ARTHURIAN LITERATURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Arthur *of the* French

The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature

edited by

Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt

THE ARTHUR

OF THE FRENCH

This page intentionally left blank

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

IV

THE ARTHUR OF THE FRENCH

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND IN MEDIEVAL FRENCH AND OCCITAN LITERATURE

edited by

Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS
2006

First published in hardback in 2006 by the University of Wales Press.

First published in paperback in 2009 by the University of Wales Press.

www.uwp.co.uk

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-7083-2196-6

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

PUBLISHED IN COOPERATION WITH

THE VINAVER TRUST

The Vinaver Trust was established by the British Branch of the International Arthurian Society to commemorate a greatly respected colleague and a distinguished scholar

Eugène Vinaver

the editor of Malory's Morte Darthur. *The Trust aims to advance study of Arthurian literature in all languages by planning and encouraging research projects in the field, and by aiding publication of the resultant studies.*

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Series Editor

Ad Putter

I **The Arthur of the Welsh**
Edited by Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman *and* Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff, 1991)

II **The Arthur of the English**
Edited by W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff, 1999)

III **The Arthur of the Germans**
Edited by W. H. Jackson *and* S. A. Ranawake (Cardiff, 2000)

IV **The Arthur of the French**
Edited by Glyn S. Burgess *and* Karen Pratt (Cardiff, 2006)

Further volumes in preparation

The ALMA series is a cooperation between
the University of Wales Press and the Vinaver Trust

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Ad Putter

This book is the fourth volume in the series Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages. The purpose of the series is to provide a comprehensive and reliable survey of Arthurian writings in all their cultural and generic variety. For some time, the single-volume *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* edited by R. S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959) served the needs of students and scholars of Arthurian literature admirably, but it has now been overtaken by advances in scholarship and by changes in critical perspectives and methodologies. The Vinaver Trust recognized the need for a fresh and up-to-date survey, and that several volumes were required to do justice to the distinctive contributions made to Arthurian literature by the various cultures of medieval Europe. The basis for this volume and its predecessors in the series is cultural rather than national. *The Arthur of the French* is primarily devoted to medieval Arthurian texts in French and Occitan, composed across a wide geographical area, though it also takes account of their historical, cultural and manuscript contexts, their afterlife in later periods, and of the formative influences by and on texts from extraneous cultures.

The series is mainly aimed at undergraduate and postgraduate students and at scholars working in the fields covered by each of the volumes. They have, however, also been written to be accessible to students and scholars from different fields, who want or need to learn what forms Arthurian narratives took in languages and literatures that they may not know, and how those narratives influenced the cultures they do know. Within these parameters the editors have had control over the shape and content of their individual volumes.

The mastermind behind this series was Ray Barron, who died without being able to see this latest instalment, *The Arthur of the French*, in its final form. This book is dedicated to his memory.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

PFA	Peter F. Ainsworth (University of Sheffield)
†EB	Emmanuèle Baumgartner (formerly Université de Paris III – Sorbonne nouvelle)
FB	Fanni Bogdanow (formerly University of Manchester)
GB	Geoffrey Bromiley (University of Durham)
GSB	Glyn S. Burgess (University of Liverpool)
KB	Keith Busby (University of Wisconsin)
LCB	Leslie C. Brook (University of Birmingham)
MTB	Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner (Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA)
AC	Annie Combes (Université de Nantes)
FC	Fabrizio Cigni (Università di Pisa)
PDG	Peter Damian-Grint (University of Oxford)
PE	Penny Eley (University of Sheffield)
JTG	Joan Tasker Grimbert (Catholic University of America)
SG	Simon Gaunt (King's College London)
RH	Ruth Harvey (Royal Holloway, University of London)
TH	Tony Hunt (University of Oxford)
DK	Douglas Kelly (formerly University of Wisconsin)
EDK	Edward Donald Kennedy (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
†EK	Elspeth Kennedy (formerly University of Oxford)
WWK	William W. Kibler (University of Texas)
NJL	Norris J. Lacy (Pennsylvania State University)
FLS	Françoise Le Saux (University of Reading)
RM	Roger Middleton (University of Nottingham)
†DDRO	D. D. R. Owen (formerly University of St Andrews)
KP	Karen Pratt (King's College London)
RTP	Rupert T. Pickens (University of Kentucky)
PVR	Paul V. Rockwell (Amherst College, MA)
MS	Michelle Szkilnik (Université de Paris III – Sorbonne nouvelle)
PS	Penny Simons (University of Sheffield)
JHMT	Jane H.M. Taylor (University of Durham)
RT	Richard Trachsler (Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne)
CVCS	Colette Van Coolput-Storms (Université Catholique de Louvain–la–Neuve)
AMLW	Andrea M. L. Williams (University of Sydney)
LJW	Lori J. Walters (Florida State University, Tallahassee)

ABBREVIATIONS

AfdA	*Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum*
AL	*Arthurian Literature*
AnFil	*Anuari de Filología*
Annales	*Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*
Ann. Bret	*Annales de Bretagne*
ANS	*Anglo-Norman Studies*
ANTS	*Anglo-Norman Text Society*
AUMLA	*Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*
AY	*Arthurian Yearbook*
BBIAS	*Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*
BEC	*Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BL	British Library
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BSCC	*Boletín de la Sociedad de Castellonense de Cultura*
CCM	*Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*
CFMA	Classiques Français du Moyen Âge
CN	*Cultura Neolatina*
DUJ	*Durham University Journal*
DVj	*Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*
EETS	Early English Text Society
Esp	*L'Esprit Créateur*
Ét. Celt	*Études Celtiques*
FCS	*Fifteenth-Century Studies*
FF	*French Forum*
FMLS	*Forum for Modern Language Studies*
FR	*French Review*
FS	*French Studies*
FSB	*French Studies Bulletin*
GRLMA	*Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*
GRM	*Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*
KRQ	*Kentucky Romance Quarterly*
LR	*Lettres Romanes*
MA	*Le Moyen Age*
Man	*Manuscripta*
M&H	*Medievalia et Humanistica*
Med	*Medievalia*
Med. Aev	*Medium Aevum*
MF	*Moyen Français*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
MR	*Medioevo Romanzo*
MRom	*Marche Romane*
MS	*Medieval Studies*
Neophil	*Neophilologus*
NFS	*Nottingham French Studies*
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
NMS	*Nottingham Medieval Studies*
NZJFS	*New Zealand Journal of French Studies*
OPS	Occasional Publications Series
PAPS	*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
PRF	Publications Romanes et Françaises
PTS	Plain Texts Series
RBPH	*Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*
RF	*Romanische Forschungen*
RHLF	*Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*
RHT	*Revue d'Histoire des Textes*
RJ	*Romanistisches Jahrbuch*
RLR	*Revue des Langues Romanes*
RMS	*Reading Medieval Studies*
Rom	*Romania*
RomN	*Romance Notes*
RomQ	*Romance Quarterly*
RPh	*Romance Philology*
RR	*Romanic Review*
SAR	*South Atlantic Review*
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
SM	*Studi Medievali*
SMC	*Studies in Medieval Culture*
SMV	*Studi Mediolatini e Volgari*
SN	*Studia Neophilologica*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
Spec	*Speculum*
StMed	*Studies in Medievalism*
Symp	*Symposium*
TL	*Travaux de Littérature*
TLF	Textes Littéraires Français

TLL	*Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature*	*YFS*	*Yale French Studies*
Tris	*Tristania*	*ZfdA*	*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*
TrL	*Travaux de Littérature*	*ZfSL*	*Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*
UTSE	*University of Texas Studies in English*		
VR	*Vox Romanica*	*ZrP*	*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*

INTRODUCTION

Karen Pratt

> Li conte de Bretaigne sont si vain et plaisant,
> Cil de Rome sont sage et de sens aprendant.
> Cil de France sont voir chacun jour aparant.
> (Jean Bodel, *Chanson des Saisnes*, 9–11)
>
> (*The tales of Britain are so frivolous and amusing; those of Rome are wise and teach us good sense; those of France are shown to be true every day*.)

The great paradox of King Arthur and his legend is that, although he is closely identified with British (even English) history and culture, it was texts in the French language that confirmed his status as a pan-European literary hero. There is no doubt that the *matière de Bretagne* (matter of Britain), to which Bodel refers above, was first made popular in written form by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which was in circulation by 1138. However, Geoffrey's wonderfully imaginative, pseudo-historical account of Arthur's life was made available to a much wider, non-literate audience in 1155, when the Norman cleric Wace translated the *Historia* into French (chapter II).[1] Significantly, it is Wace's French adaptation, rather than Geoffrey's Latin text, that served as a source for Layamon's thirteenth-century dynastic chronicle, the earliest work on Arthur to survive in the English language.[2] Wace's *Roman de Brut* also has the distinction of being the earliest surviving text to mention the Round Table, and was a key source of material for the father of Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes.

Chrétien's legacy to Arthurian tradition was enormous, not least because it is to him that we owe the first written accounts of the quest for the grail and of the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere.[3] Of his five romances, composed in the second half of the twelfth century (chapter IV), most were subsequently adapted into one or more of the following European languages: English, German, Norse, Swedish and Welsh, if one accepts that *Erec*, *Yvain* and *Perceval* served as sources for the Welsh romances *Geraint ab Erbin*, *Owein* and *Peredur*.[4] Chrétien's works did not merely provide later writers, both French and non-French, with a rich stock of Arthurian characters, themes and motifs; they also served as models of romance composition in verse, to be emulated, adapted or reacted against by his successors and continuators (chapters VI and X).

Almost contemporary with Chrétien's *œuvre* were the French Tristan romances of Beroul and Thomas, but it was Thomas of England's courtly treatment of this Celtic legend that soon gave rise to translations in German, English and Norse (chapter III). Equally influential, yet even more popular than the verse narratives, were the great thirteenth-century prose romance cycles. In the Vulgate Cycle (chapter VII) French writers presented the rise and fall of the Arthurian kingdom and the history of the Holy Grail, culminating in its Quest by Galahad and other, less perfect Knights of the Round Table. Later in the same century the matter of Arthur was combined with that of Tristan, producing in the prose *Tristan* (chapter VIII) and also in the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal* and related texts (chapter IX) veritable cornucopiae of Arthurian adventures. Once again, European literature gained in richness as foreign adapters translated French prose-romance material into English (most notably Sir Thomas Malory), Dutch, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Greek. As other volumes in the present series demonstrate, once Arthurian matter had been transplanted in foreign soil it flourished and diversified, fusing with native literary traditions. Yet all the major European literatures originally received their Arthurian rootstock from the Francophone world.

In post-conquest England the nobles who were the patrons of most literary production spoke the dialect of Old French known as Anglo-Norman, a fact that in the twelfth century facilitated cultural exchange between the France of the Capetians and the Anglo-Norman realm of the Plantagenets. Whatever Geoffrey of Monmouth's political motives may have been for composing his *Historia* (chapter II), his Arthur became for the Anglo-Normans a symbol of a strong monarchy with imperial ambitions, one which their rulers hoped could unite warring factions and provide the peoples of Britain with a unified national identity. If Wace did indeed dedicate his *Brut* to Eleanor of Aquitaine, as Layamon states, he could have been implying that her husband Henry II's recent ascent to the throne of England was continuing a tradition which had originated with the foundation of Britain by the Trojan Brutus, and which had reached its apogee in the illustrious reign of King Arthur.

However, although later English writers and their patrons fully exploited Arthur's potential in their constructions of an Anglo-British national identity, French authors operating beyond the Anglo-Norman kingdom had a more ambivalent attitude towards the legendary king. Whilst Chrétien's *Erec* presents a relatively positive view of the royal figure, leading some critics to speculate that the work was composed for Henry II,[6] his later romances present a deterioration in Arthur's status,[7] thereby problematizing his role as exemplary monarch. Chrétien's desire to please his noble patrons, Marie de Champagne and Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders, who at times in the twelfth century found themselves in conflict with the King of France, may account for his less idealized

portrayal of kingship in his later works. Moreover, Chrétien, hailing from Troyes, is more likely to have derived his sense of 'national' identity from the *matière de France* than from that of Britain, and his 'national' hero would therefore have been Charlemagne rather than Arthur. Perhaps this explains why he focused in his romances on young aristocratic heroes of unproven historicity: Erec, Cligés, Lancelot, Yvain and Perceval, rather than on the king at the centre of British history. Far less active than in the pseudo-chronicle accounts of his deeds, the Arthur of Chrétien's romances contents himself with attracting valiant knights and marvellous adventures to his court.

By the thirteenth century, Francophone Arthurian literature seems on the whole to have become the preserve of continental French authors, although many texts are either anonymous or have authors about whom we know little. Interesting exceptions to this rule are two Italians writing in French: the Venetian 'Maistre Richart d'Irlande', author of the *Prophecies de Merlin*, and Rustichello of Pisa (Rusticien de Pise), author of a prose Compilation of Arthurian, Grail and Tristan material (chapter IX). These 'non-British' writers are mostly uninterested in Arthur as a (pseudo-) historical figure capable of encouraging a sense of national identity. Instead, they use him as a cipher through which they can explore different moral and socio-political issues according to their tastes: some highlight political tensions between the monarchy and the aristocracy; others re-examine critically the universal values of honour, loyalty, love and friendship or specifically medieval concepts such as courtesy and chivalry; still others portray Arthur as an archetype of the tragic prince brought down by treachery or pride, or of the husband betrayed by his wife and best friend. He is, of course, surrounded by other colourful figures who lend themselves to constant rewriting: outspoken, sometimes spiteful Kay; beautiful, loving but unfaithful Guinevere; loyal, yet treacherous Lancelot; brave, womanizing, sometimes hot-headed Gauvain; deceitful, yet gifted Morgan; treacherous Mordred; ingenious Merlin. In addition, the Grail, transformed by Robert de Boron into a holy relic with eucharistic overtones (chapter VI), provides further scope for the exploration of Christian values, individual spirituality and Salvation History.

Whilst we find Arthur in the fourteenth century joining the ranks of the Nine Worthies, and, along with the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece, being celebrated at the courts of the dukes of Burgundy as a model of courtesy and chivalry, the political, nation-building role of Arthurian literature has been largely eclipsed by concentration on notions of lineage and historical cyclicity (chapter XII). Thus, throughout its evolution, French Arthurian literature explores in varying degrees the ethical and socio-political concerns of each successive generation. However, perhaps more importantly, it is also characterized throughout by its sheer entertainment value, the ability of the matter of Britain to generate ever more complex and gripping narratives. Verse romance

after Chrétien de Troyes (chapter X) exhibits a greater interest in intertextual, literary games than in the socio-political issues of the real world, although there is evidence that manuscript compilations may have been produced with ethical agendas in mind (chapter XI). Yet prose romance in particular demonstrates a desire for never-ending textuality. Indeed, French Arthurian literature's greatest strength seems to have been its ability constantly to generate new and exciting stories through the techniques of continuation, compilation, adaptation, interpolation and the complex interlacing of mysterious adventures.

The Arthur of the French is the fourth book to appear in this series commissioned by the Vinaver Trust to update R. S. Loomis's influential reference volume entitled *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, which was published in 1959. As should be clear from the above remarks, the word 'French' in our title refers to texts written in the French language rather than to a nation enclosed by strict geographical boundaries. Hence the inclusion of literature composed in England as well as in France. Moreover, although medieval Occitan (formerly often known as Old Provençal) was a separate language, distinct from Old French, the similarity of these languages and the geographical proximity of their speakers meant that in the Middle Ages there were close cultural and political links between Occitania and France. This volume therefore contains a chapter on Arthurian material in the Occitan lyric and romance (XIII), which argues that, from a southern perspective, Arthur was a foreign, northern French phenomenon.

Whilst the term 'French' of our title is relatively unproblematic, the definition of what constitutes Arthurian literature has created more editorial problems. In the volume as a whole a fairly broad definition has been adopted, especially in chapter X, although the statistical survey of Arthurian manuscripts in chapter I takes a slightly narrower view, and the section on narrative lays in chapter V, whilst referring to non-Arthurian examples, concentrates on those that feature Arthur or related characters. Our inclusion of the Tristan material, already present in Loomis's collective study, hardly requires justification; Arthur is mentioned by both Beroul and Thomas, and he plays a significant role in the prose *Tristan*, where Tristan becomes inextricably linked with the Knights of the Round Table.

The place of the British king in the historiographical tradition is treated in several contributions throughout this volume, especially in chapters II and XII, the latter including Jehan de Waurin's chronicle of the history of Britain and England and the pseudo-historical romance *Perceforest*. Yet other pseudo-historical texts in which Arthur plays a minor role have been excluded, and only a representative sample of works in genres other than romance has been treated in order to demonstrate how the matter of Britain was capable of crossing generic boundaries (see William Kibler, chapter XII).

In updating Loomis's volume to reflect modern scholarly interests, three chapters have been added, dealing with manuscripts (I), compilations (XI) and the post-medieval reception of the Arthurian legend in literature and film (XIV). By placing the chapter on manuscripts first, we are not only emphasizing the primary importance of the material nature of medieval textuality and its implications for the reception and interpretation of Arthurian literature, but also providing a broad overview of our subject, introducing the reader to the corpus of texts and contextualizing their production and transmission. It is noteworthy here that Arthurian literature in French was produced and copied during the Middle Ages not only in France, but also in England and Italy. The manuscript compiler's role as active editor, creating new reading experiences, is considered in chapter XI, and the enduring fascination of Arthurian material, both in scholarly and more popular contexts, is discussed in the last chapter.

