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В поисках иллюстрации: сравнительный анализ миниатюр артуровских легенд цикла Вульгаты из французских рукописей XIV в.

Предпоследняя легенда артуровского цикла Вульгаты – «Поиск Святого Грааля» – это удивительный пример переплетения рыцарской и христианской культур в позднесредневековой Франции. Цикл «Ланселот–Грааль» полностью или частично вошел больше чем в двести рукописей, но только двенадцать из них были созданы во Франции в XIV в. Настоящее исследование сосредоточено на трех манускриптах, созданных в северной Франции (в Париже и Турне) в первой половине XIV в.; они содержат весь текст легенды «Поиск Святого Грааля», при этом каждый кодекс иллюстрирован циклом нарративных миниатюр. Анализируя три иллюстрированные рукописи XIV в. (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MSS Arsenal fr. 3482 и fr. 5218, а также Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6), эта статья рассматривает визуальные переплетения священного и мирского в, пожалуй, самой религиозной артуровской легенде. Благодаря большому числу хорошо сохранившихся иллюстраций эти манускрипты идеально подходят для изучения артурианских миниатюр Франции XIV в.; тем не менее, эти рукописи все еще недостаточно изучены. Хотя Элисон Стоунс и отметила высокое качество миниатюр к «Поиску» (особенно London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii), внимательное изучение трех кодексов, на которых строится данное исследование, еще предстоит.

Статья отчасти закрывает пробел в исследованиях артурианских рукописей на примере MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482 и Arsenal 5218 и дополняет наши знания обо всем корпусе позднесредневековых французских рукописей, содержащих артуровские легенды. И в самом деле, кодексы, иллюминации которых не так превосходно исполнены или не полностью соответствуют тексту легенд, могут оказаться даже полезнее в изучении создания и распространения артуровских легенд в позднесредневековой Франции, чем более искусно изготовленные манускрипты. Через сравнение и сопоставление MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482 и Arsenal 5218, а именно их визуального влияния, стиля, иконографии, культурного контекста и восприятия, это исследование проливает свет на вопросы об изготовлении и использовании манускриптов, а также рассматривает их в качестве многозначных культурных артефактов, которые выражают визуальное единение священного и мирского – противоположных значений одного спектра, в котором существуют все элементы визуальной культуры Средневековья.

Ключевые слова: Артуровские манускрипты; изготовление манускриптов; миниатюры; мирское; священное; Священный Грааль; средневековая Франция.

ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

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Illuminating *Queste*: A Comparison of 14th-century French Manuscript Miniatures of the Vulgate Legend

The penultimate Vulgate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*, is a striking example of the intertwining of chivalry and Christianity in late medieval French culture. Through an examination of three fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* – Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MSS Arsenal fr. 3482 and fr. 5218, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 – this article considers the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular as found in what is arguably the most inherently religious French Arthurian legend. Of the approximately 200 manuscripts that contain part or all of the Vulgate *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, twelve were produced in France during the fourteenth century. Of these twelve, this study focuses on three manuscripts that were produced in northern France (Paris and Tournai) in the first half of the fourteenth century, contain the complete *Queste* text, and are illuminated throughout with narrative miniatures. The large number of generally well-preserved images among MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 renders them ideal subjects for a case study of early fourteenth-century French Arthurian illumination, as does their status as under-researched Arthurian manuscripts. Although Alison Stones has given thorough consideration to higher quality *Queste* manuscripts, such as London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii, the three manuscripts that this study focuses on have yet to be considered in depth.

Through a detailed analysis of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, this paper addresses this lacuna in Arthurian manuscript studies, contributing to the broader goal of increasing knowledge of the overall corpus of late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts. Indeed, manuscripts whose illuminations may be less perfectly rendered, or exhibit textual discrepancies, can be just as, if not more useful than their more skilfully rendered brethren in enlightening us as to the production and dissemination of the Arthurian legends in late medieval France. By comparing and contrasting MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 in terms of overall visual impact, artistic style, iconography, cultural context, and contemporary reception, this study elucidates questions of the manuscripts’ production and use, as well as their function as multivalent visual artefacts which exhibit a visual union of the sacred and the secular – opposite ends of a spectrum on which all elements of medieval visual culture existed.

Key words: Arthurian manuscripts; Grail Quest; manuscript miniatures; manuscript production; medieval France; sacred; secular.

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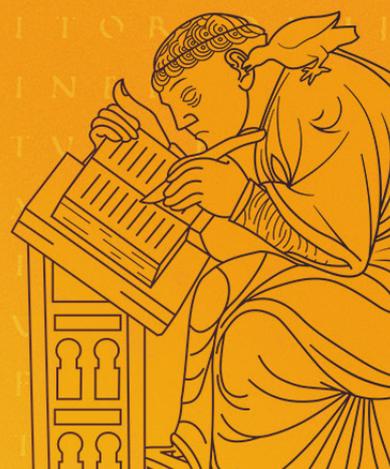
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Illuminating *Queste*: A Comparison of 14th-century French Manuscript Miniatures of the Vulgate Legend



The penultimate Vulgate legend, *La Queste del saint Graal*, is a striking example of the intertwining of chivalry and Christianity in late medieval French culture¹. In *La Queste del saint Graal*, Arthurian knights Perceval and Lancelot struggle with whether it is possible to obtain both Christian devotion and worldly glory, while fellow knights Gawain and Galahad each make the decision to pursue one of these goals — secular vainglory for the former, and Christian devotion for the latter. Although *Queste* contains its fair share of daring knightly deeds, within the romance there is repeated textual and visual evidence of clerical attempts to, as noted by Stephen Jaeger, “bend the moral direction of the Grail quest to spiritual rather than worldly chivalry”². Through an examination of three fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts of the Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* — Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MSS Arsenal fr. 3482 and fr. 5218, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6—I will consider the visual intertwining of the sacred and secular in what is arguably the most inherently religious French Arthurian legend³.

Of the approximately 200 manuscripts (dating from the early thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries) that contain part or all of the Vulgate *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, twelve were produced in France during the fourteenth century⁴. Of these twelve, this study will focus on MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218⁵. These three manuscripts were produced in northern France (Paris and Tournai) in the first half of the fourteenth century, contain the complete *Queste* text, and are illuminated throughout with narrative miniatures⁶. The large number of

1. The Vulgate Cycle, or the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, is a series of prose Arthurian romances, written c. 1215–30 that together tell the story of the Arthurian knight Lancelot from birth to death. The cycle begins with the *Lancelot propre*, followed by *La Queste del saint Graal*, and ends with *La Mort le Roi Artu*; Kennedy E. *The Grail and French Arthurian Romance // A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. West Sussex, 2009. P. 208; *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*. Chicago; London, 1991.

2. Jaeger C. S. *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilising Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*. Philadelphia, 1985. P. 267.

3. All three manuscripts have been digitized and are available online: MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, URL: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/>; MS Arsenal 3482, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000503x#>; MS Arsenal 5218, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100017d>.

4. The twelve extant manuscripts containing the text of *La Queste del saint Graal* and produced in fourteenth-century France are as follows: Cologny, Bodmer Library, MS 147; Florence, Laurentian Library, MS Ash. 121(48); London, British Library, MSS Additional 10294, Royal 14 E. iii; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Douce 199, Douce 215, Rawlinson Q.b.6; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 122, fr. 1422–4, fr. 12573; [4] >

5, 6 >

generally well-preserved images among MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 renders them ideal subjects for a case study of early fourteenth-century French Arthurian illumination, as does their status as under-researched Arthurian manuscripts. Although Alison Stones has given thorough consideration to higher-quality *Queste* manuscripts, such as London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii, the three manuscripts that this study will focus on have yet to be considered in depth. Through a detailed analysis of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, I will address this lacuna in Arthurian manuscript studies, contributing to the broader goal of increasing knowledge of the overall corpus of late medieval French Arthurian manuscripts. Indeed, manuscripts whose illuminations may be less perfectly rendered, or exhibit textual discrepancies, can be just as, if not more, useful than their more skillfully rendered brethren in enlightening us as to the production and dissemination of the Arthurian legends in late medieval France.

Through a comprehensive one-to-one comparison of miniatures within MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, I will elucidate whether there was a standardized selection of *Queste* images in illuminated manuscripts produced in early-to mid-fourteenth-century France. By considering the overarching effect of each manuscript's pictorial cycle, as well as that of the individual images, I will clarify the role and importance of Christian concepts as visualized within the simultaneously secular and sacred *Queste*. By comparing and contrasting the overall visual impact, artistic style, iconography, cultural context, and contemporary reception of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, I will engage with questions of the manuscripts' production and use. I will also consider their function as multivalent visual artifacts that exhibit a visual union of the sacred and the secular; seemingly distant ends of a spectrum that were intrinsic elements of late medieval visual culture. This study could be easily expanded to include the remaining nine fourteenth-century illuminated French *Queste* manuscripts, especially Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 199 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MSS fr. 122, and fr. 1422–4, which

< [4] Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MSS Arsenal 5218, 3482; Stones A. 1) The Illustrations of the French Prose Lancelot in Belgium, Flanders, and Paris, 1250–1340. London, 1971. P. 2; 2) Chronological and Geographical Distribution of Lancelot-Grail Manuscripts // The Lancelot-Grail Project. URL: <http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/LG-web/Arthur-LG-ChronGeog.html>.

< 5. Please see the appendix for a comparative table of the image cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482 and 5218, Royal 14 E. iii, and Add. 10294.

< 6. Although today the city of Tournai is considered part of Belgium, in the fourteenth century the province of Hainaut, which includes Tournai, was under French rule. Tournai's geographic proximity to Paris is visually exemplified by the stylistic similarities of manuscripts produced contemporaneously in the two cities, such as MS Arsenal 3482 and MS Arsenal 5218; Stones A. The Lancelot-Graal Project // New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies: Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference / ed. by D. A. Pearsall. Woodbridge, 2000. P. 169; Walters L. The Rose as Sign: Diacritical Marks in the Tournai Rose // Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. 2005. Vol. 83. No. 3. P. 890.

were also produced in Paris in the first half of the fourteenth century. However, due to limitations of scale, consideration of these manuscripts must be left to a future study.

