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Katherine A. Sedovic

Summary

In this thesis, I argue that the multivalent significance of fourteenth-century French Arthurian imagery is rooted in its dual role as secular, yet moralising, images for contemporary French audiences. In the late Middle Ages, a symbiotic relationship existed between the sacred and secular, allowing for the two ends of the spectrum to elide and influence one another. Nothing was purely sacred or secular, as is illustrated by the opposing themes of secular chivalry and Christianity, which are at the core of the French Arthurian romances. The juxtaposition of opposing moral themes with both profane and religious figures is integral to the visual programmes of fourteenth-century, French Arthurian illuminated manuscripts and ivory caskets, illustrating their role as tactile, artistic commentaries on the duality of late medieval French culture and society. Over the course of this thesis, I explore whether Chrétien de Troyes' final Arthurian legend *Le Conte du Graal* (*circa* 1190) and the anonymous Vulgate legend *La Queste del saint Graal* (*circa* 1215-30) personify the 'cross-fertilisation' of the sacred and secular in late medieval French visual culture in particular, and in French courtly culture and society in general. Core questions include: what can the visual connections between the sacred and secular impart about how the Arthurian legends were viewed by late medieval French audiences? Can a unified definition of Christian knighthood and morality be articulated from these images? Did late medieval audiences consider such visualisations of the Arthurian legends in manuscript and ivory as sources of both Christian knowledge and laical entertainment? By engaging with these questions, I hope to create a picture of the purpose and intention, as well as the cultural and social value, of visual renditions of the Arthurian legends in fourteenth-century France. By concentrating on the two Grail-centred, and most inherently religious, French Arthurian legends, I aim to elucidate the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular as exemplified through the depiction of the Holy Grail and its related characters.

My methodology involves an iconographic examination of each image's dual connotation, religious and profane. I also undertake a cross-medium iconographic comparison, comparing and contrasting representative Arthurian scenes in manuscript illuminations and ivory carvings, two visual mediums which to date have largely been treated separately. Through iconographic and stylistic examination of thematically related manuscripts and ivories, I strive to create an overarching theory of the

interconnected and multivalent nature of my selected manuscripts and ivories in particular, and of late medieval French visual culture in general. I also utilise semiotics to explore the theoretical meanings of my chosen images: exemplars of both Arthurian tropes and themes, and of late medieval society and culture. This aspect of my research relates to my consideration of the text-image relationship within medieval manuscripts, which I expand to include other forms of medieval visual culture, specifically Gothic ivories. Semiotics thus assists me in defining the blurred boundaries between text and image, a relationship whose lack of strict division is analogous to that of the sacred and secular in Arthurian imagery specifically, and in late medieval visual culture more broadly. Finally, I examine my selected manuscripts and ivories from an anthropological viewpoint, considering the images as social artefacts so as to better understand the social, political, and cultural contexts from which they were engendered. Relatedly, I also consider the concept of knighthood as a medieval social construct, whose import was broad and evolving throughout the Middle Ages. By the fourteenth century, chivalry was arguably an inactive, outdated concept, while knighthood was politically, rather than religiously or romantically, driven. However, this lack of chivalric actions and intentions did not result in a waning of enthusiasm for the Arthurian legends, but rather, can be seen as having contributed to increased interest in the French Arthurian legends during the fourteenth century. My study of Arthurian imagery is thus interdisciplinary, as I consider my selected manuscripts and ivories from both social and cultural viewpoints, in addition to considering the images from stylistic and iconographic points of view. I thus aim to elucidate these artefacts' meaning as multivalent objects of medieval visual culture, following the current art historical trend of considering historical artefacts from multiple viewpoints, so as to better place them within a multifaceted context. Although the French Arthurian legends were ostensibly romances, there are throughout undercurrents of religiosity and morality, which, when translated into visual form, speak to the images' duality as both secular and sacred illustrations. This suggests that late medieval Arthurian images were utilised by French audiences not only as a form of laical entertainment, but also as moralising exemplars of Christian life.

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Introduction

I. Overview of Topic

The Arthurian legends have long been the topic of literary studies, however medieval images of the legends have received scant attention. The seminal text to engage with the topic is Roger Loomis' *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, published 80 years ago, in 1938. More recently, Alison Stones has explored visual representations of the legends in the Lancelot-Grail Cycle.[1] Neither Loomis nor Stones, however, questioned the basis of French visual interest in Arthurian legends. Although today King Arthur is widely perceived as a figure of British origin, likely due in large part to Arthur's inclusion in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century text, *Historia Regnum Britanniae*, the Arthurian legends were extremely popular in late medieval France.[2] This is evidenced by copies of the poems of French troubadour Chrétien de Troyes (*circa* 1135-90), the anonymous Vulgate Cycle (*circa* 1215-30), lavishly illuminated manuscripts, and finely carved ivories.[3] Indeed, Christopher de Hamel has argued that 'in France the tradition of illustrating literary manuscripts probably began with versions of the tales of King Arthur.'[4] An art-historical exploration of the French fascination with these ostensibly secular legends is long overdue. My thesis asks why the French nobility of the fourteenth century were so enamoured with King Arthur and his court, and what inspired them to commission such lavishly decorated manuscripts and ivories. I argue that the illustrations' multivalent significance is rooted in their dual role as secular, yet moralising, images for French audiences, who were well-versed in the medieval cult of chivalry, a knightly code of conduct that prescribed a Christian way of life for courtly society. I posit that fourteenth-century French Arthurian manuscripts and ivories were objects whose multivalent connotations consisted of religious allegories hidden beneath the surface of secular

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[1] Alison Stones, et al. *The Lancelot-Graal Project*, http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/lancelot-project.html, accessed 2 October 2014.

[2] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966), 212.

[3] Lori Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes' in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters (Amsterdam, 1993), 332; Edward D. Kennedy, 'The Grail and French Arthurian Romance', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (West Sussex, 2009), 208.

[4] Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London, 1986), 141.

romances. Thus, a central theme of my thesis is the blurred boundaries between the sacred and secular in French Arthurian imagery. As Michael Camille aptly noted, 'on all levels, from the political down to the psychological, the sacred and profane overlapped, shared languages, subjectivities, and even… identical visual codes.'[5] For example, Christian iconography often found new life in the depiction of Arthurian legends. A Last Supper could serve as the basis for a courtly feast, with Arthur in place of Christ. Similarly, the Grail was often interpreted as a symbol of the Eucharist, thus linking knighthood to the "central sacrament of the altar", as noted by Richard Kaeuper, and thereby illustrating the integral role of the Christian code of chivalry within these legends.[6] The use and adaptation of these familiar iconographic formulas should not be dismissed as mere laziness on the part of the artist, but instead raise questions about varied medieval French perspectives on the Arthurian legends; were they secular, entertaining stories, sacred, moralising commentaries on medieval life, with a basis in Christian-centred chivalry, or an amalgamation of both?

By concentrating on illustrations of the Grail-centred, and most inherently religious, French Arthurian legends, Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* (*circa* 1190), and the Vulgate Cycle's *La Queste del saint Graal* (*circa* 1215-30), I will elucidate the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular as seen through the depiction of the Holy Grail and relevant Arthurian characters, Perceval, Gawain, Galahad, Lancelot, and Josephus.[7] *Le Conte du Graal*, or *Perceval*, was the last of five Arthurian romances written by Chrétien de Troyes, a court poet active in the courts of Marie, Countess of Champagne, and Phillip, Count of Flanders, *circa* 1160-90.[8] *Le Conte du Graal*, which Chrétien wrote at the behest of the Count of Flanders, follows the adventures of a young Welshman, Perceval, as he strives to gain both knightly acumen and Christian understanding.[9] For reasons that are not clear, Chrétien stopped writing *Le Conte du Graal* mid-sentence, leading to the complex continuation

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[5] Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London, 1998), 22.

[6] Richard Kaeuper. *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009), 156.

[7] Muriel Whitaker, 'Christian Iconography in the Quest of the Holy Grail, *Mosaic* 12.2 (1979), 13; Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur* (Cambridge, 2008), 2.

[8] Stones, 'General Introduction', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, 6.

[9] Mary Stanger, 'Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders', in *French Studies* 11 (1957), 216; Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven, 2001), 19.

of the legend by four disparate poets over the next fifty years.[10] The *Perceval Continuations*, in turn, greatly influenced the anonymously written thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, completed *circa* 1215-30. The Holy Grail, first introduced by Chrétien as a *chose merveilleuse*, or 'wonderful thing' in *Le Conte du Graal*, is at the heart of the penultimate Vulgate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*, which details the trials of King Arthur's three most Christian knights, Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, as they journey in search of the Grail. That both *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* focus on the mysterious nature and significance of the Holy Grail, and the knightly attributes required to discover it, render these two romances the most inherently Christian of all the French Arthurian legends. In its entirety, the *oeuvre* of French Arthurian legends is overwhelming, consisting of thousands of lines of twelfth-century verse in addition to the lengthy thirteenth-century prose Vulgate Cycle. Focussing on these two permutations of the Grail Quest narrows my focus, while still allowing for the building of cross-textual connections. In addition to their shared religious connotations, stemming from their focus on the Grail Quest and related acts of chivalry, these two legends also share central characters. *Le Conte du Graal* is defined by its narrative *entrelacement* of the adventures of Perceval and Gawain, while *La Queste del saint Graal* follows the travails of Perceval, Bors, Galahad, Gawain, and Lancelot as they embark on their quest for the Holy Grail. My analysis of the visualisations of these two legends in manuscript and ivory focusses first and foremost on the varying depictions of these knights, whose integral roles within the legends are highlighted by their repeated renderings in these two distinct artistic mediums.

I have chosen to focus on artefacts of medieval visual culture from the early to mid 1300s because the fourteenth century marks the high point of visual translation of Arthurian legends in both manuscript and ivory. The Arthurian manuscripts produced during this period are among the most lavishly illuminated, while the production of Gothic ivories was similarly at its apogee, evidenced by the large demand for carved ivories that resulted in a high concentration of ivory artisans working in Paris at this time.[11] Indeed, the early fourteenth century heralded a golden age of secular manuscript production in Paris and its surrounding environs, already a major centre of

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[10] Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (New York, 1970), 114.

[11] Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1994), 70.

French culture. In addition, there were no major re-workings of these two legends between the time of their composition, and the production of the fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts, allowing for consideration of the original text in conjunction with the images. Thus the imagery can be considered a response to the text, a further gloss or visual interpretation. My self-imposed limitation of concentrating on objects of material culture produced in Northern France within the first half of the fourteenth century enables me to draw connections of iconography based on a shared time and place of production, as my selected ivories were all produced between *circa* 1300-50, dating suggested in part by their similarities of artistic style.[12] Furthermore, in terms of social and political context, the first half of the fourteenth century marks a period of transition in late medieval France, characterised by the continual increase in literacy (an overall trend throughout the High Middle Ages), the centralisation of the monarchy, and transition from Capetian to Valois rule, as well as the subsequent lessening of social power among the nobility. These are all factors that may have affected, and perhaps acted to increase, the appeal of the Arthurian legends, romantic stories that were also spiritual and moralistic. For example, as noted by C. Stephen Jaeger in *The Origins of Courtliness* (1985), the increasing levels of literacy among the laity 'was one factor which accounted for the existence of a literature idealising chivalry.'[13] The growing trend of literacy among the laity created a ready audience for chivalric narratives such as the Arthurian legends, wherein courtliness and chivalry were represented as a 'sublime ethical code', as will be discussed in greater detail shortly.[14]

Through iconographic analysis of the scenes chosen for illustration in selected fourteenth-century French manuscripts and ivories, I strive to discover how the two aforementioned legends personify the 'cross-fertilisation' of the sacred and secular in late medieval French visual culture in particular, and in French courtly culture and society in general. In other words, are there iconographic similarities between the Arthurian scenes depicted on parchment and in ivory? If so, what can these visual connections tell us about the manner in which late medieval French audiences may have viewed the Arthurian legends, and what does it tell us about artistic practices in

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[12] Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 166.
[13] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilising Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210* (Philadelphia, 1985), 226.
[14] Ibid, 242.

fourteenth-century France? These questions bring us full circle to my overarching research question: does a tangible intertwining of the sacred and secular exist within the Arthurian legends? Although the legends were ostensibly secular romances, there are throughout undercurrents of religiosity and morality, which, when translated into visual form, appear to speak to the images' duality as secular and sacred illustrations. Is it possible that these Arthurian images were utilised by French audiences not only as a form of entertainment, but also as moralising exemplars of Christian life; textual and visual demonstrations of medieval chivalry?

In the Middle Ages, there is often a lack of clear distinction between the sacred and the secular. As Timothy Husband has posited, 'Holy and profane thought were constantly intermingling. The ordinary was transmuted to the sacred and the sacred to the commonplace with such consistency that any real distinction between religious and secular thought virtually disappeared.'[15] Although these two concepts may appear theoretically opposed, when considering the medieval connotations of sacred and secular, it is advisable to view the terms as occupying opposite ends of a spectrum, one on which the terms ecclesiastical and religious, courtly and profane, also appear. In other words, I will argue that during the Middle Ages, nothing was wholly sacred or secular, but rather existed as a compilation of these two concepts, with the sacred and secular both occurring to a greater or lesser degree, dependent on where the given object, legend, or value existed on the aforementioned spectrum. As Maurice Keen aptly notes, 'We are in a world in which a purely secular ethic, divorced from a religious framework of value, was almost impossible to conceive of.'[16] For example, men, as made in God's image, were expected to aspire to be more like God, minimising the aspects of themselves that were secular, courtly, and profane. This was essentially the founding purpose of the medieval code of chivalry, as developed by clerics to serve the Church. In this thesis, I use the terms 'sacred' and 'religious', and 'secular' and 'profane' interchangeably, to connote the two ends of the theoretical spectrum suggested above. I will also engage with the equivalent dichotomy of 'ecclesiastical' and 'courtly', to better examine the theological struggles of Arthurian knights such as Perceval, Lancelot, and Galahad. For instance, according to James Robinson, the composite caskets juxtapose 'themes such as lust and chastity,

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[15] Timothy Husband and Gloria Gilmore-House, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York, 1980), 1.
[16] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), 81.

folly and wisdom.'[17] Similarly, Paula Mae Carns has suggested that details of the composite caskets' imagery, such as the contradictory attire of Alexander the Great, and his teacher, Aristotle, exhibit a visual 'conflict between *chevalerie* and *clergie*.'[18] This coeval illustration of opposing concepts illustrates the medieval preoccupation with duality and opposition, a theme that is further personified by the contradicting personalities of Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Enyas, and Tristan, as well as the simultaneously secular and sacred connotations of the caskets' Arthurian scenes. The caskets' juxtaposition of the secular and sacred can be further seen to imply the necessity of both realms, religious and profane, elucidating the lack of a definitive distinction between these two seemingly dichotomous areas in fourteenth-century France.

The inherent tensions between cultural values such as Christian morality, political power, and social status help to illuminate the difficulty in separating the sacred from the secular within the late medieval world. For example, I examine the dual, yet opposing sacred and profane goals of knighthood, as are discussed in the Arthurian legends. In *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*, Perceval and Lancelot struggle with whether it is possible to obtain both Christian devotion and worldly glory, while Gawain and Galahad each make the decision to pursue one goal, the former, secular vainglory, and the latter, Christian devotion. As C. Stephen Jaeger comments, 'mere chivalric activity without some higher motive brings a knight to ruin.'[19] For example, in the case of Perceval, the young Welshman's eventual success, as described in both *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*, is dependent on not only his physical skills as a knight, but also his acceptance and adherence to a Christian way of life. It is only when Perceval comes to understand the importance of acting not just as a knight, but as a *Christian* knight, that he is able to progress and succeed in his endeavours, both earthly and spiritual. The simultaneous existence of these seemingly oppositional knightly qualities, physical prowess and Christian morality, personify the basis of medieval chivalry. This suggests that one purpose of the French Arthurian legends was to serve as a form of moral instruction for their laical, often knightly, readers. Certainly, considering that Christian chivalry served as

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[17] James Robinson, *Masterpieces of Medieval Art*, (London, 2008), 216.
[18] Paula Mae Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum' in *Gesta* 44.2 (2005), 71.
[19] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 267.

a prescription for the conduct and thoughts of the laical nobility, it follows that so would have their highly popular, religiously imbued vernacular texts, such as the Arthurian legends.[20] It was in Chrétien's romances that the theme of the Christian and moral education of the knight first surfaced, later elaborated on in the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, especially the penultimate volume, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, a romance that Richard Kaeuper describes as "blend[ing] clerical exhortation and chivalric independence."[21] Certainly, although *Queste* contains more than its fair share of daring knightly deeds, within the romance there is repeated textual and visual evidence of clerical attempts to "bend the moral direction of the Grail quest to spiritual rather than worldly chivalry."[22] For example, Lancelot is descended from Christ, while his son, Galahad, is portrayed as the incarnation of spiritual and knightly perfection. Similarly, through the Holy Grail's Eucharistic connotations, knighthood is clearly linked to Christianity and communion; the quest for the Holy Grail can be viewed as a metaphor for man's search for Christian enlightenment.[23] The consistently religious connotations of events and aspects of the Grail quest thus exemplify the inherently Christian foundation of medieval chivalry.[24] As Jaeger notes, just as the clergy were responsible for the formation of chivalry as a religious-based code of conduct, so were they also involved in the composition of seemingly secular, courtly romances with moralising meanings. For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose twelfth-century text *Historia Regnum Britanniae* provided the impetus for much, if not all, of the Arthurian material that followed, and Wace, whose slightly later *Roman de Brut* was based on Geoffrey's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*, were clerical authors.[25] From the very beginning, therefore, the Arthurian legends had a consistent strain of religiosity running through them.

Relatedly, the inherently intertwined nature of the medieval Church and royal courts also illustrates the incapability of separating the secular from the sacred. Although medieval French kings were essentially political leaders, they were anointed by the clergy, effectively tying the source of their power to the Church. Similarly, in his twelfth-century biography, Peter Abelard recounts how as a young man he was

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[20] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 194.
[21] Ibid, 158.
[22] Ibid, 158.
[23] Ibid, 157.
[24] Ibid, 158, 267.
[25] Ibid, 213.

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given the choice of knighthood versus priesthood.[26] Although these two occupations may appear dichotomous, the Church was an integral part of the ongoing Crusades, in which knights' often violent actions were consistently interpreted as acts of Christian chivalry. Indeed, chivalry was developed by the clergy as a means to socially and politically steer the lives and actions of the knightly laity. It was essentially a form of societal control, 'a response', as noted by Jaeger, 'to disorder' which simultaneously functioned as an ethical code while also helping to further the political goals of the Church, such as the ongoing Crusades.[27] For example, in his fourteenth-century text *Livre de Chevalerie*, the pious knight Geoffrey de Charny notes that the greatest knightly honour could be obtained by fighting for Christianity in foreign lands.[28] Charny, therefore, is an apt exemplar of the mental connection that medieval knights made between piety and chivalry.[29] Certainly, Kaeuper describes Charny as 'convinced of the religious rectitude of his chivalric life', and firm in his belief that 'God is the source of a knight's prowess.'[30] A similar, albeit earlier example, concerns the late eleventh/early twelfth-century Benedictine historian and theologian Guibert of Nogent, who, in relation to the First Crusade, stated that Pope Urban II had promised that Christian soldiers could earn just as much praise for defending the Holy Land as did the Maccabees for defending the Temple:

> *Si machabaeis olim ad maximam profuit pietatis laudem, quia pro cerimoniis et templo pugnarent: et vobis, o milites christiani, legitime conceditur, ut amorum studio libertatem patriae defendatis.*[31]

Thus military success and Christian devotion were intrinsically linked, with, according to Guibert of Nogent, benefits of crusadership including Christian

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[26] M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997), 17.
[27] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 238.
[28] Maurice Keen, 'Chaucer and Chivalry Revisited', in *Armies, Chivalry, and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France*, ed. by Matthew Strickland (Stamford, 1998), 2.
[29] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 50.
[30] Ibid, 45, 50.
[31] Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos,* Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux, Vol. 4. (Paris, 1844-95), 138; "If by fighting for their sacred rites and for their temple the Maccabees once won the highest praise for their piety, to you too, Christian soldiers, it is lawfully granted that through your zeal in warfare you defend the freedom of your homeland."

martyrdom and eternal praise.[32] In *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (2009), Kaeuper argues that 'knightly ideology thus bonded meritorious suffering to all licit, loyal service to kin and lord.'[33] Suffering for Christian causes and relying on God for the strength with which to bear it was an integral part of the religious dimension of chivalry.[34] For example, on the crusades, priests and other clerical figures would complete prayers and carry religious symbols, with the intention of obtaining God's divine protection for the Christian soldiers as they marched into battle.[35] Such religious symbols could include a fragment of the True Cross, as well as the Holy Lance, said to have pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion, and an object that figures heavily in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, as will be discussed in Chapter One.[36] A weapon reputed to be the Holy Lance was discovered in the church of Saint Peter at Antioch after the capture of the city by crusaders on 2 June 1098.[37] According to the *Gesta Francorum* (1100-1101), a Latin chronicle of the First Crusade written by an anonymous author, after the discovery of this object, the crusaders experienced renewed confidence, and felt able to conquer the enemy regardless of obstacles, due to their faith in God.[38] As noted by David Bachrach in *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (2003) "the discovery of this relic, so intimately connected with Jesus' death, was widely interpreted as a manifestation of God's grace upon the army."[39] In this case the soldiers' (possibly flagging) Christian devotion was renewed and strengthened by the discovery of what was viewed as a tangible example of God's faith, belief, and support in their cause, thus providing a link between physical knightly deeds and incorporeal religious morality, parallel characteristics of the medieval code of chivalry.

Yet another example of the intertwined nature of the sacred and secular, and the relationship between Church and court, is the central theme of the late thirteenth-century Occitan poem *Le Breviari d'Amor* (*circa* 1288), written by Matfre

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[32] Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, 138; David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (Woodbridge, 2003), 124, 148.
[33] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 113.
[34] Ibid, 50.
[35] David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (Woodbridge, 2003), 114.
[36] See pp. 29, 35, 39, 42, 47-9, 51, 55.
[37] Ibid, 110.
[38] *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolomitanorum: The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, ed. by Rosalind Hill (Oxford, 1967), 65.
[39] Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215*, 112.

Ermengaud, who was both a Franciscan friar and troubadour. *Le Breviari d'Amor* is a poem of 35,600 octosyllables dealing with the difficulty of reconciling Christian love for God with *fin'amor*, or courtly love.[40] Ermengaud's poem thus engages with both the theological and courtly literary traditions, both of which would have been familiar to late medieval audiences, and which are evident within the Arthurian legends. For example, Galahad, as the ideal Christian knight, eschews courtly, physical love for the love of God, while Gawain prizes beautiful damsels above Christian devotion, a decision that ultimately results in his inability to achieve the Holy Grail, or Christian enlightenment. Relatedly, the twelfth-century text *The Art of Courtly Love*, written by the cleric Andreas Capellanus for Marie de Champagne, serves as a manual for the pursuit of secular, courtly love, yet also includes references to Christian love, and love within the context of the Church.[41] For example, Capellanus includes a section titled 'The Love of the Clergy', and discusses how true love can 'adorn a man…with the virtue of chastity' in regard to his loyalty to a single woman.[42] Although Capellanus is here discussing secular, courtly love, his advice contains undertones of Christian morality, once again exemplifying the lack of a wholly secular, vernacular romantic text in the late Middle Ages. Furthermore, the final section of *The Art of Courtly Love* utilises the tale of an unnamed Arthurian knight as a means of presenting what Capellanus titles the 'Rules of Love', thereby drawing a connection between Arthurian knights and the conduct of love, thus alluding to the code of chivalry, which bridged both the Christian and the courtly by way of its purpose of lending a sense of societal organisation and political control to courtly, and more specifically, knightly, culture.[43] Indeed, as Jaeger has aptly noted, "The architects of chivalry were clerics functioning in their capacity as educators; their most effective pedagogic instrument was the courtly romance."[44] In other words, chivalry can be defined as a medieval code of conduct created by the clergy with the purpose of furthering Christian devotion through the provision of an idealised code of conduct for laical members of society, who may otherwise have drifted away from Christian piety and morality, focussing solely on the tangible pleasures of court. Medieval

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[40] Matfre Ermengaud, *Le Breviari d'Amor*, ed. by Peter T. Ricketts (London, 1998), vii.
[41] John Jay Parry, 'Introduction', in *The Art of Courtly Love* by Andreas Capellanus, trans. by John Jay Parry (New York, 1941), 17-18.
[42] Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 31, 141.
[43] Ibid, 177.
[44] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 213.

romances such as the Arthurian legends, with their overarching focus on the ideal form of chivalry, can thus be seen in part as instruction manuals for knights on how to lead lives that were at once appropriately courtly, moral, and Christian. According to Jaeger, the Arthurian legends were penned with the intention of serving as a literary form of 'moral instruction' for their laical readers.[45] For example, to quote Richard Kaeuper, romances 'provided an important channel for the diffusion of chivalric ideas.'[46] Kaeuper further notes that romance literature 'selectively absorbed heroic, religious, and courtly influences from elite society and channeled them, suitably trimmed, reinforced, or amplified, into the cultural sphere of knighthood.'[47] Arthurian romances such as Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* can be viewed as thinly veiled commentaries for contemporary audiences, both courtly and knightly, on how to live appropriately cultured and Christian lives. For example, readers may have seen themselves and acquaintances in such complex and morally flawed characters such as Perceval, Lancelot, and Bors, three Arthurian knights who strive for Christian perfection, yet embody the human predilection for making mistakes which hinder them as they aim to achieve their intangible, spiritual goals. Such disparate examples of the consistently intertwined nature of the religious and the profane in late medieval French courtly culture in general, and in chivalry in particular, illustrate the impossibility of truly separating the sacred from the secular, and place the intertwining of these two concepts in the Arthurian legends within a broader cultural context.

On a related note, I also consider the concept of knighthood as a medieval social construct, whose import was broad and evolving throughout the Middle Ages. In light of the knightly status of *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal'*s key figures, Perceval, Gawain, Galahad, and Lancelot, the definition and concept of knighthood in late medieval France is crucial to a full understanding of the Arthurian *oeuvre*. By the fourteenth century, although chivalry and knighthood were still in existence, the two concepts had undergone an essential transformation. It is worth reiterating here that chivalry can be defined as the knightly code of conduct, a code that spanned the sacred-secular spectrum, including both religious and romantically driven values, and which stemmed from Christian ideals of religious devotion and

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[45] Ibid, 233.
[46] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 178.
[47] Ibid, 94.

morality. According to Kaeuper, 'throughout the High and Later Middle Ages…
chivalry formed the framework for thought and action among the nonclerical elite.' It
was, 'the body of ideas by which laymen evaluated conduct, shaped thought, and
launched aspiration.'[48] Similarly, as stated by Jaeger, chivalry was 'at the same time
an ethical code, an instrument of ambition, and a mask for self-interest, always
practiced with an element of dissimulation.'[49] This is perhaps nowhere more in
evidence than in *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*, two seemingly
secular romances, yet which are in actuality the two most inherently religious French
Arthurian legends, characterised by the moralising Christian messages at their cores.

Due to changes in power such as the shift from Capetian to Valois rule in
1328, and ongoing events such as the Hundred Years' War, chivalry and knighthood
in fourteenth-century France were overall politically, rather than religiously or
romantically, driven.[50] However, this lack of religiously motivated chivalric actions
and intentions did not result in a waning of enthusiasm for the Arthurian legends in
the late Middle Ages. On the contrary, it may have contributed to elevated interest in
the Arthurian legends during the fourteenth century. For example, as Sandra Hindman
and Gabrielle Spiegel have suggested, it is possible that the legends were read as
harkening back to a simpler time, when human motives were driven by romance and
Christian values rather than political and social intrigue.[51] Erich Köhler similarly
conjectures that late medieval courtly literature was 'at once an idealisation of the
deteriorating situation of aristocracy and a forum for the resolution of intraclass
tension.'[52] If this is true, can such longing for a more idealistic age of chivalry,
romance, and piety be found within fourteenth-century visual representations of the
Arthurian legends? This question informs my examination and analysis of my

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[48] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 194.
[49] Ibid, 254.
[50] Georges Duby, *France in the Middle Ages 987-1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc*
(Oxford, 1991), 272; Derek Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Oxford,
2003), 45; Jeanne Fox-Friedman, 'King Arthur in Art', in *A Companion to Arthurian
Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (New York, 2009), 387; Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D.
Hedeman, *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500*, ed. by
Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 89-90.
[51] Hindman, 'King Arthur, His Knights, and the French Aristocracy in Picardy', in *Contexts:
Styles and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*, Special Issue, *Yale French Studies*, ed. by
Daniel Poiron and Nancy F. Regalado (London, 1991), 116; Gabrielle Spiegel, 'The
Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth-Century French Historical Writing', in *Imagining the
Past in France*, 45.
[52] Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik* (Tubingen, 1956), 98-99.

selected manuscripts and ivories from a socio-political point of view. In addition,
returning to my central theme of the visual interweaving of the sacred and secular, I
consider the duality of the medieval concept of knighthood, which was depicted in
both literary and visual culture, and was at once inherently profane and romantic and
religious and chivalric, exemplifying the lack of division between sacred and secular
life. Indeed, Saint Paul created an allegory in which theological concepts were
associated with various parts of a knight's armour: the hauberk of justice, the shield of
faith, and the helm of salvation, an idea that held sway throughout the Middle Ages,
as illustrated by its inclusion in a thirteenth-century copy of Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis*
(*circa* 1236).[53] Richard Kaeuper notes that within this diagram, 'chivalry and religion
[are brought] into the same conceptual framework', the knight symbolising an
idealised, Christian, form of knighthood.[54] For example, the knight's sword is labelled
as the word of God, *verbum dei*, while his lance is representative of perseverance,
perseverantia. In addition, on the three corners of his shield the members of the
Christian Trinity appear, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three attributes that come
together at the shield's center as *Deus*. When taken together, these holy attributes
given to the tools of a knight's trade, sword, lance, and shield, exemplify the
intertwined and inherent connection between Christianity and chivalry. In the Middle
Ages, both were considered integral to the proper performance of knighthood. In
other words, to again quote Richard Kaeuper, 'In our literary evidence knights seem
to swim in a sea of piety, using religious language even in situations that strike
modern sensibilities as purely secular.'[55] I therefore explore not only the connection
between chivalry and Christianity, but also the dichotomy between fictional and
actual knighthood in fourteenth-century France. Maurice Keen's *Chivalry* (1984) is an
essential resource for this aspect of my methodology, as Keen provides a detailed
overview of medieval knighthood, considering it from a range of perspectives:
literary, social, political, and religious.[56]

My topic requires that I also address the theory of a specifically 'medieval'
practice of reading, a subject of debate in recent decades. This allows for me to better

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[53] See Appendix 2; Michael Evans, 'An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus's Summa of Vice:
Harleian MS 3244', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982), 17-18
[54] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, 1.
[55] Richard Kaeuper, 'The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance: Northwestern Europe', in
The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge,
2000), 104.
[56] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984).

answer questions of the use and purpose of my selected images. By refuting the theory that medieval images were of secondary importance to the corresponding texts (as has been posited by Christopher de Hamel and Mary Carruthers) I privilege the role of the images, suggesting that visualisations of the Arthurian legends, whether in parchment or ivory, may have been viewed as sources of information and entertainment in and of themselves.[57] To this end I will engage with Aden Kumler's *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (2011) in which Kumler suggests that images, especially religious images, can and should be viewed as sacred objects whose authority and importance equals that of texts.[58] Kumler argues that religious images played a key role in strengthening and renewing the late medieval practice of Christianity, a renewal that was in part marked by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which "significantly raised the epistemological bar for Christians, both clerical and lay.'[59] Indeed, the Council decreed that all men and women 'of the age of discernment' would be required to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, and re-emphasised the importance of confession.[60] By addressing subtopics including Arthurian images' dual sacred and secular roles, cross-medium iconographical similarities, and the medieval practice of reading, both silent and oral, I articulate the multivalent identity and use of Arthurian images in fourteenth-century French culture.

By comparing the visual translations of *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* on parchment and in ivory, I address the question of the transmission of style and subject matter between these two visual mediums. Can the ways in which French audiences viewed Arthurian knights be surmised from the manner in which they were depicted in manuscripts and ivories? Do iconographic similarities between these visual mediums speak to the sharing of artistic influences and methods of production? Can a unified definition of Christian knighthood and medieval morality be articulated from these images? Questions such as these involve the consideration of both medieval patrons and artists. In parallel to each another, I consider medieval patrons' possible requests for specific scenes and meanings in their prospective

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[57] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 167; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 2008), 336.
[58] Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven, 2011), 2-3.
[59] Ibid, 2-3.
[60] Ibid, 32.

images, and artists' iconographic traditions and practicalities of medieval image making. This includes an exploration of the artists' literacy, or lack thereof, their possible knowledge of the oral Arthurian tradition, and the visual choices, both pragmatic and philosophical, involved in the design of multivalent medieval imagery such as Arthurian manuscripts and ivory caskets. More generally, I also comment upon the long tradition of French Arthurian images. For example, the appearance of Arthurian themes in early medieval churches illustrates the continuity of the French fascination with the legends, as well as the relevance of Arthurian imagery within religious settings, which justifies my consideration of both the sacred and the secular in regard to the images' context and function.

Considering the iconological focus of my research, my methodology foremost involves the identification of iconographic elements that have parallels in religious imagery. I utilise art historical concepts, including the theory of sign versus symbol, as posited by W. J. T. Mitchell, and applied to medieval art by Hans Belting.[61] For example, I consider the images' role as a multivalent form of visual communication. How did medieval French audiences understand and justify this juxtaposition of seemingly oppositional moral concepts, religious piety, and secular chivalry? To answer this question, I engage with and nuance theories posited by Michael Camille in *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image Making in Medieval Art* (1989). Camille's belief in 'multifarious' medieval audiences able to engage simultaneously with the religious and profane, or the ecclesiastical and the courtly, informs my argument for the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular, lending credence to my theory of the existence of the Christian and profane on a spectrum of greater and lesser religiosity.[62]

Additionally, I utilise semiotics to explore the theoretical meanings of my chosen images: exemplars of both Arthurian tropes and themes, and late medieval society and culture. Semiotics assists me in defining the blurred boundaries between text and image, a relationship whose lack of strict division is analogous to that of the sacred and secular in Arthurian imagery specifically, and in late medieval visual culture more broadly. This strand of research elides with my aforementioned

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[61] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, 1986), 43; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), 11, 41-2.
[62] Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 310-11.

examination of the text-image relationship within medieval manuscripts. I expand the concept of this relationship to encompass other forms of medieval visual culture, and Gothic ivories in particular. In *The Language of Images* (1974), W. J. T. Mitchell discusses the 'interrelationship of the arts', a disciplinary crossover between art history and literary criticism, or the 'communicative power of images to encode messages, tell stories, express ideas and emotions, raise questions, and "speak" to us.'[63] This theory informs my argument of the analogous communicative functions of medieval Arthurian manuscript illuminations and ivory caskets. I similarly invoke Mitchell to explore the images' role as visual manifestations of fraught cultural values in fourteenth-century France: Christian morality, political power, and social status, values that existed alongside, yet often in opposition with one another. Finally, I employ Mieke Bal's theory of images as texts in my discussion of the multivalent reading of Arthurian images.[64]

I further consider my selected manuscripts and ivories from an anthropological viewpoint, considering the images as social artefacts so as to discern the social, political, and cultural contexts from which they were engendered. Placing the selected manuscripts and ivories in a broader cultural context assists me in answering central questions of my thesis, such as how these objects of material visual culture were read and used, by whom, and for what purposes. The fourteenth century was a tumultuous period in French history, characterised politically by the centralisation of the monarchy, resulting in the wresting of power from the nobility. I question whether the popularity of the prose Vulgate Cycle in late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century France is related to these societal shifts. To this end, I discuss socio-political readings of the Arthurian legends, such as Sandra Hindman's *Sealed in Parchment: Rereadings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (1994) and Erich Köhler's *L'Aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (1974). In these texts, Hindman and Köhler similarly posit that the images within late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century French Arthurian manuscripts speak to the current crisis of the nobility and shifts in social status and power.[65] For example, according to Hindman, Chrétien's romances are 'vehicles of a

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[63] Mitchell, *The Language of Images* (1974), 2-3.
[64] Mieke Bal, 'On Looking and Reading: Word and Image, Visual Poetics, and Comparative Arts', in *Semiotica* 76 (1989), 291.
[65] Erich Köhler, *L'Aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (Paris, 1974).

process of cultural change that responded to different sociopolitical circumstances in a distinctive milieu.'[66] Although Hindman and Köhler's arguments for Arthurian imagery as exemplars of societal unrest must be treated with a degree of scepticism (such as Hindman's suggestion that images of Chrétien's *Perceval* illustrate a longing for the 'golden age' of Louis IX's rule), an analysis of their work aids with the consideration of my chosen images as more than merely a form of visual leisure for the nobility, and assists me with their cultural contextualisation.[67]

Central to this thesis is an iconographic comparison across mediums, comparing and contrasting representative Arthurian scenes in manuscript illuminations and ivory carvings, two visual mediums which to date have largely been treated separately. Richard Randall Jr. and Paula Shoppe have posited an artistic link between medieval manuscript illumination and ivory carvings, however this theory has yet to be fully considered.[68] For example, scenes such as Gawain's triumph over the enchantments of the *Chateau Merveille* are rendered in similar stylistic and compositional formats in both manuscript and ivory. Although a shared era and place of production would appear to speak to similarities of iconography, artistic influences, and methods of production, to date little research has been conducted as to the possibility of visual and cultural connections between fourteenth-century manuscripts and ivories. Scholars including Jonathan Alexander, Christopher de Hamel, and Douglas Kelly have hinted at the possibility of such an artistic connection, but have not developed it further.[69] Meanwhile, Anthony Cutler has delved into the methods of production of Byzantine ivories, positing ideas of workshops and artistic collaboration that, due to the lack of changes to ivory carving techniques throughout the intervening centuries, can also be applied to fourteenth-century ivories. Cutler's *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (1994) thus provides valuable insights into ivory workshop practices, thereby assisting me in formulating connections of production between manuscripts and ivories in fourteenth-century

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[66] Sandra Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Re-readings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (Chicago, 1994), 8.
[67] Ibid, 164-5.
[68] Richard H. Randall, Jr., *Medieval Ivories* (Baltimore, 1969), 2; Paula Shoppe, 'Reading Romances: The Production and Reception of French Gothic Secular Ivory caskets in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices', thesis (Illinois, 2000), 24.
[69] Jonathan Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (London, 1992); de Hamel, *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination: History and Techniques* (London, 2001); Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, 1992).

Paris. An examination of thematically related manuscripts and ivories assists me in pinpointing this possible connection. For example, is there consistency in the depiction of the Welsh knight, Perceval, across mediums? What can this tell us about the role and meaning of Perceval in fourteenth-century French visual culture? Although contemporary scholars including Keith Busby, Michael Camille, and Sandra Hindman have studied the Arthurian texts for evidence of Christian symbolism and socio-political associations, these interdisciplinary readings have not been applied to my chosen images, leaving a distinct gap in the field of medieval Arthurian studies.[70] Through the iconographic and stylistic examination of thematically related manuscripts and ivories, I strive to create an overarching theory of the interconnected and multivalent nature of my chosen manuscripts and ivories in particular, and of late medieval French visual culture in general.

My study of Arthurian images is thus interdisciplinary, as I consider my selected manuscripts and ivories from both social and cultural viewpoints, in addition to considering them from stylistic and iconographic points of view. E. H. Gombrich's theory of the 'social history' of art is integral to this aspect of my thesis, in that it suggests the importance of the consideration of historical factors external to the *objets d'art*, such as politics, social status, and religious values.[71] Similarly, *The Social Life of Illumination*, edited by Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn Smith, is also important to my research, with its hypothesis that medieval manuscripts served as a catalyst for the creation of social bonds and interactions.[72] By engaging with my artefacts in this multi-faceted way, I aim to elucidate their meaning as multivalent objects of medieval visual culture, following the current trend in art history and medieval studies to consider historical artefacts from multiple viewpoints, so as to better place them within a multifaceted context, and engage with them at a level deeper than mere artistic connoisseurship.

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[70] Camille, *The Gothic Idol;* Keith Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, 351-63; Busby, 'The Manuscripts of Chrétien's Romances', in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, and Joan T. Grimbert (Cambridge, 2005), 64-75.

[71] E.H. Gombrich, 'The Social History of Art', in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse: And Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Oxford, 1978), 86.

[72] Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith, eds., *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013).

II. Selection of Primary Sources

Although Alison Stones' thorough study of the Vulgate *Lancelot-Graal* cycle is a
valuable piece of secondary literature for my study, Stones places undue worth on the
artistic quality of the manuscripts' illuminations, focussing on the more lavish,
skilfully illuminated copies, such as British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii.[73] This results
in a somewhat biased overview of French Arthurian manuscript illumination, and
implies that late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts as a whole exhibit the same
high level of artistic skill and considerable amount of illumination.[74] My thesis aims
to address this gap in Arthurian studies, focussing on some of the less skilfully
executed and fully illuminated, yet equally important manuscripts. The manuscripts
whose illuminations exhibit visual anomalies and disagreements, or merely a lack of
artistic talent, can perhaps tell us more about the production and dissemination of the
Arthurian legends than their more skilfully rendered brethren, providing insights into
methods of production and forms of reading, such as the use of rubrics as a possible
aid for both illuminators and readers.

According to Chantry Westwell, there are 500 Arthurian manuscripts in
existence today, a collection too large to focus on in its entirety.[75] Of the 45 extant
manuscripts and fragments containing Chrétien's texts, none from his lifetime are
extant.[76] The earliest surviving manuscripts containing Chrétien's work date to the
late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[77] Of the 15 manuscripts whose texts include
Le Conte du Graal, a total of five are illuminated. Three of these five manuscripts
were produced in Paris during the late thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.[78] These three
manuscripts thus form half of the corpus of manuscripts upon which I focus in this

[73] See Appendix 2.
[74] Stones, 'Fabrication et illustration des manuscrits arthuriens', in *La légende du roi Arthur*,
ed. by Thierry Delcourt (Paris, 2009), 19-30; Stones, "*Mise en page*' in the French Lancelot-
Grail: The First 150 Years of the Illustrative Tradition', in *A Companion to the Lancelot-
Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge, 2003).
[75] Chantry Westwell, 'Arthurian Manuscripts in the British Library: The French Tradition',
The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, accessed 11 April, 2014,
http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourArtGen.asp.
[76] Roberta L. Krueger, 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Invention of Arthurian Courtly Fiction', in
A Companion to Arthurian Literature, ed. by Helen Fulton (West Sussex, 2009), 162.
[77] Stones, 'Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art', *Oxford Art Online*,
http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2089125, accessed 2 October,
2014.
[78] Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated
Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', 332; Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment,* 2-3.

thesis. The great popularity of the Vulgate Cycle in late medieval France is evidenced by the existence of approximately 200 complete and partial manuscripts, dating from the early thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries.[79] Of this corpus, 40 contain the text of *La Queste del saint Graal*, 12 of which were produced in France during the fourteenth century.[80] I limit my study of *Queste* manuscripts to the only three to have been produced in northern France during the first half of the fourteenth century, and which also contain narrative miniature cycles and the complete *Queste* text. Details of the manuscripts considered in this study can be found in Appendix 1.

The number of extant medieval Arthurian ivories is more manageable, consisting of a total of eight 'composite' caskets, each illustrating a selection of literary romance scenes, and one casket whose imagery is devoted entirely to Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*. Arthurian imagery is also found on medieval ivory mirror cases, although the decoration tends towards the more generically romantic, usually consisting of illustrations of courtly love.[81] In addition, as smaller objects with only two faces, and thus usually less sophisticated imagery, the mirror cases lack the unique ability of the three-dimensional caskets to juxtapose often dichotomous scenes on their sides and lids. I therefore limit my consideration of Gothic ivories to the nine complete caskets decorated with Arthurian imagery. The eight composite romance caskets I focus on, although outwardly identical, are rendered more interesting due to slight visual discrepancies that are visible when their shared imagery is compared. Subtle differences in carving style and specific details chosen for emphasis suggest that the caskets' production and meaning is more complex than has generally been thought. In parallel to the eight composite caskets, I also consider the sole extant *Perceval* casket, which differs from the composite caskets in its visual portrayal of a single narrative, likely specified by the patron, thereby providing a different view into

[79] Stones, 'The Illustrations of the French Prose Lancelot in Belgium, Flanders, and Paris 1250-1340, Vol 2', thesis (London, 1971), 2.

[80] The twelve extant manuscripts containing the text of *La Queste del saint Graal* and produced in fourteenth-century France are as follows (for full citations, see Appendices 1-2): Cologny, Bodmer Library, MS 147; Florence, Laurentian Library, MS Ash. 121(48); London, British Library, MSS Additional 10294, Royal 14 E.iii; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Douce 199, Douce 215, Rawlinson Q.b.6.; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 122, fr.1422-4, fr. 12573; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MSS Arsenal 5218, 3482; Ibid, 2; Stones, 'Chronological and Geographical Distribution of Lancelot-Grail Manuscripts', The Lancelot-Grail Project, http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/LG-web/Arthur-LG-ChronGeog.html, accessed 10 July, 2017.

[81] Élisabeth Antoine, 'The Mirror Case of Tristan and Isolde', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France*, 292.

the production and purpose of fourteenth-century French ivories. All nine caskets, however, can be viewed as a united group due to their shared Arthurian, and potentially Christian, focus.

III. Thesis Outline

The bulk of my thesis (Chapters 1-4) takes the form of a series of case studies of the selected manuscripts and ivories. Although each chapter focusses on a different visual aspect of my chosen artefacts, the individual case studies are connected through their shared focus on the visualisation of the intertwining of the sacred and secular within *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*. Each case study focusses on a different element or character from the two legends, and its visualisation within the selected manuscripts and ivories. Chapters 1-4 also include cross-medium comparisons, taking into account iconography utilised in both the manuscripts and ivories. Although one aspect of the case studies is to place each discussed manuscript and ivory within a broader social and cultural context, the final three chapters of my thesis further contextualise the artefacts, raising broad issues of medieval visual culture, such as late medieval conceptions of literacy and reading, the production of secular manuscripts and ivories in fourteenth-century Paris, the hypothesised intent and use of the artefacts, and the potential sharing of artistic influences across mediums.

Chapter One, my first case study, consists of a comparison of depictions of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* in the sole surviving ivory casket to depict Perceval, and in the three selected fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts:

> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS, fr. 1453
> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12576
> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12577
> Paris, Musée du Louvre, OA 122

Through cross-medium comparisons of the ivory casket and manuscripts, I explore the manner in which *Le Conte du Graal* was translated from written to visual form in the early fourteenth century; a period during which there was renewed interest in the works of Chrétien de Troyes, resulting in the most lavish medieval artistic renditions of his legends. Although the casket and manuscripts' shared era of production would appear to speak to similarities between the works in terms of iconography, artistic

influences, and methods of production, to date little research has been conducted as to the possibility of cross-medium visual and cultural connections. Through an iconographic and stylistic analysis of the scenes each artisan chose to depict within his or her respective medium, I elucidate the manner in which the casket and the manuscripts' imagery serves to personify Perceval's dual nature; a young knight who is at once symbolic of both the secular and the sacred. As visualisations of Chrétien's most religiously minded legend, these artefacts can be viewed as exemplars of the intertwining of the sacred and the secular within the realm of fourteenth-century French romantic art, specifically within the mediums of carved ivory objects and illuminated manuscripts, two materials that through their refinement, rarity, and great expense, signified leisure, luxury, and nobility. Through my examination of these four opulent objects, I provide insight into their purpose and significance in late medieval France, especially in regard to the inventive means of cultural crossover between the porous realms of sacred and secular medieval life.

Chapter Two involves a comparison of miniatures within the three selected manuscripts of the anonymous Vulgate Cycle's penultimate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*:

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3482
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 5218

Through a comprehensive one-to-one comparison of miniatures within the three selected manuscripts, I elucidate whether there was a standardised selection of *Queste* images in illuminated manuscripts produced in early to mid fourteenth-century France. More broadly, I consider the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular as depicted in what is arguably the most inherently religious of all the French Arthurian legends. By considering the overarching effect of each manuscript's pictorial cycle, as well as that of the individual images, I aim to clarify the role and importance of Christian concepts as they are visualised within the simultaneously secular and sacred *Queste*. By comparing and contrasting MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 in terms of overall visual impact, artistic style, iconography, cultural context, and contemporary reception, I strive to answer questions of the manuscripts' production and use, as well as their function as multivalent visual artefacts which

exhibit a visual union of the sacred and the secular; seemingly distant ends of a spectrum that were intrinsic elements of late medieval visual culture.

The focus of Chapter Three is a comparison of Arthurian scenes on the eight extant composite romance caskets:

> Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, Inv. 71.264
>
> Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Inv. 39.26
>
> Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 123 C.
>
> Krakow, Krakow Cathedral Treasury Casket of Queen Jadgwiga of Poland
>
> London, British Museum, 1856,0623.166
>
> London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 146-1866
>
> New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.173
>
> Paris, Musée de Cluny, Inv. 23840

Although the scenes of Galahad receiving the key to the Castle of Maidens (from the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*) and Gawain at the Castle of Marvels (from Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*) are discussed most prominently, I also consider Lancelot's crossing of the Sword Bridge (from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette),* Enya's slaying of the wodehouse (from *Le Roman d'Enyas*), and the tryst of Tristan and Isolde (from the Prose *Tristan*). Through a detailed analysis of these four scenes rendered in ivory, I contest the widely proposed theory that late medieval ivory caskets were solely tokens of love, courtship, and marriage, serving as receptacles in which women could store small trinkets and valuables. I instead posit that these caskets may have additionally and simultaneously served as moralising Christian exemplars, a role largely dependent upon their visual reception by a fourteenth-century French courtly audience, who, immersed in the Arthurian tradition, both literary and visual, would likely have been able to find within the caskets' imagery co-existing connotations of both secular and sacred love, and Christian values. Indeed, I will use the work of Paula Mae Carns as a starting point, in particular Carns' observation that when each casket's diverse imagery is viewed as a cohesive whole, it is engendered with new meanings, such that it "form[s] part of a worldview of love in which every type of lover and every form of love is present.'[82] By examining the textual background and visual iconography of the figures and

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[82] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', 84.

scenes depicted on the composite caskets, I will consider the ways in the caskets' imagery personifies both secular and Christian, physical and spiritual love.

Chapter Four, my final case study, consists of a comparison of the depiction of the Grail as seen in the *Perceval* ivory casket, and all six selected manuscripts. I concentrate on visual representations of the Grail in Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* and the anonymous Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*. As arguably the two most inherently religious Arthurian legends, I examine whether *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* are often given Christian connotations due to their depictions (or lack thereof) of the Grail. I also consider whether contemporary medieval audiences were expected to perceive the seemingly erudite connotations of Christianity so commonly attached to the Grail. This line of inquiry involves an anthropological consideration of fourteenth-century French literary and religious practices and beliefs, as well as a theoretically driven examination of the Grail's semiotic meaning, and its identity as a symbol. By comparing the visualisation (or lack thereof) of the Grail processions described in *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* across a range of manuscripts as well as a single ivory, I consider instances of change and continuity in fourteenth-century depictions of what are categorically characterised as the two most inherently religious legends within the late medieval Arthurian *oeuvre*.

Chapter Five consists of a study of medieval literacy and reading practices in relation to the use of Arthurian manuscripts in early to mid fourteenth-century France, taking the six selected manuscripts as exemplars. At the heart of this chapter is a discussion of the medieval definition of reading, and oral reading/aural reception versus silent reading. By focussing on these six manuscripts, I engage with broader issues of medieval reading and literacy, such as the oral tradition, secular reading practices, the gender of manuscript patrons and readers, the differing levels and types of medieval literacy, the multivalent role of manuscript images, and the text-image relationship. Utilising the lens provided by the six manuscripts, I build on the case studies of the previous four chapters, considering the ways in which manuscripts' physical characteristics, intended audiences, and text-image relationships shaped the way in which they would have been read and otherwise utilised by late medieval, French audiences. This chapter will thus begin to consolidate the various textual and visual, laical and religious components from which late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts are rendered. This entails considering each element as an individual part

of a unified object, an object with the capability to act within a socio-cultural matrix. Through an examination of the six specified Arthurian manuscripts, I provide broader insights into late medieval French manuscript culture, elucidating the connections between sacred and secular manuscripts, and late medieval reading practices.

In parallel to Chapter Five, Chapter Six focusses on the context and use of romance-themed ivory caskets in early to mid fourteenth-century France, taking the nine caskets as exemplars. This chapter questions whether viewing practices similar to those used for contemporaneously produced, illuminated Arthurian manuscripts could have been applied to fourteenth-century ivory romance caskets. To answer this question, I examine the multiplicity of ways in which the caskets could have been viewed by medieval audiences. In regard to the nine selected caskets, I consider the evident popularity of the composite caskets, which resulted in their repeated, almost identical creation, as well as the unique character of the *Perceval* casket, which, unlike the composite caskets, appears to have been a bespoke creation. Along this line of inquiry, I consider the identity of the patrons and owners of these expensive, luxurious items, as well as the ivories' original uses and purposes. The ways in which the carvers' knowledge of the Arthurian legends (or lack thereof) may have affected the composition, and thus connotations, of the caskets' imagery is also discussed. Finally, I analyse the caskets' role within the medieval culture of display. Underlying this chapter is thus a consideration of both medieval material culture and the culture of display, and how such ivory caskets may have functioned within it.

Chapter Seven formulates cross-medium links between the production processes of illuminated Arthurian manuscripts and carved ivories in early to mid fourteenth-century France, specifically Paris and its surrounding environs. As the final chapter of my thesis, this chapter considers all of the selected manuscripts and ivories, using them to draw connections between the collaborative production processes of Arthurian manuscripts and ivories in early to mid-fourteenth-century northern France. I consider the possibility of an overlap of visual sources used by ivory carvers and manuscripts workers, and what such an overlap may have entailed and resulted in. For example, I explore possible similarities in the collaborative production systems of manuscripts and ivories. This takes the form of a discussion of the possible roles of guilds, apprentices, and shared artistic work during the production of fourteenth-century Parisian manuscripts and ivories. Close visual analysis of the artistic styles of my selected manuscripts and ivories also assists me in

positing theories as to their manner of production. This chapter thus aims to elucidate the collaborative production processes of an as yet under-researched area of medieval studies, while also formulating links between two physically different, yet visually similar, objects of late medieval material culture.

The selected manuscripts and ivory caskets visually juxtapose the religious and profane, thereby implying the continued existence in late medieval France of both ends of the sacred-secular spectrum, as well as the grey areas in between, wherein the multivalent Arthurian legends can often be found. More broadly, these manuscripts and ivories elucidate the lack of a definitive distinction between these two seemingly dichotomous areas in fourteenth-century France. The juxtaposition of moral themes with both profane and religious figures is at the heart of the manuscripts' and caskets' visual programmes, illustrating their role as tactile, artistic commentaries on the duality of fourteenth-century French culture and society.

These physically different, yet visually similar, objects of late medieval, material culture are further connected through their shared goal of visually narrating the Arthurian romances. Through comprehensive, cross-medium visual comparisons, as well as more general examinations of fourteenth-century reading, viewing, and artistic production, I strive to address issues relevant to both late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts and ivories, such as iconography, production practices, contemporary functions, patronage, and ownership. By engaging with such issues, I elucidate how these manuscripts and ivories fit within the broader picture of fourteenth-century France, acting not only as visually focussed *objets d'art*, but also as active beings of social, cultural, religious, and even political import, conveying a multiplicity of meanings and issues, both sacred and secular, to contemporary audiences.

Chapter One

From Naïve Youth to Enlightened Knight?
Depictions of Chrétien de Troyes' Le Conte du Graal (Perceval) in Manuscript and Ivory

This chapter will explore the manner in which Chrétien de Troyes' final legend, *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*), was translated from written to visual form within two diverse mediums, manuscript illumination and ivory. The ivory casket Musée du Louvre, OA 122, and the manuscript Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12577 are two of only three extant fourteenth-century visual representations of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal,* both produced in Paris *circa* 1310-30.[83] The third and final fourteenth-century object to depict *Le Conte du Graal* is another manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1453, produced in Paris *circa* 1315-25.[84] I have chosen not to include this manuscript in this chapter's discussion both for the sake of simplicity, and also due to the overall poor preservation of the manuscript's miniatures, some of which have been badly rubbed. The imagery of MS fr. 1453 will be discussed in later chapters.[85] Although MS fr. 12577's and OA 122's shared era of production would appear to speak to similarities between the two works in terms of iconography, artistic influences, and methods of production, to date little research has been conducted as to the possibility of visual and cultural connections between the manuscript and casket. OA 122 is an uncommon piece of Gothic ivory carving; it is the only extant casket to depict the legend of Perceval, a story that seems to have rarely been depicted in any medieval artistic medium.[86] The casket's uniqueness is further enhanced by the religious imagery that adorns its lid, which acts to juxtapose the sacred and the profane, and by its identity as a non-composite casket, or a casket that illustrates one, as opposed to several, medieval legends or tropes. The composite form is more common among extant fourteenth-century ivory caskets, as personified by the group of eight caskets that depict various romantic scenes, from Arthurian legends such as *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*The Knight of the Cart*, Chrétien's tale of Lancelot), to the Siege of the Castle of Love, to the moralising tale of Aristotle and

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[83] See Appendix 1.
[84] See Appendix 1; The third *Le Conte du Graal* manuscript considered in this thesis, MS fr. 12576, was produced *circa* the late thirteenth century.
[85] See pp. 109-10, 116, 128, 139, 150, 228.
[86] Norris J. Lacy, ed*., The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (London, 1991), 250.

Phyllis.[87] The group of eight composite caskets was likely created in either the same or several collaborating Parisian workshops *circa* the first half of the fourteenth century.[88] That OA 122 depicts a single Arthurian legend, and one that is seldom illustrated, raises questions in regard to its patronage and creation. Who ordered the production of this very specific ivory casket? For whom was it intended? To what use was it put? Who or what were the artist's visual influences? Through an examination and comparison of the various scenes and the iconography that each artisan chose to depict within their respective mediums, I aim to elucidate the ways in which the imagery of both MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 serve to personify Perceval's dual nature; a young knight who is symbolic of both the secular and sacred. As visualisations of Chrétien's most religiously minded legend, MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 can be viewed as exemplars of the intertwining of the sacred and the secular within the realm of fourteenth-century French romantic art, specifically within the mediums of carved ivory objects and illuminated manuscripts, two materials that through their refinement, rarity and great expense, signified leisure, luxury, and nobility. Through my analysis of these two opulent objects, I aim to provide insight into their purpose and significance in late medieval France, especially in regard to the possibility of cultural crossover between the surprisingly porous realms of sacred and secular medieval life.

1.1 *Le Conte du Graal*

As the most innately religious of Chrétien's five Arthurian legends, and the first Arthurian legend to introduce the concept of the Holy Grail, *Le Conte du Graal* is imbued throughout with Christian symbolism. The legend tells of Perceval, a naïve young Welshman who rashly decides he desires nothing more than to be made a knight by the esteemed King Arthur. *Le Conte du Graal* describes Perceval's chivalric adventures and comic mishaps as he gains knightly acumen, if not spiritual understanding. It is only after witnessing the mysterious procession of the Grail and Bleeding Lance, but failing to question the use and meaning of both, followed by learning of his mother's death, and undergoing five years of solitary travel and hardship, that Perceval gains spiritual enlightenment. Upon speaking to a hermit on

[87] Élisabeth Antoine, 'Casket: Scenes from Romances', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France*, ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 283.
[88] See Appendix 1.

Good Friday, Perceval finally comes to comprehend the integral role religion must play in his life, if he is to truly be a model Christian knight. Indeed, Richard Barber notes that in *Le Conte du Graal*, 'religious and secular chivalry are not exclusive.'[89] Unfortunately, at this point in the story, Chrétien turns away from Perceval, to focus instead on the purely secular adventures of the gallant Sir Gawain. Due to the unfinished nature of *Le Conte du Graal*, Chrétien does not return to Perceval's adventures, and the reader is left to ponder the juxtaposition of Perceval and Gawain, the former, a bumbling youth turned pious Christian knight, and the latter, an experienced, and highly regarded knight, yet one whose exploits are of a solely secular nature. It is this marked contrast between the sacred and the profane that renders *Le Conte du Graal* such an intriguing and multivalent story. Although on a superficial level the legend appears a mere romance, at its core are medieval Christian values: the importance of piety and confession, God's forgiving nature, and the acknowledgment of and gratitude for Christ's sacrifice. The legend's light-hearted, secular exterior belies its more solemn, sacred, and even moralising, interior, which is gradually revealed to the reader as the story progresses. Such is also the case in regard to the imagery of OA 122 and MS fr. 12577, both of which juxtapose scenes of romantic love, secular chivalry, and comedy with pious Christian symbolism, allowing for a complex layering of visual understanding, albeit in two distinctly different manners, due to physical differences of material.

1.2 The Manuscript

Of the forty-five extant manuscripts and manuscript fragments containing Chrétien's Arthurian legends, fifteen include all or part of *Le Conte du Graal*. Five of these fifteen include the entirety of *Le Conte du Graal*, plus a selection of the four *Perceval* continuations, written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, within fifty years of Chrétien's completion of *Le Conte du Graal*, *circa* 1135-90.[90] Three of these five manuscripts were produced within the late thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, and

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[89] Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (New York, 1970), 111.

[90] The five extant illuminated *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts are (for full citations see Appendices 1-2): Mons, Bibliothèque publique de la ville, MS 331/206; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole de Médecine, MS H 249; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, fr. 12577; Lori Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters (Amsterdam, 1993), 332; Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven, 2001), 35.

thus are considered within this thesis: Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 1453, which includes the continuation of Gauchier de Dordan; fr. 12576, which includes the continuations of Gauchier de Dourdan, Manessier, and Gerbert de Montreuil; and fr. 12577, which also includes the continuations of Gauchier de Dordan, Manessier, and Gerbert de Montreuil. That these continuations appear to have been typically included within manuscript copies of Chrétien's *Perceval* suggests that medieval readers viewed the continuations as a natural extension to Chrétien's seemingly unfinished work, and enjoyed reading them along with *Le Conte du Graal*.[91]

Within this thesis, however, I have chosen to limit my discussion of the manuscript to Chrétien's work, the original, and most inherently religious, telling of the legend of Perceval. MS fr. 12577 is the most lavishly illuminated extant *Perceval* manuscript, containing an astounding 52 miniatures, believed to have been produced by a group of three artisans.[92] By focusing solely on Chrétien's *Perceval*, I limit the number of images I will examine, as in MS fr. 12577 *Le Conte du Graal* is accompanied by eight miniatures. The manuscript's first eight miniatures were painted by one of three artisans, possibly Richard de Montbason, as will be discussed later.[93] Only six of these illuminations depict Perceval. The remaining two miniatures depict the adventures of Sir Gawain, whose story parallels, or provides an *entrelacement* to, the story of Perceval. Through visual analysis of the six Perceval-themed miniatures in *Le Conte du Graal*, I aim to elucidate possible links between representations of the sacred and the profane in this most religious of secular romances. I also strive to posit theories as to the manuscript's production, patronage, and contemporary usage, especially in relation to the coeval, and visually similar, Perceval-themed ivory casket, OA 122. In addition, I will touch upon the two objects' creation in Paris. Although Paris was the recognised centre of production for high quality manuscripts and ivory carvings in the late thirteenth and early to mid-fourteenth centuries, the creation of Arthurian manuscripts in late medieval Paris is unusual, as overall, the Arthurian romances were more popular, and therefore more

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[91] Ibid, 10.