The Arthur of the French is intended to meet the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students of medieval French and Occitan literature, established scholars in these fields who are seeking information about the current state of research and students and scholars in other fields who require an introduction to Arthurian material within the French-speaking world. The volume attempts to guide Anglophone readers, some of whom may lack specialist knowledge, by expressing a consensus of academic opinion where this exists, pointing where necessary to significant differences of opinion and indicating fields in which further research would be fruitful. As far as possible, we have aimed at consistency and standardization, but in some cases this has been either impossible or undesirable. We have standardized the spelling in titles of medieval texts (though not in reference lists, where the form which appears in the title of a study is retained). Since the titles of many medieval works are modern inventions, and not universally accepted, our choice of title for individual texts may meet with some disapproval. We have, however, been consistent, as we have with proper names, where one form has been adopted per character throughout the volume, irrespective of the form employed by individual medieval authors. On the other hand, we have not attempted to eradicate conflicting scholarly views, in order to foster stimulating academic controversy. An example of this is to be found in chapters VIII and IX, where readers will find differing opinions expressed on the genesis of the prose *Tristan*.

In each chapter our aim has been to provide the following information concerning individual texts: their author, patron, possible audience, date, sources, social and literary context, manuscript transmission and reception, a plot summary, issues of interpretation and possibilities for further research. Some of this information, though, is simply unavailable, especially when authors are

anonymous and no patrons are mentioned. The general assumption is that audiences were in the main aristocratic, including noblemen, ladies and clerics, and that works were read aloud (often in instalments) at large court gatherings or in small groups. However, private reading is not to be ruled out, and the larger, more ornate manuscripts containing the lengthy prose romances were clearly designed for visual as well as aural reception. The dates we offer for texts are often very approximate, and some works are at present undergoing redating, which may in turn affect the relative dating of other works. The multiple authorship of this volume has also led to some variation in the amount of space devoted to these different aspects, and here again consistency has not necessarily been viewed as a virtue. Indeed, more detailed synopses and longer literary analyses have been provided for lesser-known texts, especially if there is a dearth of secondary literature on them. More famous works may be treated fairly summarily, but ample supplementary reading material is cited. The reference lists contain all editions and studies mentioned in the accompanying chapter, plus additional helpful items. The first edition listed is that from which all unattributed citations in the text of the relevant chapter are taken and to which all line or page numbers relate. The Harvard system of reference (author, date, page number) is employed throughout for brevity, editions and translations of texts being distinguished from studies by the use of the editor's name, followed by the abbreviation 'edn' or transl., then by a line or page reference. Within the text the date of publication of an edition is included only where the same scholar has edited more than one work. Items accompanied by an asterisk are not found in the reference list to each chapter, but in the General Bibliography, which is designed to provide a list of the most important, and especially the most recent studies on French Arthurian romance, including reference works and bibliographies. Short titles which have been used for texts within a given chapter appear in square brackets either before or after the edition in the corresponding reference list.

Acknowledgements

The editors of this book owe many debts of gratitude – to its contributors (and especially those who submitted on time) for their forbearance; to Douglas Kelly, Elspeth Kennedy and Jane Taylor for organizing the material of multi-authored chapters into *molt beles conjointures*; to Simon Gaunt, Roger Middleton and above all to Elaine Polley for their advice, reference-checking and careful proofreading; to Linda Gowans for her expert indexing; to the University of Wales Press for its continued interest in our project; to the Vinaver Trust for much-needed financial and moral support; and to the late Ray Barron, general editor of the series, who sadly did not live to see this volume brought to fruition. Finally, we should like to express our sorrow that three of our distinguished contributors,

Emmanuèle Baumgartner, Elspeth Kennedy and Roy Owen, died during the lengthy publication process. Arthurian Studies are much diminished by their loss.

Notes

[1] Thoughout this book chapter references in roman numerals relate to the present volume.

[2] See Barron ed. 1999*, 22–32. Items accompanied by an asterisk are to be found in the General Bibliography.

[3] See Lacy, Kelly and Busby eds 1987–8*, but also the review by R. Middleton (*MLR*, 85 (1990), 438–9).

[4] See Bromwich, Jarman and Roberts eds 1991*, chapters 6–8 and Lacy, Kelly and Busby eds 1987–8*, I, 337–42.

[5] Greek and Serbo-Russian versions of the Arthurian Compilation by Rustichello of Pisa (Rusticien de Pise) have survived (see chapter IX).

[6] See B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'Henri II Plantagenêt, roi d'Angleterre, et la genèse d'*Erec et Enide*', *CCM*, 24 (1981), 241–6.

[7] See B. N. Sargent-Baur, '*Dux bellorum*/*rex militum*/roi fainéant: la transformation d'Arthur au XII^{e} siècle', *MA*, 90 (1984), 357–73.

I

THE MANUSCRIPTS

Roger Middleton

The texts of medieval French Arthurian literature in verse and prose are preserved in over 500 manuscripts and fragments, written over a period of rather more than three centuries, and produced over a wide area of French-speaking territory that included England and Italy. The earliest survivors are the remains of two copies of verse romances that have claims to be from the last years of the twelfth century. These are the Sneyd fragments of Thomas's *Tristan* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS French d. 16), and the defective copy of *Cligés* at Tours (Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 942). The earliest surviving manuscript of a prose romance is not very much later, there being at least four candidates for the period 1215–25. The most important of these is Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 255, containing the beginning of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle (the *Estoire*, *Merlin* and an incomplete *Lancelot*). The possibility of a date in the region of 1220 for this manuscript poses a serious challenge to the view that the *Estoire* was not composed until 1225–30 or even later, and this has important consequences, not only for the dating of the individual texts, but also for our understanding of how the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle came into existence.

The copying of Arthurian texts in verse continued throughout the thirteenth century, but apart from the necessary exception of the two copies of Froissart's *Meliador* (which was not composed until 1388) very few surviving manuscripts are later than 1350, and even the most recent (Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS L. IV. 33) is no later than the early fifteenth century. Manuscripts of Arthurian prose romances were produced in significant numbers alongside the verse during the thirteenth century, and continued to be copied until the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The copy of *Lancelot* in BNF, fr. 1427 is dated 1504, and Gotha, Herzogliche Bibliothek, MS 688 (containing *Ysaÿe le Triste*) is probably from the period 1517–25, assuming that the arms of Louis de la Trémoïlle and his wife Louise Borgia are contemporary with the rest of the book. By this date manuscripts had been almost entirely superseded by the printed editions in which Arthurian prose texts were soon made available. The first of these was the two-volume *Lancelot* of 1488, of which the first volume was printed in Rouen by Jehan Le Bourgoys and the second in Paris by Jehan du Pré. This was quickly followed by the *Tristan* of 1489, printed by Le Bourgoys in collaboration with Antoine Vérard. After that, the succession of

other texts and new editions continued steadily until the end of the sixteenth century, and even beyond.

The surviving manuscripts represent only some fraction of the number originally produced, certainly less than half, since every survivor must have been copied from an exemplar, and the very few cases where both exemplar and copy have survived, or where we have two copies from the same exemplar, are swamped by textual traditions that imply far more intermediaries. There are, however, important differences between the manuscript traditions of verse and prose, particularly in the ratio of surviving texts to surviving manuscripts. The vast majority of extant manuscripts are of prose romances, whereas the majority of Arthurian texts are in verse (though the figures are partly dependent upon our definition of what constitutes a text). In the extreme case, it could be said that something like 70 per cent of the manuscripts are of only two texts: the *Lancelot–Grail* and the prose *Tristan*. In another sense, however, these two works are so variable in their transmission that almost every manuscript could be treated as a separate text.

Manuscripts of Arthurian Verse

Texts and Manuscripts

In the case of productions that are in verse it is not usually very difficult to know what to count as a text, but there may be some doubt over what is Arthurian. The various copies of a particular verse text are not verbally identical, but the many differences are relatively trivial, the verse form making it much harder to introduce major new episodes. The episode of the King of the Red City in one manuscript of *L'Atre périlleux* (BNF, fr. 1433) presents some difficulty, but the only significant problems are those associated with the successive Continuations of *Perceval* and its two added prologues. Not only are there different Continuations (treated as separate texts for some purposes, but not for others), there is also the more delicate question of the short, long and mixed versions of the First Continuation, which requires the complex form of publication adopted by Roach (1949–83) in his edition.[1]

What counts as Arthurian can also vary according to context. For practical rather than theoretical reasons, the present chapter takes a very broad view so as to include those Breton romances discussed elsewhere in the volume, even though Arthur and his knights do not always appear. This results in counting the various Tristan poems, lays by Marie de France and other writers, *Ille et Galeron,* the *Roman de Silence* and *Galeran de Bretagne*. The inclusion of the Tristan poems is easy enough to justify because their material becomes Arthurian in the course of time (in the poem attributed to Beroul, in the Tristan episode of the Gerbert

Continuation, and definitively in the prose romance). Similarly, in the case of Marie de France, it would be invidious to distinguish too finely between *Lanval* (which is explicitly Arthurian), *Chevrefoil* (which is part of the Tristan corpus) and those other lays that draw upon the same Celtic motifs as Arthurian romance. The inclusion of the other lays and of *Ille et Galeron*, *Silence* and *Galeran de Bretagne* is for the sake of consistency and completeness (see chapter X). Excluded from this survey of the manuscripts are *Sone de Nansay* (which has too little Arthurian material), the *Roman du Hem* and *Le Tournoiement Antechrist* (which both have significant Arthurian content, but belong to genres that are quite different from Arthurian romance), all lyrics (even those with Arthurian content of one sort or another) and most historical texts (except for occasional mention of Wace). The lyrics are left out because the manuscripts that preserve them are almost invariably collections of songs (often with their music) chosen for their literary form, not for their content. Similarly in the case of the histories, the Arthurian material is coincidental to their purpose and to the manuscripts in which they are preserved. The partial exception for Wace is because the *Roman de Brut* paves the way for the later romances, and several manuscript collections seem to recognize this association (most notably BNF, fr. 1450).

On this basis (and not counting Wace in this context) the number of surviving texts in Old French verse that enter into consideration is sixty-nine. This number includes Froissart's *Meliador* (technically in Middle French) and *Jaufre* (in Occitan), but not the modernization of Chrétien's *Yvain* undertaken by Pierre Sala in the early sixteenth century (preserved in BNF, fr. 1638). Of those included, thirty-seven are (or were) full-length romances, whilst thirty-two are lays or other shorter texts. The figure for the romances is more reliable than that for the shorter texts, and can easily be adjusted to eliminate any or all of the texts that may be considered marginal for one reason or another. The figure for the shorter texts is less easy to adjust in this way, because it is much harder to draw the line between what is or is not Arthurian amongst the *Lais* of Marie de France and amongst other texts that are sometimes described as Breton lays and sometimes not. The other variable is the ambiguous standing of those texts that survive only as fragments. The surviving portions of Beroul's *Tristran* and of *Hunbaut* are long enough in themselves to qualify as romances, and a similar status can easily be accorded to the *Tristan* of Thomas, when consideration is given to the range of the various fragments and to the foreign adaptations. The problems arise with the much smaller fragments of *Les Enfances Gauvain*, *Gogulor*, *Ilas et Solvas* and *Le Vallet a la cote mal tailliee* (counted here as romances), where the length and form of the original texts is pure speculation. The two prologues added to *Perceval* are both short, and so are counted here as shorter texts, but as they have no independent existence there are other contexts

in which they are grouped with the Continuations. That said, however, the conclusions drawn from the statistics given below are not materially affected by any narrowing of the field. The numbers change, but the proportions do not alter by very much.

The 69 verse texts to be considered are known from a total of 217 copies, of which 163 are either complete or only partially defective, whilst the other 54 have been reduced to fragments. The more or less complete copies are to be found in 58 different manuscripts, with the fragments representing the remains of 46 others.

The relationships between the number of texts, copies and manuscripts are complex. The most notable anomaly is that the five romances by Chrétien de Troyes survive in a total of 67 copies, of which 46 (found in 30 manuscripts) are more or less complete, whilst 21 (from 17 different manuscripts) are in fragments. The four Continuations of *Perceval*, together with the *Elucidation* and *Bliocadran*, representing six texts, are known from a total of 41 copies, of which 34 (found in 12 manuscripts) are more or less complete, whilst 7 (representing 4 different manuscripts) are sets of fragments. Only one manuscript (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 113) has any of these additions without also containing a copy of Chrétien's text.

The remaining 28 Arthurian verse romances are known from 55 copies, of which 30 (found in 21 manuscripts) are more or less complete, whilst 24 (representing 24 different manuscripts) are in fragments. Also worth noting is that 6 of the 21 manuscripts with more or less complete copies are compilations that include at least one romance by Chrétien or a *Perceval* Continuation. The 30 shorter verse texts (not including the *Perceval* prologues) are known from 54 copies, found in one fragment and only 14 other manuscripts, of which two also contain full-length romances. Taking all Arthurian verse texts together, the number of surviving copies (complete, partially defective or fragmentary) relative to the number of texts is 217 to 69 (a ratio of just over 3 to 1). However, this overall figure conceals a significant anomaly, for 67 of these copies are of Chrétien's five romances (a ratio of rather more than 13 to 1), and the figure remains almost as high even when the *Perceval* Continuations and prologues are added in (108 copies of just 11 texts giving a ratio of nearly 10 to 1). In contrast to this, for all other Arthurian verse romances there are 55 copies of 28 texts (a ratio of just under 2 to 1), and for the shorter Arthurian texts there are 54 copies of 30 texts (a very similar ratio of slightly less than 2 to 1). Another way of looking at this is to realize that over half the surviving copies of Arthurian texts in Old French verse are of Chrétien's five romances and the *Perceval* additions (108 out of the total 217). A further imbalance is that even amongst the five romances, *Perceval* is uniquely favoured, being represented by a total of 21 copies (of which 15 are more or less complete, and 6 reduced to fragments). The figures

for the others are: *Erec* 12 (7 more or less complete + 5 fragments); *Cligés* 12 (8 + 4); the *Charrette* 8 (7 + 1); *Yvain* 14 (9 + 5). This distinction between Chrétien's romances and the others reappears in almost every aspect of manuscript production and survival that we shall examine, and it is unlikely to be coincidental. It is true that we are at the mercy of chance survivals, but there are two factors that distinguish Chrétien from the rest. In the first place, the numerical differences are sufficiently large to be meaningful in themselves, for whereas it may be no more than luck whether one, two or three copies of a particular text happen to survive, the existence of seven or more suggests a qualitative difference. Secondly, there is the fact that the difference is consistent for all five romances.[2]

One consequence of this imbalance between copies of Chrétien's romances and those of other texts is that we are presented with quite different types of textual tradition. What we cannot know is whether the textual traditions were in reality that different (though one suspects that they were) or whether the difference is in the way that they present themselves to modern eyes. For the majority of non-Chrétien verse texts, surviving in only one copy (plus the occasional fragment), the question of textual variants does not arise. The copy and the text are indistinguishable (apart from the 'correction of obvious scribal errors' practised by most editors). But not so for Chrétien, where each text survives in at least seven copies, and where the number of variants runs into many thousands. It is true that most of these variants are entirely trivial, but not all of them, and even some of those that might be considered trivial in purely scribal terms can have important consequences for literary interpretations. Thus, the loss or addition of a couplet here or there is so commonplace in any process of copying verse texts that we should hardly pay it much attention – unless it happened to be the couplet in which Lancelot hesitates for two steps before getting into the cart (Hult 1989). Nor is this particularly well-known example an isolated case. Even the alteration of a few letters can give rise to a range of conclusions, some more reliable than others, such that *(d)estregales*/*(d)outregales* as the name of Erec's homeland was the subject of an extended debate between Zimmer, Loth, Lot and G. Paris that was continued by Brugger (1904) and later by Loomis (1949, 70–1) and Ritchie (1952, 10–11). The point, however, is that discussions of this kind are necessarily confined to the works of Chrétien de Troyes and very few other texts. The survival of additional manuscripts places the scholar in an entirely different relationship to these particular texts, though this is often obscured by modern editions and the unwarranted reliance placed upon them.

Apart from Chrétien and the *Perceval* additions, and leaving aside the special case of *Jaufre* (the one Arthurian verse romance in Occitan), only two romances (*L'Atre périlleux* and *Meraugis*) survive in as many as three copies, and only three others (*Fergus*, *La Vengeance Raguidel* and *Ille et Galeron*) survive in as many as two. No fewer than twenty are known from single copies only, of which nearly

half are to some extent defective. In addition, the copies of three of them (*Le Bel Inconnu*, *Hunbaut* and *Rigomer*) are to be found in the same collective manuscript (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 472).

Verse romances that exist in only one copy are: *Beaudous* (BNF, fr. 24301); *Le Bel Inconnu* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 472); *Le Chevalier aux deux épées* (BNF, fr. 12603); *Claris et Laris* (BNF, fr. 1447); *Escanor* (BNF, fr. 24374, with two published fragments being now lost); *Floriant et Florete* (New York Public Library, MS 122); *Galeran de Bretagne* (BNF, fr. 24042); *Gliglois* (Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS L. IV. 33); Robert de Boron's verse *Estoire dou Graal* and the fragment of his verse *Merlin* (BNF, fr. 20047); *Hunbaut* (Chantilly 472); *Silence* (Nottingham, on deposit in the University Library, MS Middleton L. M. 6); Beroul's *Tristran* (BNF, fr. 2171); and *Yder* (Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. 4. 26). To these may be added texts that survive in a single copy plus fragments: *Durmart le Galois* (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 113; fragment in Carlisle Cathedral Library); *Meliador* (BNF, fr. 12557; fragment in BNF, nouv. acq. lat. 2374); and *Rigomer* (Chantilly 472; fragment in Turin, MS L. IV. 33). Also to be included here are the texts that each survive only in a single fragment: *Les Enfances Gauvain* (Paris, Bibliothèque de Sainte-Geneviève: Meyer 1910); *Gogulor* (owned by Charles H. Livingston: Livingston 1940–1); *Ilas et Solvas* (Lille, Bibliothèque Municipale: Langlois 1913); and *Le Vallet a la cote mal tailliee* (BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 934: Meyer and Paris 1897).