The Vulgate Cycle

In its entirety, the *oeuvre* of French Arthurian legends is overwhelming, consisting of thousands of lines of twelfth-century verse, including the five Arthurian poems by Chrétien de Troyes, written c. 1160–90, and the anonymous thirteenth-century prose Vulgate Cycle, written c. 1215–30⁷. It is the Vulgate Cycle that was the most popular of the French Arthurian legends in late medieval France, as exemplified by its survival in approximately 200 manuscripts dating from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries⁸. The Vulgate Cycle, or the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, is a series of prose Arthurian romances that together tell the story of the Arthurian knight Lancelot from birth to death⁹. Written c. 1215–30, the cycle begins with the *Lancelot propre*, followed by *La Queste del saint Graal*, and ending with *La Mort le Roi Artu*. Sometime after the completion of these three romances, but before c. 1235, two prequels were appended to the Vulgate Cycle, the *Estoire del saint Graal* and the *Estoire de Merlin*¹⁰. Written after the initial three romances of the cycle, but intended to be read first, the *Estoire del saint Graal* and *Estoire de Merlin* provide the Christian background necessary to understanding *La Queste del saint Graal*¹¹.

At the heart of *Queste* is the Holy Grail, first introduced by Chrétien de Troyes as a *chose merveilleuse*, or ‘wonderful thing’ in *Le Conte du Graal* (Perceval). That the penultimate Vulgate legend focuses on the mysterious nature and significance of the Holy Grail and the knightly attributes required to discover it, renders it the most inherently Christian of all the French Arthurian legends. Due to *Queste*’s overwhelming focus on the repentance of sin, some scholars have suggested that the author of the Vulgate Cycle was a Cistercian monk, or someone who had spent time in a Cistercian monastery¹². However, more recent scholarship has complicated the possibility of a Cistercian

7. Kennedy E. *The Grail and French Arthurian Romance*... P. 208.

8. Comparatively, there are today only 45 extant manuscripts and fragments containing Chrétien’s texts, none of which date to his lifetime. The earliest surviving manuscripts containing Chrétien’s work date to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; Stones A. *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* // Oxford Art Online. URL: <https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oa0-9781884446054-e-7002089125>.

9. Kennedy E. *The Grail and French Arthurian Romance*... P. 208.

10. *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* / ed. by N. J. Lacy. Chicago; London, 1991. P. 497.

11. Huot S. *The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance* // *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* / ed. by Roberta L. Krueger. Cambridge, 2000. P. 67; Stones A. *Seeing the Grail: Prolegomena to a Study of Grail Imagery in Arthurian Manuscripts* // *The Grail: A Casebook* / ed. by D. Mahoney. New York, 2000. P. 302.

12. See Pauphilet A. *Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal*. Paris, 1921; Matarasso P. *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the Queste del Saint Graal*. Geneva, 1979.

connection¹³. *La Queste del saint Graal* details the trials of King Arthur's three most Christian knights—Galahad, Perceval, and Bors—as they journey in search of the Grail. Throughout the legend, the knights' tangible, physical quest for the Grail serves as an allegory for their intangible, spiritual quest for Christian enlightenment¹⁴.

The Manuscripts

MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 contains branches three, four, and five of the Vulgate Cycle: *Lancelot propre*, *La Queste del saint Graal*, and *La Mort le Roi Artu*. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 was produced in Northern France, possibly Amiens, c. 1320–30.¹⁵ The late-thirteenth-century production of lavishly illuminated manuscripts in Amiens, including the Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons, exemplifies the high quality of production stemming from the commercial book market in Amiens, suggesting that as a center of manuscript production, the city was akin to Paris in regard to the quality of production, if not the size of the industry¹⁶. Contrary to what scholars have previously suggested, Paris' influence as a hub of manuscript production in fourteenth-century France appears to have extended outside of the city to its surrounding environs, including cities such as Amiens, which had become an established center of manuscript production in the thirteenth century¹⁷. Scholars have suggested Amiens as the likely production locale of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 due to both the city's late-thirteenth-century status as a major center of French manuscript production, and the work of a scribe, Ernoul d'Amiens, whose name is inscribed on fol. 187v: *les queles branches Ernouls damiens escrit* (Fig. 1)¹⁸. That Amiens was a recognized center of manuscript production both prior to and at the same time as Paris lends credence to the theory that Ernoul d'Amiens could have been an active artisan in his native city. Ernoul is one of two scribes whose hand is visible in the manuscript. Within this immense tome (the manuscript consists of 410 folios, each measuring 255 x 410 mm, with text in double columns of sixty lines), the Vulgate *Queste* spans folios 315r–360r and is illustrated by

13. Pratt K. The Cistercians and the *Queste del Saint Graal* // *Reading Medieval Studies*. 1995. Vol. 21. P. 72.

14. *Ibid.* P. 70.

15. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6..

16. Greenhill E. A Fourteenth-Century Workshop of Manuscript Illuminators and Its Localisation // *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*. 1977. Bd. 40 No. 1. S. 1.

17. McGrath R. L. A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library // *Speculum*. 1963. Vol. 38. No. 4. P. 593; de Hamel C. A History of Illuminated Manuscripts. London, 1986. P. 149.

18. 'These branches were transcribed by Ernoul d'Amiens.' McGrath R. L. A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript... P. 594; de Hamel C. A History of Illuminated Manuscripts. P. 149; Donovan C. The de Brailles Hours: Shaping the Book of Hours in Thirteenth-Century Oxford. London, 1991. P. 27.

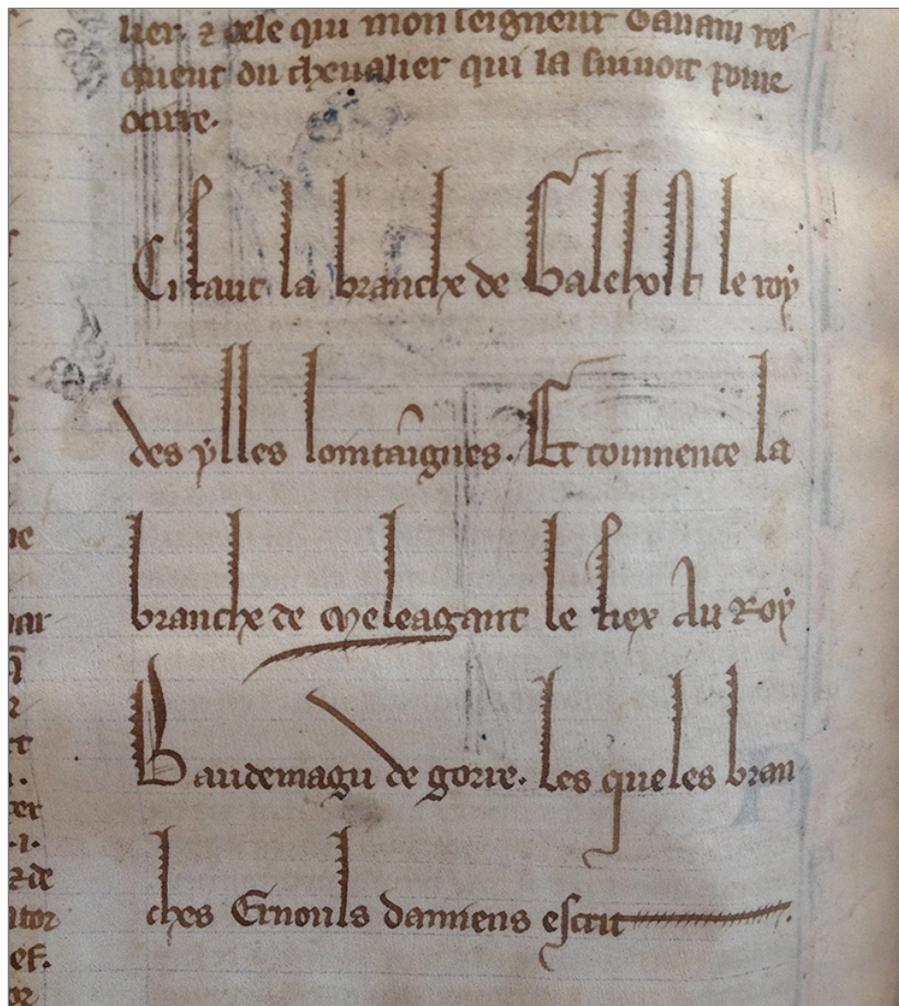


Fig. 1. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 187v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–30. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/c0a0fde0-5c67-4af4-adb0-96a8c45bdfce>

15 of the manuscript's total 212 miniatures, all of which are historiated initials, the imagery appearing within the confines of the capital 'O' for *Or dist li contes*¹⁹. This is a common transitional phrase within the Vulgate Cycle and an example of *entrelacement*, a literary technique that derives from the twelfth-century Arthurian legends of Chrétien de Troyes and involves the interweaving of multiple narratives, allowing the anonymous *Queste* author to change the story's direction, leaving behind the adventures of one knight to elaborate on those of another. The positioning of illustrations at transitional moments within the text

19. 'So the story says.'

is common throughout Arthurian manuscripts in general. For example, the miniatures of MS Arsenal 3482, although appearing as distinct illustrations, rather than historiated initials as in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, also appear at times of narrative transition. These images serve as visual signposts for breaks in the text, signifying changes in the story's focus.

MS Arsenal 3482 was produced within a similar time frame as MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, c. 1325–40, at Paris²⁰. In addition to the *Lancelot*, *Queste*, and *Mort Artu*, MS Arsenal 3482 also includes the *Estoire de Merlin*, the first text within the manuscript, as well as an incomplete telling of the *Agravain*, inserted between the *Lancelot* and *Queste*. The telling of *Queste* takes up folios 395r–539r and is written in three columns of 50 lines. Of the 136 total miniatures within the codex, 17 illustrate *Queste*. Every folio of MS Arsenal 3482 is further illuminated with small red, gold, and blue initials to mark paragraph breaks, as well as what Alison Stones terms “leaf stalks”—thin, vertical borders in red and blue, with ivy and sycamore leaves, characteristic of Parisian manuscripts, emanating from each end. A “leaf stalk” appears between the text columns on each folio illuminated with a miniature²¹.