[92] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 40; Leah Tether, *The Continuations of Chrétien's Perceval: Content and Construction, Extension and Ending* (Cambridge, 2012), 45.

[93] See p. 38.

commonly produced, in Northern France and Flanders.[94] Relatedly, it is rare to come across a fourteenth-century manuscript of Chrétien's work, as by the late Middle Ages, the popularity of Arthurian legends had in general been transferred from Chrétien's late twelfth-century verse poems to the thirteenth-century, anonymous prose Vulgate Cycle.[95] The Parisian creation of MS fr. 12577 thus suggests questions of its patronage and use. Who, in early fourteenth-century Paris, would have commissioned an illuminated manuscript devoted entirely to the legend of Perceval, an Arthurian legend established by a twelfth-century court poet? MS fr. 12577's and OA 122's shared identity as overtly secular, romantic objects also raise more general questions in regard to their creation and purpose. What can the Parisian production of these two materially different, yet visually similar, luxury objects impart about courtly culture in early fourteenth-century Paris, a time of great political and social upheaval for the nobility, the likely owners of two such luxurious objects?

1.3 The Miniatures of MS fr. 12577

By considering the division of miniatures within MS fr. 12577's telling of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, it can be surmised that the illuminator decided that the Perceval thread of the legend was more important than the Gawain thread. Of the eight miniatures that illustrate *Le Conte du Graal*, six depict episodes of Perceval, leaving a mere two to illustrate the adventures of Gawain. This decision can thus be viewed as elevating the role and status of Perceval, while debasing that of Gawain. This is a seemingly intentional, although perhaps surprising effect, considering both the seniority and respect that is traditionally awarded Gawain, one of the best known knights of King Arthur's Round Table.[96] L. T. Topsfield provides an explanation for this reversal of knightly status in *Le Conte du Graal*, noting that Gawain's purely secular, rather than spiritual, chivalry and adventures 'reflect the triviality of worldly fame, the quest for *vaine glore,* the sin of violence which can only be 'redressed' by further violence, the topsy-turvy quality of a world which is controlled by self-

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[94] Robert L. McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library' *Speculum* 38.4 (1963): 593.
[95] Alison Stones, 'Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art', *Oxford Art Online*, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2089125, accessed 2 October, 2014.
[96] Thomas Hinton, *The Conte du Graal Cycle: Chrétien du Troyes' Perceval, the Continuations, and French Northurian Romance* (Cambridge, 2012), 101.

interest', characteristics that aptly describe the overwhelmingly corrupt status of knighthood in fourteenth-century France.[97] It is fitting, therefore, that within this most religious of Chrétien's five Arthurian poems, Perceval, as the more spiritually minded knight, is awarded the place of greater visual prominence within the manuscript. Furthermore, in choosing to focus the majority of his miniatures on Perceval rather than Gawain, the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 was ostensibly able to influence the reader's comprehension of the legend, directing his or her attention towards the story's inherent religious connotations. This is further evidenced through the specific textual episodes that the illuminator chose to render in visual form. As noted by Thomas Hinton, 'Through the selection of content, they [the miniatures] create a supplementary narrative which mediates the reader's experience of the diegesis.'[98] The illuminator of MS fr. 12577 supervises the reader's visual encounter of the manuscript through his selection and rendering of *Le Conte du Graal*'s most religiously imbued scenes and characters.

1.4 The Frontispiece of MS fr. 12577

The frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6) is largely taken up by a double miniature, the largest image in the manuscript, leaving room for a mere eight lines of text. The two registers of the miniature illustrate four connected scenes from the beginning of *Le Conte du Graal*, in effect creating a four-square pattern delineated by the alternating blue and red borders that enclose the scenes. The first scene, at the top left, depicts Perceval waving farewell to his mother as he sets out for a day of hunting. This introductory image of Perceval is key, as it exemplifies Perceval's Welsh lineage (he wears a red garment with a peaked cap) and rustic, simplistic, upbringing (he carries javelins, as opposed to the more knightly and sophisticated sword and lance), two integral characteristics of Perceval that the legend will soon question and alter. The next scene, on the upper right of the folio, depicts Perceval kneeling in veneration before a group of five knights, as in his ignorance he mistakes them for angels, the first hint of the legend's religious undertone. Despite the evident care the artist took in terms of figural details, such as facial expressions, there is a lack of general continuity within these first two scenes, as Perceval's horse is first painted black, as he sets out

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[97] L.T. Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances* (Cambridge, 1981), 225.

[98] Hinton, *The Conte du Graal Cycle*, 103.

from home, and then white, as he encounters the knights. It is possible that this was a deliberate artistic decision, the differing colours of Perceval's steed serving as a means by which to differentiate the two scenes. Certainly, few visual cues are provided to alert the reader to the separation of the left and right sides of the miniature, apart from the repetition of Perceval and the changing colour of the border.

In the lower register, the left-hand image illustrates Perceval setting out for King Arthur's court, the place where, as Perceval understands it they '[make] men knights.'[99] Here the illuminator rather awkwardly depicts Perceval's mother in the midst of a faint, her arms outstretched as she falls to the ground, already pining for her departing son. This is a defining moment in the story, as it is with his departure that Perceval first sins; his mother dies of grief for her absent son, an event that reverberates throughout the entirety of the legend, for, as noted by Walters, 'The sorrow Perceval caused his mother, resulting in her death, is at the root of all his subsequent misfortunes.'[100] This introductory image can thus be seen to foreshadow events to come, creating a roadmap for the reader through its visual accentuation of key moments within *Le Conte du Graal*. Within the third image there is yet again a lack of consistency, for although it remains architecturally the same, the colour of Perceval's childhood home is here a grey blue, as opposed to the light purple in which it is rendered above. Is this once again an attempt by the illuminator to exemplify the progression of the scenes, or the passage of time? This question is further complicated by the fourth and final scene, which, once again, is subtly shown as separate from the previous scene by the change of border colour. In this last scene, the colour of Perceval's horse changes for a third time, once again leading to the question of whether this was a deliberate tool of visual transition used by the illuminator, or merely a lack of care.

Although, as noted by Roger Loomis, it appears that the illuminator was unfamiliar with the text, a fact that appears to have hampered his illustration of the legend (as further exemplified in the orange, rather than red, clothing and arms of the Red Knight), it seems more likely that the changing colour of Perceval's horse was a rather crude attempt at signifying narrative progression.[101] Technically speaking, had

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[99] de Troyes, 'Perceval: The Story of the Grail', 387.
[100] Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', 336.
[101] Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 101.

the illuminator painted the two overlapping images of Perceval's steed the same colour, it would have been difficult to visually read the two animals as separate entities. Furthermore, the illuminator has taken care to repeatedly depict Perceval in his signature red Welsh garment, which speaks to a certain level of exactness employed for visual continuity. In addition, Perceval is shown killing the Red Knight with a lance, rather than the javelin originally described by Chrétien. Although a javelin and lance exhibit a similar, spear-like appearance, the two weapons differ in regard to their use. Whereas a lance is held while being used, usually while the combatant is astride a horse, a javelin is thrown. Rather than reading this as yet another example of the illuminator's ignorance of the text, Hinton interprets this discontinuity of weapons as symbolic of Perceval's great desire to become a knight, a 'transformative' episode that serves as the catalyst for all events to come, ostensibly leading to Perceval's fateful encounter with the Grail and Bleeding Lance, two objects evocative of items associated with the Crucifixion, the lance that pierced Christ's side, and the cup that Joseph of Arimathea, father of Josephus, used to collect his blood, as referenced in the Vulgate *L'Estoire del saint Graal*.[102] I would like to take Hinton's interpretation a step further, and posit that this image can, like that of Perceval's dying mother, be seen to foreshadow events to come; specifically Perceval's dubbing as a knight, as well as his future successful knightly combats.[103] Throughout *Le Conte du Graal*, Perceval defeats a series of base knights whom he then sends in disgrace to King Arthur's court, thereby promoting his knightly prowess. A similar hypothesis is raised by Lori Walters in regard to the late thirteenth-century manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12576. Walters comments that MS fr. 12576's frontispiece miniature (Fig. 115), which is almost identical in iconography to that of MS fr. 12577, and may, therefore, have served as a model for the illumination of MS fr. 12577, introduces themes integral to the romance as a whole, namely Perceval's '*niceté*', his future successful knightly conquests, and his search for the Grail.[104]

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[102] Norris J. Lacy, ed. *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The History of the Holy Grail*, Vol. 1, trans. by Carol J. Chase (Cambridge, 2010): 16-17.
[103] Ibid, 103.
[104] Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', 335.

My theory of the intentionality and significance of the illuminator's seemingly incorrect iconography is lent further credence when the corresponding scene on OA 122 is examined. The front left half of the casket (Fig. 5) similarly depicts Perceval's battle against the Red Knight, and again depicts Perceval wielding a lance as opposed to a javelin. The repetition of this supposed visual mistake in two different artistic mediums from the same time period lends credence to the possibility that the swapping of a lance for the textually specified javelin was, in fact, intended, and furthermore, may conceal a deeper meaning. Another possibility is that any established iconography of *Le Conte du Graal*, such as Perceval's battle with the Red Knight, circulated independently of the text, thus allowing for the unconscious repetition of certain textually inaccurate tropes, like Perceval's use of a lance rather than a javelin. This would suggest the cross-medium sharing of visual references between manuscript and ivory artisans, a topic that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.[105]

Based on a thorough examination of the miniatures that illuminate the frontispiece of MS fr. 12577, it thus seems appropriate to characterise the manuscript's first illuminator as an artisan who, although relatively skilled, was unfamiliar with the text, and was likely reliant on a combination of previously produced visual references, artistic creativity, and possibly the rubrics that accompany the illuminations. The text rubricated in red above or below each miniature narrates the depicted scene, and, having been written in prior to the illumination of the manuscript, could have served as a textual aid to artists who were literate, yet unfamiliar with the text as a whole. Indeed, the content of the rubrics of MS fr. 12577 matches the scenes depicted. These rubrics do not, however, preclude the use of artistic invention. Keith Busy characterises the inconsistencies between the text and images within MS fr. 12577 not as idle mistakes, but as products of the illuminator's artistic license, describing the manuscript's miniatures as 'some of the most ambitious, detailed, and successful of all late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Perceval illustrations.'[106] Whether such visual decisions as Perceval's use of a lance rather than a javelin can be seen to have a symbolic connotation would likely have been dependent on the specific viewers, and their varying levels of Christian devotion, and textual and iconographic knowledge.

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[105] See pp. 226-29.
[106] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', 363.

According to Alison Stones and Lori Walters, the layout of MS fr. 12577's frontispiece is typical for secular books of the early fourteenth century, as by *circa* 1300 it was an established practice to illuminate the opening page of secular manuscripts with either a series of several related miniatures, or one large miniature divided into compartments, as seen in MS fr. 12577.[107] Stones further notes that the division of a single large introductory miniature into multiple registers, such as is found on folio 1r of MS fr. 12577, is an artistic decision likely derived from the decoration of psalters, in which full page miniatures were often sub-divided into individual scenes.[108] If Stones' hypothesis is correct, it serves to emphasise the links in the production of religious and secular manuscripts, illustrating one of a multiplicity of ways in which the creation of sacred and profane artistic objects in the late Middle Ages elucidates the marrying of two seemingly dichotomous ends of a spectrum. From surviving documentation such as tax records and town plans, it is known that the various craftsmen involved in the production of manuscripts, including scribes, illuminators, parchment makers, book dealers, and book binders, often had their workshops located on the same or neighbouring streets, regardless of whether the manuscripts produced were sacred or secular in nature.[109] For example, there is evidence that manuscript illuminators of vernacular romances such as *Le Conte du Graal* also illuminated religious texts.[110] Although the illuminator of the rendition of *Le Conte du Graal* in MS fr. 12577 is not definitively known, the illuminations bear a distinct resemblance to those found in manuscripts produced in part by the artisan Richard de Montbason, a known *libraire* and illuminator, who worked in mid-fourteenth-century Paris on the Rue neuve Notre Dame, the heart of manuscript production in late medieval Paris.[111] Richard de Montbason took the oath of booksellers in 1338, and is believed to have been involved in the production of several manuscript copies of *Le Roman de la Rose*, such as Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.6., produced in Paris *circa* 1330-40, which exhibits

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[107] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', in *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism,* ed. by C. Kleinhenz (Chapel Hill, 1977), 93; Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', 332.

[108] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 94.

[109] Stones, 'Sacred and Profane Art: Secular and Liturgical Book Illumination in the Thirteenth Century' in *The Epic in Medieval Society, Aesthetic and Moral Values*, ed. by Harold Scholler (Tübingen, 1977), 104.

[110] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 90.

[111] Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. 1*, 262.

illuminations of a similar artistic style to that of MS fr. 12577's *Le Conte du Graal*.[112] That Richard is recorded as *libraire* in the colophon of a manuscript containing *La Legende des Sains*, or the *Lives of the Saints* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 241), whose illuminations are again stylistically similar to those of MS fr. 12577, suggests that he was variously involved in the production of both sacred and secular manuscripts.[113] Certainly, *libraire* was a rather ambiguous role that likely consisted of both the selling of manuscripts and management of their production. *Libraires* could also serve as go-betweens for the patron and manuscript workshop.[114] Similarly, as will be discussed later in regard to the depiction of the Grail feast at the Castle of the Fisher King, the translation of religious iconography to secular images further speaks to the close ties, or as Stones terms it, 'cross-fertilisation', between sacred and secular book production.[115]

1.5 The Perceval Casket

Meanwhile, the iconography of OA 122 is unique in terms of its visualisation of the sacred and the secular. Unlike the illuminations of MS fr. 12577, in which the sacred and secular inhabit shared spaces, existing alongside one another so that there is no clear distinction between the two realms, the ivory casket depicts the sacred and profane in clearly separate spheres. Whereas the lid of the casket is decorated with images of Saints Christopher, Martin, George, and Eustace (Fig. 1) as will be discussed next, the sides of the casket (Figs. 2-5) depict the inherently laical aspects of *Le Conte du Graal*. Neither the spiritually imbued episode of the Grail and Bleeding Lance, nor Perceval's religious epiphany in the forest, is shown. This simultaneous separation and juxtaposition of the sacred and profane on the casket's panels is intriguing, especially when compared to the more integrated sacred and secular imagery found in MS fr. 12577. Early fourteenth-century Paris was the

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[112] See Appendix 2; Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. 1*, 262; '*Le Roman de la Rose* (MS Gg.4.6)', University of Cambridge Digital Library, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-GG-00004-00006/17, accessed 30 March 2017.

[113] See Appendix 2.

[114] Stones, 'The Illustrations of the French Prose Lancelot in Belgium, Flanders, and Paris 1250-1340', thesis (London, 1971), 88; Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, *Illiterati et Uxorati: Manuscripts and Their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200-1500* (Turnhout, 2000), 14.

[115] Stones, 'Sacred and Profane Art: Secular and Liturgical Book Illumination in the Thirteenth Century', 109.

recognised centre of high quality Gothic ivory carving, an artistic technique that
Joseph Natanson notes usually resulted in pleasing, romantically inclined objects, in
which although the sacred and the secular were often intertwined, the overall focus
was on romantic chivalry and courtly culture.[116] Considering that lavishly illuminated
manuscripts were produced within the same time period and location as Gothic
ivories, and quite probably utilised some of the same visual references, the dichotomy
of tone between OA 122 and MS fr. 12577 is intriguing, especially considering that
both objects depict the same, rarely illustrated legend.

Indeed, it seems possible that the casket was meant to be viewed from the lid
down, so that viewers would first ponder the obvious Christian iconography of the
saints, giving precedence to the religious imagery, and then apply this knowledge to
the images of Perceval, thereby creating an 'interactive' picture of Christian, and
perhaps even Arthurian, knighthood. Considering the religious significance of each
saint, it can be surmised that the viewer was expected to draw connections between
Christopher's unknowing aid of the infant Christ, Martin's generosity towards a
mysterious beggar, George's chivalry, and Eustace's newfound piety.[117] All four of
these saintly virtues can be applied to the legend of Perceval specifically, and to the
concept of Christian knighthood more generally. For example, for a viewer familiar
with the text of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, Christopher's unknowing, grudging aid
of the infant Christ recalls Perceval's naïve and self-serving defeat of the Red Knight,
which inadvertently aids King Arthur. Perceval covets the Red Knight's fashionable
armour and, in keeping with his youthful naiveté, slays the Red Knight with a javelin
when the knight refuses to cede his armour to Perceval. Coincidentally, the Red
Knight is one of King Arthur's greatest foes, and has stolen the King's prized goblet.
By killing the Red Knight to aid his own selfish cause, Perceval makes it possible for
Arthur's cup to be returned, placing the King in his debt.[118] Meanwhile, Martin's
generosity and George's chivalry underscore two important tenets of knighthood:
boundless aid and unfailing courage. Finally, Eustace's vision of Christ's head
between the antlers of a stag can be seen to refer specifically to Perceval's dramatic

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[116] Joseph Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1951), 12.

[117] Antoine, 'Casket: Four Saints and the Story of Perceval', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France*, 288.

[118] Chrétien de Troyes, 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991), 394-6.

conversion and confession on Good Friday, and more generally, to the importance of Christian, as opposed to irreligious, knighthood.[119] Thus, both viewers with and without specific knowledge of *Le Conte du Graal* would have been able to draw connections between the religious imagery of the casket's lid, and the more secular imagery of the four side panels. Whether ruminating on Perceval's Christian progression, or more generally on the strains of Christianity inherent within medieval chivalry, contemporary viewers would likely not have found the juxtaposition of Christian saints and Arthurian knight to be at odds with one another. Indeed, although the images of the saints may appear exclusively sacred, they can in fact be seen to exemplify the subtle interweaving of the sacred and the secular within the casket's imagery, in addition to personifying the lack of a definitive boundary between the sacred and secular within late medieval art and culture. Although the carvings on the lid of OA 122 are stylistically different from those on the casket's side panels, the lack of standardisation among Gothic ivory caskets as a whole, and the corresponding dimensions of the lid and side panels of OA 122 specifically, suggest that the lid was indeed original to the casket, and was not added as a later addition. This lends credence to the conscious visual intertwining of the sacred and secular within a single object of late medieval visual culture.

According to Keith Busby, it is likely that the scenes selected for illustration in ivory were chosen merely for their decorative effect and popularity.[120] Although Busby's theory is lent credence by the repetitive imagery found on the aforementioned group of eight composite caskets, the inclusion of religious as well as profane imagery on OA 122 suggests that this particular casket's imagery was chosen for reasons specific to its context and patron. Taking the casket's knightly imagery into consideration, it seems possible that the casket was originally created for a young man. Although scholars such as Richard Randall Jr., Martine Meuwese, and Jeanne Fox-Friedman have routinely, and without clear evidence, suggested that ivory caskets were typically used by noblewomen as objects in which to store small trinkets and jewellery, OA 122's subtle emphasis on the inherently Christian nature of medieval knighthood suggests a young male owner, to whom the legend of Perceval

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[119] Ibid, 460-1.
[120] Keith Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1.*, 361.

may have had special significance.[121] Notwithstanding that by the early fourteenth century the golden age of simultaneously secular and sacred chivalry was a distant memory, the casket's imagery likely still served a dual purpose, serving both as a form of visual pleasure; an escape from the current political and social troubles of fourteenth-century France, as well as acting as a reminder of the importance of living a moral life in which Christianity played a key role. The possible male ownership of the casket is further supported by OA 122's lack of courtly scenes. Whereas caskets similar in terms of time and place of production, such as the group of eight composite caskets, commonly included romantic scenes such as Gawain receiving the key to the Castle of Maidens, the Siege of the Castle of Love, and Tristan and Isolde's 'tryst beneath the tree', all of which can be understood to have, among other interpretations (to be discussed in Chapter Six), feminine appeal and connotations of courtly love, OA 122 includes no such romantic scenes, focussing instead on male-centred images of combat and knighthood.[122] For example, scenes of Perceval's romantic love interest, Blanchefleur, are conspicuously absent, lending credence to the theory that the casket's original owner was a young nobleman.

1.6 MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 Compared

Due to the explicit juxtaposition of the casket's sacred and secular imagery, it can be argued that the viewing of OA 122 was a more active process than the viewing of images in MS fr. 12577. Whereas in the manuscript the scenes selected for illumination include Perceval's witnessing of the procession of the Grail and Lance, and his conversation with the hermit, scenes in which the sacred and secular are inherently interwoven, the clear distinction between the religious scenes on the casket's lid, and the secular, romantic scenes that adorn its side panels requires a greater effort on the part of the viewer, calling for complex connections to be made between the physically disconnected sacred and secular images. Such connections must be made if the viewer is to fully understand the subtleties of the casket's iconographic meaning. It is further interesting to note the overall tone of the selected

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[121] Richard H. Randall, Jr., 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory' in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 65; Martine Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', in *Arthurian Literature XXV*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Cambridge, 2008), 119; Jeanne Fox-Friedman, 'King Arthur in Art', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (New York, 2009), 389.
[122] See pp. 201-4; Ibid, 68.

images. Whereas the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 chose to illustrate scenes that highlight Perceval's path to piety and Christian enlightenment, such as the episodes of the Grail and Bleeding Lance, and Perceval's conversation with the hermit, the maker of OA 122 chose scenes of a more light-hearted, comic nature, forgoing scenes of obvious religious connotation. Although OA 122 and MS fr. 12577 share foundational scenes such as Perceval's formative encounter with five Arthurian knights (Figs. 3 and 6), his departure from home (Figs. 4 and 6), and his battle against the Red Knight (Figs. 5-6), the two objects differ in their respective inclusion and exclusion of Perceval's more humorous adventures. The first half of *Le Conte du Graal* is rife with comic descriptions of Perceval's ignorance, such as his bumbling harassment of a young maiden, and lack of any knightly knowledge or prowess. None of these episodes, however, are depicted in MS fr. 12577. Instead, the illuminator's only reference to Perceval's simplicity is the hooded garment he is first shown wearing, a symbol of his Welsh, and, according to Chrétien, therefore coarse, upbringing.[123]

Despite MS fr. 12577's and OA 122's almost identical imagery of Perceval fighting the Red Knight, the manuscript and ivory differ in the scene that each artisan chose to depict next. Whereas in MS fr. 12577, a miniature does not appear again until folio 13r (Fig. 7) where the illuminator depicts Perceval's battle against Guingueron (the seneschal who is holding his love-interest Blanchefleur, and her people, captive), the carver of OA 122, meanwhile, chooses to linger over the vanquishing of the Red Knight, using the right side of the casket's front panel to illustrate (from left to right) Perceval's unsuccessful attempt to remove the slain Red Knight's armour, followed by the depiction of Yvonet assisting Perceval in donning the armour, illustrating Perceval's lack of knightly qualities at this early point in the narrative, and his desire to present himself as an Arthurian knight.[124] Both of these images have an air of the absurd, due to Perceval's awkward stance as he tugs at the fallen knight's armour, his passivity as he is dressed by Yvonet, and the carver's pointed inclusion of his Welsh hood, symbolic of Perceval's '*niceté*', as coined by Lori Walters.[125] In Chrétien's telling of *Le Conte du Graal*, this is a comical scene in which Perceval once again displays his lack of maturity and sophistication; he is

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[123] Ibid, 387.

[124] Alexandre Micha, *La Tradition manuscrite des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (Genève, 1966), 48.

[125] Walters, 'The Use of Multi-Compartment Opening Miniatures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes', 335.

dogmatic in his desire to wear the Red Knight's armour, yet refuses to part with his crude Welsh garments, failing to understand that the armour is of a much higher quality. The comic aspect of the situation is evident in the carving, Perceval's Welsh cap rendering him yet again as an almost jester-like figure, while the awkward manner in which he stands over the fallen Red Knight, struggling to remove his armour, adds to the ridiculous nature of the situation.

Another scene of Perceval's boorishness is depicted on the rear panel of the casket, where the carver illustrates Perceval (again wearing his Welsh cap, as this episode is prior to his battle with the Red Knight and attainment of arms) kissing the reluctant maiden (Fig. 4), thereby reinforcing the simultaneously secular and comic nature of the scenes on the casket's side panels. It is a sign of Perceval's childish nature that his encounter with the maiden at the beginning of the legend is of an almost entirely non-sexual nature; he ignorantly believes that kissing a maiden, even when it is against her will, is a required social grace. Therefore, the inclusion of this scene on the casket provides a form of comic relief for the viewer, especially when juxtaposed with the weighty iconography of the four saints found on the lid. However, it can also be argued that this scene more negatively renders Perceval a character not to be taken seriously; the inclusion of his Welsh hood in conjunction with his crude actions toward the maiden act only to increase his buffoon-like appearance, rendering the casket's Arthurian scenes more a form of decorative banter, than moralising visual tropes. A final scene that illustrates Perceval's naiveté is found on the right end panel of the casket (Fig. 2). Here the carver depicts Perceval's arrival at King Arthur's court, where the young Welshman interrupts a courtly feast by riding straight into the hall and refusing to dismount. On this panel the carver also makes creative use of the background, choosing to include the reluctant maiden's subsequent abuse by her lover after Perceval forces himself upon her. The inclusion of this scene increases the complexity of the panel's imagery as it successfully renders two separate yet simultaneous scenes, while also foreshadowing events to come; later in the legend, Perceval again meets the maiden, and is able to free her from the unfair punishment her lover has sentenced her to. In so doing, Perceval absolves himself of his earlier sin against the maiden, illustrating the progress he has made towards becoming a conscientious Christian knight.

In contrast, the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 has chosen to pass over these scenes entirely, focusing solely on the religious, chivalric aspects of *Le Conte du*

Graal. By so doing, the illuminator essentially portrays Perceval in a more positive, laudatory light. It is important to consider what each artist's selected scenes say about his (or his patron's) interpretation of the legend. Considering that the images in both mediums draw the reader's attention to a select few scenes out of some 9,000 lines of verse, it must be remembered that these scenes would likely have been the most easily recalled parts of the legend for the audiences of both the manuscript and the casket. Hence, MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 can be seen to be in agreement in regard to the importance of the introductory scenes (those that are illustrated on the frontispiece of MS fr. 12577), but differing in regard to their varying depictions of the sober and religious versus comic and secular aspects of the legend. This is in accordance with Busby's observation that medieval images of *Le Conte du Graal*, unlike those of other texts, both sacred and secular, cannot be observed to have a 'standard programme of illustration.'[126] It is possible that this lack of artistic canon is due to the legend's overall lack of popularity. Although the extant manuscripts and ivories that depict *Le Conte du Graal* are of generally high artistic quality, Chrétien's final legend was never one of the most popular Arthurian tales, especially in fourteenth-century France, when the prose Vulgate Cycle held sway.

The difference in selected scenes between MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 suggests a dichotomy between the visual references that were used by each artisan. Élisabeth Antoine suggests that the carver of the casket worked directly from the text, translating the textual to the visual, as opposed to referring to previously created visualisations of *Le Conte du Graal*, such as the illuminations within previously produced manuscripts, like the aforementioned late thirteenth-century MS fr. 12576.[127] However, as discussed earlier, the carver's decision to depict Perceval wielding a lance instead of the textually specified javelin suggests that the carver was not familiar with the text, and used a visual model, possibly even MS fr. 12577, that included this textually incorrect detail. That OA 122 and MS fr. 12577 have both been dated to *circa* 1310-30 renders it difficult to know which, if either, visualisation of *Le Conte du Graal* served as a reference for the other. Conversely, Loomis suggests that the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 was unfamiliar with the text, relying on suggestions within the marginal rubrics to guide his work.[128] Loomis' hypothesis is supported by

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[126] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', 356.

[127] Antoine, 'Casket: *Four Saints and the Story of Perceval*', 288.

[128] Micha, *La Tradition manuscrite des romans de Chrétien de Troyes*, 193.

the fact that MS fr. 12577's red rubrics, which describe the scenes depicted in the corresponding miniatures located above or below the rubrics, were likely completed prior to the manuscript's illumination, as was customary within late medieval French manuscript production. Alexandre Micha expresses a similar opinion, noting that the illuminator's visual translations appear to defy all aspects of logic within the text, beyond the replacement of javelin with lance in the introductory miniature. For example, the scene of the presentation of the Grail is recognisable as a standard feast scene, due in part to the incorrect appearance of a queen as well as a king. Loomis also notes the textually incorrect form of the Grail.[129] Whereas Chrétien describes it as a serving dish, or *escuelle*, the illuminator has depicted it as a ciborium adorned with a cross.[130] Although in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* the Grail is described as a serving dish, the next legend to take up the story, the early thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle's penultimate *La Queste del Saint Graal*, envisions it as the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper and which later held his blood during the Passion sequence.[131] It was this retelling of the Grail legend that acted to cement the connection between Chrétien's mysterious and ill-defined Grail, and the better known mythical and inherently Christian symbol. Considering the widespread popularity of the Vulgate Cycle, it seems possible that the Vulgate *La Queste del Saint Graal* could have influenced the illumination of MS fr. 12577, whether through the wishes of the patron, who was likely familiar with the Vulgate Cycle, transmitted to the illuminator, or as a direct result of the illuminator's own knowledge.

1.7 The Grail in MS fr. 12577

The next miniature in MS fr. 12577 appears on folio 18v (Fig. 8), and in accordance with the eulogistic and religious overtones of the manuscript's miniatures, bypasses scenes of Perceval's often bumbling, early knightly adventures to focus instead on his mysterious experiences at the Castle of the Fisher King. Like the previous illuminations, the importance of the miniature is signified by its large size: it fills the entire bottom quarter of the page, and is the width of the two columns of text combined. The large scale of MS fr. 12577's miniatures speaks to the manuscript's

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[129] Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 101.

[130] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance* (Redwood City, 1960), 6.

[131] Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, 16.

luxury and expense; two-column wide miniatures are unusual within fourteenth-century Arthurian manuscripts, appearing only in a select few of the most lavish extant manuscripts, such as New York, Morgan Library, MS Morgan 805, *circa* 1315, and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, *circa* 1351.[132] According to Muriel Whitaker, this layout appears to date to *circa* 1274, the supposed production year of Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 342, an extravagant manuscript in which 95 miniatures span the two columns of text.[133] Also similar to the previous miniatures, here again the changing colours of the red and blue border signify the scene's left to right progression, from Perceval's arrival at the Castle of the Fisher King, to his witnessing of the procession of the Holy Grail and Bleeding Lance. A left to right narrative progression can also be inferred from the imagery depicted on the lid of OA 122, providing another parallel between the imagery of the Perceval manuscript and ivory casket. As discussed earlier, the four saints' legends progress in theme from grudging aid to willing Christian devotion, mirroring Perceval's evolution from selfish youth to Christian knight. According to Sandra Hindman, the clear directionality of MS fr. 12577's miniatures is characteristic of illuminated verse romances, whose miniatures are in general more narrative than those of prose romances, the images of which appear more static.[134] The castle keep at the centre of the miniature therefore serves as a transitional tool between both the chronology of the scene and the exterior and interior of the Fisher King's castle.

In this third miniature, the incongruity of the illuminator's high level of skill (the figures are carefully rendered, with attention paid to their minute facial expressions and even hair styles) and lack of familiarity with the text is evident. That the care the artist took in rendering the figures signifies MS fr. 12577's status as a luxury manuscript suggests that many of the 'incorrect' translations of the textual to the visual were in fact intentional. This theory is given further credence when it is considered that given the high price the patron undoubtedly paid for such a lavishly illustrated manuscript, it is unlikely that he or she would have accepted a work riddled with errors, whether textual or visual. Furthermore, it must be remembered that it was often common practice for the patron to oversee the production of his or her manuscript, in conjunction with the *libraire*, further increasing the possibility that

[132] See Appendices 1-2.
[133] Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, 30; See Appendix 2.
[134] Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment*, 196.

major errors would have been noticed and amended during the production process, and that inconsistencies in the translation from the textual to the visual were indeed deliberate.[135]

Certainly, the illuminator can be seen to have emphasised the religious nature of the scene through his 'incorrect' depiction of the Grail as a ciborium rather than as the serving dish described by Chrétien. It is difficult to know whether the artist's rendering of the Grail was an individual artistic decision or one prescribed by the manuscript's patron. Comparison of MS fr. 12577's Grail depiction with those of contemporaneous *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, such as MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12576 suggest that the artist's depiction of the Grail in MS fr. 12577 is unique, as neither aforementioned manuscript includes a miniature depicting the Grail scene at the Castle of the Fisher King. However, both MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12576 do similarly depict King Arthur's cup as a ciborium, allowing for a visual comparison to be drawn with the form of the Grail in MS fr. 12577. Perhaps, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, King Arthur's cup is here utilised as a means of foreshadowing Perceval's quest for the Grail, ostensibly serving as an alternative, symbolic depiction of the Grail and Perceval's future Christian enlightenment.[136] By depicting the Grail not as a dish, as described by Chrétien, but as a ciborium, finished with a gilded cross, the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 emphasises the religious connotation of the Grail, reinforcing its spiritual significance for his audience. It thus seems possible that like his 'incorrect' depiction of Perceval slaying the Red Knight with a lance as opposed to a javelin, the illuminator's depiction of the Grail is yet another example not so much of his ignorance of and lack of familiarity with the text, as thought by Loomis, but rather his use of artistic license to underscore important aspects of the legend. Regardless of the illuminator's intent, or lack thereof, the form of the Grail as depicted in MS fr. 12577 emphasises the religious undertones of the scene, illustrating that by the early fourteenth century, a definitive connection had been drawn between Chrétien's seemingly secular romance and the holiest of Christian relics, the cup from which Christ drank and the lance that pierced his side. This connection first appears in *Li Livres du Graal*, written *circa* 1191-1212 by the Burgundian knight Robert de Boron,

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[135] Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London, 1994), 176.
[136] See pp. 123, 128, 139-42.

shortly after Chrétien had penned *Le Conte du Graal*, *circa* 1135-90.[137] L. T. Topsfield, however, argues that contemporary Christian readers of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* would have instantly made the connection between the Grail and Lance and objects of the Passion, prior to Boron's writing of *Li Livres du Graal*, merely due to their religious knowledge.[138] Further examination of the iconography of the Grail scene in MS fr. 12577 seems to suggest a combination of artistic innovation and direction as well as blind copying. For example, the illuminator's reliance on a secondary visual reference, such as a model book or previously produced manuscript, is suggested by the aforementioned presence of both a king and a queen (possibly taken from the iconography of a biblical feast scene) at the ceremony, when according to Chrétien, the only observers of the procession of the Grail and Bleeding Lance were Perceval and the Fisher King.[139] This juxtaposition of unique interpretations with stereotypical religious scenes thus seems to suggest a certain degree of communication between the artist and *libraire*, the bookseller and coordinator of the manuscript's production, albeit not so much as to assure absolute textual precision of the miniatures' iconography.[140]

1.8 Christianity in MS fr. 12577 and OA 122

The next miniature to depict Perceval occurs on folio 23v (Fig. 9), and differs from MS fr. 12577's prior miniatures in its use of a well-defined separation between the left and right images. Whereas in the miniature on folio 18v (Fig. 8), the castle keep serves to subtly mediate the distinction between the two scenes in terms of chronology and locale, within 23v's miniature (Fig. 9), a geometric border definitively partitions the two scenes. At first glance, the illuminator's use of such a clear cut border seems out of place, as the two scenes depicted are closely related; on the left, the reluctant maiden and her lover make their way to King Arthur's court

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[137] Fanni Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail: The Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth Century Arthurian Prose Romance* (Manchester, 1966), 2.

[138] Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances*, 210.

[139] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 95-6.

[140] Martin Kauffman, 'Satire, Pictorial Genre, and the Illustrations in BN fr. 146', in *Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS français 146*, ed. by Margaret Bent and Andrew Wathey (Oxford, 1998), 305; Lucy F. Sandler, 'Worded and Wordless Images: Biblical Narratives in the Psalters of Humphrey de Bohun', in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout, 2013), 109.

after their second interaction with Perceval, who waves them on their way from the right-hand image. At their second encounter, Perceval comes across the maiden's lover treating her cruelly, as punishment for Perceval's kisses, which the lover believes the maiden enjoyed. Perceval vanquishes the knight, putting an end to the maiden's abuse, and orders the couple to make their way to King Arthur's court, where the knight will testify to his base treatment of the maiden.[141] Further analysis suggests that the lack of transition between the left and right images increases the complexity of the miniature. The border serves to separate the maiden and knight from Perceval, reinforcing the theme of Perceval's solitary state at this point in the legend. The border further illustrates the dichotomy between the figures by emphasising their movement in opposing directions, an artistic choice that can also be seen to speak to the spiritual differences between the two groups; the maiden's lover, who, having sinned, is sent to King Arthur's court in disgrace, and Perceval, a virginal Arthurian knight in search of Christian spirituality. The miniature thus highlights Perceval's growth since his first encounter with the maiden: from rustic youth to polished courtier, progressing towards an understanding of Christianity, and becoming worthy of engaging with sacred objects.

The final two miniatures to illustrate the Perceval strand of *Le Conte du Graal* in MS fr. 12577 continue with the theme of Perceval's spiritual journey, as seen in the previous miniature on folio 23v. These two miniatures, on folios 27r and 36r respectively (Figs. 10-11), are similar in that both take as their focus episodes which act as catalysts in Perceval's journey towards spiritual truth and understanding. In addition, as on folio 23v, both miniatures are clearly divided into two distinct sections. Once again, the use of these architecturally stylistic borders acts to more clearly delineate the scenes, reinforcing the chronological visual progression from left to right, and perhaps causing the reader to ponder the relationship between the two scenes, defining them as 'before and after', or the right-hand scene an effect of what takes place in the left-hand scene. On folio 27r, the connection between the left and right images is merely chronological, whereas within the final miniature, on folio 36r, the two scenes have a definitively causal relationship; the scene depicted on the left results in the scene depicted on the right, as will be discussed below. The miniature on folio 27r (Fig. 10) first depicts Perceval being greeted by King Arthur and Queen

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[141] de Troyes, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, 46-7.

Guinevere, the former of whom has been eager to meet him, after hearing of the young knight's impressive deeds from the vanquished knights Perceval has sent to his court. In opposition to this joyous event, the right-hand scene illustrates Perceval's encounter with the *damoiselle hideuse*, who tells him of the havoc wreaked by his failure to question the meaning of the Grail and Bleeding Lance. This encounter marks a turning point in the story, as it is upon learning of his sins that Perceval vows to undertake a quest to discover the meaning of the Grail and Lance, thereby signifying his initial transformation from young, naïve, purely secular, chivalric knight (not unlike Gawain) to increasingly morally and spiritually focussed knight. This transformation is concluded in the legend's final miniature (Fig. 11) on folio 36r, in which Perceval, after coming across a group of pious maidens on Good Friday, is directed to a hermit, to whom he confesses his sins, and as a result accepts the integral role Christianity must play in his life, thereby becoming a true Christian knight. It is thus as a *milites Christi*, or 'soldier of Christ', that Perceval is later portrayed in the penultimate legend of the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, *La Queste del saint Graal*.[142]

OA 122 is set apart from MS fr. 12577 in that it does not depict any scenes from *Le Conte du Graal* beyond the point at which Perceval vanquishes the Red Knight and seizes his armour. The complete visual dismissal of the Castle of the Fisher King and the procession of the Grail and Bleeding Lance would seem to suggest an overall secular connotation for the casket, were it not for the inclusion of the four saints on its lid. What factors contributed to the carver's selection of images? Is it possible that the saints take the place of the religiously connoted Fisher King, Grail, and Lance? Certainly, the secular nature of the imagery on the casket's side panels is tempered by the religious imagery that adorns its lid. Another issue to consider in relation to the casket's juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular is the level of familiarity the owner of the casket would have had with Chrétien's tale. Would the owner/viewer of the casket have drawn a connection between the four saints and Perceval's quest for knowledge of the Grail and Lance, symbolic of his striving to become a model Christian knight? As mentioned earlier, the popularity of the French Vulgate Cycle in the late Middle Ages would seem to point to the possibility that the owner of the casket would indeed have been able to make such

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[142] Fox-Friedman, 'King Arthur in Art', 387.

connections between its secular and sacred imagery. According to Joseph Natanson, the artistic style of Gothic ivories can be seen to '[reflect] the contemporary attitude of mind which took pleasure in an imaginary gentleness and chivalry, and in a religion that was mingled with legends.'[143] If this is true, then it would follow that despite the lack of religious imagery taken directly from *Le Conte du Graal*, the four saints that adorn the lid of the casket serve as a means by which to acknowledge the legend's religious underpinnings. Another possibility is that the decision not to include scenes of the Grail was an attempt by the carver to allow for a multiplicity of interpretations of the casket's imagery. By choosing to have the saints inhabit a panel and plane separate from those that depict scenes from *Le Conte du Graal*, the viewer is given the ability to choose either for or against incorporating the sacred images into his or her reading of the casket's decoration, thereby comprehending the casket as either a light-hearted, secular, chivalric romance, or as a multi-layered commentary on the Christian duties of contemporary knights. The difference in subject matter and position between the lid and side panels also suggests an inequality in regard to the visual status of the panels. The prominent visual placement of OA 122's lid, paired with its Christian subject matter posits that this panel is the most significant, or at least that it can serve as a visual 'entry point' to the casket. Similarly, the lids of the eight composite caskets, discussed in Chapters Three and Six, also act to mediate viewers' experiences of the caskets.[144] The composite caskets' lids illustrate the Siege of the Castle of Love, a scene that is at once more technically detailed than the imagery adorning the side panels, and which can also be viewed as a courtly and chivalric lens through which the caskets' remaining romance imagery can be viewed.

1.9 MS fr. 12577 and OA 122 in Fourteenth-Century France

From a twenty-first-century perspective, it is difficult to fully understand the multivalency inherent in such images. That medieval viewers of such objects were at once able to find within the juxtaposition of secular, comic images, and sombre, religious images a coherent, and at once entertaining and moralising meaning, is evidence of the complexities inherent in both the creation and viewing of medieval art. It is also evidence of the continual fusing of the sacred and secular in late

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[143] Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 12.
[144] See pp. 93, 207-8.

medieval France; a time characterised by political upheaval and marked changes in devotional practices. By the early fourteenth century, France was in the midst of a variety of changes, religious, social, and political. A variety of factors, such as a growing literacy rate, had contributed to the rise of personal devotion, illustrated by the growing popularity of personal devotional books and other objects of Christian visual culture.[145] France also underwent a major political shift, the transfer of the monarchy from Capetian to Valois rule when Philip the Fair's youngest son died childless, an event that resulted in the rule of Philip of Valois, crowned Philip VI.[146] As a result, the role and status of the French nobility underwent significant changes, as the monarchy became increasingly centralised, and acted to limit the power of land-owning nobles. This was a time of great upheaval for the French aristocracy, as their hallowed positions of political and social influence were swept from under their feet.[147] It should also be kept in mind that by the fourteenth century, the golden age of religiously connoted chivalry was long past. Although in the late fifteenth century the King of France encouraged a rebirth of chivalry, it was in the interest of the state rather than of Christianity, the higher power originally served by knightly deeds. As explained by Georges Duby, the political division of the Hundred Years War caused the loyalty and bravery inherent within a group of knights to appear as a panacea to revolt and treason; by creating an artificial need for groups of knights, the King was essentially ensuring his own political safety and success, while also appearing to aid the disconsolate nobles.[148]

In the early fourteenth century, the anonymously written Prose *Lancelot*, or Vulgate Cycle, usurped Chrétien's Arthurian legends in popularity.[149] It is therefore unusual to find extant fourteenth-century works, especially ones as luxurious as MS fr. 12577 and OA 122, that so faithfully depict Chrétien's final, and incomplete legend. The question must thus be asked, what was the appeal of *Le Conte du Graal* that resulted in its visualisation in two different artistic mediums, more than a century after its composition? One possible consideration is the extent to which contemporary audiences may have viewed the legend as relatable. Out of all the characters in

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[145] David Diringer, *The Illuminated Book: Its History and Production* (London, 1958), 260.
[146] Georges Duby, *France in the Middle Ages 987-1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc* (Oxford, 1991), 274.
[147] Ibid, 273.
[148] Ibid, 272.
[149] Huot, Sylvia, 'The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge, 2000), 74.

Chrétien's legends in particular, and the *oeuvre* of French Arthurian legends in general, it can be argued that Perceval is one of, if not the most, relatable of characters. From his humble beginnings as an ignorant youth, to his rise to both knightly and spiritual glory, Perceval consistently strives to live up to his identity as an Arthurian knight, although he often falls short, sometimes, as at the Castle of the Fisher King, with drastic consequences. It is Perceval's human nature, consistently prone to fault, yet always striving for the spiritually correct path, that can be seen to have engendered feelings of recognition and sympathy in contemporary audiences. For example, young men of the nobility may have seen something of themselves in Perceval, a youth who yearns to live a virtuous Christian life, while also enjoying secular pleasures such as female company, tournaments, and feasting. That Perceval does eventually obtain his religious goals, despite innumerable mistakes and setbacks, must have been comforting to readers who felt similarly torn between earthly pleasures and spiritual rewards. In addition, the fact that at the heart of *Le Conte du Graal* is Perceval's path to the attainment of Christian virtues imbues the legend with a moralising tone, which may also have increased its popularity.

It is further possible that Arthurian legends such as *Le Conte du Graal* appealed to early fourteenth-century members of the aristocracy and nobility because they were viewed as harkening back to the golden age of France: the thirteenth-century rule of Louis IX (1226-70), later consecrated as Saint Louis (1297), a time that although not without its own political and social troubles, was largely remembered in the next century for its great prosperity and piety.[150] Considering that by the early fourteenth century, the social and political role of the aristocracy was increasingly weakened due to the growing centralisation of the French monarchy, it is not surprising that members of this exclusive social milieu would seek to escape their daily troubles by immersing themselves in the tales of a past and at least partially mythical age in which knights were highly regarded, and the spheres of secular and sacred life were well-balanced, through dually romantically chivalric and Christian quests, such as the quest for the Holy Grail, an Arthurian concept first introduced by Chrétien in *Le Conte du Graal*.

Sandra Hindman posits a further, although rather far-reaching, possibility for the artistic renderings of *Le Conte du Graal* in the fourteenth century. Hindman notes

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[150] Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment*, 198.

that there are recognisable similarities between Perceval and Saint Louis, the last Capetian monarch, and arguably the most Christian of medieval French kings. Hindman states:

> Through his quest Perceval eventually achieves a balance between the secular and the spiritual, to become an ideal ruler who, if not canonized like Louis, is clearly divinely appointed, seated at the right hand of God in paradise.[151]

However, it must be kept in mind that Saint Louis ruled approximately a century after Chrétien penned his legends, so any similarities between the saintly ruler and legendary Christian knight would have been entirely of visual, rather than textual, conception. This theory does, however, lend credence to the possibility that both the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 and the carver of OA 122 actively took into consideration the marrying of the sacred and secular within *Le Conte du Graal* when planning their artistic work. This would help to explain the inclusion of the four saints on the lid of the casket; in addition to the fact that they can be tied to Perceval through their chivalric attributes, the saints could also be seen as exemplary of Perceval's newfound Christian faith.

Other similarities between Saint Louis and Perceval abound. For example, Saint Louis' participation in the seventh and eighth crusades, and his purchase of a fragment of the True Cross and the Crown of Thorns can be likened to Perceval's quest for an explanation of the Grail and Bleeding Lance, objects that have inherently religious connotations.[152] Hindman also goes a step further, comparing the Castle of the Fisher King to Saint Louis' Sainte Chapelle, and noting that both structures, one a secular castle, the other a sacred chapel, served as reliquaries for the aforementioned objects kept within. Hindman posits that this similarity would have been readily apparent to contemporary audiences of MS fr. 12577, reading the manuscript in the early decades after the death (1270) and canonization of Saint Louis.[153] Although the connection between the Castle of the Fisher King and the Sainte Chapelle is striking, it is perhaps a bit of a reach. Although a contemporary audience of MS fr. 12577 would undoubtedly have understood the manuscript in light of both its secular and sacred connotations, it seems unlikely that they would have drawn such a specific association. Howard Bloch posits a more general connection between the Capetian

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[151] Ibid, 190.
[152] Ibid, 189-90.
[153] Ibid, 189.

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monarchy and French Arthurian legends, noting that the overall 'constitution of the Arthurian community' recalls that of the past Capetian kingship, and of the rule of Saint Louis in particular, citing the period's centralised government, respected and beloved king, and politically and socially well-positioned nobility as similar to the fraternity of King Arthur and his Round Table, composed of aristocratic and loyal knights.[154] Similarly, medieval English kings explicitly sought to identify themselves with King Arthur, most notably Kings Henry II and Edward I, both of whom (in *circa* 1190 and 1278, respectively) visited Glastonbury, and had the supposed tomb of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere exhumed, ostensibly to confirm their burial site, and to rebury the remains in a more prominent place within the abbey.[155] The repeated re-burial of Arthur and Guinevere exemplifies the medieval English crown's fascination with the cult of Arthur, and their desire to associate the English monarchy with the Arthurian tradition. Indeed, Edward is also said to have gained possession of Arthur's crown after his conquest of the Welsh *circa* 1277-83, and in 1344 pledged to reinstate a fellowship of the Round Table.[156] Although Edward's Round Table did not come to be, his obsession with King Arthur illustrates Edward's intention of legitimising his reign through the creation of a connection with the long-dead, likely mythical English king.[157] Similarly, Stephen Knight's characterisation of Middle English romances can also be applied to those of late medieval France, further elucidating how the Arthurian legends may have functioned as a textual and visual escape for their aristocratic and noble readers:

> Romance was the non-realistic aristocratic literature of feudalism. It was non-realistic in the sense that its underlying purpose was not to help people cope in a positive way with the business of living but to transport them to a world different, idealised, nicer than their own.[158]

[154] Howard R. Bloch, 'Wasteland and Round Table: The Historical Significance of Myths of Dearth and Plenty in Old French Romance', *New Literary History* 11 (1980): 271.
[155] Antonia Grandsen, 'The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions and Legends in the Twelfth Century', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition,* ed. by James P. Carley (Cambridge, 2001), 49; John C. Parsons, 'The Second Exhumation of King Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury, 19 April 1278', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, 179; Aelred Watkin, 'The Glastonbury Legends', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, 19.
[156] James P. Carley, 'Introduction', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, 8.
[157] Parsons, 'The Second Exhumation of King Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury, 19 April 1278', 182.
[158] Stephen Knight, 'The Social Function of the Middle English Romances', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed. by David Ayers (Brighton, 1986), 100.

The ease with which readers and/or viewers would have been able to understand and follow the images must also be taken into account. For example, someone unfamiliar with the story may, solely utilising the images, assume that Perceval fights the Red Knight directly upon departing from his mother's home, when in reality, Perceval's battle is preceded by his visit to King Arthur's court, where he requests to be dubbed a knight, and is mocked by the seneschal Kay, a seemingly trivial event that has import throughout the entirety of the legend. It must be kept in mind that there was more than one way in which contemporary audiences would have interacted with both the manuscript and the casket. In regard to manuscripts, both the tradition and immense cost of illumination suggest the possibility of readers who may have chosen to engage exclusively with the images.[159] The act of reading within the Middle Ages was much more open to interpretation than it is in today's society, encompassing a variety of sub-activities, such as the use of miniatures and marginal illustrations, memorisation, performance, and even display, all of which contributed to the reader's successful comprehension and utilisation of the text, the ultimate goal of 'reading' in the late medieval period.[160] These ideas of medieval reading practices will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five. The viewing of the ivory casket can even be categorised as a form of 'reading', for like the manuscript, the ultimate goal of the viewing and pondering of such an object was to come to terms with the meaning of the images inscribed upon it. The casket can therefore be seen as an alternative, non-textual re-telling of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*. Just as the illuminator of MS fr. 12577 made decisions as to which scenes to visually emphasise, essentially altering the meaning of the legend, so did the carver of OA 122. For example, the inclusion of Saints Christopher, Martin, George, and Eustace on the lid of the casket, perhaps in lieu of the Grail scene, while preserving the legend's religious connotation, change the manner in which the legend is presented, and in so doing, emphasise the Christian nature of Perceval, rather than that of the Grail, as is arguably done within the miniature on folio 18v of MS fr. 12577 (Figs. 1 and 8).

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[159] Hinton, *The Conte du Graal Cycle,* 72.
[160] Frank H. Bäuml, 'Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Speculum* 55.2 (1980), 239.

1.10 Concluding Thoughts

The various interpretations of *Le Conte du Graal*, as visualised in the miniatures of MS fr. 12577 and the carvings of OA 122 are therefore exemplary of the wide-ranging role and definition of reading in the late Middle Ages, illuminating both the possibilities and problems inherent to the process of translation from the textual to the visual, such as the emphasis of certain scenes or aspects of the story, and the visual form that objects, such as the Grail, variously take. As has been discussed, artistic decisions such as these can be seen to have ultimately shaped the way in which the objects' fourteenth-century audiences both reacted to and envisioned the story being told, ostensibly to fit within their own distinct world-views. According to Busby, the common lack of correspondence between text and image as seen in both OA 122 and MS fr. 12577 suggests that medieval audiences strove for a general, rather than specific, understanding of stories, and so did not rely upon the close comparison of text and image in their 'reading' processes.[161]

Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* recounts Perceval's transformation from naïve youth to enlightened Christian knight. Departing his childhood home a purely secular being, as a result of his chivalric and spiritual adventures, Perceval undergoes a religious awakening, developing into a model Christian knight, personifying the union of the sacred and secular. Whereas MS fr. 12577's miniatures closely follow the textual narrative, focussing on Perceval's intrinsic humanity and Christian awakening, encouraging a religious reading of the legend, OA 122's imagery is characterised by its departure from the legend's moralising themes, engendering a more humorous, and seemingly secular, visual adaptation. However, the juxtaposition of such light-hearted scenes with the Christian saints on the casket's lid is proof of the inherent multivalency of late medieval visual culture, wherein the sacred and the secular intermingled, transcending boundaries of Christianity, iconography, and artistic medium.

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[161] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', 362.

Chapter Two

Illuminating *Queste*:
Manuscript Miniatures of the Vulgate Legend

Chapter One focussed on two visualisations of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, an Arthurian legend in which Christian undertones abound, but are never clearly defined. It is in *Le Conte du Graal* that the trope of the Holy Grail is first introduced, although Chrétien rather vaguely describes it as a *chose merveilleuse*.[162] However, later Arthurian legends, in particular the anonymous thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, expand upon the subtle religious connotations that Chrétien introduced to the Arthurian world. The penultimate Vulgate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*, is a prime example of the intertwining of chivalry and Christianity in late medieval French culture. Through an examination of three fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MSS Arsenal fr. 3482 and fr. 5218, and Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., this chapter will consider the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular as found in arguably the most inherently religious of all the French Arthurian legends.[163] By considering the overarching effect of each manuscript's pictorial cycle, as well as that of each individual image, I aim to clarify the role and importance of Christian concepts as they are visualised within *Queste*, a legend with overlapping and intertwining connotations of both the sacred and secular. In particular, I will concentrate on the characterisation of Galahad, as the most devoutly Christian of all Arthurian knights, and Lancelot, who in *Queste* serves both as a counterpoint to Galahad's purity and piety, and as an exemplar of Christian sin and forgiveness. After a brief discussion of the manuscripts' technical details, I will embark on a visual analysis of the three miniatures found in MS Arsenal 5218, discussing the images in terms of their possible visual connections to stylistically related manuscripts and ivories, as well as the images' ability to create a comprehensive visual narrative of *Queste*, one that encapsulates both the legend's religious and profane characteristics. I will next consider the images shared by MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, two manuscripts of similar date and place of production, with largely analogous

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[162] 'something wonderful'
[163] See Appendix 1.

pictorial cycles. An analysis of the similarities and differences in the iconography and artistic style of these two manuscripts' images will contribute to a discussion of the ways in which the illuminators may have endeavoured to highlight the Christian themes at the centre of *Queste*, an outwardly profane legend, yet one through which a distinct strand of Christian significance runs. The question of whether these images can function as, to borrow Lydia Kertz's phrase, 'narrative[s] in their own right', independent of the text, will be at the heart of this section, which will also introduce the theory of a specifically medieval concept of reading, most notably promulgated by Mary Carruthers, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter Five.[164] This section will also encompass the issue of artistic originality as both a boon and a bane to an overarching visual comprehension of the specified images, examining the two illuminators' varying stylistic methods when illustrating often analogous scenes.[165] An analysis of these three manuscripts would not be complete without a consideration of the images' context, both within the three codices, and more broadly, in terms of the production of late medieval French manuscripts. By comparing the differing placement of the images in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, I will assess whether the images function as more than mere 'visual breaks' within the narrative, perhaps speaking to an as yet unconsidered level of visual creativity. This comparison of the images' placement will further engage with questions of production practices and visual trends within Arthurian illumination, such as the use of historiated initials and multi-column miniatures, contributing to a discussion of what such trends can suggest about the manuscripts' cultural value and purpose. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the three manuscripts' depictions (or lack thereof) of the Grail as a tangible object. Whereas the final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218 is dedicated to a lavish visualisation of the Grail liturgy, both MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6. refrain from portraying the Grail in any form whatsoever. This disparity between the titular theme of *Queste* and its dearth of depictions speaks to a central query of this thesis, the extent to which abstract concepts of Christianity were given not only textual, but visual, explanation, and the ways in which contemporary French audiences may have reacted to these visual manifestations of the divine. By

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[164] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 2008).
[165] Lydia Kertz, 'Shadows and Reflections: Tristan and Isolde in Manuscripts and Ivory' in *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 30.2 (2014), 133.

comparing and contrasting MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 in terms of overall visual impact, artistic style, iconography, cultural context, and contemporary reception, I aim to elucidate questions of the manuscripts' production and use, as well as their function as multivalent visual artefacts which exhibit a visual union of the sacred and the secular; opposite ends of a spectrum on which all elements of medieval visual culture existed.

2.1 The Manuscripts

Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. contains the Vulgate *Lancelot propre*, *La Queste del saint Graal*, and *La Mort le Roi Artu*. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. was produced in Northern France, possibly Amiens, *circa* 1320-30. Scholars have suggested Amiens as the likely production location of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. due to both the city's status in the thirteenth century as a major centre of French manuscript production, and the work of a scribe, Ernoul d'Amiens, whose name is inscribed on folio 187v (Fig. 12).[166] MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s possible production in Amiens will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.[167] Ernoul is one of two scribes whose hand is visible in the manuscript, and the text of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. is written in double columns of sixty lines. Within this immense tome (the manuscript consists of 410 folios, each measuring 255 x 410 mm), the Vulgate *Queste* spans folios 315r-360r, and is illustrated by 14 of the manuscript's total 212 miniatures, all of which are historiated initials, the imagery appearing within the confines of the capital 'O' for '*Or dist li contes.*'[168] This is a common transitional phrase within the Vulgate Cycle, and an example of *entrelacement*, a literary technique that derives from the twelfth-century Arthurian legends of Chrétien de Troyes, and involves the interweaving of multiple narratives, allowing the anonymous *Queste* author to change the story's direction, leaving behind the adventures of one knight to elaborate on those of another. The positioning of illustrations at transitional moments within the text is common throughout Arthurian manuscripts in general. For example, the miniatures of MS

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[166] Robert L. McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library' in *Speculum* 38.4 (1963), 594; Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London, 1986), 149; Claire Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours: Shaping the Book of Hours in Thirteenth-Century Oxford* (London, 1991), 27.
[167] See pp. 229-33.
[168] 'So the story says.'

Arsenal 3482, although appearing as distinct illustrations, not historiated initials as in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., also appear at times of narrative transition. These images can thus be seen to serve as visual signposts for breaks in the text, signifying changes in the story's focus. It is worth noting that none of these three *Queste* manuscripts include rubrics used in conjunction with the images, further demarcating transitions within the text, as is seen in two of the three selected *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS 1453 and 12577, where the content of the rubrics matches closely with that of the accompanying images.

Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3482 was produced within a similar time frame as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., *circa* 1325-40, at Paris. In addition to the *Lancelot*, *Queste*, and *Mort Artu*, MS Arsenal 3482 also includes the *Estoire de Merlin*, the first text within the manuscript, as well as an incomplete telling of the *Agravain*, inserted between the *Lancelot* and *Queste*. The telling of *Queste* takes up folios 395r-539r, and is written in three columns of 50 lines. Of the 136 total miniatures within the codex, 18 illustrate *Queste*. MS Arsenal 3482 is further illuminated with small red, gold, and blue initials which appear on every folio to mark paragraph breaks, as well as what Alison Stones terms 'leaf stalks', thin, vertical borders in red and blue, with ivy and sycamore leaves, characteristic of Parisian manuscripts, emanating from each end. A 'leaf stalk' appears between the text columns on each folio illuminated with a miniature.[169]

The final manuscript to be discussed in this chapter, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 5218, is a significantly smaller volume than either MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. or MS Arsenal 3482, and as such contains solely *La Queste del saint Graal*. Like MS Arsenal 3482, MS Arsenal 5218 was also produced in Paris, although slightly later, *circa* 1351, as evidenced by the timeline of its chief illuminator, who was active between 1330-51.[170] It is believed that MS Arsenal 5218 was created by Pierart dou Tielt, the head artisan of what Lori Walters characterises as 'a very active Tournaisian workshop.'[171] The manuscript bears Pierart's colophon on folio 91v (Fig. 13):

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[169] Alison Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France' in *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism*, ed. by C. Kleinhenz (Chapel Hill, 1977), 93; Muriel Whitaker, *Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 30.
[170] Lori Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the *Queste del saint Graal*' in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 340.
[171] Ibid, 339.