The texts preserved by more than one extant copy are: *L'Atre périlleux* (BNF, fr. 1433; BNF, fr. 2168; Chantilly 472); *Fergus* (BNF, fr. 1553; Chantilly 472); *Ille et Galeron* (BNF, fr. 375; Nottingham, L. M. 6); *Meraugis de Portlesguez* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1725; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2599; Turin, MS L. IV. 33; fragments in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, MS gall. qu. 48 and Draguignan, Archives Départementales de Var); *La Vengeance Raguidel* (Chantilly 472; Nottingham, L. M. 6; fragment in BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1263; the first twenty-nine lines in BNF, fr. 2187, fol. 155v, and the scattered lines transcribed by Pierre Borel from an unknown manuscript of what he calls the 'Roman de Gauvain'); and the Occitan *Jaufre* (BNF, fr. 2164; BNF, fr. 12571; two different fragments in Nîmes, Archives Départementales du Gard, and excerpts in two *chansonniers*: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 3206 and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 819).

Most shorter texts fall into the same categories. Those surviving in a single copy are: *Le Lai du Cor* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86); *Le Chevalier à l'épée*, *La Mule sans frein* and the *Folie Tristan de Berne* (all in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 354; with a fragment of the *Folie* in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 302, fol. 100); *Le Donnei des amants* and *Nabaret* (in Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 82); the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce d. 6); *Doon*, *Guingamor*, *Lecheor*, *Tydorel* and *Tyolet* (BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104); and *Trot*

(Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3516). The twelve *Lais* of Marie de France are to be found (with a prologue) in British Library, MS Harley 978, and this is the collection that determines the canon. However, the prologue and three of the lays (*Eliduc*, *Chaitivel* and *Laustic*) are unique to this manuscript. The nine others also appear in BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104, with third copies of *Lanval*, *Guigemar* and *Yonec* in BNF, fr. 2168, a fourth of *Lanval* in British Library, MS Cotton, Vespasian B. xiv, and a fourth of *Yonec* in BNF, fr. 24432. All but *Eliduc* are also represented in the Old Norse *Strengleikar* (as are six of the anonymous lays as well as three others for which no French text has survived). Amongst the anonymous lays there are three that survive in two copies: *Desiré* (BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104; Bodmer 82); *Graelent* (BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104; BNF, fr. 2168); and *Melion* (Arsenal, MS 3516; Turin, MS L. IV. 33). Best represented of all is *Le Lai du Mantel*, which survives in five copies (BNF, fr. 353; BNF, fr. 837; BNF, fr. 1593; BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104; Bern 354).

The copies of *Le Lai du Mantel* are in manuscripts that are mainly collections of *fabliaux* (except for BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104), suggesting that the text was perceived as such. Similarly, the *Lais* of Marie de France occur mainly in collections of similar texts (particularly Harley 978, which also contains Marie's *Fables*, and BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104), and so do the anonymous lays (also in BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104 and, to a lesser extent, in Bodmer 82). Thus it looks as though their preservation is often a consequence of their respective genres (and supposed authorship) rather than any Arthurian content.

The most important text not included in the above lists is the *Tristan* of Thomas d'Angleterre. In one sense this is represented by several copies, but all are fragmentary. The most substantial single fragment is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce d. 6 (which also contains the closely related *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*), but almost as much text is contained in the two fragments from the collection of the Revd Walter Sneyd (now Bodleian Library, MS French d. 16). The four leaves that were once in the library of the Protestant Seminary at Strasbourg were destroyed by fire in 1870, but their text survives in the publication by Michel (1835–9, III, 83–94). There are other smaller fragments in Turin (once in a private collection, then lost, now rediscovered in the Accademia delle Scienze di Torino: Fontanella Vitale-Brovarone 1988, 299–314), in Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 15. 12 and in Carlisle Cathedral Library (on deposit in the Cumbria Record Office: Benskin, Hunt and Short 1992–5). This provides material evidence of six manuscripts, and the translations into German, Norse and English imply the existence of three others. This number of manuscripts, and the fact that copying continued over an extended period until the end of the thirteenth century, suggest a manuscript tradition similar in principle to that of Chrétien's romances, but with a dramatic difference in the rate of survival. Various factors may have contributed to the losses, but the most

obvious explanation is that the manuscripts reduced to fragments were not of the highest quality. It is true that the Sneyd fragment was illustrated to a certain extent (one small miniature survives), and true also that the Strasbourg fragments were illustrated by five miniatures in the space of four leaves, but it seems that they were of poor quality (according to Michel 1835–9, III, xxix). The Douce fragments have no miniatures and little decoration, and the recently discovered Carlisle fragment has a gap where a coloured initial has not been executed, implying that it was left undecorated, whatever the original intention may have been. We can, of course, have no knowledge of any illustrated manuscripts that have disappeared without leaving fragments or some other record, but there is no convincing example in the major inventories. Another factor may have been the length of the text (variously estimated at anything from 15,000 lines to not far short of 30,000), not merely a deterrent in itself when Old French verse is no longer either the form or the language of the day, but also a feature that would have reduced its chances of being incorporated into a collection of verse romances whose variety might have aided survival. The fact that as time went on there would have been more or less direct competition from the prose *Tristan*, whose more accessible text and illustrated manuscripts would have had more appeal, will also have had an effect. It is difficult to know whether the text's being Anglo-Norman had a direct influence upon its survival, but it may have affected the kind of manuscripts that were produced. Manuscripts of French literature made in England were often of the cheaper sort (Middleton 2003, 234).

The other most obvious point to emerge from this analysis is that certain manuscripts appear more than once. Chantilly 472 is particularly important, having *L'Atre périlleux*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, *Fergus*, *Hunbaut*, *Rigomer* and *La Vengeance Raguidel* (with three of them being unique); Bern 354 has *Le Chevalier à l'épée*, *La Mule sans frein*, *Le Lai du Mantel* and the *Folie Tristan de Berne*; Turin, MS L. IV. 33 has *Gliglois*, *Meraugis*, *Melion* and a fragment of *Rigomer*; BNF, fr. 2168 has *L'Atre périlleux*, *Lanval*, *Guigemar*, *Yonec* and *Graelent*; BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 1104 is a collection of lays, in which nine by Marie de France are accompanied by *Le Lai du Mantel*, *Desiré*, *Doon*, *Espine*, *Graelent*, *Guingamor*, *Lecheor*, *Tydorel* and *Tyolet*; Nottingham, L. M. 6 has *La Vengeance Raguidel*, *Ille et Galeron* and *Silence* (though the last two of these are stretching the boundary of what is Arthurian). The first two of these collective manuscripts also contain works by Chrétien de Troyes (Chantilly 472 has *Erec*, *Yvain* and the *Charrette*; Bern 354 has *Perceval*). Three other manuscripts noted above as containing only one non-Chrétien Arthurian romance also contain works by Chrétien (BNF, fr. 1433 has *Yvain* as well as *L'Atre périlleux*; BNF, fr. 12603 has *Yvain* as well as *Le Chevalier aux deux épées*; Vatican, Reg. lat. 1725 has the *Charrette* and *Yvain* as well as *Meraugis*). Similarly, Bern 113 contains the Second Continuation (without *Perceval* itself) as well as *Durmart*.

It is in fact characteristic for manuscripts of verse romances to contain several different texts, not necessarily all Arthurian but usually all in verse. Manuscripts that contain prose texts amongst the verse are: BNF, fr. 375; BNF, fr. 1553; Bern 113; and Chantilly 472. However, in all these cases, the prose constitutes only a small percentage of the whole. In Chantilly 472 the contents are almost exclusively Arthurian verse romances, the exceptions being a partial copy of *Perlesvaus* (Arthurian, but not in verse) and some branches of the *Roman de Renart* (in verse, but not Arthurian). Whether its present contents are those that were originally intended is difficult to say, because the manuscript is the work of several different scribes (though not all the numerous changes in the appearance of the script necessarily indicate a change of personnel), and there are parts where the physical structure is extremely complex.

In some cases the verse texts are all in octosyllabic rhyming couplets to the exclusion of texts in *laisses*. Whether this implies an awareness of a difference of genre (romance versus *chanson de geste*) or whether the distinction is purely formal is a more difficult question. Some notable exceptions are BNF, fr. 12603 and BNF, fr. 24403 (with its companion volume in Berkeley, California, Bancroft Library, MS UCB 140). In these cases it is the octosyllabic texts that are in the minority.

Some of the compilations show signs of deliberate planning, the most obvious example being BNF, fr. 1450. This begins with the 'historical' sequence of *Troie*, *Eneas* and the first part of the *Brut*, but then interrupts Wace's account of Arthur's reign to insert the five romances by Chrétien de Troyes (though two are now defective through loss of gatherings). It then continues with the rest of the *Brut*. All this is clearly deliberate, and it is probably not coincidental that the versions of Chrétien's romances in this manuscript are amongst the shortest preserved. On the other hand, the book ends with *Dolopathos*, which has no very obvious connection with the rest of the collection. Another, larger, compilation with several of the same texts is BNF, fr. 375, but the rationale behind its organization is less clear. The gatherings now bound at the beginning are not part of the original collection, but the rest was clearly a deliberate compilation, despite the somewhat disparate nature of its contents. It includes works by Chrétien (*Cligés* and *Erec* occur consecutively, and there is also a copy of the doubtfully attributed *Guillaume d'Angleterre*), and there are various other chivalric romances, but none that is Arthurian unless we count *Ille et Galeron*. In between, there are historical texts, *fabliaux*, religious works and lyrics. However, the defining feature of the collection is that it is introduced by a versified description that deals with each text in numerical order. This catalogue by Perrot de Nesle is now defective at the beginning through the loss of its opening leaf, but in its original form it must have been a substantial text in its own right (more than a thousand lines long). The first nine summaries are now missing and so is part of the tenth (*Floire et*

Blancheflor); the others, from the eleventh to the twenty-second, are intact. After the manuscript had been completed, someone other than the original scribes added the appropriate number to the *explicit* of each text. So, at this practical level, this collection is highly organized, but whether there is any underlying principle governing the choice of material is much more open to question. In its present state, the collection begins, like BNF, fr. 1450, with *romans d'antiquité*. The *Roman de Thèbes* is followed by *Troie* and *Athis et Prophilias*, but the sequence is then interrupted by the insertion of the *Congés* of Jean Bodel before the *Roman d'Alexandre*. However, the numbering system allows us to know that these were originally preceded by two other texts, because *Thèbes* is described in its *explicit* as 'the third branch' (*la tierce branke*). Since the opening leaf of the summaries by Perrot de Nesle has also been lost we cannot know how the collection began when it was complete, and whilst *Eneas* might be a reasonable guess for one of the two there is no obvious candidate for the other.

Several manuscripts other than BNF, fr. 1450 present what appear to be collected editions of Chrétien's works. Most notable are BNF, fr. 794 (the 'copie de Guiot') and the lost manuscript represented by the Annonay fragments. On the other hand, it should be remembered that, although the Guiot manuscript begins with four Chrétien romances (signed at the end by the scribe), there is a considerable amount of intervening material before *Perceval* and the First and Second Continuations with which the manuscript ends. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the book was made in three separate fascicles (Roques 1952, 182–3). What is now the middle section may have been the first to be written, followed by what is now last (containing *Perceval* and its Continuations) and finally the present opening section (Chrétien's four romances with Guiot's colophon). In this order the five Chrétien texts would be consecutive, and the book would end with Guiot's colophon. Yet the fact remains that when the volume was assembled (or soon afterwards) there was no requirement to keep the five romances together, the present order being guaranteed by the table of contents added later in the thirteenth century (Roques 1952, 184). Even with the Continuations, Chrétien's romances represent less than half the total (178 leaves out of 433). What form the Annonay manuscript took is pure speculation, though it is probably not coincidental that the surviving fragments were all written by the same scribe, and that they are exclusively from four of Chrétien's romances (*Erec*, *Cligés*, *Yvain* and *Perceval*), with nothing from any other text.

Amongst collections of non-Arthurian texts there are several that bring together the works of authors associated with a particular place or a particular region (be it through deliberate selection or through the simple availability of exemplars). As far as we know (given that so many texts are anonymous) there are no examples amongst the compilations of Arthurian verse that are made up of works by 'local authors'. It is true that the 'copie de Guiot' (BNF, fr. 794) has

close connections with Champagne, having been copied as it seems in Provins (Roques 1952, 189). It does contain all five romances by Champagne's most famous poet as well as the unique surviving copy of the *Empereurs de Rome* by Calendre, who also seems to have been from the county. However, this accounts for less than half its contents, and the other texts are such as might be found anywhere.

Format and Appearance

Some compilations are large, both in physical dimensions and in the number of texts they contain. Amongst manuscripts containing works by Chrétien, the largest in format is BNF, fr. 375, which measures 395 x 305mm, has 313 leaves and contains 23 texts (not counting the extra gatherings at the beginning that are from a different book); but this is exceptional, most Chrétien manuscripts being between 260 and 300mm tall. Amongst the manuscripts without works by Chrétien, the largest is Bern 113, measuring 350 x 245mm with 291 leaves.

At the other end of the scale, nearly all the examples of manuscripts with just one Arthurian verse text are copies of *Perceval* and its Continuations, the few exceptions being the very early copy of *Cligés* in Tours 942, the unique copies of *Escanor*, *Floriant et Florete* and *Yder*, and the copy of *Meraugis* in Vienna. The main factor in producing volumes with a single text is presumably length. Once the Continuations are added to *Perceval* there are at least 30,000 lines, and usually over 40,000, enough to fill a book of standard size (and the same is true of *Escanor*). Oddly enough, however, the longest version of *Perceval* (incorporating the Gerbert Continuation) is followed in BNF, fr. 12576 by the works of the Renclus de Moliens, though this may not have been the original intention since the Grail section at one time ended with several blank leaves (some now missing, others now filled with later additions). By contrast, any romance of more typical length (about 6,000 lines for Chrétien and Raoul de Houdenc) would make only a very slim volume. It is not possible to say whether such small volumes were very rarely produced, or whether they have just failed to survive (with the exception of the *Cligés* in Tours and the very different case of the *Meraugis* in Vienna, which is slim but not small). Larger books, particularly if illustrated, are more likely to be preserved even when their text is no longer read. An imposing volume carries a certain prestige, and an illustrated one may be kept for the sake of its paintings. On the other hand, the small, single-text manuscript was a common enough format for copies of *chansons de geste*, provoking the rather improbable notion that they were used by *jongleurs* to refresh their memories before undertaking an oral performance. For a critique of the term 'manuscrit de jongleur', a discussion of suitable criteria (200mm or less, single column, minimal decoration, single text, or closely connected texts) and a list of survivors (some as late as the fourteenth century), see Duggan (1982). Amongst

Arthurian manuscripts only Tours 942 would meet all these criteria, and this may be an indication that there was at least some difference of practice between the two genres.

Some Arthurian manuscripts meet some of Duggan's criteria but not others. In single columns, with very limited decoration, each containing only *Perceval* and only slightly too large are Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 2943 (126 leaves measuring 208/210 x 103/106mm) and Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque Municipale et Interuniversitaire, MS 248 (152 leaves measuring 215 x 125mm). Not much larger (but with twice as many leaves) is Bern 354 (283 leaves measuring 240 x 165mm), which also has two small historiated initials. As now bound this consists of a collection of *fabliaux*, the *Sept Sages de Rome* in prose, and *Perceval*, but there are blank leaves with an owner's signature after the *Sept Sages* before *Perceval* begins a new gathering. As a separate volume the *Perceval* would be much closer to the relevant criteria, though still somewhat too large and in two columns. Amongst the single-text manuscripts without works by Chrétien, the two smallest are both in two columns: the unique copy of *Floriant et Florete* in New York Public Library, MS 122 (69 leaves measuring 228 x 168mm) and that of *Yder* in Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. 4. 26 (54 leaves, plus a gathering that is now missing from the beginning, measuring 255 x 185mm). Although it is the smaller of the two, the copy of *Floriant et Florete* has slightly more elaborate decoration, including some decorated initials and a few marginal illustrations. Also small and with little decoration is the collection of lays in Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 82. This has only 24 leaves, and apparently measures somewhere near to 230 x 170mm. The Bodmer catalogue (Vielliard 1975, 103) gives the dimensions as '218 x 260mm. Justification env. 280 x 140mm' (which involves several obvious contradictions); G. Paris (1896, 497) described the leaves as 'mesurant 236 mill. en hauteur sur 160 en largeur'; most plausible is Tobin (1976, 15) with '23 par 17cm', and these dimensions are in the correct ratio for those of the leaf that is reproduced at a reduced scale as her frontispiece. Whatever the exact measurements may be (and it is clear from the photograph that not all leaves are the same) the fact remains that, despite its small size, the manuscript is in two columns and contains more than one text.

Significantly smaller than all those mentioned so far is Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 942, measuring 165 x 108mm, and containing only *Cligés*. In its present state it consists of just 59 leaves, but there are leaves missing from the beginning (probably 10) and from the end (probably 26) as well as a bifolium from quire 4 and a single leaf from quire 8. Assuming that *Cligés* really was the only text, this would suggest a manuscript with close to 98 leaves. It is tempting to extrapolate from this example and speculate that the early manuscripts now lost were often of this small size, containing a single text, and with little decoration. There is some support for this from the Sneyd fragments of Thomas (also early

and small, but with small miniatures) and from copies of other types of vernacular literature (Nixon 1993a, 18). The early copies of *Perceval* are also fairly small, but not excessively so, and the Annonay fragments of four of Chrétien's romances are from a manuscript that must have measured 280 x 210mm. This is very much within the range that is normal for the collective manuscripts of fifty years later. It used to be thought that the small-format manuscripts of *chansons de geste* were all early, but this is not so (Duggan 1982, 38–9). The truth of the matter is that we have no way of knowing whether the small, single-text *Cligés* is typical of its time, one of several available formats that are all equally common, or a unique exception.