MS Arsenal 5218 is a significantly smaller volume than either MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 or MS Arsenal 3482 and contains solely *La Queste del saint Graal*. MS Arsenal 5218 was produced in Tournai, c. 1351, as evidenced by the timeline of its chief illuminator, who was active between 1330–51²². MS Arsenal 5218 was created by Pierart dou Tielt, the head artisan of what Lori Walters characterizes as ‘a very active Tournaisian workshop’²³. The manuscript bears Pierart’s colophon on fol. 91v (Fig. 2):

Chius livres fu parescrips le nuit n[ost]re / dame en mi aoust
la mil trois cens et / li. Si lescripst pierars dou tielt. Et en- / lu-
mina et loia. Explicit li q[ue]ste del s[ainte] graal²⁴.

Although Pierart illuminated many other manuscripts, MS Arsenal 5218 is unique; it is the only known manuscript to be not only illuminated, but also written, bound, and signed by him²⁵. The text of MS Arsenal 5218’s *Queste* is written in double columns of 35 lines, with red, blue, and gold initials throughout. In

20. Stones A. Chronological and Geographical Distribution of Lancelot-Grail Manuscripts // The Lancelot-Grail Project. URL: <http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/LG-web/Arthur-LG-ChronGeog.html>.

21. Stones A. Secular Manuscript Illumination in France // Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism / ed. by C. Kleinhenz. Chapel Hill, 1977. P. 93; Whitaker M. Legends of King Arthur in Art. Cambridge, 1990. P. 30.

22. Walters L. Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the *Queste del saint Graal* // Word and Image in Arthurian Literature / ed. by K. Busby. London, 1996. P. 340.

23. Ibid. P. 339.

24. “This book was brought to completion on the night of Our Lady in the middle of August 1351. Pierart dou Tielt transcribed it. And illuminated and bound it. Here ends the *Queste of the Holy Grail*”; Walters L. Wonders and Illuminations... P. 339.

25. Ibid. P. 339.

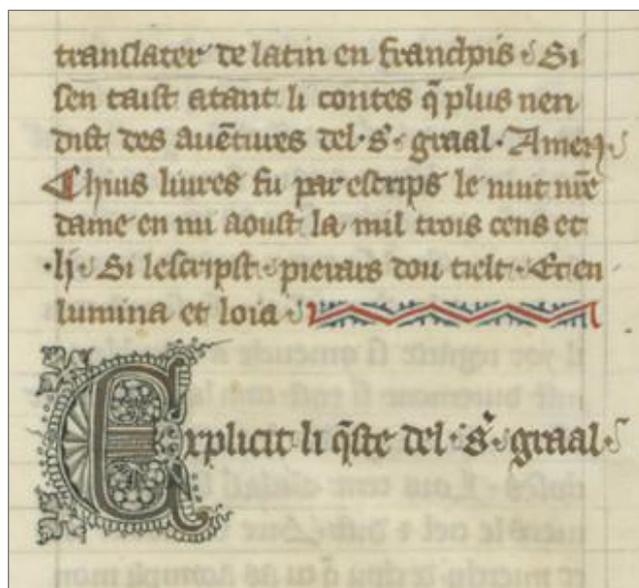


Fig. 2. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 91v. Paris, France, c. 1351. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100017d/f186.item>

addition to the three miniatures on folios 1r, 10r, and 88r, MS Arsenal 5218 is further illuminated with foliate borders and marginal scenes, which decorate 17 of the 106 total folios, and which, according to Lori Walters, reinforce *Queste*'s message of sanctity over the worldly²⁶. Intriguingly, in this manuscript, the text of *Queste* is followed by vernacular church annals, which combine church history and local records of Tournai²⁷. Although the annals begin a new gathering, codicological and textually thematic evidence suggests that the two texts were designed to be bound together. Both texts are written in Pierart's hand, appear to have been ruled by the same artisan, and exhibit similar decoration, such as ornamental letters and border designs²⁸. In addition, the annals include details of the life of Christ, with an entry detailing his crucifixion and resurrection, as well as Pentecost; the very same biblical events are central to the narrative of *La Queste del saint Graal*²⁹. The compilation of these two texts brings new meaning to the intertwining of the sacred and secular, as the Arthurian *Queste* and the church annals are not only similar in appearance and theme but are physically bound together³⁰.

Although I have described the three manuscripts in chronological order of production thus far, in my analysis of their image

26. Walters L. *Wonders and Illuminations...* P. 349.

27. *Ibid.* P. 340.

28. *Ibid.* P. 351.

29. *Ibid.* P. 352.

30. *Ibid.* P. 339, 351.

cycles I will begin with MS Arsenal 5218 as it is the only manuscript of these three to illustrate the introductory scene of *La Queste del saint Graal*. After analyzing MS Arsenal 5218's brief image cycle, I will next compare and contrast the two significantly longer and more closely related image cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482. In the final two sections of this article I will broaden my focus, considering the physical placement of the images in relation to the text, and the depiction (or lack thereof) of the Grail in all three manuscripts.

MS Arsenal 5218: A Visual Analysis

The Vulgate *La Queste del saint Graal* opens on the Eve of Pentecost, as King Arthur and his knights sit down to an elaborate feast, a pivotal event in the legend. It is during this feast that readers first hear of the Quest for the Grail, and are introduced to Galahad, the most Christian of Arthurian knights, and the only one worthy of experiencing the wonders of the Grail in full. Galahad's Christian perfection is both textually and visually signified by his acquisition of the shield of his Biblical ancestor Josephus (Fig. 3), which bears the heraldry of Saint George, patron saint of Christian soldiers. The Pentecostal feast is an event from which all the following episodes and adventures in the legend derive.

However, despite the importance of this introductory scene, only one of the three *Queste* manuscripts considered here depicts it. MS Arsenal 5218's first image, on fol. 1r, is a two-column frontispiece with a left to right visual progression, clearly narrating introductory events of the legend. The poorly preserved frontispiece of MS Arsenal 5218 begins with a mysterious woman's visit to King Arthur's court on the Eve of Pentecost. The woman asks Lancelot to follow her to an unknown location to perform an unidentified task, a request that Lancelot accepts, as illustrated by the central image, in which Lancelot departs on horseback with the woman and her squire. The rightmost image reveals the purpose of Lancelot's trip: to knight the young Galahad, Lancelot's son from his brief dalliance with Elaine of Corbenic, the daughter of King Pellès. This final section of the frontispiece depicts three

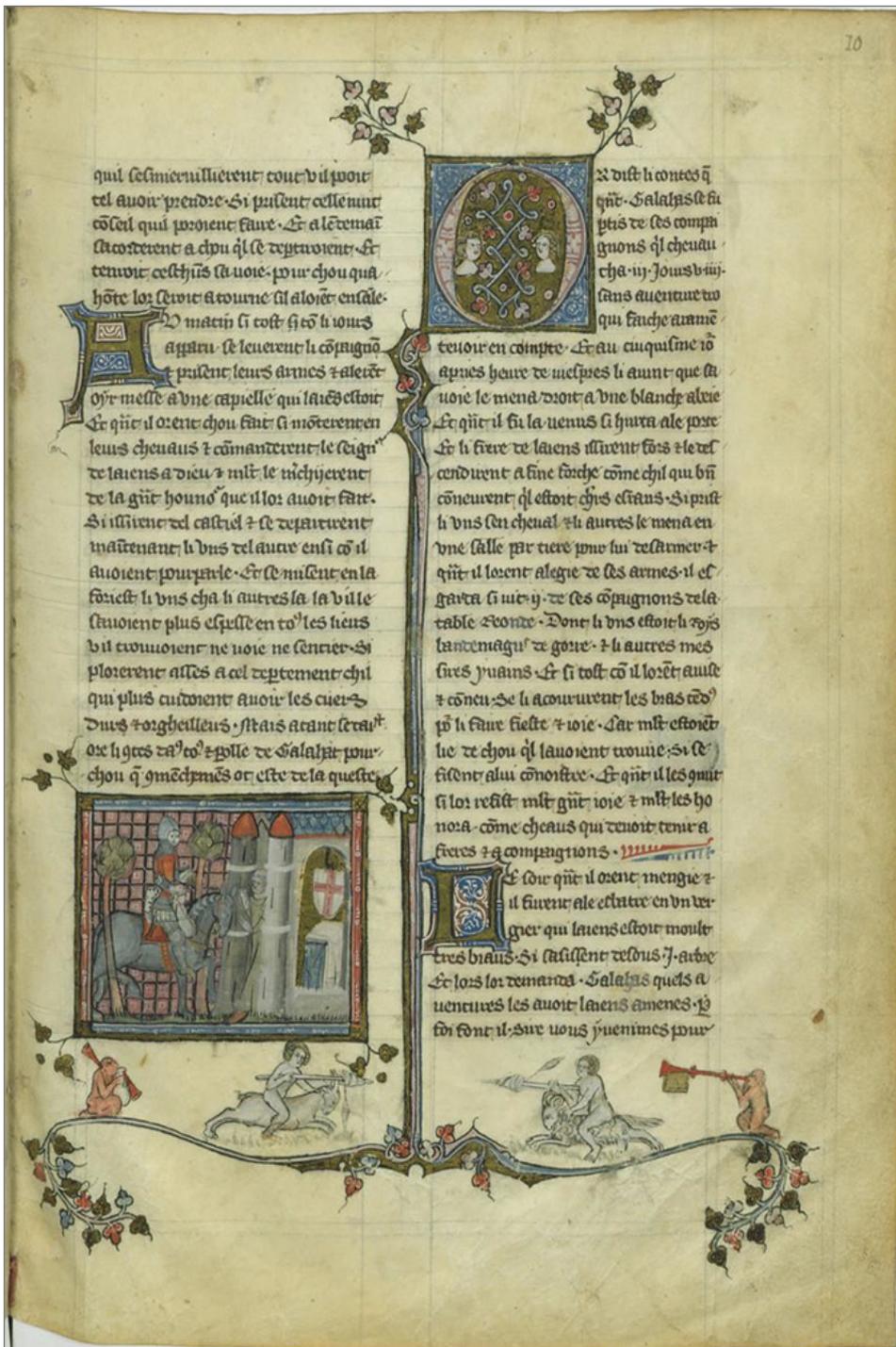


Fig. 3. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 10r.
 Paris, France, c. 1351. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100017d/f23.item#>

nuns presenting Galahad to Lancelot to be dubbed a knight³¹. The frontispiece of MS Arsenal 5218 uses a repetition of figures in lieu of geometric borders to acknowledge the scene's left-to-right progression. Lancelot is first shown at King Arthur's court, conversing with the woman, then astride his horse, and finally dubbing Galahad, who kneels before him.