Chius livres fu parescrips le nuit n[ost]re / dame en mi aoust la mil trois cens et / li. Si lescripst pierars dou tielt. Et en- / lumina et loia. Explicit li q[ue]ste del s[ainte] graal.[172]

Although Pierart is known to have illuminated many other manuscripts, MS Arsenal 5218 is unique in that it is the only known manuscript to be not only illuminated, but also written, bound, and signed by him.[173] The text of MS Arsenal 5218's *Queste* is written in double columns of 35 lines, with red, blue, and gold initials throughout. In addition to the three miniatures on folios 1r, 10r, and 88r, MS Arsenal 5218 is further illuminated by foliate borders and marginal scenes, which decorate 17 of the 106 total folios, and which, according to Lori Walters, can be seen to reinforce *Queste*'s message of sanctity over the worldly.[174] Intriguingly, the text of *Queste* in this manuscript is followed by vernacular church annals. Although the annals begin a new gathering in the manuscript, codicological and textually thematic evidence suggest that the two texts were designed to be bound together. Both texts appear to have been ruled by the same artisan, be written in Pierart's hand, and exhibit similar decoration, such as ornamental letters and border designs.[175] In addition, the annals include documentation of the life of Christ, with an entry detailing his crucifixion and resurrection, as well as Pentecost; biblical events that are referenced in and central to the narrative of *La Queste del saint Graal*.[176] The compilation of these two texts thus brings new meaning to the intertwining of the sacred and secular, as the Arthurian *Queste* and the liturgical annals are not only similar in appearance and theme, but are physically bound together.[177]

Of the approximately 200 manuscripts that contain part or all of the Vulgate *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 are the only three to have been produced in northern France in the first half of the fourteenth century, and to contain the complete *Queste* text.[178] The large number of

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[172] 'This book was brought to completion on the night of Our Lady in the middle of August 1351. Pierart dou Tielt transcribed it. And illuminated and bound it. Here ends the Quest of the Holy Grail'; Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations', 339.
[173] Ibid, 339.
[174] Ibid, 349.
[175] Ibid, 351.
[176] Ibid, 352.
[177] Ibid, 339, 351.
[178] Alison Stones, 'The Lancelot-Graal Project' in *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies: Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference*, ed. by Derek A. Pearsall (Woodbridge, 2000), 169.

generally high quality images among the manuscripts further renders them ideal subjects for a case study of early fourteenth-century French Arthurian illumination, as does their status as under-researched Arthurian manuscripts. Although Alison Stones has given thorough consideration to other *Queste* manuscripts, such as London, British Library, MS Royal 14 iii, manuscripts such as MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, which, although illustrated throughout, are of lesser artistic quality than MS Royal 14 E. iii, have yet to be considered in depth.[179] Through a detailed analysis of these three manuscripts, this chapter aims to begin to address this gap in Arthurian manuscript studies, contributing to the central goal of my thesis; to increase knowledge of the overall corpus of late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts. Indeed, as noted previously, manuscripts whose illuminations may be less perfectly rendered, or exhibit textual discrepancies, can be just as, if not more useful than, their more skilfully rendered brethren in enlightening us as to the production and dissemination of the Arthurian legends in late medieval France.[180]

2.2 MS Arsenal 5218: A Visual Analysis

The Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* opens on the Eve of Pentecost, as King Arthur and his knights sit down to an elaborate feast, a pivotal event in the legend. It is during this feast that the reader first hears of the Quest for the Grail, and is introduced to Galahad, the most Christian of Arthurian knights, and the only one worthy of experiencing the wonders of the Grail in full. Galahad's Christian perfection is both textually and visually signified by his acquisition of the shield of his Biblical ancestor Josephus (Fig. 15), which bears the heraldry of Saint George, patron saint of Christian soldiers. The Pentecostal feast can thus be viewed as an event from which all following episodes and adventures in the legend derive. However, despite the seeming importance of this introductory scene, only one of the three *Queste* manuscripts considered in this thesis includes a depiction of it. MS Arsenal 5218's first image, on folio 1r, is a two-column frontispiece (Fig. 14) reminiscent of that found in MS fr. 12577, the manuscript of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* discussed in Chapter One. In both frontispieces, there is a left to right visual progression, providing a clear narration of introductory events prior to the main body of the legend. The poorly

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[179] See Appendices 1-2.
[180]

preserved frontispiece of MS Arsenal 5218 begins with the visit of a mysterious woman to King Arthur's court on the Eve of Pentecost. The woman asks Lancelot to follow her to an unknown location to perform an unidentified task, a request that Lancelot accepts, as is illustrated by the central image, in which Lancelot departs on horseback with the woman and her squire. The rightmost image reveals the purpose of Lancelot's trip; to knight the young Galahad, Lancelot's son from his brief dalliance with Elaine of Corbenic, the daughter of King Pelles, also known as the Fisher King, as seen in MS fr. 12577. This final section of the frontispiece depicts three nuns presenting Galahad to Lancelot to be dubbed.[181] Like the frontispiece of MS fr. 12577, that of MS Arsenal 5218 utilises a repetition of figures in lieu of geometric borders to acknowledge the scene's left to right progression. Lancelot is first shown at King Arthur's court, conversing with the woman, then astride his horse, and finally, in the process of dubbing Galahad, who kneels before him. Also reminiscent of MS fr. 12577 is MS Arsenal 5218's use of architectural structures as a further means of visual division within a single miniature. Whereas in MS fr. 12577 this role is filled by Perceval's childhood home, in MS Arsenal 5218, Arthur's castle and the convent where Lancelot dubs Galahad serve as strategic 'bookends', assisting with the division of the frontispiece into three distinct chronological stages.

In a manner similar to the illuminations of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the first folio of MS Arsenal 5218 is illustrated with a historiated initial in addition to the frontispiece miniature. The initial 'A' for '*A la veille de la pentecouste…*' (Fig. 14) marks the beginning of the *Queste* narrative, and depicts Galahad presented to King Arthur's court at the Pentecostal feast, continuing the visual narrative begun in the two-column miniature above.[182] The introductory folio of MS Arsenal 5218 therefore exemplifies a visual technique that neither MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. nor Arsenal 3482 utilises, employing a progression of images to provide a succinct yet textually accurate introduction to *Queste*, thus setting the stage for the subsequent narration of the Grail Quest. Furthermore, the selection of scenes chosen for illustration within MS Arsenal 5218 can all be seen to take the ritual of mass and its role within the life of a devout Christian as a central theme. As noted by Lori Walters, 'Through his

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[181] Norris J. Lacy, ed. *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, Vol. 6, trans. by E. Jane Burns (Cambridge, 2010): 3-5.
[182] 'On the eve of Pentecost…'

selection of scenes to be illustrated and their depiction in the pictorial cycle, the planner, adapting the theme of virginity so prominent in the *Queste*, also makes a statement about the celibacy of those who celebrate the mass.'[183] According to Walters, the focus of MS Arsenal 5218's first two miniatures of Galahad suggests that it is he, a virginal knight, rather than the chivalrous yet adulterous Lancelot, who is worthy of completing the Grail Quest. As will be discussed later, the juxtaposition of Galahad's purity and Lancelot's immorality is essential to a complete understanding of the *Queste* image cycles within all three manuscripts. The opposing moral characters of Lancelot and Galahad can be interpreted as symbolic of the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, an opposition that the illuminations of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 strive to bridge through their inclusion of established Christian iconography.

The second miniature in MS Arsenal 5218, on folio 10r (Fig. 15), serves to reinforce Galahad's role as the 'Good Knight', essentially a messianic figure characterised by his total purity and piety.[184] In this miniature, the artist has depicted Galahad's arrival at the abbey where he will receive the shield of his ancestor Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea, who ostensibly collected Christ's blood at the Crucifixion in the cup which became the Holy Grail, as recounted in the first Vulgate text, *L'Estoire del saint Graal*.[185] Galahad's retrieval of the shield is predicted by its presence within the abbey, viewable to the manuscript's audience by means of a cut-away in the abbey's exterior wall, creating a voyeuristic feel for those viewing the image, and increasing the sense of reverence and divinity surrounding Galahad's taking up of the shield, symbolic of his messianic role. The Christian significance of Josephus' shield is further exemplified through its evocation of the heraldry of Saint George, patron saint of both soldiers, and Crusader knights fighting in the name of Christianity: white with a red cross, or *argent a la croix de gules*. The employment of this spiritually multivalent heraldry is prevalent throughout fourteenth-century Arthurian imagery. For example, the lid of the ivory casket Musée du Louvre, OA 122, discussed in Chapter One, includes a depiction of Saint George and the dragon, the characteristic cross prominently displayed on the trappings of George's steed.

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[183] Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations', 347.
[184] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 23.
[185] Lacy, ed. *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation, The History of the Holy Grail*, Vol. 1, trans. by Carol J. Chase (Cambridge, 2010): 16-17.

Within MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the shield appears twice, on folios 323v and 346v, serving to identify Galahad within two historiated initials (Figs. 16-17) where he would otherwise have appeared as an undefined knight. In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the shield's importance is heightened by the fact that the illuminator does not depict any other heraldry whatsoever, colouring the shields of other knights in solid hues, the focus on Galahad's shield thus emphasising his singularity.

MS Arsenal 5218's second miniature functions on several levels, serving as a visual means of narrative progression, illustrating an episode within Galahad's quest for the Grail, while also promoting Galahad's inherently Christian nature and messianic role through the display of Josephus' shield; a symbolic object that provides visual assistance for the audience, illuminating parallels between Galahad and Christ, as well as between the fictional Grail Quest and true Christian piety. As noted by Lori Walters, 'the three miniatures in the pictorial cycle [of MS Arsenal 5218] trace a quest for the divine that culminates in the revelation of holy mysteries.'[186] Through its focus on the sacred, MS Arsenal 5218's second miniature moves both the narrative and the questing knights one step closer to the 'revelation of holy mysteries', the climactic scene of *Queste*, which will be discussed later in this chapter in terms of the visualisation of the Grail as a corporeal object.

2.3 MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482: A Visual Analysis

Whereas the introductory illustration of MS Arsenal 5218 focusses on the series of events prior to the beginning of the Grail Quest, the opening illustrations of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 both jump directly into the Quest narrative. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s image cycle begins on folio 318r (Fig. 18) with a historiated initial 'O' depicting Galahad upon his arrival at a Cistercian abbey, conversing with the Arthurian knights Baudemagus and Yvain. It is at this abbey that Galahad receives his signature *argent a la croix de gules* shield. MS Arsenal 3482's first miniature, on folio 405r (Fig. 19), similarly depicts a scene related to Galahad's acquisition of the shield, illustrating the exact moment of his arrival at the abbey, where he is greeted by a Cistercian monk. The decision to begin the *Queste* section of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. with an illustration of Galahad speaking with King Baudemagus and Sir Yvain is curious, as it is not a pivotal scene in the legend, and is not illustrated in either MSS

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[186] Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations', 344.

Arsenal 3482 or Arsenal 5218. Nor is this scene illustrated in British Library, MSS Royal 14 E. iii, or Additional 10294, both similarly produced within Northern France in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and considered exemplary illuminated *Queste* manuscripts due to their plentiful and finely executed illustrations. Galahad's meeting with Baudemagus and Yvain does, however, presage his acquisition of Josephus' shield. Upon arriving at the abbey, Galahad is joyfully met by the two knights, who inform him that they are there to witness 'what we were told would be a wondrous adventure'; Galahad's procurement of a shield that has so far proved fatal to all those who attempt to use it.[187] When the context for the image of three knights conversing beneath a grove of trees is understood, it can be seen to act both as a prediction of events to come, and as an illustration of Galahad's reputation as the most spiritually worthy of knights, which for contemporary Christian audiences would likely have called to mind Biblical warriors such as Moses, David, and Joshua. In comparison to MS Arsenal 3482's introductory miniature, the pictorial organisation of which is discernable in other of the manuscript's miniatures, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s opening illustration is more individual and specific. A complete understanding of this image requires knowledge of the *Queste* text, suggesting that MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s historiated initials were meant to function in tandem with the text of the legend that they illuminate. The text-image relationship and its varying degrees of use is a theme that will be continually returned to throughout the subsequent comparisons of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s and Arsenal 3482's image cycles, so as to elicit theories of the ways in which these manuscripts may have been read by contemporary French audiences.

MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 share several common scenes, although the manner in which they are portrayed often differs. The first shared scene, the second image to illustrate *Queste* in both manuscripts, depicts the Arthurian knight Meliant stealing a crown he discovers while travelling through a forest (folios 321r and 413r respectively). Although both illuminators portray Meliant with the crown looped over his arm, approached and challenged by a mounted knight, the two images differ in regard to their backgrounds and visual flow. In MS Arsenal 3482, the artist has included an abandoned throne and lavish feast, the peculiar setting in which Meliant discovers the crown (Fig. 20). This visual choice, which adds to the image's

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[187] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 19.

specificity and uniqueness, can be seen to aid the reader's recognition of the scene, especially when compared to the corresponding image in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. (Fig. 21), where the artist has merely depicted two knights on horseback, the only defining features the lance held by the rightmost knight, and the barely visible crown slung over the arm of the leftmost. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s image of Meliant is visually akin to that found in MS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 22), a parallel that may suggest shared visual sources, or the circulation of whichever manuscript's imagery was completed first. The inclusion of this scene in at least three of the 12 total French early fourteenth-century illuminated *Queste* manuscripts also suggests a level of visual continuity among coevally produced manuscripts. This theory is lent credence by the fact that further matching miniatures can be found in not only MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, but other representative *Queste* manuscripts as well, as will be discussed later in this chapter.[188] The artist of MS Arsenal 3482 has additionally imbued the image with a sense of movement, depicting the mounted knight entering from the left, while Meliant attempts to sidle out of the image on the right, both figures crossing in front of the miniature's geometric borders, lending a sense of dynamic movement and an almost three-dimensional quality to the scene. The artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., meanwhile, has depicted his figures firmly ensconced within the historiated initial. Although other initials in the manuscript are slightly more daring in execution, with a figure daintily putting a foot outside the parameters of the 'O', the overall effect of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s illustrations is one of composure and restraint, suggesting the use of a visual model, such as a pattern book or set of comparable religious illustrations. It therefore appears that the artist of MS Arsenal 3482 took more artistic license with his illustrations, and perhaps was also more familiar with the text, allowing for the creation of more textually independent, specifically Arthurian scenes.

The next scene that MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 have in common depicts Gawain's arrival at the abbey where Galahad leaves Meliant to recuperate after the incident with the crown (folios 322v and 418v respectively). Although both manuscripts illustrate this episode, they differ in the exact moment that is depicted. The illuminator of Q.b.6. envisages Gawain's arrival at the abbey, where a monk greets him (Fig. 23). This initial is simplistic in its iconography, and again possibly

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derived from a pattern book, suggesting the illuminator's tendency to rely on visual models; the image of a knight on horseback greeted by a member of a religious order is generic enough to warrant its inclusion in a variety of texts, both secular and sacred. The illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482, on the other hand, has created a more complex image, involving a chronological progression from left to right, reminiscent of the frontispieces of both MSS Arsenal 5218 and fr. 12577 (Figs. 6, 14, and 24). On the left, a monk, who raises an arm to assist with the removal of Gawain's armour, greets Gawain. On the far right, Gawain is again depicted, divested of his armour and recognisable by his repeated pink tunic. Here he embraces a man dressed in a red robe, his brother Gaheriet. The visual complexity of this scene, in which a single figure is rendered twice to show the passage of time, is striking, as it exemplifies the high level of artistic invention that is characteristic of MS Arsenal 3482 as a whole.

The following image in both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 presents Galahad after his departure from the '*Chastel aux Pucelles*', or Castle of Maidens (folios 323v and 420v respectively), a *Queste* episode that does not appear in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, or Arsenal 5218, yet is consistently depicted on ivory caskets of the fourteenth century, as will be examined in Chapter Three.[189] This scene is, however, illustrated in MS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 25), where the miniature's composition is akin to that found on the right side panels of the British Museum, Cluny, Victoria & Albert, and Walters composite caskets (Figs. 56, 59, 61-62). It is intriguing to note the illuminators' or planners' decision not to illustrate Galahad at the Castle of Maidens in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482. It is a case, as noted by Sandra Hindman, in which the scenes that are *not* depicted are equally, if not more enlightening, than those that are.[190] As interpreted by Malcolm Godwin, Galahad's adventures at the Castle of Maidens, where he defeats seven knights so as to release the maidens under their control, is symbolic of Christ's descent into Hell. Godwin characterises the knights as the Seven Deadly Sins, and the maidens as exemplifying the souls of the pure.[191] Galahad, of course, is Christ, a metaphor that is evident throughout the entirety of *Queste*, regardless of whether we

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[189] See pp. 104-106.

[190] Sandra Hindman, 'King Arthur, His Knights, and the French Aristocracy in Picardy' in *Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*, ed. by Daniel Poirion and Nancy Freeman Regalado, Special Issue, *Yale French Studies* (New Haven, 1991): 120.

[191] Malcolm Godwin, *The Holy Grail: Its Origins, Secrets, and Meaning Revealed* (London, 1994), 120.

choose to privilege other, perhaps more radical, Christian interpretations, including Godwin's perception of the Castle of Maidens as Hell, a theory whose recognition by medieval audiences is questionable. Although it is evident that visual connections between the sacred and secular did exist, it is more likely that these connections were less explicit and more enigmatic than Godwin's personification of the Castle of Maidens would suggest. It is also likely that contemporary audiences of the Arthurian romances interacted with the images on a variety of levels, their understandings of the multivalent images dependent on factors such as their degree of familiarity with the legend, and knowledge of Christian liturgy.

Indeed, it is the ambiguity of the scenes depicted in place of the Castle of Maidens that is intriguing, and which speaks to the co-existence of multiple visual interpretations. Whereas the Castle of Maidens is an instantly recognisable scene, and can even be viewed as a key episode within *Queste*, the artists of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 chose instead to illustrate more minor, transitional scenes, neither of which are easily recognisable without an understanding of the corresponding text. The artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., for example, depicts Galahad riding through the Gaste Forest after his departure from the Castle of Maidens (Fig. 16). Although the knight in this historiated 'O' is immediately recognisable as Galahad, due to the inclusion of his shield *argent a la croix de gules*, the significance of the scene is less evident. The image of a knight on horseback is a common visual trope, and as such, was likely copied from a model book or other manuscript, just as the earlier image of Gawain greeted by a monk may have been. This second rather routine image in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. can thus be seen to function as a sort of 'filler' or 'place holder', failing to advance the story visually, and adding to the overall perception of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s initials as universal images that could serve to elucidate a variety of scenes, Arthurian and otherwise, both profane and religious.

Meanwhile, the artist of MS Arsenal 3482, although illustrating a slightly more significant scene, depicts it in a way that renders pure visual comprehension unlikely. This miniature renders the battle between Galahad, Perceval, and Lancelot, in which Lancelot and Perceval, unaware of Galahad's identity, attack him, with the result that Lancelot's spear is broken and Perceval is unhorsed (Fig. 26).[192] Although this is a relatively important episode in *Queste*, as its illustration of Galahad's

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[192] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 36.

knightly prowess functions as a metaphor for his exceptional Christian devotion, the manner in which the illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482 depicts the scene impedes visual recognition. The miniature shows three knights in a tumult of physical blows, the jumble of bodies and horses, and lack of heraldic devices, making recognition of individual figures difficult. Redolent of the corresponding image in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the iconography of this miniature appears conventional and indeterminate. Although a reader familiar with the text would likely have understood the image upon close scrutiny, to an audience member less familiar with the *Queste* narrative, the scene would likely have appeared merely as a stereotypical joust between knights.

The next image in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 depicts Perceval's meeting with his aunt, an anchoress (folios 326v and 428v respectively).[193] In the two manuscripts, this particular image is remarkably similar in terms of its iconography; both depict Perceval on the left and the anchoress on the right, enclosed within her chapel, which appears as a tall and narrow building. The only difference is that in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. Perceval is shown having dismounted (Fig. 27), whereas in MS Arsenal 3482 he has evidently just arrived at the chapel, his horse still in mid-gallop and his lance held aloft (Fig. 28). In MSS Royal 14 E. iii's and Additional 10294's versions of this miniature (Fig. 29), Perceval is still mounted on his horse, and the anchoress has yet to appear within the chapel window. The visual difference between MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 once again calls attention to the greater sense of movement found in MS Arsenal 3482 when compared to the more staid imagery of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. As in MS Arsenal 3482's first *Queste* image, the illuminator has again utilised the miniature's borders as a visual aid, rendering Perceval's horse as emerging from beyond the left side of the miniature, engendering the image with a dynamism not seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s historiated initials.

In both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, as well as MSS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 30) and Additional 10294, the image of Perceval's encounter with his aunt is followed by a depiction of Lancelot being preached to by a hermit. The inclusion of this scene is expected, as it is due to his encounter with the hermit that Lancelot vows to forgo all future relations with Queen Guinevere in order that he may lead a more Christian, spiritually oriented life. Known, until Galahad's arrival, as the best of Arthur's knights in terms of prowess, secular chivalry, and courtesy, Lancelot has yet

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[193] Ibid, 46.

failed to live a properly pious life, resulting, as told in *Queste*, in his inability to view the Grail. The hermit explains to Lancelot the connection between his repeated sins with Guinevere and his failure to achieve spiritual enlightenment.[194] It is this discussion that engenders in Lancelot a fundamental change of character. As Carol Dover comments, 'Lancelot reorients the knight's pursuit of chivalric ideals from the earthly to the spiritual realm.'[195] This particular episode within *Queste* can be seen to reinforce the religious theme of the importance and benefits of Christian piety, a message that would not have been likely to escape the notice of late medieval audiences well versed in the multivalency of visual messages, such as those found in manuscript illuminations. As has been extensively studied by Michael Camille, marginal illustrations in religious manuscripts appear to have functioned on several levels, serving as visual entertainment, textual aids, and even as a form of satire or commentary.[196] It would follow, therefore, that the images within the margins could have operated in much the same way as those outside the margins, evoking a multiplicity of meanings in regard to the text and its application to both secular and sacred life.

In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the image of Lancelot and the hermit on folio 334v (Fig. 31), like the manuscript's other historiated initials, appears of a rather generic nature. The composition of Lancelot kneeling in supplication before the hermit, who sits, garbed in a black gown, with his right hand raised in a sign of benediction, is a pose typically seen in the illuminations of myriad religious manuscripts, often appearing as part of a donor portrait, in which the donor kneels in prayer before a monk or priest so as to demonstrate his or her religious piety. This connection would likely have appeared obvious to contemporary audiences, reinforcing Lancelot's vow to live a more spiritually oriented life. Although MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s image of Lancelot and the hermit is visually evocative of *Queste*'s central religious themes, MS Arsenal 3482's visualisation of Lancelot and the hermit on folio 449r (Fig. 32) is redolent of a level of artistic originality not seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. For example, the sense of movement found in MS Arsenal 3482's previously discussed miniatures is similarly present here; Lancelot is depicted entering on horseback from

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[194] Ibid, 72-3.

[195] Carol R. Dover, 'An Inside-Out Story: Verbal Image and Pictorial Image in the French Prose Lancelot' in *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 2.1 (1997): 193.

[196] Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992), 39-40.

the left, his steed rendered in mid-step. The hermit, meanwhile, is depicted residing in a cave rather than a chapel, a textually incorrect choice, yet one that suggests parallels with images of Saint Jerome in the desert, implying either an advanced level of iconographic understanding on the part of the illuminator, or a reliance on religious visual models. Despite these differences in pictorial setting, the pose of MS Arsenal 3482's hermit is identical to that seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. This iconographic similarity can thus be seen to signify an accepted visual formula, if not for the depiction of hermits in particular, for religious figures in general, again pointing to at least the partial use of visual models by the illuminators or planners of not only MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., but also, to an extent, MS Arsenal 3482.

Whereas MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. next depicts a scene unrelated to the actions of Lancelot, MS Arsenal 3482 lingers over his narrative, inserting an image of the death of Lancelot's horse at the hands of an anonymous black knight, on folio 460v (Fig. 33). The inclusion of this second consecutive Lancelot-centred image can be interpreted as reinforcing the significance of Lancelot's decision to lead a morally Christian life. Following his promise to the hermit to refrain from future sinful activities, Lancelot comes to a river that he must forge in order to continue his journey. However, the sudden death of his horse at the hands of an unknown black knight prevents Lancelot from crossing. Recollecting the hermit's advice to place his faith in God, *Queste* tells how Lancelot 'was not terribly troubled by this event, since he knew it was the will of our Lord.'[197] By deciding to place his fate in God's hands, Lancelot cements his newfound religious devotion, reinforcing the concept of a definitively Christian type of knighthood. Edward Kennedy notes the centrality of the Grail Quest in effecting Lancelot's change of morals, as seen through *Queste*'s emphasis on the role that Lancelot's illicit relationship with Guinevere plays in his inability to achieve the Grail.[198] It is possible that for contemporary French audiences, the images of Lancelot's struggles towards increased piety and morality would have been viewed as emphasising both man's fallible nature, and the possibility of personal, moral betterment as obtained through the Christian faith. When the images of Lancelot kneeling before a hermit, and unhorsed by an anonymous knight are juxtaposed with the triumphant images of Galahad wielding the shield of Josephus,

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[197] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 91.
[198] Edward D. Kennedy, 'The Grail and French Arthurian Romance' in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (West Sussex, 2009), 214.

and receiving the Grail Host, the dichotomy between the sinful father and pure son is evident. Whereas Galahad is representative of Christ, Lancelot is symbolic of Christ's followers, mere mortals, who, although striving for the correct Christian path, tend to lose their way. Just as fourteenth-century readers may have identified with the naïve yet well meaning Perceval illustrated in MS fr. 12577, so may they have seen themselves in Lancelot, struggling to lead a life of moral and religious perfection. Franco Cardini comments: 'The knight remains a warrior hero, but above all he becomes a human type in search of an identity and a self-awareness that elude him.'[199] The metaphorical opposition between Lancelot and Galahad characterises the co-existence of the sacred and profane within fourteenth-century Arthurian imagery, a visual manifestation of abstract ideals that could be understood in numerous ways, such as man's continual struggle towards a higher level of spirituality.

The next miniature shared by MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 depicts Sir Bors' solitary meeting with a monk riding an ass.[200] The reason for the inclusion of this scene in both manuscripts is readily evident for readers familiar with *Queste*, for the monk's explanation of the importance of confession speaks to the legend's Christian disposition. For readers less familiar with the *Queste* narrative, however, the scene would not appear so easily recognisable. Regardless, the image is able to function independently as a visual representation of the sacred and profane, the juxtaposition of an iconographically recognisable knight (garbed in armour and holding a shield) and monk (wearing the black robe of the Benedictines and sporting a tonsure) symbolising the crossover of these two opposing spheres. This is perhaps most evident in the historiated initial on folio 342v of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., in which the illuminator has depicted Bors and the monk riding side by side, the monk's right hand raised in a gesture of explanation (Fig. 34). Meanwhile, MS Arsenal 3482's miniature on folio 466v (Fig. 35) depicts the exact moment of meeting between Bors and the monk, the two figures entering the picture plane from opposite directions, emphasising the clash between the sacred and profane, a central theme of *Queste*, as exemplified by Lancelot's struggles to forswear his life of secular chivalry, yet irreligious immorality.

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[199] Franco Cardini, qtd. in *The Medieval World* by Jacques Le Goff, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (London, 1990), 91.
[200] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 100.

The next image to correspond in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 depicts the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve (folios 349r and 487r, respectively) (Figs. 36-37), an inherently Christian image, which raises questions of its relationship to the text in this outwardly secular romance. First and foremost, however, did the illuminator or planner choose to illustrate the Temptation and Fall merely due to ease of production? Whereas feast scenes such as MS Arsenal 5218's final illumination, depicting the Grail procession, may often have been based upon religious illustrations of the Last Supper or Marriage at Cana, and altered slightly to fit within an Arthurian context, the images of Adam and Eve in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 appear to have been copied directly from a religious text or pattern book, their iconography so typical of the infamous Old Testament episode as to have undergone no secular adaptation whatsoever. The inclusion of this scene would therefore seem to suggest a marked reliance on visual models during the production of both manuscripts. Indeed, the reliance on pattern books for the illumination of religious manuscripts in Northern France can be seen to presage the similar use of pattern books to depict religious scenes within secular books such as Arthurian romances.[201] Jonathan Alexander's comment that, 'changes or new departures in illumination…were unlikely to be accidental, matters of whim or of hasty unthought-out decisions' is applicable to this situation.[202] With a ready model at hand, there would have been little need for the creation of new iconographies. The recycling of such images would have increased the speed of production and ensured a certain level of quality; images of the Fall of Adam and Eve, for example, were proven and dependable in terms of their visual impact and significance.

But are the images of the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve truly fitting with the text of *Queste*? The answer is perhaps surprisingly, yes. It must be kept in mind that *Queste* does include a brief retelling of the Adam and Eve narrative as a means of elucidating the origins of the miraculous bed with red, green, and white spindles which Galahad, Perceval, and Bors find aboard the ship that transports them first to Carcelois Castle, and then to Sarras.[203] Thus, the quintessential image of Adam and Eve seen in both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 may have been

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[201] Whitaker, 'The Illustration of Arthurian Romance' in *King Arthur Through the Ages, Vol. II*, ed. by Valerie M. Lagorio, and Mildred L. Day (London, 1990), 124.
[202] Jonathan J.G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work* (New Haven, 1994), 53.
[203] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 141, 167.

included for its relevant religious significance, in addition to technical considerations of artistic ease. Considering *Queste*'s identity as the most religiously driven of the French Arthurian legends, it does not seem too radical to view the image of Adam and Eve as yet another visual means of highlighting the Christian connotation and moral significance of the text, further establishing the reader's understanding of the sacred-secular connection, here in a less subtle, and therefore more easily understandable, manner than that of previous images within the two manuscripts. According to Norris Lacy, the quintessential image of Adam and Eve is typical of the iconography of the Grail Quest, perhaps because the retelling of the Temptation and the Fall within *Queste* is an episode that easily lends itself to visual depiction, requiring little effort on the part of the manuscript's planner or illuminator.[204] Indeed, MS Royal 14 E. iii includes two miniatures depicting Adam and Eve (Figs. 38-39). That one of the most heavily illuminated and skilfully rendered *Queste* manuscripts would include two such images would seem to suggest that this particular scene served both as an integral part of the narrative, and as a form of visual shorthand for the artist.

However, the reuse of religious illumination for secular purposes should not preclude the building of sacred-secular connections by contemporary readers of *Queste* manuscripts such as MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482. Elizabeth Morrison justly notes that the overlapping production of sacred and secular manuscripts by the same scribes and illuminators would seem to render such visual translation an obvious and time-saving technique. Although as Morrison further comments: 'What remains to be investigated is the extent to which they [the illuminators] simply used sacred images as models, as opposed to intentionally adapting those models to develop an innovative visual vocabulary for a new idiom.'[205] On the whole, the miniatures of both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 exude an overtly religious tone, evidenced by the repeated depiction of Christian officials, such as monks and nuns, and more subtly, by Galahad's heraldic shield, which originated with his ancestor Josephus, and is reminiscent of the shields of Christian crusaders and Saint George. The repeated inclusion of such textually accurate and

[204] Lacy, ed. *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Chicago, 1991), 302.
[205] Elizabeth Morrison, 'From Sacred to Secular: The Origins of History Illumination in France' in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500,* ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 9.

Christian-oriented elements implies that the artists' use of religious models was at least in part intentional.

Within MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, the inclusion of familiar Christian iconography can be seen to create a visual link between the ostensibly profane romance and its multi-levelled, often Christian readings, illustrating the lack of a clear division between the secular and sacred in the late Middle Ages. The secular was inhabited by the sacred and the sacred by the secular, due to their coexistence on a spectrum of greater and lesser religiosity. Just as the margins of religious manuscripts such as psalters and Books of Hours were inhabited by seemingly profane creatures and beasts, so were the illustrations of secular romances infused with the Christian spirit. Late medieval culture and society was characterised by this constant tug of war between two seemingly opposing spheres, or ends of a spectrum. The fact that the intertwining of the sacred and the secular was such an entrenched part of medieval life thus appears to point to artists' knowing adoption of sacred tropes within secular romance illustrations, such as those in *Queste*. In this way, manuscripts such as MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 can be seen to have served not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a means of reinforcing key Christian beliefs and morals. Arthurian legends such as *Queste* and their visual translations thus occupied a middle, or grey area, on the sacred-secular spectrum, wherein both the sacred and secular were present. The stereotypical image of Adam and Eve as seen in *Queste* manuscripts is thus an example of the multivalency inherent within Arthurian images. At first appearing as a wholly sacred illustration, the image can be further understood to act as a bridge between the sacred and the secular, emphasising the essential role of Christianity in the Arthurian knights' achievement of the Grail.

In both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 the final image of Lancelot depicts the knight aboard a ship that is described in *Queste* as having no oars or sails, propelled instead by the will of God, and thus symbolic of Lancelot's relinquishment of his un-Christian, immoral lifestyle (folios 355v and 514v respectively).[206] It is interesting to note that in regard to this specific image, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., although overall the less imaginative of the two manuscripts, and seemingly reliant on visual models, is in fact the more textually correct (Fig. 40), a reversal in the overall

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[206] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 151.

visual accuracy of the two manuscripts. The illuminator of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.
portrays Lancelot in a small rowboat, hands upraised in a gesture of prayer, consistent
with Lancelot's reliance on God's both spiritual and nautical guidance. The
illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482, meanwhile, has inaccurately added a billowing sail
to the boat in which he depicts Lancelot standing (Fig. 41), resulting in a dichotomy
between his relatively high level of artistic skill, and lack of textual accuracy.
Meanwhile, in MS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 42), the illuminator's depiction of the scene is
textually accurate, yet visually different from that of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. Here the
illuminator has chosen to include Perceval's sister, whose body is set to sea in the
boat after she sacrifices herself to cure a Leper woman.[207] That MSS Rawlinson
Q.b.6. and Royal 14 E. iii exhibit visual similarities and differences in their depictions
of this scene points to both the possible circulation of multiple visual sources, and a
degree of artistic invention, paired with textual knowledge, among the manuscripts'
planners and illuminators.

A further inaccuracy in the visual translation of *Queste* occurs two scenes later
in MS Arsenal 3482, and directly after the final image of Lancelot in MS Rawlinson
Q.b.6. In this instance, the final pair of shared images between the two manuscripts,
the artist of MS Arsenal 3482 can be seen to have once again exceeded his artistic
license, resulting in a lack of agreement between the textual and visual scenes of
Galahad healing the maimed and paralysed King Mordrain. On folio 357v, the artist
of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. correctly, albeit awkwardly, portrays the ailing King
Mordrain lying in bed, struggling to embrace Galahad (Fig. 43). The corresponding
miniature in MS Arsenal 3482, on folio 525r, shows King Mordrain standing in front
of his throne, conversing with Galahad (Fig. 44). Perhaps the illuminator of MS
Arsenal 3482 thought to depict Mordrain standing so as to illustrate Galahad's healing
of the king's paralysis. However, this is textually incorrect, as *Queste* describes how,
as visually exemplified in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Galahad embraced the prone King
Mordrain, who thereupon took his last breath.[208] This textual-visual inconsistency,
when considered together with that of Lancelot in the boat, suggests that the
illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482, although artistically skilled, was overall unfamiliar
with the story of *Queste*. However, the specificity of so many of MS Arsenal 3482's
miniatures speaks to a lack of reliance on pattern books or religious models, such as is

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[207] Ibid, 148, 151.
[208] Ibid, 161.

repeatedly seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. Lacking familiarity with the legend, yet still able to produce highly relevant Arthurian images, it seems likely that MS Arsenal 3482's illuminator received expert guidance, in the form of either written or verbal instructions.[209] Many manuscripts display evidence of the illuminator's use of marginal notes and sketches, as well as rubrics.[210] Similarly, artisans may have relied on the beginning phrases of each new narrative section, which sometimes, written in red, had the dual function of rubrics. In MS Arsenal 3482 for example, the bottom of the leftmost column on folio 514v signifies an *entrelacement* through the use of an illuminated 'O', which begins '*Or dit le contes que quant lancelos fu venus…*' describing how Lancelot was told by God to board the first ship that he sees.[211] Perhaps MS Arsenal 3482's illuminator referred to the opening lines of the new narrative section, but did not read further, therefore remaining ignorant of the slightly later description of the boat as having no sails or oars, resulting in a textually incorrect, albeit carefully rendered, miniature.

2.4 The Images in Context

In order to examine the image cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 in full, another factor that must be considered is the location of each illustration in conjunction with the text. In light of the images' consistent placement at points of textual diversion, or *entrelacement*, it must be asked whether they serve only as visual 'breaks', or if they depict key scenes, regardless of their textual placement. As Keith Busby notes, the various divisions or 'chapters' of the Vulgate legends are often quite lengthy, and include multiple scenes that could potentially be illuminated.[212] Thus, the pairing of an image with a textual transition does not predetermine the image's subject matter. This suggests that illuminators of romances such as *Queste* may have had more artistic license than has previously been theorised by scholars such as Roger Loomis and Norris Lacy, and that the scenes to be

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[209] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 96-7.
[210] Stones, 'Some Aspects of Arthur's Death in Medieval Art' in *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, ed. by Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe (New York, 1988), 56.
[211] 'So the story says how Lancelot comes to…'; See Appendix 1; Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 151.
[212] Keith Busby, 'Text and Image in the Getty Tristan (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig XV, 5)' in *Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honor of Richard and Mary Rouse* (Turnhout, 2011), 3.

illustrated were not always predetermined.[213] The differing pictorial cycles, yet close production dates of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 support this hypothesis. Although MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 have several images in common, these scenes almost always differ in terms of style and iconography. For example, as has been discussed, MS Arsenal 3482's images exhibit an overall sense of energy and movement, whereas MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s, inscribed within the stringent confines of initial 'O's, appear more stationary and scripted. In addition, MS Arsenal 3482 contains four more miniatures than does MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., thereby increasing both the manuscript's visual impact and its number of possible visual manifestations. For two *Queste* manuscripts so similar in place and date of production, this appears as a surprising lack of visual continuity, raising questions in regard to the two manuscripts' methods of production, intended audiences, and purposes, issues that will be addressed in the coming chapters.

By the mid-fourteenth century, secular romance manuscripts were generally organised into two or three columns of text, with single-column illuminations serving to highlight the divisions between chapters or changes in narration, such as the *entrelacement* of narratives so commonly seen in both Chrétien's tales and the Vulgate Cycle. In addition, as has been discussed, by this point in time it appears to have been common practice for illuminators to recycle images from pattern books and religious manuscripts, using routine scenes of battles, feasts, and equestrian knights to speed the production process and to increase the reader's visual comprehension of the multilayered stories.[214] Although the textual planning of secular manuscripts was therefore relatively prescribed by the mid 1300s, there was, on the other hand, a lack of consistent visual planning. For example, among MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, three manuscripts of close proximity in terms of time and place of production, there is a confusing compilation of artistic styles, iconographies, and visual frameworks.

For example, the decision to illuminate the manuscripts with either historiated initials or miniatures must be taken into account. The close production dates of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 complicates this question, as it cannot merely be assumed that the historiated initials of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. are indicative of an

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[213] Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 91; Lacy, ed. *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (London, 1991), 302.
[214] Morrison, 'From Sacred to Secular', 22.

earlier artistic time period and style, as hypothesised by Elizabeth Morrison. Morrison supposes that there was a stylistic progression from historiated initials to multi-compartmental miniatures so as to increase the space available for illumination.[215] However, produced *circa* 1351, MS Arsenal 5218 is the latest of the three manuscripts considered in this chapter, yet it includes a historiated 'A' that begins the narration of *Queste*. The juxtaposition of this historiated initial with the manuscript's more visually developed frontispiece questions whether these two artistic techniques could have co-existed in the mid-fourteenth century. Considering the mix of artistic styles and plans found in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, it appears more likely, as noted by Alison Stones, that there was a general lack of continuity of artistic quality and text-image relationships in late medieval Arthurian manuscripts. Stones also comments that Arthurian illustrations can be seen to differ even among manuscripts created by a single scribe, artist, or workshop.[216] It is possible, therefore, that the differences in creativity and style are evidential of the illuminators' varying levels of artistic ability; as a whole, MS Arsenal 3482 is of a more refined, unique artistic quality than is MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.

In addition, as noted previously, MS Arsenal 3482's repeated lack of textual-visual agreement, yet consistently imaginative images, points to the involvement of an artisan who, although highly skilled, was unfamiliar with the *Queste* narrative. This suggests that visual interest and extravagance were of greater importance to the manuscript's owner than was textual accuracy. Furthermore, the inclusion of several scenes not found in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., which increases MS Arsenal 3482's overall number of miniatures, implies both that the manuscript was of great expense, and also that it was created as a unique item. This is in keeping with Loomis' hypothesis that only in the more costly manuscripts would effort be taken to increase the originality and specificity of the illustrated scenes.[217] The high quality of MS Arsenal 3482, exemplified by its wide margins, careful script, and relatively extensive decoration, would unquestionably serve to classify it as a manuscript created for an owner of some wealth and prestige.

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[215] Ibid, 16-17.

[216] Stones, 'The Lancelot-Graal Project', 167; Stones, ''Mise en page' in the French Lancelot-Grail: The First 150 Years of the Illustrative Tradition' in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge, 2003), 126-7.

[217] Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, 92.

In comparison, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., although undoubtedly a manuscript of some cost, as evidenced by its extensive use of gold, is less imaginative in its illustrations, epitomised both by the ostensibly dated use of historiated initials, and the static poses of its illustrated figures. Stones notes that by 1350, the historiated initial had become 'obsolete', likely due to the constrictions its often awkward and contrived form placed on the scenes illustrated within, as seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. This is especially notable when the historiated initial O's of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. are compared to the more energetic and unrestrained miniatures of MS Arsenal 3482.[218] MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s more extensive use of visual tropes taken from pattern books and religious manuscripts, when paired with its use of historiated initials rather than independent miniatures, suggests a manuscript created without a buyer in mind, or at the very least, a manuscript of lesser cost than one as extravagant as MS Arsenal 3482. The distinction between the visual plans of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 therefore personifies the varied methods of production and intended purposes of late medieval Arthurian manuscripts, even among those produced within a prescribed time period and geographic area.

In regard to the overall visual effect of MS Arsenal 5218, the possibility that its artistic programme is no more than an anomaly within the *oeuvre* of Arthurian illumination is a theory that must also be taken into account. When compared to MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, as well as to other similarly dated *Queste* manuscripts, such as MS Royal 14 E. iii, MS Arsenal 5218's few, yet lavish illustrations appear as an aberration. It seems more probable, however, that as posited by Stones, 'There is no chronological progression from one kind of layout to another, nor is one format preferred in any one region.'[219] The similar production dates and locales, yet differing illumination styles of MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6 further support this hypothesis. What is clear is that although historiated initials may have given way to more clearly delineated miniatures in sacred texts *circa* 1350, the same is not true of secular texts, such as the Arthurian romances, which appear to have continued to make use of a variety of visual forms, including both historiated initials and more visually complex miniatures.[220]

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[218] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 94.
[219] Stones, 'The Lancelot-Graal Project', 167.
[220] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 94; Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 18.

2.5 The Depiction of the Grail

According to Alison Stones, MS Arsenal 5218 is one of only five *Queste* manuscripts to illustrate the climactic Grail scene.[221] Scholars such as Frederick Locke and Martine Meuwese have posited that this reluctance to visualise the Grail stems in part from its elusive nature within the text.[222] Throughout *Queste* the form of the Grail is never clearly elucidated. In E. Jane Burns' translation, edited by Norris Lacy, the Grail is repeatedly referred to merely as the 'Holy Vessel', or in Old French, *terrine*, for the English 'tureen'.[223] Although the climactic Grail scene describes Christ issuing from the Grail to present the host to Galahad, Bors, and Perceval, no further detail of the Grail's exact form is provided. Much of the Grail's appeal is due to its ill-defined nature; the Grail is more an abstract concept than a physical object; according to *Queste* it is a spiritual ideal towards which all good Christians should strive.[224] Only those who are truly chaste and devout, as exemplified by Galahad, shall succeed. In accordance with the Grail's ambiguity, both MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6. shy away from direct visual interpretations of the Grail, in a manner similar to depictions of the Grail in fourteenth-century manuscripts of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, such as MS fr. 12577, discussed in Chapter One. Stones describes this as a 'deliberate ploy… so that the climactic Grail liturgy is left to the imagination to picture'.[225] Martine Meuwese ponders:

> Was it the many forms and functions of the Grail that confused artists or made them reluctant to represent it? Is it due to the lack of a clear description of the form of the Grail in the texts, or was it rather out of veneration for the holy object that they preferred not to depict the Grail? After all, the mysterious object was rarely seen by the characters in the romances either.[226]

The artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. chose to skirt the issue entirely, with his final historiated initial on folio 357v depicting Galahad embracing the dying King

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[221] Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229' in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 213.

[222] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance* (Redwood City, 1960), 7; Martine Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art' in *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge, 2008), 27.

[223] Lacy, ed. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 164; *La Queste del saint Graal*, http://portal.textometrie.org/txm/texte/queste, accessed 16 February 2015.

[224] Busby, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance' in *French Studies* 53.2 (1999), 138.

[225] Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', 214.

[226] Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', 27.

Mordrain (Fig. 43), an episode that occurs prior to the performance of the Grail liturgy, and Galahad's, Bors', and Perceval's enlightenment as to the Grail's significance. The artist of MS Arsenal 3482 similarly chose not to depict the Grail, although he carries the visual narrative slightly further, with his final miniature on folio 538v illustrating Galahad receiving the host from Josephus (Fig. 45), an important aspect of the Grail liturgy, if not one that requires a direct visual representation of the Grail. Both artists can therefore be seen to actively promote the Grail's obscurity, an artistic decision that may have increased interest in the *Queste* legend, as previously commented upon by Keith Busby.[227]

Considering the obvious reluctance of the illuminators of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 to visualise the Grail, it is all the more intriguing that the illuminator of MS Arsenal 5218, a manuscript relatively close in date to MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, and of Parisian production like MS Arsenal 3482, chose to so clearly depict the Grail. The final two-column miniature in MS Arsenal 5218, on folio 88r, provides an amalgamated visualisation of the Grail liturgy, in which Josephus, the procession of the Grail, and the vision of Christ all figure in the illumination (Fig. 46). This image, although textually incorrect in terms of the order of events, can be seen to provide a visual overview of this most crucial of *Queste* scenes, thereby emphasising the key points of the episode: Josephus' celestial presence more than three hundred years after his death, the procession of the Grail and Lance as described in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, and the issuing of Christ from the Holy Grail; the personification of Christian enlightenment.

The final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218 is also clearly reminiscent of a biblical feast scene such as the Last Supper or the Marriage at Cana; the figures are arrayed in a straight line on the far side of the table, and all turn slightly to face the most centrally seated figures, whom it can be surmised represent Galahad, Perceval, and Bors. The miniature's Christian origins are further evident through the inclusion of Josephus, who appears as a bishop on the left side of the image. The placement of his throne, squeezed into the leftmost corner of the picture frame, is sufficiently awkward as to suggest that it was merely transplanted from another image, most likely a religious scene in which the inclusion of a bishop was more fitting. The mix of artistic borrowing and invention seen in the final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218

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[227] Busby, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance', 138.

personifies both the myriad visual resources available to illuminators, as well as the lack of a definitive visual programme for the depiction of the Grail. As noted by Alison Stones:

> As befits its mysterious nature, the depiction of the Grail does not reflect a single direction or trend, nor is it depicted in a single way in the illustrations of *Estoire* and *Queste*. Manuscripts produced by the same team of craftsmen show inconsistencies as to which Grail scenes are included and how the Grail is treated, suggesting that the rules were flexible at best, and that there was no single line of development.[228]

The illuminator of MS Arsenal 5218 appears to have dealt with the lack of guidance for the Grail's visualisation by incorporating common elements of religious iconography, while also illustrating each disparate aspect of the Grail procession, resulting in a comprehensive, if textually inaccurate, scene. However, regardless of the miniature's lack of textual accuracy, it undoubtedly functioned as an explicit visual commentary for contemporary readers. The sacred and profane are clearly juxtaposed within the miniature, creating a climactic image that serves as a visual summary of the links between the secular and sacred in Arthurian romance.

The question of why MS Arsenal 5218's illuminator chose to depict the Grail procession is still deserving of consideration. In light of MS Arsenal 5218's contrasting visual programme when compared to that of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, it seems possible that MS Arsenal 5218's uncommon depiction of the Grail is related to the manuscript's overall paucity of images. Whereas MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482 contain 14 and 18 *Queste* images respectively, MS Arsenal 5218 contains only three. The inclusion of a mere three images, regardless of whether this artistic decision was due to factors of time or cost, significantly increases the need for each image to be as visually explicit and relevant as possible. If the illuminations are considered to serve as a visual narration of *Queste*, it becomes apparent that each image counts towards the audiences' potential visual, as well as textual, comprehension. Together, the three illuminations serve to succinctly introduce, progress, and conclude the legend, while also elaborating on the Christian tropes at the heart of *Queste*.

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[228] Stones, 'Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts' in *The Grail: A Casebook*, ed. by Dhira Mahoney (London, 2000), 336.

2.6 Concluding Thoughts

According to Muriel Whitaker, *Queste* illustrations engender a heightened level of Christian meaning, one not found in illustrations of the other Vulgate legends, such as the prose *Merlin* and *Lancelot*.[229] The Christian core of *La Queste del saint Graal* therefore results in multiple levels of both textual and visual understanding, ranging from the secularly chivalric, to the wholly messianic. The coexistence of these varying interpretations exemplifies the intertwining of the secular and the sacred, a theme that is at the heart of *Queste*, both as a work of medieval literature, and of visual culture. Furthermore, the presence of both iconographic and stylistic similarities and differences in the visual depictions of *Queste*, as seen in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, illustrate the complexities inherent in the translation of Arthurian legends from word to image. Although in some cases, the artists can be seen to have borrowed heavily from religious illustrative traditions, such as in the illuminations of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., in other instances, such as the miniatures of MS Arsenal 3482, they can be seen to transcend the boundaries of accepted iconography, suggesting a level of artistic invention beyond what has been traditionally suggested.

Based solely on the analysis of the three manuscripts discussed in this chapter, it would be impractical to construct a single, cohesive theory of the function and use of *Queste* imagery in fourteenth-century France. It is feasible, however, to collate a series of hypotheses based on the detailed visual analysis of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 undertaken in this chapter. From such an analysis, it can be surmised that early fourteenth-century *Queste* manuscript illustration specifically, and perhaps Arthurian manuscript illustration more generally, was overall characterised by a melding of not only the secular and the sacred, but also of the visually traditional and the visually original. As first noted by Alison Stones, there does not seem to be a defined pattern to the artists' renderings of *Queste* scenes, rather, their adoption of various visual techniques and models appears to have functioned on a case by case basis, determined by multiple factors, such as the size and cost of the manuscript, the patrons' wishes, the illuminator's knowledge of the text, and even mere artistic and technical convenience. Although this resulting lack of visual concordance renders it difficult to categorise the manuscripts based purely on

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[229] Whitaker, *Legends of King Arthur in Art*, 47.

elements of style or iconography, it also serves to define their overall visual impact; one of outward discontinuity yet inward unity, achieved through the juxtaposition of the sacred and secular, two seemingly opposing, yet in actuality overlapping, concepts, which when assembled, function as a cohesive whole.

Like *Queste* itself, characterised by narrative *entrelacement*, the pictorial cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 are conceived of varying collections of interlacing elements, seemingly dichotomous aspects that work together to form a single, multivalent entity with simultaneously secular and sacred connotations. Based on the complex nature of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s, Arsenal 3482's, and Arsenal 5218's pictorial cycles, it seems valid to posit that the illuminators of these three manuscripts did, to an extent, actively strive to emphasise the inherently religious nature of *Queste*, the most religiously rooted of all the Arthurian legends. Just as the style and iconography of each manuscript varies, so does the degree to which the illuminators incorporated Christian ideology into each manuscript's outwardly secular imagery. The varying degree and use of religious visual metaphors within *Queste* manuscripts therefore characterise the dynamic visual role of the sacred within the realms of secular Arthurian romance, illustrating that such Christian-minded artistic visualisations can, and should, be considered a defining element of early fourteenth-century French *Queste* imagery.

Chapter Three

Chivalry and Christianity Intertwined:
Depicting Gawain and Galahad in Ivory

Chapter Two in part considered images of the Arthurian knights Galahad, Lancelot, and Gawain in three selected fourteenth-century *La Queste del saint Graal* manuscripts. In parallel to that analysis, this chapter will examine depictions of these three knights on contemporaneously produced ivory caskets. Although Arthurian scenes are found on a variety of medieval ivory carvings, including hair combs and mirror cases, there are today only nine complete extant ivory caskets whose visual programmes include Arthurian scenes. Fragments of approximately a dozen additional romance and Arthurian-themed composite caskets are also extant, which, given the relative fragility of these objects, suggests that the composite caskets enjoyed widespread popularity in late medieval France, and were widely disseminated geographically, perhaps even outside of France. For example, the provenance of the Krakow Cathedral Treasury composite casket can be traced back to the fourteenth-century Queen Jadwiga of Poland (b. 1371, d. 1399).[230] Considering the Krakow casket's most recent dating to the late fourteenth-century, it seems possible that Queen Jadwiga was an early, if not the first, owner of the casket. Of the aforementioned nine caskets, one is the Perceval-themed casket previously discussed in Chapter One, Musée du Louvre, OA 122.[231] The remaining eight form a group of composite caskets, or *coffrets composites*, a term first used by Raymond Koechlin in his seminal work *Les ivoires gothiques français* (1924), which alludes to the compilation of romance scenes that make up the caskets' decorative programmes.[232] It is worth noting here that the romance scenes that adorn the eight composite caskets are not solely Arthurian, but also hail from a variety of other medieval legends, or romances, as will be discussed shortly. These eight caskets form a cohesive group, exhibiting both stylistic and iconographic similarities, suggesting that they were

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[230] Raymond Koechlin, *Les ivoires gothiques français* (Paris, 1924), 34, 409.; See p. 196.
[231] See Appendix 1.
[232] See Appendix 1; Koechlin, *Les ivoires gothiques français*, 484; David J.A. Ross, 'Allegory and Romance on a Medieval French Marriage Casket,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948), 24.

created within either the same or a small group of neighbouring Parisian workshops within a circumscribed period of time, *circa* the first half of the fourteenth century, the time at which Gothic ivory carving reached its apex. However, despite their marked iconographic and stylistic similarities, the eight caskets have yet to be studied as a cohesive collection, a task that I aim to undertake in this thesis.

3.1 Arthurian Scenes on the Composite Caskets, an Overview

In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the two Arthurian-themed panels of each casket. The imagery includes scenes from the two Grail-focussed Arthurian legends, Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*, and the anonymous Vulgate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*. I will visually analyse the rear panels of the eight composite caskets, depicting Gawain's adventures at the *Chateau Merveille*, (from Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*), and Lancelot's crossing of the Sword Bridge, (from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*) (Figs. 47-54). Similarly, I will also consider the eight caskets' right end panels, which illustrates Enyas' slaying of the wodehouse (from the *Roman d'Enyas*), and/or Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles* (from the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*) (Figs. 55-62). Although I will touch upon certain aspects of the caskets' remaining three panels, whose imagery hails from other medieval and Roman legends, such as the Prose *Tristan*, the *Roman d'Alexandre*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I have chosen to pay particular attention to the rear and right side panels of the eight composite caskets due not only to their depiction of key figures within the two Grail legends, but also because each panel's juxtaposition of two scenes from different legends, a visual technique not seen in Arthurian manuscripts, renders the imagery visually complex, allowing for a multiplicity of meanings to be construed by medieval viewers, suggesting that the composite caskets functioned as more than mere *objets d'art*, or visual exemplars of courtly love and romantic chivalry.

The juxtaposition of the Enyas and Galahad scenes, which will be discussed shortly, is but one example of the inclusion of several distinct romances on the eight composite caskets' various panels. In addition to scenes from *Le Roman de Enyas* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, all eight of the caskets' lids depict at centre, knights jousting at the behest of maidens, who look on from a balcony. On the lids, this scene is book-ended on either side by the Siege of the Castle of Love (Figs. 63-

70), wherein knights storm a castle held by maidens, with the aim of forcibly attaining the maidens' love. This allegorical scene of courtly love may stem from Robert Grossetesse's thirteenth-century text *Le Chateau d'amour*, and appears in a variety of medieval visual forms, including an illumination in the late thirteenth-century English-produced Peterborough Psalter (Fig. 79), the earliest known manuscript to include an image of the Siege of the Castle of Love.[233] The existence of this quintessential allegory in both French and English examples of medieval visual culture would seem to point to cross-channel shared visual knowledge in the late Middle Ages. Such an overlap of visual tropes would thereby increase the number of possible influences and pictorial sources for the carvers of the caskets, illustrating the continuity of romantic and Arthurian themes throughout late medieval England and France, and perhaps even throughout areas of continental Europe in which the Arthurian legends were popular, such as Germany and Italy. As well as the Siege of the Castle of Love, all eight caskets also include Tristan and Isolde's 'tryst beneath the tree' from the Prose *Tristan* (Figs. 71-78), depicted on the left end panels of the eight caskets. On all but one of the eight caskets (the Cluny casket, which instead includes a second image of Tristan), the image of the two illicit lovers is paired with the quintessential medieval image of a maiden and unicorn; a pairing that will be discussed later in this chapter. On the caskets' front panels (Figs. 80-87), varying arrangements and selections of the following scenes are depicted: the hugely popular image of Phyllis' 'seduction' of Aristotle from the *Roman d'Alexandre*, along with the enduring classical trope of the Fountain of Youth, and two images of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The caskets' rear panels depict scenes from two of Chrétien's Arthurian poems, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, the first telling of Lancelot, and the source for the image of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge, as well as *Le Conte du Graal*, which contributes the three images of Gawain at the *Chateau Merveille* (Figs. 47-54); images that will also be discussed later in this chapter.

Although Gothic ivory caskets have often been studied as material tokens of love, courtship, and marriage, they have yet to be fully considered as tactile exemplars of late medieval Christian morality. Richard Randall Jr. has discussed the 'double meanings' of the composite caskets in general, and of the Metropolitan casket

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[233] See Appendix 2; Richard H. Randall Jr., 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory' in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 65; James Robinson, *Masterpieces of Medieval Art* (London, 2008), 216.

in particular, but he has overall focussed on the caskets as purely visual manifestations of courtly love.[234] Randall's theory that the stories illustrated on the caskets would likely have been part of medieval popular culture, and therefore familiar to contemporary viewers, has merit, however his hypothesis of the caskets' prospective double meanings needs expanding, specifically to include the visual intertwining of the sacred and the secular. Taking my cue from Paula Carns, who has aptly suggested that the composite caskets are similar to compilation manuscripts in that they serve as 'a survey of the subject of love', and provide an easily digestible visual translation of various pieces of medieval literature, I will suggest that the caskets can also be viewed as a visual survey of the interrelation of the sacred and secular in fourteenth-century France. Thus, I will explore, as Carns notes has yet to be done, 'the casket[s'] visual language and narrative presentation as unifying forces.'[235] Working from Carn's hypothesis that the composite caskets can be seen as a visual form of literary compilatio, or a compilation of diverse albeit thematically related narratives, I will examine the ways in which the composite caskets' carved scenes function independently and as a cohesive program to relate complex messages of love, chivalry, and Christianity to contemporary French audiences. In her essay 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', Carns uses the Metropolitan composite casket as a case study to argue that the varied romance imagery on the eight composite caskets can as a whole be seen as 'unique renditions of the stories they tell, offering contemporary responses to Old French literature.'[236] Carns suggests that the casket's imagery serves several purposes; acting as 'a medieval historical overview on love' while also, as visualisations of texts that bridge the religious and profane, inviting viewers to ponder the relationship between the sacred and secular in the imagery at hand specifically, and in contemporary medieval life, more generally.[237] For example, the selected scenes that adorn the caskets' panels may at first appear decidedly profane, such as the widely circulated image of the Siege of the Castle of Love, which adorns the lids of all eight composite caskets (Figs. 63-70), and the 'tryst beneath the tree' from the Prose *Tristan,* included on the left end panel of all eight caskets (Figs. 71-78). Both of these scenes appear to

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[234]Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 68.

[235] Paula Mae Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', *Gesta* 44.2 (2005), 69, 83.

[236] Ibid, 70.

[237] Ibid, 71, 75.

provide clear visual proof of the caskets' espousal of courtly love, as seen through the knights' attempts to forcibly win over the hearts of maidens on the caskets' lids, and Tristan and Isolde's illicit romantic meeting on the left end panel. Other scenes, however, such as Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*, or Castle of Maidens, and Enyas' slaying of the wodehouse (Figs. 55-62) on the caskets' right end panel, are not so easily interpreted as mere light-hearted scenes of amorous love and quintessentially secular chivalry. While such episodes may appear to refer superficially to themes of courtly love and knightly daring, at their cores are Christian tropes, such as sin and redemption, chastity and humanity, illustrating the dual nature of these luxurious objects of medieval visual culture; at once exemplars of both secular and sacred love, as well as moralising Christian commentaries. As E. H. Gombrich aptly noted, during the Middle Ages there existed 'a conception of images which should be seen as having numerous meanings simultaneously, meanings which are combined to make linguistic metaphors intuitable.'[238] In the case of the composite caskets, these 'numerous meanings' resulted from contemporary viewers' unique visual experiences with the caskets. These experiences were composed of each viewer's visual and textual understanding (or lack thereof) of the late medieval French Arthurian *oeuvre*, allowing for interpretations of the caskets' imagery that ranged from the superficial; romantic chivalry and courtly love, to the metaphorical; chastity and Christianity.

Through a detailed analysis of the aforementioned Arthurian scenes, I will contest the widely proposed theory that late medieval ivory caskets were solely tokens of love, courtship, and marriage, serving as receptacles in which women could store small trinkets and valuables, as has been espoused by scholars such as Martine Meuwese and Richard Randall Jr.[239] I will instead posit that these caskets may have additionally and simultaneously served as moralising Christian exemplars, a role largely dependent upon their visual reception by fourteenth-century French courtly audiences, who, immersed in both the Christian and Arthurian traditions, literary and visual, would likely have been able to find within the caskets' imagery dual connotations of both secular-sacred love and Christian values. In a manner similar to my analysis of the saintly imagery adorning the lid of Musée du Louvre, OA 122

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[238] E.H. Gombrich, 'Achievement in Mediaeval art', in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse: And Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Oxford, 1978), 77.

[239] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 65; Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 119.

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(Fig. 1), discussed in Chapter One, I will suggest that the Arthurian imagery on the eight composite caskets renders them as lavish, secular exemplars of visual culture, as well as tangible reminders of integral Christian values.

3.2 The Visual Juxtaposition of Arthurian Knights

Throughout the caskets' visual programmes, four pairs of opposing figures are created, both physically in terms of their adjacent depictions, and theoretically in terms of their similarities and differences and relationships within the texts. These four pairs are: Lancelot and Gawain, Galahad and Gawain, Galahad and Enyas, and Lancelot and Galahad. Within each of these pairs, it can be argued that both the religious and profane are represented, thereby drawing attention to the necessity of both ends of the sacred-secular spectrum within the late medieval world, and inviting contemporary viewers to compare and ponder each knight's dual attributes. Opposition can thus be read as a central theme of the eight composite caskets' visual programmes, a theme that invites an interactive style of viewing, wherein viewers are encouraged to ruminate on the sacred-secular connections, as well as to reflect on their own dually oriented lives, considering the roles allotted to secular (and sexual) desires, such as erotic love and worldly glory (whether social or political), versus chaste, Christian devotion, and morality. As discussed in the Introduction, the overlapping nature of the sacred and secular, as if on a spectrum, was integral to the way in which lay people in the Middle Ages engaged with day to day life, which contained varying amounts of the religious and profane.[240] For example, viewers of the composite caskets, and more broadly, audiences of the French Arthurian romances, would likely have been familiar with Matfre Ermengaud's *Le Breviari d'Amor,* a lengthy poem that puts into words the difficulty in reconciling the courtly, erotic love of *fin'amor* with the chaste love of God that all good Christians were to aim for.[241] Similarly, William Peraldus' moral and theological texts *Summa de virtutibus* (*circa* 1248) and *Summa de vitiis* (*circa* 1236) which detail the virtues and vices, were widely used by late medieval preachers and confessors, thus greatly

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[240] See p. 5.
[241] Matfre Ermengaud, *Le Breviari d'Amor*, ed. by Peter T. Ricketts (London, 1998), vii.

impacting the lives of lay Christians, detailing how best to avoid and amend sinful, irreligious behaviours.[242]

Within the group of eight composite caskets, all most recently dated on stylistic grounds by their respective institutions to within the first half of the fourteenth century, four (Krakow, Metropolitan, Cluny, and Bargello) juxtapose a scene from the lost text *Le Roman d'Enyas* with the quintessential image from the Vulgate *Queste* of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*, or Castle of Maidens (Figs. 57-60). Of the four remaining caskets, three (British, Victoria & Albert, and Walters) (Figs. 56, 61-62) solely depict Galahad's arrival at the Castle of Maidens on the right panel, while the final casket (Barber) (Fig. 55) merely illustrates Enyas in the act of slaying the wild man, as seen in conjunction with Galahad at the Castle of Maidens on the four previously mentioned caskets. As will be discussed in regard to the production of the composite caskets in Chapter Seven, these differences in composition suggest that although the caskets have overlapping dates of production, and were all produced in Paris within at the very most a period of fifty years, there was variation in the specific workshops or artisans involved in their creation, pointing to the use of a combination of shared visual sources and artistic license.[243] Furthermore, although the caskets differ in their depiction of Enyas and/or Galahad, the imagery of all eight caskets closely follows the text, suggesting that the carvers were either familiar with the two legends, or were working from a previously produced, textually accurate visual model. In other words, although the carvers of the composite caskets were tasked with the replication of an established set of imagery, with clear textual precedents, there was yet room for the artisans to assert their artistic independence through choices of composition and subtle visual details. As noted by Kathryn Smith,

> 'It was the artists who- through recourse to a shared vocabulary of pictorial and decorative forms, and by employing analogous strategies of visual expression- articulated, shaped, and affirmed their clients' spiritual and social world view.'[244]

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[242] Michael Evans, 'An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus' Summa of Vice: Harleian MS 3244', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982), 14-15.