Apart from Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS L. IV. 33, all manuscripts of Arthurian verse texts are on parchment. This is almost certainly no more than a reflection of their dates, paper being rare during the period when most of the manuscripts were copied, but common by the time the much later Turin book was being made. Decoration is usually limited to coloured initials that alternate between red and blue, with pen-flourishing in the opposite colour. Sometimes there is a limited use of gold. These initials are mostly two lines high, with larger examples at the beginning of a text and only occasionally elsewhere. On the other hand, manuscripts without any decoration at all are very rare indeed, though this may be a reflection of rates of survival rather than original production, and there is an obvious connection here with their size. Large manuscripts of any text are nearly always decorated; manuscripts without decoration are much more likely to be small. This is simple economics. It makes no sense for a manuscript that is already more costly because of its size to be made to look cheap by omitting all decoration, whereas a manuscript that is being made as cheaply as possible needs to be both small and plain.

The earliest surviving illustration in the verse manuscripts that we are considering is the one small miniature (the width of a narrow column) in the Sneyd fragment of *Tristan*, which dates from the end of the twelfth century. There is then a gap of more than thirty years before the small historiated initial (just over half the width of the column) at the beginning of the *Charrette* in BNF, fr. 794, but this is the only example in the manuscript, and it is very much smaller than the miniatures in prose manuscripts of the same date (*c.*1230). It shows no more than a seated female figure, depicted in an entirely conventional manner, probably representing the Countess of Champagne explaining the story, either to an unseen author or perhaps directly to the reader. Not much later is the equally small historiated initial at the beginning of *Perceval* in Bern 354 (showing Perceval on horseback). More extensive illustration is to be found in the 82 miniatures found throughout Nottingham, MS Middleton, L. M. 6 (whose Arthurian material comprises *Vengeance Raguidel*, *Ille et Galeron* and the *Roman de Silence*), but these are still small (half the width of a column).

It is not until about 1270–80 that we have any example of a miniature to rival those of the prose romances. The earliest larger illustration of a scene from an Arthurian verse romance is probably in the manuscript of the non-Arthurian *Roman de la poire* (BNF, fr. 2186). Amongst several illustrations depicting famous pairs of lovers one is devoted to Cligés and Fénice, and another to Tristan and Yseut (Loomis 1938, 89–90, figs 202 and 203). From much the same time are the copies of *Perceval* and its Continuations in BNF, fr. 12576 and Montpellier, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, MS H 249 (Stones 1993).

From then on, manuscripts of Chrétien's *Perceval* and its Continuations are nearly always illustrated with a significant number of miniatures. Such are: Mons, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Mons-Hainaut, MS 331/206; BNF, fr. 12577; and BNF, fr. 1453. There is, however, the exception of BNF, fr. 1429, which has no more than large decorated initials. Apart from the *Perceval* manuscripts the most elaborate illustration is in BNF, fr. 1433 (containing *Yvain* and *L'Atre périlleux*), and in Princeton, University Library, MS Garrett 125 (containing the *Charrette* and *Yvain*). Much less impressive are three miniatures in the *Erec* of BNF, fr. 24403, though other parts of the manuscript are well illustrated. Various manuscripts have no more than one illustration at the beginning of each text: a historiated initial for *Fergus* in BNF, fr. 1553; a miniature for *Claris et Laris* in BNF, fr. 1447; a historiated initial for *Le Chevalier aux deux épées* in BNF, fr. 12603; and a historiated initial for the beginning of *Erec* in BNF, fr. 1376. It has been speculated that the manuscript of *Escanor* (BNF, fr. 24374) once had a full-page miniature at the beginning, but the leaf is now missing. It is true that one of the manuscripts of *Jaufre* (BNF, fr. 2164) has so many small miniatures that they average more than one per page, but this stands apart from the rest of the tradition in several other ways: the text itself is in Occitan rather than French; the manuscript is from the south; and the paintings show considerable influence from Spain or Catalonia. The one real anomaly amongst the French manuscripts is the *Meraugis* in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2599. This is a manuscript of only 38 leaves, containing only one text, but of standard format (290 x 200mm) and with no fewer than seventeen miniatures and one historiated initial. That apart, only the Grail texts have anything approaching a complete programme of illustration, and to judge from the survivors the practice of illustrating Arthurian verse romances on any significant scale is at least half a century later than the equivalent illustration of the prose romances.

Dates and Places of Production

The earliest manuscripts of Arthurian verse romances must have been made when the texts themselves were first composed, probably in the 1170s. As far as we know, the first truly Arthurian romance was Chrétien's *Erec*, but this was

surely preceded by some version of the Tristan story, possibly that by Thomas d'Angleterre, and perhaps also by the *Lais* of Marie de France.[3] The earliest surviving manuscripts are those that some have assigned to the later years of the twelfth century. This is almost certainly a valid claim in the case of the Sneyd fragments of *Tristan* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS French d. 16), and possibly also for the defective copy of *Cligés* at Tours (Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 942), now dated *c.*1200. The Annonay fragments of four Chrétien romances were at one time thought to be twelfth century or just after, but the current opinion is that they are more likely to be somewhat later, perhaps no earlier than 1220.

That manuscripts of Chrétien's romances enjoyed a reasonably wide circulation as early as the 1190s is demonstrated by the fact that copies were available to Hartmann von Aue for him to make his adaptations into German. Somewhat less reliable evidence for the movement of French Arthurian manuscripts is provided by Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, who claims to have derived his *Lanzelet* from a French book (presumably a manuscript of verse romances) brought to Germany by Hugh de Morville when he was one of the hostages for Richard the Lionheart. If true, this would have been in 1194, but none of it can be confirmed from other documents. Even if it is not entirely true, it is likely that by the time of writing both poet and audience took it to be plausible, but this may have been ten or more years later. In any event, by the first decade of the thirteenth century we have the evidence of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and the version of Thomas's *Tristan* produced by Gottfried von Straßburg.

On the other hand, despite this evidence for the availability of French manuscripts at an early date, we must not forget that most surviving copies are significantly later, and that there is no surviving complete copy before about 1220–30. There are three copies of *Perceval* that have claims to be this early, some thirty to forty years after the date of composition, but the dates suggested by different scholars are so varied that it is extremely difficult to be more precise. In Nixon (1993b) the suggested order of date (omitting smaller fragments) is: Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 942 (*Cligés*), with a suggested date of *c.*1200; Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque Municipale et Interuniversitaire, MS 248 (*Perceval*); Annonay fragments (*Erec*, *Cligés*, *Yvain* and *Perceval*); London, British Library, Additional MS 36614 (*Perceval* plus *Bliocadran* and two Continuations); Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 2943 (*Perceval*); and BNF, fr. 794 (all five Chrétien romances), with a suggested date of *c.*1230–40.

Perhaps even more revealing is the fact that Chrétien's *Perceval* is not only amongst the earliest of the survivors, but also amongst the latest. The survival of London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 14 (from the late fourteenth century) shows that this text continued to be copied for another 150 years (a total of some 200 years from the time of its composition). The latest manuscript to contain Arthurian verse texts is probably Turin, MS L. IV. 33, which includes *Meraugis*,

Gliglois, *Melion* and a fragment of *Rigomer*. This manuscript (the only one on paper) is apparently from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Since it was badly damaged by the fire of 1904 any new assessment of its date is impracticable, and we are forced to rely upon the range of opinions given in nineteenth-century descriptions. It may in fact be more or less contemporary with Arundel 14 and with the manuscripts of Froissart's *Meliador* (which was not composed until 1388). Thus, the surviving copies of Arthurian verse in French span a period of just over 200 years (shortly before 1200 to not long after 1400). However, nearly all of them fall within a period of only half that (roughly speaking from 1220 to 1320), with a significant proportion being from the four decades 1280 to 1320 (precisely when literature of this type was no longer being produced).

There are no fixed relationships between the dates of the manuscripts and their contents, but there are certain features that are worth noticing. Obviously the later texts cannot occur in the earliest manuscripts, but the more interesting point is that they do not occur in the latest either. Manuscripts that are unequivocally from the fourteenth century are most likely to contain the earliest texts, the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, and especially *Perceval* and its Continuations.

It is also the case that the later romances exist in the fewest manuscripts. The latest of all, Froissart's *Meliador*, survives in one manuscript with fragments in one other, but since this text is so much later than all the others we might be wary of citing it as an example. On the other hand, it may be worth noting that Froissart's fame as a writer in another genre and his established contacts with possible patrons do not seem to have resulted in a great many copies of his romance. As far as we can tell, the latest Arthurian verse romance before *Meliador* was *Escanor*, composed by Girart d'Amiens about 1280. This too survives in only one copy, though there were at one time two other fragments, both apparently now lost. At over 30,000 lines *Escanor* is long enough to survive in isolation, and it is assumed that BNF, fr. 24374 never contained any other text, though since the manuscript is damaged at the beginning we could not be entirely sure of this.

Slightly earlier is *Claris et Laris*, thought to have been begun in 1268, and this too survives in only one copy (BNF, fr. 1447). Despite being much the same length as *Escanor*, this is accompanied by the early version of *Floire et Blancheflor* (an octosyllabic romance composed in the twelfth century) and by *Berte aus granz piés* by Adenet le roi (a *chanson de geste* in *laisses* composed at much the same time as *Claris et Laris*). This manuscript was made in Paris in the late thirteenth century by a team of craftsmen that was probably directed by the *libraire* Robert de l'Isle Adam. The same scribes and artists were responsible for a number of manuscripts that all contain either works by Adenet le roi or the *Meliacin* of Girart d'Amiens, which shares an origin with Adenet's *Cleomades*

(Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 111). This tells us much about the commercial context in which this copy of *Claris et Laris* was produced, but what we do not know is who might have commissioned it or who might have been its medieval owners. It does have a later ex-libris indicating that its then owner lived in Rouen, but the name has been erased. It came to the Bibliothèque du Roi in 1732 with the collection of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, but it had not entered his collection until after his death in 1683 (item 62 in the list in BNF, MS Baluze 100, fol. 226v). Consequently, unlike many of the manuscripts acquired during Colbert's lifetime, it entered the collection in circumstances that are not documented.

Apart from the fact that each survives in only one copy (plus fragments), what these three late romances have in common is that their manuscripts were made within relatively few years of the time of their composition. So what we have is a small number of copies, all made within the space of a few years. The consequence of this, if matters really were as the surviving evidence seems to suggest, is that the textual tradition will have had little opportunity to become diffuse. Thus, in stemmatic terms, extant copies are likely to be close to the archetype. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that their text is close to the original, for there is always the possibility of deliberate intervention. Indeed, the fragments of *Meliador* do seem to be from a recension of the text that is different from that in BNF, fr. 12557. This, however, is no particular surprise, because Froissart is notorious for his successive revisions of his *Chroniques*, and he may well have done the same with his romance.

Other relatively late romances that are poorly represented are *Rigomer* and *Hunbaut*, but here the gap between composition and surviving copies is more problematic. For one thing, the date of the texts is less easy to determine. Though *Hunbaut* in particular is sometimes said to be as late as 1250, this is no more than an estimate. The other part of the problem is that opinions differ on the date of the manuscript. The older view of Chantilly 472 would place it as late as the early fourteenth century, whereas Nixon (1993b, 40–1) has proposed that it is from nearer to the middle of the thirteenth century, and its date is now usually given as 1250–75. This would present us with a manuscript made within a very few years of some of the texts that it contains, but the copies of *Rigomer* and *Hunbaut* are both defective, implying at least one previous copy of each, and probably more (unless they were never finished).

A more important point about Chantilly 472 is that it contains Arthurian verse texts of different dates, so even if *Rigomer* and *Hunbaut* are relatively recent texts, Chrétien's romances are certainly not, and there are others between the two extremes. Of these *Le Bel Inconnu* is unique to this manuscript, but *Fergus* and *L'Atre périlleux* are the two non-Chrétien romances that occur in the largest number of copies. The most surprising case here is *Le Bel Inconnu*. Since this is a relatively early text that was still being copied as late as 1250, or even several

decades after, one might have expected to find copies elsewhere, but none exists. However, there is evidence of various kinds that it was at one time a more popular text than its single copy would suggest. Certainly, the theme of the Fair Unknown is widely attested, for there are several versions in various different languages: *Lybeaus Desconus* in English, *Wigalois* in German and *Carduino* in Italian, as well as later reworkings in French such as the *Chevalier du Papegau*. These may have been made using written copies of the surviving French romance, but the differences between these versions allow for the possibility that the tale was transmitted orally. Better evidence for the existence of a lost French manuscript is provided by the adaptation into French prose that survives in the *Hystoire de Giglan* by Claude Platin (first printed in 1520), even though the story is there interwoven with that of *Jaufre*.

The copying of twelfth-century texts in the early fourteenth century implies a continuing tradition throughout the previous hundred years. In theory, the late copies could have been made directly from twelfth-century originals, but the textual evidence provided by Chrétien's romances suggests that the transmission was by means of a developing tradition that involved a significant number of stages. Consequently, it is probably fair to assume that the copying process was more or less continuous from the time of composition to the date of the latest surviving manuscript. This in turn implies the gradual disappearance of earlier copies (no doubt partly through continuing use rather than neglect), as well as sufficient continuing interest to justify the new ones. By the same token, the extreme scarcity of copies from the later fourteenth century onwards implies that interest had waned. The occasional exceptions (such as London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 14; Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS L. IV. 33; and the copies of Froissart's *Meliador*) prove that some interest continued into the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, and the presence of fifteenth-century marginalia in various manuscripts indicates that some people were still reading older copies, but it looks as though there was little demand for new ones. It is probably no coincidence that the fourteenth century was also the time when Arthurian verse romances (with the exception of *Meliador*) were no longer being composed. Given that we are to some extent at the mercy of chance survivals, it is difficult to be sure that the impression created is an accurate reflection of reality. On the other hand, the total absence of survivors from the early fifteenth century onwards is surely indicative. There is a marked contrast here between Arthurian verse literature and the continued popularity of the *Roman de la rose*, which was still being copied well into the sixteenth century.

In the case of narrative literature, verse increasingly gave way to prose, and by the fifteenth century prose was so much the established medium that there was a fashion for turning earlier verse texts into prose (Doutrepont 1939). Only a small proportion of these *mises en prose* were Arthurian, and the manuscripts of them

are far from numerous. Best known are the adaptations of *Erec* and *Cligés*, whose manuscripts were in the Burgundian library by 1467 (Barrois 1830, nos 1277 and 1477) and are now Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 7235 and Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Rep. II 108. The copies of these two texts are written on very similar paper in a fifteenth-century cursive that is not very easy to read. Both are entirely devoid of decoration, but the copy of *Cligés* has spaces for miniatures that have not been executed. Everything indicates that they are drafts rather than finished products. The version of *Cligés* was made, the author says, at the command of a 'prince' and the date given at the end is 25 March [1]454, which could mean either 1454, if the writer started the year on Lady Day (25 March), or more probably 1455, if his year did not change until Easter (which fell on 12 April in 1454, and on 28 March in 1455). This 'princely' command is usually taken to mean that the adaptation was intended for Philip the Good himself, and it is likely that the same was true for the version of *Erec.* However, the fact that neither was ever written up as a fair copy suggests that the duke showed little interest. The binding of the Brussels manuscript is probably the original, having been done by a craftsman known as 'the predecessor of Gohon' (Colombo Timelli 2000, 10–11). This binder was the earliest of a distinctive group working in Lille in the second half of the fifteenth century (Colin 1992), and it is quite likely that Lille is where the adaptation itself was made. The incorporation of the first part of this version of *Erec* into a *Guiron* compilation (preserved by BNF, fr. 358–63 and by the fragments in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 383) indicates that another manuscript (with a text somewhat closer to Chrétien's verse original) was available in Flanders in the 1470s (Middleton 1988; Colombo Timelli 2000). In 1474 there was a manuscript of 'Ereth filz du roy Lach' in the library of the Countess of Montpensier at Aigueperse (Boislisle 1880, 302), doubtless the same manuscript as 'Le chevalier herech filz du Roy lac' that appears in a second inventory of the library in 1507 (BNF, fr. 20598, fol. 356; Le Roux de Lincy 1850, 121, item 155). Since this was amongst the books on paper (a point confirmed by the more detailed description of 1507), it was probably a copy of a prose adaptation, and we could not rule out the possibility that the Count or Countess of Montpensier was responsible for the original commission.

The only non-Chrétien Arthurian text turned into prose in this way was *Floriant et Florete*. This is not mentioned by Doutrepont (1939), but there are two surviving copies, both on paper, in BNF, fr. 1492 and 1493. In the light of what has just been said about the library at Aigueperse it may not be coincidental that it also contained 'Floret et Florete' and 'Le livre de Florent' (Boislisle 1880, 301 and 306). In 1474 both are listed amongst the books on paper, but in 1507 they are described as 'Le livre de Florent Florette . . . en pappier' and 'Le Floret . . . en parchemyn' (Le Roux de Lincy 1850, 125 and 128, items 215 and 258). The one on paper is likely to have been a prose adaptation, but the one on parchment

could have been a copy of the verse original. There was also a 'Floriant de Sécille' at Tours at the end of the fifteenth century (Chéreau 1868, item 81), but since we do not know whether this was on paper or on parchment we have no guide at all as to whether it is more likely to have been in prose or verse.