Similar to the illuminations of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, the first folio of MS Arsenal 5218 is further illustrated with a historiated initial. The initial 'A' for *A la veille de la pentecouste...* (Fig. 4) marks the beginning of the *Queste* narrative and depicts Galahad presented to King Arthur's court at the Pentecostal feast, continuing the visual narrative begun in the two-column miniature above³². The introductory folio of MS Arsenal 5218 exemplifies a visual technique that neither MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 nor Arsenal 3482 utilizes, employing a progression of images to provide a succinct yet textually accurate introduction to *Queste*, setting the stage for the subsequent narration of the Grail Quest. Furthermore, the scenes illustrated within MS Arsenal 5218 share a central theme: the ritual of mass and its role within the life of a devout Christian. The focus on Galahad in MS Arsenal 5218's first two miniatures suggests that it is he, a virginal knight, rather than the chivalrous yet adulterous Lancelot, who is worthy of completing the Grail Quest. The juxtaposition of Galahad's purity and Lancelot's immorality is essential to a complete understanding of the *Queste* image cycles of all three manuscripts. Lancelot and Galahad can be interpreted as opposing moral characters, symbolic of the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, an opposition that the illuminations of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 bridge through their inclusion of established Christian iconography.

The second miniature in MS Arsenal 5218, on fol. 10r (Fig. 3), reinforces Galahad's role as the 'Good Knight,' essentially a messianic figure characterized by his total purity and piety³³. Here the artist depicts Galahad's arrival at the *blanche abeie*, or white abbey³⁴. It is at the *blanche abeie* that Galahad receives the shield of his ancestor Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea, who ostensibly collected Christ's blood at the Crucifixion in the cup

31. The Quest for the Holy Grail / trans. E. J. Burns; ed. by N. J. Lacy. Cambridge, 2010. (The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation. Vol. 6). P. 3–5.

32. 'On the eve of Pentecost...'

33. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 23.

34. Another possible Cistercian reference, as noted by Pratt K. The Cistercians and the *Queste del Saint Graal*... P. 72.



Fig. 4. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol.1r. Paris, France, c. 1351. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100017d/f5.item>

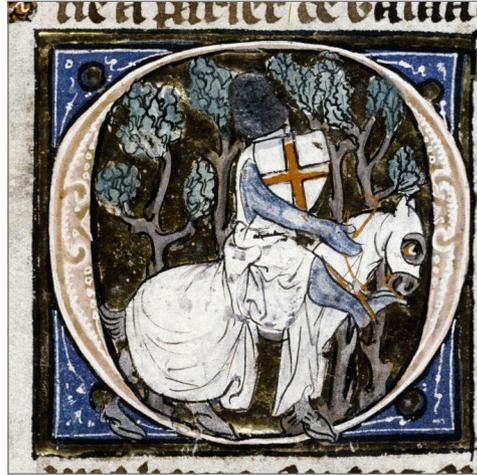


Fig. 5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 323v. Amiens, France, c.1320–1330.

Fig. 6. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 346v. Amiens, France, c.1320–1330. Source (5, 6): <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/8ecb2c7a-0b57-4e80-8f5b-bdc7fe05486d/>

which became the Holy Grail, as recounted in the first Vulgate text, *L'Estoire del saint Graal*³⁵. Galahad's retrieval of the shield is predicted by its presence within the abbey, viewable to the manuscript's audience by means of a cut-away in the abbey's exterior wall. This cut-away creates a voyeuristic feel for viewers and increases the sense of reverence and divinity surrounding Galahad's assumption of the shield, symbolic of his messianic role. The Christian significance of Josephus' shield is further exemplified through its evocation of the heraldry of Saint George, patron saint of soldiers and Crusader knights fighting in the name of Christianity: white with a red cross, or *argent a la croix de gules*. The employment of this spiritually multivalent heraldry is prevalent throughout fourteenth-century Arthurian imagery. Within MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, the shield appears twice, on folios 323v and 346v, serving to identify Galahad within two historiated initials (Figs. 5–6) where he would otherwise have appeared as an undefined knight. In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, the shield's importance is heightened by the fact that the illuminator does not depict any other heraldry whatsoever, coloring the shields of other knights in solid hues. The focus on Galahad's shield thus emphasizes his singularity.

MS Arsenal 5218's second miniature functions on several levels. It is both a visual means of narrative progression, illustrating an episode within Galahad's quest for the Grail, and also an

35. *The History of the Holy Grail* / trans. C. J. Chase; ed. by N. J. Lacy. Cambridge, 2010. P. 6–17.



Fig. 7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 318r. Amiens, France, c. 1320–30. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/4e68aa89-1d10-4a76-b986-742034c8c4eb/>

exemplar of Galahad's inherently Christian nature and messianic role. By including Josephus' shield, a symbolic object that provides visual assistance for the audience, the second miniature illuminates parallels between Galahad and Christ, as well as between the fictional Grail Quest and true Christian piety. Through its focus on the sacred, MS Arsenal 5218's second miniature moves both the narrative and the questing knights one step closer to the 'revelation of holy mysteries.' This climactic scene of *Queste* will be discussed later in regard to the visualization of the Grail as a corporeal object³⁶.

³⁶. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 19.

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

Whereas the introductory illustration of MS Arsenal 5218 focuses on events prior to the beginning of the Grail Quest, the opening illustrations of both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 jump directly into the Quest narrative. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's image cycle begins on fol. 318r (Fig. 7) with a historiated initial 'O' depicting Galahad upon his arrival at a Cistercian abbey,

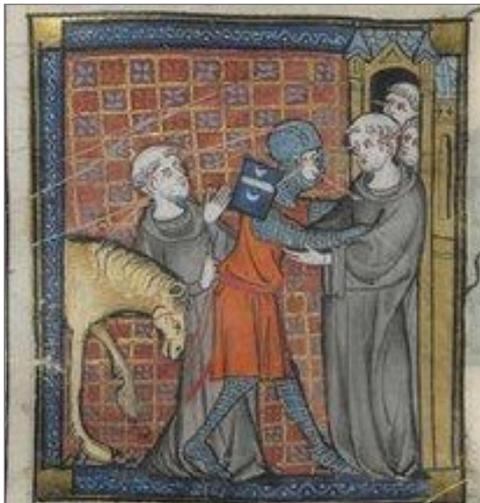


Fig. 8. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 405r. Paris, France, c.1325–40. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000503x/f407.item.r=MS%203482>

conversing with the Arthurian knights Baudemagus and Yvain. It is at this abbey that Galahad receives his signature *argent a la croix de gules* shield. MS Arsenal 3482's first miniature, on fol. 405r (Fig. 8), similarly depicts a scene related to Galahad's acquisition of the shield, illustrating the exact moment of his arrival at the abbey, where he is greeted by a Cistercian monk. The decision to begin the *Queste* section of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 with an illustration of Galahad speaking with King Baudemagus and Sir Yvain is curious, as it is not a pivotal scene in the legend and is not illustrated in MSS Arsenal 3482 or Arsenal 5218. Nor is this scene illustrated in British Library, MSS Royal 14 E. iii, or Additional 10294, both similarly produced within Northern France in the first quarter of the fourteenth century and considered exemplary illuminated *Queste* manuscripts due to their plentiful and finely executed illustrations. Galahad's meeting with Baudemagus and Yvain does, however, presage his acquisition of Josephus' shield. Upon arriving at the abbey, Galahad is joyfully met by the two knights, who inform him that they are there to witness 'what we were told would be a wondrous adventure'; Galahad's procurement of a shield that has proved fatal to all who have attempted to use it³⁷. When the context for the image of three knights conversing beneath a grove of trees is understood, it can be perceived as both a prediction of events to come, and an illustration of Galahad's reputation as the most spiritually

37. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 19.

worthy of knights, which for contemporary Christian audiences would likely have called to mind Biblical warriors such as Moses, David, and Joshua. In comparison to MS Arsenal 3482's introductory miniature, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's opening illustration is more individual and specific. A complete understanding of this image requires knowledge of the *Queste* text, suggesting that MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's historiated initials were meant to function in tandem with the text of the legend that they illuminate.

MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 share several common scenes, although the manner in which they are portrayed often differs. The first shared scene, the second image to illustrate *Queste* in both manuscripts, depicts the Arthurian knight Meliant stealing a crown he discovers while travelling through a forest (folios 321r and 413r respectively). Although both illuminators portray Meliant with the crown looped over his arm, approached and challenged by a mounted knight, the two images differ in their backgrounds and visual flow. In MS Arsenal 3482, the artist has included an abandoned throne and lavish feast, the peculiar setting in which Meliant discovers the crown (Fig. 9). This visual choice, which adds to the image's specificity and uniqueness, aids the reader's recognition of the scene, especially when compared to the corresponding image in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 (Fig. 10), where the artist merely depicts two knights on horseback, the only defining feature the barely visible crown



Fig. 9. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 413r. Paris, France, c. 1325–40. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f415.item.r=MS%203482#>



Fig. 10. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 321r. Amiens, France, c. 1320–30. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/c4d25455-5f29-4b02-9732-28220e08d474/>



Fig. 11. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Morte Artu*, fol. 96r. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–1325. Source: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7793&CollID=16&NStart=150111>

slung over the arm of the leftmost. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's image of Meliant is visually akin to that found in MS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 11), a parallel that suggests shared visual sources, or the circulation of whichever manuscript's imagery was completed first. The inclusion of this scene in at least three of the twelve early-fourteenth-century French illuminated *Queste* manuscripts also suggests a level of visual continuity among coevally produced manuscripts. Further matching miniatures can be found not only in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482, but in other representative *Queste* manuscripts as well. The artist of MS Arsenal 3482 has additionally imbued the image with a sense of movement, depicting the mounted knight entering from the left, while Meliant attempts to sidle out of the image on the right, both figures crossing in front of the miniature's geometric borders. This complex composition lends a sense of dynamic movement and an almost three-dimensional quality to the scene. Meanwhile, the artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, depicts his figures firmly ensconced within the historiated initial. Although other initials in the manuscript are slightly more daring in execution, with a figure daintily putting a foot outside the parameters of the 'O', the overall effect of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's illustrations is composure and restraint, suggesting the use of a visual model, such as a pattern book or set of comparable religious illustrations. It appears that the artist of MS Arsenal 3482 took more artistic

license with his illustrations and was perhaps more familiar with the text, allowing for the creation of textually independent, specifically Arthurian scenes.