[243] See pp. 236-41.

[244] Kathryn A. Smith, 'A 'Viewing Community' in Fourteenth-Century England', in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout, 2013), 168.

The carvers of the composite caskets were thus able to actively influence the multiplicity of ways in which a medieval audience understood their three-dimensional, artistic creations. The selection and placement of specific Arthurian imagery on the composite caskets, when considered both independently of, and in conjunction with, the corresponding textual legends, acted to both mirror and formulate contemporary viewers' social, cultural, and religious views, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Six.[245]

3.3 *Le Roman d'Enyas*

Le Roman d'Enyas, a little known and seldom illustrated legend, tells of an old knight, Enyas, who comes upon a wodehouse, or wild man, ravishing a maiden.[246] In a typical display of secular chivalry, Enyas slays the wild man, saving the maiden, who then joins him on his travels. However, the pair soon come upon a young knight, who wishes to take the maiden for himself. When asked to decide between the two men, the maiden chooses the more youthful knight. Pleased with this, the young knight taunts Enyas, and attempts to take his hound in addition to the maiden, to further humiliate him. Angered, Enyas kills the boastful knight, and then denies the now frightened maiden his protection. Left alone in the forest, the maiden is soon eaten by a wild beast. The fate of the maiden in the *Roman d'Enyas* is thus akin to that of the biblical Queen Jezebel, who, accused of encouraging the worship of false deities, is defenestrated, and demolished by wild dogs. That this biblical legend circulated as part of late medieval Christian visual culture is evident through the inclusion of Jezebel and her husband Ahab within a historiated initial in the Bohun Psalter (Fig. 88), a luxurious manuscript likely produced in London in the second half of the fourteenth-century.[247] Although the maiden's unfortunate end is not depicted on the caskets, the right end panels of which merely depict Enyas in the act of slaying the wild man, viewers with prior knowledge of the *Roman d'Enyas* would have anticipated the legend's dark, unchivalric ending, allowing for them to create complex

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[245] See pp. 198-204.

[246] Medieval images of *Le Roman d'Enyas* are known to appear in the following manuscripts and ivories (for full citations, see Appendices 1-2): Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Inv. 39.26; Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 123 C; Krakow, Krakow Cathedral Treasury, Casket of Queen Jadwiga; London, British Library, MSS Royal 10 E. iv, Yates Thompson 13; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.173; Paris, Musée de Cluny, Cl. 23840.

[247] See Appendix 2.

understandings of the imagery, which may have included connections to biblical tales such as that of Jezebel, another maiden whose unwise decisions result in her gruesome death.

That viewers would have been familiar with the *Roman d'Enyas* is evidenced by its inclusion in imagery in contemporaneous manuscripts, suggesting that the story was more broadly circulated than its subtle visualisation on the composite caskets may suggest. Apart from the five fourteenth-century composite caskets on which it appears (Barber, Krakow, Metropolitan, Cluny, and Bargello) (Figs. 55, 57-60) episodes from the *Roman d'Enyas* are also depicted in two manuscripts dating to *circa* the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries; the jointly French and English-produced Smithfield Decretals, and the English Taymouth Hours (London, British Library, MSS Royal 10 E. IV and Yates Thompson 13 respectively), placing their execution within the same approximately fifty-year period in which the eight composite caskets are thought to have been completed.[248] The imagery of both the Smithfield Decretals and the Taymouth Hours similarly depict the wild man's attempted kidnap and rape of the maiden, followed by her salvation at the hand of Enyas (Figs. 89-97). The Taymouth Hours' imagery, however, brings the story to its conclusion, depicting the maiden left alone in the forest, abandoned by both knights, awaiting her fate (Figs. 98-105). According to Alixe Bovey, the Smithfield Decretals' marginal illuminations, in which the *Roman d'Enyas* is depicted, were executed *circa* 1340 in London, while a different artist in southern France, possibly Toulouse, previously completed the miniatures and foliate borders.[249] This overlap in dates of production suggests that one visual medium served as a model for the other. Considering that manuscripts sometimes served as models for ivory carvings, it seems possible that the carvers of the caskets were familiar with such images; if not with these specific examples, perhaps with other, now lost, visualisations. Considering the iconographical similarities between the Enyas scene on the caskets, and those found in the margins of the Smithfield Decretals and Taymouth Hours, as well as the images' shared creation in such a closely defined period of time, and the utter lack of other examples of *Roman d'Enyas* imagery, it seems likely that the various artisans

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[248] See Appendix 2.

[249] Alixe Bovey, 'Tales from the Margins of a Fourteenth-Century London Lawbook: The Smithfield Decretals (BL Royal 10 E. IV)' (paper presented at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies' Lecture Series, Trinity College Dublin, 20 May, 2015).

would have been knowledgeable of these parallel depictions, and may have used the images themselves, or some sort of visual model based on the images, as reference points. If this is indeed the case, a certain degree of cross-channel visual sharing between manuscript makers in England and France is suggested.[250]

However, the relative dearth of Enyas imagery in any late medieval visual medium raises further questions as to why the carvers of the composite caskets chose to depict it on five of the eight caskets. Considering the maiden's unfortunate end, the scene does not appear as a typically laudatory portrayal of medieval chivalry. For example, according to Roger Loomis, the *Roman d'Enyas* is first and foremost an exemplum of female ingratitude, therefore suggesting a feminine focus for this panel, and again promoting the biblical connection to Queen Jezebel, in terms of the theme of proud women who come to sticky ends.[251] Koechlin categorised French gothic ivory caskets into two groupings, those illustrating a compilation of Arthurian, courtly, and allegorical scenes, and those whose imagery focusses solely on scenes of love.[252] Although Loomis' interpretation of the *Roman d'Enyas* as a visualisation of female vicissitudes would be fitting for Koechlin's second grouping of ivory caskets, whose imagery focusses on courtly love and its perennial problems, as opposed to the sacred-secular connection explored in the first grouping, it seems at odds with the eight composite caskets' coeval focus on amorous chivalry juxtaposed with Christian knighthood and morals.[253] An alternative explanation for the scene's inclusion must therefore be found. Considering the possibility of a dual secular-sacred connotation for the composite caskets' imagery as a whole, it seems likely that if it is not an example of chivalric love and prowess, the Enyas scene must instead personify a moralising Christian lesson.

3.4 Enyas versus Galahad

The key to this lesson lies not only in the metaphorical connection to the biblical Queen Jezebel, but also in the relationship between the adjacently rendered scenes of

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[250] 'Detailed record for Royal 10 E IV', British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, The British Library, http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6549, accessed 31 March 2017.

[251] Roger S. Loomis in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500*, ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 283.

[252] Koechlin in 'Allegory and Romance on a Medieval French Marriage Casket', 24.

[253] Ross, 'Allegory and Romance on a Medieval French Marriage Casket', 24.

Enyas and Galahad, depicted on the right end panels of four of the eight composite caskets (Krakow, Metropolitan, Cluny, Bargello) (Figs. 57-60). The juxtaposition of the two knights on the same panel suggests that viewers were expected to draw a link between Enyas and Galahad, both of whom are similarly garbed in armour and depicted in profile, facing right. Could the two knights represent the secular and sacred, Enyas' chivalry motivated by thoughts of lust and personal gain, whereas Galahad, as a recognised Christ figure, can be seen to represent selfless, Christian chivalry? Certainly, both knights are depicted in the midst of saving maidens, albeit with different intentions. Whereas in the *Roman d'Enyas*, Enyas slays a monster to rescue a helpless maiden, who will then remain in his debt, the Vulgate *Queste* tells how Galahad breaks the enchantments of the *Chateau de Pucelles* to selflessly save its female occupants. However, there appear to be even more layers of meaning at work within the Enyas-Galahad pairing. For example, despite the fact that scholars such as Richard Randall Jr. and Susan Smith have posited that viewers were expected to ponder the juxtaposition of Enyas and Galahad, two knights rescuing maidens, the former out of selfishness, and the latter out of humanity, the opposing pairing of Galahad and the wild man has yet to be throughly discussed.[254] Past interpretations of this scene have focussed solely on the possible moralising meanings of Enyas, without giving consideration to the significance of the wodehouse, or wild man, who on the caskets is routinely depicted as a shaggy-furred creature who yet stands upright like a human, mirroring its depiction in the marginalia of the Smithfield Decretals and Taymouth Hours (Figs. 89-97). As noted by Richard Randall Jr., the two scenes of Enyas and Galahad were commonly paired, striking a balance between not only the selfish Enyas and the selfless Galahad, but also between the sexually pure Galahad and the 'wild and sensuous' wodehouse.[255] According to Alixe Bovey, the medieval wild man 'was seen as a spiritual exile, usually the victim of his own sin.'[256] It was only through penitence and reflection on his past sins that the wild man could improve his monstrous state and become more human.[257] This definition of the wild man can therefore be readily applied to the composite caskets' repeated image of Enyas and the wodehouse. Considering the wild man's Christian origins as a heathen

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[254] Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia: 1994), 164; Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 65.
[255] Ibid, 240.
[256] Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: 2002), 55.
[257] Ibid, 57.

beast, it seems possible that viewers of the Bargello, Krakow, Cluny, and Metropolitan composite caskets may have been expected to recognise and react to a second dichotomous pairing, that of the spiritually exiled wild man, and the Christ-like Galahad. If so, the complexity and multivalency of the two scenes is essentially doubled; through the pairing of the lost *Roman d'Enyas* with an episode from the Vulgate *Queste*, a commentary on both pure and impure, Christian and profane chivalry, as well as the importance and redemption of Christian spirituality, is provided for medieval viewers.

On three of the four caskets to depict both Enyas and Galahad (Krakow, Metropolitan, and Cluny) (Figs. 57-59) the foliage serves as a dividing border between the two scenes, allowing for a more gradual transition than if the panel was divided into independent sections, as are the eight caskets' rear panels depicting Lancelot and Gawain (Figs. 47-54). This use of foliage as a porous dividing line recalls the transitions within the four-square frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6), in which trees are similarly used to denote the division of separate, yet thematically and chronologically related scenes. On the Krakow, Metropolitan, and Cluny caskets, this transition suggests that viewers were expected to draw a connection between Enyas and Galahad. Perhaps, as previously suggested, viewers were meant to reflect on the dichotomy of the two men's personalities; Enyas' essentially pagan desires, and Galahad's Christ-like goodness. This theory is further supported by the Barber casket, whose right end panel is devoted entirely to Enyas and the wild man (Fig. 55). Although the scenes on the remaining panels of the Barber casket are equatable with the scenes on the seven other composite caskets, the carver or patron of the Barber casket chose to depict Enyas and the wild man minus the scene of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*. Considering that the remaining four composite caskets to depict Enyas also include Galahad (Krakow, Metropolitan, Cluny, and Bargello) (Figs. 57-60), it cannot have been an issue of space; the Barber casket's scene is quite spacious in comparison, with hardly any overlapping pictorial elements. This is indeed a case as described by Sandra Hindman (in reference to the illumination cycles of *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts) wherein what is not depicted is just as, if not more intriguing, than what is.[258] Without Galahad to serve as the antithesis to both Enyas and the wild man, the focus is entirely upon Enyas' ill-fated

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[258] Sandra Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Re-Readings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (Chicago, 1994), 130.

act of chivalry, and, to those in the know, the wild man's lack of Christian spirituality. Although the composite caskets have often been cited as mere tokens of courtly love, this essentially negative depiction of chivalry, paired with the heathen tendencies of the wild man, would appear to contradict that interpretation, pointing instead to a focus on the religious underpinnings of the *Roman d'Enyas*, once again exemplifying the visual union of the sacred and secular, even without the visual inclusion of the most inherently Christian Arthurian knight.

In terms of other visual differences between the caskets, the Cluny and Victoria & Albert caskets (Figs. 59 and 61) are the only two to include both Galahad's horse and attendant; both the British Museum and Walters caskets (Figs. 56 and 62) include Galahad's horse, but omit the attendant. Meanwhile, the Krakow and Metropolitan caskets (Figs. 57 and 58) are similar in that both show only Galahad and the monk, failing to include both the horse and the attendant. While these seemingly insignificant differences of composition may not affect the overall connotations of the two scenes, they do exemplify the work of several artisans, who, through such minor visual changes, may have striven to assert their artistic independence.

3.5 Galahad at the *Chateau de Pucelles*

The decision to depict Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*, a scene seldom, if ever, depicted in *Queste* manuscripts, suggests that, as noted by Busby, such scenes were chosen more for the ease with which they could be visually translated into ivory, than for their textual significance or popularity.[259] For example, Galahad at the *Chateau de Pucelles* is not included in the narrative *Queste* image cycles of either MSS Arsenal 3482 (17 total miniatures), or Rawlinson Q.b.6. (15 total miniatures). Unlike in manuscripts, in which visual cycles often consist of several dozen images, the limitations of physical space on objects such as ivory caskets create a need for clearly recognisable, iconographically striking scenes. The textually accurate image of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles* is therefore an obvious choice; its iconography and narrative progression, if not its religious significance, would have been evident to medieval viewers, regardless of whether or not they were familiar with *La Queste del saint Graal*. For example, the image of

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[259] Keith Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters (Amsterdam, 1993), 361.

Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles* can be interpreted multivalently; first, to the uninitiated, as a straightforward depiction of an adventuring knight aided by a monk, and secondly, to those familiar with the Vulgate *Queste*, as an exemplary episode of Galahad's intrinsic goodness and Christianity. Indeed, Galahad's identity as an inherently Christian knight, and more specifically, as a Christ figure, is enhanced by his pairing with a monk who holds a large key, ostensibly that of the *Chateau de Pucelles*. The monk can be seen to dually reference Saint Peter, who is traditionally depicted holding one or two keys, as seen in contemporaneous French manuscripts such as a copy of the *Vies des saints* from the second quarter of the fourteenth century (Cambridge, Saint John's College Library, University of Cambridge, MS B.9) (Fig. 106).[260]

Relatedly, the connection between the key held by the monk and the physicality of the caskets as boxes with locks and keys should also be noted. For example, within the image of the Siege of the Castle of Love on the British Museum casket lid (Fig. 64), the rightmost register depicts a kneeling knight receiving a key from a maiden, ostensibly illustrating his acceptance of her proffered love.[261] This image takes the place of various scenes of knights attacking the castle, which are found in the rightmost register of the seven remaining composite caskets' lids (Figs. 63, 65-70). Although the Barber casket also includes a kneeling knight and standing maiden in the rightmost register of its lid (Fig. 63), the British Museum casket is the only one to include the visual trope of a key. That the lid of the British Museum casket is, apart from the inclusion of the maiden holding the key, overall stylistically and iconographically similar to the lids of the remaining seven composite caskets, suggests that the eight caskets were made by a group of Parisian artisans who engaged in communication with one another, and likely used a combination of shared visual models and artistic creativity or independence, as will be further considered in Chapter Seven.[262] The visual vignette of the knight, maiden, and key clearly illustrates the association between the aforementioned trope of the key, its visual manifestation, and secular love. The inclusion of a key on both the lid of the British Museum casket and its Galahad-themed, right end panel creates visual continuity, eliding the casket's planes through the repetition of a single visual element, connecting the wholly secular

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[260] See Appendix 2.
[261] Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 131.
[262] See pp. 235-41.

Siege of the Castle of Love to the more theologically amorphous scenes on the casket's side panels. For example, by connoting the monk as St. Peter, a sacred association for the key is suggested, an association that is strengthened by Galahad's identity as a Christ figure, and by the status of the Vulgate *Queste* as the most inherently Christian of all medieval French Arthurian legends. In this way the symbol of the key exemplifies both visual continuity and the intertwining of the secular and sacred, through its use in both clearly profane (the Siege of the Castle of Love) and inherently sacred (Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*) scenes, creating cross sacred-secular links within the casket's visual programme.

Considering Galahad's religiously connoted identity, it seems possible that viewers may have been able to extend the theological connection from a Christ-like knight to an apostolic monk, thereby increasing the religious import of the casket. These layers of meaning, both secular and sacred, increase the likelihood that the composite caskets were intended to serve as more than mere superficially attractive repositories. For example, whereas Jeanne Fox-Friedman dismisses the composite caskets' depictions as merely 'attest[ing] to the glamour of the Arthurian world and its ambivalent values', the Vulgate Cycle's interpretation of Galahad as Christ reincarnated brings the Christian values hidden within the legends into focus.[263] Similarly, Roger Loomis was non-plussed as to why the scene of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles* was selected from the multiplicity of traditionally illustrated *Queste* scenes. Martine Meuwese notes that: 'Loomis considered the scene chosen from the *Queste del saint Graal* [Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*] for the ivory carvings [composite caskets] odd and pointless.'[264] It is perhaps not an obvious choice from a literary point of view, as the event is not a textual highlight, but the connotations do fit extremely well into the caskets' decorative programme, providing, for example, a visual and textual link to the Castle of Love imagery depicted on the lids of the eight caskets. Superficially, both images refer to the rescue of maidens from fortresses, although Galahad's rescue is motivated by piety, while that of the knights depicted on the lids appears to be motivated by sexual desire and lust. Thus, it can be said that the image of Galahad at the *Chateau*

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[263] Jeanne Fox-Friedman, 'King Arthur in Art' in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (New York, 2009), 389.
[264] Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 131.

de Pucelles is defined by its ability to bridge the two seemingly dichotomous readings of the caskets, secular and sacred.

3.6 Lancelot versus Gawain

As discussed above, both the Enyas and Galahad scenes focus on the rescue of maidens.[265] This observation can be further applied to the scenes depicted on the composite caskets' rear panels, Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge and Gawain at the *Chateau Merveille* (Figs. 47-54). The overarching theme of chivalric rescue perhaps provides a partial explanation for the composite caskets' seemingly random compilation of Arthurian scenes. It also serves to relate the Arthurian scenes on the caskets' side panels to the image of the Siege of the Castle of Love found on all eight of the caskets' lids (Figs. 63-70). This is but the first, and most straightforward, of at least two levels that the caskets' imagery functions at: a charming visual diversion from daily life, with a primarily secular, chivalric connotation. However, just as the images of Enyas and Galahad can be multivalently understood from both profane and religious perspectives, so too can the Lancelot and Gawain scenes. Indeed, the French Arthurian legends existed within a society that was profoundly shaped by Christianity, a fact that made it difficult, if not impossible, for anything to exist outside of the sacred-secular framework, or off of the sacred-secular spectrum. The rear panel of each composite casket consists of three images of Gawain from Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, arranged from left to right in a textually backwards order, first illustrating Gawain's battle with a lion at the *Chateau Merveille*, followed by his near death on the enchanted Perilous Bed, or the *Lit de la Merveille*.[266] However, the image of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* has been inserted into the middle of the Gawain sequence, appearing after Gawain battles the lion but before he conquers the Perilous Bed. This begs the question of why the carvers of all eight caskets would have chosen to so interrupt the pictorial progression of three clearly related scenes. According to Glyn Davies, the caskets exemplify the 'deliberate conflation' of the scenes of Lancelot and

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[265] Ibid, 131.

[266] Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres complétes,* ed. by Daniel Poiron, Anne Berthelot, Peter F. Dembowski, et al. (Paris, 1994), 897.

Gawain.[267] Although the caskets do exhibit a degree of visual fusion in their illustration of Lancelot's and Gawain's pursuits, exemplified by the textually incorrect placement of the lion(s), and the inclusion of arrows raining down on both knights, evidence that the carver intended the two knights to be read as one and the same is lacking. Rather, it is perhaps more appropriate to read the shower of weapons that attack each knight as a means of creating a connection between, or 'visually synthesis[ing]' these two narrative scenes, as aptly noted by Paula Mae Carns.[268] In *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, Lancelot crosses the perilous Sword Bridge to rescue his beloved Queen Guinevere. As part of the enchantments of the Sword Bridge, two lions appear to wait at the far end of the bridge. Upon crossing the bridge, however, Lancelot realises that the lions were nothing more than a magical mirage meant to dissuade him from crossing.[269] Meanwhile, in *Le Conte du Graal*, Gawain valiantly overcomes the enchantments of the *Chateau Merveille* so as to prove his knightly prowess. These enchantments include a shower of bolts and arrows when Gawain first reclines on the Perilous Bed, and a vicious lion that then attacks him.[270] Indeed, there seems to be no real reason to depict the two knights as one and the same. As will be discussed shortly, although both Lancelot and Gawain serve as personifications of idealised medieval chivalry, the two knights differ in terms of their relationships with Christianity. Whereas Lancelot consistently struggles to live up to the expectations of Christian knights, Gawain essentially ignores the Christian aspects of knighthood, practicing chivalry of a wholly secular sort. Therefore, it instead seems more likely that the rear panels' ambiguous visual programme, which arises from the mingling of the two legends, perhaps served, whether consciously or unconsciously, to encourage a multivalent reading of the caskets' imagery; as both secular images of knightly daring, and, at a deeper, more textually dependent level, as meditations on the relationship between chivalry and Christianity.

Furthermore, it is odd that the carvers included three scenes from one Arthurian legend by Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, and only one from a second of Chrétien's legends, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Although both Lancelot's

[267] Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200-1550* (London, 2014), 658.
[268] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art', 84.
[269] de Troyes, 'The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)', in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991): 245.
[270] de Troyes, 'Perceval: The Story of the Grail', in *Arthurian Romances,* 477.

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perilous crossing of the Sword Bridge and Gawain's triumphant combat at the *Chateau Merveille* can be considered quintessential scenes from Chrétien's Arthurian *oeuvre*, the marked emphasis on Gawain, a chivalric, yet purely secular knight, is difficult to explain. Keith Busby has posited that such scenes were chosen merely for their overall decorative effect.[271] However, if this were indeed the case, it seems more likely that the carver would have chosen scenes from a wider selection of legends, or at the very least, two each from *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and *Le Conte du Graal*. There is, however, a link between Lancelot and Gawain, which serves to connect the intertwined scenes of the two knights. In *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, Lancelot believes that there are two lions awaiting him at the far side of the Sword Bridge, rendering this scene similar to Gawain's adventures at the *Chateau Merveille*, in which he encounters and slays a lion. This episode of Gawain visually recalls Samson's slaying of a lion, as depicted in roughly contemporaneous moralising Bibles and bestiaries, such as Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 3; Montpellier, Médiathèque de l'Agglomération, MS 59; and the Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MSS KB 133 D 25, and MMW 10 B 21 (Figs. 107-110).[272] Like the similarity between the maiden of the *Roman de Enyas* and the biblical Queen Jezebel, the visual concurrence between Gawain and Samson again suggests a metaphorical link between the wholly secular Gawain and the moralising, biblical narrative of Samson, who kills a lion with the aid of God. In addition, the positioning of the Lancelot scene in the middle of the Gawain progression also invites viewers to draw comparisons between the actions of Lancelot and Gawain. Although both knights' motivations are overall secular and chivalric, they differ in their relationships with Christianity. Whereas Lancelot is generally oblivious of yet receptive to the Christian faith, Gawain actively resists all attempts to Christianise him, culminating in his complete inability to view the Holy Grail, as described in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*.[273] As noted by Richard Kaeuper, Gawain's failure to embrace Christian spirituality renders him locked within 'the tunnel vision of *chevalerie terrienne*.'[274] Perhaps the three images of Gawain on the composite caskets' rear panels were meant

[271] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', 361.
[272] See Appendix 2.
[273] Norris J. Lacy, ed. *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, Vol. 6, trans. by E. Jane Burns (Cambridge, 2010): 98-100.
[274] Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2001), 257.

to serve as a warning to those who would privilege secular chivalry and knightly prowess over Christian devotion, with the visual similarity between Gawain and Samson further emphasising Gawain's lack of Christianity.

Similar to the dearth of manuscript depictions of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles*, the Lancelot and Gawain scenes found on the composite caskets' rear panels are also seldom found in contemporaneous fourteenth-century manuscripts. One exception is MS fr. 12577, where an image with iconography almost identical to that of the composite caskets accurately depicts Gawain first reclining on the Perilous Bed, and then fighting the lion (Fig. 111). The rendition of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* in Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1453, also includes miniatures focussed on Gawain (six out of fifteen total miniatures), although only Gawain's battle with the lion, not the Perilous Bed, is depicted (Fig. 112). MSS fr. 1453 and 12577 are two out of three extant fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts to include images of Gawain.[275] The miniature of Gawain at the *Chateau Merveille* is one of only two to depict Gawain in MS fr. 12577's rendition of *Le Conte du Graal*, while MS fr. 1453 includes a total of six images of Gawain, although, like MS fr. 12577, only one is akin to the Gawain imagery of the composite caskets. Meanwhile, of the seven extant *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, or *Lancelot*, manuscripts, only one (Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS Garrett 125) is illustrated, although an image of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge is not among the manuscript's few illuminations.[276] Roger Loomis interprets the overall dearth of depictions of these scenes of Gawain and Lancelot in late medieval Arthurian manuscripts as evidence that the caskets were produced prior to the manuscripts.[277] However, due to the inclusion of the miniature of Gawain at the *Chateau Merveille* in MS fr. 12577, it is possible that either the manuscript image or ivory carving served as a visual reference for the other, depending on which object was produced first. It is also possible, considering the close, possibly even overlapping, production dates of the manuscript and eight composite caskets, that these objects of Arthurian visual culture were produced concurrently, with the manuscript and ivory artisans working alongside, and thus influenced, by one another, as will be discussed in greater detail in

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[275] The third fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscript is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12576 (for full citation, see Appendix 1).
[276] See Appendix 2; Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's *Perceval*', 361.
[277] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 64.

Chapter Seven.[278] It would therefore follow that the overall lack of Lancelot and Gawain imagery in fourteenth-century renditions of Chrétien's legends had more to do with the scenes' and the overall compositions' specific suitability for the given artistic material (parchment or ivory), as well as the existence of parallel visual traditions in manuscript and ivory, than the carvers' lack of knowledge of current trends in Arthurian illustration. Whereas the Galahad/Enyas panel of each of the eight composite caskets (Figs. 55-62) exhibits some considerable iconographic differences, such as the inclusion or exclusion of either Enyas or Galahad, or the omission of Galahad's horse and/or attendant, the eight Lancelot/Gawain panels (Figs. 47-54) are almost indistinguishable; they depict the same Arthurian scenes in the same order, and exhibit almost identical iconography. Any differences, such as the number of bells under the Perilous Bed, or the positioning of Gawain's sword in the leftmost episode, are so slight as to not affect the scene's pictorial meaning, and therefore suggest a certain degree of either rote copying or artistic independence, as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven.[279]

3.7 Lancelot versus Galahad

The rear panels' visual union of the sacred and secular is most evident in the Lancelot episode. The image of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge is a visual scene with complex connotations, as Lancelot's motivation, to save Queen Guinevere, although admirable in theory, is motivated by his sinful lust and adulterous love for her, the complete opposite of his virginal son Galahad's motivation to rescue the maidens of the *Chateau de Pucelles*. It must be kept in mind, however, that because the image of Lancelot on the composite caskets merely shows the Arthurian knight crossing the Sword Bridge on his hands and knees, while (textually inaccurate) arrows rain down upon him, knowledge of Lancelot's motivations would have been available only to those viewers with textual knowledge of Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. For example, Carns suggests that the inclusion of the arrows 'collapses different narrative moments', hearkening back to an earlier point in the text where Lancelot does indeed dodge a rain shower of weapons.[280] Like the image of Galahad on the right end panel, that of Lancelot on the rear panel functions at several levels of understanding, ranging

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from a purely secular form of chivalry to quintessential Christianity, dependent on the literary knowledge the viewer would have brought to his or her visual experience of the casket. According to Chrétien's text, by crossing the bridge on his hands and knees, Lancelot acquires wounds that can be interpreted as reminiscent of the stigmata, which would seem to render him a Christ figure, were it not for his consistently sinful decisions, namely his adulterous relationship with Guinevere.[281] This reference to the stigmata has been discussed by scholars such as Barbara Newman, who unduly simplifies the event by commenting that the crossing of the Sword Bridge is a reference to Christ's crucifixion, clearly labelling Lancelot as a Christ figure.[282] Newman's theory of the visual clarity with which Lancelot appears as Christ is suspect. This Christological connotation of Lancelot is in actuality far more subtle. Although there are undoubtedly shades of Christianity within this episode, Lancelot's acquisition of the 'stigmata', a textual detail that is not depicted visually, speaks more to the complexity and duality of his character than to his personification as Christ. Newman is perhaps closer to the complex meaning of this episode when she notes that Lancelot's crossing provides a 'chivalric perspective on Christ's passion', with all the positive and negative connotations that the practice of chivalry in late medieval France entailed.[283] The fourteenth century was in part characterised by shifting political power among French royalty, and the continuation of the Hundred Years' War. Thus, knighthood was utilised more at the behest of political convenience and machinations than Christian morals and purely chivalric motives, suggesting that Lancelot's dramatic crossing could have been read as a futile and possibly even unnecessary action.[284] However, it must be kept in mind that this image could alternatively have been meant to hearken back to the golden age of romantic chivalry, depicting a well-known knight risking his life to save a maiden. Just as young men may have identified with Perceval, a clearly mortal, and sometimes immoral, youth, yet one striving for religious perfection, perhaps they similarly identified with Lancelot, a celebrated knight, yet one who constantly struggles to balance his secular and religious obligations. In both Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and the anonymous Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, Lancelot appears as

[281] de Troyes, 'Lancelot (The Knight of the Cart)', 245.
[282] Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, 2013), 61.
[283] Ibid, 65.
[284] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), 308.

a figure similar to Perceval, in that he strives for Christian perfection, yet often falls short. The dichotomy between Lancelot's adulterous motivations and his receipt of the 'stigmata' in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* exemplifies this, suggesting that viewers of the eight composite caskets who had prior textual knowledge of the legend would have seen much more than a mere visual exemplar of chivalry in the image of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge.

Similarly, the connection between Lancelot and his son Galahad should be recognised, especially in terms of their visual juxtaposition on adjacent panels of the eight composite caskets. However, it is worth noting that for a viewer unfamiliar with Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, the two knights could appear to be one and the same, depicted several times over on the casket, completing various knightly deeds. Indeed, none of the carvers of the composite caskets made noticeable efforts to visually differentiate the various knights, Lancelot, Galahad, Gawain, and Enyas. Thus, without prior knowledge of the relevant Arthurian legends, it is possible that a viewer could come away with an alternative understanding of the casket's imagery, in essence creating a new romantic legend. However, that the sinful father and saintly son are both depicted on the caskets suggests that viewers with prior knowledge of the Vulgate *Queste* would, when viewing the casket as a three-dimensional object formed of thematically related ivory panels, have been able to draw comparisons between the two knights, musing over each knight's relationship to Christianity. For example, although the association between Lancelot and Christ appears obvious, due to Lancelot's acquisition of ostensibly stigmata-like wounds, Lancelot, unlike his son Galahad, is far from a true Christ figure, especially considering that he crosses the Sword Bridge to rescue Queen Guinevere, his illicit lover. Galahad, meanwhile, can be viewed as the 'perfected' version of Lancelot, a knight with all of Lancelot's charm and chivalric prowess, but without his weakness for earthly pleasures. It is therefore possible that the inclusion of this particular image of Lancelot was meant to suggest the interrelated nature of the religious and secular, illustrating the medieval interweaving of chivalry, lust, and love, the Christian and the profane. The dichotomy between Lancelot's adulterous motivations and acquisition of the 'stigmata' exemplifies this. The crossing of the Sword Bridge is therefore loaded with contradictory messages; Lancelot's determination to rescue Guinevere is clearly chivalric, yet his relationship with the Queen would certainly have been frowned upon. Chrétien, in writing *Le Chevalier de*

la Charrette, introduces the legend by noting that he is composing it at the request of his patroness, Marie de Champagne:

> Chrétien begins his book about the Knight of the Cart; the subject matter and meaning are furnished and given him by the countess, and he strives carefully to add nothing but his effort and careful attention.[285]

Chrétien's statement can be understood as an attempt to divest himself of authorship and direct connection to the text due to his own moral disapproval of the narrative. Indeed, scholars such as William Kibler have suggested that due to the difference in theme between *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and Chrétien's other romances, in essence an adulterous relationship (*Charrette*) versus marital fidelity and morality (*Eric et Enid*, *Cligés*, *Yvain*, *Le Conte du Graal*), it seems likely that the idea for *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* was suggested to Chrétien by Marie de Champagne herself.[286]

3.8 The 'Spiritual Unicorn'

Seven of the eight caskets (Barber, British, Krakow, Metropolitan, Bargello, Victoria & Albert, and Walters) (Figs. 71-74, and 76-78) also include a further common medieval trope found in a wide variety of artistic mediums, from the margins of psalters and Books of Hours, to bestiaries and misericords; the unicorn with its head in the lap of a maiden, usually signifying the male lover trapped by feminine wiles. According to the bestiary, 'a virgin girl is led to where the unicorn is accustomed to live, and is sent off alone into the wood. As soon as it sees her it leaps into her lap and embraces her. So it is caught by the hunters.'[287] However, the unicorn can be alternatively understood as a metaphor for Christ's sacrifice. Typological treatises such as Honorius of Autun's *Speculum ecclesiae* (*circa* 1120) helped to bring the term 'spiritual unicorn' in reference to Christ into circulation.[288] On all of the composite caskets except for Cluny (in which a second Tristan scene takes the place of the maiden and unicorn) (Fig. 75), the scene of the maiden and unicorn is located on the same panel as Tristan and Isolde's secret tryst (Figs. 71-74 and 76-78). The pairing of these two scenes results in a theological opposition similar to that of Enyas and

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[285] de Troyes, 'Lancelot (The Knight of the Cart)', 207.
[286] Kibler, 'Introduction', in *Arthurian Romances*, 8.
[287] Ann Payne, *Medieval Beasts* (London: 1990), 27.
[288] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 164.

Galahad. Tristan and Isolde's adulterous, sexual love is contrasted with Christ's chaste love for humanity and his resulting sacrifice, signified by the man stabbing the passive unicorn with a spear. In addition, the image of Tristan and Isolde on the left end panel of all eight caskets provides an example of the blurred definitions of right and wrong. Under the effects of a love potion, Tristan lusts after Isolde, the wife of King Mark. Meanwhile, King Mark jealously spies on the lovers from within the branches of a tree. None of these three figures' actions are honourable, however they can be seen to personify various levels of sin, both passive (Tristan, due to the love potion) and active (King Mark, due to jealousy). It therefore appears possible that this pictorial juxtaposition may have been intended to serve a purpose similar to the pairing of Enyas and Galahad; to cause the viewer to reflect on the various forms which love can take; secular and sacred, sinful and chaste. The fact that the Enyas/Galahad and Tristan/unicorn scenes adorn the two end panels of each casket (right and left, respectively), rendering them spatially parallel to one another, increases the likelihood of this comparison. Susan Smith aptly describes the effect on medieval viewers of this appropriation and use of secular and sacred images in new and varying contexts:

> One…gets the sense…of a wresting of images from one situation and installing them in another, transformed to stand for a very different proposition and intended to be perceived as such. For the viewer who knew these figures from other contexts…, the experience must have been one of confounded expectations, of challenge to previously assumed meanings, of being at the centre of an ongoing interpretive game.[289]

This speaks to the intrinsically active quality of the composite caskets' imagery, again suggesting that they served as more than mere visually attractive vessels intended for the storage of small trinkets and documents. Rather, the caskets can be seen to have fomented theological reflection on the part of the viewer, inviting comparisons between the intertwined, complex, secular and sacred realms of medieval life.

3.9 The Composite Caskets' Imagery in Context

At the most superficial level, the scenes of Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Enyas, and Tristan can be read without an Arthurian connotation, as mere visualisations of chivalric prowess and courtly love; all four of the knights undertake their depicted

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[289] Ibid, 190.

adventures with the end goal of rescuing or obtaining maidens. There are, however, moral differences between the knights' actions, differences that would require a viewer to have prior knowledge of the Arthurian legends of Chrétien de Troyes and the Vulgate Cycle. Whereas in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, Galahad's motive as a virgin knight is purely humanitarian and Christian, in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, Gawain is more selfishly motivated, undertaking the seizing of the *Chateau Merveille* more as a means to prove his knightly prowess than to aid humanity. Gawain and Galahad therefore appear as counterparts; Gawain embodies only the secularly chivalric, rather than the Christian aspects of medieval knighthood, while Galahad personifies knightly deeds that are religiously motivated. The caskets' scenes of Galahad and Gawain can be viewed as defining portrayals of the two knights, highlighting their sacred and secular identities, in much the same way that Perceval and Gawain are compared in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, wherein the two knights are similarly presented as exemplifying the (respectively) sacred and secular aspects of medieval life and knighthood. In both MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12577, the only two extant fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts to include images of Gawain, the ratio of images of Perceval to Gawain (nine to six in MS fr. 1453, and six to two in MS fr. 12577) focusses the viewer's attention on Perceval's increasing religiosity, as opposed to Gawain's stubborn refusal to adopt Christian behaviours. This juxtaposition invites the viewer to ponder the dichotomy of the two knights, searching for incongruities between the two, such as Gawain's Christian shortcomings. Although Gawain is a highly regarded Arthurian knight, his narrow focus on secular life eventually inhibits his achievement of the Holy Grail, as described in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*. Galahad, meanwhile, as the knightly reincarnation of Christ, is the definition of Christian knighthood; his rescue of the maidens trapped within the *Chateau de Pucelles* is motivated by purely selfless, humanitarian reasons, rather than personal gain or to exemplify his knightly prowess, as is the case with Gawain's vanquishing of the enchantments of the *Chateau Merveille*.

Meanwhile, although Lancelot successfully rescues both Queen Guinevere and her captured people, his focus is on availing himself of Guinevere's sexual desire for him. Similarly, in *Le Roman de Enyas*, Enyas may have originally rescued the maiden out of a pure sense of knightly chivalry, but his motives are soon swayed by male jealousy when he is confronted with a rival knight. Finally, in the Prose *Tristan*,

Tristan's love for Isolde, although a passive emotion resultant of a love potion, is based purely on lust, irrespective of any moral sense of right and wrong. In keeping with the caskets' obvious themes of courtly love and chivalry, the juxtaposition of the scenes of Enyas/Galahad and Gawain/Lancelot can be interpreted as commentaries on two dichotomous kinds of love; chaste, Christian love, versus sexual, profane love. As the Arthurian personification of Christ, Galahad is motivated by his love for humanity, while Gawain, a knight known both for his chivalric deeds and lust for women, is a definitively more worldly, as opposed to spiritually focussed, knight. Similarly, Tristan is also known for his knightly prowess, although the Prose *Tristan* is largely taken up by his pursuit of Isolde. Galahad can therefore be read as the antithesis of not only Gawain, but also Enyas and Tristan, the caskets' inclusion of all four knights resulting in a cyclical comparison of secular and profane versus sacred, Christian knighthood, to be reflected upon by the viewer. The depiction of sexual versus chaste love, and therefore, secular versus sacred love, is personified respectively by Lancelot, Gawain, Enyas, and Tristan versus Galahad, the sole Arthurian knight who is truly Christian. It seems possible that Chrétien created such complex and dichotomous figures such as Lancelot and Gawain to encourage his audience to consider how such contradictions are evident in contemporary medieval life, in which the sacred and the secular routinely both contradict and intertwine with one another.[290]

Although in fourteenth-century France, Chrétien's verse Arthurian legends were second in popularity to the Prose Vulgate Cycle, the dedication of all eight composite caskets' rear panels to scenes from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and *Le Conte du Graal* suggests that these two legends had a surprising degree of longevity in the Middle Ages, perhaps more than they are attributed by scholars such as Alison Stones and Muriel Whitaker.[291] This is further evidenced by the existence of the fourteenth-century manuscripts MSS fr. 1453, 12576, and 12577, and the casket OA 122, which provide visual accounts of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*. The decision to include imagery on the caskets from variously authored Arthurian legends and other romances must also be considered. For example, the juxtaposition of

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[290] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', 78.
[291] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 11; Alison Stones, 'Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art', *Oxford Art Online*, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2089125, accessed 2 October, 2014.

Chrétien's twelfth-century poems *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and *Le Conte du Graal* with the early thirteenth-century prose Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* once again suggests that in opposition to what Roger Loomis has posited, various Arthurian compilations, including both the anonymous Vulgate Cycle and Chrétien's Arthurian *oeuvre*, were circulating in France within the first half of the fourteenth century, illustrating that Chrétien's poems enjoyed a longer period of popularity than has generally been thought.[292] Certainly, past scholars such as Roger Loomis have claimed that Chrétien's verse legends declined in popularity following the composition of the prose Vulgate Cycle. The existence of fourteenth-century manuscripts and ivories detailing Chrétien's tales renders this theory suspect. Perhaps the late medieval continuity of Chrétien's work can be attributed in part to his poems' ability to hearken back to a simpler, earlier age, when chivalry was at the apex of its reign, and most closely aligned with its archetypal medieval definition; a knightly code of conduct founded on both secular and Christian morals. As has been previously discussed, the imaginations of a fourteenth-century audience may have been captured by the manuscripts' and caskets' images of unequivocally morally right and wrong scenarios, paired with illustrations of quintessentially chivalric deeds.

Why would such images have been especially popular in early to mid-fourteenth century Paris in particular? One possibility has to do with the literary connection between King Arthur and Paris. In his *Roman de Brut* (1155), the poet Wace describes how after conquering Norway and Denmark, King Arthur proceeded to conquer France, and then remained in the country for nine years.[293] The *Roman de Brut* is thus one example of the medieval literary tradition that served to tie King Arthur to France, particularly to Paris:

> During these nine years that Arthur abode in France, he wrought divers great wonders, reproving many haughty men and their tyrannies, and chastising many sinners after their deservings. Now it befell that when Easter was come, Arthur held high feast at Paris with his friends.[294]

Indeed, Paris was the specified area in which this finely wrought style of carving surfaced for an inscribed period of time, the first half of the fourteenth century.

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[292] Loomis, A*rthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 9.
[293] Wace, *Roman de Brut,* in *Arthurian Chronicles,* trans. by Eugene Mason (London, 1962), 57-62.
[294] Ibid, 62.

During this period, several ivory workshops were active in Paris. The workshops'
shared location in a specified area of the city, likely the Rue neuve Notre Dame, on
the Île de la Cité, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, points to the possibility that
the caskets' production was a collaborative affair, the work divided among several
different workshops and/or artisans.[295] Although the caskets are overall stylistically
similar, the aforementioned differences in composition, such as the inclusion or
exclusion of certain scenes, like Galahad at the *Chateau de Pucelles*, and Enyas and
the wild man, as well as more subtle differences in terms of background details, such
as the use of foliage, suggests a group of several connected, yet individual, ivory
artisans. Within this group of artisans, it is possible that certain artisans were assigned
specific scenes to repeatedly produce for inclusion on multiple caskets. For example,
the lids of the Victoria & Albert and Walters caskets are remarkably similar both
stylistically and compositionally. Instances in which the placement of details (such as
a trebuchet, which appears on the right of the Victoria & Albert lid, and on the left of
the Walters lid) (Figs. 69-70) on the lids of these caskets differ, could merely suggest
artistic ingenuity and creativity on the part of the artist.

In terms of the caskets' audiences, according to Élisabeth Antoine, 'we know
fairly well for whom the caskets were intended, that is, a cultured group who owned
illuminated manuscripts and knew all the scenes depicted.'[296] F. X. Newman
describes what he terms the 'paradox of courtly love', the coexistence of licit and
illicit, moral and immoral love.[297] This concept is perhaps nowhere more evident than
in the French Arthurian legends, and on the eight composite caskets, through the
physical juxtaposition of Lancelot, Gawain, Tristan, and Galahad. As has been
suggested, is it possible that this juxtaposition extended to the secular-sacred divide?
Could the viewers of the caskets have simultaneously viewed these four Arthurian
knights as exemplars of both medieval love and Christian values? As Carns aptly
notes, 'the viewer of the ivory must interpret each sign against prior knowledge, both
of the tale as well as the ivory carver's visual language, and in the context of the

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[295] See pp. 219, 241-4; Henrike Manuwald, 'Carving the Folie Tristan: Ivory Caskets as
Material Evidence of Textual History', in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by
Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge, 2015), 216.
[296] Élisabeth Antoine, Casket: Scenes from Romances', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past
in France*, 286.
[297] F.X. Newman, ed., *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (Albany, 1968), vii.

visual cycle.'[298] The nature and extent of knowledge that viewers would have brought to their encounters with the caskets must be considered if the manner in which the caskets were understood by contemporary audiences is to be hypothesised. It is, however, possible that some viewers of the caskets would only have understood the more superficial connotations of courtly love and chivalry. For example, the image of Galahad receiving the key to the *Chateau de Pucelles* could have been interpreted simply as referring to the 'unlocking' or attainment of courtly love, while the scene from the *Roman d'Enyas* may have innocently appeared as an exemplar of positively motivated chivalry. As noted by Michael Camille, 'rather than see "Gothic man" as capable of looking only through the spectacles of doctrine, we should see a multifarious audience…able to relate intimately both to the amorous self-images adorning their dressing tables and to the small ivory Virgin before which they might say their devotions before retiring.'[299] If this is indeed true, it does not seem too large of a jump to suggest that medieval viewers of the composite caskets may have simultaneously been able to relate to the visual aspects of the sacred and profane, practicing a kind of visual multitasking. A viewer's understanding of one of the composite caskets could therefore have ranged from its superficial role as a token of love, courtship, or marriage, to a visual exemplar of Christian morals, or anywhere in between, depending on his or her textual knowledge of the Arthurian romances, Christian iconography and biblical narratives, and currently circulating visual tropes and allegories. As noted by Nancy Regalado, the viewers' understanding of the caskets' imagery would have been reliant upon 'knowledge of cultural connotations associated with iconographic motifs…which may be signalled by repetitions, juxtapositions, and explicit allusions.'[300] The purpose of romantic and Arthurian-themed ivory caskets as dependent upon their audience's prior knowledge will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, where I will consider the context and use of such caskets in early to mid fourteenth-century France.[301]

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[298] Carns, 'Playing the Fool: La Folie Tristan on Two French Gothic Ivories', *Sculpture Journal* 23.1 (2014): 60.

[299] Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 310-11.

[300] Nancy F. Regalado, 'The Wings of Chivalry and the Order of Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 308', in *Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe,* ed. by Karen L. Fresco, and Anne D. Hedeman (Columbus, 2011), 53.

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3.10 Concluding Thoughts

Considering the variety of scenes illustrated on the eight composite caskets' panels; Arthurian tales, medieval allegories, and chivalric romances, it would at first appear that the various images have nothing more in common than the general tropes of secular, romantic love, and quintessential knightly chivalry. However, a more detailed analysis of the caskets' visual programmes reveals several levels of interconnected themes, both secular and sacred. The juxtaposition of opposing moral themes with both profane and religious figures is at the heart of the caskets' visual programmes, illustrating their role as tactile, artistic commentaries on the duality of fourteenth-century French culture and society. Certainly, it can be surmised that the sacred and the secular were nowhere near as clearly circumscribed in the late Middle Ages as they are in today's world, and were instead viewed as constantly overlapping and intertwining, as is evidenced by the eight composite caskets' visual programmes, in which the secular and sacred are consistently integrated with one another; the sins of Enyas and the wodehouse mitigated by Galahad's charity and divinity, Gawain's adamant refusal of Christianity tempered by Lancelot's good intentions.

In other words, although the visual programmes of the eight composite caskets do include imagery that is extrinsically Christian, comparable to the wholly religious lid of OA 122 (Fig. 1), the romantic, profane scenes selected for illustration can similarly be interpreted as personifications of the sacred. For example, despite the composite caskets' initially secular appearance, perhaps best exemplified by the romantic and allegorical Siege of the Castle of Love (Figs. 63-70), a close analysis of the Arthurian scenes on their side panels reveals coeval religious and profane visual connotations. Just as the illuminations in manuscripts such as MSS fr. 12577, Arsenal 3482 and 5218, and Rawlinson Q.b.6., discussed in Chapters One and Two, can be understood at a multiplicity of visual and textual levels, dependent on a plethora of cultural factors, including the readers' gender, level of literacy, and familiarity with the legend, so too can the eight composite caskets be multivalently understood, as objects of medieval visual culture that can be 'read' and endowed with opposing, yet coexisting, interpretations, both religious and profane. In this way the dual purposes of the caskets' imagery are visually intertwined.

Chapter Four

***Chose Merveilleuse* and Eucharistic Chalice?**

Visualising the Grail

This chapter, my final case study, will concentrate on visual representations of the

Grail in Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* and the anonymous Vulgate *La*

Queste del saint Graal. As arguably the two most inherently religious Arthurian

legends, I will examine whether *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* are

so religiously designated due to their depictions (or lack thereof) of the Grail.

Questions that I will engage with include: is there a standard representation of the

Grail within fourteenth-century French Arthurian manuscripts? If not, what are the

varying forms in which the Grail is depicted, and what are the visual references and

models from which these depictions stem? Do divergent visualisations of the Grail

signify its multivalent and abstract nature? Are there instances in which the

illuminators appear to have actively refrained from depicting the Grail, perhaps due to

its connotations as a transcendent Christian object? I will also incorporate a

discussion of my selected ivories, questioning the complete lack of Grail imagery on

the eight composite, romance-themed ivory caskets. Was this dearth of Grail images

perhaps due to the overtly religious, rather than romantic, status of the Grail in the late

Middle Ages? The only known ivory to include a possible reference to the Grail is

OA 122, in which a small carving of a chalice-shaped cup (ostensibly that stolen from

King Arthur by the Red Knight and recovered by Perceval) is included on the front

panel (Fig. 5).[302] In regard to OA 122, I will discuss whether this cup can indeed be

seen as a prefiguration, or foreshadowing, of the Grail, and can thus be identified as a

form of Grail imagery. This analysis will coincide with my argument that late

medieval Grail imagery encompassed a wider visual *oeuvre* than may at first be

expected. Finally, I will consider whether contemporary medieval audiences were

expected to perceive the seemingly erudite connotations of Christianity so often

attached to the Grail. According to Aden Kumler, the artistic visualisation of religious

artefacts and rituals in illuminated manuscripts 'made religious formation- and

reformation- a process of seeing religious truth painted on the page.'[303] Indeed, in

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[302] See Appendix 1.

[303] Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven, 2011), 5.

Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England (2011) Kumler hypothesises that images 'played a decisive part in…what it meant to be a good- even an excellent- Christian', a theory that will inform my analysis of the function of Grail imagery in fourteenth-century French copies of *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*.[304] For example, I will consider what cultural knowledge the audiences have required in order to understand these visual, Christological interpretations of the Grail? This line of inquiry will involve an anthropological consideration of fourteenth-century French literary and religious practices and beliefs, as well as a theoretically driven examination of the Grail's semiotic meaning, and its identity as a symbol. By comparing the visualisation (or lack thereof) of the Grail processions described in *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* across a range of manuscripts, as well as nine ivory caskets, I will consider instances of change and continuity in fourteenth-century depictions of what are categorically characterised as the two most inherently religious legends within the late medieval Arthurian *oeuvre*.

4.1 Historical and Textual Background of the Grail

Before delving into an analysis of fourteenth-century Grail imagery, it is essential to have an understanding of the Grail's origins. I will thus begin by tracing the French medieval textual roots of what became, in the words of Christopher Snyder, 'arguably the most famous Christian relic in the world.'[305] Although there are early medieval textual references to the Grail, most notably in the Welsh *Mabinogion* and the Celtic legends of Bran, for the intents and purposes of this chapter, I will focus solely on the emergence of the Grail in medieval French culture.[306] Chrétien de Troyes was the first to invoke the concept of the Grail within the context of the Arthurian legends, rendering it a key, if elusive, aspect of his final, seemingly incomplete legend, *Le Conte du Graal,* written *circa* 1180.[307] Chrétien appropriated the pre-existing word *graal*, used to designate a serving tray, and applied it to his mysterious and ill-defined

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[304] Ibid, 4.

[305] Christopher A. Snyder, *Exploring the World of King Arthur* (London, 2011), 113.

[306] 'Grail Legends', *Timeless Myths (Arthurian Legends)*, http://www.timelessmyths.com/arthurian/grail.html#Background, accessed 10 November, 2015.

[307] Jean Frappier, 'Chrétien de Troyes', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. by Roger S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), 159.

concept of a magical, and potentially holy, vessel.[308] It is unclear whether Chrétien meant to take his conception of the Grail any further, considering the unfinished status of *Le Conte du Graal*. The legend ends abruptly, mid-sentence, leaving Perceval having achieved Christian piety, but not an understanding of the Grail, the main goal of the quest upon which he has embarked.[309] Did Chrétien plan to expand upon his concept of the mystical object he christened *graal*, perhaps concluding with Perceval's successful attainment of the Grail? Literary scholars are divided as to whether Chrétien intended to complete the legend, rendering the Grail in a more obviously religious light, or whether he left the legend purposefully open-ended, so as to leave room for later continuations, of which there are four, written in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, shortly after Chrétien 'completed' *Le Conte du Graal*, *circa* 1180.[310]

Although Chrétien provides the foundation for the Grail's Christian associations in *Le Conte du Graal*, describing it as *tant sainte chose set li graals*, or a 'most holy thing', it was Robert de Boron, a near contemporary of Chrétien, who truly cemented the connection between the Grail and biblical history.[311] As Frederick Locke aptly notes, 'in Chrétien [the Grail] is more of a *chose merveilleuse* of indeterminate qualification than something with a specific existence in the religious atmosphere of the twelfth century.'[312] However, in his late twelfth-century *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal*, or *Joseph d'Arimathie*, de Boron describes the Grail as both the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, and that which Joseph of Arimathea later used to collect Christ's blood at the Entombment.[313] According to Edward Kennedy, the Christianisation of the Grail may be in part a reaction against twelfth-century rationalism, 'a desire to present…an object that was mysterious and unknowable', perhaps as a means of inciting renewed religious wonder among a doubtful and

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[308] Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur* (Cambridge, 2008), 2.
[309] Chrétien de Troyes, 'Perceval: The Story of the Grail', in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991), 460, 494.
[310] Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (New York, 1970), 114; Derek A. Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2003), 36, 39; Lacy, ed., *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur*, 2.
[311] Lacy, ed., *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur*, 2.
[312] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance* (Redwood City, 1960), 4-5.
[313] Martine Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', in *The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur*, 14.

increasingly cynical laity.[314] It was not until the thirteenth century, however, with the advent of the immensely popular, anonymously written, prose Vulgate Cycle that the Grail became a dual Arthurian symbol of quintessential chivalry and spiritual perfection[315], an identity whose widespread influence and continuity is evidenced by Sir Thomas Malory's ubiquitous *Le Morte Darthur* of 1485, and the fact that the Grail is still endowed with this multivalent and exalted character today, more than 700 years after its initial conception. [316]

The issue of the Grail's textual context must also be addressed before a formal visual analysis of its imagery is undertaken. The differing manners in which the Grail appears in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* help to shape both its visual form and cultural significance. Whereas in *Le Conte du Graal* the Grail's Christianity is secondary to its air of general mysticism and abstract spirituality, in *La Queste del saint Graal* the Grail is first and foremost a tangible Christian symbol of God and the Eucharist. In both cases, the textual presentation of the Grail helps to shape the way in which it is visually depicted. Just as a word may have several denotations, dependent on context, so may a single image have several denotations, similarly dependent on aspects of context, such as audience, time period, and in this specific case, the inherent mysticism or Christianity of each legend's text.[317] For example, as has been discussed previously, in *Le Conte du Graal*, Chrétien imbues his *graal* with an undefined sense of magic and mystery, while in the Vulgate *Queste*, as a result of de Boron's later Christianisation of the Grail, the object is transformed into a holy vessel, rendering the text rife with biblical metaphors. It must be kept in mind, however, that textual context is only one of several factors that contributed to the various visualisations of the Grail. To fully examine the various possible interpretations and aesthetic meanings of the Grail, it must be considered within the complete cultural context from which it emerged, social, political, economic, religious, and artistic. For example, according to Janet Wolff:

> Works of art…are not closed, self-contained and transcendent entities, but are the product of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social

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[314] Edward D. Kennedy, 'The Grail and French Arthurian Romance', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (West Sussex, 2009), 214.

[315] Keith Busby, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance', *French Studies* 53.2 (1999): 138.

[316] Roger S. Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (New York, 1963), 5-6.

[317] Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, 1992), 7.

groups in given conditions, and therefore bear the imprint of the ideas, values and conditions of existence of those groups, and their representatives in particular artists.[318]

In other words, the *graal* of Chrétien's final legend and the Grail of the penultimate Vulgate legend are direct results of the varying circumstances of the time periods in which they were produced, the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, respectively. Where these two definitions come together is in the chronologically overlapping fourteenth-century depictions of the Grail in manuscript and ivory. An exploration of these depictions thus requires knowledge both of the circumstances surrounding the creation of each legend, as discussed previously, and of the history and culture of early to mid-fourteenth century France, when visualisations of these two Arthurian romances reached the height of their popularity. Of particular importance will be an understanding of the Christian practices and beliefs of fourteenth-century France, such as the continued debates over transubstantiation and the rituals of Mass. Through the development of such an integrated understanding, it will become possible to apply an interdisciplinary, anthropological approach such as that posited by Alfred Gell, in which the best means of understanding a given art object involves a search for the contemporary 'way of seeing.'[319]

4.2 Visualising the Grail

A significant feature of late medieval Grail imagery is the lack of overt Grail illustrations. Just as the Grail seldom appears in carved ivory, manuscript illuminators often seem reluctant to explicitly depict the Grail. Among the six illuminated fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* manuscripts discussed in this thesis, only one of each (MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 5218) include unequivocal depictions of the Grail (Figs. 8 and 46).[320] However, as noted by Sandra Hindman, sometimes the scenes that are exempt from illustration are just as, if not more significant, than those that are visually rendered.[321] This is especially relevant to images of the Grail procession in Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*, and the

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[318] Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London, 1981), 49.

[319] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), 2.

[320] See Appendix 1.

[321] Sandra Hindman, 'King Arthur, His Knights, and the French Aristocracy in Picardy', in *Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*, ed. by Daniel Poirion and Nancy F. Regalado, Special Issue, *Yale French Studies* (New Haven, 1991), 120.

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Grail liturgy in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, both climactic scenes within the two most inherently Christian Arthurian legends, yet scenes that are often excluded from illustration.[322] In relation to this last query, I will argue that in the case of *Le Conte du Graal* illustrations where there is no direct representation of the Grail (MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12576, as well as the ivory casket OA 122), the image of King Arthur's stolen cup serves as a prefiguration of the Grail, and as such, can be visually compared to the sole image of the Grail to appear in a fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscript, which occurs on folio 18v of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8).

Throughout late medieval, French Arthurian manuscripts, in the rare instances in which the Grail is depicted, it appears variously as a pyx, bowl, ciborium, or chalice, all variations on a vessel-shape, illustrating the longevity and influence of Robert de Boron's Christian personification of the Grail. The Grail appears in a total of twelve miniatures among the five extant illuminated manuscripts containing *Le Conte du Graal* and the *Perceval* continuations, all of which date to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[323] Within the *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts discussed in this thesis, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, and fr. 12577, the Grail is consistently depicted as a pyx or ciborium. Only in MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8), however, is the Grail procession at the Castle of the Fisher King depicted, in which the Grail is presented along with the Bleeding Lance and sword, providing Perceval with his first glimpse of these sacred objects, so venerated because of their connection to Christ's crucifixion, as is explained in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*.[324] As Martine Meuwese has noted, within MS fr. 12577's depiction of the Grail procession, the Grail 'precedes the Bleeding Lance…perhaps to show the objects in order of importance.'[325] In a manner equatable to the *Le Conte du Graal* Grail depictions, among the limited fourteenth-century *Queste* illustrations of the Grail, it is similarly always visualised as a chalice, pyx, or ciborium, three shapes that specifically suggest

[322] Alison Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 21.
[323] Matilda T. Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the Conte du Graal and its Verse Continuations* (Oxford, 2009), 9.
[324] de Troyes, 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', 420; Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the Conte du Graal and its Verse Continuations*, 9; Norris J. Lacy, ed, *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, Vol. 6, trans. by E. Jane Burns (Cambridge, 2010), 164-6.
[325] Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', 14.

associations with the Eucharistic blood and Host, respectively.[326] Furthermore, akin to the lack of Grail liturgy scenes in *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, there are only five extant *La Queste del saint Graal* manuscripts that contain depictions of the Vulgate Grail liturgy, as seen in Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218 (Fig. 46), and to a lesser extent, in Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482 (Fig. 45), whose final miniature depicts Galahad receiving the Host from Josephus.[327] According to Alison Stones, 'most [*Queste*] manuscripts omit an illustration altogether, so that the climatic Grail liturgy is left to the imagination to picture- a deliberate ploy that was also used in the illustration of Chrétien.'[328] It is likely that such rare visualisations of the Grail contributed to Franco Cardini's description of the Grail as being 'unfailingly interpreted symbolically as the Eucharist.'[329] Cardini is not alone in his Christological understanding of the Grail, as other scholars such as Alison Stones and Frederick Locke have posited similar interpretations.[330] However, although past scholarship has overwhelmingly attributed a Eucharistic meaning to the Grail, it is possible that the significance of the Grail was more loosely interpreted by fourteenth-century audiences, encompassing both a more broadly Christian, as well as secular and romantic, definition. It is therefore worthwhile to consider alternative interpretations of the Grail, both sacred and secular.

It is possible that the Grail did have an overtly Christian connotation, yet one more abstract in nature than of the pairing of the physical object with the Eucharist. In keeping with this theory, the Grail's identity as an abstract Christian symbol may help to explain the lack of continuity among its few, yet varying, fourteenth-century depictions. If the theological symbolism of the Grail was more important than the physical object itself, it would stand to reason that as long as the Grail was rendered in a form recognisable to contemporary audiences, the artist had achieved success

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[326] Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', 331.

[327] The five *Queste* manuscripts containing depictions of the Grail liturgy are as follows (for full citations, see Appendices 1-2): Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Ashburnham 121(48); New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Beinecke MS 229;
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MSS Arsenal 3482, 5218; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 95; Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', 213.

[328] Ibid, 214.

[329] Franco Cardini, "The Warrior and the Knight" in *The Medieval World*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (London, 1990), 91.

[330] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 6; Stones, 'Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts', in *The Grail: A Casebook*, ed. by Dhira Mahoney (New York, 2000), 331.