Almost invariably overlooked in the context of these *mises en prose* is the very early example provided by the prose adaptation of Chrétien's *Charrette* that survives in three manuscripts of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle. Instead of the usual prose version of this story, two closely related manuscripts made in Paris at the very beginning of the fifteenth century (BNF, fr. 117–20 and Arsenal MSS 3479–80) and the somewhat earlier BNF, fr. 122 (written in 1345) preserve a prose adaptation that follows Chrétien's text so closely as to borrow phrases verbatim (Hutchings 1938, xliii–xlvii). Another rather different case is the fragmentary prose *Yvain* now in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 444-D. This consists of seven discrete episodes separated by traditional interlace formulas. Only the first is related to Chrétien's *Yvain* in that it offers a variant account of Yvain's rescue of a lion from a dragon. The longest episode is a reworking of a narrative associated with the *Chevalier aux deux épées*; though not necessarily drawn directly from this verse text. Other episodes are analogues of material found in prose romances such as the *Queste* and the prose *Tristan*, and there also seems to have been some influence from the compilation of Rusticien de Pise. Three episodes are either original to this text or based on sources now lost (Muir 1964; Lacy 2004). Thus although this eclectic work has been partly created by making prose versions of narratives that are represented in earlier verse texts, it is not a *mise en prose* in the usual sense. Its composite nature, the freedom of its adaptation, the date of the manuscript (fourteenth century rather than fifteenth) and the place of its production (Italy rather than northern France) all suggest a very different literary environment.

By the sixteenth century, prose versions of the verse romances were being made for publication in print rather than manuscript. Such were Claude Platin's *Hystoire de Gyglan* first printed in 1520 (mentioned above as combining *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Jaufre*) and the version of Chrétien's *Perceval* and its Continuations printed in 1530 for Jean Longis, Jean Saint-Denis and Galiot du Pré. The last remnant of a literary (as opposed to an antiquarian) interest in Arthurian verse romance is the work of Pierre Sala in Lyon, who made a verse adaptation of Chrétien's *Yvain* (Suard 1970). This is dedicated to King Francis I (who visited Sala's house in Lyon in 1522), but it should be noted that the only surviving manuscript (BNF, fr. 1638) bears the ex-libris of Jean Sala (Pierre's half-brother), suggesting that the king either never received a dedication copy or never kept it. The fact that this Jean Sala was also the owner of the copy of the *Chanson de Roland* that begins with ten lines from Chrétien's *Yvain* (Lyon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 743) seems to be purely coincidental. Pierre's other known work

in the Arthurian field is his prose version of *Tristan* (Muir 1958), but it looks as though he also made a verse adaptation of *Erec*, if we may judge from the few lines preserved by Du Verdier (Middleton 1993, 166–8).

All this implies that manuscripts of the verse romances were still available in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and that some people continued to show some interest. However, it is revealing that no Arthurian verse romance was put into print except by way of an adaptation into prose. The printers presumably had access to verse manuscripts, and also had an interest in their narrative content, but they judged that the verse form was no longer commercially viable. One printer who certainly knew such a manuscript was Geoffroy Tory. In his *Champ fleury* of 1529 he reports that he has recently seen various works of Old French literature in parchment manuscripts shown to him by René Macé of Vendôme (Tory 1529, Biii). The Arthurian items are the 'Cheualier a lespee' (said to be by Chrétien), 'Perseual' (also by Chrétien) and the 'Mule sans frein' (by 'Paysant de Mesieres'). Since the only surviving copies of the *Chevalier* and the *Mule* are in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 354, which also contains a copy of *Perceval*, this could well be one of the manuscripts that Tory saw. On the other hand, Tory's text presents some difficulties of interpretation, and the only corroborating evidence is the possibility that the attribution of the *Chevalier* to Chrétien stems from the marginal note that is in the manuscript itself. Coincidentally, later in the sixteenth century Bern 354 was owned by another printer, Henri Estienne, whose signature and ex-libris are on the first folio.

By the second half of the sixteenth century, Arthurian verse romances were of no more than antiquarian interest. Several are mentioned by Etienne Pasquier in his *Recherches de la France*, in a passage that was first published in 1596, but he admits that he is taking his information from Tory, and that he has not seen the texts for himself (Pasquier 1617, 726). Only Claude Fauchet had the kind of first-hand knowledge that allowed him to write his *Recueil de l'origine de la langue et poesie françoise* (1581), which remained authoritative for more than 150 years. Fundamental to Fauchet's unrivalled expertise was his own extensive collection of manuscripts (Espiner-Scott 1938a). His manuscript of the *Charrette*, *Yvain* and *Meraugis* survives as Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1725, and the fragment of *Meraugis* in Berlin is in a manuscript that was once his. He must also have had access to copies of *Yvain* and *Perceval* that are now lost, because he transcribed extracts from them into a notebook that is now BNF, fr. 24726 (Espiner-Scott 1938b, 261–3). He also records how he found eight stray leaves of parchment in a printer's shop from which he transcribed some lines of *Perceval* into the *Recueil* (Fauchet 1581, 98). Both La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier in their respective *Bibliothèques françoise*s of 1585 take their entries on Chrétien from Fauchet (La Croix du Maine briefly, but without acknowledgement; Du Verdier with extensive quotation, explicitly attributed). Despite his reliance on

Fauchet, Du Verdier had in fact seen a manuscript of *Perceval* in Lyon, in the possession of Antoine Guillem, the nephew of François Sala, whose father Jean was the half-brother of the Pierre Sala who had produced the modernized version of *Yvain* (Rigoley de Juvigny 1772–3, III, 559; Middleton 1993, 168).

A feature of the copying of verse romances that distinguishes them from their prose counterparts is the existence of significant numbers of 'modern copies'. Such copies of the prose romances are extremely rare, for reasons that are obvious: the texts were accessible in far more medieval manuscripts and in the various early printed editions, so that the task of copying hundreds of pages can have had few attractions (though there is the exception of Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 5154). The verse romances, on the other hand, were difficult to find and short enough to transcribe without major difficulty. In the eighteenth century La Curne de Sainte-Palaye had complete or partial copies made of BNF, fr. 375 (copy in Arsenal MSS 3313–18), BNF, fr. 1420 (copy in Arsenal MS 3319), BNF, fr. 2168 (partial copy, without *L'Atre périlleux,* in Arsenal MS 2770) and Bern, Burgerbibliothek MS 354 (copy in BNF, MS Moreau 1720–1). He may also have been involved in procuring the copy of *Perceval* (from Bern 354) that is now Arsenal MS 2987. At the very beginning of the next century Rochegude copied *Jaufre* from both BNF, fr. 2164 and BNF, fr. 12571; *Le Chevalier aux deux épées* from BNF, fr. 12603; *Erec* from BNF, fr. 375; and *Yvain* and the *Charrette* from BNF, fr. 794 (Albi, Bibliothèque Rochegude, MSS 2, 3 and 8: Middleton 1993, 164–5). It is notable that Chrétien's romances are still predominant.

Not very much later, French and German scholars were making transcriptions, which they sometimes freely lent to other colleagues, sometimes kept to themselves for use in proposed editions that did not always appear. The first edition of any romance by Chrétien de Troyes, the *Yvain* published by Lady Charlotte Guest in 1838, was prepared from a transcript made by Villemarqué (of which Lady Charlotte rightly had a very low opinion), and the first edition of *Erec*, by Immanuel Bekker in 1856, was made possible by the transcript that Francisque Michel had given to Moritz Haupt. Similarly, the critical editions of Chrétien's romances by Wendelin Foerster consistently indicate the extent to which he used transcripts made by others whose names are often commemorated in the choice of sigla. Most of these scholarly copies are of nothing more than passing historical interest, but events can occasionally alter their status in dramatic fashion. Thus, after the Turin fire of 1904, the copy of *Gliglois* made by Professor J. Müller for Wendelin Foerster became the only surviving witness to the text (Livingston 1932, 7–11).

The surviving manuscripts of French Arthurian texts in verse seem to have been made for the most part in a quadrant extending eastwards and northwards from about the centre of France (for the localization of Chrétien manuscripts, see

Nixon 1993b, 15–16 and Stones 1993). This quadrant includes Paris, Normandy, the north-east (Artois, Flanders, Hainault) and eastern France (Champagne, Burgundy). There are very few surviving manuscripts of Arthurian verse made anywhere in France outside this quadrant. From the west we have Tours 942 (containing *Cligés*) and perhaps the fragments in Institut de France, MS 6138 (also *Cligés*). From the south we have BNF, fr. 1374 (*Cligés* again); BNF, fr. 2164 (containing *Jaufre*, the one Arthurian romance in Occitan); and the two fragments of *Jaufre* in Nîmes.

Arthurian verse manuscripts were also produced outside France, and there are surviving examples from Italy, and even more from England. From Italy we have the complete copy of *Jaufre* in BNF, fr. 12571; the two *chansonniers* with excerpts from *Jaufre*; the passage from *Cligés* in Florence, Riccardiana 2756; and perhaps the *Roland* manuscript with a few lines of *Yvain* (Lyon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 743). The scarcity of copies of Arthurian verse romances from Italy contrasts with the significant numbers of Italian manuscripts of *chansons de geste* and of Arthurian prose romances.

Rather more numerous are the Arthurian verse manuscripts that were written in England. Most important is Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. 4. 26, which contains the only surviving copy of *Yder*. Made in England in the second half of the thirteenth century, it eventually entered the library of Sir Thomas Knyvett of Ashwellthorpe in Norfolk, who died in 1618 (McKitterick 1978, 33 and 162). A second is London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 14, containing Chrétien's *Perceval* (without Continuations) alongside Anglo-Norman lays and historical texts. Its first known owner is William Howard of Naworth Castle in Cumbria, who died in 1640, but the book had presumably been in England from the time of its production in the late fourteenth century. Another possible candidate is the *Perceval* in Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 2943, but the evidence is not decisive (Nixon 1993b, 27).

Several other Anglo-Norman manuscripts are represented by surviving fragments. These include the fragments of Thomas's *Tristan*, the fragment of the *Folie Tristan de Berne* in Cambridge, the fragment of the First Continuation of *Perceval* in the Public Record Office, and perhaps the fragment of *Meraugis* in Berlin. There are also Anglo-Norman copies of some of the shorter texts. Most notable is the one manuscript to contain all twelve lays by Marie de France. This is British Library, MS Harley 978, which comes from Reading Abbey in Berkshire. Marie's *Lanval* is also to be found in British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian B. xiv. Another important collection is to be found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86, but only the *Lai du Cor* falls within our area of interest, the rest being a variety of other works in both French and English. Finally, there is Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 82, containing *Le Donnei des amants*, *Desiré* and *Nabaret*. This manuscript was given to Sir Thomas Phillipps

by 'R. B.' (thought to be Robert Benson, Recorder of Salisbury), and there is a suggestion that it had come from Wilton Abbey in Wiltshire.

History and Ownership

Little is known about the early history of the surviving verse manuscripts. This is almost certainly a simple consequence of the date of their production, for the earlier manuscripts of the prose texts are in much the same situation. It is mainly from the later fourteenth century onwards that aristocratic owners commissioned books with their coats of arms incorporated into the decoration, added their ex-libris at the beginning or end, and made catalogues of their libraries. Thirteenth-century books rarely have any clues to their history until they become objects of antiquarian and scholarly interest towards the end of the sixteenth century, and above all when the collectors' market is established from the eighteenth century onwards.

Amongst manuscripts containing works by Chrétien de Troyes there are only nine where anything is known of their history before 1500, and no more than three where there is reliable information before 1400. There are two cases where we know the name of a scribe, and in one of these we also have his address. This is the well-known 'copie de Guiot' (BNF, fr. 794) in which the scribe has added four lines at the end of *Yvain* on fol. 105. Here we find his name 'Guiot' and his place of work 'notre dame del val', which is believed to refer to Provins (Roques 1952, 189). The only other names of scribes are 'Colins li fruitiers' at the end of *Fergus* in Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 472, fol. 122, and Jean Madoc (or Madot), the nephew of Adam de la Halle, in BNF, fr. 375, fol. 119v. This last is controversial, for the date that accompanies it (2 February 1289) seems to be too early for this manuscript. Consequently, most authorities suppose that the name and the date have been copied from an earlier exemplar. None of these scribes is known as the copyist of other surviving manuscripts, and neither of the first two features in other documents. There was a Jean Madoc at Arras (spelt with final *c* in the only known document), who apparently died shortly before Whitsun 1288, but this may not be the scribe (given that the dates do not quite match), and even if he were the scribe he may not have written the manuscript that we now have (Middleton 1993, 182–3).

The earliest information on ownership is in BNF, fr. 12576, which contains *Perceval* and all Continuations, including Gerbert. This has a note of rents that relate to property in Amiens at the end of the thirteenth century, and we may draw the tentative conclusion that the manuscript was then in the hands of a prosperous burgher of similar social standing to the former mayors of Amiens named in the note. By the early sixteenth century the book was owned by the family of Raisse de la Hargerie, whose nobility was established by this time, but whose earlier generations seem to have been administrators. From a rather

similar professional background was Jean Desplancques, *receveur d'Arras* for the Duke of Burgundy in the 1460s, and owner of Mons, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Mons-Hainaut, MS 331/206, which contains *Perceval* with *Bliocadran* and three Continuations. This seems to have been written and illustrated in or near Tournai in the 1280s (Stones 1993, 243–50), and was probably acquired by Jean Desplancques in the region. It was bound by A. Fierlin, probably in Lille, no later than the early sixteenth century (Colin 1992).

A book with early aristocratic connections is BNF, fr. 12560 (containing *Yvain*, the *Charrette* and *Cligés*), which was amongst the property of Margaret of Flanders at the time of her death in 1405 (de Winter 1985, 250–1). Since the book was at Arras (Margaret's principal residence for the latter part of her life), rather than at Paris (the principal residence of her husband Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, at the time of his death a year earlier), it is likely that she had obtained it through inheritance from her father Louis de Mâle, Count of Flanders (d. 1384), or from her grandmother Margaret of France, Countess of Flanders and of Artois (d. 1382). Except for one debatable case, there are no romances of any kind in the inventory of the duke's books at Paris in 1404, and all references to Arthurian romances in Burgundian documents, whether for purchase or refurbishment, are to copies of prose texts (see below, p. 60). By 1400 this manuscript of verse romances was outdated in both form and appearance, being entirely without miniatures at a time when Philip the Bold was vying with his brother Jean de Berry to commission the very finest illustrated books of the day.

The other manuscript of Arthurian verse that is known to have been in the Burgundian library in the Middle Ages is the copy of *Meraugis* that is now in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2599. This does not appear in inventories of the library until that of 1467 (Barrois 1830, no. 1355), but we should not necessarily take this as evidence of a belated interest in this outmoded text. The book may have been in one of the duke's other residences when the earlier inventories were made, or it may have been acquired for the sake of its impressive appearance. An even later acquisition was BNF, fr. 12603, not obtained until 1511, when Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands for her nephew the Emperor Charles V, bought a substantial number of manuscripts from Charles de Croy, Prince of Chimay (Debae 1995, XIII). The characteristic ex-libris at the end (see below, p. 72) shows that it was part of the Croy collection in 1486, but there is no way of knowing whether it had been in the family for generations or whether it was a more recent acquisition. It is not very likely that Charles de Croy (or even his father Philippe, or his grandfather Jean who had begun the collection) would have enjoyed the difficulties of reading verse romances written in Old French, but he (or they) may have wished to acquire old manuscripts simply to enhance the collection. If chosen deliberately, it may have

been so as to provide material for the kind of modernized prose adaptations that were then fashionable at the Burgundian court.

Other verse manuscripts owned by noble families in the fifteenth century are BNF, fr. 1450, which remained in the family of Matignon until the seventeenth century, and BNF, fr. 1453, which seems to have passed from the families of Orléans de Rere and Tranchelion to the Duke of Bourbon at some time before the death of Jean II in 1488 (Middleton 1993).

Amongst books not containing the works of Chrétien even fewer have a known early history. The manuscript on deposit in Nottingham University Library, Middleton MS L. M. 6, which includes copies of *La Vengeance Raguidel*, *Ille et Galeron* and *Le Roman de Silence*, has a note referring to 'ma dame de Laval', for whom there is no reliable identification (despite various speculations). The probable date of this note suggests that the book was still in France as late as the fifteenth century, but it had come to Yorkshire in England at some time before 1500, to be owned by 'Johannes Bertrem de Thorp Kilton', whose identity is also still under discussion (Cowper 1959; de Mandach 1974).

Although we lack so much information about the ownership of surviving manuscripts, we are not entirely at a loss to know some of the people who possessed copies of the texts in which we are interested. Books of all sorts are mentioned in various documents throughout the Middle Ages, and by the fourteenth century we begin to get catalogues and inventories that are sufficiently detailed to allow the identification of surviving volumes.