The next scene shared by MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 depicts Gawain's arrival at the abbey where Galahad leaves Meliant to recuperate after the incident with the crown (folios 322v and 418v, respectively). Although both manuscripts illustrate this episode, they differ in the exact moment that is depicted. The illuminator of Q.b.6 envisages Gawain's arrival at the abbey, where a monk greets him (Fig. 12). This initial is simplistic in its iconography, and again possibly derived from a pattern book, suggesting the illuminator's tendency to rely on visual models; the image of a knight on horseback greeted by a member of a religious order is generic enough to warrant its inclusion in a variety of texts, both secular and sacred. The illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482, on the other hand, creates a more complex image, involving a chronological progression from left to right, reminiscent of the frontispiece of MS Arsenal 5218 (Figs. 4, 13). On the left, a monk raises an arm to greet Gawain and assist with the removal of his armor. On the far right, Gawain is again depicted divested of his armor and recognizable by his repeated pink tunic. Here he embraces a man dressed in a red robe, his brother Gaheriet. The visual complexity of this scene, in which a single figure is rendered twice to show the passage of time, is striking

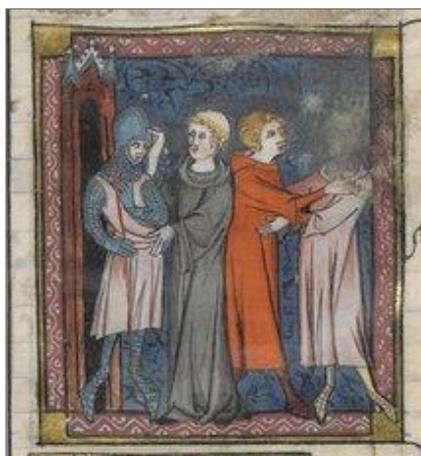


Fig. 12. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 322v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/efa74ce4-7a93-4786-b6f4-97af09c4f648>

Fig. 13. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 418v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f420.item.r=MS%203482#>

as it exemplifies the high level of artistic invention that is characteristic of MS Arsenal 3482 as a whole.

The following image in both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 presents Galahad *after* his departure from the *Chastel aux Pucelles*, or Castle of Maidens (folios 323v and 420v respectively). Galahad's adventures at the Castle of Maidens is a *Queste* episode that appears in none of the three manuscripts, although it is depicted in MS Royal 14 E. iii. The illuminators' or planners' decision not to illustrate Galahad at the Castle of Maidens in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 is worth noting, as it is a case in which the scenes that are *not* depicted are equally, if not more enlightening, than those that are³⁸. As interpreted by Malcolm Godwin, Galahad's adventures at the Castle of Maidens, where he defeats seven knights in order to release the maidens under their control, is symbolic of Christ's descent into Hell. Godwin characterizes the knights as the Seven Deadly Sins and the maidens as exemplifying the souls of the pure³⁹. Galahad, of course, is Christ, a metaphor that is evident throughout the entirety of *Queste*, regardless of whether the reader chooses to privilege other, more radical Christian interpretations, including Godwin's perception of the Castle of Maidens as Hell, a theory whose recognition by medieval audiences is questionable. Although it is evident that visual connections between the sacred and secular did exist, it is more likely that these connections were less explicit and more enigmatic than Godwin's personification of the Castle of Maidens. It is also likely that contemporary audiences of the Arthurian romances interacted with the images on a variety of levels, their understanding of the multivalent imagery dependent on factors such as their degree of familiarity with the legend and knowledge of Christian liturgy.

The ambiguity of the scenes depicted in place of the Castle of Maidens is also intriguing and speaks to the co-existence of multiple visual interpretations. Whereas the Castle of Maidens is an instantly recognizable scene and a key episode within *Queste*, the artists of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 chose instead to illustrate more minor, transitional scenes, neither of which are easily recognizable without an understanding of the corresponding text. For example, the artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6

38. Hindman S. King Arthur, His Knights, and the French Aristocracy in Picardy // Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature / ed. by D. Poirion and N. Freeman Regalado (Special Issue, Yale French Studies). New Haven, 1991. P. 120.

39. Godwin M. The Holy Grail: Its Origins, Secrets, and Meaning Revealed. London, 1994. P. 120.

depicts Galahad riding through the Gaste Forest after his departure from the Castle of Maidens (Fig. 5). Although the knight in this historiated ‘O’ is immediately recognizable as Galahad due to the inclusion of his shield, *argent a la croix de gules*, the significance of the scene is less evident. The image of a knight on horseback is a common visual trope, and thus was likely copied from a model book or other manuscript, just as the earlier image of Gawain greeted by a monk may have been. This second rather routine image in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 functions as a sort of ‘filler’ or ‘placeholder,’ failing to advance the story visually, and adding to the overall perception of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6’s initials as universal images that could have elucidated a variety of scenes, Arthurian and otherwise, both profane and religious.

Meanwhile, the artist of MS Arsenal 3482, although illustrating a more significant scene, depicts it in a way that renders pure visual comprehension unlikely. This miniature depicts the battle between Galahad, Perceval, and Lancelot wherein Lancelot and Perceval, unaware of Galahad’s identity, attack him, resulting in Lancelot’s spear breaking, and Perceval being unhorsed (Fig. 14)⁴⁰. Although this is an important episode in *Queste*, as its

40. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 36.



Fig. 14. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 420v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f422.item.r=MS%203482>

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

The next image in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 depicts Perceval's meeting with his aunt, an anchoress (folios 326v and 428v respectively)⁴¹. In both manuscripts, this particular image is remarkably similar iconographically; both depict Perceval on the left and the anchoress on the right, enclosed within her chapel, which appears as a tall, narrow building. The only difference is that in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 Perceval is shown having dismounted (Fig. 15), whereas in MS Arsenal 3482 he has evidently just arrived at the chapel, his horse still in mid-gallop and his lance held aloft (Fig. 16). The visual difference in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 once again draws attention to the greater sense of movement found in MS Arsenal 3482

41. The Quest for the Holy Grail.... P. 46.



Fig. 15. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 326v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/582f539d-5632-465d-9b16-653c9963c1f1>

Fig. 16. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 428v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/pt-v1b55000503x/f430.item.r=MS%203482#>



Fig. 17. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Morte Artu*, fol. 101v. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–1325.



Fig. 18. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Morte Artu*, fol. 109r. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–1325.

Source (17, 18): <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7793&CollID=16&NStart=150111>

when compared to the staid imagery of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. As in MS Arsenal 3482's first *Queste* image, the illuminator again uses the miniature's borders as a visual aid, rendering Perceval's horse as emerging from beyond the left side of the miniature, engendering the image with a dynamism not seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's historiated initials. In MSS Royal 14 E. iii's and Additional 10294's versions of this miniature (Fig. 17), Perceval is still mounted on his horse, and the anchoress has yet to appear within the chapel window.

In both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482, as well as MSS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 18) and Additional 10294, the image of Perceval's encounter with his aunt is followed by a depiction of a hermit preaching to Lancelot. The inclusion of this scene is unsurprising, as it is as a result of his encounter with the hermit that Lancelot vows to forgo all future relations with Queen Guinevere so that he may lead a more Christian, spiritually-oriented life. Known—until Galahad's arrival—as the best of Arthur's knights in terms of prowess, secular chivalry, and courtesy, Lancelot had until this point failed to live a properly pious life, resulting, as told in *Queste*, in his inability to view the Grail. The hermit explains to Lancelot the connection between his repeated sins with Guinevere and his failure to achieve spiritual enlightenment⁴². It is this discussion that engenders in Lancelot a fundamental change of character. This episode within *Queste* reinforces the religious theme of the importance and benefits of

42. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 72–73.

Christian piety, a message that would not have escaped the notice of late medieval audiences well-versed in the multivalency of visual messages, such as those found in manuscript illuminations. As Michael Camille has asserted extensively, marginal illustrations in religious manuscripts appear to have functioned on several levels, serving as visual entertainment, textual aids, and even a form of satire or commentary⁴³. It would follow, then, that the images within the margins could have operated in much the same way as those outside the margins, evoking a multiplicity of meanings in regard to the text and its application to both secular and sacred life.

In MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, the image of Lancelot and the hermit on fol. 334v (Fig. 19), like the manuscript's other historiated initials, appears rather generic. The composition of Lancelot kneeling in supplication before the hermit, who sits, garbed in a black gown, with his right hand raised in a sign of benediction, is a pose typically seen in the illuminations of myriad religious manuscripts, often appearing as part of a donor portrait, in which the donor kneels in prayer before a monk or priest, demonstrating his or her religious piety. This connection would likely have appeared obvious to contemporary audiences, reinforcing Lancelot's vow to live a more spiritually oriented life. Although MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's image of Lancelot and the hermit is visually evocative of *Queste*'s central religious themes, MS Arsenal 3482's visualization of Lancelot and the hermit on fol. 449r (Fig. 20) is

43. Camille M. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. London, 1992. P. 39–40.



Fig. 19. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 334v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/976362a9-04ee-43fc-8c32-cab240e40188>

Fig. 20. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 449r. Paris, France, c. 1325–40. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f451.item.r=MS%203482>

redolent of a level of artistic originality not seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. For example, the sense of movement found in MS Arsenal 3482's previously discussed miniatures is similarly present here; Lancelot is depicted entering on horseback from the left, his steed rendered in mid-step. Meanwhile, the hermit is depicted residing in a cave rather than a chapel, a textually incorrect choice, yet one that suggests parallels with images of Saint Jerome in the desert, implying either an advanced level of iconographic understanding on the part of the illuminator or a reliance on Christian visual models. Despite these differences in pictorial setting, the pose of MS Arsenal 3482's hermit is identical to that seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. This iconographic similarity signifies an accepted visual formula, if not for the depiction of hermits in particular, for Christian figures in general, if not for the depiction of hermits in particular, again pointing, again pointing to the use of visual models by the illuminators or planners of both MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and (to an extent) MS Arsenal 3482.