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with his or her depiction, regardless of the exact form given to the Grail. For example, a more abstract understanding of the Grail may have interpreted the physical act of the quest as a representation of the 'spiritual quest of the soul for God.'[331] This is in keeping with the ill-defined, yet captivatingly spiritual characterisation of the Grail in *Le Conte du Graal*. As noted by Brigitte Cazelles, 'Perceval's search for the Grail as emblem of redemption thus becomes, in turn, emblematic of a chivalric pilgrimage for spiritual maturity and salvation.'[332] This latter characterisation of the Grail as a representation of Christian salvation can also be used to describe the purpose of the Grail Quest in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, and by extension, the Grail as a physical object, a tangible reminder of the integral role of Christian devotion on the path to ultimate salvation. In the final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218, the Grail's role as a tangible symbol of salvation is made evident through the illuminator's depiction of Christ, in human form, literally emerging from the Grail (Fig. 46). As is described in the text of the Vulgate *Queste*, only those select few knights (Galahad, Perceval, and Bors) whose Christian devotion is true and pure are able to obtain the ultimate Christian reward, knowledge of the Grail, which ultimately leads to their salvation from the hardships of human mortality.[333]

Yet another Christian interpretation of the Grail, and one that again concentrates on the physicality of the Grail, is provided by Pauline Matarasso, who is unique among scholars in her explicit characterisation of the Grail as a Christian relic. Matarasso states: 'On the literal level the Grail clearly is a relic, one whose unique holiness, derived from its use at certain historical moments, empowers it to embody in a real sense the significance of those events.'[334] Matarasso's theory of the Grail as a relic is intriguing, yet lacks nuance. Although the Grail as a physical object does possess the characteristics of a relic, a tangible object made both holy and spiritually powerful through its close association with either Christ or a related holy figure, this definition does not account for the more abstract connotations of the Grail, wherein it serves as a symbol of Christian piety and devotion. In other words, Matarasso's

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[331] Pauline Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the Queste del Saint Graal* (Genève, 1979), 16.
[332] Brigitte Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes' 'Conte du Graal'*, (Stanford, 1996), 3.
[333] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 164-6.
[334] Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, 182.

interpretation fails to consider the Grail's intrinsic multivalency, in which it stands for much more than can be surmised through its identity as a tangible object.

Taken as a whole, the diverse visualisations of the Grail can be seen to signify its inherently multivalent and abstract nature, an object lacking continuity, apart from its consistent visual *dis*continuity. According to Locke, 'The Grail's success as an image…depends on its being multivalent, open on all sides to the power of evocation.'[335] In this sense, the Grail's most important role is to serve as a means of encouraging its audience to reflect upon their own Christian values and devotion, and to enable them to equate themselves with the various Arthurian knights involved in the Grail Quest; the naïve yet increasingly devout Perceval, the well-intentioned, yet spiritually lacking Lancelot, and the spiritually pure and pious Galahad. The Grail's ability to simultaneously suggest several meanings of varying sacred and secular import may help to explain the diversity of Grail depictions within an inscribed period of time, specifically the first half of the fourteenth-century.

Indeed, it appears that there were multiple lines of covalent visual development in terms of the Grail's appearance in late medieval manuscripts and ivories. This is evidenced by the varying depictions of the Grail in the six selected manuscripts. To begin with, on folio 18v of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8), the illuminator adorns the Grail with a cross, adding a further layer of symbolism to an already symbolic object, and cementing the Grail's status as a Christian liturgical object. The illuminator of MS Arsenal 5218, meanwhile, tends towards a more literal, textually accurate interpretation, illustrating Christ emerging in human form from the chalice-shaped Grail, on folio 88r (Fig. 45). As the text of *La Queste del saint Graal* states:

> Then, as the three companions gazed upon the Vessel, they saw an unclothed man issue from it. His hands were bleeding, as were his feet and his body, and he said to them, 'My knights and servants and loyal sons, who from human beings have become spiritual creatures, you have searched for me so long that I can no longer conceal Myself from you. It is appropriate for you to see part of My mysteries and My secrets. You have accomplished such feats that you now sit at My table, where no knight has eaten since the time of Joseph of Arimathea. The others have received the servant's due; that is, the knights living here and many others were fed by the grace of the Holy Vessel, but they have not occupied the place where you now sit. So partake of the heavenly food that you have desired so long, the very reason for your prolonged quest.[336]

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[335] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 9.
[336] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 165.

The image of Christ emerging from the Grail in human form in the fourteenth-century *Queste* manuscript MS Arsenal 5218 is in keeping with earlier accounts and images of Eucharistic miracles, such as the account of Guibert de Nogent, and the miracle witnessed by Edward the Confessor, wherein the English king had a vision of the Christ Child appearing within the Host during Mass.[337] Edward's vision is illustrated in an abridged version of the Domesday Book (London, National Archives, MS E 36/284) (Fig. 113), created *circa* 1241 in Westminster, and in the sole extant manuscript of the Anglo-Norman verse *Life of Saint Edward the Confessor* (Fig. 114), likely created in St. Albans by Matthew Paris, *circa* 1250-60, for Queen Eleanor of Provence.[338] The thirteenth-century production dates of these two manuscripts speak to the continued circulation of narratives and images of Eucharistic miracles more than two centuries after the reign of King Edward I (1042-66). Although it is intriguing to compare the two divergent visualisations of the Grail in MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 5218 (Figs. 8 and 46), it must be kept in mind that these images appear within two different Arthurian legends, *Le Conte du Graal* (MS fr. 12577), and *La Queste del saint Graal* (MS Arsenal 5218). Could the more subtle and symbolic representation of the Grail in MS fr. 12577 be accounted for by Chrétien's failure to provide it with a definitively Christian identity? On the other hand, the text of *Queste* is full of explicit Christian references and allegories, rendering MS Arsenal 5218's more literal illustration of the Grail, wherein the image's iconography is reminiscent of the Last Supper (Fig. 46), textually appropriate.

Further evidence of multiple covalent visual traditions is provided by the variety of Grail depictions among contemporaneous copies of Vulgate Cycle legends. The Grail appears in both *L'Estoire du Graal,* the first of the five Vulgate legends, and the penultimate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*. While fourteenth-century *Estoire* illustrations tend to favour a bowl-shaped Grail, or *escüele*, on the few occasions in which the Grail appears in *Queste* imagery, it takes the form of a chalice.[339] According to Stones, this difference, even among contemporaneously produced

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[337] Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200-1400* (New Haven, 1995), 147; Jay Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (London, 2013), 139, 186.
[338] See Appendix 2; Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*, 55, 147; Stones, 'Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts', 313.
[339] Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', 336.

Vulgate manuscripts can be traced to the 'complexities of the iconography of each branch of the [Vulgate Cycle].'[340] Stones further comments that this suggests:

> Painters- or, more likely, their patrons and/or the directors of operations- took upon themselves either to exclude or include the subject on an ad hoc basis, and if the latter decision was made, to be guided by what seems to have been quite a complex network of factors, the rationale for which is not altogether clear.[341]

This brings us to a brief discussion of the circumstances necessary for the illustration of the Grail. Was its depiction perhaps at the behest of a particular patron, as suggested by Stones? Or did the artisan have a degree of artistic freedom that allowed him or her to decide whether to render the Grail in visual form? Unfortunately, due to the sheer lack of evidence regarding the provenance of the six manuscripts discussed in this thesis, it is impossible to provide a definitive answer to this query. However, as has been previously hypothesised, it does seem likely that patrons of the most costly and elaborate manuscripts would have played an active, supervisory role in their production.[342] When this hypothesis of patron-involvement is paired with what appears to be a certain level of Arthurian and liturgical knowledge on the part of the artisan, it is further possible to posit that the visual appearance or non-appearance of the Grail in fourteenth-century French manuscripts was, as noted by Stones, reliant on a 'complex network of factors' involving several layers of participants and decisions, a complexity reminiscent of the Grail's own multivalent identity.

4.3 The Grail in Manuscript and Ivory: A Visual Analysis

Compared to Grail imagery in the Vulgate *Queste*, the Grail is only slightly more visually prevalent in *Le Conte du Graal*, where there are a total of twelve miniatures

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[340] Stones, 'Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts', 336.

[341] Ibid, 336.

[342] Georges Duby, *The Age of Cathedrals: Art and Society 980-1420*, trans. by Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (London, 1981), 204; Lucy F. Sandler, 'Worded and Wordless Images: Biblical Narratives in the Psalters of Humphrey de Bohun', in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout, 2013), 109.

depicting the Grail in the five extant illuminated manuscripts.[343] Furthermore, of the surviving illuminated *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, MS fr. 12577 is the only one to depict not only the Grail, but also the Bleeding Lance and sword (Fig. 8).[344] This trio of items has Christological significance, loosely personifying the Holy Trinity through its tripartite formation, as well as exemplifying a further Christian interpretation of the Grail, in addition to its hypothesised Eucharistic identity. The inclusion of the Bleeding Lance (rumoured to be that which pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion), and the sword (which brutally wounded the Fisher King, rendering him paralysed) further underlines the Grail's Christian associations, imbuing the scene with a distinctly religious tone, one not found in Chrétien's text, in which the overall tone is more mysterious and mythical, than spiritual and Christian. A further act of 'visual Christianisation' is adduced by the physical form of the Grail. The illuminator of MS fr. 12577 chose to depict the Grail as a sort of cross between a pyx; a small, round chalice adorned with a cross, used to transport the Eucharist to the unwell, and a ciborium, or lidded chalice (Fig. 8). By choosing to depict the Grail as pyx-like, and accompanied by the sword and lance, the illuminator references the Grail's dual role as a symbol of both the Eucharist and the Holy Trinity. Although the pyx-ciborium format of the Grail does not follow Chrétien's original textual description, the pyx is thematically appropriate due to the Grail's sustainment of the ill Fisher King in *Le Conte du Graal*. This late medieval visualisation of the Grail therefore speaks to the gap in time between the twelfth-century composition of *Le Conte du Graal*, when the object entitled *graal* denoted a serving dish, and the early fourteenth-century production of MS fr. 12577, by which time the Grail was commonly visualised in vessel-form, as a result of de Boron's Christian personification of it.[345]

In addition, the pyx-ciborium Grail of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8) is similar to the referential Grail seen in the frontispiece of MS fr. 12576, on folio 1r (Fig. 115), which will be discussed shortly. Considering that MS fr. 12576 was produced slightly earlier than MS fr. 12577 (*circa* 1275-1300 versus 1315-25), it seems possible that the dissemination of MS fr. 12576's imagery, whether through the movement of the

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[343] Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the Conte du Graal and its Verse Continuations*, 9.
[344] Ibid, 9.
[345] Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', 14.

manuscript itself, or through the production of copies or models based on the manuscript, may account for the similar Grail depictions within these two *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts. In light of the overall lack of Grail imagery in early fourteenth-century France, it makes sense that artists would avail themselves of any prior visual interpretations. A further possible model that would have resulted in visually similar Grails takes a physical form; the actual Eucharistic chalice used during Mass. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 resulted in the promulgation of the Eucharist, increasing the popularity of its use and elevation at Mass. By the early fourteenth century, the presentation of the Eucharist was an established aspect of Mass, meaning that Eucharistic chalices would have been common liturgical objects, well known to any practicing Christian.[346]

MS Arsenal 5218's *La Queste del saint Graal* is closely related to MS fr. 12577's *Le Conte du Graal*, in that it similarly depicts a Grail procession within a two-column miniature, the large size of which emphasises the import of the scene (Figs. 8 and 46). MS Arsenal 5218's Grail liturgy scene is the last of the legend's three illuminations, and is rendered in an overall textually accurate fashion. Here Christ is shown issuing forth in human-form from the ciborium-shaped Grail, while Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, eight knights, and Josephus, dressed as a bishop, look on.[347] The layout of the miniature is clearly reminiscent of the Last Supper. The figures are ranged on the far side of a rectangular table, with the three central figures, ostensibly Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, turned towards one another. Josephus-as-priest, meanwhile, appears as an afterthought, inserted at the left end of the table, and situated at an angle, almost as though he has been directly traced onto the already existing illumination. It therefore appears as though the artist relied on a second religious model, in addition to the quintessential Last Supper layout, for his or her depiction of Josephus. Such a religious model could have taken the form of a previously or contemporaneously produced religious manuscript with imagery of the Last Supper, as is seen in the *Miracles de Notre-Dame et autres poésies de Gautier de Coinci*, and the Epistolary of the Sainte-Chapelle, both produced in Paris during the fourteenth century (Figs. 116-117).[348]

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[346] Elizabeth M. Remak-Honef, 'Text and Image in the *Estoire del Saint Graal*: A Study of London, British Library MS Royal 14.E iii', thesis (Chapel Hill, 1987), 146; Moshe Barasche, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* (New York, 1997), 297.

[347] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 163-5.

[348] See Appendix 2.

Lori Walters suggests that MS Arsenal 5218's depiction of the Grail liturgy (Fig. 46) can be understood as a visual representation of the current debate over transubstantiation.[349] Although the theory of transubstantiation was clarified at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the issue continued to be hotly debated during approximately the next 300 years, through the lifetime of Martin Luther.[350] By focussing the final miniature on Galahad and Josephus, in addition to consciously referencing the Last Supper, the artist of MS Arsenal 5218 accentuates the Christian devotion necessary to attain the Grail. Furthermore, the tripartite image cycle of MS Arsenal 5218 is in the form of a visual progression from the secular to the sacred (Figs. 14-15, and 46). Walters comments: 'whereas secular figures and institutions predominate over religious ones in the illustrations on the initial page of the text, the second illustration shows only an abbey. By the third miniature [on folio 88r] the transformation of the secular Arthurian court into a sacred space is complete', culminating in the adaptation of the Last Supper to engender the presentation of the Grail.[351] As evidenced by MS Arsenal 5218's final miniature (Fig. 46), in which the Grail assumes its most consciously Christian visual identity, the 'Christianisation' of the Grail appears to have peaked by the early fourteenth century, suggesting that it was at this point in the Grail's history that it was most readily interpreted in an inherently Christian sense.

The rather blatant reference to the Last Supper in MS Arsenal 5218's concluding miniature (Fig. 46) suggests that the manuscript's audiences were expected to draw a link between the intrinsically biblical visual composition of the miniature, discussed previously, and the essential holiness of the Grail. Although we cannot be certain whether contemporary audiences would have readily made this connection, the propensity of religious allegories throughout the text of *Queste* points to the probable reading of the legend with a Christian mindset. Religiously connoted illuminations such as that on folio 88r of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 46) could have functioned as a visual emphasis of the romance's essentially Christian morals. As noted by Richard Barber, 'the Grail stories cross from romance to theology with no apparent feeling of contradiction.'[352] For example, biblical history is so deeply

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[349] Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the *Queste del saint Graal*', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 344.
[350] Ibid, 347.
[351] Ibid, 344.
[352] Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (London, 2004), 144.

embedded within the text of the Vulgate *Queste* as to merit the inclusion of the Fall of Adam and Eve, a biblical episode related to Lancelot as a warning against the continuation of his illicit sexual relations with Guinevere.[353] In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. (folio 349r) and MS Arsenal 3482 (folio 487r), the image of the Fall has been included in *Queste*'s pictorial cycles (Figs. 36-37), and similar to the Last Supper-inspired Grail liturgy of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 46), has been directly copied from a religious manuscript or model book.[354] The inclusion and coalescence of such overtly biblical scenes in an outwardly secular medieval romance attests to the Grail's intrinsic duality as a symbol. The Grail can at once signify both the sacred and secular values of knighthood propagated in the Arthurian legends, thereby personifying the continuous intertwining of the sacred and secular within the late medieval French Arthurian legends.

As noted by Rupert Pickens, Keith Busby, and Andrea Williams, 'The theme of the Grail Quest…is a constant reminder of the subordination of worldly adventures to the spiritual.'[355] In MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, the two fourteenth-century *Queste* manuscripts without a direct depiction of the Grail, this is personified by Galahad, who appears in the final miniature of each manuscript, and can be seen as a reference to the achievement of the Grail, not as a physical object, but as the arrival at a state of utmost Christian devotion. In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., on folio 357v (Fig. 43), Galahad is depicted embracing the dying King Mordrain, providing him with Christian compassion at the moment of his death.[356] This scene emphasises Galahad's Christian perfection, and by extension, the goal of the Grail Quest. In MS Arsenal 3482, the final miniature on folio 538v (Fig. 45) shows Galahad's last living moment, in which he partakes of the Host from Josephus.[357] Considering the interpretation of the Grail as symbolic of the Eucharist, it can be surmised that Galahad, as the most devout Arthurian knight, is here shown worthy of the Grail, his immense Christian piety and acceptance of the Host defining him as inherently spiritual and equal to

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[353] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 64-5; 77-9.
[354] See pp. 77-9.
[355] Rupert T. Pickens, Keith Busby, and Andrea M.L. Williams, 'Perceval and the Grail: The Continuations, Robert de Boron, and *Perlesvaus*', in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. by Glyn Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff, 2006), 228.
[356] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 160-1.
[357] Ibid, 170.

Josephus, the physical personification of Christ and God, who, by presenting the Host to Galahad, initiates him into the highest level of Christian spirituality:

> The worthy man standing in front of the altar in priestly dress took the host from the table and offered it to Galahad. He received the body of Our Lord with humility and great devotion. And when he had partaken of it, the good man asked, 'Do you know who I am?'
> 'No indeed', replied Galahad, 'not unless you tell me.'
> 'Know that I am Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea, sent by Our Lord to be your companion. And do you know why he sent me rather than another? Because you are like me in two ways: you witnessed the mysteries of the Holy Grail, as I did, and you are a virgin, as I am. It is thus fitting that we be together.'[358]

 The illustration of Galahad's acceptance of the Host personifies the conclusion of the Grail Quest, and therein the intrinsic symbolism of the Grail; a tangible reminder that man should strive for Christian devotion and perfection above all else. According to Roger Loomis, *La Queste del saint Graal* is 'an allegory in which the Grail signifies the love of God, and the quest of the Grail the seeking after God through complete and joyous self-abnegation in the fellowship of the likeminded.'[359] This is certainly exemplified by Galahad, who single-mindedly seeks the Grail, and, unlike his companions, will not be tempted from either his quest or Christian values. The inclusion of these two images in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, although integral to the legend, suggests that the artisans were avoiding direct depictions of the Grail. For readers familiar with the legend, the concluding image of Galahad and King Mordrain in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. (Fig. 43) could signify the entire series of climactic events in *Queste*, including the Grail liturgy and Galahad's ascension to heaven, without necessitating the actual depiction of these events. Furthermore, Galahad's embrace of King Mordrain exemplifies his pure Christian spirit, with which he is able to bring solace to the sinful and dying king.

Similar to MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, MS fr. 1453's rendition of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* includes no explicit depictions of the Grail. However, on folio 6r (Fig. 118), the red cup on the table in front of King Arthur can be seen to reference the cup stolen by the Red Knight. Although the cup taken by the *Chevalier Vermeille* is not physically present at this moment in the legend, this second cup serves as a sort of doppelgänger, reminding the audience of the reason for King

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[358] Ibid, 170.
[359] Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*, 277.

Arthur's despair, and the topic of his conversation with Perceval.[360] The cup's presence and vivid red hue therefore foreshadow Perceval's ensuing encounter with the Red Knight. Consequently, on folio 8v (Fig. 119), Yvonet, on Perceval's orders, is depicted returning the recovered cup to King Arthur, after Perceval's successful battle with the Red Knight.[361] The illuminator has here chosen to render the cup as a sort of ciborium. In a manner similar to the previous miniature on folio 6r (Fig. 118), this image may also have been meant to serve as a subtle reference to Perceval's connection to the Grail. The emphasis on the act of returning the cup, a scene not illustrated in any other illuminated fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, can be interpreted as pre-figuring Perceval's eventual religious transformation. His initial knightly success suggests his intrinsically good nature, which will ultimately resurface, despite his future sins. Paula Shoppe similarly views the cup stolen from King Arthur as foreshadowing the goal of Perceval's future quest. Moreover, Shoppe specifically connects Yvonet's return of the cup to Arthur upon Perceval's defeat of the Red Knight to Perceval's forthcoming quest.[362] Can the act of returning the cup thus be interpreted as a visual hint towards the eventual outcome of Perceval's quest, if not in Chrétien's unfinished legend, then in the *Perceval* continuations and the Vulgate *Queste*? Such a complex interpretation of the image would require profound knowledge of the French Arthurian *oeuvre* on the part of both the artist and the audiences. Both the possibility of this interpretation, and its cultural ramifications, will be discussed shortly.

In a manner similar to MS fr. 1453, within the frontispiece of MS fr. 12576, on folio 1r (Fig. 115), the illuminator has depicted the Red Knight clutching the cup he has stolen from King Arthur. The Red Knight brandishes the cup over his head as he and Perceval confront one another.[363] The cup is here depicted as a ciborium, again suggesting its role as a prefiguration of the Grail, and establishing visual continuity in the depiction of the Grail in fourteenth-century versions of *Le Conte du Graal*. This raises questions of the use of visual models, and whether manuscripts within this selected group may have served to visually influence one another. As discussed

[360] de Troyes, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, 386-7.
[361] Ibid, 390.
[362] Paula Shoppe, 'Reading Romances: The Production and Reception of French Gothic Secular Ivory Caskets in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices', thesis (Urbana-Champagne, 2000), 160.
[363] de Troyes, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, 388-9.

earlier, considering MS fr. 1453's production date of *circa* 1315-25, it seems possible that the artist referred either directly to the earlier produced MS fr. 12576 (*circa* 1275-1300), or to the same (or related) model used by the earlier illuminator of MS fr. 12576. MS fr. 12577 is also akin to MS fr. 12576 in that it similarly depicts Perceval and the Red Knight's tussle for the cup within its frontispiece on folio 1r (Figs. 6 and 115). MS fr. 12577, however, has the added detail that both Perceval and the Red Knight grasp the cup, with Perceval's hand placed above that of the Red Knight, signifying Perceval's victory over the Red Knight, and the subsequent return of the stolen cup to King Arthur. According to Walters, the ciborium-shaped cup held by the Red Knight in MS fr. 12577's frontispiece could thus have been intended as a prefiguration of the Grail. Walters states: 'The presence of the ciborium-shaped cup brandished by the soon-to-be-defeated *Chevalier Vermeille* in the register on the lower right is a discreet proleptic reference to Perceval's renunciation of secular chivalry for its spiritual equivalent.'[364] The positioning of the Red Knight's and Perceval's hands as they tussle with the cup supports this theory; Perceval's fist is placed above that of the Red Knight's, suggesting his forthcoming victory and perhaps even his future religious transformation, which can be seen as an achievement of the Grail Quest, wherein Perceval rejects all worldly things for a more spiritually driven life.

MS fr. 12577 is furthermore the only fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscript to include an illustration of the Grail procession. The Grail procession is illustrated within a double column miniature on folio 18v (Fig. 8). The illuminator has chosen to depict the Grail in the typical fourteenth-century manner, as a ciborium. However, he has increased the Grail's Christian significance through the inclusion of a cross adorning its top. MS fr. 12577 thus depicts both Arthur's cup and the Grail as ciboria, creating a further link between the two vessels, and underlining the prefiguration of Perceval's quest for the Grail through the inclusion of Arthur's cup in the introductory frontispiece. As again noted by Walters, 'Perceval's conquest of a worldly cup gives way to his attainment of the divine Grail, as he comes to learn

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[364] Walters, 'Female Figures in the Illustrated Manuscripts of *Le Conte du Graal* and its *Continuations*: Ladies, Saints, Spectators, Mediators', in *Text and Image: Studies in the French Illustrated Book from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. by David J. Adams, and Adrian Armstrong, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 81.3 (1999): 20.

about the true worship of angels and the divine truths they transmit.'[365] Considering the contemporaneous rise in Eucharistic devotion, it does not seem too far of a leap to suggest that early fourteenth-century medieval audiences would have made this visual connection between the secular chalice stolen by the Red Knight, and the Holy Eucharist embodied by the Grail.

Loomis, however, rather simplistically designates MS fr. 12577's highly Christianised representation of the Grail as a result of the illuminator's lack of familiarity with Chrétien's text.[366] Although this is possible, when the obvious care taken by the illuminator is accounted for, as well as metaphorical references to the Grail, such as King Arthur's stolen cup, it seems more likely that the illuminator had conscious reasons for depicting the Grail as divergent from its textual description. In general, this suggests either that the fourteenth-century illuminators of *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts were working from a previously produced model, which itself depicted the Grail in a distinctly Christian manner, or that the illuminators themselves understood the Grail as a Christian symbol, and thus depicted it as such. Considering the religious atmosphere of the early to mid-fourteenth century, a time at which there was increased interest in the Eucharist and its use at Mass, as well as an increase in personal, private devotion among the laity, it seems most likely that the artists of these Grail depictions consciously included religious references, both material and abstract, rendering the three *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts and sole ivory casket dually secular and sacred *objets d'art*; at once both captivating romances and Christian commentaries.

OA 122 is the only extant casket to depict *Le Conte du Graal*. The left side of OA 122's front panel, which depicts Perceval's battle with the Red Knight (Fig. 5), reflects the frontispieces of MSS fr. 12576 and fr. 12577 (Figs. 6 and 115) in its inclusion of King Arthur's stolen cup. However, whereas both manuscripts depict the Red Knight holding the cup as he battles Perceval, the carver of the casket has rather oddly inserted the cup directly behind the Red Knight, seemingly suspended in mid-air. The placement of the cup to the left of the casket's lock renders it difficult to comprehend the carver's visual motives. Is the cup supported in some way, but obscured by the casket's lock? The seemingly random placement of the cup can be seen to render its appearance a mere after-thought, or a means of filling negative

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[365] Ibid, 20.
[366] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 40.

space. The stolen cup is OA 122's sole possible reference to the Grail, although the casket exhibits a definitively Christian tone overall, due to the carvings of Saints Christopher, Martin, George, and Eustace on its lid (Fig. 1). However, if the cup is indeed referential of the Grail, its placement next to the lock could in fact be purposeful, suggesting a metaphorical association between the Grail and lock. Just as Saint Peter's key is viewed as a means of accessing heaven, so in *La Queste del saint Graal* is the achievement of the Grail a path to heaven, as exemplified by Galahad.[367] Thus, the placement of the cup next to the casket's lock could refer to the Grail's ability to 'unlock' heaven for devoted Christians.

None of the eight composite caskets include Grail-related scenes, or even references to the Grail, such as King Arthur's cup, or Galahad's acceptance of the Host. It seems possible that this is due both to the caskets' overtly secular connotations, and lack of a totalising Arthurian focus. Whereas the subtle religious connotations of images such as Galahad receiving the key to the Castle of Maidens, or Enyas' slaying of the wild man could ostensibly be disguised beneath their secular, chivalric façades, it seems possible that the Grail was deemed too conspicuously spiritual to warrant its inclusion on such outwardly romantic, profane objects as the composite ivory caskets. The utter dearth of Grail imagery on the eight composite caskets must be attributed to their lack of Grail-related scenes. Although the composite caskets do exhibit veiled religious connotations within their imagery, such as Enyas battling the Wodehouse, and Galahad receiving the key to the Castle of Maidens, neither of these scenes is directly related to the Grail. In other words, there are no scenes depicted in which the Grail could have figured, but was consciously omitted. For example, whereas the lid of OA 122, which is devoted entirely to *Le Conte du Graal*, is decorated with the images of four Christian saints (Fig. 1), the lids of all eight composite caskets are carved with the allegorical romance scene commonly entitled 'The Siege of the Castle of Love' (Fig. 63-70). Considering the actions of a contemporary viewer of the casket, who likely would have held the three-dimensional object, and examined the casket from the lid down, from the first instance of its viewing, the casket announces itself as either an essentially sacred or secular object. Whereas the Christian theme of OA 122's lid encourages further examination of the casket's scenes under the auspices of Christian understanding, the

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[367] Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 170.

identical lids of the eight composite caskets delineate their overarching focus on romantic love, tempered by Christian values.

4.4 The Dearth of Grail Depictions

The connotation of the Grail as an embodiment of God may help to explain the frequent reluctance of *Queste* illuminators to depict it. Just as God is seldom given a definitive visual presence within medieval art, neither is the Grail. Stones characterises the recurrent omission of illustrations of the Grail liturgy in *Queste* manuscripts as a 'deliberate ploy' on the part of the artists, meant to encourage the audience's reliance on their imaginations.[368] Just as the knights in *Queste* seldom see the Grail, so too are viewers of the manuscripts often excluded from this most intensely spiritual of experiences. The legend is rife with instances of near-visualisation, such as when Lancelot twice comes close to viewing the Grail, only to fall asleep the first time, and be physically paralysed upon the second occasion.[369] Lancelot's repeated failure to glimpse the Grail signifies his lack of spiritual dedication. Lancelot is not the only Arthurian knight to be deemed unworthy of the Grail. Although Perceval and Bors are ultimately rewarded for their dedication to the quest with a vision of the Grail, as illustrated by MS Arsenal 5218's final miniature (Fig. 46), Galahad is the only knight to experience the Grail in full.[370]

The repeated failures of the Arthurian knights in *Queste* to view the Grail can therefore be considered one reason for the general lack of illustrations of the Grail in illuminated manuscripts and ivories. Stones' explanation is thus in keeping with the text of *Queste*, suggesting that the artists may have refrained from depicting the Grail as a means of encouraging a closer connection between audience members and fictional Arthurian knights. In this way the audiences may have been influenced to reflect on their own sins. By refraining from illuminating the Grail, perhaps medieval artisans strove to remind audiences of their general unworthiness, as sinners, to view the Grail, and to encourage them to strive towards a more pure and wholly Christian existence, with Galahad as the ultimate model. In *Queste*, the Grail eventually reveals itself to Galahad, cementing his identity both as Christ-like, and as the most

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[368] Stones, 'The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229', 214.
[369] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 37-9; 156-7; Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', 27.
[370] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 170.

spiritually pure of all the Arthurian knights. The visual absence of the Grail may have been intended to communicate to contemporary audiences the ephemeral nature of the physical Grail, which itself exemplified the constant struggle to live a more perfect Christian life.

However, another explanation for the lack of consistency among Grail depictions, even within contemporary manuscripts, refers directly back to the overall dearth of Grail imagery: were artisans often simply without a visual model on which to base their depictions?[371] As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, stylistic and iconographic similarities among sacred and secular manuscripts, as well as among sacred and secular ivories, suggests that manuscript artisans and ivory carvers were similarly tasked with the completion of both religious and profane imagery within their respective mediums.[372] Thus, both manuscript artisans and ivory carvers could have had access to liturgical, visual models for their Arthurian renditions of the Grail. For example, images of the Last Supper were relatively common within both thirteenth and fourteenth-century religious manuscripts, such as Bibles, psalters, and epistolaries, and within thirteenth and fourteenth-century ivory diptychs (Figs. 116-117, 133-134).[373] Thus, the general lack of, and inconsistency among, fourteenth-century Grail depictions does not appear to have been caused by a dearth of visual models from which to work. Rather, it seems more likely that the varying visual forms of the Grail have a theological explanation, for as discussed earlier, the most commonly chosen forms, pyx, chalice, and ciborium, all emphasise the liturgical and Eucharistic connotations of the Grail.

It is worth noting that the Grail itself, as well as visual references to the Grail, appear more often within Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* than in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*. This begs the question, is the Grail more readily, and therefore commonly, depicted in Chrétien's final, unfinished legend, than in the penultimate Vulgate legend? Among the three fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts considered here, the Grail is explicitly depicted in only one manuscript (MS fr. 12577) (Fig. 8), although the remaining two manuscripts and ivory casket include

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[371] Meuwese, 'The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art', 13.

[372] See pp. 245-6; Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 64; Anne D. Hedeman, 'Gothic Manuscript Illumination: The Case of France', in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 427.

[373] See Appendices 2-3.

possible prefigurations of the Grail (Figs. 5, 115, and 118-119). If these hypothetical prefigurations are considered Grail images, the Grail is indeed more commonly depicted in fourteenth-century *Le Conte du Graal* renditions as opposed to *Queste* visualisations.

Considering that the two fourteenth-century illuminated *Queste* manuscripts discussed here (MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482), which do not include any depictions of or allusions to the Grail, were likely produced within the same approximately forty-year period as the three *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts (MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, and fr. 12577), whose renderings of the Grail range from the referential stolen cup (Figs. 8, 115, and 118-119) to the actual Grail procession at the castle of the Fisher King (Fig. 8), the dearth of Grail illustrations in *Queste* manuscripts cannot be attributed to the lack of a Grail imagery tradition. Continuing with this theory, it seems possible that the artists of *Queste* manuscripts overwhelmingly made a conscious decision to refrain from Grail depictions, perhaps due to the assumed religiosity of the object. Maurice Keen states that, 'the quest…is not just for the Grail, as an object, but for what it symbolises: Eucharistic grace and communion in ecstasy with God.'[374] Busby similarly comments, 'the mere fact of its depiction as a recognisable object divests the Grail of much of its mystery.'[375] It thus appears that the lack of *Queste* Grail scenes can be attributed to the identity of the legend, as opposed to the artistic production of the manuscripts. In keeping with this hypothesis, the abstract act of the Grail Quest can be viewed as more spiritually important than the Grail as a physical object. Therefore, as noted by Locke, the dearth of Grail depictions may stem in part from the medieval belief that the Quest motif, or the act of a journey by which one becomes more spiritually aligned, was more important than the Grail as a physical object.[376]

4.5 The Grail as Symbol

In order to analyse the theoretical underpinnings of the Grail, as well as its role as a symbol, I will utilise a primarily iconological approach. In positing the Grail as a medieval symbol, I will consider the Christian significance of the Grail, thus strengthening my argument of the inherently sacred connotations, both textual and

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[374] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), 61.
[375] Busby, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance', 138.
[376] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 4.

visual, which exist alongside the secular in the French Arthurian legends. Erwin Panofsky defines iconology as 'a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis.'[377] This iconological investigation will build upon my visual analysis of the various depictions of the Grail in fourteenth-century manuscripts and a single ivory casket, wherein I considered the iconographic, or solely visual aspects, of the Grail's identity as a multivalent symbol. I will now turn to an examination of the cultural significance of fourteenth-century French Grail depictions, evaluating the relationship between the illustrations and the accompanying texts. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, a symbol can be defined as a sign, or something that stands for something else, by means of accepted social conventions.[378] For example, as will be discussed, one way in which the visual form of the Grail as ciborium, as seen in MS fr. 12577, can be understood is as symbolic of the Eucharist. As noted by Aden Kumler, the late medieval Eucharist can be seen to 'radically collaps[e] the categories of sacred sign and signified into one material and divine presence.'[379] In other words, as a visual manifestation of the invisible divine, the Eucharist personified the consummate Christian debate over what is seen and what is not seen, and how it relates to and affects Christian devotion.[380] Thus, by illuminating the Grail, the artist creates a visual connection between the tangible and intangible aspects of the Grail as a symbol, including, but not limited to, its Christological interpretation as the Eucharist.[381] Relatedly, in keeping with Panofsky's definition, the iconology of the medieval Grail can be understood to be formed from a synthesis of its various visual interpretations: pyx, chalice, and ciborium; secular object, and sacred relic. Is it possible, by amalgamating these diverse interpretations, to come to an understanding of the Grail's import as both a tangible and abstract cultural symbol in fourteenth-century France? By engaging with this query, I will consider whether there are, as discussed by Moshe Barasche, established conventions by which the Grail was able to visually signify select cultural meanings, such as the Eucharist, Arthurian chivalry, and the importance of Christian devotion to eventual salvation.[382] I will also consider

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[377] Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago, 1955), 58.
[378] Charles Sanders Peirce, 'What is a Sign? (1894)', in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Vol 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. by Nathan Houser, André De Tienne, et al. (Bloomington, 1998), 9-10.
[379] Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 104.
[380] Ibid, 104.
[381] Ibid, 157.
[382] Barasche, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation*, 7.

the role of the text in promulgating these hypothesised cultural values. Thus, I will argue that the manner in which the Grail is portrayed in both the twelfth and thirteenth-century texts, and in fourteenth-century imagery, coalesced to create a complex, multivalent connotation of the Grail that encapsulated both romantic chivalry and Christian devotion.

The cultural progression of the Grail from Chrétien's abstract, mystical *graal*, to the clearly defined Christian vessel first put forth by Robert de Boron in the late twelfth century illustrates the main conventions by which fourteenth-century audiences could have been expected to interpret an image of the Grail as an inherently Christian symbol. The combination of specific Arthurian legend (*Le Conte du Graal* or *La Queste del saint Graal*), visual biblical allusions, and the physical or referential presence of a vessel are all variables necessary to construct an informed interpretation of the Grail. Without one of these elements, it is unlikely that a positive, and Christianised, identification of the Grail could have been made. This is especially the case considering that the *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* texts only vaguely refer to the physical form of the Grail, with the former referring to it as a 'grail' made of gold and inlaid with precious stones, and the latter merely as the 'Holy Vessel.'[383] Thus, the role of cultural knowledge in the identification of the Grail cannot be understated. Without both literary knowledge and Christian experience, the reader/viewer may not have been able to visually identify the given vessel as the Grail. This suggests that although Grail-focussed miniatures such as those found in MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 5218 can indeed function as narratives in and of themselves, separate from the accompanying texts, they do require a certain amount of relevant prerequisite knowledge on the part of the reader/viewer. For example, as noted by W. J. T. Mitchell, 'the dialectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself.'[384] The text is partially responsible for the object's ability (or lack thereof) to signify. This is especially the case within the double image of Perceval's arrival at the Castle of the Fisher King and the Grail procession illustrated on folio 18v of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8). The two-column miniature, whose two scenes are rendered separate by the inclusion of the castle keep at the centre, is accompanied by four lines of rubricated text above each half of the

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[383] de Troyes, 'Perceval: The Story of the Grail', 421; Lacy, ed, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 164.

[384] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, 1986): 43.

miniature. As discussed in previous chapters, these rubrics provide textual narration of the scenes visually rendered below, assisting literate readers (and possibly the illuminator) in their understandings of the narrative.[385]

Roland Barthes similarly exemplifies the innate connection between text and image when he notes, 'it appears increasingly more difficult to conceive of a system of images and objects whose signifieds can exist independently of language.'[386] In other words, an informed interpretation of the Grail is reliant on both the accompanying Arthurian text (*Le Conte du Graal* or *La Queste del saint Graal*) and its visual rendering, or lack thereof. The coalescing of these textual and visual factors allow for the reader/viewer to form an interpretation of the Grail's symbolic status that is unique to the given collection of variables, which in turn constitute the given manuscript or ivory as a multivalent cultural object. Although the image of the Grail can be understood apart from the accompanying text, the text does inform the manner of visual depiction, and vice versa. For example, as discussed previously, in MS fr. 12577, the miniature depicting the Grail procession at the Castle of the Fisher King (Fig. 8) is a two-column miniature with an accompanying rubric that describes what takes place in the below image. Meanwhile, in MS Arsenal 5218, the Grail liturgy scene (Fig. 46) similarly spans two columns of text, yet no rubric is included. These two manuscripts thus exhibit varying text-image relationships in regard to their Grail scenes. For example, it can be argued that in MS fr. 12577, the inclusion of the red rubricated text on this particular folio acts to place the text and image on an even plane, with the viewer's eye drawn to both the image and the highlighted text. On the other hand, the lack of rubrication accompanying the Grail liturgy scene in MS Arsenal 5218, paired with the image's large size and striking use of gilt acts to give precedence to the image over the text, perhaps speaking to the importance of the Grail as first and foremost a visual object. Indeed, there is a consistent, yet shifting, relationship between the visual illustration of the Grail, the accompanying text, and the contemporary cultural norms, all of which converge to dictate the way in which the Grail behaves as a symbol. According to Alfred Gell, 'The nature of an art object is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded.'[387] The meaning

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[385] See pp. 36-37, 45, 63, 82.

[386] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York, 1967), 10.

[387] Gell, *Art and Agency*, 7.

of an art object is intrinsically tied to its given context. The fourteenth-century visualisations of the Grail, for example, were informed and shaped by the current social, political, and religious atmosphere, arguments, beliefs, and ideas, such as the ongoing effects of the Fourth Lateran Council, current Eucharistic practices, and the belief in the inherently romantic and Christian nature of medieval chivalry.

Furthermore, as noted by Arthur Danto, the identity of a connoting and symbolising object is intrinsically related to its author.[388] Thus, Chrétien's ambiguous conception of the *graal* is inherent to all visual representations of it within renditions of *Le Conte du Graal*, even if there is a conflict between textual and visual descriptions, such as exists in MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, and fr. 12577, wherein images of the Grail are rendered in a textually-incorrect, Christian manner, as illustrated by the inclusion of a cross on the top of the ciborium-shaped Grail in MS fr. 12577. This conflict is due in part to the twelfth-century composition of the text, and fourteenth-century production of the manuscripts and ivory casket. In the more than one hundred years between the writing of *Le Conte du Graal* and the creation of the six manuscripts and ivory casket analysed here, concepts central to the legend, such as the identity of the Grail, and Perceval's *naïveté* underwent shifts of connotation, influenced by changing cultural values and beliefs. In 'The Social History of Art', E. H. Gombrich discusses what he characterises as the 'conflicting pulls', and 'tensions and divisions' within material objects.[389] Both the chronologically shifting, and simultaneous, yet conflicting interpretations of the Grail, both sacred and secular, and reliant on a multiplicity of cultural factors, exemplify Gombrich's theory. Relatedly, Gombrich extols the importance of considering 'a conception of images which should be seen as having numerous meanings simultaneously.'[390] In the case of the Grail, it can be simultaneously read both as a physical object, a Christian relic utilised during Mass, as characterised by Matarasso, as well as a more abstract symbol of Christian devotion and the romantic cult of Arthuriana. In other words, the Grail can at once be seen to embody the Eucharist, chivalry as a Christian code and endeavour, and the Grail Quest as a progression towards increased Christian piety and ultimate salvation, as well as a mere foil to the quintessential romantic and chivalric Arthurian quest.

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[388] Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, 1981), 35-6.

[389] E.H. Gombrich, 'The Social History of Art', in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse: And Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Oxford, 1978), 88.

[390] Gombrich, 'Achievement in Mediaeval Art', in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, 77.

According to Jessie Gellrich, the Grail's identity and success as a symbol hinges on its essential ambiguity; without its inherent multiplicity of meanings (King Arthur's cup, the Eucharist, a vague magical object, to name but a few interpretations) the Grail is unable to signify, and becomes stymied as a mere textual and visual prop.[391] It is the ability of the Grail to signify in such a various and complex manner that renders it the rich and multivalent symbol it has been since its initial Arthurian conception by Chrétien de Troyes in the late twelfth century. Hans Belting aptly provides an alternative explanation for the simultaneously sacred-secular identity of the Grail, utilising the phrase 'images with a double face' to connote the opposing yet co-existing meanings of medieval images such as the Grail, at once a symbol of secular Arthurian romance and sacred Christian liturgy.[392]

4.6 Concluding Thoughts

As exemplified by the varying visual depictions and allusions to the Grail in the six *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal* manuscripts discussed in this thesis, by the fourteenth century, the Grail exhibited a complex and well-developed cultural history, allowing for diverse, yet simultaneous, depictions and references in illuminated manuscripts and carved ivories. It is impossible to fully resolve the meaning of the Grail. As several scholars, such as Richard Barber and Frederick Locke have noted, to attempt to do so goes against the intrinsic conception of the Grail, a physical object, yet one characterised by an abstract and multivalent spirituality.[393] According to Locke, 'The very ambiguity of the Grail is precisely its strong point.'[394] Certainly, the longevity of the Grail as a concurrently secular, chivalric Arthurian object, and sacred, Eucharistic Christian symbol is owing to its lack of a single conclusive definition. The Grail's multiple and open-ended interpretations have allowed it to remain consistently topical, from Chrétien's original Arthurian conception of the *graal* in the late twelfth century, to Malory's fifteenth-century adaptation, and beyond. Each reimagining of the Grail is dependent upon cultural context, rendering it unique to each specific audience and location.

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[391] Jesse M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1985), 7.

[392] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994), 458.

[393] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 7; Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief*, 155.

[394] Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 7.

Depictions of the Grail in fourteenth-century French manuscripts and ivories are overall characterised by a seemingly conscious interpretation of the Grail as a spiritually imbued, Christian object, although the extent to which the Grail's religiosity is evident varies among illustrations, due to differences in legend (*Le Conte du Graal* or *La Queste del saint Graal*), artistic medium (manuscript or ivory), artist, the use of visual models, and the exact date of production.

Although the late twelfth-century text of *Le Conte du Graal* does not specifically refer to the Grail as a Christian object, by the fourteenth century, the intrinsically Christian interpretation of the Grail, first posited by Robert de Boron, was so entrenched within Arthurian literary history as to be the accepted visual rendering of the Grail for both Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the Vulgate Cycle's *La Queste del saint Graal*. This often resulted in a dichotomy between text and image, which may seem to suggest a lack of textual comprehension or technical care on the part of the artist, but can in fact be viewed as exemplary of the artists' cognisance of the manner in which Christianity was interwoven into both sacred and secular contemporary culture. What the late twelfth and early thirteenth-century texts of *Le Conte du Graal* and *Queste*, and their fourteenth-century visual cycles have in common therefore, is an overwhelmingly Christian focus, which reflected current cultural trends of Christian beliefs and practices. As noted by Locke, 'In the *Queste*, the progressive stages of illumination are symbolised by the revelation of the Grail as a movement from what is perceived by the eyes to what is absorbed by the spirit.'[395]

It is this essentially abstract nature of the Grail, as an intangible symbol of Christian devotion, which accounts for its varying depictions, even within a confined place and time period, such as northern France in the first half of the fourteenth century. Certainly, late medieval Grail imagery encompassed a wider *oeuvre* than has been posited by past scholars. Illustrations of King Arthur's cup in both manuscript and ivory can be seen to foreshadow Perceval's quest for the Grail and future Christian conversion, while manuscript miniatures which disparately imagine the Grail as a pyx, chalice, or ciborium, serve to elucidate its multiplicity of tangible forms. That contemporary readers and viewers would likely have recognised the Grail in such a diverse assemblage of visualisations lends credence to the Grail's preeminent role as an abstract symbol of Christian spirituality, non-reliant on a

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[395] Ibid, 9.

standard visual form, as well as speaking to a specified level of Christian and literary knowledge required for readers and viewers to comprehend the Grail in all its complexity. At once symbolic of quintessential Arthurian chivalry through its role in the ultimate quest, and Christian devotion by way of its Eucharistic connotations, at its essence, the Grail is an enduring and multivalent personification of change and continuity, the secular and the sacred.

Chapter Five

Reading the Arthurian World:

Secular Literacy and Reading Practices in Late Medieval France

As my final case study, the previous chapter dealt specifically with the various visual forms of the Grail, and the ways in which medieval French audiences would have 'read' and interpreted such visualisations. Similarly, this chapter will also focus on the visual and textual perspectives of contemporary French audiences, albeit in a manner that more broadly encompasses the experience and practice of reading in the late Middle Ages. Thus, this chapter will ask: how would a fourteenth-century French audiences have read and otherwise utilised illuminated Arthurian manuscripts? This question will provide the overarching structure for this chapter, as I explore the medieval practice of reading and related subtopics, including the definition of medieval literacy, the relationship between text and image, and medieval reading techniques, such as the use of visual imagery. I will begin with a brief overview of the history of medieval reading, as well as a discussion of its role as both a social and cultural, textual and visual practice. As noted by Alison Stones, 'questions of literacy and illiteracy, orality, memory, and of image as sign' are currently some of the most hotly contested issues within the interdisciplinary realm of medieval studies in general, and of Arthurian studies in particular.[396] At the centre of this chapter will thus be a discussion of oral and aural versus silent reading as it relates to the dissemination of vernacular, romance literature such as the Arthurian legends. I will aim to refute the view that individual, silent reading was viewed as superior to oral, group reading during the Middle Ages, considering the oral dissemination of the text of the Arthurian legends, and the visual dissemination of their corresponding imagery throughout the late medieval period, from the twelfth century through the fifteenth century. I will apply this knowledge of medieval reading techniques to the six selected Arthurian manuscripts: MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., fr. 1453, fr. 12576, fr. 12577, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218. By applying current theories of medieval reading practices to these specific manuscripts, I will aim to move my research from a specific to a more general plane, elucidating the overarching role and purpose of secular,

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[396] Alison Stones, 'Arthurian Art Since Loomis', in *Arcturus rex II, Acta Convents Lovaniensis, 1987*, ed. by Werner Verbeke, Jozef Anssens, et al. (Leuven, 1992), 21-2.

vernacular manuscripts in late medieval France. I will argue that such manuscripts served not only as entertaining texts, diversions from everyday life, or visually focussed *objets d'art*, but also as active objects of social, cultural, religious, and even political import, conveying a multiplicity of meanings and issues, both secular and sacred, to their contemporary audiences. As Laurel Amtower comments, 'a reader's response to the popular works of his or her culture yields a great deal of insight into the reading public's capacity for creativity, response, and responsibility.'[397] In regard to the identity of the manuscripts' medieval audiences, questions to be discussed include: who would have made up the manuscripts' intended audiences, in regard to social class and gender? In particular, would the readers have been solely members of the nobility? Attempting to answer such questions will involve a consideration of the manuscripts' patrons, as well as the possibility of the manuscripts' continued use and dissemination in later periods. For example, the possibility that such lavish, valuable objects were passed from one familial generation to another will be discussed.

Furthermore, I will contest Christopher de Hamel's statement that miniatures were likely 'not much more than decoration to be admired as the reading was going on', to argue that they were instead an integral part of the very act of reading, which was itself a complex, multivalent, and socially imbued activity.[398] To this end, I will employ an interdisciplinary approach to medieval reading, which will involve the consideration of a manuscript's text and images not only as two distinct elements, but more importantly, as a united whole through which the manuscript was able to communicate to and affect its readers. I will employ Mieke Bal's theory of images as texts to explore the multilayered relationship between text and image. In relation to this, the hypothetical use of images as mnemonic devices will also be considered. I will question the theory propagated by Mary Carruthers that images served as no more than mnemonic devices or aids to textual understanding, thereby inhabiting a role secondary to the text. I will seek to overturn the theory of images as subordinate to text by suggesting that manuscript images should instead be viewed as an element with equal importance to text, without which a reader's comprehension would have been incomplete and less multivalent. As stated by Aden Kumler, by considering images to be on par with texts in regard to their discursive properties, we 'grant to the

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[397] Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2000), 3.
[398] Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London, 1986), 167.

image the considerable authority associated with text and with codices.'[399] The repositioning of images as having the same level of authority as texts will be one goal of this chapter. Similarly, engagement with the hypothesis of images as mnemonic devices will allow for a broader discussion of the various co-existing roles of manuscript images, and their relationship to the reading process as a whole.

5.1 Medieval Reading, Defined

The medieval definition of reading is perhaps one of the most contested topics within contemporary medieval studies.[400] At once much broader and less prescriptive than that of the twenty-first century definition, the act of reading in the Middle Ages encompassed a wide variety of activities: textual and visual, silent and oral, individual and collective. As noted by Mieke Bal, the variety of medieval activities which would have fallen under the umbrella of 'reading' were related through their shared goal of interpretation, regardless of whether this was textual or visual.[401] Medieval reading involved not only textual comprehension, the basis of the twenty-first-century definition of literacy, but also comprehension and examination of the manuscript's individual images and *mise-en-page* as a whole. In other words, medieval reading involved extensive visual analysis of all elements of the page, text, image, notations, and layout, which, when treated as a comprehensive whole, could serve to elaborate the overall meaning and value of the manuscript.[402] The interconnected nature of text and image ensured that these two elements, which acted both separately and jointly, played key roles in the dissemination of a manuscript's content. The medieval practice of reading was therefore both multi-layered and multivalent in terms of its techniques and outcomes. According to Augustine, the act of reading was:

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[399] Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven, 2011), 2.

[400] Paul Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13 (1982); Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages;* Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 2008); Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Maidie Hilmo, et al., *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (London, 2012), 153; Stephen G. Nichols, 'What is a manuscript culture? Technologies of the manuscript matrix', in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge, 2015).

[401] Mieke Bal, 'On Looking and Reading: Word and Image, Visual Poetics, and Comparative Arts', in *Semiotica* 76 (1989), 295.

[402] Kerby-Fulton, Hilmo, et al., *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts*, 153.

> A critical step in a mental ascent: it is both an awakening from sensory illusion and a rite of initiation, in which the reader crosses the threshold from the outside to the inside world. This upward and inward movement takes place when the appropriate text is transformed into an object of contemplation. *Lectio* becomes *meditatio*.[403]

Augustine's definition focusses on the end result of the act of reading, that of mental and spiritual contemplation and stimulation, suggesting that for a medieval audience, the value of literacy was dependent on its ability to endow readers with heightened awareness, assisting them in the transition from thoughts of the earthly and mundane to the divine and cerebral. Late medieval religious manuscripts such as *Bible moralisée*, or moralised Bibles, were characterised by the inclusion of textual glosses, commentaries on the biblical texts by Church Fathers and later medieval scholastics such as Peter Lombard.[404] These glosses were meant to assist lay readers with their interpretation of the Bible, essentially ensuring that lay readers arrived at prescribed ethical and moral assertions. According to Gerald Guest, the purpose of the moralised Bible in the late Middle Ages was to 'interpret contemporary moral problems through the veil of sacred scripture.'[405] Although in the above quote Augustine refers to the act of reading liturgical, religious texts, such as the Bible, which throughout the Late Middle Ages was most commonly transcribed in Latin, Augustine's characterisation of literary contemplation as leading to Christian enlightenment can also be applied to late medieval vernacular manuscripts, such as the French Arthurian romances. That the term '*roman*', or romance, originally referred to the French vernacular language suggests that there is a less distinct separation between sacred and secular texts than may be thought, thus allowing for comparisons to be drawn between these two types of texts in terms of the manuscripts' inclusion of specifically Christian textual and visual themes meant to lead readers to a higher level of Christianity.[406] In other words, as noted by Laurel Amtower, 'the act of reading is associated with a consequence of spiritual or ethical significance for readers who partake in the message of the text.'[407] Augustine's spiritually imbued theory of reading will be

[403] Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1996), 1-2.
[404] Guest, Gerald B., trans. *Bible moralisée: Codex Vindobonensis 2554, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* (London, 1995), 22.
[405] Ibid, 23.
[406] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 144.
[407] Amtower, *Engaging Words*, 6.

further elaborated and utilised later in this chapter, in relation to the role of the Arthurian legends as tangible manifestations of spiritual quests for their readers.

5.2 Oral Reading

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood aspects of medieval literacy is that of oral reading. It is generally assumed that oral reading was the property of the early Middle Ages and the lower, less literate social classes, while silent reading belonged to the educated and textually literate upper social classes.[408] This is supported by the fact that silent reading originally developed between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, in parallel with the increase in intellectual life at Cistercian abbeys and cathedral schools, which gave rise to the first universities.[409] In keeping with this view of silent reading as scholarly and skilful, today being read aloud to is generally considered the province of the very young and the very old, or of those incapable of reading unassisted. However, this preconception did not exist in the Middle Ages, a time during which the act of 'reading' was both a mentally and socially stimulating activity. The type of text, rather than the audience's level of literacy, was indicative of how it would be disseminated, orally or silently. For example, in the French Arthurian legends of Chrétien de Troyes and the anonymous Vulgate Cycle, the use of speaking and hearing verbs throughout the texts, such as the oft repeated '*or dit li contes*', or 'as the story says', points to the original oral use of the text.[410] For example, in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., historiated initial 'O's begin the phrase '*or dit le contes*', connoting the oral, narrative character of the text, and allowing for readers to more easily find their place. The assumption that aural reception of a text was employed only by the illiterate and socially lowly must be overturned. It is further important to recognise that orality did not exist as a concept separate from literacy, but rather, as a function, or technique of literacy, in and of itself.[411] Just as there exists an intrinsic relationship between text and image, so a similar relationship exists between medieval literacy and orality.

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[408] Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', 384.
[409] Ibid, 384.
[410] Lisa Fagin Davis, *La Chronique Anonyme Universelle: Reading and Writing History in Fifteenth-Century France* (London, 2014), 94.
[411] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996), 5.

5.3 Silent Reading

Silent reading first developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries within Cistercian *studias* and cathedral schools, originating as a method of academic study, by which religious texts could be comprehended more quickly.[412] The use of silent reading continued to progress during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, although it was still used solely for intellectual study, such as within the recently created universities.[413] In the late thirteenth century, coinciding with the advent of Books of Hours, silent reading was increasingly used as a technique for individual religious devotion. For example, medieval women from the thirteenth century onwards could have prayed silently to themselves with the assistance of a Book of Hours, whose rich visual, narrative programme would have likely appealed both to the generally less literate female population, for whom Books of Hours could serve as primers, as well as to literate female aristocrats, such as Mahaut d'Artois and Yolande de Soissons, both of whom are known to have owned lavish, bespoke manuscripts.[414] For example, Yolande de Soissons was the owner of a heavily illuminated Psalter-Hours, produced *circa* 1280-90 in Amiens (Fig. 135).[415] The pairing of frequently occurring illuminations and textual devotions in Books of Hours thus resulted in a new form of personal devotion in the late thirteenth century that could be utilised by laypeople of varying levels of literacy, suggesting that the text and images both played crucial roles, dependent on the textual literacy of the reader.[416] In addition to their small format, overall delicacy, and myriad illustrations, Books of Hours probably further appealed to female consumers due to their connection to the Virgin Mary, of whom private, individual worship greatly increased in the thirteenth century.[417]

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[412] Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', 384.

[413] Ibid, 384.

[414] Michael Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', in *Art History* 8 (1985), 41; Anne R. Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter: A Study of Affect and Audience* (Philadelphia, 2001), 69; Lucy Freeman Sandler, 'Word Imagery in English Gothic Psalters: The Case of the Vienna Bohun Manuscript', in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose, and Placement of Its Images*, ed. by Frank O. Büttner (Turnhout, 2004), 395

[415] See Appendix 2.

[416] Claire Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours: Shaping the Book of Hours in Thirteenth-Century Oxford* (London, 1991), 23.

[417] Ibid, 23.

5.4 Reading Romance Texts

However, vernacular, romantic works, such as the Arthurian legends, continued to be enjoyed through means of aural reception, and in the company of others. The difference in size between Books of Hours and romance manuscripts, such as the six discussed in this thesis, speaks to the differing forms of reading to which these two manuscript types were suited. As Karin Littau comments, 'the materiality of the book affects modes of reading.'[418] A manuscript's size and heft, text layout, and organisation of illuminations all affected the manner in which the book was utilised. Whereas Books of Hours were created to fit easily within a pocket or the palm of a hand, allowing for private, individual literary consumption, romance manuscripts were generally of a much larger size, such as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., whose folios measure 255 x 410 mm. The large size of romance manuscripts facilitated their display on a lectern, and use by large audiences, who may have gathered around the manuscript to view the illuminations as the text was read aloud. Furthermore, as has been discussed, the reading of secular texts was, unlike that of sacred works, considered a form of leisure entertainment, and a social, group activity. This classification persisted throughout the entirety of the Middle Ages, resulting in the oral dissemination of the Arthurian legends through at least the fifteenth century. According to Joyce Coleman:

> Although equated frequently with a 'transitional' period of low literacy and limited access to mss, aurally, i.e., the reading aloud of written literature to one or a group of listeners- was in fact the modality of choice for highly literate and sophisticated audiences, not only in ancient Greece and Rome but also among the nobility of England, Scotland, France, and Burgundy from (at least) the fourteenth through the late fifteenth century.[419]

In a manner similar to Coleman, Albrecht Classen characterises the medieval world up to the fifteenth century as a 'fundamentally oral society.'[420] Classen attributes this both to the fact that the majority of the population continued to be illiterate, and to the immense popularity of the oral dissemination of secular and vernacular texts, even among the textually literate. For example, even literate nobility, such as Saint Louis,

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[418] Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge, 2006), 24.

[419] Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, 1-2.

[420] Albrecht Classen, 'Introduction', in *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (New York, 1998), xiii.

chose to read aloud in small groups rather than to read silently and individually.[421] Although silent reading did allow for the quicker and increased consumption of texts, which was especially useful within the academic realm, oral reading was consistently popular among the medieval laity due to its status as a communal, social activity, which invited group discussion and debate.[422] For example, in Book Two of Chaucer's late fourteenth-century poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, Criseyde is depicted sitting with two ladies, listening to *Le Roman de Thèbes* being read aloud by a maiden.[423] Individual readers would create personal interpretations of a text through verbal and visual interactions with fellow readers.[424] The longevity of the oral dissemination of romance manuscripts speaks to the centrality of this reading practice as a means of building social relations among a group of readers. As noted by Simon Gaunt, the oral dissemination of texts invited a 'communal response' from the audience, an action unique to the practice of group reading as opposed to individual, silent reading.[425] This allowed for the re-engendering of the text's meaning, each time it was read. To quote Iser Wolfgang, the meaning of a text is not fixed, rather, it is a 'dynamic happening' with the ability to shift and change shape depending on the context in which it is read.[426] It is the mutability of a text's meaning that allows for its continued relevance, despite changing audiences, and shifting social, cultural, religious, and political views. This is well exemplified by the continued popularity of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, written in the late twelfth century, yet still included in lavish illuminated manuscripts, such as MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, and fr. 12577, produced *circa* the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century. Manuscripts such as these, likely produced on a bespoke basis, suggest that wealthy and noble buyers, such as Mahaut d'Artois, Countess of Artois (1302-29) had a specific interest in *Le Conte du Graal*, or *Perceval*, and thus requested its inclusion in their commissioned

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[421] Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', 405.
[422] Ibid, 408.
[423] Amtower, *Engaging Words*, 151.
Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book Two, Lines 81-4, Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/257/257-h/257-h.htm#link2H_4_0002, accessed 29 March, 2017.
[424] Susan Noakes in 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', by Michael Camille, in *Art History* 8 (1985), 33.
[425] Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, 1995), 20.
[426] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978), 22.

manuscripts.[427] Although cultural constructs such as chivalry and the public practice of Christianity had undergone marked changes in the intervening century or so, the underlying morals of *Le Conte du Graal* remained applicable to a late medieval audience, likely even engendering discussion of cultural changes and current issues, such as the dissolution of the cult of chivalry, the fading power of the nobility, and the heightened role of the Eucharist within the practice of Mass.