Amongst the most important of these inventories are those of the royal collection. The earliest was made in 1373 and there were then several others until 1424, when the library was valued for its purchase by the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France for his nephew King Henry VI. The entries from the various inventories have been amalgamated and published in a classified order by Delisle (1907). From the inventory of 1411, which quotes the first words of the manuscripts' second folio, we can be sure that all three entries for *Perceval le Galois* refer to copies of Chrétien's text: Delisle no. 1151 cites 'se sont angles' (*Perceval*, 138); Delisle no. 1152 cites 'mais c'est en sain' (*Perceval*, 119); Delisle no. 1153 cites 'et lendemain' (*Bliocadran*, 69). None of these corresponds to a manuscript that is now extant. Other Arthurian romances in verse are *L'Atre périlleux* (Delisle no. 1163: '. . . l'Estre perileux, achevé par messire Gauvain, en ryme', citing as the first words of the last folio 'celle nuit', which corresponds to *L'Atre périlleux*, 6568) and *Escanor* (Delisle no. 1103: 'Du bel Ascanor de la Montangne . . .'). The volume containing *Escanor* was taken from the library by the king for the queen on 29 August 1390, so it is not present in the later inventories that give the folio references that would allow its identification. There was also a text (presumed to be Arthurian) that is not known from any surviving copy (Delisle no. 1195: 'Torrez chevalier au Cercle d'or, rymé, bien historié et escript'). This volume was

another that was removed from the library, this time by the queen herself on 11 November 1392, and the absence of the volume from later inventories means that we have no folio references. The text it contained may have been the French original of the Dutch *Torec*, and it may be the same text (perhaps even the same manuscript) as that described in successive inventories of the Burgundian library at Malines in 1523 and Turnhout in 1556: 'Le livre du Chevalier chercle d'or et de Parcheval le Galoy' (Michelant 1871, 37) and 'Livre de Chevalier cercle d'or et de Percheval de Galoy' (Gachard 1845, item 89). Although the removal of *Escanor* in 1390 and of *Torec* in 1392 has deprived us of some additional information, it does reveal that the queen, Isabella of Bavaria, was interested in Arthurian verse romances at a later date than might have been expected.

Not all entries in the royal inventories are quite what they seem, and some need to be interpreted with care. Thus, the 'Cligés et Ypomecol, rymé' (Delisle no. 1101) has a second folio reference 'Calabre' that is not from *Cligés*, but would correspond to line 120 of *Ipomedon* (perhaps implying that there were two columns per page of thirty lines each, with the first line used for a title or with the first verse spread over two lines because of a large initial). However, the reference for the last folio given by Delisle from the inventory of 1411 ('fet si ne sens plit') does not seem to be from either *Ipomedon* or *Cligés*. However, this folio reference is given by Douët d'Arcq as 'fet se ne s'emplit' (1867, item 108), though it must be noted that the difference is purely editorial. Despite his title (*Inventaire de . . . 1423*) Douët d'Arcq takes the text of each entry from the inventory of 1411, there being no folio references in that of April 1424 (Delisle 1907, I, 31–2; 34). Nevertheless, the form adopted is extremely helpful, because it can be recognized as a corruption of 'fet cent [*variant*: ces] nes emplir' (*Cligés*, Gregory and Luttrell edn, 6676, less than 120 lines from the end, as required by the presumed format). Thus, 'Cligés et Ypomecol' does represent *Cligés* and *Ipomedon*, but in the opposite order. Other problematic entries are 'Glorion de Bretagne, rymé' (Delisle no. 1112), whose folio references do not suit the unique, late manuscript of *Galeran de Bretagne*, and the 'Merengis rymé, très vieil' (Delisle no. 1141), whose folio references do not suit *Meraugis de Portlesguez*. Other possible evidence for a different *Meraugis* (unless 'Sado' is a corruption of 'Lidoine') is the 'romaunz de Merangys et Sado' that was issued to Queen Isabella, wife of Edward II, in London in March 1327 (London, British Library, Additional MS 60584, fol. 27v, lines 11–12; Vale 1982, 50, with slightly different transcription).

From a very different context is the inventory of Jean de Saffres, a dean of the chapter of Langres, who died in 1365. This includes a number of Arthurian entries in both prose and verse (Carnandet 1857, 471). Those presumed to be in verse are 'romancium dicti *de Cligez*', 'romancium dicti *de Percevaux le Galoix*' and 'romancium dicti *de Beaudoux*' (items 3, 4 and 6). The occurrence of *Perceval* is no surprise; just as it has the greatest number of surviving manuscripts, so it is

also by far the most common Arthurian verse text in the inventories. By contrast, *Beaudous* does not occur anywhere else, and *Cligés* is far from common, though there was one in the library of King Martin I of Aragon in 1410 (Massó Torrents 1905, item 281). This is heavily disguised in the published inventory as 'vn altre libre appellat *De Rech* en frances' (*another book called* De Rech *in French*). This title should have been transcribed as *d'Erech*, but there is an older misunderstanding in the inventory itself, for the *incipit* given is 'Cil qui fests de rech', i.e. the first line of *Cligés*: 'Cil qui fist d'Erec et d'Enide' (*he who wrote about Erec and Enide*). In 1474 the library of the Countess of Montpensier at Aigueperse had amongst the books on parchment 'Le livre de Parseval le Galoiz' and a 'Durmas le Galoiz, en ryme' (Boislisle 1880, 299), but by 1507 only the *Perceval* remained, unless *Durmart* is represented by 'Ung petit Livre des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde . . . en parchemyn' (Le Roux de Lincy 1850, 121, items 143 and 152).

We have already seen that BNF, fr. 12560 appears amongst the books of Margaret of Flanders in 1405, and that the *Meraugis* in Vienna had entered the Burgundian library before 1467, but it is extraordinary that these are the only examples of Arthurian verse manuscripts in catalogues of this extensive collection until the acquisition of BNF, fr. 12603 from Charles de Croy in 1511. This is almost certainly an anomaly that results in part from the inventories' being restricted to one particular ducal residence on each occasion. It is extremely unlikely that dukes of Burgundy did not possess other Arthurian verse. Indeed, it looks as though they did have a second copy of *Yvain*, if we may judge from the closing line 's'on n'y vient mensoenge adiouster' given in the inventory of 1487 for a volume that ended with 'pluiseurs autres livres' (*several other books*) whose titles are not specified (Barrois 1830, no. 1756; Doutrepont 1906, xxiii). However, the inventory of 1467 records the opening words of the last folio of the same book as 'presques exploittié' (Barrois 1830, no. 1484), which fails to support the identification with *Yvain*, forcing us to suppose either that another text used the same closing line, or that *Yvain* was added to the volume between the making of the two inventories. It is also hard to believe that Philip the Bold never had a copy of the ubiquitous *Perceval*, when he commissioned a tapestry of its subject-matter as a gift for the Duke of York (Dehaisnes 1886, 697 and 727). There was certainly an opportunity for a copy to be in the library, because there are several routes by which Philip the Bold or Margaret of Flanders could have had a share in the inheritance of Matilda, Countess of Artois, who bought a *Perceval* at Arras in November 1308 (Dehaisnes 1886, 183).

The distribution of the manuscripts of verse texts was at one time much wider than the history of the surviving copies would indicate. The survivors are now mostly in France, and those that are elsewhere nearly all reached their present homes after the Middle Ages. Out of the 58 surviving Arthurian verse manuscripts and 46 sets of fragments only 19 (of which 11 are fragments) are likely to

have been outside France before 1500, and this figure includes four that were in territories that some definitions might count as part of France: three in the Burgundian Netherlands (as already indicated) and Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS L. IV. 33, which was presumably in Savoy. Only those that were made in England and Italy were outside France in the broader sense.

There is, however, evidence of various kinds that manuscripts now lost were to be found somewhat further afield. There were, for example, at least one or two copies of *Perceval* in Italy. The inventory of the Gonzaga library at Mantua in 1407 includes: 'Princivallis le galoys per versus. Incipit: *Qui petit seme petit cheul*. Et finit: *se il chierent par chemin*. Continet cart. 315.' (Braghirolli 1880, item 39). The title has been distorted, but the *incipit* identifies the text as Chrétien's *Perceval*, and the *explicit* is that of Manessier's Continuation. The copy of *Perceval* owned by Valentina of Milan may have been brought from Italy on the occasion of her marriage to Louis d'Orléans in 1388, but it is not specifically recorded amongst her books at that time. It was later inherited by her son Charles d'Orléans in 1408 (Champion 1910, lxix, lxxiii and 86). Somewhat surprisingly, given the survival of so much of the Orleans library, this book cannot be identified amongst extant copies.

English bequests and catalogues include a good number of Arthurian titles, but most are likely to be in prose. A possible example of one in verse is in a book in the Benedictine abbey at Peterborough at the end of the fourteenth century. This contained 'Tristrem Gallice' and 'Amys et Amilion Gallice' (Blaess 1973, 343). Since the prose *Tristan* is too long to share a volume, it is likely that both texts were in verse, though whether the *Tristan* was the version by Thomas or Beroul, or some other that has not survived, would be pure speculation. The only document that provides sufficiently precise information to identify texts and manuscripts beyond doubt is the library catalogue of St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury. Thus, 'Romaunz de per le Galois, 2º fº. *et oreisons*' (James 1903, 373, item 1530) is confirmed as a copy of Chrétien's romance by the opening words of its second folio (*Perceval*, 157). Less certain in its identification is the 'Romance de Perciuall & Gawyn' owned by King Richard II, though this too is likely to have been Chrétien's *Perceval*. It appears in a list of books in 1384–5, but it had previously been recorded in the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer as having been handed over to the *valet de chambre* John Rose in 1379. It could have been the 'romaunz Perceual coaperto de coreo albo' released by command of Queen Isabella to Thomas de Useflete in March 1327 (London, British Library, Additional MS 60584, fol. 27v, line 7; Vale 1982, 50, with slightly different transcription), and it is presumably the 'Perceual & Gauwayn' bequeathed by Isabella to Edward III in 1358, and inherited by Richard II in 1377. However, far from being a 'catalogue' of the royal library at the time, the list of 1384–5 records books that Richard had already discarded (for the text of the lists of 1358 and

1384–5, see Rickert 1932; for a correct interpretation of the documents involved, see Green 1976, especially 237). Evidence that there was once a manuscript of *Erec* in England is provided by the section of this text listing the Knights of the Round Table (ed. Foerster, 1691ff.) that has been copied into British Library, MS Harley 4971, a composite manuscript, whose various parts were written in England in the fourteenth century before finding their way to Bury St Edmunds.

There is also the indirect evidence provided by translations and adaptations. Most notably, Chrétien's romances gave rise to versions in several languages. Thus *Erec*, *Yvain* and *Perceval* all have their counterparts in German, Norse and Welsh, and the latter two also exist in English, whilst a somewhat later German version of *Cligés* is now known only from fragments (Meyer 2000, 107). The *Lanzelet* by Ulrich von Zatzikhoven is not taken directly from Chrétien's *Charrette*, but its author claims to have used a French manuscript. There are German, Norse and English versions of Thomas's *Tristan*, and a Norse version of lays by Marie de France and other writers. Equally important, though less well preserved, are several romances in Middle Dutch. The only one to have survived in an independent form is *Ferguut*, a slightly abridged version of Guillaume le Clerc's *Fergus*, composed in the first half of the thirteenth century (Besamusca 2000, 211–14). However, there must at one time have been others, because versions of them have been included in the *Lancelot* Compilation of about 1320. These are: *Perchevael* (a version of the Gauvain section of *Perceval* combined with episodes from the First Continuation); *Wrake van Ragisel* (a version of *La Vengeance Raguidel* which survives in an earlier fragment as well as in the much-abridged version of the *Lancelot* Compilation); *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet* (related to the *Lai de Tyolet*); and *Torec*, which probably reflects the lost French romance of *Torrez* (Besamusca 2000, 200–11).

All these translations and adaptations imply access to manuscripts of the originals. Theoretically, some of the foreign versions could have been done in France and exported later, but it is very much more probable that it was the French manuscripts that travelled abroad for the foreign versions to be made in their own country. Certainly, the documented cases of *Lanzelet* and *Tristrams saga* appear to be of this type, as does Wolfram von Eschenbach's non-Arthurian *Willehalm*.

Manuscripts of Arthurian Prose

Texts and Manuscripts

In considering the manuscripts of Arthurian texts in prose, one of the most significant differences is the sheer number of the survivors (in the region of 450) by comparison with the volumes containing Arthurian verse (58, plus 46 sets of

fragments). There is, however, an even bigger change in the ratio of texts to manuscripts, since for most purposes scholars recognize fewer Arthurian texts in prose than in verse. The vast majority of extant manuscripts are classified as copies of only two 'texts', the *Lancelot–Grail* and the prose *Tristan*, but when confronted by the actual contents of these several hundred volumes, it soon emerges that this classification is as much the result of a particular scholarly understanding as of any consistency in the books themselves. Given that the *Lancelot–Grail* is made up of five branches (usually presumed to be by several different authors), it is far from clear that it can legitimately be treated as one text rather than five. In reality, matters are even more complicated than that, because the *Estoire* exists in at least three versions (short, long and mixed), not to mention those manuscripts that have the *Joseph d'Arimathie*, either as an alternative, or in addition, or even embedded within the text of the *Estoire*. Similarly, the *Merlin* has a short and a long version, as well as occurring with or without one or other of its various sequels (Vulgate *Suite*, Huth *Suite du Merlin*, or the *Livre d'Artus* of BNF, fr. 337). Following which, *Lancelot* exists in the early non-cyclic version and in the much extended cyclic version (with an expanded form of the earlier text and several additional sections long enough to be romances in their own right, and sometimes known by separate titles, especially in the case of *Agravain*). Manuscripts of the *Queste* and *Mort Artu* are less subject to such large variations, but the important question here is how they relate to their so-called Post-Vulgate counterparts. And this is still not counting the anonymous abridgement of the whole Cycle represented by New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 38 (a manuscript copied by Loys Daymeries at Bruges in 1479) and by the incomplete Arsenal MS 3350 (Bogdanow 1955 and 1976). Nor does it include the modernized adaptation of the cycle made by Guillaume de la Pierre, of which parts can be found in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9246 (*Estoire*) and in BNF, fr. 91 (*Merlin*), these being the two surviving volumes of a manuscript written for Jean-Louis of Savoy, Bishop of Geneva (Bayot 1909, 341–51).

Thus, even without considering differences between individual copies, the term *Lancelot–Grail* can be used to cover any number of texts from one to fifteen, or even more. This is complicated enough, but the term prose *Tristan* is, if anything, even more nebulous. Well-known differences between manuscripts are so considerable that scholars recognize several distinct versions (short, long and mixed). Even then, many manuscripts have individual variants that can be extensive, not to mention those that incorporate substantial portions of the *Lancelot–Grail*, or mix the *Tristan* with *Guiron le Courtois* in the Compilation of Rusticien de Pise. The consequence of all this is that the same codex may be cited as a manuscript of three or four different texts, according to each scholar's particular interest at the time.

A classic example of the difficulties that arise in this way is *Guiron le Courtois*. In one sense this text survives in twenty-six manuscripts (bound in thirty-six volumes) and in various further fragments (Lathuillère 1966 and below, chapter IX). Yet in another sense it survives in none at all. Amongst those that bear witness to its existence there is none that gives the complete text, scarcely any two that contain the same material from *Guiron* (even on the larger scale) and none that does not contain material from other texts, either individually or in combination. These other texts are most often the Compilation of Rusticien de Pise, but also quite frequently the *Lancelot–Grail* or the prose *Tristan*, and occasionally the *Prophecies de Merlin* or a different version of *Guiron* itself. Thus, in the case of what we call *Guiron le Courtois*, every manuscript is a compilation, and many consist of one compilation embedded within another. Added to which, one can say almost exactly the same of the Compilation by Rusticien. Given that its very nature is to combine parts of *Guiron* and *Tristan*, it is no surprise that of the eleven manuscripts considered by Cigni (1992) no fewer than eight are also described by Lathuillère (1966) as copies of *Guiron*. Of the remaining three, BNF, fr. 99 and Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 647 are invariably included amongst the manuscripts of *Tristan*, leaving only BNF, fr. 1463, probably written within ten or twenty years of the date of composition, and chosen by Cigni as the most authentic representative of the text. Not discussed by Cigni is Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, MS Hamilton 581 (Bogdanow 1991b). In principle, both BNF, fr. 1463 and Hamilton 581 contain only the Compilation by Rusticien, and yet both are also listed amongst manuscripts of the Post-Vulgate (Bogdanow 1991a, 132–3 and 135–7).

In the light of these considerations, it is obvious that a comparison of the type made for verse texts between the number of texts and the number of copies would simply be at the whim of our classifications. It is also clear that when considering the prose romances the concept of compilation takes on a meaning that is quite different from the collections of texts in verse. In the case of verse, the texts preserve their integrity; it is the manuscript that is the compilation. Even in the extreme case of BNF, fr. 1450 the beginning and end of each individual text is well defined, despite the changes and omissions brought about by their being inserted into the middle of Wace's *Brut*. In prose compilations, however, sources are amalgamated to produce a continuous text, so that only careful comparison with other copies will reveal the addition of extraneous material and any further modification. The technique of *entrelacement* means that even a text in its purest form moves from one strand of narrative to another at frequent intervals, so nothing could be easier than inserting episodes from a different source, or from one's own imagination. Once a compilation has been made, it may be transmitted by a number of further copies, or it may remain as a more or less isolated example. Thus we have the cases of *Guiron*, Rusticien and the prose *Tristan* with a Grail narrative, where each is represented by several surviving

manuscripts (each in turn with its own modifications), but we also have a number of cases where a particular combination of texts is confined to just one or two copies. The best-known example is BNF, fr. 112, studied in detail by Pickford (1959/60*) and in chapter IX, but there are several other cases of some importance. One such is the unusual compilation created by interpolating religious texts into the *Lancelot–Grail* that is now Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 147, described in detail by Vielliard (1974).