Whereas MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's next miniature depicts a scene unrelated to the actions of Lancelot, MS Arsenal 3482 lingers over his narrative, illustrating the death of Lancelot's horse at the hands of an anonymous black knight, on fol. 460v (Fig. 21).

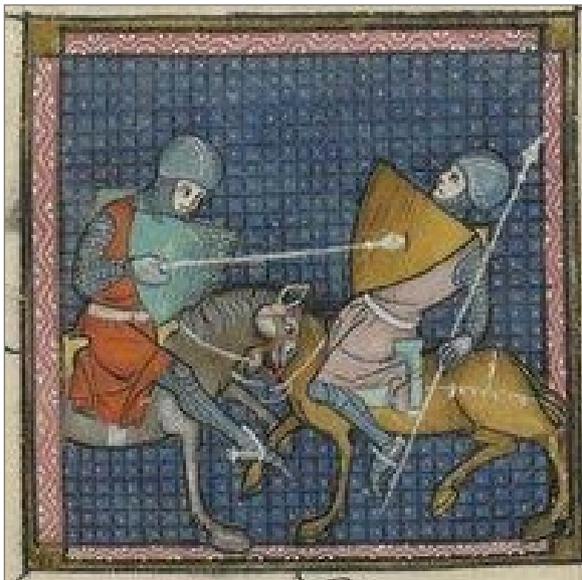


Fig. 21. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 460v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f462.item.r=MS%203482#>

The inclusion of this second consecutive Lancelot-centered image can be interpreted as reinforcing the significance of Lancelot's decision to lead a morally Christian life. Following his promise to the hermit to refrain from future sinful activities, Lancelot comes to a river that he must ford in order to continue his journey. However, the sudden death of his horse at the hands of an unknown black knight prevents Lancelot from crossing. Recollecting the hermit's advice to place his faith in God, *Queste* tells how Lancelot 'was not terribly troubled by this event, since he knew it was the will of our Lord'⁴⁴. By deciding to place his fate in God's hands, Lancelot cements his newfound religious devotion, reinforcing the concept of a definitively Christian type of knighthood. Edward Kennedy notes the centrality of the Grail Quest in effecting Lancelot's change of morals, as seen through *Queste*'s emphasis on the role that Lancelot's illicit relationship with Guinevere plays on his inability to achieve the Grail⁴⁵. It is possible that for contemporary French audiences, the images of Lancelot's struggles towards increased piety and morality would have emphasized both man's fallible nature and the possibility of personal moral betterment as obtained through the Christian faith. When the images of Lancelot kneeling before a hermit and unhorsed by an anonymous knight are juxtaposed with the triumphant images of Galahad wielding the shield of Josephus and receiving the Grail Host, the dichotomy between the sinful father and pure son is evident. Whereas Galahad is representative of Christ, Lancelot is symbolic of Christ's followers, mere mortals, who, although striving for the correct Christian path, tend to lose their way. Fourteenth-century readers may have identified with Lancelot, a mortal man struggling to lead a life of moral and religious perfection. The metaphorical opposition between Lancelot and Galahad characterizes the co-existence of the sacred and profane within fourteenth-century Arthurian imagery, a visual manifestation of abstract ideals that could be understood in numerous ways, such as man's continual struggle towards a higher level of spirituality.

The next miniature shared by MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 depicts Sir Bors' solitary meeting with a monk riding

44. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 91.

45. Kennedy E. The Grail and French Arthurian Romance... P. 214.

an ass⁴⁶. The reason behind the inclusion of this scene in both manuscripts is readily evident for readers familiar with *Queste*; the monk's explanation of the importance of confession speaks to the legend's Christian disposition. However, for readers less familiar with the *Queste* narrative, the scene would not be so easily recognizable. Regardless, the image functions independently as a visual representation of the sacred and profane, the juxtaposition of an iconographically recognizable knight (garbed in armour and holding a shield) and monk (wearing the black robe of the Benedictines and sporting a tonsure) symbolizing the crossover of these two opposing spheres. This is perhaps most evident in the historiated initial on fol. 342v of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, wherein the illuminator has depicted Bors and the monk riding side by side, the monk's right hand raised in a gesture of explanation (Fig. 22). Meanwhile, MS Arsenal 3482's miniature on fol. 466v (Fig. 23) depicts the exact moment of meeting between Bors and the monk, the two figures entering the picture plane from opposite directions, emphasizing the clash between the sacred and profane, a central theme of *Queste*, as exemplified by Lancelot's struggles to forswear his life of secular chivalry yet irreligious immorality.

The next image to correspond in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 depicts the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve (folios 349r and 487r, respectively) (Figs. 24–25). The scene's identity as an inherently Christian image raises questions of its

46. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 100.



Fig. 22. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 342v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330.

Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/fc98453e-aa73-4e17-9ade-85518621cdc3>

Fig. 23. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 466v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340.

Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000503x/f468.item.r=MS%203482>

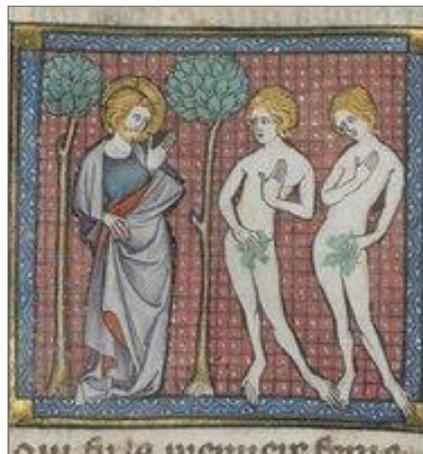


Fig. 24. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 349r. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/db2a09d8-61d3-409d-b97c-3b29b5341787>

Fig. 25. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 487r. Paris, France, c.1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000503x/f489.item.r=MS%203482>

connection to the text of this outwardly secular romance. First and foremost, however, did the illuminator or planner choose to illustrate the Temptation and Fall merely due to the ease of production? Whereas feast scenes such as MS Arsenal 5218's final illumination depicting the Grail procession may often have been based upon religious illustrations of the Last Supper or Marriage at Cana, altered slightly to fit within an Arthurian context, the images of Adam and Eve in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 appear to have been copied directly from a religious text or pattern book. The images' iconography is so typical of the infamous Old Testament episode as to have undergone no secular adaptation whatsoever. The inclusion of this scene would seem to suggest a marked reliance on visual models during the production of both manuscripts. Indeed, the reliance on pattern books for the illumination of religious manuscripts in Northern France can be seen to predate the related use of pattern books to depict religious scenes within secular books, such as Arthurian romances⁴⁷. Jonathan Alexander's comment that 'changes or new departures in illumination...were unlikely to be accidental, matters of whim or of hasty unthought-out decisions' is applicable to this situation⁴⁸. With a ready model at hand, there would have been little need for the creation of new iconographies. The recycling of such images would have increased the speed of production and ensured a certain level of quality. Images of the Fall

47. Whitaker M. *The Illustration of Arthurian Romance // King Arthur Through the Ages (Vol. II)* / ed. by V. M. Lagorio and Mildred L. Day. London, 1990. P. 124.

48. Alexander J. J. G. *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work*. New Haven, 1994. P. 53.

of Adam and Eve, for example, were proven and dependable in terms of their visual impact and significance.

But are the images of the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve truly fitting with the text of *Queste*? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. *Queste* includes a brief retelling of the Adam and Eve narrative to elucidate the origins of the miraculous bed with red, green, and white spindles which Galahad, Perceval, and Bors find aboard the ship that transports them to Carcelois Castle and Sarras⁴⁹. The quintessential image of Adam and Eve seen in both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 may have been included for its relevant religious significance, in addition to the technical considerations of artistic ease. Considering *Queste*'s identity as the most religiously driven of the French Arthurian legends, it is appropriate to view the image of Adam and Eve as yet another visual means of highlighting the Christian connotation and moral significance of the text. The Adam and Eve miniature further establishes the reader's understanding of the sacred-secular connection in a less subtle, and therefore more easily understandable, manner than that of previous images within the two manuscripts. According to Norris Lacy, the quintessential image of Adam and Eve is typical of the iconography of the Grail Quest, perhaps because the retelling of the Temptation and the Fall within *Queste* is an episode that easily lends itself to visual depiction, requiring little effort on the part of the manuscript's planner or illuminator⁵⁰. For example, MS Royal 14 E. iii includes two miniatures depicting Adam and Eve (Figs. 26–27).

49. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 141, 167.

50. The New Arthurian Encyclopedia... P. 302.



Fig. 26. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Morte Artu*, fol. 127v. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–1325.

Fig. 27. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, *Morte Artu*, fol. 128r. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–1325.

Source (26, 27): <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7793&CollID=16&NStart=150111>

That one of the most heavily illuminated and skilfully rendered *Queste* manuscripts includes two such images suggests that this particular scene served as both an integral part of the narrative, and a form of visual shorthand for the artist.

However, the reuse of religious illumination for secular purposes should not preclude the building of sacred-secular connections by contemporary readers of *Queste* manuscripts such as MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482. Elizabeth Morrison justly notes that the overlapping production of sacred and secular manuscripts by the same scribes and illuminators would render such visual translation an obvious and time-saving technique⁵¹. On the whole, the miniatures of both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 exude an overtly religious tone, evidenced by the repeated depiction of Christian officials, such as monks and nuns, and more subtly, by Galahad's heraldic shield, which originated with his ancestor Josephus, and is reminiscent of the shields of Christian crusaders and Saint George. The repeated inclusion of such textually accurate and Christian-oriented elements implies that the artists' use of religious models was at least in part intentional.

Within MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482, the inclusion of familiar Christian iconography creates a visual link between the ostensibly profane romance and its multi-levelled, Christian readings, illustrating the lack of a clear division between the secular and sacred in the late Middle Ages. The secular was inhabited by the sacred and the sacred by the secular, due to their co-existence on a spectrum of greater and lesser religiosity. Just as the margins of religious manuscripts such as psalters and Books of Hours were inhabited by profane creatures and beasts, so were the illustrations of secular romances infused with the Christian spirit. Late medieval culture and society were characterized by this constant tug of war between two seemingly opposing ends of the sacred-secular spectrum. That the intertwining of the sacred and secular was such an entrenched part of medieval life points to artists' knowing adoption of sacred tropes within secular romance illustrations, such as in *Queste*. In this way, manuscripts such as MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal

51. Morrison E. From Sacred to Secular: The Origins of History Illumination in France // *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250–1500* / ed. by E. Morrison and A. D. Hedeman. Los Angeles, 2010. P. 9.