In addition to the continued oral transmission of Chrétien's late twelfth-century works, Roger Loomis suggests that Arthurian romances composed throughout the thirteenth century, such as the Vulgate Cycle, were likely written with the intent of being read aloud.[428] This may have been due in part to the belief that, as noted by Saenger, 'the nobleman was expected to listen to the feats of his predecessors or ancient worthies.'[429] Considering Galahad's elevated status in the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* as an exemplary Christian and perfect knight, it seems possible that he would have been included within this category of 'ancient worthies', rendering *Queste* an intrinsically moralising, as well as entertaining, legend. As has been discussed, the aural reception of vernacular texts was imbued with social significance during the Middle Ages, elevating and setting its practitioners apart from lower social classes who most likely did not have the leisure time nor secular manuscripts necessary for such an intellectual and recreational activity. Loomis' hypothesis illustrates the continued circulation of the theory of the oral transmission of late medieval Arthurian manuscripts, a theory that has been referenced from *circa* the mid twentieth century through today. More recent scholars such as Sandra Hindman have similarly posited the late medieval continuation of an oral culture of vernacular reading in particular.[430] Michael Camille, for example, has examined the increased production and use of vernacular as opposed to Latin texts from *circa* the twelfth century onward. According to Camille, vernacular forms of expression, both textual and visual, were influenced by their Latin predecessors, resulting in a certain literary continuity, in which vernacular works gained the textual authority previously reserved

[427] Sarah Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, 1988), 154.
[428] Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 89.
[429] Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', 405.
[430] Sandra Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Re-Readings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (Chicago, 1994), 83.

solely for Latin works.[431] Beginning in the late twelfth century, the use of the French vernacular for historical writings began to eclipse the formerly dominant use of Latin within the context of royal courts.[432] For example, the thirteenth-century Benedictine monk, chronicler, and illuminator Matthew Paris explained that he had translated the life of King Edward into French for readers with no knowledge of Latin.[433] It was not until the fourteenth century, however, that a clear distinction between *estoire* and *roman* existed, although even then, characters such as King Arthur could appear within both genres.[434] The developing use of the vernacular in both sacred and secular writings can be viewed as an attempt by the aristocracy to wrest power back from the ever more powerful monarchs, and to gain a sense of individuality through means of private devotion and self-identification with literary characters, such as those of the Arthurian romances.[435]

Contrary to Hindman's aforementioned hypothesis, Keith Busby has suggested that the late medieval rise in the production of illuminated manuscripts coincided with an increase in the practice of individual, silent reading. Busby points to the inclusion of illuminations in manuscripts of Chrétien's work as an unnecessary expense for texts that were likely intended for oral transmission.[436] However, as will be further examined, such illuminations could have served both as a means of visual orientation for the oral reader, and also as a tangible exemplar of the manuscript owner's wealth, thereby including the act of display within the medieval definition of reading and literacy. Furthermore, considering that the nobility was still widely read aloud to throughout at least the mid-fourteenth century, by which time heavily illuminated manuscripts, both sacred and secular, such as Books of Hours and the Arthurian legends, had been around for more than a century, the presence of illuminations in

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[431] Michael Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', in *Art History* 8 (1985), 38.

[432] Gabrielle Spiegel, 'The Textualisation of the Past in Thirteenth-Century French Historical Writing', in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting, 1250-1500,* ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 45.

[433] Herbert L. Kessler, 'Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Oxford, 2010), 158.

[434] Howard R. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1983), 98.

[435] Ibid, 17; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, et al., *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature* (Basingstoke, 2002), 1.

[436] Keith Busby, 'Text, Miniature, and Rubric in the Continuations of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, et al. (Amsterdam, 1993), 366.

vernacular manuscripts does not seem to imply a shift from oral to silent reading.[437] In addition, Busby's hypothesised connection between illuminations and silent reading does not fit with the physical characteristics of the six manuscripts examined here. The large size of these Arthurian manuscripts, especially that of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the largest of the six manuscripts, suggests that such legends continued to serve as part of a communal literary activity, even as other texts, such as the physically smaller Books of Hours, were increasingly read silently and individually.

Yet another factor in favour of the French Arthurian legends' oral dissemination is their textual composition. The narratives are divided into several self-contained episodes, rendering them singularly suitable for oral reading. Utilising an episodic method of reading, the legends would likely have been orally disseminated to their audiences in several instalments.[438] The legends' episodic narrative style is characterised by Chrétien's revolutionary use of *entrelacement*, or the interweaving of parallel, simultaneously occurring narratives. For example, in *Le Conte du Graal*, Perceval's spiritually imbued quest is paralleled by the purely chivalric adventures of Gawain. In MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12577, the intertwining of the two knights' narratives is made visually evident through the inclusion of illuminations depicting the adventures of both Perceval and Gawain, lending visual importance to both narrative strands. For example, in MS fr. 12577, six of the eight miniatures that illuminate *Le Conte du Graal* are devoted to Perceval, the story's main protagonist, although the remaining two miniatures focus on Gawain, illustrating his lesser, albeit still integral, narrative role. As mentioned previously, the episodic nature of the Arthurian legends is further characterised in renditions of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* by the use of the phrase '*or dit li contes*', which signifies a change in narrative path. In MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, this phrase is visually signified by the use of a historiated or rubricated initial. For example, in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., all of the illuminations take the form of historiated initial 'O's', the first letter of the transitional phrase '*or dit le contes*'. Historiated initials were similarly used to mark the divisions between the Psalms in late medieval psalters, suggesting a visual link between contemporaneous religious manuscripts and

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[437] Busby, 'Vernacular Literature and the Writing of History in Medieval Francophonia', in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500*, 36-7.
[438] Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, 112.

seemingly secular romance manuscripts such as *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*.[439] The narrative device of *entrelacement* used by Chrétien is later put to similar use in the anonymous Vulgate Cycle. In *La Queste del saint Graal*, the narrative is even more complex than any of those by Chrétien, vacillating between the telling of Galahad's quest, the sometimes intertwined quest of his companions; Perceval and Bors, Gawain's refusal of Christianity, and finally, Lancelot's struggles to confess his sins. In MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6., both of which exhibit extensive image cycles, all of the aforementioned knights are depicted in the historiated initials and miniatures that serve to illuminate each manuscript's rendition of *Queste*. The number of times each knight is depicted corresponds roughly with the importance of his role within the legend; Galahad, as the only knight worthy of the Grail, is depicted most often, while Gawain, who is unable to view the Grail due to his utter lack of Christian devotion, is depicted least frequently. In both Chrétien's works and the Vulgate legends, the use of *entrelacement* allows for the comparison of characters, encouraging readers to comprehend Gawain as a secularised version of Perceval, and similarly, Lancelot and Gawain as warnings against adultery and ignorance of Christianity. This latter moralisation is especially apparent when Lancelot and Gawain's faults are measured against Galahad's purity and divinity. Indeed, Georges Duby describes the Arthurian romances and similar vernacular works as a form of literature 'expressing the convergence of the two ways of life [clergy and chivalry].'[440]

5.5 Connotations of Manuscript Ownership

In addition to fostering social bonds and raising contemporary issues, literacy in the Middle Ages also served as a measure of social status. Regardless of whether the manuscripts' owners were textually literate, the very fact that they were interested in and knowledgable about the Arthurian legends suggests that they had the leisure time with which to pursue such secular, courtly interests. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, one of manuscripts' multiplicity of identities was as *objets d'art*, wherein they functioned as tangible exemplars of the monetary wealth and social status of

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[439] Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter*, 58.
[440] Georges Duby, *The Age of Cathedrals: Art and Society 980-1420*, trans. by Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (London, 1981), 206.

their owners.[441] Thus, the display of manuscripts can be viewed as a form of reading, revealing to viewers the wealth, cultural refinement, and leisure interests of their owners. Lavishly illuminated manuscripts such as MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 3482 could function to heighten their owner's social prestige beyond his or her given status. The manuscripts set their owners apart from the lower classes, who, although not necessarily illiterate, did not have the necessary economic means to commission or purchase such expensive items of material culture. Manuscripts such as the six discussed here therefore functioned as a tangible means of social discrimination, setting their owners apart, both intellectually and economically, from the general laity.[442] Just as the ability to read spoke to a certain amount of leisure time in which to become literate, the owning of manuscripts spoke to a certain amount of discretionary income. The more lavish the manuscript, the more laborious and costly its production. The great expense involved in the production of a manuscript also helped to ensure its continued value and use long after its initial production. For example, the use of a manuscript throughout several consecutive familial generations can perhaps partially account for the poor state of some illuminations, such as the frontispiece of MS fr. 12576 (Fig. 115), wherein the large miniature appears rubbed and badly damaged, with much gilt missing.

In this way, manuscripts are cultural artefacts imbued with agency, able to impart a range of information dependent on the manner in which they are engaged with by a specified audience.[443] Medieval manuscripts could be read not only in terms of the text and images within their pages, but also in terms of their identity and value as active cultural artefacts. For example, as discussed previously, the large size of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. suggests that it was either kept or used on a lectern.[444] As Christopher de Hamel comments, 'the manuscripts were probably originally intended to be carried in by the librarian, bound in beautifully coloured silks, and placed on a lectern so that the owner might listen to readings from his favourite authors.'[445] The immense size of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. renders it too cumbersome to have been easily moved from one place to another, as was likely done with books used by an

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[441] Margaret Goehring, *Space, Place, and Ornament: The Function of Landscape in Medieval Manuscript Illumination* (Turnhout, 2013), 101.
[442] Amtower, *Engaging Words*, 11.
[443] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), 6.
[444] See p. 160.
[445] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 167.

individual reader, such as the much smaller and more portable Books of Hours. Rather, as posited by de Hamel, it is likely that the manuscript would have been displayed open on a lectern, possibly left open to one of the several points where the binding is now broken, such as at folios 176v and 177r, or folios 213v and 214r (Fig. 136), perhaps so as to exhibit a favourite or especially elaborate image. Similarly, the elaborate full page frontispiece that begins MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6) speaks both to the manuscript's high cost of production, and possible display, left open to its most heavily illuminated, and therefore most visually impressive, folio. This may also have been the case with MS Arsenal 5218, a manuscript with a mere three illuminations, yet whose final miniature spans both columns of text and includes a solid gilt background. The remaining three manuscripts in this study are all physically smaller than MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., and display both less frequent and less prominent illuminations than those found in MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 5218. This suggests that these three manuscripts were intended for more personal, individual use, during which the smaller illustrations could be carefully considered from a close vantage point. Although these manuscripts were thus likely not intended for open display, this does not mean that they are lacking in quality. For example, the miniatures in MS Arsenal 3482 are rendered in great detail, and exhibit the frequent use of gilt and patterned backgrounds.

Large and lavishly illuminated manuscripts such as the six Arthurian manuscripts discussed, would thus have been reserved for those of high economic status, namely nobility and royalty. The mere fact that images were more easily and readily available to the wealthy, and therefore socially elevated, posits an elevated social identity for the audiences of such decadently illuminated manuscripts.[446] In the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries, the patronage and ownership of vernacular romance manuscripts was widespread among courtly society. Although the audiences of vernacular romances would later grow to include the aristocracy and even *bourgeoisie*, members of courtly society were the initial recipients of vernacular, illuminated manuscripts. The French courts therefore directly influenced and encouraged the literary and artistic production of vernacular works.[447] Furthermore,

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[446] Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, et al. (Amsterdam, 1993), 268.

[447] Norris J. Lacy, ed. *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (Chicago, 1991), 302; Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe*, 1270-1380

from the twelfth century onwards, the literature propagated by the courts was of a jointly sacred and secular nature, as exemplified by the interwoven chivalric and Christian themes of Arthurian legends such as *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*.[448]

In the French court of the early fourteenth century, aristocratic women, rather than men, most commonly patronised manuscript illuminators. Mahaut, Countess of Artois, is one example.[449] Mahaut is known to have patronised both manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers, suggesting that she had a cross-medium interest in romances and their visual depiction.[450] Mahaut commissioned a carved ivory mirror from a certain Jean le Scelleur in the early fourteenth century, and purchased a manuscript containing *Le Conte du Graal* in 1308.[451] Mahaut is further known to have ordered thirty books, of varying type and subject, between 1300-30.[452] Considering that Mahaut's accounts also record her purchase of a desk at which to read, it is evident that Mahaut did not order books for mere artistic display, but rather to thoroughly engage with the literature and imagery, speaking to her level of literacy as a politically powerful aristocratic woman, as will be further discussed in Chapter Six.[453] Similarly, at the beginning of the early fifteenth-century *Book of the City of Ladies*, author Christine de Pizan describes herself as 'sitting alone in [her] study surrounded by books on all kinds of subjects.'[454] The considerable female interest in Arthurian romances can in part be explained by the complex, essential role of women within the legends. According to Simon Gaunt, the masculine themes of chivalry and courtly love that are at the centre of romances are 'constructed in relation to femininity.'[455] Without the presence of female characters, the tropes that form the

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[448] Elizabeth Salter, 'Courts and Courtly Love', in *Literature and Western Civilization, Vol. 2, The Medieval World*, ed. by David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London, 1972), 411.
[449] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 160.
[450] Paula Shoppe, 'Reading Romances: The Production and Reception of French Gothic Secular Ivory Caskets in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices', thesis (Illinois, 2000), 22, 24; Sarah Guérin, 'Tears of Compunction: French Gothic Ivories in Devotional Practice', thesis (Toronto, 2009), 105.
[451] Ibid, 105; Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', 154.
[452] Ibid, 157.
[453] See pp. 196-9.
[454] Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Early Jeffrey Richards (New York, 1982), 3.
[455] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 103.

quintessential masculine identity cease to exist. Furthermore, as noted by Roberta Krueger, 'courtly romance opened up a discursive space for male and female readers in which boundaries could be temporarily confused, subverted or resisted- at least in the space of a fiction- even as they were maintained.'[456] In other words, romances could serve as places in which readers could explore alternative identities, which were likely unavailable to them in their socially prescribed, fourteenth-century lives.[457] In *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*, although female characters are few in number, where they do appear they inhabit roles integral to the narratives. For example, in *Le Conte du Graal*, it is a maiden who carries the Grail in the procession at the Castle of the Fisher King, and in *Queste*, it is Perceval's sister who guides the three Grail Questers to the conclusion of their adventure, and sacrifices herself so that they may continue onwards to the Grail.[458] Indeed, in MS fr. 12577, the female characters of *Le Conte du Graal* are visually prominent, appearing in five of the eight total miniatures (Figs. 6, 8-11). Similarly, in MS fr. 1453 women appear in 12 of the 15 total miniatures that illuminate *Le Conte du Graal* (Figs. 118-123, 126-131).

5.6 Reading Manuscript Images

The illuminations in Arthurian manuscripts are rendered even more important when the act of interpreting them is considered. As Alexa Sand comments, 'the ability to work with and understand images, as much as vernacular literacy, was a mark of high social rank, but it also carried with it a moral and spiritual charge.'[459] Being capable of comprehending and pondering current issues of Christianity through visual, as well as textual means arguably increased a person's religiosity, expanding his or her chances of forming a connection with God. This was a view held throughout the entirety of the Middle Ages, for, as stated by Pope Gregory the Great *circa* 600 A. D.,

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[456] Roberta L. Krueger, 'Questions of Gender in Old French Courtly Romance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge, 2000), 146.
[457] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 91.
[458] Chrétien de Troyes, 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991), 420; Norris J. Lacy, ed, *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, Vol. 6, trans. by E. Jane Burns (Cambridge, 2010), 125, 145.
[459] Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 2014), 18.

'the pictures, are above all, for the instruction of the people.'[460] Indeed, Pope Gregory was of the opinion that illiterate lay people could 'read in them [images] what they cannot read in books.'[461] The idea that through the use of images, a person could increase his or her Christian devotion and understanding was a theory that was consistently cited throughout the medieval period. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, 'visual literacy' was a skill increasingly valued by the aristocracy, simultaneously serving to reinforce their high social position while also ensuring their active Christian devotion.[462] The very activity of reading, whether textual, visual, or a combination of both elements, can itself be viewed as a spiritual quest. Both the text and images could serve as a means of leading the reader towards salvation.[463] In the French Arthurian legends, both the text and images had underpinnings of religiosity, as seen in the rare visual presence of the Grail, the artistic use of gilt, and the visual reliance on biblical models, such as depictions of the Last Supper and the Eucharistic chalice. All of the aforementioned visual Christian references are evident in the Grail liturgy scene on folio 88r (Fig. 46) of MS Arsenal 5218, as will be discussed next.

Readers of the simultaneously entertaining and moralising Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* follow Galahad on his quest for chivalric and Christian enlightenment. As Galahad moves closer to his obtainment of the Grail, and thereby Christian perfection, so the reader ostensibly grows closer to an understanding of what it means to live a virtuous, pious Christian life. According to Laurel Amtower, 'the act of reading is associated with a consequence of spiritual or ethical significance for readers who partake in the message of the text.'[464] This is but one of many ways in which the spiritual significance at the heart of the Arthurian legends was conveyed to readers. Yet another example involves the image of the Grail, such as is seen on folio 88r of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 46). The literal nature of this illumination, in which Christ, in human form, issues forth from the chalice-shaped Grail, provides a direct

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[460] Gregory the Great in a letter to Serenus, bishop of Marseille, October 600, in *Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great,* trans. by J. Barmby, Vol. 13*, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wave (Grand Rapids, 1956), 53; Michael Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', in *Art History* 8 (1985), 26

[461] Herbert L. Kessler, 'Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Chichester, 2010), 151.

[462] Ibid, 22.

[463] Classen, 'Introduction', xxv.

[464] Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages,* 6.

visualisation of the spiritual nature of the Eucharist. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, visualisations of Christian concepts, such as the Eucharist, were increasingly viewed as an acceptable means of communicating with God.[465] For example, in the thirteenth century, Matthew Paris rendered an image of the Holy Face in a psalter (London, British Library, MS Arundel 157) (Fig. 137) 'in order for the soul to be stirred to devotion.'[466] The viewing of such an inherently Christian image as the Grail pictured in MS Arsenal 5218, regardless of its appearance in an overtly secular, romantic text, could have been viewed as a legitimate religious experience, serving to increase the reader's devotion. This is in keeping with the increase in private devotional practices, often visually focussed, such as the advent of highly illuminated Books of Hours, beginning in the late thirteenth century.[467] The decision of MS Arsenal 5218's artist to base the Grail liturgy illumination on the quintessential Last Supper scene, whether due to mere artistic convenience or a deeper, religious meaning, suggests that the text is intrinsically Christian, shaping the reader's visual perception of the legend, and exemplifying the ways in which a text's meaning is dependent on context, both in terms of its physical location (the manuscript) and in terms of outside influences (social, religious, and political views and events). This reliance on context allows for a text's meaning to be active and changeable, enabling it to morph in accordance with time, place, and audience. In this way, Chrétien's texts were ensured literary longevity, rendering them just as relevant to early to mid fourteenth-century audiences as they were to their original late twelfth-century audiences.

Arthurian manuscripts can therefore be seen to both share and reflect their readers' relationship with Christianity; reinforcing and shaping the readers' thoughts, beliefs and religious practices.[468] For example, in *La Queste del saint Graal* Galahad serves as a model of utmost Christian piety. The juxtaposition of Galahad with his sinful father, Lancelot, exemplifies for readers both proper and improper Christian piety. While Lancelot stands for the sinner, striving, yet ultimately failing, in his quest for both the Grail and Christian enlightenment, Galahad personifies the achievement

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[465] Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art*, 24.
[466] See Appendix 2; Matthew Paris, qtd. in ibid, 157.
[467] David Diringer, *The Illuminated Book: Its History and Production* (London, 1958), 260.
[468] Kathryn A. Smith, 'A 'Viewing Community' in Fourteenth-Century England', in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Joyce Coleman, et al. (Turnout, 2013), 168.

of both secular, chivalric, and sacred, religious goals, as both the ultimate Christian and perfect knight. This message is communicated both textually and visually; the text recounts Galahad's quest for the Grail during which he consistently ignores worldly, secular concerns in favour of religiously motivated issues, thereby promoting his Christian perfection. In terms of his visual portrayal as a wholly Christian knight, Galahad is routinely illustrated bearing his ancestral shield, previously owned by Josephus, which, with its white background and red cross, is identical to that of Saint George, the patron saint of soldiers (i.e. crusaders). For example, medieval chroniclers highlighted the importance of patron saints to the safety and success of Christian soldiers. An eleventh-century chronicler of the First Crusade (1096-99), Raymond of Aguilers, told of a priest who was visited by Saint George, who identified himself by stating that he was the 'standard bearer of this army.'[469] The depiction of such a quintessential Christian symbol, as seen on folio 323v of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. (Fig. 16), folio 10r of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 15), and, slightly differently, on folio 538v of MS Arsenal 3482 (Fig. 45), serves to draw connections between Christ's legacy, the trope of chivalry, and the role of Christian knights. By following Galahad both textually and visually, from the beginning to the end of his quest, medieval readers were tutored in how to better live as pious Christians, focussing on divine, rather than worldly, concerns.

5.7 The Text-Image Relationship

The primacy of text over image is a long held view within the realm of manuscript studies. The supremacy of text is supported by the manuscript production process, wherein the text was commonly written first, with the illuminator then rendering images in response to the physical presence of the text. The production order of text followed by image is visually evident in manuscripts such as MS fr. 12577, where the miniatures are often not wholly textually accurate, suggesting that the text was not adapted to fit the imagery. Rather, instances such as the frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6), in which Perceval is depicted holding a lance instead of the textually specified javelins, suggests that the illuminator may not have paid careful attention to, or was not familiar with, the already existing text. Scholars such as Emile Mâle and

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[469] David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (Woodbridge, 2003), 126, 193; Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, ed. by John H. Hill, et al. (Paris, 1969), 133.

Christopher de Hamel have tended to privilege text over image, a trend that is prevalent throughout the twentieth-century study of medieval manuscripts.[470] Relatedly, Mary Carruthers is known for her theories concerning the role of manuscript images as mnemonic devices. Carruthers theorises that manuscript images served to increase the reader's understanding of the text, a hypothesis that clearly privileges text over image.[471] Although it is likely that manuscript images were used as a visual aid to textual understanding, it should not be assumed that images consistently inhabited a role secondary to that of the text. On the contrary, late medieval images likely served as more than mere mnemonic devices, aids to textual understanding, or visual signposts orienting the reader within the narrative. Rather, these are only a few of the many co-existing roles of manuscript illuminations, and not the primary means in which such visual aspects of a manuscript functioned. The images can instead be seen to provide another level of meaning, both separate from and in relation to the text. Text and image are interrelated, each enhances the existence and purpose of the other.[472] The text informs the images, and the images, the text. Both text and image can be classified as narratives, and thus can both be 'read'. As noted by Mieke Bal, 'the image does not replace a text; it *is* one.'[473] For example, the 'reading' of an Arthurian legend though the chronological examination of a manuscript's images would have fallen within the medieval category of reading. The images can act as a narrative in and of themselves, independent from the text, functioning as an alternative method of reading in and of themselves.[474] Indeed, in addition to translating the life of King Edward into vernacular French, Matthew Paris is also recorded as noting that he rendered the text into pictures as well, for 'ceux qui les lettres ne scavent', illustrating the function of images as a different, yet equivalent, form of reading.[475] Similarly, in the thirteenth-century epic poem *Der welsche Gast*, Thomasin von Zerclaere argued that, 'whoever cannot comprehend higher things

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[470] de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 167; Madeline H. Caviness, 'Reception of images by Medieval Viewers', in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 75.
[471] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 226.
[472] Mieke Bal, 'On Looking and Reading: Word and Image, Visual Poetics, and Comparative Arts', in *Semiotica* 76 (1989), 291.
[473] Ibid, 291.
[474] Ibid, 291.
[475] 'Those who do not know letters'; Kessler, 'Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', 158.

ought to follow the example [of the romances]…as the priest looks at writing, so should the untaught man look at the pictures.'[476]

The role of images as a narrative is particularly evident within the frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6), and the miniature cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Arsenal 3482, all of which are comprehensive visual interpretations, illustrating distinct, chronologically organised scenes within the legends. The consistent visual appearance of Perceval, who wears a hooded tunic, and Galahad, who bears the shield of Saint George throughout the manuscripts' series of illuminations allows for readers to visually follow the adventures of the two knights in their respective legends, *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*. According to Moshe Barasche, 'what differentiates script and images is simply the medium of recording; in basic function and structure, it is assumed, images have the same general character as script.'[477] In other words, both text and image have the same integral purpose: to convey meaning to an audience. For example, within the aforementioned frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6), text and image exist on a surprisingly equal plane: the opening scene of the romance can be understood either through a visual examination of the four-panel, narrative miniature, or through a reading of the rubricated description of the image, and corresponding introductory text. Both visual and textual readings of the frontispiece would provide the reader with the same general narrative information, although it can be argued that a method of reading involving both the text and images would provide the reader with the most detailed understanding of the legend, taking into consideration both the original, twelfth and thirteenth-century text, and contemporary fourteenth-century imagery, thereby providing a complex view of the legend's changes and continuities since its inception.

Although Carruthers puts too much emphasis on the role of images as mnemonic devices, often to the detriment of other, more central purposes of the images, she is correct in her hypothesis that the 'visual presentation' of a text was integral to its overall meaning, and, rather than being limited to the illustration of the text's themes and subjects, was necessary for the complete, multivalent reading of the text.[478] There were multiple ways in which a manuscript could be 'read.' The viewers of illuminated manuscripts, such as the six Arthurian manuscripts discussed in this

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[476] Thomasin von Zerclaere qtd. in ibid, 160.
[477] Moshe Barasche, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* (New York, 1997), 3.
[478] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 278.

thesis, could choose an interpretation based on their own understanding of the written text and images, an oral retelling of the story, or they could rely solely on the discourse of the illustrations.[479] This is yet another example of the multivalent nature of late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts. Just as the manuscripts allowed for a multiplicity of understandings along the spectrum from the strictly secular to the purely sacred, the manner by which a reader would come to these interpretations was equally varied, ranging from the purely textual, to the strictly visual, to an intermediary compilation of textual and visual 'reading'. The chosen means by which a specific manuscript was read was equally dependent on the manuscript's physical form; size, textual layout, and pattern of illumination, as well as the individual reader's style and level of literacy, and familiarity with the manuscript's content.

The inclusion of illuminations within Arthurian manuscripts implies their use as a visual form of reading that coexisted with textual reading. Considering the cost of illumination, especially in the case of heavily gilded images, such as the Grail liturgy scene on folio 88r of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 46), it seems unlikely that such lavish illuminations would be inserted haphazardly. Rather, the images and their placement were likely carefully planned to function both in conjunction with and independently from the text, serving as a form of visual comprehension. For example, the scenes chosen for illumination in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. highlight the major scenes within *La Queste del saint Graal*, including Galahad's acquisition of his ancestral shield (folio 323v) (Fig. 16), Lancelot's meeting with a hermit (folio 334v) (Fig. 31), the re-telling of the Fall of Adam and Eve (folio 349r) (Fig. 36), and the death of King Mordrain (folio 357v) (Fig. 43). The comprehensive narration provided by the illuminations in manuscripts such as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. implies that a reader could have 'read' the legend through the use of the images alone, a method of reading in which the visual is privileged over the textual. The reader's depth of comprehension would, however, have hinged upon his or her prior knowledge of the legend. Nonetheless, at the very least, a rudimentary understanding of the story could be gained from the chronological consideration of the images. Similarly, the large and lavishly illuminated frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6) suggests that the introductory scenes of *Le Conte du Graal* were meant to be primarily visually rather than textually, conveyed to the reader. The division of the frontispiece into four separate frames,

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[479] Stephanie C. van d'Elden, 'Discursive Illustrations in Three Tristan Manuscripts', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 294.

arranged chronologically, and relying on visual transitions such as the overlapping of individual scenes, renders the frontispiece a miniature with the ability to function independent of the text. Thomas Hinton conjectures that the imagery within Arthurian manuscripts implies its use by readers 'who may choose to browse the spatial text of the manuscript without engaging with its diegetic text.'[480] In this case, in opposition to Mary Carruthers' aforementioned theory, the text is relegated to a secondary position, the imagery being put forward as the primary means of comprehension.

In the case of MS fr. 12577, the images could also be used as a means of confirming a reader's textual understanding, matching textually described events within the legend to the corresponding images. The images could reinforce and mirror the ideas set forth in the text, as is also seen in the case of MS Arsenal 5218's Grail liturgy (Fig. 46). However, it is not always the case that there is a one to one correspondence between text and image. Rather, this is more the exception than the rule, as exemplified by visual translations of textual descriptions of the Grail, such as in MSS fr. 12576 and fr. 12577. Regardless of the divergence (or lack thereof) between text and image, there did exist a definitive connection between text and image, which is evidenced by the interwoven nature of the relationship between the text and illuminations. For example, in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., some aspects of the historiated initial 'O's escape their frames, invading the rectangular space of the frame, and sometimes even crossing into the text space. On folio 318r (Fig. 18), the foot of the leftmost knight protrudes beyond both the outline of the 'O' and the miniature frame, resting above the letter 't' of '*tout*'. Similarly, on folio 349r (Fig. 36) Adam and Eve stand with their feet outside of the 'O's confines, their toes barely grazing the top of the line of text directly below. These protrusions can be seen as creating a subtle, yet tangible connection between image and text, reinforcing the analogous state of these two manuscript components, and perhaps serving to remind readers of the equal importance of both text and image. Similarly, in MS Arsenal 3482, the illuminator has also extended his illustrations beyond their proscribed borders. In opposition to the illuminator of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., however, here the illuminator is more daring, allowing aspects of his images to encroach upon the margins of the pages. On folio 514v (Fig. 41), the billowing sail of Lancelot's unmanned ship inhabits the upper margin. This grants the image a further quality of

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[480] Hinton, *The Conte du Graal Cycle*, 72.

liveliness, creating a sense of movement and activity within an otherwise small and confined miniature. This artistic technique is found in other contemporaneous Arthurian manuscripts, such as British Library, MS Additional 10294, a copy of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* and *Le Morte Artu*, where, on folio 11v (Fig. 138), the sword of a combative knight, the steeple of a church, and the upper halves of a fallen knight and his horse protrude from the confines of the miniature.[481] The possibility of working relationships between scribes and artists, and evidence for workshops, all of which could have been contributing factors in the creation of such interrelated text-image relationships, will be discussed in Chapter Seven.[482]

The text-image relationship could even vary within a single manuscript. For example, the remainder of MS fr. 12577's rendition of *Le Conte du Graal* is more sparsely illuminated, suggesting that the previously prominent role of the images and the overall text-image relationship shifted as the story progressed. Whereas on folio 1r (Fig. 6), the visual is more prevalent than the textual, within the legend's remaining folios, text and image appear either on a more equal plane (Fig. 8), or with the text emphasised over the images, such as on folios where no illuminations appear. This illustrates the interchangeable nature of the text-image relationship.[483] Similar to the meaning of a text, the text-image relationship is mutable, never fixed; the tension between word and image is in a constant state of flux, dependent on issues of context such as the physical layout of the manuscript, and the identity of the audience. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, two of the three selected *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, yet none of the three *La Queste del saint Graal* manuscripts, include rubrics.[484] In MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12577, several lines of red rubricated text accompany the miniatures, perhaps serving as textual instructions to the illuminators due to their accurate descriptions of the accompanying images, while also serving to highlight transition points within the narrative. A blurring of boundaries between the roles of text and image, one that is analogous to the intertwining of the sacred and secular, is suggested by the mutability of the text-image relationship, which changes both within a single manuscript, and among a group of several manuscripts with the same text. Both seemingly dichotomous pairings, text and image, sacred and secular,

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[481] See Appendix 2.
[482] See pp. 219-26.
[483] Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', 260.
[484] See p. 63; See Appendix 1.

exhibit what is perhaps a surprising amount of crossover in terms of their interrelated meanings and usage.

Yet another example of the text-image relationship within Arthurian manuscripts deals with the lack of agreement between text and image, which occurs often in the six selected Arthurian manuscripts. According to Busby, this suggests that although the illuminations were likely used both as an aid to textual reading and as a form of reading in and of themselves, it is doubtful that the images were used by readers as a means of 'double-checking' their textual comprehension.[485] Rather, the dichotomy between text and image occurs most often in episodes of possible religious import. The images often exaggerate or even contradict aspects of the text, such as in the case of the Christianisation of the Grail within renditions of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*. In manuscripts such as MS fr. 12577, the imagery is much more explicitly Christian than is the text. Whereas Chrétien described the object later envisioned as the Grail as more of an indeterminate, spiritual object, or a '*chose merveilleuse*', the artist of MS fr. 12577 has rendered it in a much more decidedly Christian manner, adding a cross to the top of the already distinctly Eucharistic vessel depicted in the procession illustrated on folio 18v (Fig. 8).[486] This fits with the gradual Christianisation of the French Arthurian legends during the intervening century or so between when Chrétien wrote *Le Conte du Graal* (*circa* 1135-90) and the production of illuminated Arthurian manuscripts in the early fourteenth century. For example, the anonymous thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle was the first French Arthurian text to actively introduce a Christian aspect to the narrative, creating a history for the Grail (*L'Estoire du Graal*) as the vessel used to hold the blood of Christ at the Crucifixion.[487] The distinctly Christian visual tone of early fourteenth-century imagery such as that of MS fr. 12577's Grail scene thus suggests the influence of the Vulgate Cycle's Christian themes, which appear to have infused fourteenth-century French Arthurian visual culture. Regardless of whether the illuminator purposefully utilised such a quintessentially Christian model, the fact remains that the audience's

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[485] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, et al (Amsterdam, 1993), 362.
[486] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth-Century French Romance* (Redwood City, 1960), 4-5.
[487] Lacy, ed. *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, *The History of the Holy Grail*, Vol. 1, trans. by Carol J. Chase, 16-17.

interpretation of the text would have been in part shaped by the inclusion of such Christian references, colouring the ways in which they perceived the legend.

What can be inferred about the use of manuscripts such as MSS fr. 12576 and Arsenal 5218, which lack a large number of illuminations? Does their dearth of illuminations suggest a method of reading different from that of other Arthurian manuscripts, such as MSS fr. 12577, Arsenal 3482, and Rawlinson Q.b.6., which are more heavily (and perhaps skilfully) illuminated? As has been discussed, Busby hypothesises that manuscripts that were orally disseminated had no need for illuminations. Busby's theory therefore posits that MSS fr. 12576 and Arsenal 5218 were aurally received, whereas MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12577, and Rawlinson Q.b.6. were transmitted through silent reading. However, Busby's theory does not take into account other physical factors that would have helped to shape such manuscripts' ascribed methods of literary dissemination. For example, as has been noted, the large size of the folios of the six Arthurian manuscripts points to the manuscripts' use in oral, group settings, where an increased manuscript size would have been necessary to accommodate large audiences. The inclusion (or lack) of images should not be assumed to be the sole deciding factor in a manuscript's means of literary transmission.[488] Although the paucity of illuminations in some Arthurian manuscripts may suggest their oral use, the presence of illuminations does not prefigure silent reading. As has been discussed, the medieval practice of reading was a complex process that took into account a multiplicity of factors, including physical characteristics of the manuscripts, the type of text, social norms, and even religious beliefs. Furthermore, textual literacy did not preclude oral reading practices, blurring the line between the use of heavily illuminated manuscripts, and those that are less lavishly decorated.

5.8 Reading Marginal Imagery

MS Arsenal 5218, a rendition of *La Queste del saint Graal*, although illuminated with only three miniatures, also includes marginal images in its visual programme, an illustrative technique that does not appear in any of the five remaining manuscripts discussed in this thesis. In this case, I define marginal imagery as human, animal, or composite forms that exist within the margins of the text. I do not include ivy-leaf

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[488] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', 353.

borders, which often encroach upon the margins, are prevalent among late medieval French manuscripts, and have been classified as a typical visual characteristic of late medieval romance manuscripts produced in Northern France, especially Paris.[489] Marginalia is most commonly found within thirteenth-century religious manuscripts, such as psalters. In manuscripts such as the Luttrell, Queen Mary, and Ormesby Psalters, the marginalia can often be seen to provide a commentary on the text, perhaps serving as a lighthearted form of entertainment, juxtaposed against the solemn nature of the sacred text.[490] The inclusion of marginalia in a romance manuscript is therefore unusual. On folio 1r of MS Arsenal 5218 (Fig. 14), three apes are depicted in the bottom margin, in the act of fishing, using a net and rod. On folio 10r (Fig. 15), two nude figures are shown astride a goat and ram, jousting. Finally, on folio 88r (Fig. 46), an ape directs a chained and dancing bear, accompanied by a pig and rabbit playing musical instruments. Does the marginalia found in MS Arsenal 5218 take the place of more conventional miniatures, providing an alternative, satirical commentary of *Queste*? Apes were often used in medieval marginalia to depict base human actions.[491] Perhaps the inclusion of apes in the margins of all three folios is meant to provide a visual commentary on the path to sin, in juxtaposition with the virtuous acts of the Christ-like Galahad, the legend's protagonist? Lori Walters posits that the marginalia found in MS Arsenal 5218 is employed 'to intimate that the love quest is not as worthy as the quest for the divine and to discourage sexual activity and marriage on the part of the celebrants of the mass.'[492] The religious undertones of *Queste* may therefore help to explain the inclusion of such marginal illustrations. As Walters further states, the marginalia does seem to emphasise the secular aspects of the text, 'reinforc[ing] the dialectic established between secular and spiritual quests in the pictorial cycle.'[493] Similarly, Simon Gaunt notes that the medieval tension between *chevalerie* and *clergie* was often expressed in an amusing, ironic manner within the romances, lending credence to the possible satirical use of

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[489] Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 30; de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 167.

[490] See Appendix 2.

[491] Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The Symbolic Significance of *Figurae Scatologicae* in Gothic Manuscripts', in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle: Papers,* ed. by Clifford Davidson and Karl P. Wentersdorf (Kalamazoo, 1984), 3.

[492] Lori Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the Queste del saint Graal', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature,* ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 349.

[493] Ibid, 349.

marginal imagery in MS Arsenal 5218.[494] Certainly, considering that *Queste* may have simultaneously served as both secular entertainment and as a visual and textual reminder of the importance of Christian devotion, it does seem possible that the marginalia could have served as an extra dialogue on the simultaneous dichotomy and union of the seemingly opposed, secular and sacred spheres. This is in keeping with the tradition of marginal imagery as illustrations of the *monde reversé*, or world turned upside down, as discussed by Lilian Randall in her study of the pairing of snails and knights in the margins of fourteenth-century manuscripts.[495] Marginalia could provide a visual forum for the examination of ideas that could not be expressed within the page proper. In the case of *Queste*, this could have been the overtly prosaic, secular aspects of the text. However, the fact that none of the other manuscripts examined here, whether renditions of *Queste* or *Le Conte du Graal,* exhibit any marginalia whatsoever, suggests that the inclusion of marginalia in MS Arsenal 5218 is not wholly motivated by the text's religious nature, and may possibly have been included at the request of the patron, to further enhance the visual appeal of the book. Regardless, it is safe to say that marginalia served as a visual means by which the artist could experiment with the manuscript's text-image relationship, enhancing the reader's visual experience of the manuscript.

As evidenced by MS Arsenal 5218's marginalia, manuscript imagery was likely used in a variety of ways other than pure 'visual reading'. For example, miniatures and historiated initials could have served to orient the reader within the text, mark textual transitions, and add to the reader's comprehension, all of which would have served to benefit an audience listening to an oral telling of the legend. The visual presentation of a manuscript contributed directly to its readability. The placement of text and images served as a sort of 'road map' for readers, providing visual directions for the better comprehension of the manuscript as a whole. Manuscript illuminations could contribute context, serving as visual transitions or breaks within the text, thereby becoming a means by which the reader could orient him or herself within the story. One function of MS fr. 1453's miniatures is that of 'chapter headings', highlighting transitions and breaks in the text, and perhaps even assisting the reader (whether oral or silent) with finding his or her place, providing ready places within the text for the reader to both stop and start reading. MS Arsenal 3482 is similarly

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[494] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 93.
[495] Lilian M.C. Randall, 'The Snail in Gothic Marginal Warfare', in *Speculum* 37 (1962), 358.

illustrated with 'chapter heading' miniatures. Additionally, other means of visual adornment also functioned to increase the manuscript's overall readability. For example, in MS Arsenal 3482 (Fig. 20), smaller foliate initials in red, blue, white, and gold are often used to signify minor textual transitions. Rubrication was also commonly utilised to signify image descriptions, which may have been inserted to aid the illuminator in his or her work. For example, in MS fr. 1453, rubrics of two to three lines are included before each image, setting them apart from the rest of the text, and identifying them as commentary of the miniatures placed below (Fig. 118). In MS 1453, stylistic similarities between the rubricated and non-rubricated text, as well as the fact that the borders of some images (such as on folios 6r and 8v) overlap the rubrics suggests that the rubrics were completed at the same time as the rest of the text, prior to the illuminations, and thus could have served as instructions for the artists, who seem to have overall followed the textual instructions provided by the rubrics. Rubrication is similarly utilised in MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8), although not in the four remaining manuscripts, MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., fr. 12576, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218. Such rubrication can, however, be found in similarly dated Arthurian manuscripts, such as the aforementioned British Library, MS Additional 10294 (Fig. 138), a copy of *La Queste del saint Graal* and *Le Morte Artu*, which dates to *circa* 1316.[496]

5.9 The Flexibility of the Reading Process

Analogous to the multivalent purpose and significance of manuscript images, the narratives could also have been understood at a variety of levels, dependent on the reader's level of literacy, knowledge of the narrative, and manner of reading. A text is a living construct, imbued with agency in the sense that it is endowed with the intentions of its creator(s) and the reactions of its audience(s).[497] For example, the existence and purpose of a manuscript such as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. is mediated by the author of the text it contains (the anonymous *La Queste del saint Graal*), the makers of the physical book, (including the scribe Ernoul d'Amiens and several illuminators), and its audiences, the members of whom likely exhibited varying degrees of textual literacy, and engaged with the text and images in various ways.

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[496] See Appendix 2.

[497] Howard Morphy, 'Art as a Mode of Action: Some Problems with Gell's Art and Agency,' in *Journal of Material Culture* 14.5 (2009), 6, 20.

Thus, there is not one finite way in which a manuscript can be read or interpreted. As a result of its complex production process and both textual and visual elements, a manuscript is a complex, multivalent object with the ability to invoke infinite thoughts, emotions, and meanings for its audiences. The variety of ways in which medieval manuscripts were likely read speaks to this. As Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer have commented, books are part of the 'socio-cultural matrix.'[498] In order to fully understand their import, they must be considered in light of contemporary events, beliefs, and traditions, all of which help to shape their ever-changing reception.[499] For example, the narratives could have been understood along a sliding scale of meaning, ranging from the wholly secular to the wholly sacred ends of the spectrum, from purely chivalric, recreational reading, to allegorical Christian commentary. Relatedly, as has been suggested previously, the legends could also have been read as commentaries on contemporary issues, such as the dwindling power of the nobility in the late Middle Ages, the concurrent growing irrelevance of romantic and Christian chivalry, and the renewed role of the Eucharist in Christian Mass, as first promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which, as noted by Aden Kumler helped to emphasise the 'importance of religious knowledge to the proper practice of religion and Christian living.'[500] The legends can be seen to both engender and mirror the social, political, and religious views of their readers, reinforcing ideas of Christianity, while also raising issues relevant to their aristocratic audiences.[501] To again quote Kumler, with the monetary means to hire scribes and artisans, 'elite laypeople pursued a more ambitious version of spiritual excellence, a vision given form and voice in the pages of luxury manuscripts.'[502] Illuminated Arthurian manuscripts such as the six studied here could ostensibly be used as a tool to further Christian devotion among the aristocracy. Furthermore, the Arthurian narratives could thus serve as a forum in which to examine current issues; social, political, and

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[498] Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, 'Current Trends in the History of Reading', in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. by Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia, 2002), 1.

[499] Nancy F. Regalado, 'The Wings of Chivalry and the Order of Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 308', in *Collections in Context: The Organisation of Knowledge and Community in Europe*, ed. by Karen L. Fresco, and Anne D. Hedeman (Columbus, 2011), 53.

[500] Kerby-Fulton, Hilmo, et al, *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches*, 97; Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 3.

[501] Regalado, 'The Wings of Chivalry and the Order of Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 308', 54.

[502] Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 42.

religious, such as the lay practice of Christianity, and the fluctuating power of the nobility, concerns which were endemic to the late Middle Ages as a whole. As noted by Wolfgang Iser, 'literary texts constitute a reaction to contemporary situations.'[503] Medieval readers approached texts through the lens of their contemporary society. Political events, such as the Hundred Years' War and the shift from Capetian to Valois rule in 1328, as well as religious beliefs, and social and cultural changes, all played a role in determining the various ways in which a text would be understood.[504]

Thus, Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, though still popular more than a century after its composition, would have been understood and interpreted in a manner different from that in which it was comprehended shortly after its late twelfth-century completion. Due to the multivalency of the text, meaning is not static, and is dependent on the current context in which the manuscript exists. For example, Chrétien composed his Arthurian legends in the late twelfth century. Although they were still widely circulated and produced in manuscript form two centuries later, the manner in which they were understood would have shifted along with social, cultural, political, and religious changes of the intervening two hundred years. For example, whereas when Chrétien was writing, chivalry was largely an active concept, a knightly code of both romantic and religious import, by the fourteenth century, it largely lived only within his legends, and was looked upon by contemporary readers as exemplary of the 'golden age', when the nobility wielded their political, social, and economic power more freely. According to Joachim Bumke, 'the courtly ideal of knighthood and the social reality of noble life stood in glaring contrast.'[505] Relatedly, Erich Köhler theorised that courtly literature specifically appealed to an aristocratic audience in the late Middle Ages as a result of their experience of political and social upheaval by both the higher and lower classes; the monarchy and the growing 'urban bourgeoisie.'[506] As Howard Bloch explains, 'courtly literature is at once an idealisation of the deteriorating situation of aristocracy and a forum for the resolution of intraclass tension.'[507] The exclusivity of courtly literature helped to codify the

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[503] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, 3.
[504] Anne D. Hedeman, 'Gothic Manuscript Illumination: The Case of France', in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 427; Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining the Past in France*, 89-90.
[505] Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1991), 311.
[506] Howard R. Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Laws* (Berkeley, 1977), 220.
[507] Ibid, 220.

community to which it was addressed, engendering royal and noble readers with a sense of unity and power that was perhaps in danger of lessening or disappearing from their real lives.[508] Thus, the multivalency of the Arthurian legends allowed for their continued application as a commentary on medieval life, lending them longevity enjoyed by few other texts. The mutability of the text's meaning saves it from becoming obsolete. As Bal describes, although a text is composed of a 'finite ensemble of signs' this does not mean that the text's meaning is restricted. On the contrary, a text's meaning and significance is mutable, dependent on changing factors of context such as time period, audience, and the text-image relationship.[509] As noted by Maura Nolan, 'texts do not exist in isolation.'[510] Rather, a text's significance and meaning is dependent upon the current context in which it exists. Manuscripts must be viewed as living artefacts, their significance stemming from the interaction between the text, images, and contemporary audiences.[511] Each of the manuscripts discussed here would have been specially created for a specific patron and purpose, lending each manuscript a definitive nascent identity. After its inception, the identity of the text, composed of its relationship to images, can be renewed indefinitely.[512]

Reading was thus a complex activity that involved a wide array of participants, from the author of the text, to the illuminator of the manuscript, to the audiences of the final product, which was a marriage of textual and visual stimuli.[513] According to Anne Hedeman, 'how a book's message was created requires an analysis both of the physical object and of the relationship between those involved in its making and the expectations of the intended audience.'[514] The author of the text, the manuscript illuminator, the patron, and readers all participated in the formation of the manuscript's message and significance. The artist had a central role in shaping the

[508] Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London, 1998), 219.
[509] Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto, 1985), 5.
[510] Maura Nolan, 'Introduction', in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, and Readers*, ed. by Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, 2006), 1.
[511] Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, 21.
[512] Bal, 'On Looking and Reading: Word and Image, Visual Poetics, and Comparative Arts,' 291.
[513] Margriet Hoogvliet, ' "Pour faire laies personnes entendre les hystoires des escriptures anciennes": Theoretical Approaches to a Social History of Religious Reading in the French Vernaculars during the Late Middle Ages', in *Cultures of Religious Reading in the Late Middle Ages: Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit, and Awakening the Passion*, ed. by Sabrina Corbellini (Turnhout, 2013), 274.
[514] Hedeman, 'Presenting the Past: Visual Translation in Thirteenth-Fifteenth Century France', in *Imagining the Past in France*, 69.

audiences' perceptions. Where known, specific artists of the six selected manuscripts will be discussed in Chapter Seven. By choosing certain visual models, such as the Last Supper as the basis for a feast scene (MS Arsenal 5218), and the Eucharistic chalice as the outline for the Grail (MSS fr. 12577 and Arsenal 5218), the artist, whether knowingly or not, effectively influenced the audiences' perceptions of the legend's meaning, influencing the extent to which it was viewed as secular or sacred.[515] Such visual models, paired with the interdisciplinary context in which the manuscript was read, shaped the way in which it was received. The active role of the reader, meanwhile, was addressed by the manner in which the text was written. For example, Chrétien de Troyes adopts a conversational voice when narrating his Arthurian legends, using transitional phrases such as '*Ne parole li contes ci*,' which translates loosely to 'as the story relates.'[516] Similarly, in the anonymous Vulgate Cycle, the oft repeated phrase '*or dit li contes*' adds to the interactive nature of the legends' narratives, suggesting a close proximity and relationship between text and reader, regardless of the difference in time between the legend's composition and current dissemination. The manuscript's reception shaped the way in which the readers viewed both themselves and current issues, social, political, and religious. Manuscripts were active players in the social dialogue. Even seemingly romantic, entertaining tales such as the Arthurian legends harboured the ability to affect queries and change in late medieval French society. Arthurian imagery also circulated independently of the texts, as exemplified by ivory carvings such as the eight composite romance ivory caskets, and the sole extant Perceval casket, all produced in the early fourteenth century. Concurrent with the growing market for vernacular romances, the late thirteenth century also saw the beginnings of an increased demand for private luxury items, such as carved ivories.[517] The various ways in which such wholly visual renditions of the Arthurian legends could have been 'read' and understood will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The individual elements of the manuscript's *mise-en-page* worked together to convey a complex meaning, at once both sacred and secular, textual and visual. Not

[515] Smith, 'A 'Viewing Community' in Fourteenth-Century England', 168.
[516] de Troyes, 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', in *Arthurian Romances*, 457; de Troyes, 'Perceval ou le Conte du Graal', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Daniel Poiron, et al (Paris, 1994), 845.
[517] Lydia Y. Kertz, 'Shadows and Reflections: Tristan and Isolde in Manuscripts and Ivory', in *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 30.2 (2014), 133.

only the text and images, but also the layout of the pages (the number of text columns, the size and placement of miniatures, the use of red rubrication, historiated initials, and marginalia) contributed to the reader's overall experience of the manuscript. Each individual textual and visual element acted as part of the manuscript as a whole, which, as a single unified object, had the capability to act within a specified socio-cultural matrix; in this case, the aristocratic society of early to mid fourteenth-century France. As Graham Caie comments, 'the medieval reader would learn as much from the page presentation as from the script.'[518] All of these diverse elements played a role in how the manuscript was read and understood by contemporary audiences, rendering the act of reading a manuscript a rich and multivalent activity, during which the reader was required to use all of his or her senses to gain full comprehension of the manuscript. For example, Sand cites medieval metaphors of chewing and digesting texts as exemplary of the fundamentally sensual nature of medieval reading.[519] This personification of reading as a multi-sensual activity is in direct opposition to the arguably more two-dimensional identity of the contemporary definition of reading, which privileges textual understanding to the complete exclusion of visual comprehension. Considering the integral roles of speaking and listening to the medieval practice of reading, it seems clear that medieval audiences would have subscribed to a theory of reading as a multi-dimensional activity which was at once both entertaining and moralising, secular and sacred. In this sense, the act of engaging with a medieval manuscript was a much more mentally and socially complex activity than is the reading of a contemporary printed book, whose physical attributes are generally regulated and commodified to an extent never seen in medieval manuscripts. Caie characterises the heightened act of medieval reading as the 'manuscript experience', which he views as an all-encompassing, visually and mentally stimulating event.[520] This is in keeping with Augustine's description of reading as a movement from cogitation to meditation, an intellectual and spiritual process by which the reader can gain both intellectual and religious enlightenment.

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[518] Graham D. Caie, 'The Manuscript Experience: What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us About Authors and Texts', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (London, 2008), 18.
[519] Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art*, 15.
[520] Caie, 'The Manuscript Experience: What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us About Authors and Texts', 11.

5.10 Concluding Thoughts

Such literary-based enlightenment was further affected by a manuscript's mode of reception. The role of secular and vernacular reading as a social activity during the late Middle Ages speaks to the continued oral transmission of texts such as the Arthurian legends, even among noble, textually literate audiences. The longevity of the oral transmission and aural reception of the Arthurian legends suggests not only their overall popularity, but also their continued social relevance, long after their initial composition in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Illuminated Arthurian manuscripts, such as the six discussed in this thesis, functioned as more than tangible recordings of textual and visual works, meant merely to provide secular amusement for socially privileged audiences. Rather, they simultaneously served as active beings of social, cultural, religious, and even political import, conveying a multiplicity of meanings and issues, both secular and sacred, to their contemporary audiences. Arthurian manuscripts could act as tangible exemplars of their owners' monetary wealth and cultural interests, as well as serving as a visual means of communication with God; a form of Christian meditation. Although such diverse purposes may appear at odds with one another, they in fact co-existed within the wider *milieu* of manuscript functions, presenting a dichotomy similar to the often contested relationship between text and image, and to the union of the sacred and secular, as is exemplified within late medieval visual culture. Lay manuscript culture in late medieval France was thus characterised by a continuity of popular, secular and vernacular texts (such as the romantic Arthurian legends), and widely utilised reading techniques (oral dissemination/aural reception). The longevity of these literary factors assisted in the rendering of illuminated manuscripts as active artefacts; they served not only as visually focussed *objets d'art*, but also as active beings of social, cultural, religious, and even political import, conveying a multiplicity of meanings and issues, both laical and religious, to their contemporary audiences, thereby elucidating the connection between ostensibly secular manuscripts and their often religiously instilled connotations. In the late Middle Ages, the very act of reading was in and of itself a complex, multivalent, and socially imbued activity, with the power to engender within its readers a variety of thoughts and emotions, at once equally as complex in meaning and use as were the multilayered Arthurian legends that were rendered in textual and visual form in early fourteenth-century manuscripts.

Chapter Six

Images in Ivory:

Viewing, Contextualising, and Using Ivory Romance Caskets in Late Medieval France

Could fourteenth-century ivory romance caskets have been viewed, even 'read', in a manner similar to that of contemporaneously produced, illuminated Arthurian manuscripts? Such is the overarching query of this penultimate chapter. In parallel to the previous chapter, which focussed on medieval practices and theories of reading, as well as issues of use and ownership associated with fourteenth-century Arthurian manuscripts, this chapter will apply such ideas to ivory romance caskets. In addition to the question of the manners of viewing employed by medieval audiences, other queries to be considered include: Who were the patrons and owners of these expensive, luxury items? What were the original uses and purposes of ivory romance caskets? How did the carvers' knowledge of the Arthurian legends (or lack thereof) affect the composition and connotations of the caskets' imagery? In this chapter I will argue that like manuscripts, fourteenth-century ivory romance caskets were complex visual objects that could be engaged with in a variety of ways. I will posit that the caskets' flexibility was a result of their multivalent imagery, the connotations of which ranged from the purely sacred to wholly secular, and everywhere in between. Particular attention will be paid to the ivories studied in previous chapters: the group of eight composite romance caskets, and the sole surviving *Perceval* casket.[521] In regard to these nine specific caskets, I will consider the evident popularity of the composite caskets, which resulted in their repeated, almost identical creation, as well as the unique character of the *Perceval* casket, which, unlike the composite caskets, appears to have been a bespoke creation. I will also consider the caskets' role within the fourteenth-century culture of display. By using the term 'culture of display', I refer to the ways in which visually centred objects such as carved ivories may have performed a variety of roles, signifying concepts such as wealth, courtly love, social sophistication, and even piety. This will entail an examination of the ways in which the caskets would have been viewed and 'read' by medieval audiences. In other words, what sorts of meanings did the ivory caskets have for contemporary

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[521] See Appendix 1.

audiences? Did they serve as more than mere ornamental trinkets? Did the caskets' juxtaposition of secular and sacred imagery serve as a visual reminder of Christian piety and devotion? Underlying this chapter will thus be a consideration of both medieval material culture and the culture of display, and how such ivory caskets may have functioned within it. Ivory caskets had a unique status, as both household objects with a specific use, and luxurious *objets d'art*. As a result of this dual function, the caskets were able to provide not only tangible use, but also visual pleasure and moralising meanings for their viewers.

6.1 The Multivalency of the Caskets' Imagery

Although Paula Carns, W. D. Wixom, and Richard Randall Jr. have all posited that the selection of images on the composite caskets results in a visual 'survey of the subject of love', the caskets' visual programme is in actuality more nuanced, as perhaps only Carns has suggested, including references not only to the ideal form of secular chivalry, but also to Christian morality.[522] Indeed, Carns notes that the 'conflict between *chevalerie* and *clergie*' which can be seen in the composite caskets' imagery, such as in the visual tension between Aristotle and Alexander, Enyas and Galahad, is 'a recurrent theme in medieval aristocratic literature.'[523] Certainly, although various stereotypical forms of medieval love are indeed represented on the composite caskets, this is but the most superficial reading of the caskets' imagery. For example, Bernard O'Donoghue likens courtly love to 'some kind of surrogate religion', a phrase that illustrates the caskets' easy juxtaposition of secular and sacred imagery; diverse images rendered with the intent of both amusing and educating medieval viewers.[524] As a whole, the caskets' imagery can be viewed and understood from both secular and sacred perspectives. For example, the image of Galahad at the Castle of Maidens (Figs. 56-62) can be read both as an exemplar of knightly chivalry, and as a visual allegory of Galahad's virginity and Christian purity. Similarly, the Siege of the Castle of Love depicted on the lids of all eight composite caskets (Figs. 63-70) can be read both as an allegory of medieval courtship, and as a reference to the

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[522] W.D. Wixom, *Treasures from Medieval France* (Cleveland, 1967), 208; Richard H. Randall Jr., 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 84; Paula Mae Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', *Gesta* 44.2 (2005), 69.
[523] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', 71.
[524] Bernard O'Donoghue, ed. *The Courtly Love Tradition* (Manchester, 1982), 12.

purity of the Virgin Mary. Such dual meanings in the caskets' imagery will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Instead of serving solely as a superficial illustration of romantic love, the intended visual purpose of the ivory caskets likely ranged from mere tokens of secular *amour*, to visual exemplars of Christian values, illustrating the multivalent and cross-cultural use of these ivories as objects of medieval visual culture.

In addition, it is feasible that the ivories were viewed and 'read' in a manner similar to that of contemporaneous illuminated Arthurian manuscripts. For example, the caskets, like contemporaneously produced illuminated Arthurian manuscripts such as those discussed in Chapters One, Two, Four, and Five can be viewed as a contemporary response to twelfth and thirteenth-century French Arthurian literature.[525] Both the caskets and manuscripts are visualisations of romance texts composed during the previous two centuries. Like the manuscript illuminations, the caskets' imagery is visually adapted to speak to fourteenth-century ideologies and cultural tastes, while still narrating the earlier written Arthurian romances. The work of Moshe Barasche further suggests that the caskets could have been 'read' in a manner similar to that employed by medieval readers of romance manuscripts. According to Barasche, 'images have the same general character as script. In other words, both have a general "linguistic" quality or constitution.'[526] For example, the Perceval casket, OA 122, provides a visual narrative of Chrétien's final Arthurian legend, *Le Conte du Graal*. The four side panels of the casket, beginning with the left end panel and continuing clockwise (left end panel, rear panel, right end panel, front panel) chronologically depict key events within the legend, providing a purely visual rendition of the initially textual narrative. Both fourteenth-century French Arthurian manuscripts and ivories were able to impart to their audiences complex messages of secular and sacred connotations, whether through words, images, or a combination of both. Thus, in order to fully comprehend the narrative nature of the ivory caskets, it is integral to view images as on par with text. The eight composite caskets' collection of scenes from various popular medieval romances recalls the make-up of composite manuscripts, which often contained a collection of the Arthurian legends, such as is seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., which contains the *Lancelot propre*, *La Queste del*

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[525] Paula Shoppe, 'Reading Romances: The Production of French Gothic Secular Ivory Caskets in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices', thesis (Illinois, 2000), 21.

[526] Moshe Barasche, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* (New York, 1997), 3.

saint Graal, and *La Mort le Roi Artu*, and MS Arsenal 3482, with the *Estoire de Merlin*, *Lancelot propre*, *Agravain*, *La Queste del saint Graal*, and *La Mort le Roi Artu*.[527] The compilation of such closely related, yet diverse stories, allowed for readers and viewers to draw both textual and visual thematic connections between the various romances. The composite caskets' multiple layers of meaning, dependent on factors such as the viewer's gender, and prior Arthurian and biblical knowledge, could be constantly remade, thereby meeting the unique expectations of each individual viewer.

Tactility was clearly an important feature of the caskets. The caskets' three-dimensionality and high relief carvings would have rendered them ideal for multi-sensory experiences. The tactile nature of the ivories would thus have been integral to a complete understanding of them; the visual experience of the caskets would have involved touching and holding. The repeated handling of the caskets is suggested by certain areas of carving that exhibit an additional amount of wear. This is found, for example, on the shields of the jousting knights on the lids of the composite caskets (Figs. 63-70). On the Musée de Cluny casket in particular (Fig. 67), wear to the shield depicted on the right side of the lid suggests repeated handling. Perhaps the shield, when coloured with a coat of arms, had special meaning for the recipient of the casket. The overall lack of polychromy on the eight composite caskets could be a result of frequent handling, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven.[528] Such wear is also visible on other panels of the caskets, similarly appearing on other raised areas of carving, such as drapery and apparel, further suggesting the continued handling of the caskets so as to facilitate greater visual understanding. For example, Anthony Cutler's hypotheses of the tactile nature of Byzantine ivory panels can be applied to fourteenth-century ivory caskets such as those studied here. Cutler broadly suggests that Byzantine ivories were touched, held, and caressed by their owners.[529] For example, according to Cutler, the worn areas on the Romanos and Eudokia plaque in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris demarcates where the owner would have held the ivory, suggesting its repeated tactile use. Similarly, Cutler posits that abrasion to Christ's face on the panel could be the result of repetitive kissing of this area of the

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[527] See Appendix 1; Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 127-8.
[528] See pp. 246-8.
[529] Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1994), 29.

ivory.[530] Although Byzantine and French Gothic ivories differ greatly in terms of technical style and subject matter, the physical and tactile manners in which they were engaged with likely exhibited continuity throughout the intervening centuries.

6.2 Patrons, Owners, and Audiences

Recent scholars such as Susan Smith and Richard Randall Jr. have posited that ivory caskets served merely as jewellery boxes for aristocratic and noble ladies. Although this theory is likely in part true, it does not fully reflect the varied and complex purposes and audiences of the caskets.[531] For example, the fully chivalric, masculine imagery of the *Perceval* casket suggests the possibility of male ownership, and thus points to a more diverse purpose and audience for carved ivories.[532] A consideration of the gender of the caskets' patrons, owners, and audiences is therefore central to a complete understanding of the caskets' roles in fourteenth-century French society. Unfortunately, unlike manuscripts, which often contain inscriptions speaking to their production or ownership, fourteenth-century ivory caskets include no written or carved clues as to the identity of their creators or owners.[533] This makes it especially difficult for scholars not only to attribute a casket to a specific workshop, but also to trace its provenance. The provenance of the *Perceval* casket as well as six of the eight composite caskets (British Museum, Metropolitan, Cluny, Bargello, Victoria & Albert, and Walters) can be traced back only to the eighteenth century.[534] The ownership of the Barber Institute casket can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when, as stated by a label on the inside of the casket's lid, it was owned by Francis Annesley, First Viscount Valentia (1595-1660), and Lord Deputy of Ireland and Lord Privy Seal to King James I. The label states: 'This curious casket belonged to Francis Annesley, 1st Viscount Valentia, Lord Privy Seal to James the Ist of England.' Meanwhile, the Krakow Cathedral Treasury casket can be traced back to an

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[530] Ibid, 24-5.

[531] Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1994), 169; Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 65.

[532] Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 119; see pp. 41-2.

[533] Joseph Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1951), 7.