Less strictly Arthurian is the *Guiron le Courtois* in Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 96, a compilation that is sometimes attributed to Jean Vaillant of Poitiers (Loomis ed. 1959*, 354–5). However, Vaillant's contribution is probably confined to his abridged adaptation of the *Brut*, said to have been made for Louis II, Duke of Bourbon, during April and May, and finished on 'le samedi jour Saint Jehan euvangeliste' of 1391. A small problem not previously noticed is that the date intended is surely the feast of St John the *Baptist* (24 June), which was indeed a Saturday in 1391, whereas the feast of St John the Evangelist (27 December) would have been a Wednesday. The other copy of this prologue (in BNF, fr. 358) agrees on the year 1391, but omits the more detailed reference. Subject to correcting 'Evangelist' to 'Baptist', the date given is probably reliable, but it may not refer to the whole compilation. The Geneva manuscript itself is often described as being from about 1410–30, but it is in fact slightly later, for there is a passage on fol. 4 that refers to the present year as being 1443. Towards the end of the century this compilation was expanded into the six-volume *Guiron* made for Louis de Bruges (BNF, fr. 358–63). This originally had a companion (made for Engelbert of Nassau) that has been reduced to the fragments that remain in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 383. These seventeen leaves (preserved for the sake of their miniatures) contain material from the first and last volumes of the set (Bogdanow 1964, but it is not the case that both volumes were by the same scribe, the hand of the second being measurably smaller than that of the first, and its overall appearance much neater). The original foliation still present on the Oxford fragments enables us to calculate that the amount of text now missing between the surviving leaves is consistently within 1 per cent of the amount that has survived in BNF, fr. 358 and 363 (once due allowance has been made for the different amount of text per page). The two Nassau volumes were still intact when they were described in 1686, and they remained intact until at least 1749 (Renting et al. 1993, item 1318: 'Histoire Guiron le Courtois. premier Volume. MS. en parchemin. Quatriesme et dernier Volume'). The description of these volumes as 'first' and 'fourth and last' does not refer to how the set was bound, but to how the text was divided by the compiler, for the complete set in Paris uses the same terminology. The *explicits* of the six bound volumes (Lathuillère 1966, 70–4) divide the tale into a first volume (BNF, fr. 358), a second volume, parts 1 and 2 (BNF, fr. 359 and 360), a third volume, parts 1

and 2 (BNF, fr. 361 and 362), and a fourth and last volume (BNF, fr. 363). No doubt the Nassau set was treated in the same way, unless we entertain the possibility that the first and last volumes were the only ones to have been made. An additional Arthurian interest of this *Guiron* compilation is that the first part of the prose adaptation of *Erec* (probably done in Lille in the 1450s) has been incorporated into the final volume (Middleton 1988; Colombo Timelli 2000).

From a number of related manuscripts with additional material of this sort, and influenced no doubt by parallels in the works of Malory, which he was then editing, Vinaver and his Manchester colleagues extracted tales that they presented (at least by implication) as if they were separate texts (Vinaver 1942; Pickford 1951; 1959; Bogdanow 1965), but it is far from certain that these tales have the independence that this procedure implies. They do not necessarily occur in the manuscripts as continuous, easily defined sections, often appearing as episodes separated by other material, subject to the usual procedure of *entrelacement*. Even more problematic is the Post-Vulgate *Queste du Graal*. In one sense this is represented by an impressive array of manuscripts (Bogdanow 1991a), but never in a complete and uncorrupted form. Embedded in other compilations, not in one continuous sequence, and often fragmentary, it presents a real challenge to any definition of what constitutes a text. Even if it were once a text, it is not clear what it would mean to make such a claim for what the surviving manuscripts now contain. This is a case of considerable importance that is on the very boundary of our definitions.

Outside the two great cycles, Arthurian prose manuscripts are no more numerous than verse, even when we include texts that are only on the fringes of being Arthurian. Best represented is *Guiron le Courtois* with its twenty-six manuscripts and various fragments, but in addition to the complexities of its text that have already been mentioned, its connection with Arthurian literature is rather tenuous. Similarly, although the cover of the recent edition (though not the title page) confidently describes it as a 'roman arthurien', *Ysaÿe le Triste* is a tale in which most of the action takes place outside the Arthurian realm (Giacchetti 1989). This is preserved in just two manuscripts: Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, MS 2524 and Gotha, Herzogliche Bibliothek, MS 688. The first of these comes from the library of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy; it is first recorded in the inventory of 1467 (Barrois 1830, no. 1282), and is still present in 1487 (Barrois 1830, no. 1834). This shortage of copies might give the impression that the text had a very restricted readership, were it not for the fact that there were several printed editions. There was also sufficient continuity of interest for the manuscript now at Gotha (apparently made 1517–25) to be the latest of all surviving Arthurian manuscripts (discounting secondary copies made by scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).

Represented by more manuscripts, but even less Arthurian than *Guiron* and *Ysaÿe le Triste*, is *Perceforest*. This is preserved in twenty-four volumes, yet this is

largely a reflection of the sheer length of the text. In the Middle Ages it was usually divided into six volumes, but eighteenth-century rebinding has turned one of these sets of six into a set of twelve (Arsenal MSS 3483–94). Thus, the large number of volumes disguises the fact that there were in reality relatively few copies of the text, though it is clear that at least a dozen other volumes have disappeared, and there were also printed editions of 1528 and 1531.

If *Guiron*, *Ysaÿe le Triste* and *Perceforest* can claim to be Arthurian more by their associations than by their substance, the Arthurian credentials of the *Prophecies de Merlin* are much more apparent, but even here the prophecies themselves are often devoted to other things. The narrative framework certainly incorporates the elements we might expect of a chivalric romance, but the text as a whole does not fit easily within the genre. Four of the twelve surviving manuscripts incorporate the prophecies into the text of the Vulgate *Merlin*, and one other combines them with *Guiron le Courtois*. Whether associated with other texts or preserved in isolation, the number of copies is probably a reflection of a general interest in prophecy and of the particular reputation of Merlin himself.

Conversely, a text whose Arthurian credentials are often overlooked is the *Roman de Laurin* (Thorpe 1958). Taken as a whole it is not, of course, an Arthurian romance, being a sequel to *Marques de Rome*, itself a sequel to the *Sept sages de Rome*, but it does contain two lengthy sections that are exclusively Arthurian, in which many familiar figures (such as Arthur, Guinevere, Gauvain, Kay, Lancelot, Perceval, Yvain, Erec and Bohort) make their appearance, but also in which less well known Arthurian characters have significant roles (notably Baudemagu, but also Brandelus, Claudas and Giglain). Given that these sections amount to very nearly half the text (occupying 185 pages out of a total of 386 in Thorpe's edition) it has, in some ways at least, a much better claim to be called Arthurian than *Perceforest*, *Ysaÿe le Triste* or *Guiron*. On the other hand, the copies in which it survives are all manuscripts of the Seven Sages Cycle, so although the text could claim to be Arthurian, the manuscripts are not.

Not fully incorporated into the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle, but not entirely independent, are the three prose texts attributed to Robert de Boron: *Joseph*, *Merlin* and *Didot-Perceval*. These occur together in just two manuscripts: Modena, Biblioteca Comunale Estense, MS E. 39 and BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 4166. This prose version of *Perceval* appears nowhere else, and it is this in particular that defines these three texts as an alternative cycle. In contrast to this, the *Merlin* is also a constituent of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle, and even the *Joseph* is more usually found in manuscripts of the *Lancelot–Grail*, sometimes instead of the Vulgate *Estoire*, sometimes alongside it, sometimes embedded within it.

In the mainstream of Arthurian literature there are really only two texts without some connection to the two great cycles: *Perlesvaus* and *Le Chevalier du Papegau*. One is early and the other late, but each survives in only a few

manuscripts. Indeed, in the case of the *Papegau*, there is just one known copy (BNF, fr. 2154, obtained from Cangé in 1733, having previously belonged to various members of the Tournon family). There is a 'Liber militis a papagallo' in the inventory of the Gonzaga library at Mantua in 1407 (item 36), and the next item is also a 'Papagallus' (Braghirolli 1880). Since the *incipits* and *explicits* of these two books are the same in all but one minor variant, it is clear that these were two copies of the same text (one in seventy leaves, the other in sixty). However, neither the *incipit* nor the *explicit* resembles anything in the surviving *Chevalier du Papegau*, though it may not be irrelevant that the Tournons had close connections with Italy, and owned several Arthurian manuscripts that had been made there (see below, p. 69).

The more interesting case is that of *Perlesvaus*, which survives more or less complete in three manuscripts and in a defective copy that lacks the final third (Chantilly, MS 472, a major repository of Arthurian texts in verse, see Chapter XI). Several small sections of the text are preserved in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 113 (which we have also encountered before for its verse romances), and there are three sets of fragments. In addition, a short passage has been incorporated into a version of the *Lancelot–Grail* preserved in two closely related copies completed in Paris in 1404 or very soon afterwards (BNF, fr. 117–20 and Arsenal MSS 3479–80). There is also a translation into Welsh (Lloyd-Morgan 1986). Two of the three principal manuscripts have no documented history until the sixteenth century, but the third (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 82) has much more to tell us. The Bodleian *Summary Catalogue* suggests that it was written in England, but the editors Nitze and Jenkins (1932–7) failed to find any specifically Anglo-Norman linguistic forms, and were led to suppose that it was probably written in northern France, in the middle of the thirteenth century. Later additions, however, are certainly in an English hand (the French poem on the recto of the last leaf and the Latin on the verso both use long-stemmed *r*), and there is reason to believe that the book was in England by 1300, or not very much after. At the head of the first leaf of text there is an ex-libris that reads 'Le seint Graal; le liuer Sire Brian, fiz alayn'. In the edition by Nitze and Jenkins this leaf is designated 'fol. 1', but the foliation on the manuscript itself begins with the four flyleaves, making this first leaf of text fol. 5. The editors insist that the inscription has *seinti*, but this is not really so, since the stroke that represents the final *i* is significantly fainter than the rest. It has probably been imperfectly erased by the writer of this inscription, who probably began by following the wording of the text itself (which has *seintisme*), but then decided to abbreviate so as to have room for the name that follows. It is just possible that the *i* might be a survival from a previous inscription that is no longer legible, but whose existence is implied by the fact that these first words are written upon erasure.

Brian Fitzalan has been identified by Nitze (1935; 1932–7) as the lord of Bedale in Yorkshire who died in 1306. The origins of his family are not documented with complete certainty, but the tradition that he was descended from a younger son of Alan the Black, Duke of Brittany (d. 1146) is unlikely to be correct, though Brian himself or his descendants may have believed it. Whatever its ultimate origins, the family of Brian Fitzalan, lord of Bedale, had been established in northern England for several generations. His grandfather, another Brian Fitzalan, had been sheriff of Northumberland and of Yorkshire. Brian himself was summoned to the Welsh war of 1282 and to the council of Gloucester of 1287. In 1290 he was appointed warden of the castles of Forfar, Dundee, Roxburgh and Jedburgh (in southern Scotland), and in 1292 he was made one of the guardians of Scotland. In 1294 he was summoned to repress the Welsh revolt, and in 1295 he was summoned to Parliament (and again on various occasions until 1305). From 1296 he spent most of his life in Scotland or on the border. It is notable that the available records do not include any period of service in France, his summons to serve beyond the sea (7 July 1297) being immediately superseded, firstly by his appointment as captain of all garrisons and fortresses in Northumberland (12 July 1297) and then by his appointment as guardian of Scotland (14 August 1297). We could not be sure that Brian had never been abroad, but it seems more likely that the manuscript had been brought across the Channel by someone else.

The manuscript itself is an interesting example of cooperation between several scribes working simultaneously and perhaps in some haste. Nitze and Jenkins (1932–7) have identified nine different hands, but what they do not make clear is that most of the transitions take place at the start of a new gathering. Even more revealing are the occasions when the scribe finishing the previous gathering has slightly misjudged the amount of material available to fill the final column. Fol. 28v ends with two blank lines; fol. 36v ends with its last line half blank; fol. 44v has four lines in which letters and words are widely spaced, but still ends with a blank line; on fol. 50v the last line is five letters too long; on fol. 51v the last line consists of only two words, completed by an extended horizontal stroke; on fol. 53 the catchword of fol. 52v has been added before the text in a different hand; fol. 77v ends with two extra lines below the ruling, written in an even smaller hand; fol. 83v has two lines in which letters and words are widely spaced, followed by a line with only one word, and then three blank lines. These procedures (which all correspond to changes of scribe) are clear evidence that the exemplar was divided into quires, and distributed to the various different scribes for each to copy a specified section of the text.

Format and Appearance

In physical appearance, manuscripts of Arthurian prose texts are usually quite different from their verse counterparts. The prose manuscripts are typically larger

than the verse, and some are very large indeed. A simple means of gaining an impression of these different sizes is to compare the shelf-marks of those that are in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The order of manuscripts in the earlier part of the *fonds français* is still essentially that of the numerical sequence established by Nicolas Clément for his catalogue of 1682, which was arranged in a series of categories that were determined by size. These began with *folio maximo* (as far as modern shelf-mark fr. 151), followed by *folio magno* (to fr. 390), *folio mediocri* (to fr. 888), *folio parvo* (to fr. 1747) and finally *quarto* (to fr. 2423), after which the system becomes more complicated. The merest glance at a list of shelf-marks will show how many of the prose manuscripts are *folio maximo*, whereas verse manuscripts have nothing larger than one *folio magno* (BNF, fr. 375) and after that only one *folio mediocri* (BNF, fr. 794), with both of these being collective manuscripts containing a wide range of texts. A further difference, despite this average increase in size, is that prose manuscripts usually contain either a single text or consecutive texts of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle. Copies of the complete Cycle are often divided into several volumes, as are those of *Perceforest*, *Guiron le Courtois* and *Tristan*. The obvious reason for both these differences is that the prose compositions are much longer than the verse, so that the additional space is a practical necessity, though it is also the case that many prose manuscripts, especially the later ones, are written in a larger script and with much more generous margins.

It is also worth remembering that the Middle Ages tolerated far thicker volumes than modern libraries or collectors. Earlier inventories often allow us to know that books now bound as two, three or four volumes were originally single volumes of over 600 leaves. Thus, the four volumes of BNF, fr. 117–20 began life as a single volume in the library of the Duke of Berry, and so did its twin in the collection of the Duke of Burgundy (now Arsenal MSS 3479–80). The four volumes of BNF, fr. 113–16 owned by Jacques d'Armagnac were a single volume until after 1645 (Omont 1908–21, III, 6, item 54), and the three volumes of British Library, Additional MSS 10292–4 were still bound as one in 1686, as were the two volumes of Cologny-Genève, cod. Bodmer 96. These last two items (a complete *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle and a *Guiron* compilation) both come from the collection of the princes of Orange at Nozeroy, where they were items 5 and 28 in the inventory taken in 1686 (their numbers 'cinq' and 'vingt huit' being written on their opening folios, as specified by the inventory itself). The descriptions of 1686 also allow them to be identified in earlier inventories at Nozeroy, the *Lancelot–Grail* being item 5 in 1533 and the *Guiron* being item 15 in 1542 (Lanoë 1998, 475, 480, 486 and 488, without identifications). A similar case is the complete *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle that is now divided between Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, MS 1 (three volumes), Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS French 1 (two volumes) and Oxford, Bodleian

Library, MS Douce 215. There is some evidence that this may have been a single volume at one stage, but it was certainly in only two volumes when it disappeared from the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris early in the eighteenth century (Kohler 1898, xciii, item 6). It is described as 'deux gros volumes' in the two catalogues of the library preserved in Paris, Sainte-Geneviève, MS 952 (fol. 16) and MS 965 (p. 17), and the first of these also has a note by Mercier de Saint-Léger recording its absence, and another giving its shelf-mark as T 7 (which is what appears on the opening folios of Amsterdam vol. 1 and Douce 215).

On the other hand, we should not suppose that all prose manuscripts were particularly large, nor that they never contained unrelated texts. It is true that no survivor is as small as the smallest of the verse, but quite a few are no bigger than more typical verse manuscripts. For example, nine of the twenty-one surviving manuscripts containing texts from the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle that were in England during the Middle Ages are no more than 300mm tall (Middleton 2003, n. 43). This proportion of nearly half is not repeated outside England, but there were certainly some smaller manuscripts elsewhere. The sizes given by Micha (1960–3) for copies of the *Lancelot* are an easily accessible guide. His list includes eight of the nine smaller manuscripts that were in England, all now in the British Library: MSS Egerton 2515 (267mm); Lansdowne 757 (225mm); Royal 15. A. xi (185mm); Royal 19. B. vii (300mm); Royal 19. C. xiii (300mm); Royal 20. A. ii (275mm); Royal 20. B. viii (266mm); Royal 20. C. vi (185mm). The ninth (containing the *Estoire* and *Merlin*) is British Library, Additional MS 32125 (250mm). Smaller manuscripts of the *Lancelot* that were in France during the Middle Ages are: BNF, fr. 1430 (289mm); BNF, fr. 12573 (280mm); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MSS 445-D (280mm) and 5018-D (297mm); Escorial, Monasterio Real de San Lorenzo, MS P. II. 22 (289mm); Fribourg, Bibliothèque Cantonale, MS L. 310 (292mm). The dimensions given by Micha for New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MSS M. 805–06 are in error; the library describes these volumes as measuring 346mm.

There are also some examples of Arthurian prose manuscripts with additional texts (not counting those compilations with interpolated texts that have already been mentioned). A notable case is Berkeley, Bancroft Library, MS UCB 106 (ex Phillipps 3643), which consists mainly of texts in verse, but also contains the *Estoire* and *Merlin*, though there is some room for doubt whether this was the original intention. It is now in two volumes, and although the present division does not fall between the verse and the prose, there are signs that the manuscript was at one time bound in a different order. Equally significant is BNF, fr. 95, whose *Estoire* and *Merlin* are followed by the *Sept sages de Rome* and the *Pénitence Adam*, despite the fact that it is believed to be a companion to New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 229, which contains *Agravain*, the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu* (Stones 1996). Other examples are: BNF, fr. 770, in

which an *Estoire* (with embedded *Joseph*), *Merlin* and *Suite* are followed by the *Histoire d'outre-mer et du Roi Saladin*, into which has been interpolated *La Fille du Comte de Pontieu* and the *Ordene de chevalerie*; BNF, fr. 12581, in which the *Queste* is followed by various texts, including a *Tresor* of Brunetto Latini copied in 1284; Arsenal MS 5218, in which the *Queste* is followed by a chronicle; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1517, in which *Merlin* is preceded by *Garin de Montglane*; Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS Thott 1087 4º, in which the *Mort Artu* is followed by troubadour poetry; and the former Newcastle 937, in which *Lancelot* was accompanied by a life of Bertrand du Guesclin. This last had been divided into two volumes by 1986 (Tenschert, Catalogue 16, items 6 and 7), but both volumes were still companions when offered for sale in 1995 by Jörn Günther of Hamburg (Catalogue 3, item 11).