Fig. 28. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 355v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/ed28e765-0450-4ce4-ab29-2f30e03ec12b>

5218 likely served not only as a form of entertainment but also as a means of reinforcing key Christian beliefs and morals. Arthurian legends such as *Queste* and their visual translations thus occupied a middle, or grey area on the sacred-secular spectrum, wherein both the sacred and secular were present. The stereotypical image of Adam and Eve as seen in *Queste* manuscripts is an example of the multivalency inherent within Arthurian images. At first appearing as a wholly sacred illustration, the image can be further understood as a bridge between the sacred and the secular, emphasizing the essential role of Christianity in the Arthurian knights' achievement of the Grail.

In both MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 the final image of Lancelot depicts the knight aboard a ship that is described in *Queste* as having no oars or sails, propelled instead by the will of God, symbolic of Lancelot's relinquishment of his un-Christian, immoral lifestyle (folios 355v and 514v respectively)⁵². In regard to this image, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, although overall the less imaginative of the two manuscripts, and seemingly reliant on visual models, is in fact the more textually correct (Fig. 28), a reversal in the overall visual accuracy of the two manuscripts. The illuminator of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 portrays Lancelot in a small rowboat, hands upraised in a gesture of prayer, consistent with Lancelot's reliance on God's both spiritual and nautical guidance. Meanwhile, the illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482 has inaccurately added a billowing sail to the boat in which he depicts

52. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 151.

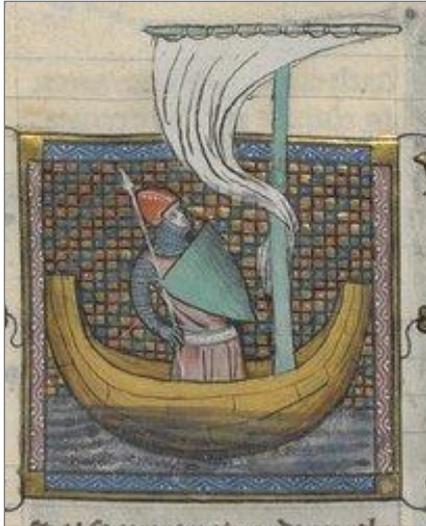


Fig. 29. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La Queste del saint Graal, fol. 514v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f506.item.r=MS%203482>

Lancelot standing (Fig. 29), resulting in a dichotomy between his relatively high level of artistic skill, and lack of textual accuracy. In MS Royal 14 E. iii (Fig. 30), the illuminator's depiction of the scene is textually accurate, yet visually different from that of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 Here the illuminator has chosen to include Perceval's sister, whose body is set to sea in the boat after she sacrifices herself to cure a Leper woman⁵³. That MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Royal 14 E. iii exhibit both visual similarities and differences in their depictions of this scene points to the possible circulation of multiple visual sources, and a degree of artistic invention paired with textual knowledge among the manuscripts' planners and illuminators.

⁵³. The Quest for the Holy Grail... P. 148, 151.



Fig. 30. London, British Library, MS Royal 14 E. iii., *Estoire del saint Graal*, La Queste del Saint Graal, Morte Artu, fol. 133v. Saint Omer or Tournai, France, c. 1300–25. Source: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7793&CollID=16&NStart=150111>



Fig. 31. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 357v. Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330. Source: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/cee84920-8cef-42f4-afa3-7fcd97ea55f1/surfaces/973eae90-0c65-407d-86f5-3c273ab1d0bb/>

Fig. 32. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 525r. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000503x/f517.item.r=MS%203482>

A further inaccuracy in the visual translation of *Queste* occurs two scenes later in MS Arsenal 3482. The more textually accurate version of this scene in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 is situated after the final image of Lancelot. In this instance, the final pair of shared images between the two manuscripts, the artist of MS Arsenal 3482 once again exceeds his artistic license, resulting in a lack of agreement between the textual and visual scenes of Galahad healing the maimed and paralyzed King Mordrain. On folio 357v, the artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 correctly, albeit awkwardly, portrays the ailing King Mordrain lying in bed, struggling to embrace Galahad (Fig. 31). The corresponding miniature in MS Arsenal 3482, on folio 525r, shows King Mordrain standing in front of his throne, conversing with Galahad (Fig. 32). Perhaps the illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482 thought to depict Mordrain standing to illustrate Galahad's healing of the king's paralysis. However, this is textually incorrect, as *Queste* describes how, as visually exemplified in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Galahad embraces the prone King Mordrain, who then takes his last breath⁵⁴. This textual-visual inconsistency, when considered together with that of Lancelot in the boat, suggests that the illuminator of MS Arsenal 3482, although artistically skilled, was unfamiliar with the story of *Queste*. The specificity of so many of MS Arsenal 3482's miniatures speaks to a lack of reliance on pattern books or Christian models, as is repeatedly seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. Lacking familiarity with the legend, yet still able to produce highly relevant Arthurian images, MS Arsenal 3482's illuminator may have

54. *The Quest for the Holy Grail...* P. 161.

received expert guidance, in the form of either written or verbal instructions⁵⁵. Many manuscripts display evidence of the illuminator's use of marginal notes and sketches, as well as rubrics⁵⁶. Similarly, artisans may have relied on the beginning phrases of each new narrative section, which, written in red, sometimes had the dual function of rubrics. For example, in MS Arsenal 3482, the bottom of the leftmost column on fol. 514v signifies an *entrelacement* through the use of an illuminated 'O', which begins *Or dit le contes que quant lanceles fu venus...* describing how Lancelot was told by God to board the first ship that he sees⁵⁷. Perhaps MS Arsenal 3482's illuminator referred to the opening lines of the new narrative section but did not read further, thus remaining ignorant of the slightly later description of the boat's lack of sails and oars, resulting in a textually incorrect, albeit carefully rendered, miniature.

The Images in Context

In order to examine the image cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 in full, another factor to be considered is the location of each illustration in conjunction with the text. In light of the images' consistent placement at points of textual diversion, or *entrelacement*, it must be asked whether they serve only as visual 'breaks,' or if they depict key scenes regardless of their textual placement. As Keith Busby notes, the various divisions or 'chapters' of the Vulgate legends are often quite lengthy and include multiple scenes that could potentially be illuminated.⁵⁸ The pairing of an image with a textual transition does not predetermine the image's subject matter. This suggests that illuminators of romances such as *Queste* may have had more artistic license than has previously been theorized by scholars such as Roger Loomis and Norris Lacy, and that the scenes to be illustrated were not always predetermined⁵⁹. The differing pictorial cycles, yet close production dates of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 support this hypothesis. Although MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 have several images in common, these scenes almost always differ in terms of

55. Stones A. Secular Manuscript Illumination in France... P. 96–97.

56. Stones A. Some Aspects of Arthur's Death in Medieval Art // The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition / ed. by C. Baswell and W. Sharpe. New York, 1988. P. 56.

57. 'So the story says how Lancelot comes to...'; The Quest for the Holy Grail.... P. 151.

58. Busby K. Text and Image in the Getty Tristan (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig XV, 5) // Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honor of Richard and Mary Rouse. Turnhout, 2011. P. 3.

59. Loomis R. S. Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art. London, 1938. P. 91; The New Arthurian Encyclopedia... P. 302.

style and iconography. For example, MS Arsenal 3482's images exhibit an overall sense of energy and movement, whereas MS Rawlinson Q.b.6's, inscribed within the stringent confines of initial 'O's, appear more stationary and scripted. In addition, MS Arsenal 3482 contains two more miniatures than MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 does, increasing both the manuscript's visual impact and its number of possible visual manifestations. For two *Queste* manuscripts so similar in place and date of production, this is a surprising lack of visual continuity, raising questions as to the two manuscripts' methods of production, intended audiences, and purposes.

By the mid-fourteenth century, secular romance manuscripts were generally organized into two or three columns of text, with single-column illuminations highlighting the divisions between chapters or changes in narration, such as the *entrelacement* of narratives so commonly seen in both Chrétien's tales and the Vulgate Cycle. In addition, as has been discussed, by this point in time it appears to have been common practice for illuminators to recycle images from pattern books and religious manuscripts, using routine scenes of battles, feasts, and equestrian knights to speed up the production process and increase the reader's visual comprehension of the multilayered stories⁶⁰. Although the textual planning of secular manuscripts was therefore relatively prescribed by the mid-1300s, there was, on the other hand, a lack of consistent visual planning. For example, among MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, three manuscripts of close proximity in terms of time and place of production, there is a confusing compilation of artistic styles, iconographies, and visual frameworks.

One example of this is the decision to illuminate the manuscripts with either historiated initials or miniatures. The close production dates of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 complicate this question, as it cannot be assumed that the historiated initials of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 are indicative of an earlier artistic time period and style, as hypothesized by Elizabeth Morrison. Morrison suggests a stylistic progression from historiated initials to multi-compartmental miniatures so as to increase

60. Morrison E. From Sacred to Secular... P. 22.

the space available for illumination⁶¹. However, produced c. 1351, MS Arsenal 5218 is the latest of the three manuscripts considered in this article, yet it includes a historiated 'A' that begins the narration of *Queste*. The juxtaposition of this historiated initial with the manuscript's more visually developed frontispiece questions whether these two artistic techniques could have co-existed in the mid-fourteenth century. Considering the mix of artistic styles and plans found in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, it appears more likely, as noted by Alison Stones, that there was a general lack of continuity of artistic quality and text-image relationships in late medieval Arthurian manuscripts. Stones comments that Arthurian illustrations often differ even among manuscripts created by a single scribe, artist, or workshop⁶². It is thus possible that the differences in creativity and style are evidential of the illuminators' varying levels of artistic ability. As a whole, MS Arsenal 3482 is of a more refined, unique artistic quality than is MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.