[534] Margaret H. Longhurst, *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory, Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1927-9), 53; Wixom, *Treasures from Medieval France*, 208; Randall, *Medieval Ivories* (Baltimore, 1969), 18; Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature*, 169; 'Gothic Ivories Project.' The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk, accessed 6 November, 2014.

early, if not the very first owner, Queen Jadwiga of Poland (b. 1371, d. 1399), former princess of Hungary, who married Wlasdislaw Jagiello II in 1386. The casket was later deposited as a reliquary in a chapel of Krakow Cathedral, where, according to Raymond Koechlin, it was not rediscovered until 1881.[535]

Thus, with the exception of the Krakow Cathedral Treasury casket, it is impossible to assign the *Perceval* or composite caskets to specific medieval owners. Instead, we must rely on more general assertions as to the type of person who may have commissioned or owned such a luxury object. For example, by examining the caskets, it can be extrapolated that they were the purview solely of the wealthy and nobility, as evidenced by Queen Jadwiga's possession of the Krakow composite casket. The caskets' creation from a rare and highly prized material, paired with their high relief, finely executed carvings, would suggest that they were only available to those with large disposable incomes. This hypothesis is further supported by the fifteenth-century inventory of the Duc de Berry, in which two entries refer to ivory caskets:

'*1014. Item, VII coffers d'yvoire à VI pans, à ymaiges eslevez, marquetez, fermans chascun à un clef.*'[536]

'*1015. Item, de deux autres petis coffrez d'yvoire, fermans comme le precedens.*'[537]

The Duc de Berry's inventory also includes references to other carved ivory objects, including several religious diptychs and triptychs, as well as an ivory cross.[538] Similarly, the household inventories of Mahaut, Countess of Artois (b. *circa* 1270, d. 1329, ruled 1302-29), provide evidence of the countess' possession of at least one carved ivory object. Mahaut was the daughter of Robert II, Count of Artois, the wife of Otto IV, Count Palatine of Burgundy, and the mother of two queens of France, Jeanne I of Burgundy (*circa* 1291-1330), and Blanche of Burgundy (1296-1326).[539] Mahaut's familial history and connections illustrate her lofty social position, which brought her great wealth as well as social and political influence, enabling her to play an active role as an aristocratic patron of both Parisian manuscripts and ivories. The

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[535] Raymond Koechlin, *Les ivoires gothiques français* (Paris, 1924), 34, 409.

[536] '1014. Item, Seven ivory caskets composed of six panels, with carved images and patterns, each one closing with a key'; Jules Guiffrey, ed. *Inventories de Jean Duc de Berry (1401-1416)* (Paris, 1894), 273.

[537] '1015. Item, two other small ivory caskets, as in the previous statement'; Ibid, 273.

[538] Ibid, 11, 24-5.

[539] Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France, 987-1328* (New York, 1980), 357.

inventories reference Mahaut's patronage of an artisan named Jean le Scelleur, who worked for her on several occasions. One task was the 'illumination' of an ivory mirror, among other small ivory objects:

'*A Jehan Le Seeleur de Paris, pour II piegnes d'yvoere achetés en la presence madame, XVIs. Audit Jehan, pour II foureaus pour lesdiz piegnes, et pour une broche, et pour le mireor madame, enluminer, IXs. VId.*'[540]

The inventories of the Duc de Berry, and Mahaut d'Artois, as well as Queen Jadwiga's possession of the Krakow composite casket thus attest that ivory caskets were objects commonly found within aristocratic households, and which were owned by both men and women.[541] As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, it was not unusual for the owners of romance-themed ivories to also own romance manuscripts.[542] Mahaut d'Artois is one such example.[543] In addition to her ivory mirror, Mahaut is also recorded as purchasing a copy of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* in 1308.[544] Mahaut paid 7 *livres* 10 *sous* for '*deux romans achetés à Arras par ma main, l'un del histoire de Troyes et l'autre de Perceval Le Galoys.*'[545] Mahaut's ownership of these materially different objects of Arthurian romance suggests that she had an overarching interest in the romance genre, regardless of the artistic medium in which it was presented. This lends credence to the theory that ivory caskets could have been 'read' in a fashion similar to that employed for the viewing of illuminated romance manuscripts, at least by viewers accustomed to seeing both kinds of material.

Does Mahaut's dual ownership of both Arthurian and romance manuscripts and ivories further suggest that in order to fully comprehend the caskets' imagery, prior knowledge of the legends, gained from manuscripts, was necessary? Like manuscripts, the manner in which ivory caskets were viewed and understood by contemporary audiences was dependent on several factors, such as the viewers'

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[540] 'To Jehan Le Seeleur of Paris, for two ivory combs purchased in the presence of Madame, 14 sous. For two cases for the combs, and for a brooch, and for Madame's decorated mirror, 9 sous, 6 deniers'; Archives de Pas-de-Calais, A.329, cited in: Jules-Marie Richard, *Une petite-nièce de saint Louis: Mahaut comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne (1302-1329)* (Paris, 1887), 321-22.

[541] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 22.

[542] See pp. 240-1.

[543] Ibid, 22.

[544] Sarah Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture,' in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, 1988), 154.

[545] 'Two romances bought in Arras by my hand, one *The History of Troy*, and the other *Perceval the Welsh*'; Ctd. in ibid, 154.

gender, social status, and level of literacy. This raises the question of whether a viewer's ability to fully interact with the caskets was contingent upon prior textual knowledge of the Arthurian legends, or whether the caskets exhibited a multiplicity of meanings, allowing for a wide variety of interpretations, personalised for the viewer based on his or her identity, literary knowledge, and visual expectations. Wixom suggests that, 'as an elaborate visual exegesis on the subject based on contemporary secular literary themes, these caskets implied a high level of culture on the part of their owners necessary for their fullest understanding.'[546] Similarly, according to Carns, 'the viewer of the ivory must interpret each sign against prior knowledge, both of the tale as well as the ivory carver's visual language, and in the context of the visual cycle.'[547] The multiple layers of meaning within the caskets' imagery suggest that although textual knowledge of the Arthurian legends would indeed have aided viewers in comprehending the specificity of the images, it would also have been possible for viewers not versed in the legends to come away with an understanding of the imagery, relying on their more general Christian knowledge, which was an integral part of late medieval life. Indeed, it must be remembered that medieval viewers were accustomed to images of a multivalent nature.[548] If it was possible for medieval viewers to participate equally in both the sacred and secular worlds of material culture, it follows that such viewers could also have found simultaneously sacred and secular meanings within a single object, such as an ivory romance casket.

The inventories and records of the Duc de Berry, Mahaut d'Artois, and Queen Jadwiga thus shed some light on the type of person who would have owned such ivory caskets, and the way in which they may have been regarded and even used. For example, as cherished objects, would the caskets have been kept in a private household area, such as the bedchamber? Or would they, like lavishly illuminated manuscripts, have been displayed to guests, thereby inhabiting a more public area? Both the Duc de Berry and Mahaut d'Artois owned carved ivories in addition to impressive collections of high quality manuscripts. It seems possible therefore, that the caskets may have functioned in a manner similar to a lavishly illuminated manuscript displayed open on a lectern, serving as a visual exemplar of its owner's

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[546] Wixom, *Treasures from Medieval France*, 208.
[547] Carns, 'Playing the Fool: La Folie Tristan on Two French Gothic Ivories', *Sculpture Journal* 23.1 (2014), 60.
[548] Anne R. Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter: A Study of Affect and Audience* (Philadelphia, 2001), 193.

monetary wealth and cultural sophistication. In this way, the caskets would have functioned within the medieval culture of display, serving as objects to be both used and admired. As noted by Laurel Amtower, 'an enormous secular mythology underlies the symbols and devices with which the nobility associated themselves in the late Middle Ages, infusing artefacts with charged issues of identity and social utility.'[549] The caskets likely served in part as symbols of status, to be admired and commented upon by visitors. The relatively large size of the composite caskets (for example, the Victoria & Albert composite casket measures 246 x 103 x 126 mm and weighs 1600 g. The other seven caskets are approximately the same size) speaks to their monetary cost and value: the sheer amount of ivory, a precious, rare material, required for the caskets' production, paired with the skill required for carving ivory renders the caskets unique and costly objects that would have been visually appreciated both for their artistic worth and as symbols of their owners' wealth and social sophistication.

In regard to how ivory caskets would have entered the collections of wealthy nobility, it is possible that they were given as gifts. Patterns of gift giving and exchange could have bearing on an object's production and worth.[550] For example, the existence of the nearly identical eight composite caskets suggests their popularity, which would likely have increased their worth in the eye of the owner, and which would also have affected the manner in which they were produced, possibly allowing for on spec production, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven.[551] In the early thirteenth-century German text, *Die Wälschen Gast*, ivory caskets are included in a list of luxurious items which ladies enjoyed receiving as gifts.[552] Other such items include gloves, mirrors (quite possibly adorned with ivory backs) and rings.[553] Susan Smith compares the practice of giving ivory caskets as gifts to the use of greeting cards in contemporary society (although, of course, an ivory casket would have cost far more than a modern day greeting card), 'in which conventional sentiments considered appropriate to certain socially designated occasions are chosen as the vehicle of communication between individuals who may interpret them according to

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[549] Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2000), 11.
[550] Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380* (Oxford, 2001), 167.
[551] See p. 244.
[552] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 169.
[553] Ibid, 169.

the nature of their particular relationship.'[554] In this case, the 'particular relationship' would likely have been one of courtship. Similarly, as noted by Kathryn Rudy, 'gifted objects therefore function as important social glue, making the receiver beholden to the giver, who remains connected with the gifted object.'[555] Romantic commitment as a result of gift giving could certainly have been a desired effect during the medieval courtship process, were a man to present his lady with an expensive and luxurious token such as an ivory casket. However, it must be kept in mind that this was not the case with all ivory caskets. Although the composite caskets may have been given as gifts between lovers, the differing imagery of the *Perceval* casket makes it unlikely that it would have been intended as a romantic, feminine gift. On the contrary, the knightly and chivalric imagery suggests that a male was the intended viewer/owner of the casket.[556]

Perhaps the *Perceval* casket was presented to a young man to mark a special occasion, such as knighthood, marriage, or the transition from boy to man. Martine Meuwese comments that, 'the concern with the hero's early development as a knight raises the question of whether this *Perceval* casket was perhaps intended for a young knight.'[557] This is a reasonable assumption. The casket could have been a gift marking a special occasion, while also serving as a visual reminder of the importance of retaining a balance between the secular and sacred aspects of one's life. The casket's juxtaposition of secular, romantic imagery, and sacred, Christian imagery may have served as a reminder of the necessity of maintaining a balance between the profane and religious ends of the spectrum. OA 122 provides a clear visual rendition of the central theme of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*; Perceval's progression from a naïve youth, ignorant of religion, to an enlightened, Christian knight. Unlike manuscript versions of *Le Conte du Graal*, such as MS fr. 12577, wherein the illuminations include gratuitous battle scenes and images of Gawain, whose story is told in parallel to Perceval's, OA 122 is clearly focussed on Perceval's progression from the secular to the sacred.[558] Extraneous scenes, such as Gawain's triumph at the *Chateau Merveille*, or Perceval's battles with various knights, do not appear on the casket.

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[554] Ibid, 172.

[555] Kathryn M. Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment: The Social Lives of Medieval Books* (New Haven, 2015), 4.

[556] Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 119.

[557] Ibid, 124.

[558] See Appendix 1.

Rather, the scenes that are depicted have been carefully chosen for their ability to tell the story in a succinct visual manner.

While the casket's four side panels depict ostensibly secular scenes, the lid is carved with images of four Christian saints (Fig. 1), which, when viewed from left to right, can be understood as a reference to Perceval's spiritual progression and growth. The four saints may also shed some light on the identity of the casket's owner. Most simply, the inclusion of four male saints on the casket's lid would seem to point to a male owner. From left to right the saints are Christopher, Martin, George, and Eustace. Both Martin and George were knights, and George is the patron saint of knights.[559] Meanwhile, Eustace was a soldier who converted to Christianity upon experiencing a vision of Christ. Christopher, as the patron saint of travellers, is known for his unwitting aid of Christ. The stories of Christopher and Eustace are similar through their initial scepticism of Christianity, and ultimate enlightenment and conversion, which parallels Perceval's youthful religious naiveté and eventual conversion and devotion. In addition, both Perceval and Eustace are depicted in positions of religious veneration. Whereas Eustace kneels upon seeing an image of Christ between the antlers of a stag, affirming his Christian conversion and devotion, on the casket's left end panel, Perceval kneels in front of a group of Arthurian knights (Fig. 3), who, in his naiveté, he mistakes for angels.[560] The formal similarities of these two illustrations result in a visual connection that unites these respectively sacred and secular images.[561] A kinship between the two figures is suggested, foreshadowing Perceval's future Christian devotion.[562] The parallel nature of these two images exemplifies one of many ways in which the casket's imagery can be read. When viewed together, the visual similarities of these two images suggest Perceval's spiritual growth and progression. The inclusion of the four saints on the casket's lid exemplifies the Christian connotation of the casket's imagery, which is significantly more subtly visualised on the side panels, where Perceval's progression from naive youth to enlightened Christian knight is illustrated. As noted by Shoppe, 'the visual material raises the character of Perceval from Arthurian knight to holy figure.'[563] In

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[559] Ibid, 124.
[560] Chrétien de Troyes, 'Perceval: The Story of the Grail', in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991): 382-3.
[561] Ibid, 124.
[562] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 172.
[563] Ibid, 171.

this way, the casket's imagery draws a link between Perceval and Christian devotion, suggesting the importance of living a good Christian life, and increasing the complexity of connotations of the casket's imagery.

The physical constrictions of ivory caskets (five panels on which to carve selected scenes), as well as those of ivory as an artistic medium, rather than hampering the artist's communication, serve to enhance the concentrated focus of the *Perceval* and composite caskets. Little to no extraneous detail is included within the imagery. Laila Gross' analysis of British Museum, Dalton 367, an ivory casket depicting *Le Châtelaine de Vergi*, can be similarly applied to both the *Perceval* and composite caskets: 'reduced, in a sense, to an outline form, the plot moves visually from event to event with inexorable certainty and logic.'[564] In other words, the caskets' lack of space in which visual motifs can be rendered results in the consolidation of the narratives chosen for illustration. Carvers were forced to choose a small selection of scenes with which to convey the story's overarching plot and themes. This is particularly evident on the *Perceval* casket. As previously discussed, when considered as a whole, the casket's imagery describes Perceval's progression from secular youth to sacred knight. Although the scenes depicted adequately convey this message, the pivotal scene of the Grail procession at the Castle of the Fisher King is omitted. This seems especially odd considering that it is one of only eight scenes to be depicted in one of five surviving illuminated *Perceval* manuscripts, the lavishly rendered MS fr. 12577. What could have been the reasoning behind the omission of a scene that is so integral to the story's narrative? Considering the casket's unique status as the sole surviving casket to depict Chrétien's *Perceval*, it seems possible that the casket was a special commission, and that the scenes included were chosen by the patron, and reflect his specific interests in the story.

Considering the overall popularity of the Arthurian legends in late medieval France, it seems likely that the audience of the ivory caskets would have been equipped with prior knowledge of the romances. If so, this would have brought their comprehension of the ivories' imagery to a new level; beyond that of mere entertaining tropes of chivalry and love, to a more subtle and nuanced understanding of the interplay between the secular and sacred. For example, Meuwese has suggested that, 'medieval viewers of the *Perceval* casket would probably have read its pictorial

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[564] See Appendix 3; Laila Gross, 'La Chastelaine de Vergi Carved in Ivory', *Viator* 10 (1979), 315.

version of Chrétien's tale with an awareness of the *Queste*.'[565] Such audiences could thus have made connections between Perceval's early Christian conversion, as depicted on the casket, and his destiny in the Vulgate *Queste* as one of three Arthurian knights to achieve the Grail Quest. The inclusion of the chalice on the front panel of the casket, to the left of the lock (Fig. 5), can be viewed as a further reference to Perceval's future role in the Grail Quest. While the chalice depicted on the casket is not in actuality the Grail, but rather the cup stolen from King Arthur by the Red Knight and later recovered by Perceval, it simultaneously serves as a specific reference to an episode within *Le Conte du Graal*, as well as a more general allusion to the most Christian of all French Arthurian legends. As noted by Shoppe, 'this image collapses Perceval's role as restorer of Arthur's cup and seeker of the Grail.'[566]

Like the *Perceval* casket, can the composite caskets' overall focus on male knights be seen to point to intended audiences that were male, as well as female? Due to the caskets' use of courtly love imagery, such as the Siege of the Castle of Love depicted on the caskets' lids, it is widely accepted that the composite caskets signified romantic relationships, and were presented from a man to a women on the occasion of courtship or marriage, engendering the caskets with a feminine connotation. However, it is possible that like the *Perceval* casket, the composite caskets may have been targeted towards male, as well as female, audiences. Certainly, the juxtaposition of sacred and secular knights and chivalric deeds, paired with the caskets' overall focus on male-centred romances, suggests that they may have appealed not only to women, but also to men, their imagery serving as visual exemplars of both sacred and profane chivalry. For example, Gross notes that the 'atemporality' of romance caskets allows for their continuity of meaning. Although some of the caskets' scenes are specific to Arthurian romances, the majority of the images depict common medieval tropes that transcend centuries, as well as the supposed sacred-secular divide. For example, the images of the Siege of the Castle of Love, and that of the maiden and unicorn, have dual sacred and secular connotations.

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[565] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 177.
[566] Ibid, 161.

6.3 The Siege of the Castle of Love

The Siege of the Castle of Love, seen on the lids of all eight composite caskets (Figs. 63-70), can be read simultaneously as a visualisation of both courtly love and religious virtue.[567] The image of the Castle can be understood as symbolic of the Virgin Mary, exemplifying the importance of maintaining the 'fortress' of virtue, chastity, and morality.[568] Meanwhile, the imagery of maidens responding to their male attackers/prospective lovers by throwing roses suggests common late medieval tropes and games of courtly love. That the Siege of the Castle of Love was a popularly depicted scene is evidenced by its similar depiction on two contemporaneous ivory mirror cases: Paris, Musée du Louvre OA 6933, and London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1617-1855 (Figs. 139-140).[569] The Siege also appears within two roughly contemporaneous manuscripts: the Peterborough Psalter (*circa* 1299-1328) and the Luttrell Psalter (*circa* 1330-1345) (Figs. 79 and 141).[570] The Siege of the Castle of Love also calls to mind the thirteenth-century text *Le Roman de la Rose*, an allegorical romance that takes the form of a dream recounted, in which a young man attacks a castle so as to obtain the rose sequestered within.[571] Of the approximately 320 extant manuscripts containing *Le Roman de la Rose*, copies such as Chicago, University of Chicago Library MS 1380, and Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal MS 5209 (Figs. 142-143) contain illuminations detailing the castle's assault, a scene both visually and thematically comparable to the Siege of the Castle of Love in that it is yet another instance of a castle attacked with the express purpose of possessing the female(s) within.[572] Thus, the inclusion of the image of the Siege of the Castle of Love in both superficially profane carved ivories, and both romantic and religious manuscripts, supports the varied interpretations, both sacred and secular, of this archetypal medieval allegory.

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[567] Michelle Brown, *The World of the Luttrell Psalter* (London, 2006), 84.
[568] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 177.
[569] See Appendix 3.
[570] See Appendix 2.
[571] de Lorris, Guillaume, and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose,* trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford, 2008), 244.
[572] See Appendix 2; *Roman de la Rose* Digital Library, http://romandelarose.org, accessed 3 July, 2017.

6.4 The Maiden and the Unicorn

Similarly, the image of the unicorn found on the left end panel of the composite caskets (Figs. 71-74, and 76-78) may also have functioned both as a symbol of chastity and as an allegory of the Immaculate Conception and Christ's sacrifice. Throughout the Middle Ages, the term 'spiritual unicorn' was commonly employed as a metaphor for Christ, as found in treatises such as the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of Honorius of Autun, *circa* 1120, and in the bestiary, which states:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ is the spiritual unicorn of which it is said: 'My beloved is like the son of the unicorns' [Song of Songs 2:9]; and in the psalm: My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn' [92:10]; and Zacharias said: 'He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David.'[573]

The unicorn is yet another example of a medieval image which through its multiplicity of meanings, existed simultaneously in the realms of both the sacred and the secular. As a medieval symbol of virginity, Christ's sacrifice, and even courtly love, the unicorn is at once representative of both the sacred and the secular, again exemplifying both the intrinsic link between these two seemingly dichotomous aspects of medieval visual culture, and the inherent multivalency of medieval images.[574] Within the image of the lady and unicorn, sacred and secular themes are mixed; the image can be interpreted in multiple ways. Seven of the eight composite caskets (the Musée de Cluny casket is the exception) depict this common medieval pairing. On all seven caskets, the unicorn is shown laying its head in the lap of a maiden, while a man attacks it from behind with a spear. According to the bestiary, 'a virgin girl is led to where the unicorn is accustomed to live, and is sent off alone into the wood. As soon as it sees her it leaps into her lap and embraces her. So it is caught by the hunters' (Fig. 144).[575] The maiden holds a chaplet, an item usually interpreted as a type of marriage garland.[576] Women are often seen to hold chaplets in the

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[573] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 164; *Bestiary: Being An English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 764 with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile*, trans. by Richard Barber (Woodbridge, 1999), 36-7.

[574] Ibid, 164, 174.

[575] A medieval bestiary qtd. in Ann Payne, *Medieval Beasts* (London, 1990), 27; Barber, *Bestiary*, 36.

[576] Nigel Morgan, 'Gendered Devotions and Social Rituals: The Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter-'Hours' and the Image of the Patron in Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Century France', *Melbourne Art Journal* 6 (2003): 17.

marginal images of late medieval manuscripts. For example, in the late thirteenth-century Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter (Fig. 145), a marginal scene depicts a man kneeling before a woman, who holds both a garland and a javelin, the latter of which recalls the weapon used to attack the unicorn in the aforementioned scene.[577] The Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter also includes a marginal image of a maiden and unicorn (Fig. 146), almost identical in composition to that found on the composite caskets, further illustrating the image's application to both secular (ivory caskets) and sacred (religious manuscripts) contexts. Marriage garlands also appear on three ivory mirror cases at the Musée du Louvre: MRR 197 A and B, and OA 117 (Figs. 147-149).[578] However, in the case of the composite caskets, the juxtaposition of the maiden and unicorn with a chaplet points to a romantic and sexual connotation for the image, suggesting the loss of the maiden's virginity upon her marriage.

On the aforementioned seven composite caskets (Krakow, Metropolitan, Bargello, Barber, British Museum, Victoria & Albert, and Walters), the scene of the maiden and unicorn shares its panel with the Tryst of Tristan and Isolde (Figs. 71-74, and 76-78). The juxtaposition of Tristan and Isolde and the maiden and unicorn results in a visual dichotomy of the adultery and lust of the young couple, paired with the virginity of the maiden and the innocence of the unicorn.[579] Like the maiden and unicorn, the scene of Tristan and Isolde also has a dually sacred and secular connotation. For example, there are striking similarities between the image of Tristan and Isolde and that of the Fall of Man.[580] Both images depict a man and woman beneath a tree, the image divided into two halves by a tree and water. Through these visual associations, medieval viewers were invited to ponder the relationship between original sin and courtly love. Furthermore, there is a voyeuristic aspect to the image of Tristan and Isolde. Just as King Mark spies on the two lovers from the boughs of a tree, so does the viewer of the casket gaze on the scene in its entirety, ostensibly inserting him or herself into the seemingly private moment between Tristan and Isolde.[581] The private, intimate nature of the ivory caskets lends them to the visual depiction of courtly love, itself a complex and secretive endeavour, much like the

[577] See Appendix 2.
[578] See Appendix 3.
[579] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 67.
[580] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', 75.
[581] Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London, 1998), 42.

detailed images so carefully depicted on the caskets.[582] The pattern of gazes between the figures, Tristan to Isolde and vice versa, King Mark to the couple, and the viewer to all three figures, suggests the multiplicity of ways in which a viewer could engage with the casket's imagery. The carefully planned figural compilations and varying styles of carving suggest directions, or paths of viewing, for the caskets' audiences.

6.5 Visual Perspectives of the Caskets

The deeper and more detailed carving on the lids of the eight composite caskets and the *Perceval* casket suggests that the lid was intended as the initial focus for viewers, essentially acting as a visual gateway to a consideration of the ivories' secular and sacred motifs. The caskets' lids can be read both as separate from, and in accordance with, the imagery depicted on the side panels. For example, the repeated motif of a key on the British Museum casket leads the viewer's eye from the lid to the right end panel. The image on the right end of the lid depicts a woman holding out a key to a kneeling knight (Fig. 64). This is likely a symbol of her surrender to his courtship. On the side panel directly below this image, Galahad is depicted arriving at the Castle of Maidens (Fig. 56), where, in a fashion similar to the woman above, a monk holds out a large key to him. Here, however, the key has a sacred rather than secular connotation. Whereas the key depicted on the casket's lid exemplifies the woman's surrender to lust and love, in regard to Galahad the key signifies his chaste rescue of the maidens entrapped at the *Chateau de Pucelles* in *La Queste del saint Graal*. The repetition of this motif provides a direction of movement from the lid to the side panels, while also encouraging the viewer to examine the casket closely. Such a detail would not be noticed without intensive study of the casket, again suggesting that in addition to being a superficially attractive *objet d'art*, the casket also served as a more detailed commentary on the sacred and secular.

Could the act of viewing the caskets, and meditating on the sacred meanings of their imagery, have been considered a form of moral instruction? As suggested by Beth Williamson, 'narrative imagery clearly fulfilled other functions, meditative and devotional, as well as didactic.'[583] It seems possible that viewers could have been expected to discern a contemporary, Christian moral code within the casket's

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[582] Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 309.

[583] Beth Williamson, 'Material Culture and Medieval Christianity', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. by John H. Arnold (Oxford, 2014), 64.

imagery. For example, scenes such as Perceval kissing the reluctant maiden (Fig. 4) could be disparately read as a generic, yet positive example of chivalry, or, more negatively, as an instance of Perceval's naivety and lack of Christian understanding. These readings would have been dependent on the viewer's knowledge of *Le Conte du Graal*. The carvers' reliance on visual traditions as opposed to textual accuracy allows for a certain universality of the caskets; they can be understood both as visualisations of Arthurian legends, and more generally, as images of romantic love, chivalry, and the confluence of the sacred and profane. As James Rushing comments, 'the story is made by the new [visual] context.'[584] For example, Galahad's arrival at the Castle of Maidens, found on the right end of seven of the eight composite caskets visually recalls Christ's arrival in Jerusalem.[585] This is especially evident when the composite caskets are compared with a diptych at the Walters Art Museum (Fig. 150), where Christ's entry into Jerusalem appears in the top left register.[586] This similarity illustrates the crossover between the secular and sacred visual worlds, and further suggests that viewers with both Arthurian and biblical knowledge may have drawn the connection between the visual forms of Galahad and Christ, thereby reinforcing Galahad's identity as the perfect Christian knight.

6.6 Visual Discrepancies and Textual Errors

Although the eight composite caskets are similar overall, visual discrepancies on the caskets suggest that textual accuracy was of secondary importance to both the carvers and viewers. For example, on all eight composite caskets, both the scenes of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge and Gawain at the *Chateau Merveille* (Figs. 47-54) include swords and spears raining down on the two knights. This detail is taken from Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, and therefore applies only to Gawain, not Lancelot, whose scene is taken from *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Considering such seemingly incorrect iconography, what did the caskets' audiences hope to gain from their viewings, if not textually accurate visualisations of the relevant legends? The concurrent existence of several visual meanings, both general and specific, is one answer. For medieval viewers, the caskets' imagery likely called to mind not just the

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[584] James A. Rushing, 'Adventure in the Service of Love: Yvain on a Fourteenth Century Ivory Panel', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 61.1 (1998), 65.
[585] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 54.
[586] Ibid, 54.

specific Arthurian legends, but also more general themes of knightly valour and romantic love.

A similar textual error occurs on the rear panel of the Barber casket (Fig. 47). Here the carver has erroneously inserted two lions into the third scene from the left, creating an amalgamation of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and *Le Conte du Graal*. The text of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* states that there were two lions at the far end of the Sword Bridge.[587] However, the carver has erroneously inserted two lions into the image of Gawain reclining on the Perilous Bed, a scene from *Le Conte du Graal*.[588] This conflation of scenes suggests either that the leftmost image of a knight fighting a lion is a generic image, and is not representative of Lancelot or Gawain, or that the image was instead intended as a loose interpretation of the two legends, creating a visual amalgamation of the two tales. The double lions appear only on the Barber casket, suggesting that the carver of this particular casket either took artistic license, or utilised a different, and now unknown, visual exemplar, such as a previously completed casket. The carver has also omitted Gawain's distinctive shield adorned with the paw of the slain lion. Here Gawain is instead armed with a sword. This is the only one of all eight composite caskets to so depict Gawain, again suggesting that the carver may have used a different visual model, that he was working from memory, or that he was creating his own unique visualisation of the narrative.

Yet another textual-visual incongruity is the placement of the knight fighting the lion in the left-most subsection of the caskets' rear panels (Figs. 47-54). In *Le Conte du Graal*, Gawain does not battle the lion until after he defeats the enchantments of the *Chateau Merveille* by lying on the Perilous Bed.[589] Meanwhile, in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, upon crossing the Sword Bridge, Lancelot discovers that the two lions he had believed to be lying in wait for him are in fact no more than enchantments:

> Then he thinks back and remembers the two lions he thought he has seen
> when he was on the other bank; and he looks and sees there not so much as a
> lizard or anything at all to do him harm…he gazes at his ring and thus proves,

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[587] de Troyes, 'Lancelot (The Knight of the Cart)', in *Arthurian Romances*, 245.
[588] de Troyes, 'Perceval', in *Arthurian Romances*, 476-77.
[589] Ibid, 477.

when he finds there neither of the two lions he believed he had seen, that he has been bewitched and deceived, there being no living creature present.[590]

The leftmost placement of the knight battling the lion is therefore textually incorrect for both *Le Conte du Graal* and *Le Chevalier de la Charette*. This inconsistency calls to mind questions of the carvers' textual knowledge, the possible oral circulation of stories, and the possibility of rote copying within the group of eight composite caskets. Was the incorrect placement of this scene, and perhaps some, if not all, of the other textually incorrect elements, the result of the use of a single composite casket as a visual reference and guide? This is possible, and may be supported by small variations within the caskets' visual programmes, such as the placement of the knight's sword, which suggests a combination of direct copying paired with slight artistic changes. For example, on the rear panels of both the Metropolitan Museum and Musée de Cluny caskets (Figs. 50 and 51), the knight shown slaying the lion in the first frame is depicted with his sword raised above his head, held parallel to the ground. Meanwhile, on the Barber, British Museum, Krakow, Victoria & Albert, and Walters caskets (Figs. 47-49, and 53-54), the knight holds his sword parallel to the ground, at waist-level. The Bargello casket (Fig. 52) appears as an outlier in regard to this scene, the knight holding his sword at an angle, in a quintessentially combative pose.

Similarly, the textually incorrect inclusion of foliage carved behind the knight battling the lion on the Barber, Krakow, Cluny, and Victoria & Albert caskets (Figs. 47, 49, 51, and 53) suggests either artistic license on the part of the carver, or that the image is unrelated to either *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* or *Le Conte du Graal*, and instead serves merely to exemplify a generic trope of medieval knighthood. Considering the definitive Arthurian identity of the other rear panel images, it seems most probable that the carver perhaps got carried away and inserted the foliage as an example of his artistic ability, or merely as a means of filling negative space. Certainly, Paula Mae Carns posits that the carver may have added such foliage as a means of 'visually aligning' the panel with the casket's remaining panels, which exhibit a definitive lack of empty negative space.[591] Another possibility is that the foliage was carved by a lesser artist, who perhaps lacked knowledge of the relevant Arthurian legend. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, it is likely that multiple

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[590] Ibid, 226.

[591] Carns, 'Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', 79.

artisans were involved in the production of a single casket, and perhaps even the carving of a single panel.[592] The work involved may have been divided into categories such as figures and architectural/foliate decorations, with the latter being assigned to less skilled artisans, or perhaps even apprentices.[593] The Metropolitan and Victoria & Albert caskets (Figs. 50 and 53) also include foliage behind the rightmost image of the three damsels at the *Chateau Merveille*, yet another textual-visual inconsistency, as in Chrétien's legend, the damsels are described as being inside the castle to congratulate Gawain after he successfully vanquishes the *Chateau*'s enchantments. The Victoria & Albert casket is the only one to include foliage behind both the knight and the damsels (Fig. 53). The Barber, Krakow, and Cluny caskets (Figs. 47, 49, and 51) only include foliage behind the knight, the carver opting for a draped curtain behind the three damsels on the right, whereas the Metropolitan casket (Fig. 50) includes foliage solely behind the damsels. The British Museum and Bargello caskets (Figs. 48 and 52) include no foliage whatsoever, engendering the scenes of the knight and damsels with a sense of interior space. These two caskets also omit the draped curtain from the damsel scene. On the British Museum casket (Fig. 48), this lack of decorative detail appears due simply to a lack of space; the top of the knight's and the damsels' heads butt against the top border of the panel. The carver of the Bargello casket (Fig. 52), however, has rendered a less tight composition, leaving negative space throughout, such as above the knight and damsels. The Walters casket (Fig. 54) also differs slightly, the carver including no foliage or background carving behind the knight, but rendering the draped curtain, here more dramatic than on any of the other caskets, above the damsels.

A further textual inaccuracy is that the carver of the Victoria & Albert casket (Fig. 53) has rendered both Lancelot and Gawain as carrying shields adorned with lions' paws. As described in *Le Conte du Graal*, after overcoming the enchantments of the *Chateau Merveille*, Gawain must then defeat a rampaging lion. Gawain quickly decapitates the beast, leaving one of its paws embedded in his shield. The story says that Gawain:

> Deals the lion such a blow that he cuts off its head and both its feet. Then Sir Gawain was delighted, for the feet stayed hanging from his shield by the

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[592] See pp. 242-3.

[593] Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 20.

claws, one dangling right inside, the other on the outside. Having slain the lion, he resumed his seat on the bed…[594]

Meanwhile, as noted earlier, in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* Lancelot crosses the Sword Bridge to discover that the two lions on the opposite bank are nothing but a mirage.[595] Glyn Davies, Susan Smith, and David Ross have suggested that this commingling of scenes through the inclusion of a lion's paw on both knights' shields is evidence of the Victoria & Albert carver equating Lancelot's and Gawain's adventures as undertaken by a single knight. Martine Meuwese has suggested that all eight caskets' incorrect inclusion of falling arrows and spears above both Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge and Gawain on the Perilous Bed is further evidence of this.[596] In Chrétien's poems, only Gawain, not Lancelot, has to deal with a shower of weapons. The repeated textually incorrect depiction of the raining arrows therefore appears more exemplary of rote copying from a single original source, whereas the two lion paw shields on the Victoria & Albert casket (Fig. 53) suggest a degree of artistic creativity, if lack of textual familiarity on the part of the carver. Indeed, contemporary scholars tend to privilege text over image, a way of thinking that was perhaps unfamiliar during the Middle Ages.[597] It is important to consider the possibility that as makers of images, rather than of textual meaning, the carvers were more deeply invested in the visual success and satisfaction of their work, even if at the cost of textual accuracy. Considering the similarly prone positions of Lancelot and Gawain, it is possible that the Victoria & Albert carver was merely striving for visual symmetry. In addition, the falling arrows and spears on the Barber casket (Fig. 47) are rendered at an almost vertical angle, which differs from the left or right tilted angle seen on the remaining seven caskets. Although this may at first appear as a mark of the Victoria & Albert carver's lack of expertise, it seems more likely that it signifies the carver's dedication to visual satisfaction over textual accuracy. Also exemplary of possible artistic individuality is the varying number of bells depicted beneath the Perilous Bed on the eight caskets. Small variations such as this may have been ways in which the carvers attempted to differentiate their work, or tried to regain a degree of creative independence. For example, the Barber casket (Fig. 47) is unique in the

[594] de Troyes, 'Perceval', in *Arthurian Romances*, 477.
[595] de Troyes, 'Lancelot', in *Arthurian Romances*, 246.
[596] Meuwese, 'Chrétien in Ivory', 147.
[597] See p. 173.

carver's inclusion of five, rather than four bells under the Perilous Bed. Of the eight caskets, only two others depict five bells, the Bargello and Krakow caskets; the remaining five caskets depict four bells.

The apparent rote copying suggests that the carvers involved in the production of the eight composite caskets were using one or more of the caskets as models, resulting in a cycle of textually incorrect, albeit perhaps visually successful, and multivalently meaningful, scenes. As noted by Michael Camille, 'images in both realms [sacred and profane] are highly ritualised products of culture whose meaning changes over time and is sometimes irrecoverably lost.'[598] It is possible that the textual inaccuracy of the caskets' scenes, such as that seen in the Lancelot and Gawain images, resulted in a lessening of the scenes' specificity, allowing for multiple visual interpretations. These inaccuracies can thus be seen to contribute to the caskets' multivalent nature, inviting viewers familiar with the texts to take a closer look at the caskets, as well as encouraging further introspection of the interlocking secular and sacred themes. In this way such inaccuracies would have become intrinsic to the caskets' imagery, perpetuating textually incorrect tropes such as the raining arrows and spears as Lancelot crosses the Sword Bridge.

Keith Busby passes off textual inaccuracies in ivory images by stating that the scenes were purely decorative, thereby allowing the carvers an increased degree of artistic freedom.[599] However, the multiple layers of meaning found in the caskets' Arthurian imagery suggests otherwise, instead positing that the scenes may have been chosen in part for their ability to call to mind both secular and sacred tropes. In addition, the various textual inaccuracies exemplify the triumph of an established Arthurian visual tradition over textual knowledge and accuracy.[600] Considering the repeated textual inaccuracies in the eight composite caskets' Arthurian imagery, such as the inclusion of a shower of swords and arrows both as Lancelot crosses the Sword Bridge, as well as during Gawain's adventures on the Perilous Bed, it would appear that the contemporary owners and viewers of the caskets were either not familiar

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[598] Michael Camille, 'At the Sign of the 'Spinning Sow': the 'other' Chartres and images of everyday life of the medieval street', in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, ed. by Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (Turnout, 2003), 276.
[599] Keith Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, et al. (Amsterdam, 1993), 363.
[600] Rushing, 'Adventure in the Service of Love: Yvain on a Fourteenth Century Ivory Panel', 57-8.

enough with the legends to recognise such mistakes, or, more likely, simply prioritised visual satisfaction and symmetry over textual accuracy.

Such inconsistencies in the textual to visual translation suggest that the caskets acted in more than one visual world. The caskets' imagery could have been read as a specific visual telling of Arthurian romances, and also, more generally, as visual exemplars of medieval tropes such as romantic love, chivalry, and Christianity. The artisans' use of standardised, stereotypical medieval imagery, such as the Siege of the Castle of Love, the maiden and unicorn, and the meeting of two lovers, points to this more general reading of the caskets' visual content. In regard to the Metropolitan composite casket, Richard Randall Jr. suggests that, 'the visual nature of the story in the context of the entire casket was more important to the carver than textual integrity was.'[601] This seems more plausible than the idea that the carvers were merely ignorant or careless of the subject matter they were tasked with depicting. Considering the high cost and large amount of effort involved in the creation of such objects, it seems unlikely that the carver's instruction would have been so vague as to result in such obvious visual discrepancies. Rather, the caskets' mix of textually accurate and inaccurate visualisations suggests that the carvers had a certain amount of prior knowledge of the legends, which guided the general formation of their work, while more intricate details were based on a variety of sources, such as previously produced models, artistic license and imagination, and possibly even the specific wishes of the patron. This allowed for the re-engendering of the Arthurian narratives, creating visual stories with multiple connotations, both secular and sacred. Simply put, the manner in which the carvers chose to render their subject matter defined the ways in which the caskets would be read by contemporary audiences.

6.7 Physical Considerations of the Caskets

The caskets' relatively large size also suggests the type of objects that they may have held. If the caskets did indeed serve as jewellery boxes for wealthy female owners, they could have held jewels, combs, and perhaps even an ivory mirror, similarly carved with romance imagery. Other objects could have included small pieces of apparel and mementos, such as gloves, letters, and locks of hair. In addition, the caskets are large enough that a small manuscript, such as a Book of Hours, could

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[601] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 84.

have been contained within. If the caskets were given as gifts to women during romantic courtship, perhaps they held love letters. Similarly, just as the divergent imagery of the *Perceval* casket suggests a different type of owner from those of the composite caskets, its slightly smaller size (225 x 74 x 113 mm) suggests a different use, as does an even smaller romance casket also at the Musée du Louvre, LP 615 (144 x 48 x 89 mm) (Fig. 151).[602] The relatively lightweight and compact nature of the caskets suggests that they could have been transported with relative ease, perhaps even tucked under an arm. Perhaps they were used to store precious objects during travel from one courtly location to another. For example, Mahaut, Countess of Artois, is known to have moved court constantly, dividing her time between locations such as Paris, Lens, Saint-Omer, Calais, Artois, and further afield to Burgundy.[603] It is possible that an ivory casket was among the many possessions that accompanied her on her travels. Assuming that the caskets' current locks are similar in style to those originally provided, their delicate nature suggests that they were intended more for their visual appeal than their strength or ability to protect against theft. Likewise, the delicacy of the current handles on the caskets suggest their decorative as opposed to utilitarian use. Thus the caskets likely held items that were of value to their owners, but which did not require advanced security. Rather, the caskets would have served as a means of superficial protection for the objects within, while also signifying the objects' worth through the precious nature of the ivory caskets themselves.

In light of their multiplicity of visual connotations, both religious and profane, specifically Arthurian, and generally romantic, medieval ivory caskets have remained active objects of material culture well beyond their initial production and purpose. For example, London, British Library, MS Additional 36615/Dalton 370 (Fig. 152), a copy of Godefroy de Boulogne's *Le Chevalier au Cygne* includes a fourteenth-century ivory panel, one of the aforementioned composite casket fragments, set into its nineteenth-century cover.[604] The panel's imagery is identical to that of the back panel of the eight composite caskets, depicting Gawain at the Castle of Marvels, from *Le Conte du Graal,* and Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge, from *Le Chevalier de la Charrette.* The panel's long, narrow shape, and lack of marks from a previously

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[602] See Appendix 3.
[603] Christelle Balouzat-Loubet, 'The Court of Mahaut, Countess of Artois (1302-1329) through its Bookkeeping Practices', HAL Archives, 2014.
[604] See Appendix 3.

extant lock, speaks to its original use as the rear panel of a casket. The panel is thus proof that more than eight similarly decorated composite caskets were produced within the early fourteenth century, pointing to an active market for such luxurious objects. The continued use of this ivory fragment was made possible through its secondary role as part of a decorative book cover. Although the panel continues to serve as a tactile object of conspicuous consumption, its primary purpose is to elevate the value of the manuscript. The ivory panel lends the nineteenth-century cover a more sumptuous and medieval tone. In addition, taken out of the context of the three-dimensional casket, the panel's imagery takes on a more general connotation of chivalry and knighthood, befitting the text enclosed within the cover. The Arthurian connotation of the imagery is now rendered secondary. In this context, the more general romantic meaning of the ivory comes to the fore: a visual exemplar of medieval chivalry and knighthood.

6.8 Concluding Thoughts

As is illustrated by the shifting uses and connotations of the ivory panel Dalton 370, late medieval ivories were viewed and used in a multiplicity of ways. This was dependent on a complex network of factors, which included cultural context: the ivory's material role as a functional object or a visually pleasing *objet d'art*; the gender, wealth, and social status of the ivory's owner: encompassing issues such as the commissioning, purchasing/giving of the ivory, as well as its display and practical use; and the production of the ivory: how the carvers' technical skill and both literary and religious knowledge would have shaped medieval viewers' understanding and visual experiences of the completed object. In regard to the eight composite caskets and the *Perceval* casket, it is clear that their imagery functions as complex, diverse narratives that can be simultaneously understood as visual exemplars of both sacred and secular themes. The caskets' wide range of imagery, encompassing traditional medieval visual tropes such as the maiden and unicorn, and the Siege of the Castle of Love, as well as quintessential Arthurian scenes from both the legends of Chrétien de Troyes and the Vulgate Cycle (Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge, Gawain at the Castle of Marvels, Perceval jousting with the Red Knight, and Galahad at the Castle of Maidens), and even religious imagery (the four saints adorning the lid of the Perceval casket), speaks to their ability to function both as objects of visual pleasure,

and also as visualisations of literary and moralising narratives. Indeed, as has been discussed, instead of serving solely as superficial illustrations of romantic love, the intended visual purpose of the ivory caskets likely ranged from mere tokens of secular *amour*, to visual exemplars of Christian values, illustrating the multivalent and cross-cultural use of these ivories as objects of medieval visual culture. Thus, the visual complexity of the caskets should not be underestimated. Their ability to function within the realms of the sacred and profane, the Christian and Arthurian, the romantic and didactic, speaks to the multi-layered visual nature of fourteenth-century French ivories specifically, and of medieval material culture more generally. The ivories' ability to transcend such seemingly diverse, even contrary, visual themes and categorisations speaks to the ability of medieval viewers to acknowledge and consider multiple connotations of the images they are presented with, a skill that is applicable to other mediums of medieval visual culture, such as manuscripts.

Chapter Seven

Materially Different, Visually Similar:

Collaborative Production Practices Among Arthurian Manuscripts and Ivories in Fourteenth-Century Paris

In the first half of the fourteenth century, Paris was the recognised centre of French commercial book production, both sacred and secular.[605] The presence of not just scribes and illuminators, but also parchment makers, paper-sellers, and binders helped to facilitate Paris' preeminence as a major centre of commercial manuscript production.[606] Along the Rue neuve Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité, a group of *libraires* focussed on vernacular book production, creating illuminated manuscripts of popular romances, such as the Arthurian legends, which were in high demand among the growing number of literate nobility and aristocracy of northern France. During the same period, Paris was also the major European centre of production for carved ivories. Elephant ivory from Africa was transported to France by Mediterranean merchants via the Straits of Gibraltar and the English Channel.[607] The overall period of production for carved ivory objects such as combs, mirror cases, writing tablets, and caskets was incredibly short, lasting only until the beginning of the fifteenth century. However, the great skill and detail with which these objects were created imbued them with a popularity and longevity similar to the contemporaneously created illuminated romance manuscripts.[608] Both the secular manuscripts and ivories of early fourteenth-century Paris exhibit evidence of artistic collaboration. Often a minimum of two hands is evident in the illuminations of a single manuscript, while differing styles of carving on the panels of an ivory casket attest to the combined efforts of several carvers. In addition, Arthurian images in manuscript and ivory frequently focus on the same scenes, which are often rendered in similar visual formats, suggesting cross-medium collaboration between manuscript and ivory artisans. Although the production processes of late medieval Parisian manuscripts

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[605] Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam, 2002), 585, 589.

[606] Godfried Croenen, 'Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris Around 1400', in *Patrons, Authors, and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris around 1400*, ed. by Godfried Croenen and Peter F. Ainsworth (Louvain, 2006), 1.

[607] Sarah M. Guérin, '*Avorio d'omni Ragione*: The Supply of Elephant Ivory to Northern Europe in the Gothic Era', in *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010), 164.

[608] Paul Williamson, *An Introduction to Medieval Ivory Carvings* (1982), 19.

have been researched by scholars such as Alison Stones, Richard and Mary Rouse, and Godfried Croenen, the production of secular Gothic ivories has received little academic attention, especially in regard to the possibility of shared visual models and techniques with contemporaneously created illuminated romance manuscripts. As Gervase Rosser aptly notes, 'the extent to which medieval craft production entailed complex collaboration between craftsmen and women and between workshops has yet to be sufficiently acknowledged.'[609]

Through an examination of selected manuscripts and ivories, focussing in particular on scenes that are illustrated in both artistic mediums, I will strive to draw connections between the collaborative production processes of Arthurian manuscripts and ivories in early to mid-fourteenth-century Paris and its surrounding environs. I will engage with questions such as: was there an overlap of visual sources used by manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers? Are there similarities in the collaborative production processes of these manuscripts and ivories? For example, did the workshops similarly function on a basis of hierarchy of skill or apprenticeships? And finally, apart from increased speed of production, what were the reasons for collaborative artistic efforts? This chapter will thus aim to elucidate the cross-medium collaborative production processes of early fourteenth-century manuscripts and ivories, thereby formulating links between these two physically different, yet visually similar, objects of late medieval material culture.

7.1 Manuscript Production in Late Medieval Paris

The commercial production of secular, vernacular manuscripts in Paris began in the late thirteenth century.[610] By the early fourteenth century, manuscript production in France was a 'group enterprise', often involving collaboration between both multiple artisans within the same workshop, as well as between several separate workshops.[611] Manuscript production and the circulation of models would have been overseen by a *libraire*, with the artisans resident within the confines of adjacent streets, facilitating

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[609] Gervase Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds, and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town', in *Past and Present* 154 (1997), 14.

[610] Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. by Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, 1990), 99.

[611] Robert Branner, *Manuscript Painting in Paris During the Reign of Saint Louis* (Berkeley, 1977), 14, 21.

easy collaboration.[612] Cases in which a single manuscript was illuminated by more than one artisan were therefore relatively common. Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12577 is exemplary of this kind of collaboration. MS fr. 12577 is a large tome of 272 folios, created in Paris *circa* 1315-25, and containing Chrétien de Troyes' final, late-twelfth-century legend, *Le Conte du Graal*, or *Perceval*, as well as two of the four *Perceval* continuations, those by Gauchier and Manessier, written *circa* the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries. The manuscript is illuminated with a total of 52 miniatures, including an elaborate frontispiece (Fig. 6), the manuscript's largest image, which visually narrates the introductory scenes of *Le Conte du Graal*. Although this first illumination is of relatively high artistic quality, exhibiting careful attention to facial expressions and backgrounds, the following miniatures, especially those of the continuations, are of varying quality, style, and colour palettes, suggesting that more than one illuminator was involved in the manuscript's creation.[613] Considering the large size of MS fr. 12577 (each folio measures 325 x 215 mm), the manuscript would have constituted an immense undertaking for a single workshop, in terms of both the amount and cost of materials, and hours of work invested. It is not surprising, therefore, that multiple artisans, possibly from more than one workshop, would have been employed to assist with, and hopefully speed, its production. As noted by Rosser, temporary contracts between workshops were common.[614] Often, a single manuscript was divided into parts, whose production was then dispersed among several workshops. For example, smaller workshops may have joined together to better and more quickly execute larger commissions. It is possible that this was the case with MS fr. 12577, in which, according to Alison Stones, one artisan provided the illuminations for the first legend, *Le Conte du Graal*, while the remaining illustrations for the *Perceval* continuations were completed by an additional two artisans.[615] Stones' hypothesis is verified when the illuminations are viewed as a whole; their quality and colour palettes can be seen to vary. Leah Tether divides the work of the three artisans into the following sections: 'painter 1 is

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[612] Rouse and Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', 15.

[613] Alison Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters (Amsterdam, 1993), 263-4.

[614] Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds, and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town', 15.

[615] Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', 260, 264.

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responsible for ff. 1-85v, painter 2 for ff. 95v-234r and painter 3 for ff. 240v-265v.'[616] Close examination of the manuscript confirms Tether's theory. For example, the miniature on folio 95v is rendered in a bolder, less delicate style than that of the previous illuminations, and is also the first illumination in the manuscript to display the use of yellow pigment, suggesting the work of a second artisan. In addition, it is likely that another, lesser artisan was employed to render the gold ivy leaves and other instances of gilt, which would have been completed prior to the application of colour, and a further artisan to fill in the red and blue decorative borders that frame the miniatures.[617] This complex division of work among several greater and lesser skilled artisans would have diversified the manuscript's production. Red rubrications, which describe the illustrated scenes and often signify shifts in the narrative, appear above or below each miniature (Fig. 8), and were likely written by the scribe at the same time as the text, prior to illumination.[618] These rubrics could thus have served as a guide for illuminators who were marginally literate, and who may have had little prior knowledge of the romance, or, if working on it collaboratively, be illustrating scenes out of the context provided by the manuscript as a whole. As discussed previously, such rubrics are also visible in Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1453, another *Perceval* manuscript also produced in Paris *circa* 1315-25 (Figs. 112, 118-131).[619]

Similarly, Martin Kauffmann suggests that in some cases, an illuminator could have been paired with an 'iconographer', another artisan involved in and familiar with the manuscript's production, who could have advised the illuminator in his work. According to Kauffmann, such assistance would have positively contributed to the artistic quality and inventive nature of the illuminations.[620] A further means of visual direction for manuscript artisans consisted of simple sketches rendered in plummet in

[616] Leah Tether, *The Continuations of Chrétien's Perceval: Content and Construction, Extension and Ending* (Cambridge, 2012), 45.
[617] Christopher de Hamel, *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination: History and Techniques* (London, 2001), 78.
[618] Busby, 'Text and Image in the Getty Tristan (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms Ludwig XV, 5)', in *Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honour of Richard and Mary Rouse* (Turnhout, 2011), 2, 3.
[619] See pp. 63, 178, 183; Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', in *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism*, ed. by C. Kleinhenz (Chapel Hill, 1977), 97.
[620] Martin Kauffmann, 'Satire, Pictorial Genre, and the Illustrations in BN fr. 146', in *Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS français 146*, ed. by Margaret Bent and Andrew Wathey (Oxford, 1998), 305.

either the future location of the miniature or in the folio's margins.[621] These sketches would have provided an illiterate artisan with a basic idea of what he or she was to depict. Jonathan Alexander notes that, 'preliminary marginal drawings may… have been much more prevalent than we are now able to perceive.'[622] This means of illustrative planning developed in thirteenth-century Paris along with the recognition of scribes and illuminators as two distinct, established professions, which acted to delineate the boundaries between the various workers involved in the production of manuscripts.[623]

Stones has identified the artisans of MS fr. 12577 as members of a network whose shops were located on the Île de la Cité on the Rue neuve Notre Dame (Fig. 153).[624] This group of manuscript shops would have been overseen by a team of bookseller-entrepreneurs, or *libraires*, who would have facilitated the commissioning and sale of the manuscripts produced by the artisans and scribes. According to Stones, the master artisan of MS fr. 1453 (possibly the Papeleu Master, discussed later), also belonged to this Parisian manuscript network, as evidenced by the two *Perceval* manuscripts' (MSS fr. 12577 and fr. 1453) shared place and date of production, and rendering of the same Arthurian legend, Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*.[625] The *libraires* located on the Rue neuve Notre Dame are known to have focussed on vernacular manuscript production, a subsection of the Parisian manuscript market that experienced heightened popularity in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due in part to the growing number of literate nobility and wealthy.[626] It would have been here that prestigious patrons could have purchased illuminated vernacular manuscripts. For example, in the surviving household records of Mahaut, Countess of Artois, it is recorded that in Arras on 30 November 1308, the Countess' chaplain, Jehan de Courceles, purchased a selection of manuscripts for Mahaut, including a

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[621] Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski, eds. *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400* (London, 1987), 4, 382.

[622] Alexander, 'Preliminary marginal drawings in medieval manuscripts', in *Artistes, Artisans, et Production Artistique au Moyen Age, Vol. III*, ed. by Xavier Barrai I Altet (Paris, 1987), 308.

[623] Alexander, 'Preliminary marginal drawings in medieval manuscripts', 310; de Hamel, *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination*, 56.

[624] Stones, 'The Illustrated Chrétien Manuscripts and Their Artistic Context', 260.

[625] Ibid, 267.

[626] Rouse and Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', 105.

copy of *Le Conte du Graal*.[627] Manuscripts such as MS fr. 12577 were generally produced on a bespoke basis for wealthy clientele, such as Mahaut. Mahaut's household records indicate that her more elaborate manuscripts were special commissions, a fact that aligns with the improbability of an expensive, luxury manuscript being produced on spec with the hope that a ready buyer would be found.[628] Indeed, in 1305, Mahaut commissioned a lavish copy of the *Chroniques des Rois de France*, specifying that it should have 'XL lettres d'or as commencemens des istoires.'[629] During the thirteenth century, the growing size of both Paris and its wealthy literate population allowed for the first instance of medieval scribes and artisans who were able to support themselves through the production of made-to-order manuscripts.[630] The concentration of *libraires* along the Rue neuve Notre Dame likely resulted in artistic collaboration among workshops, allowing for the increased, expanded, and quicker production of secular manuscripts, reflecting the development and expansion of the commercial Parisian book trade from the mid-thirteenth century onward.[631]

The location of manuscript workshops on the Rue neuve Notre Dame, which opened out onto the square in front of the west facade of Notre Dame, mirrors the location of other European centres of medieval manuscript production, such as those located in Oxford, York, London, and Utrecht, where book craftsmen similarly tended to locate their workshops in the vicinity of their city's main church or cathedral (the University Church of Saint Mary's, Yorkminster, Saint Paul's Cathedral, and Saint Martin's Cathedral, respectively).[632] There are several parallels between the book

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[627] See Appendix 2; Jules-Marie Richard, 'Les livres de Mahaut, comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne 1320-1329', in *Revue des questions historiques* 40 (1886), 236; Richard, *Une petite-nièce de saint Louis: Mahaut comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne (1302-1329)* (Paris, 1887), 100; Sarah Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture,' in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: 1988), 154.

[628] Joan A. Holladay, 'Fourteenth-century French queens as collectors and readers of books: Jeanne d'Evreux and her contemporaries', *Journal of Medieval History* 32.2 (2006): 91.

[629] 'Forty letters of gold at the beginnings of the stories'; See Appendix 2; Richard, 'Les livres de Mahaut, comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne 1320-1329', 235-6.

[630] Rouse and Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', 103.

[631] Godfried Croenen, 'Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris Around 1400', 1; Rouse and Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', 105, 113.

[632] C. Paul Christianson, 'A Community of Book Artisans in Chaucer's London', in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studie*s 20 (1989), 209; Claire Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours: Shaping the Book of Hours in Thirteenth-Century Oxford* (London, 1991), 12.

making communities of Paris and Oxford in particular. For example, in mid thirteenth-century Oxford, manuscript makers were grouped around Saint Mary's, the University Church. Records indicate that William de Brailes, a thirteenth-century illuminator, both lived and worked in the Catte Street area of Oxford (Fig. 154), adjacent to Saint Mary's, where All Souls College stands today.[633] Like the Rue neuve Notre Dame in Paris, Catte Street was home to the workshops of parchment makers, scribes, and binders, all of whom worked closely with one another to produce the high quality, luxury manuscripts for which William de Brailes is known.[634] The most famous of de Brailes' manuscripts is the de Brailes Hours (London, British Library, MS Additional 49999) (Fig. 155), produced for a female patron, exemplifying that as in Paris, book production in Oxford was not solely linked to the provision of texts for the university.[635] Although the majority of manuscripts were produced by monastic scriptoria through the end of the twelfth century, the beginnings of commercial manuscript production in Oxford are seen in the first half of the thirteenth century, providing another parallel to Parisian book production, in which the thirteenth century also served as a precedent for the following century's collaborative, commercial manuscript production.[636] In addition, both cities also benefitted from the existence of literate, wealthy communities eager to obtain luxurious manuscripts of both sacred and secular content.

The close proximity of workshops on the Rue neuve Notre Dame may have facilitated the exchange of both visual models and artisans between workshops, allowing for the sharing of sources, as well as temporary collaborations among illuminators.[637] The close professional relationships that existed among neighbouring artisans is manifested in surviving wills, in which, as noted by Laurel Amtower, 'craftsmen almost invariably named fellow book artisans as executors, guarantors, or beneficiaries, reflecting a series of interrelationships and trust.'[638] This suggests that

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[633] Jonathan Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (London, 1992), 25.

[634] Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours*, 13.

[635] Ibid, 18.

[636] Ibid, 10.

[637] Richard H. Randall, Jr., 'The Medieval Artist and Industrialised Art', in *Apollo* 84.8 (1966): 435; Joan Diamond, 'Manufacture and Market in Parisian Book Illumination Around 1300', in *Europäische Kunst um 1300, Akten des XXV. Internationalen Congresses für Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Hermann Fillitz and Martina Pippal (Vienna, 1986), 103-4.

[638] Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2000), 20.

book artisans were able to form close personal and professional relationships through consistent artistic collaboration over an extended period of time. The fact that many artisans began their training as apprentices in Parisian workshops speaks to the likely longevity of their relationships with their peers and colleagues within the world of Parisian manuscript production.[639] Such close working relationships among artisans, as well as streamlining production, helped to cement the status of Paris as the centre of French manuscript production throughout the fourteenth century. That this system of collaborative manuscript production was actively used even into the fifteenth century attests to its commercial success.[640]

7.2 Ivory Production in Late Medieval Paris

Also during the course of the thirteenth century, Paris began to evolve into the major centre of French ivory production. *Circa* 1240, large amounts of ivory began to arrive in Northern Europe, allowing for the wider production of ivory objects, whose subject matter, by the fourteenth century, had overwhelming shifted towards the superficially secular.[641] Before this point, ivory was used solely for the creation of sacred objects, such as crosiers, portable altars, and crucifixes, befitting the material's great rarity and value.[642] Such early, sacred ivory works were visually reminiscent of architectural sculpture.[643] This artistic influence is still visible in fourteenth-century secular pieces, carved at the apex of the age of Gothic ivories. On ivories such as Musée du Louvre, OA 122, the sole surviving *Perceval* casket, architectural details such as arches, colonettes, trefoils, and quatrefoils serve as frames, borders, and abstract details, lending the casket a sense of place and religiosity (Fig. 1). The detailed Gothic arches, bordered by quatrefoil designs, recall the facades of medieval cathedrals as well as the architectural frames often found bordering manuscript miniatures (as seen on folio 232v of the Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons, *circa* 1280-90, in Amiens (Fig. 135)).[644] Furthermore, the religious connotations of the Gothic arches on the casket

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[639] Christianson, 'A Community of Book Artisans in Chaucer's London', 211.
[640] Guérin, 'Tears of Compunction: French Gothic Ivories in Devotional Practice', thesis (Toronto, 2009), 105.
[641] Guérin, '*Avorio d'omni Ragione*: The Supply of Elephant Ivory to Northern Europe in the Gothic Era', 164.
[642] Ibid, 164.
[643] Randall, *Medieval Ivories* (Baltimore, 1969), 2; Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge, 1990), 21.
[644] Laila Gross, 'La Chastelaine de Vergi Carved in Ivory', in *Viator* 10 (1979): 317.

serve to emphasise the lid's Christian subject matter (Fig. 1): four saints, Christopher, Martin, George, and Eustace, that, when viewed from left to right, can be interpreted as a visualisation of Perceval's progression towards Christian enlightenment. Such architectural details can also be found on other secular ivories, including London, British Museum, Dalton 367, a casket depicting *Le Châtelaine de Vergi*, whose end panels exhibit repeated use of Gothic arches (Fig. 156), while the imagery of the lid is neatly enclosed within eight quatrefoils (Fig. 157).

There was an early medieval sculptural precedent for the French Arthurian romances that could have served as a visual cue for fourteenth-century carvers of Gothic ivories. Early Arthurian imagery in monumental sculpture includes a depiction of Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge, from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, on a pillar of the Church of Saint Pierre in Caen (Fig. 158), dating to *circa* 1350.[645] Another, even earlier example, is a carving on the façade of Modena Cathedral in Northern Italy (Fig. 159). This carving depicts the abduction of Winlogee, a precursor to Guinevere from the late eleventh-century Breton chronicles, legends that are believed to have circulated orally in Italy in the late eleventh century via Breton nobles enroute to the First Crusade. The Winlogee carving, on the Porta della Pescheria of Modena Cathedral dates to *circa* 1120-40, in accordance with the prior circulation of the Breton chronicles *circa* 1096.[646] However, despite these sculptural parallels, it seems more likely that fourteenth-century French carvers relied in part on manuscript illuminations of the very romances they were commissioned to render in ivory.[647] Manuscripts were closer in size, if not artistic medium, to the delicate fourteenth-century carvings than were the aforementioned examples of monumental sculpture.