Most prose manuscripts contain miniatures, and it is common for them to have extensive programmes of illustration. For obvious reasons it is those with the most lavish illustrations that are best known through the repeated reproduction of their pictures, not only in specialized studies, but also in more popular publications. We must not, however, be misled into supposing that all prose manuscripts were of this type. Even amongst the survivors this is far from the case, and it is a reasonable assumption that cheaper manuscripts will have perished in greater numbers than their more expensive counterparts. This availability of 'untypical' copies is of some importance. We tend to know the history of the lavishly illustrated manuscripts owned by members of the higher aristocracy much better than that of the plainer volumes. This might lead us to associate Arthurian prose literature with a particular social class, whereas in fact it had a much wider distribution. A characteristic side-effect of this is the assumptions that are made about the work of Sir Thomas Malory. More than one attempt to identify the writer of the *Morte Darthur* has thought it necessary to explain how the favoured candidate had access to a substantial library packed with expensive volumes, but this rests upon a misconception. All the French texts that Malory used could be contained in two or three volumes at most, and there is no need for any of them to have been expensive, particularly in England. As we have already seen, nine of the surviving manuscripts of the *Lancelot–Grail* known to have been in England in the Middle Ages are relatively small. Six of these have no more than coloured initials for decoration, and the other three have only one or two miniatures. What is more, even five of the larger manuscripts are without miniatures (Middleton 2003, n. 43). There is every reason to believe that the relevant French texts would have been available without much difficulty to anyone from the landed gentry, and there is every chance that Sir Thomas Malory (whoever he may have been) could have owned his own copies (Meale 1985, 105–8). A much more pertinent question in Malory's case would be to consider how he obtained access to the English alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which really was a rarity.

In France, however, the fifteenth century witnessed a new type of manuscript production, in which outward appearance was very much a prime consideration. The number and quality of the illustrations had always had a major influence upon the price, and those that could afford it might buy more than one copy of the same text if the volumes were sufficiently attractive. Older copies might be replaced by those that were newer, and plainer copies by those that were more prestigious. Kings and dukes might acquire multiple copies as a result of gifts or by inheritance, but except for the production of bibles and service books it is not until the fifteenth century that we encounter situations where the making of a particular book is more important than the copying of a particular text.

This change of emphasis appears in commissions to produce a copy of a text that the patron already owns, in commissions to produce two or three matching copies of a particular text, and in repeated commissions to produce copies of the same text in different formats. The last of these categories is most obviously exemplified by the Duke of Berry and his many Books of Hours, but there are no documented cases amongst Arthurian manuscripts. For the production of matching copies we can turn to Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who in 1403 paid his agent Jacques Raponde for three copies of the *Fleur des histoires de la terre d'orient* (Cockshaw 1969, no. 55). One of these was for his brother the Duke of Berry, the second for his nephew the Duke of Orleans and the third for Philip himself. As an Arthurian example, it is likely that a similar commission is at the origin of the two matching copies of the *Lancelot–Grail* that are now BNF, fr. 117–20 and Arsenal MSS 3479–80, the first owned by the Duke of Berry, the second by Philip's son, John the Fearless. If this double commission is not fully documented, it is probably because Philip the Bold had died (on 27 April 1404) before the books were ready. The copy owned by Jean de Berry was obtained by him from the Parisian bookseller Regnaut du Montet in January 1405 (Delisle 1907, Berry no. 270), but it is hard to believe that the production of these expensive matching copies was a commercial speculation. It is usually assumed that the Arsenal volumes are the book for which John the Fearless paid his (and his father's) Parisian agent Jacques Raponde in 1406 or 1407, and this is probably so, despite some discrepancies.[4]

The classic example of a bibliophile making new books using texts that he already owned is Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, who seems to have supplied the exemplars for manuscripts that he commissioned (see below, pp. 66–8). One characteristic of these productions is that they often combine existing texts in a new way. This is especially noticeable in the case of Jacques d'Armagnac's Arthurian compilation that is now BNF, fr. 112 (Pickford 1959/60*), but it also applies on a smaller scale to the *Lancelot–Grail* of the dukes of Berry and Burgundy, which is distinguished by the use of the prose adaptation of Chrétien's *Charrette* (instead of the usual prose version of the same story) and

by the insertion of a short section of *Perlesvaus*. However, these modifications to the text are probably less important than the physical appearance of the resulting books. The manuscripts that stem from the commissions of known bibliophiles are conceived on the grand scale; they are large, well illustrated and expensive.

Dates and Places of Production

The earliest surviving manuscript of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle is thought to be Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 255 (containing the *Estoire*, *Merlin* and an incomplete *Lancelot*), but there is a serious possibility that two manuscripts containing the non-cyclic version of the prose *Lancelot* (BNF, fr. 768 and 1430) and one of the manuscripts of the trilogy attributed to Robert de Boron (Modena, Biblioteca Comunale Estense, MS 39) are even earlier. The miniatures of the Rennes manuscript have been studied by Stones (1977), who came to the conclusion that they were painted in the 1220s, and who has since suggested that this could be slightly modified to 'the early 1220s' (1991, 299) or even to '*c.*1220' (1996, 221). Although she has not published a similar study of the Modena manuscript, her opinion of its miniatures (mentioned in various lectures and conference papers) is that they may be as early as the decade 1210–20. For BNF, fr. 1430 and BNF, fr. 768 Stirnemann suggests *c.*1215–25 (1993, 206, 207). Thus, given that we have no exact dates for the composition of the texts involved, and that some of the dates suggested for the texts are later than those proposed for the manuscripts in which they occur, the reliability of these various suggestions becomes an issue of some importance.

Such an early date for the Modena manuscript is wholly incompatible with the conventional view of how and when the prose *Joseph* was written. It is normally supposed that the prose version is an adaptation of the verse *Joseph d'Arimathie* also known as *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal*, whose author seems to have been called Robert de Boron (Nitze edn, 3155 and 3461). A passage at the end of this text (3489–91) appears to invoke as a patron a certain Gautier de Montbéliard, who has been identified with the person of that name who was regent of Cyprus from 1205 to 1210 and who probably died fighting in Palestine in 1212. The most plausible interpretation of this difficult passage suggests that Robert de Boron produced this rhymed version in the East after 1212 (Gallais 1970), making it extremely difficult for there to be a manuscript of the prose version from the decade 1210–20. The difficulty might be alleviated by rejecting the mention of Gautier de Montbéliard, or by reversing the relationship of verse to prose, but even with a date for the prose *Joseph* as early as 1200 a problem would still remain. This is because, by the common consent of those who have studied the manuscript tradition, the copy of the *Joseph* in the Modena manuscript is the most decadent of all those that survive. Such a situation is not impossible in theoretical terms, but it would be extremely unusual for the latest stage of a text's

development to be preserved exclusively by the oldest manuscript. Even if we allow that the later manuscripts all derive from even earlier exemplars, it still implies that there were more stages between the original and the Modena text than might have been expected for the supposed time available, or that the deterioration from one copy to the next was on a much greater scale than would have been anticipated. Only if the Modena manuscript were shown to be later than 1250 could we be comfortable with the conventional view of the prose *Joseph* and its manuscript tradition.

Another difficult case is that of the Vulgate *Estoire*, whose recent editor suggests a date of composition 'postérieur à 1220–1225' whilst accepting the date of 'environ 1220' for the Rennes manuscript (Ponceau 1997, I, xiv). If there were no more to it than this, the apparent conflict of dates might be resolved by taking a liberal view of the approximations involved. However, the text of the *Estoire* in the Rennes manuscript is partly from the short version and partly from the long version (Ponceau 1997, I, xxvii–xxviii and xxxi–xxxiii). Thus, whichever version is the earlier, the combination of the two places the Rennes manuscript at two removes from the beginning of the tradition. Only in the highly improbable event of its own unique combination being the original form of the text can this manuscript be close to the date of composition. Consequently, if the manuscript really is as early as 1220, the time needed for the development of whichever version was secondary and the subsequent mixture of long and short forms implies a date of composition that is surely no later than 1215, and probably no later than 1210. Even the mechanical copying of the manuscripts would take several years, without allowing for any delay between successive copies or for the additional time required by such deliberate editorial intervention. However, since it is also normally supposed that the creation of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle began with the expansion of the Lancelot section and with the addition of the *Queste* and *Mort Artu* before the incorporation of the *Estoire*, this would place the origins of the Cycle no later than 1200–10, and the non-cyclic *Lancelot* would have had to have been made either at the very beginning of that period or even earlier.

Such a possibility would have profound consequences, not least of which would be the possible role of Walter Map. When the Cycle was supposed to be from later than 1230, the attribution of some of its parts to Walter Map, who died on 1 April 1209 or 1210, did not require serious consideration, but if the Cycle were earlier the least that we should have to allow is that the attribution was made while Walter Map was still alive. This does not make it true, of course, but it does alter its significance. Such a date would also cast a different light upon the reference to the story of the grail in Helinand's chronicle, itself of uncertain date, but presumed to have been written not long after 1204 and certainly before 1227 (Lot 1918, 136–7). Perhaps most significant of all would be the consequences that an early date for the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle would have for the

relationships between the Cycle and a number of early thirteenth-century verse texts, especially the *Perceval* Continuations: either some of the proposed dates would have to be revised, or the direction of influence would have to be reconsidered. The exact dating of manuscripts is always a delicate matter, but it would be difficult to think of another circumstance where a difference of only a decade either way could have such an impact upon our understanding of the literature involved.

Quite apart from raising the possibility that these various prose texts were created in a different political and literary environment, the early dating of any of these four manuscripts would mean that there are surviving copies of Arthurian texts in prose that are no later than the earliest complete copy of any Arthurian text in verse. Only the Sneyd fragments of *Tristan* and the defective copy of *Cligés* in Tours are any earlier. What is more, these manuscripts of the prose texts are already illustrated, long before this becomes the normal practice for manuscripts of Arthurian verse. Indeed, the interval between the time of composition and the earliest manuscripts to contain the prose texts is so short that we could reasonably suggest that manuscripts of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle were illustrated from the very beginning. This would not preclude earlier unillustrated copies of the non-cyclic prose *Lancelot*, nor does it deny the existence of unillustrated copies of the Cycle, for there are such examples amongst later survivors. Nevertheless, there is a serious possibility that the idea of creating the Cycle and the idea of presenting it in manuscripts with a developed programme of illustrations were virtually simultaneous. In any event, there is a significant difference in this respect between verse and prose.

There is also a further significance to the fact that the earliest manuscripts of the *Lancelot–Grail* Cycle were already fully illustrated. Since the Rennes manuscript was apparently made in Paris, it is possible that the programme of illustration also had a Parisian origin, and if that were so, there is the prospect that the Cycle itself was a Parisian creation. Indeed, if there really is a close connection between the making of the Cycle and the illustrations that accompany it, the whole project takes on the air of being a business venture by a Parisian *libraire*, an exercise in marketing as much as a literary or artistic creation.

The earliest recorded date on an Arthurian prose manuscript is 'Mil deus Cens et sixante et quatorse, le semedi Apries les octaues de le trinite' (i.e. Saturday 9 June 1274), which appears in the colophon of BNF, fr. 342 (Bruce 1910, 264). This is accompanied by the invitation 'pries pour celi ki lescrist' (*pray for the one who wrote it*) in which the use of the form 'celi' (rather than 'celui') presumably indicates that the scribe was a woman. Although it is possible to find examples of 'celi' as a masculine pronoun, it is unlikely that a male scribe would deliberately choose such a form when referring to himself. Almost as early is Bonn,

Universitätsbibliothek, MS 526, whose colophon gives both the date and the name of the scribe: 'Explicit. Arnulfus de Kayo scripsit istum librum qui est Ambianis. En l'an del Incarnation M. CC. IIII^{xx}. VI el mois d'aoust le jour devant le S. Iehan decolasé' (Frappier 1936, xxv). Loomis (1938, 94) prints this colophon without 'devant' and inexplicably interprets the date as 27 August; Micha (1958, 86) includes 'devant' but gives a self-contradictory date: 'le mercredi 26 août 1286'. As it happens, Wednesday is correct, for the beheading of John the Baptist is commemorated on 29 August, making the date of the colophon 28 August 1286, which was indeed a Wednesday (given correctly in Hutchings 1938, ix). The form 'ambianis' presumably means either that the scribe was a native of Amiens or that he was living and working there at the time. In either case, by this date, 'de Kayo' might well be a family name, so it does not guarantee the scribe's own place of origin (though it was no doubt derived originally from one of the several localities within easy reach of Amiens that are named either Caix or Cayeux). This point is somewhat more than academic, because the manuscript of the *Estoire* (with embedded *Joseph*) in Le Mans, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 354 has the colophon: 'Explicit. Walterus de Kayo scripsit istum librum' (without date). This manuscript has sometimes been assigned to the second quarter of the fourteenth century, but it is in fact one of a group made in the last three decades of the thirteenth century, and there is a manuscript of the *Image du monde* from 1282 with the colophon: 'Explicit. En l'an de l'incarnation M. CC. IIII^{xx} et II. l'escrit Wautiers dou Kai, foi que jou doi a Deu' (BNF, fr. 14962). The similarities between these colophons (the identical wording of the two in Latin, and even the fact that they are in Latin at all after vernacular texts; and the form of the date in the two that give it) prompt the speculation that there may be connections (of family or place of work) between these scribes. There does not appear to be any connection between 'Arnulfus … ambianis' and the 'Ernouls damiens' whose name appears in a colophon to the *Lancelot* of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q. b. 6, fol. 187v, as having written 'la branche de Galeholt' [*sic*, not as transcribed in the *Summary Catalogue*]. This manuscript was probably made in Paris in the early decades of the fourteenth century, and the hand is not the same as that of Bonn 526. The elaborate style and layout of the colophon seem to eliminate the possibility of the name's having been copied from an exemplar.

Other dated manuscripts earlier than the fifteenth century are: BNF, fr. 122 (a *Lancelot–Grail* dated 'le lundi prochain devant le jour de paskes flories en mars l'an mille CCCXLIIII' i.e. Monday 14 March 1345 rather than Monday 22 March 1344); and BNF, fr. 335–6 (a *Tristan* 'qui fut fait l'an mille III^{cc} IIII^{xx} et XIX la veille de Pasques grans' i.e. 17 April 1400 rather than 29 March 1399). When converting these dates to modern forms it is normally safe to assume that French documents of the period will follow the practice of the royal chancery

and change the year at Easter, but in dates that use Easter itself as a reference it is necessary to make an adjustment for the date on which Easter falls, as well as changing the year. The practice in England (and in the Franche-Comté) was to begin the year on Lady Day (25 March), and this occasionally makes a difference when a date falls between then and Easter. Examples of manuscripts that are not only dated but also signed by the scribe are: BNF, fr. 750, a *Tristan* signed in Latin by Petrus de Tiergevilla (presumably Tiergeville in Normandy) in 1278; Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 593, a *Prophecies de Merlin* written by Robin Boutemont in 1303 or 1304 (for the complications in determining the exact date, see Paton 1926–7, I, 4–5); Arsenal MS 5218, a *Queste* written, illustrated and bound by Pierart dou Tielt in 1351; and New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 227, a *Joseph*, *Estoire*, *Merlin* and *Suite* completed by the scribe Jehan de Loles, from Hainault, on 'le premier samedi de guillet' of 1357 (Knight 1967–8). In 1357 'the first Saturday of July' was in fact 1 July.

Although we have names and dates on these various manuscripts, we know virtually nothing about the circumstances of their production. Conversely, although they are not signed or dated, there are several associated manuscripts that allow us to understand something of how they were made, and of the personnel employed. These belong to a group identified as having been made in Paris in the first half of the fourteenth century (probably the second quarter) by scribes, artists and pen-flourishers associated with the *libraires* Thomas de Maubeuge (who sold non-Arthurian manuscripts to Matilda, Countess of Artois in 1313 and 1328, and to Guillaume, Count of Hainault in 1323: Dehaisnes 1886, 207, 276, 255), Geoffroy de Saint-Ligier and Richard de Montbaston (Stones 1993, 260–2; 1998; Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 184–260). These include the *Lancelot* of Arsenal MS 3481 and two copies of the *Estoire*, *Merlin* and *Suite*: BNF, fr. 105 and BNF, fr. 9123 (which may have spent all its life in Paris, for it is probably one of three Arthurian manuscripts alienated from the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève early in the eighteenth century). According to Richard and Mary Rouse, the Master of Thomas de Maubeuge shared the illustration of BNF, fr. 9123 with the Fauvel master, who painted all of BNF, fr. 105 and also all of Arsenal 3481, apart from one miniature contributed by Richard de Monbaston. There are similar patterns of collaboration between identifiable scribes and pen-flourishers (Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 184–7, 214–17 and 235–41; II, 176, 178, 182–9, 197, 198, 199 and 204). More loosely connected is the *Tristan* in Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV. 5, with a frontispiece by Jeanne de Monbaston and other miniatures by one of the artists of BNF, fr. 12577, which contains *Perceval* and its Continuations (Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 391, n. 105, and II, 204).

The Rouses also include in this same group a manuscript that they refer to as the *Histoire du Graal* (I, 184), giving the shelf-mark as 'Florence, Laurenziana