That the style of dress of the figures rendered in both fourteenth-century romance manuscripts and ivories exhibits similarities further suggests the sharing of visual models. For example, the illuminators of MSS fr. 1453 and fr. 12577, as well as the carver of OA 122, depict Perceval wearing a hooded garment (Figs. 5, 6, and 118), which, according to Chrétien's text, signifies Perceval's status as a

[645] Lori Walters, 'Introduction', in *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook*, ed. by Lori Walters (New York, 2002), xlix.
[646] Roger S. Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York, 1927), 10; Marilyn Stokstad, 'Modena Archivolt' in *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (New York, 1986), 390-1.
[647] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 78.

Welshman.[648] This cross-medium visualisation of Perceval as a specific Arthurian knight whose identity is tied to his supposedly Welsh naiveté, differs from the chainmail-adorned knights who are usually depicted in contemporaneous manuscripts and ivories such as Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., and the eight composite caskets. Such cross-medium collaboration likely took the form of model books, exemplars, and sketches, all of which could be easily passed among workshops and artisans.[649] Villard de Honnecourt's thirteenth-century sketchbook is one example. Villard's often simplistically rendered figures and structures (Fig. 160) could have served as patterns for artistic production within a variety of mediums, including manuscripts and varying forms of sculpture, such as ivories.[650] In addition, styles of manuscript illumination were disseminated from Paris to other, smaller centres of French manuscript production, such as Amiens, which served as a precursor to Paris, as will be discussed next. According to Richard Randall Jr., 'the individual atelier and the master-artisan predominated: the better shops set the styles and the smaller ones followed.'[651] This was likely also the case in regard to the production of carved ivories. Although Paris appears to have been the sole centre of French ivory production at the time, it is probable that styles and techniques were passed on from greater to lesser skilled *ymagiers* within the Parisian ivory network. Indeed, as noted by Anthony Cutler, the sheer number of ivory artisans in fourteenth-century Paris, paired with the large demand for carved ivories at this time, points to 'a constant exchange of ideas and models' among artisans.[652] Thus, Paris was able to keep its monopoly on the parallel fourteenth-century ivory and manuscript markets through its continued production of high quality, fashionable products, sold at competitive prices. Manuscripts and ivories could be sold both within the city centre and outside of it, thanks to 'itinerant merchants' who would travel to meet prospective customers.[653]

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[648] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*), in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London, 1991), 388.

[649] Charles T. Little, 'The Art of Gothic Ivories: Studies at the Crossroads', *Sculpture Journal* 23.1 (2014): 24.

[650] Theodore Bowie, T*he Medieval Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt* (New York, 2006), viii-ix.

[651] Randall, 'The Medieval Artist and Industrialised Art', 435.

[652] Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1994), 70.

[653] Ibid, 435, 438.

7.3 MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. and Amiens

Prior to Paris' monopoly of French manuscript production in the fourteenth century, a large selection of manuscripts were produced in the northern French cities of Arras and Amiens, which functioned as centres of manuscript production in the thirteenth century.[654] Between the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth centuries, the centre of French manuscript production moved south, from Picardy to Paris.[655] This does not, however, preclude the production of fourteenth-century manuscripts outside of Paris. Rather, although the fourteenth century saw Paris gain a monopoly on French manuscript production, manuscripts were still produced in other French cities, resulting in 'satellite' areas of manuscript production that were duly influenced by Parisian artistic styles. According to Eleanor Greenville, Amiens served as a 'centre for the dissemination of secular romance.'[656] The late thirteenth-century production of lavishly illuminated manuscripts in Amiens, including the Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons (Fig. 135), exemplifies the high quality of production stemming from the commercial book market in Amiens, suggesting that as a centre of manuscript production, the city was akin to Paris in regard to quality of production, if not size of industry. Due to Amiens' status as a late medieval centre of manuscript production, scholars such as Christopher de Hamel, Robert McGrath, and Claire Donovan have suggested that the romances of Chrétien de Troyes were among the manuscripts produced in Amiens.[657] One of these manuscripts may have been MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. This manuscript is exemplary of collaboration among several artisans, both scribes and illuminators. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. is an immense tome of 410 folios, each measuring 255 x 410 mm, created *circa* 1320-30, and containing the late thirteenth-century Vulgate romances *Le Lancelot propre*, *La Queste del saint Graal*, and *La Mort le Roi Artu*.[658] The manuscript is illuminated with 212 historiated initials, and although the identity of its illuminators is unknown, the manuscript does

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[654] Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours*, 27.

[655] Robert L. McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library', in *Speculum* 38.4 (1963), 593.

[656] Eleanor S. Greenhill, 'A Fourteenth-Century Workshop of Manuscript Illuminators and Its Localisation', in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 40.1 (1977), 1.

[657] McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library', 594; de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London, 1986), 149; Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours*, 27

[658] Gweneth Hutchings, 'Two Hitherto Unnoticed Manuscripts of the French Prose "Lancelot"', in *Medium Aevum* 3.3 (1934): 189.

exhibit evidence of the hands of at least two scribes, the first of whom, Ernoul d'Amiens, is known through an inscription on folio 187v: '*les queles branches Ernouls damiens escrit*' (Fig. 12).[659] While it was relatively common for manuscripts to include notations referring to their makers, inscriptions do not commonly appear on ivory caskets before the end of the fourteenth century.[660] This renders the attribution of ivories to particular workshops difficult, as scholars must rely entirely on stylistic clues. In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the different hands are evident through variations in the formation and size of the script. The work of at least two scribes, paired with the large size of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., suggests that, like MS fr. 12577, the manuscript would have constituted an immense undertaking for a single workshop, resulting in multiple scribes and artisans, possibly hailing from several different workshops, being involved in its production.

The possible production of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. in Amiens, as suggested by Ernoul d'Amiens' inscription, suggests that late medieval manuscript collaboration was more geographically widespread than has often been thought, encompassing commercial book markets in towns and cities outside of the Île de France.[661] Contrary to what scholars have previously suggested, Paris' influence as a hub of manuscript production in fourteenth-century France appears to have extended outside of the city to its surrounding environs, including cities, such as Amiens, which had previously become established centres of manuscript production in the thirteenth century.[662] That Amiens was a recognised centre of manuscript production both prior to and possibly also at the same time as Paris lends credence to the theory that the scribe Ernoul d'Amiens could have been an active artisan in his native city. The creation in Amiens of a large-scale and elaborate manuscript such as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. suggests that the city, like Paris, although perhaps on a smaller scale, continued in the fourteenth-century to have a thriving market for secular, illuminated manuscripts, as well as the wealthy and literate audience necessary to commission and purchase them. The

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[659] 'These branches were transcribed by Ernoul d'Amiens.'

[660] Joseph Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1951), 7; Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1994), 171.

[661] Croenen, 'Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris Around 1400', 1.

[662] McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library', 593; de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 149.

production of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. in Amiens specifically, or the northern French area of Picardy more generally, is further supported by the similarly hypothesised place of production for other Arthurian manuscripts, including Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS Garrett 125, New York, Morgan Library, MS M. 805, and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 95.[663] Based on stylistic similarities within their miniatures, Roger Loomis has posited that these manuscripts were produced in the same Picard city, possibly Amiens.[664] MSS Garrett 125 and Rawlinson Q.b.6. exhibit a similar figural style and use of colours (particularly red and blue) within their miniatures (Figs. 21 and 161), which Robert McGrath has characterised as unique to Picard manuscripts. McGrath further suggests that this Picard school of illumination served as an 'artistic middle ground'; although greatly influenced by the Parisian style of illumination, it was able to maintain its own distinctive characteristics, such as a defined use of line, and simplistic, red and blue initials.[665]

According to Stones, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. was likely illuminated by artisans working within the orbit of the eminent illuminator Master Honoré, based in Paris.[666] Thus, considering the inscription on folio 187v (Fig. 12) by the scribe Ernoul d'Amiens, it seems possible that the manuscript was either brought from Amiens to Paris to be illuminated, or that Ernoul was working in Paris. Considering that MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. has most recently been dated to *circa* 1320-30, it is most probable that the manuscript was created by followers of Honoré after the Master was active, *circa* 1288-1318.[667] Master Honoré's workshop was located near the Sorbonne, on rue Erembourc-de-Brie, today rue Boutbrie. When paired with the adjacent rue aus Escrivains, now known as rue de Parcheminerie, these two streets served as the centre of late thirteenth to early fourteenth-century book production, prior to the centre of production on the nearby Ile de la Cité, which was likely established shortly thereafter.[668] The hypothesised production of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. in Amiens, and the link between its Amienois artisans and the Parisian Master Honoré suggests that

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[663] See Appendix 2.
[664] Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (London, 1938), 89.
[665] McGrath, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library', 590-1.
[666] Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts: 1260-1320 Vol. 1* (London, 2013), 56.
[667] Ibid, 56.
[668] S. C. Cockerell, 'The Parisian Miniaturist Honoré', in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10.45 (1906): 186.

there was communication between these two centres of manuscript production in northern France. Furthermore, in contemporary Parisian tax registers, Master Honoré is referred to as '*Maitre Honoré d'Amiens*', which suggests that the illuminator had a familial connection with the city of Amiens.[669] Even if this connection was only that his paternal family hailed from Amiens, it is still possible that the connection would have contributed to the dissemination of Honoré's artistic style within his paternal homeland. Honoré's status as the most highly paid illuminator in late thirteenth-century Paris could have also contributed to the sense of pride felt by native Amienois.[670] The fact that artists and scribes often travelled lends further credence to the theory of artistic dissemination between Paris and Amiens. Honoré is also the hypothesised illuminator of a lavish breviary owned by Philippe le Bel, created *circa* 1296 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 1023).[671] When compared to the Breviary of Philippe le Bel, the miniatures of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. can be seen to exhibit a similar artistic style (Figs. 18 and 162). Although of a lesser quality in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6., the use of frames and the careful rendering of hair with thin, black pen strokes is comparable.

7.4 The Production of MS fr. 1453

Another Arthurian manuscript to have been attributed to a specific illuminator is MS fr. 1453, created in Paris *circa* 1315-25, and containing Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the four variously authored *Perceval* continuations. Stones attributes MS fr. 1453 to either the Papeleu Master or related artists.[672] Considering MS fr. 1453's rather simplistic images (Figs. 112, and 118-131), it seems probable that the manuscript was illuminated either by assistants of the Papeleu Master, or artisans influenced by his style. For example, when MS fr. 1453 is compared to manuscript illuminations that have been more definitively attributed to the Papeleu Master, such as an image of the Martyrdom of Saint Urban, from a fourteenth-century manuscript of Jean de Vigny's *Miroir historial* (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5080) (Fig. 163) and a double folio with miniatures of the Crucifixion and Majesta Domini from an early fourteenth-century French missal (London, British Library, MS Harley 2891) (Fig. 164), the

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[669] 'Master Honoré of Amiens'; Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts: 1260-1320 Vol. 1*, 56.
[670] Greenhill, 'A Fourteenth-Century Workshop of Manuscript Illuminators and Its Localisation', 2.
[671] Cockerell, 'The Parisian Miniaturist Honoré', 191.
[672] Ibid, 57.

discrepancy in artistic talent between the illuminations of MS fr. 1453 and these more finely rendered images becomes evident.[673]

7.5 The Production of MS Arsenal 5218

Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, a copy of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, was produced significantly later, *circa* 1352, and appears to have been written, illuminated, and bound by an illuminator by the name of Pierart dou Tielt, according to his colophon on folio 91v (Fig. 13):

> '*Chius livres fu par escrips le nuit n[ost]re / dame en mi aoust la mil trois cens et / li. Si lescripst pierars dou tielt. Et en- / lumina et loia. Explicit li q[ue]ste del s[ainte] graal.*'[674]

The production of a manuscript by a single artisan is a rare occurrence, especially as there is no evidence that Pierart wrote or bound any of the other manuscripts that he is known to have illuminated. In addition, MS Arsenal 5218 is the only known manuscript to include Pierart's signature.[675] Pierart is recorded working as a master illuminator in the Flemish city of Tournai from *circa* 1330-51.[676] Pierart can be located in Tournai due to notable manuscript commissions he is known to have assisted with. For example, *circa* 1330, Pierart collaborated with the Master of the Ghent Ceremonial to produce a manuscript known as the Tournai *Rose*, a complete edition of the *Roman de la Rose* (Tournai, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 101).[677] In the following years, among other commissions, Pierart was involved in the production of another *Roman de la Rose* (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS GKS 2061 kvart), as well as the lavish *Roman d'Alexandre* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264), illustrating the wide range of texts to which he lent his talents; popular secular romances, as well as sacred works, such as the vernacular annals that follow *La*

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[673] Elizabeth Morrison, 'Jean de Vignay, Miroir historial', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500,* ed. by Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles, 2010), 151.

[674] 'This book was brought to completion on the night of Our Lady in the middle of August 1351. Pierart dou Tielt transcribed it. And illuminated and bound it. Here ends the Quest of the Holy Grail'; Lori Walters, 'Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the Queste del saint Graal', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby (London, 1996), 339.

[675] Ibid, 339.

[676] Ibid, 339.

[677] See Appendix 2.

Queste del saint Graal in Arsenal MS 5218.[678] *Circa* 1349, Pierart is recorded as being employed as the restorer of books for the Benedictine monastery of St. Martin de Tournai.[679] Medieval Tournai was known for its cathedral and active trade network, suggesting that it would have been a prime location for northern European manuscript production. It is unclear, however, whether MS Arsenal 5218 was produced in Tournai or Paris, as both cities have been suggested as locales for its production.[680]

7.6 The Production of MS fr. 12576

Like Arsenal MS 5218, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12576, produced in northeastern France *circa* 1275-1300, similarly contains a compilation of texts. The manuscript contains Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, the first and second *Perceval* continuations by Gerbert de Montreuil and Manessier, as well as two works by the Renclus de Moiliens, *Le roman de Miserer*e, from the early thirteenth century, and *Le roman de Carité*, dating to the 1180s. The two texts by de Moiliens are moralising works, whose purpose, according to Joseph Duggan, was to 'chastise the worldly and lead them to salvation.'[681] The Christian themes of de Moiliens' works thus pair well with Chrétien's most inherently religious romance. Such a wide-ranging selection of texts suggests several possibilities, including a broad audience, later additions to the manuscript, or perhaps a patron who specified the inclusion of such texts.

7.7 The Cross-Medium Use of Visual Models

Of the Arthurian manuscripts discussed here, MS fr. 12577 includes the most detailed and lavish imagery. However, despite their overall impressive appearance, the illuminations of MS fr. 12577 exhibit signs of rote copying, and a reliance on visual sources, such as model books and previously completed manuscripts. Although the illuminations include a marked use of gilt and are overall carefully rendered, they lack artistic originality. This may be accounted for by the high demand for illuminated vernacular romances, which resulted in the need for an increased rate of production, and which would certainly have been assisted by artistic collaboration, as well as a

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[678] See Appendix 2; Ibid, 340.
[679] Ibid, 340-1.
[680] Ibid, 340.
[681] Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven, 2001), 43.

reliance on already established imagery. The replication of visual scenes suggests that copying was often utilised due to the popularity of certain images.[682] Visual models could have included previously produced manuscripts with the same illustrative cycle, or model books containing stock scenes on which new images could be based.[683] Religious imagery could also have served as inspiration for secular illuminations. For example, the Grail liturgy scene from the Vulgate *Queste*, depicted in MS Arsenal 5218, is closely reminiscent of the quintessential image of the Last Supper (Fig. 46). Meanwhile, the Grail was commonly given the form of a liturgical chalice, as seen in MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 8). Similarly, the death of Jacob, from the Book of Genesis, could have served as a visual model for the image of the death of King Mordrain from the Vulgate *Queste*, as seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. (Fig. 43).

Carvers of Gothic ivories similarly relied on established visual tropes in an effort to speed and ease their work. For example, the scene of Tristan and Isolde on the eight extant composite romance caskets (Figs. 71-78) could have been visually inspired by images of lovers playing chess (Figs. 149 and 165), a common medieval scene that appeared in a variety of mediums, including manuscripts and ivories.[684] Furthermore, the Siege of the Castle of Love, an archetypal medieval allegory, possibly stemming from Robert Grosseteste's early thirteenth-century poem *Le Chateau d'amour*, was utilised for centuries as a visual symbol of the code of chivalry, courtship, and the idealised romantic relationship between a knight and lady.[685] This scene, which is depicted in almost identical format on the lids of the eight extant composite romance caskets (Figs. 63-70), was also rendered in manuscripts. The Peterborough Psalter, created *circa* 1299-1328, contains the earliest known manuscript illustration of the scene (Fig. 79).[686] A marginal image of the Siege also appears on folio 75v of the Luttrell Psalter, produced *circa* 1330-45 (Fig. 141).[687] As is illustrated by the inclusion of the Siege of the Castle of Love within two manuscripts, as well as on the lids of the eight composite caskets, there was a degree of continuity in the rendering of visual scenes across artistic

[682] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 168.
[683] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 96.
[684] Paula Mae Carns, 'Compilation in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum', in *Gesta* 44.2 (2005), 74.
[685] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 65; Michelle Brown, *The World of the Luttrell Psalter* (London, 2006), 84.
[686] See Appendix 2; James Robinson, *Masterpieces of Medieval Art* (London, 2008): 216.
[687] See Appendix 2; Brown, *The World of the Luttrell Psalter*, 84.

mediums. The almost identical appearance of the scene in English, religious manuscripts, and secular, French ivories also points to the sharing of visual motifs across both the geographical boundary of the English Channel, and the social boundary of the religious versus the profane. There was no reason to entirely reinvent an image once its iconography was found to be successful.

However, although the composite caskets' repetitive and almost identical subject matter does point to the use of visual models, perhaps even the referencing of a previously produced casket, there appears to have been no slavish copying, as each casket displays slight variations in its imagery. This is seen for example, in the differing compositions of the Enyas and Galahad end panels, discussed next.[688] This mix of recycled visual tropes and artistic individuality present within the caskets' imagery exemplifies what Alixe Bovey has characterised as the 'tension between active volition and passive reception in artistic creative processes.'[689] The creativity inherent in the selection, placement, and carving of images on the caskets suggests that the carvers should be treated not as mere copyists, but rather as authors imbued with artistic and narrative agency, or, as defined by Michael Baxandall, as active participants in the creative process.[690] Similarly, Jean Campbell characterises ivory carvers as 'self-conscious participants in the fabrication of courtly art.'[691] The composite caskets thus serve as evidence of the simultaneous universality and individuality of the romance scenes rendered on their panels. Although the images on the eight caskets are identical in placement and subject matter, the subtle, unique qualities of each image illustrate the creative agency of the carvers, as well as the scenes' application within a variety of visual contexts.[692]

Just as manuscript illuminations may have served as visual sources for ivory carvings of the Siege of the Castle of Love, the image of the wildman from the *Roman d'Enyas*, illustrated on four of the composite caskets (Krakow, Metropolitan, Cluny,

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[688] Randall, *Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery* (New York, 1985), 180; Alixe Bovey, 'Introduction: Influence and Illumination', in *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. by John Lowden and Alixe Bovey (Turnhout, 2007), ix.

[689] Ibid, xii.

[690] Paula Shoppe, 'Reading Romances: The Production and Reception of French Gothic Secular Ivory Caskets in the Context of Late Medieval Literary Practices', thesis (Illinois, 2000), 220; Michael Baxandall, ctd. in Bovey, 'Introduction: Influence and Illumination', viii.

[691] Jean C. Campbell, 'Courting, Harlotry, and the Art of Gothic Ivory Carving', in *Gesta* 34.1 (1995), 11.

[692] Smith, *The Power of Women*, 169.

and Bargello) in conjunction with Galahad at the Castle of Maidens from the Vulgate *Queste* (Figs. 57-60), was similarly depicted in two manuscripts. The Taymouth Hours (London, British Library, MS Yates Thompson 13) (Figs. 94-105), created in south-east England during the second quarter of the fourteenth century, and the Smithfield Decretals (London, British Library, MS Royal 10 E IV) (Figs. 89-93), created in southern France *circa* the last quarter of the thirteenth century to the first quarter of the fourteenth century, both include visual references to this little known legend.[693] The *Roman d'Enyas* tells of a knight, Enyas, who chivalrously assists a maiden by slaying a wild man, an inhuman monster attempting to abduct and rape her.[694] The inclusion of this seemingly secular scene in two dichotomous visualizations; religious manuscripts, and secular ivory caskets, can be explained by the biblical roots of the medieval conceit of the wild man. The Old Testament story of King Nebuchadnezzer tells how God punished the arrogant king by causing him to undergo a period of insanity, during which he developed beast-like characteristics. According to Alixe Bovey, 'like Nebuchadnezzer, the wild man was seen as a spiritual exile, usually the victim of his own sin.'[695] In both the Taymouth Hours and the Smithfield Decretals, the story of the wild man is told via marginal imagery, essentially serving as a moralising gloss to the religious texts. Meanwhile, on the eight composite caskets, the wild man serves as a foil to Galahad, rendering the scene an embodiment of lust juxtaposed with chastity.[696] Whereas Galahad's interactions with women are entirely chaste and chivalrous, those of the wild man are more sinister and sexual. For example, later medieval accounts of the wild man characterised him as 'sexually promiscuous and often given to abducting human females in order to satisfy his insatiable lust.'[697] On the four composite caskets, the juxtaposition of the wild man's death by Enyas, as a result of his attempted abduction of a maiden, and Galahad's selfless freeing of entrapped maidens, is an obvious commentary on the diverging paths to sin and salvation. Whereas the Taymouth Hours and the Smithfield Decretals are religious manuscripts whose marginal depictions connote secular values such as chivalry, the composite caskets are secular

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[693] David J.A. Ross, 'Allegory and Romance on a Medieval French Marriage Casket', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948), 129; Élisabeth Antoine, 'Casket: Scenes from Romances', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France*, 283.

[694] See p. 98.

[695] Alixe Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 2002), 55.

[696] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 240.

[697] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 214.

objects whose imagery can be viewed as connotations of the sacred. The manuscripts and ivories are thus united in their visual manifestations of the intertwining of the sacred and secular. As noted by Henrike Manuwald, 'ivory caskets may be viewed on par with manuscript texts as manifestations of a particular version of a story.'[698]

As mentioned in Chapter Three, in addition to the eight complete composite caskets, fragments of approximately a dozen more are also extant, suggesting the wide popularity of the composite casket, perhaps as a result of its multivalent imagery taken from a broad selection of romances.[699] The popularity and resulting repeated production of the composite caskets is further supported by the fact that OA 122 is the sole surviving casket to depict a single romance, suggesting that it was a unique commission for a specific patron.[700] Élisabeth Antoine comments that it may have been commissioned by 'an enthusiast who adored the story of Perceval or…a prince or great lord who might have made a gift of it to a young man in the occasion of his entrance into the knighthood.'[701] As discussed in Chapter Six, rather than serving as a token of courtship presented from a man to a woman, it is possible that the casket could have been commissioned to mark an important occasion in the life of a young man.[702] On the other hand, the popularity of the composite caskets suggest that they may have been mass-produced, with multiple artisans within a workshop working simultaneously, yet separately, on the panels for a single casket, which would then have been assembled upon the completion of carving. According to Keith Busby, 'decorative effect and popularity' would have been the key deciding factors when choosing specific scenes to depict on the ostensibly mass-produced composite caskets.[703] This is in accordance with the eight composite caskets' inclusion of the aforementioned scenes of Tristan and Isolde, the Siege of the Castle of Love, and Enyas and the wild man. Due to their circulation in a variety of artistic mediums, including manuscript and ivory, these scenes were easily recognisable, and thus

[698] Henrike Manuwald, 'Carving the Folie Tristan: Ivory Caskets as Material Evidence of Textual History', in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge, 2015), 216.
[699] See p. 91.
[700] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 248.
[701] Antoine, 'Casket: Four Saints and the Story of Perceval', catalogue entry, in *Imagining the Past in France*, 288.
[702] See p. 200.
[703] Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', in *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes Vol. 1*, 361.

universal, yet also imbued with multiple layers of meaning, allowing for ongoing visual interpretation by multiple generations of viewers.

Further evidence that manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers may have relied on the same visual models is found in Arthurian scenes that are similarly depicted across the two mediums. For example, both MS fr. 12577 and the eight composite caskets illustrate the aforementioned scene of Gawain's ordeal at the Castle of Marvels (Figs. 47-54 and 111), taken from Chrétien's final legend, *Le Conte du Graal*. Similarly, Musée du Louvre, OA 122, the sole surviving *Perceval* casket, and MS fr. 12577, share a visual focus on Perceval's battle with the Red Knight (Figs. 5 and 6), a scene that can be interpreted as foreshadowing Perceval's future quest for the Grail. That these two scenes were not only repeated, but that they appear in almost identical visual form in two different artistic mediums; Perceval on the left, garbed in his traditional Welsh hood, and the Red Knight on the right, his horse clothed in a caparison, lends credence to the possible circulation of visual models among artisans of both manuscripts and ivories in fourteenth-century Paris. The close proximity of not only fellow manuscript workshops, but also those of other artistic mediums, such as ivory carvers, or *ymagiers*, who were resident within the same quarter of the city, may have promoted the cross-medium exchange of artistic ideas.[704] That the stylistic development of manuscript illumination was comparable to that seen in ivory carvings further suggests the cross-medium sharing of visual models.[705]

The dissemination of visual sources among artisans of both manuscripts and ivories is paralleled by the French nobility's comprehensive interest in depictions of courtly life. In addition to her copy of *Le Conte du Graal*, Mahaut is also known to have commissioned a carved ivory mirror with courtly imagery from a certain Jean le Scelleur.[706] Considering the practical use of mirrors, to provide a reflection of the viewer, it can be posited that the inclusion of romantic, courtly imagery on such a self-referential object could have led the user/viewer to identify with popular romances such as the Arthurian legends. For example, were Mahaut's mirror case to have illustrated Tristan and Isolde's tryst, as seen on a mirror case now at the Musei Vaticani in Rome (Fig. 166), perhaps Mahaut would have identified with Isolde, an

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[704] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 57.
[705] Randall, *Medieval Ivories*, 2.
Little, 'The Art of Gothic Ivories', 24.
[706] Guérin, 'Tears of Compunction: French Gothic Ivories in Devotional Practice', 105.

Arthurian noblewoman caught in a love triangle with her husband, King Mark, and lover, Tristan.[707] Mirrors also appear in contemporaneous manuscripts, often as marginal illustrations with likely moralising meanings, such as the perils of vanity. In the late thirteenth-century Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter, on folio 9r (Fig. 167) a female grotesque adorns the bottom margin, combing her hair while observing herself in a small round mirror, much like the ivory-backed mirrors of this period.[708] Gothic ivories are also known to have been produced by Parisian workshops for members of the nobility such as Jean le Bon, Kings Charles V and Charles VI, Robert of Clermont, and the Dukes of Berry, Orléans, and Anjou.[709] Mahaut may have viewed her manuscript and mirror as two materially different, yet equatable, visual renditions of the same story.[710] The two objects are united in their role and purpose as visualisations of the initially textual Arthurian romances. The likely simultaneous ownership of Arthurian illuminated manuscripts and ivories by illustrious patrons such as Mahaut illustrates an overarching, cross-medium interest in the Arthurian legends in late medieval France, as well as the shared longevity of manuscripts and ivories, both of which continued to engage their audiences visually and narratively, long after their initial production.[711] The consistently repeated imagery of the Arthurian legends suggests that the popularity of the stories' themes transcended the initial composition of the romance texts.

7.8 Ivory Workshops

In the thirteenth-century text *Le Livre des métiers*, author Étienne Boileau notes that every ivory workshop consisted of a master, a journeyman, and an apprentice, suggesting that, as with manuscripts, many hands would have been involved in the carving of a single object.[712] According to Boileau, beginning in the thirteenth century in France, apprenticeships became the accepted form of training required to become a master artisan. Ivory carving was a complex process entailing many steps and techniques that had to be carefully learned, suggesting workshops as the ideal place

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[707] See Appendix 3.
[708] See Appendix 2.
[709] Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, 111.
[710] Manuwald, 'Carving the Folie Tristan', 216.
[711] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 22, 24.
[712] Guérin, 'An Ivory Virgin at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in a Gothic sculptor's oeuvre', in *The Burlington Magazine* 154 (2012), 400-1.

for such training to take place, where an apprentice could learn from, and even imitate, his master.[713] Indeed, apprenticeships could last several years, and involved the apprentice's close observation of and instruction by the master.[714] The apprentice would be tasked solely with simple tasks, which, in terms of ivory carving, could have included the preparation of the ivory, or the carving of simple foliate designs or background imagery. For example, Joseph Natanson has posited that the division of labour within an ivory workshop would have been based on skill and experience; the more skilled artisan would have rendered the figures, while a more junior member of the workshop would have then carved any architectural or foliate decorations.[715] Meanwhile, the journeyman, or *valet*, was responsible for making sure that the workshop observed the regulations of the guild, while the master, or *maître*, oversaw the workshop, completed the most difficult artistic tasks, and was responsible for the proper training of his lesser employees and apprentice. Boileau notes that certain workshops were tasked with the production of commercially produced objects, whereas others were responsible for the creation of bespoke objects for members of the nobility.[716]

Boileau also lists four guilds whose members were permitted to work in ivory: painters and carvers of images, sculptors and makers of crucifixes, makers of combs and lanterns, and makers of writing tablets and knife handles. The production of objects not covered by these guilds would likely have been divided among the aforementioned groups.[717] This suggests that members of multiple guilds would have been involved in the creation of Arthurian ivories, with perhaps more than one guild involved in the creation of a single object, such as an ivory casket or mirror case. For example, collaboration between the guild of painters and carvers of images and the guild of sculptors could have occurred. This could especially have been the case with ivory caskets, whose sides and lid were composed of five separate carved panels, work that could have been easily divided among several workers, possibly from

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[713] Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1994), 66.

[714] Étienne Boileau, *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris: XIIIe siècle. Le livre des métiers d' Étienne Boileau* (Paris, 1879), c.; Alexander and Binski, eds. *Age of Chivalry*, 49.

[715] Randall, *Medieval Ivories*, 20.

[716] Boileau, *Le livre des métiers d'Étienne Boileau*, xcvi, ciii.

[717] Archer St. Clair and Elizabeth P. McLachlan, *The Carver's Art: Medieval Sculpture in Ivory, Bone, and Horn* (New Brunswick, 1989), 4.

different guilds.[718] The appearance of varying carving styles on a single casket, such as is found when the lid and sides of OA 122 are compared, where the lid includes delicate architectural details such as Gothic arches and foliate designs not found on the more simply carved sides, supports the hypothesised involvement of more than one *ymagier*.[719] It appears that at least two artisans were involved in the production of OA 122, one to carve the religious imagery adorning the lid (Fig. 1), and one or more to carve the scenes from *Le Conte du Graal* that feature on the side panels (Figs. 2-5). Fourteenth-century Parisian tax records list dozens of ivory carvers, who contributed to the existence of organised guilds.[720] These carvers would have been divided into workshops not on the basis of skill, but rather on the size and type of ivory products that they produced. It is likely that ivory carvers would also have worked in other mediums, such as wood, stone, and bone. Boileau identifies two guilds of small-scale sculptors, the *ymagiers tailleurs* and the *paintres et tailleurs d'images,* both of which were authorised to work in a variety of materials, including ivory.[721] Boileau also mentions an additional three guilds whose members produced ivory crucifixes, combs, knife handles, and writing tablets.[722] Whether guilds existed for manuscript artisans at this period is unknown. It is possible that a more generalised guild for image-makers or colourists, whose members could have included both ivory carvers and manuscript illuminators, may have existed. This is suggested by the fact that not all carved ivory objects, such as caskets and mirror cases, were included in the aforementioned sculpture guilds.[723] The possible existence of such an all-encompassing guild suggests yet another cross-medium association between manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers.

Thus, the Arthurian composite caskets, created *circa* 1300-50, were likely produced by either multiple artisans within a single workshop, or several collaborating workshops. According to Randall, the panels that make up secular ivory caskets 'follow to a certain extent the developments in book illumination in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but with the advantages of illusion that relief

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[718] Carns, 'A Curious Collection in Ivory: The Lord Gort Casket', in *Collections in Context: The Organisation of Knowledge and Community in Europe*, ed. by Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman (Columbus, 2011), 263.
[719] Ibid, 263-4.
[720] Randall, 'The Medieval Artist and Industrialised Art', 441.
[721] Guérin, 'An Ivory Virgin at the Metropolitan Museum', 400-1.
[722] St. Clair and McLachlan, *The Carver's Art*, 4.
[723] Ibid, 4.

sculpture has over a flat surface.'[724] Clay models of individual casket panels, or casts of already extant ivories are two more possible iconographic sources for ivory carvers, and may have been used in the creation of the composite caskets, as such models could have been easily distributed among multiple workshops in order to facilitate the near identical production of a large number of caskets.[725] This is, however, mere scholarly speculation, as there are no known extant models.[726] As in the case of OA 122, the technique of shared production was likely used during their creation, as the caskets' lids and side panels consist of distinct vignettes that could have been carved individually by several artisans, and then assembled. This is supported by the fact that OA 122's Christian-themed lid is not an anomaly; rather, it can be seen to refer to Perceval's progression towards Christian piety and enlightenment, drawing a connection between the secular themes of the side panels, and thematically sacred lid. Considering that on spec production was typical of the fourteenth-century ivory market, it is probable that the composite caskets were mass-produced, with each *ymagier* tasked with the carving of a specific panel or scene.[727] According to Cutler, 'their makers seem to have carved them with an eye on broadly held preferences, tastes that expressed themselves in the marketplace.' Although Cutler is speaking in reference to Byzantine ivories, this statement can also be applied to those produced in fourteenth-century France, when, as noted previously, there was a large demand for carved ivories, which necessitated an increase in production.

7.9 Producing Sacred and Secular Ivories

Likewise, when each composite casket is considered as a single composition, the seemingly independent scenes are united through their shared references to the medieval tropes of chivalry, romantic love, and Christian morality. The term *compilatio*, commonly used to describe late medieval manuscripts that consist of a collection of various texts, can thus also be used to describe the composite romance caskets.[728] Just as manuscripts such as MSS fr. 12577 and Rawlinson Q.b.6. consist of several Arthurian romances bound into a single codex, the composite caskets function in a similar manner, serving as three-dimensional compilations of French Arthurian

[724] Randall, *Medieval Ivories*, 2.
[725] Manuwald, 'Carving the Folie Tristan', 230.
[726] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 58.
[727] Guérin, 'Tears of Compunction', 109.
[728] Shoppe, 'Reading Romances', 218.

romances, their imagery highlighting what were perhaps some of the most visually popular events and themes. As Paula Shoppe notes, 'familiarity with anthologies…would predispose the casket's beholders to read the carvings like a textual compilation.'[729] The late medieval popularity of written *compendia* may have inspired the carvers or planners of the composite caskets to apply this typically literary technique to a three dimensional object.

The *ymagiers* who created secular ivories such as the Arthurian caskets would likely have also carved devotional ivories with Christian narrative scenes, such as the Annunciation, the Crucifixion, and the death of Judas.[730] This is evidenced by the fact that early fourteenth-century secular ivories were carved in the same detailed relief style used for sacred ivories. This style of carving dates to the thirteenth century, when it was commonly used in the creation of diptychs and triptychs focussing on the lives of Christ and the Virgin.[731] Such ivories, as well as small devotional statues of the Virgin and infant Christ, were produced in both Paris and Amiens, *circa* 1210-40, recollecting the simultaneous status of Amiens as a centre of manuscript production in the thirteenth century.[732] Fourteenth-century ivory carvers' visual reliance on religious ivories from the previous century recalls the use of religious models for Arthurian manuscript illuminations, and illustrates the overlapping of the sacred and secular in regard to the production of Gothic ivories; a form of collaboration that, like that which existed between manuscripts and ivories, transcended established boundaries. As Michael Camille aptly noted, 'knowledge of signs both sacred and profane is essential to the proper appreciation of the *sens* of the ivory.'[733] Similarly, manuscript illuminators of secular texts such as the Arthurian legends would also have been involved in the decoration of devotional and liturgical texts.[734] The close relationship between sacred and secular texts is exemplified by the four-panel frontispiece of MS fr. 12577 (Fig. 6), as the division of a single large introductory miniature into multiple registers is an artistic technique likely derived from the

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[729] Ibid, 219.

[730] Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 20; Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 310-11; Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 70.

[731] Ibid, 64.

[732] D. Sandron, 'La Sculpture en ivoire au début du XIIIe siècle: d'un monde à l'autre', in *Revue de l'Art* 102 (1993), 50.

[733] Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 313.

[734] Hedeman, 'Gothic Manuscript Illumination: The Case of France', in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 427.

decoration of psalters, in which full page miniatures were often sub-divided into individual scenes.[735] This crossover of artistic technique personifies the intertwining of the sacred and secular in late medieval art.[736]

7.10 The Question of Polychromy

The eight composite caskets exhibit a marked lack of polychromy. However, it must be kept in mind that the presence of dirt can make it difficult to properly assess the surface of a carved ivory. Regardless, the most recent conservation studies of ivories such as the composite casket at the Victoria & Albert Museum present no lingering evidence of pigment. Similarly, records of the Musée de Cluny composite casket state that there are no visible traces of polychromy or gilding, even when the casket is viewed under a magnifying glass.[737] This lack of colour on the caskets is puzzling, considering that religious ivories, such as statuettes of the Virgin and Child, were often painted. Perhaps the Arthurian caskets were not painted because of their ostensibly secular nature, or because of the large amount of handling they were expected to undergo, as three-dimensional, narrative objects. However, that some secular ivory caskets were painted is suggested by the remnants of gilt on British Museum, Dalton 367 (Fig. 156-157), an ivory casket depicting *Le Châtelaine de Vergi*. There appears to have been gilt outlining the figures' apparel, as well as the subtle application of some colour; polychromy mirroring that found on thirteenth-century Virgin and Child statuettes, such as the Virgin of the Sainte Chapelle, now at the Musée du Louvre (Fig. 168).[738] In cases such as the aforementioned statuette and the *Châtelaine de Vergi* casket, the subtle application of polychromy was used to enhance the already precious nature of the ivory, while refraining from obscuring its naturally lustrous patina.[739] In keeping with this, the *Perceval* casket, OA 122, exhibits traces of polychromy. For example, there appear to be traces of black and

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[735] Stones, 'Secular Manuscript Illumination in France', 94.

[736] Stones, 'Sacred and Profane Art: Secular and Liturgical Book Illumination in the Thirteenth Century', in *The Epic in Medieval Society, Aesthetic and Moral Values*, ed. by Harold Scholler (Tübingen, 1977), 109.

[737] 'Paris, Musée de Cluny- Musée national du Moyen Âge', 'Gothic Ivories Project', The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, http://gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/B4ACC9EF_62ff93be.html, accessed 23 April, 2016.

[738] Gross, 'La Chastelaine de Vergi Carved in Ivory', 316.

[739] D. Sandron, 'La Sculpture en ivoire au début du XIIIe siècle: d'un monde à l'autre', 54.

possibly yellow pigment on the saints' beards on the lid of the casket (Fig. 1). Perhaps the *Perceval* casket, as a one-off, special commission for a likely prestigious patron, was painted, while the composite caskets, likely produced on-spec, were not.

The image in the Lambeth Apocalypse (*circa* 1252-67) (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 209) of a monk applying colour to an ivory statue of the Virgin and Child (Fig. 169) can perhaps be seen to provide evidence of the cross-medium work of medieval colourists, whose work, like that of the *ymagiers*, may have transcended boundaries of physical materials. The inclusion of such an image in a religious manuscript, paired with the inscription at the top of the folio, which reads '*memento mei arnica dei*', or 'beloved of God, remember me', suggests that the monk pictured was responsible for both illuminating the Lambeth Apocalypse and for painting the ivory statuette depicted. If this was indeed the case, it can be hypothesised that manuscript illuminators were sometimes responsible for the coloration of art objects of varying mediums, including carved ivories. Thus, it may not be too much of a reach to suggest that fourteenth-century Paris-based illuminators, such as those involved in the creation of MS fr. 12577, may have been involved in the application of colour to Paris-produced ivory caskets such as OA 122, on which traces of polychromy are faintly visible. This theory is further supported by the aforementioned close proximity of manuscript and ivory workshops on the Île de la Cité, as well as the possible sharing of visual models across the two mediums. It seems unlikely that manuscript and ivory artisans working within such a proscribed area would have had little to no interaction with one another, especially when they often dealt with the same or similar sacred and secular topics. Certainly, the repetition of certain Arthurian scenes across two unique artistic mediums, such as Perceval's joust with the Red Knight, the quest for the Grail, and the tryst of Tristan and Isolde suggests if not outright communication, then a continuity of visual tropes between manuscript and ivory artisans.

7.11 The Continuity of Gothic Ivories

The nineteenth-century reuse of an ivory casket panel as decoration for the cover of a book (Fig. 152) further exemplifies the continuation of the porous boundary that existed between the artistic mediums of manuscript and ivory in the late Middle Ages. The nineteenth-century, cross-medium cover of London, British Library, MS

Additional 36615, protects a fourteenth-century manuscript of *Le Chevalier au Cygne* by Godefroy de Boulogne.[740] It should be noted that although this cover is a nineteenth-century creation, ivories were used as books covers during the early Middle Ages.[741] The cover of MS Additional 36615 includes a panel (one of the aforementioned approximately twelve extant fragments) from what was likely a composite romance casket. The panel depicts Lancelot crossing the Sword Bridge, and Gawain at the Castle of Marvels, and is visually concurrent with the back panel of the eight extant complete composite romance caskets. As discussed earlier, the existence of this panel suggests that there were originally more than eight composite caskets, lending support to the theory of mass production as a result of the caskets' widespread popularity.[742] In addition, the reuse of the ivory panel illustrates the continuity and wide range of interpretations that the ivories' visual universality allowed for. Here the panel is used in a general manner to reference medieval knighthood.

Whereas the fourteenth-century style of commercial manuscript production continued well into the fifteenth century, the production of carved ivories was already beginning to slow by the mid-fourteenth century. Both the Hundred Years War and the Black Death likely contributed to the decline in quality and the production rate of French ivories in the second-half of the fourteenth century.[743] However, the fast decline of secular ivory carving was also brought about by the lessening availability of ivory, and a lack of stylistic innovation after the mid-fourteenth century, which endowed later carvings with a dated and conservative air.[744] As noted by Randall, 'the style remained largely static after the great shops developed, so the art of the ivory carver seems somewhat conservative and repetitive by the middle of the fourteenth century.'[745] Joseph Natanson similarly notes that the 'art of ivory carving naturally progressed towards mannerism and preciousness' as a result of the constraints of size and material.[746] In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, as the Parisian

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[740] See Appendix 3.
[741] "The Art of the Book in the Middle Ages", in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/book/hd_book.htm, accessed 19 March, 2017.
[742] See p. 91.
[743] Randall, *Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery*, 187.
[744] Randall, *Medieval Ivories*, 2.
[745] Ibid, 2.
[746] Natanson, *Gothic Ivories of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 6.

production of Gothic ivories slowed, the centre of ivory trade and production moved to Flanders and the Netherlands, where new commercial centres were developing. The ivories produced in these more northern European cities were of a solely religious nature, harkening back to thirteenth-century French ivory production.[747]

7.12 Concluding Thoughts

Illuminated manuscripts and ivories exemplify the overall international dissemination of the visual arts in the late Middle Ages. Although Paris was not the only centre of French production, with smaller cities such as Amiens also serving as key players, the high quality objects of material culture, such as manuscripts and ivories created in Paris, were disseminated both across and outside of France. The simultaneous rise in popularity of illuminated romances and secular carved ivories at the beginning of the fourteenth century, combined with Paris' growing role as the centre of artistic production in northern France, gave rise to collaboration both within and across the orbits of manuscript and ivory artisans. Although these artisans worked with essentially different materials, their production processes and final products exhibit a great number of similarities, indicating ties between these two seemingly divergent areas of medieval craftsmanship. The close proximity of manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers along the Rue neuve Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité encouraged artistic collaboration through the sharing of both visual sources and techniques, resulting in lavish visualisations of the Arthurian legends in both manuscript and ivory. These two physically different, yet visually similar, objects of late medieval material culture were thus connected through the shared goal of visually narrating the Arthurian romances.

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[747] Randall, 'Popular Romances Carved in Ivory', 78.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore whether Chrétien de Troyes' final Arthurian legend, *Le Conte du Graal*, and the anonymous Vulgate legend *La Queste del saint Graal* personify the 'cross-fertilisation' of the sacred and secular in late medieval French visual culture in particular, and in French courtly culture and society in general. Central questions have included: what can the visual connections between the sacred and secular tell us about how the Arthurian legends were viewed by late medieval French audiences? Can a unified definition of Christian knighthood, chivalry, and morality be articulated from these images? And finally, were such visualisations of the Arthurian legends in manuscript and ivory viewed by late medieval audiences as sources of both religious information and profane entertainment? By engaging with these questions, I have aimed to create a picture of the purpose and intent, as well as the cultural and social value, of visual renditions of the Arthurian legends in late medieval France.

I. Reflections

In fourteenth-century France, the Arthurian legends were viewed and utilised not only as secular, entertaining stories, but also as sacred, moralising commentaries on everyday life. A tangible intertwining of the theoretically opposed sacred and secular spheres is evident within late medieval Arthurian imagery. This is in accordance with Malcolm Vale's statement that, 'the later Middle Ages have sometimes been portrayed as a period which saw the increasing secularisation of the sacred. But they may also be seen as one which witnessed the increasing sacralisation of the secular.'[748] Fourteenth-century French Arthurian manuscripts and ivories served as visual exemplars of the late medieval melding of the sacred and secular, illustrating the ongoing Christianisation of secular life. The melding of the sacred and secular in Arthurian illustrations often took place under the guise of the reuse of the visually traditional. Quintessential religious scenes such as the Last Supper and Christ's arrival in Jerusalem were used as templates for ostensibly secular Arthurian scenes; the Grail procession and Galahad's arrival at the Castle of Maidens, respectively. A

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[748] Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380* (Oxford, 2001), 300.

symbiotic relationship existed between the sacred and secular, allowing for these two seemingly oppositional concepts to elide and influence one another.[749] Indeed, the sacred and secular can be understood to have existed at the two ends of a spectrum; all aspects of medieval society and culture could be found on this spectrum, and thus, to differing degrees, were composed of both the sacred and the secular. In the late Middle Ages, the sacred and secular were endowed with seemingly equal importance and relevance. It was impossible to fully separate the two concepts from one another, as Christianity was all-pervasive. A Christian world-view did not allow for the existence of an entirely secular sphere; for example, the lives of laymen were greatly impacted by the Sacraments, such as the Eucharist, as is both textually and visually described through the trope of the Holy Grail in fourteenth-century manuscripts of the Arthurian Vulgate legend *La Queste del saint Graal*. Nothing was purely sacred or secular, as shown by the opposing themes of secular chivalry and Christianity that are at the heart of Arthurian romances, especially Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* and the anonymous Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*. The juxtaposition of opposing moral themes with both profane and religious figures is integral to the visual programmes of the illuminated manuscripts and ivory caskets examined in this thesis, illustrating their role as tactile, artistic commentaries on the duality of fourteenth-century French culture and society.

I.I The Grail

Although the late twelfth-century text of *Le Conte du Graal* does not specifically refer to the Grail as a Christian object, by the fourteenth century, Robert de Boron's essentially Christian interpretation of the Grail was so entrenched within Arthurian literary history as to be the basis for the accepted visual rendering of the Grail in copies of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*. Despite the fact that the dichotomy of the Grail in text and image may appear to suggest a lack of textual comprehension or technical care on the part of the artist, it can in fact be viewed as exemplary of the artists' cognisance of the manner in which Christianity was woven into both sacred and secular contemporary culture. The complex nature of the decisions involved during the artistic production of the images

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[749] Ibid, 165.

should not be discounted.[750] It is the Grail's essentially abstract nature, as an intangible symbol of Christian devotion, which accounts for its varying definitions and depictions, even within a confined place and time period, such as that covered within this thesis; northern France in the first half of the fourteenth century. Late medieval Grail imagery encompassed a wider *oeuvre* than has been posited by past scholars. As discussed in this thesis, illustrations of King Arthur's cup in both manuscript and ivory foreshadow Perceval's quest for the Grail and his future Christian conversion, while manuscript miniatures, which disparately imagine the Grail as a pyx, chalice, and ciborium, serve to elucidate its multiplicity of tangible forms. That contemporary readers and viewers would likely have recognised the Grail in such a diverse assemblage of visualisations lends credence to the Grail's preeminent role as an abstract symbol of Christian spirituality, a symbol that does not rely on a standard visual form, and that requires a specified level of religious and literary knowledge in order for readers and viewers to fully comprehend it. At once symbolic of quintessential, secular Arthurian chivalry through its role in the ultimate Quest, and of Christian devotion due to its Eucharistic connotations, at its essence, the Grail is an enduring and multivalent symbol of change and continuity, the sacred and the secular.

I.II The Manuscripts

What the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century texts of *Le Conte du Graal* and *La Queste del saint Graal*, and their fourteenth-century visual manifestations thus have in common is a shared Christian focus, a focus which reflects current cultural trends of Christian beliefs and practices. Like the text of *Queste*, which is characterised by narrative *entrelacement*, the pictorial cycles of the selected *Queste* manuscripts (MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218) are created from intertwining visual elements, seemingly dichotomous aspects that when united, form a single, multivalent entity with both secular and sacred connotations. Based on the complex nature of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6.'s, Arsenal 3482's, and Arsenal 5218's pictorial cycles, I have posited that the illuminators of these three manuscripts did, to an extent, strive to emphasise the essentially religious nature of *Queste*, the most religiously

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[750] Alison Stones, 'Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts', in *The Grail: A Casebook*, ed. by Dhira Mahoney (New York, 2000), 336.

rooted of all the French Arthurian legends. As Richard Barber has noted, *La Queste del saint Graal* contains 'a deliberate attempt to bend the power of chivalry to new ends, the Church's ends.'[751] Just as the style and iconography of each manuscript varies, so does the degree to which the illuminator incorporated Christian ideology into each manuscript's outwardly secular imagery. For example, although MS Arsenal 5218 has the fewest images of the three selected *Queste* manuscripts, its three miniatures form a visual progression from the secular to the wholly sacred, culminating with a Grail liturgy scene that is visually reminiscent of the Last Supper. The varying degree and use of religious visual metaphors within the three selected *Queste* manuscripts characterises the dynamic visual role of the sacred within the realms of secular Arthurian romance, illustrating that such Christian-minded artistic visualisations can, and should, be considered a defining element of early fourteenth-century French *Queste* imagery.

The culture of vernacular manuscripts in fourteenth-century France was defined by the continuity of previously popular secular texts (such as the Arthurian legends) as well as the common reading techniques of oral dissemination and aural reception. The continued existence and popularity of these vernacular manuscripts assisted in the rendering of illuminated manuscripts as active artefacts; they served not only as visually focussed *objets d'art*, but also as active beings of social, cultural, and religious import, conveying a multiplicity of meanings and issues, both laical and religious, to their contemporary audiences, thereby highlighting the connection between ostensibly secular manuscripts, and their often Christian-focussed connotations. In the late Middle Ages, the very act of reading was a complex, multivalent, and socially imbued activity, an activity with the power to engender within its readers a variety of thoughts and emotions, at once equally as complex in meaning and use as were the multilayered Arthurian legends that were rendered in textual and visual form in early fourteenth-century manuscripts.

I.III The Ivory Caskets

Rather than acting as a mere superficial illustration of romantic love, the intended visual purpose of the ivory caskets range from tokens of secular *amour*, to visual exemplars of Christian values, such as chastity and piety, illustrating the multivalent

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[751] Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (New York, 1970), 125.

and cross-cultural use of the ivories as objects of medieval visual culture. The multiplicity of ways in which medieval ivories were both viewed and used was dependent on a complex network of factors, which included cultural context: the ivory's material role as a functional object or a visually pleasing *objet d'art*; the gender, wealth, social status, and Christian knowledge of the ivory's owner: encompassing issues such as the commissioning, purchasing/giving of the ivory, as well as its display and practical use, and the production of the ivory: how the carvers' technical skill and personal literary and religious knowledge would have shaped medieval viewers' understanding and visual experience of the completed object. During the creation of the ivory caskets, factors such as the artists' training and reliance on visual models were juxtaposed against the artists' ostensible lack of engagement with the textually based subject matter, suggesting that the artisans were largely unfamiliar with the Arthurian legends, or more likely, simply prioritised a pleasing visual composition over textual accuracy. Visual models served a primary role, as seen in the repetition of both visual themes and iconography among the eight composite caskets, which suggests that the artists were largely reliant on previously produced caskets and/or model books to guide their work, although instances of artistic individuality and creativity are also evident in varying details among the caskets, such as the slightly differing compositions of the Siege of the Castle of Love on the lids of the eight composite caskets.

Examining the eight composite romance caskets and the sole *Perceval* casket, it is clear that their imagery functions as complex, diverse narratives that can be simultaneously understood as visual exemplars of both sacred and secular themes. The juxtaposition of opposing moral themes with both profane and religious figures is at the heart of the caskets' visual programmes, illustrating their role as tactile, visual commentaries on the duality of fourteenth-century French culture and society. This coeval illustration of opposing concepts describes the medieval preoccupation with duality and opposition, a theme that is personified through the contradicting personalities of Lancelot and Gawain; Galahad and Enyas, as well as the simultaneously secular and sacred connotations of the caskets' Arthurian scenes. The caskets' juxtaposition of the secular and sacred can be further seen to imply the necessity of both ends of the spectrum, religious and profane, elucidating the lack of a definitive distinction between these two seemingly dichotomous areas in fourteenth-century France.

The caskets' wide range of imagery, encompassing customary medieval visual tropes such as the maiden and unicorn, the *Roman d'Enyas*, and the Siege of the Castle of Love, as well as quintessential Arthurian scenes from both the legends of Chrétien de Troyes and the Vulgate Cycle, and even religious imagery (the four saints adorning the lid of the Perceval casket), speaks to the ivories' ability to function both as objects of visual pleasure, and as visualisations of literary and moralising narratives. The visual complexity of the caskets should not be underestimated. The ivories' ability to function within the seemingly opposing, yet in actuality overlapping, realms of the sacred and profane, the Christian and Arthurian, the romantic and didactic, speaks to the multi-layered visual nature of fourteenth-century French ivories specifically, and of medieval material culture more generally. For example, Beth Williamson correctly notes the importance of considering the 'conjunctions of medieval Christianity and material culture.'[752] It is important to recognise the manuscripts and ivories not only as *objets d'art*, but also as social artefacts. Both manuscripts and ivories were tangible symbols of aristocratic culture and social status.[753] Social interactions could arise as a result of engagement with manuscripts and ivories.[754] The ivories' ability to transcend such seemingly diverse, even contrary, visual themes and categorisations speaks to the ability of medieval viewers to acknowledge and consider multiple connotations of the ivories' images, a skill that is applicable to other mediums of medieval visual culture, such as illuminated manuscripts.

The divide between the sacred and the secular was less clearly defined in the late Middle Ages than it is in today's world. The two spheres were viewed as constantly overlapping and intertwining, as evidenced by the eight composite caskets' visual programmes, in which the secular and sacred are consistently integrated with one another; the sins of Enyas and the wodehouse mitigated by Galahad's charity and divinity, Gawain's adamant refusal of Christianity tempered by Lancelot's pious intentions. Furthermore, although the visual programmes of the eight composite caskets do include imagery that is extrinsically religious, comparable to the wholly

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[752] Beth Williamson, 'Material Culture and Medieval Christianity', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. by John H. Arnold (Oxford, 2014), 62.
[753] Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2000), 11.
[754] Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith, eds. *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013), 2.

Christian lid of Musée du Louvre, OA 122, the romantic, profane scenes selected for illustration can similarly be interpreted as personifications of the sacred, as seen in the visual connection between the key held by the maiden on the right side of the British Museum casket's lid, and the corresponding key held by the monk on the right end panel, situated directly below the maiden depicted on the lid. Despite the composite caskets' initially secular appearance, exemplified by the romantic and allegorical Siege of the Castle of Love, close visual analysis of the Arthurian scenes on the caskets' side panels reveals coeval religious and profane visual connotations. Just as the illuminations in the selected Arthurian manuscripts can be understood at a multiplicity of visual and textual levels, dependent on a plethora of cultural factors, such as the readers' gender, level of literacy, and textual familiarity, so too can the eight composite caskets similarly be multivalently understood, as objects of medieval visual culture that can be 'read' and endowed with opposing, yet coexisting, interpretations, both religious and profane. Thus, the dual purposes of the caskets' imagery are visually intertwined.

I.IV Manuscript and Ivory Production

Distinct iconographic similarities exist between the Arthurian imagery found in fourteenth-century manuscripts and on contemporaneous carved ivory caskets. Such similarities are exemplary of cross-medium shared artistic influences and methods of production. The various interpretations of *Le Conte du Graal* as visualised in the miniatures of MSS fr. 1453, fr. 12576, and fr. 12577, and the carvings of OA 122, are exemplary of the wide-ranging role and definition of reading in the late Middle Ages, suggesting the possibilities and problems inherent to the process of translation from textual to visual, such as the emphasis of certain scenes or aspects of the story, and the visual form that objects, such as the Grail, variously take. Artistic decisions can be seen to have ultimately shaped the way in which the objects' fourteenth-century audiences reacted to and envisioned the story being told, ostensibly to fit within their personal world-views. As Keith Busby aptly notes, the common lack of correspondence between text and image as seen in both OA 122 and MS fr. 12577 suggests that medieval audiences often strove for a general, rather than specific, understanding of stories, and so did not rely upon the close comparison of text and

image in their 'reading' processes, much like the artisans of the ivory caskets' focus on visual fluidity at the expense of textual accuracy.[755]

Illuminated manuscripts and ivories exemplify the overall international dissemination of the visual arts in the late Middle Ages.[756] Illuminated manuscripts and carved ivories are two examples of high quality objects of material culture that were created in Paris and then disseminated both across and beyond France. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the growing role of Paris as the centre of northern French artistic production paired with the sudden increase in popularity of secular carved ivories and illuminated romance manuscripts resulted in the beginnings of artistic collaboration within and across the orbits of manuscript and ivory artisans. Although these artisans worked with essentially different materials, their production processes and final products exhibit a great number of similarities, creating ties between these two seemingly divergent areas of medieval craftsmanship. The close proximity of manuscript illuminators and ivory carvers along the Rue neuve Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité further encouraged artistic collaboration through the sharing of both visual sources and techniques, resulting in lavish visualisations of the Arthurian legends in both manuscript and ivory. These two physically different, albeit visually similar, objects of late medieval, material culture were therefore connected through the shared purpose of visually narrating the Arthurian romances.

II. Suggestions for Future Research

Although this thesis has focussed solely on Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal*, contemporaneous fourteenth-century renditions of Chrétien's other tales and the remaining Vulgate legends exist, providing a clear next step for further research. Similarly, the four *Perceval* continuations, which are commonly included in *Le Conte du Graal* manuscripts, also deserve further study, especially in terms of how openly Christian their texts and illustrations are in comparison to that of Chrétien's final legend. Many of these aforementioned legends appear in my selected manuscripts, such as the Vulgate *Lancelot* and *Mort Artu*, which are included in both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6., and Arsenal 3482, and three of the

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[755] Keith Busby, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Chrétien's Perceval', *in The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. 1*, ed. by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters (Amsterdam, 1993), 362.

[756] Charles T. Little, 'The Art of Gothic Ivories: Studies at the Crossroads', in *Sculpture Journal* 23.1 (2014), 25.

four *Perceval* continuations, those by Gauchier, Manessier, and Montreuil, accompanied by substantial miniature cycles, which appear in MSS fr. 12576 and fr. 12577. In addition, MS Arsenal 3482 curiously includes an incomplete version of the Vulgate *Agravain*. It is worth examining the illuminations of these other Vulgate legends in a manner similar to that utilised in this thesis, considering their iconography, production, audiences, and ownership, especially in relation to the adjacent texts in each manuscript. Such research will help to provide a more complete picture of these under-studied manuscripts, allowing for their place in the canon of late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts to be better understood.

Other avenues for future work include a wider-ranging investigation of fourteenth-century romantic ivories. For example, mirror cases, of which a great number are extant, were commonly carved with scenes of medieval courtship, such as the Siege of the Castle of Love, or a pair of lovers hawking or playing chess. Due to the constraints of this thesis, I was unable to include more than passing references to such ivories. There is, however, great scope for research into the function, ownership, and intended cultural meaning of these items of personal luxury. Considering my overarching theory of the constant intertwining of the sacred and secular in late medieval culture, it is worth considering whether such mirror cases, with their imagery of courtly love, were intended to have wholly secular visual connotations. Michael Camille noted the similarities between medieval Christianity and courtly love and life; both were highly ritualised experiences, dependent on distinct sets of values and prescribed actions.[757] Future research could consider visual links between courtly love and religion, as seen in fourteenth-century ivory mirror cases and contemporaneous religious manuscripts, such as psalters and Books of Hours, thereby expanding this cross-medium study of late medieval French manuscripts and ivories.

In addition, the question of whether there was originally polychromy on the eight composite ivory caskets and the *Perceval* casket has proved contentious, and deserves further research. It is as yet unclear whether polychromy was used solely on religious ivories, or also on secular, romance themed ivories, such as those focussed on in this thesis. Close visual analysis of the nine selected ivory caskets suggests that in general, they were not adorned with gilt or pigment. This does not, however, preclude the use of polychromy on secular ivories as a whole. For example, the

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[757] Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 308.

possibility of polychromy on the aforementioned romance-themed ivory mirror cases has yet to be considered.

Relatedly, the general lack of information on the practices of late medieval ivory workshops suggests another, albeit perhaps more difficult, route to further study. Little is known regarding the division of labour within ivory workshops, as well as the possibility of artistic collaboration both within and across workshops. In this thesis I have posited general links of production between manuscripts and ivories due to similarities of iconography, and the close proximity of manuscript and ivory workshops in medieval Paris. Although primary sources are scant, the next step in this area of inquiry may be to consider the division of labour during the production of individual ivories. For example, did a master carver render the figures, while apprentices or less-skilled workers supplied the foliage and background decoration? Who was responsible for preparing the ivory to be carved, processing it from curved tusk to smooth panel?

On a broader level, I hope that this thesis will serve as a springboard for further questions and research regarding the overall visual intertwining of the sacred and secular in late medieval France. There is still ample room for cross-medium research into the complex, multi-layered roles of objects of late medieval French material culture, including, but not limited to, manuscripts and ivories. As Michael Camille so astutely notes, 'images, art historians have realised in recent years, are not static representations of a pre-existing reality. They partake in that reality and often help construct it.'[758] The cross-disciplinary and cross-medium consideration of objects of medieval visual culture can help to provide a better understanding of life in late medieval France, a period in history during which tactile artistic creations such as manuscripts and ivories inhabited complex social and cultural roles, and visually elucidated the coexistence of the sacred and secular.

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[758] Camille, 'At the Sign of the 'Spinning Sow': the 'other' Chartres and images of everyday life of the medieval street', in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, ed. by Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (Turnout, 2003), 271.