In addition, as noted previously, MS Arsenal 3482's repeated lack of textual-visual agreement, yet consistently imaginative images, points to the involvement of an artisan who, although highly skilled, was unfamiliar with the *Queste* narrative. This suggests that visual interest and extravagance were of greater importance to the manuscript's owner than textual accuracy. Furthermore, the inclusion of several scenes not found in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, which increases MS Arsenal 3482's overall number of miniatures, implies both that the creation of the manuscript was undertaken at great expense, and that it was created as a unique object. This is in keeping with Loomis' hypothesis that only in the more costly manuscripts would effort be taken to increase the originality and specificity of the illustrated scenes⁶³. The high quality of MS Arsenal 3482, exemplified by its wide margins, careful script, and fairly extensive decoration, would unquestionably classify it as a manuscript created for an owner of wealth and prestige.

In comparison, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, although undoubtedly a manuscript of some cost, as evidenced by its extensive use of gold, is less imaginative in its illustrations, epitomized both

61. Morrison E. From Sacred to Secular... P. 16–17.

62. Stones A. The Lancelot-Graal Project... P. 167; Stones A. 'Mise en page' in the French Lancelot-Grail: The First 150 Years of the Illustrative Tradition // A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle / ed. by C. Dover. Cambridge, 2003. P. 126–127.

63. Loomis R. S. Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art... P. 92.

by the ostensibly dated use of historiated initials, and the static poses of its illustrated figures. Stones notes that by 1350, the historiated initial had become ‘obsolete’, likely due to the constrictions its often awkward and contrived form placed on the scenes illustrated within, as seen in MS Rawlinson Q.b.6. This is especially notable when the historiated initial O’s of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 are compared to the more energetic and unrestrained miniatures of MS Arsenal 3482⁶⁴. MS Rawlinson Q.b.6’s more extensive use of visual tropes taken from pattern books and religious manuscripts, when paired with its use of historiated initials rather than independent miniatures, suggests a manuscript created without a buyer in mind, or at the very least, a manuscript of lesser cost than one as extravagant as MS Arsenal 3482. The distinction between the visual plans of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 personifies the varied methods of production and intended purposes of late medieval Arthurian manuscripts, even among those produced within a prescribed time period and geographic area.

The possibility that MS Arsenal 5218’s artistic program is no more than an anomaly within the *oeuvre* of Arthurian illumination is a theory that must also be taken into account. When compared to MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482, as well as to other similarly dated *Queste* manuscripts, such as MS Royal 14 E. iii, MS Arsenal 5218’s few, yet lavish illustrations appear as an aberration. It seems more probable that as posited by Stones, ‘there is no chronological progression from one kind of layout to another, nor is one format preferred in any one region’⁶⁵. The similar production dates and locales yet differing illumination styles of MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6 further support this hypothesis. Although historiated initials may have given way to more clearly delineated miniatures in sacred texts c. 1350, the same does not seem to be true of secular texts, such as the Arthurian romances, which appear to have continued to use a variety of visual forms, including both historiated initials and more visually complex miniatures⁶⁶.

64. Stones A. *Secular Manuscript Illumination in France...* P. 94.

65. Stones A. *The Lancelot-Graal Project...* P. 167.

66. Stones A. *Secular Manuscript Illumination in France...* P. 94; *Camille M. Image on the Edge...* P. 18.

The Depiction of the Grail

According to Alison Stones, MS Arsenal 5218 is one of only five *Queste* manuscripts to illustrate the climactic Grail scene⁶⁷. Scholars such as Frederick Locke and Martine Meuwese have posited that this reluctance to visualize the Grail stems in part from its elusive nature within the text⁶⁸. Throughout *Queste* the form of the Grail is never clearly elucidated. In E. Jane Burns' translation, edited by Norris Lacy, the Grail is repeatedly referred to simply as the 'Holy Vessel', or in Old French, *terrine*, for the English 'tureen'⁶⁹. Although the climactic Grail scene describes Christ issuing from the Grail to present the host to Galahad, Bors, and Perceval, no further detail of the Grail's exact form is provided. Much of the Grail's appeal is due to its ill-defined nature; the Grail is more an abstract concept than a physical object. According to *Queste* it is a spiritual ideal towards which all good Christians should strive⁷⁰. Only those who are truly chaste and devout, as exemplified by Galahad, shall succeed. In accordance with the Grail's ambiguity, both MSS Arsenal 3482 and Rawlinson Q.b.6 shy away from direct visual interpretation of the Grail, similar to depictions of the Grail in fourteenth-century manuscripts of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*. Stones describes this as a 'deliberate ploy... so that the climactic Grail liturgy is left to the imagination to picture'⁷¹.

The artist of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6 chose to skirt the issue entirely. The final historiated initial on fol. 357v depicts Galahad embracing the dying King Mordrain (Fig. 31), an episode that occurs prior to the performance of the Grail liturgy, and Galahad's, Bors' and Perceval's enlightenment as to the Grail's significance. The artist of MS Arsenal 3482 also refrains from depicting the Grail, although he carries the visual narrative slightly further. The final miniature on fol. 538v illustrates Galahad receiving the host from Josephus (Fig. 33), an important aspect of the Grail liturgy, if not one that requires a direct visual representation of the Grail. Both artists actively promote the Grail's obscurity, an artistic decision that may have increased interest in the *Queste* legend⁷².

67. Stones A. The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229 // *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature* / ed. by K. Busby. London, 1996. P. 213.

68. Locke F. W. *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance*. Redwood City, 1960. P. 7; Meuwese M. *The Shape of the Grail in Medieval Art // The Grail, the Quest, and the World of Arthur* / ed. N. J. Lacy. Cambridge, 2008. P. 27.

69. *The Quest for the Holy Grail...* P. 164.

70. Busby K. *Rubrics and the Reception of Romance // French Studies*. 1999. Vol. 53 No. 2. P. 138.

71. Stones A. The Illustrations of BN, Fr. 95 and Yale 229... P. 214.

72. Busby K. *Rubrics and the Reception of Romance...* P. 138.



Fig. 33. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3482, La *Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 538v. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b55000503x/f530.item.r=MS%203482>

Considering the reluctance of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6's and Arsenal 3482's illuminators to visualize the Grail, it is even more intriguing that the illuminator of MS Arsenal 5218, a manuscript relatively close in date and location of production to MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482, chose to so clearly depict the Grail. The final two-column miniature in MS Arsenal 5218, on fol. 88r provides an amalgamated visualization of the Grail liturgy in which Josephus, the procession of the Grail, and the vision of Christ all figure (Fig. 34). This image, although textually incorrect in the order of events, provides a visual overview of this crucial *Queste* scene, emphasizing the key points of the episode: Josephus' celestial presence more than three hundred years after his death, the procession of the Grail and Lance as described in Chrétien de Troye's *Le Conte du Graal*, and the issuing of Christ from the Holy Grail; the personification of Christian enlightenment.

The final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218 is also reminiscent of a biblical feast scene such as the Last Supper or the Marriage at Cana; the figures are arrayed in a straight line on the far side of the table, and all turn slightly to face the most centrally seated figures; Galahad, Perceval, and Bors. The miniature's Christian origins are further evident through the inclusion of Josephus,



Fig. 34. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218, *La Queste del saint Graal*, fol. 88r. Paris, France, c. 1351. Source: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100017d/f179.item>

who appears as a bishop on the left side of the image. The placement of his throne, squeezed into the leftmost corner of the picture frame, is sufficiently awkward to suggest that it was transplanted from another image, likely a religious scene wherein the inclusion of a bishop was more fitting. The mix of artistic borrowing and invention seen in the final miniature of MS Arsenal 5218 personifies both the myriad visual resources available to illuminators, as well as the lack of a definitive visual program for the depiction of the Grail⁷³.

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The illuminator of MS Arsenal 5218 dealt with the lack of guidance for the Grail's visualization by incorporating common elements of religious iconography while also illustrating each disparate aspect of the Grail procession. This combined use of established iconography and imagination results in a comprehensive, if textually inaccurate, scene. Regardless of the miniature's lack of textual accuracy, it undoubtedly functioned as an explicit visual commentary for contemporary readers. The sacred and profane are clearly juxtaposed within the miniature, creating a climactic image that functions as a visual summary of the links between the secular and sacred in Arthurian romance.

The question of why MS Arsenal 5218's illuminator chose to depict the Grail procession is also deserving of consideration. It is possible that MS Arsenal 5218's uncommon depiction of the Grail is related to the manuscript's overall paucity of images. Whereas MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6 and Arsenal 3482 contain 15 and 17 *Queste* images respectively, MS Arsenal 5218 contains only three. The inclusion of a mere three images, regardless of whether this artistic decision was due to factors of time or cost, significantly increases the need for each image to be as visually explicit and relevant as possible. If the illuminations serve as a visual narration of *Queste*, each image counts towards the audiences' potential visual, as well as textual, comprehension. Together, the three illuminations serve to succinctly introduce, progress, and conclude the legend, while also elaborating on the Christian tropes at the heart of *Queste*.

Conclusion

Queste illustrations engender a heightened level of Christian meaning, one not found in illustrations of the other Vulgate legends, such as the prose *Merlin* and *Lancelot*⁷⁴. The Christian core of *La Queste del saint Graal* results in multiple levels of both textual and visual understanding, ranging from the secularly chivalric to the wholly messianic. The coexistence of these varying interpretations exemplifies the intertwining of the secular and the sacred, a theme that is at the heart of *Queste*, both as a work of medieval literature and of visual culture. Furthermore, the presence of both iconographic and stylistic similarities and differences in the visual depictions of *Queste*, as seen in MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218, illustrate the complexities inherent to the translation of Arthurian legends from word to image. Although in some cases the artists borrow heavily from religious illustrative traditions, such as in the illuminations of MS Rawlinson Q.b.6, in other instances, as in the miniatures of MS Arsenal 3482, they transcend the boundaries of accepted iconography, suggesting a level of artistic invention beyond what has been traditionally posited.

Based solely on the analysis of the three manuscripts discussed here, it would be impractical to construct a single, cohesive theory of the function and use of *Queste* imagery in fourteenth-century France. It is feasible, however, to collate a series of hypotheses based on the detailed visual analysis of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 undertaken in this article. From such an analysis, it can be surmised that early fourteenth-century *Queste* manuscript illustration specifically, and perhaps Arthurian manuscript illustration more generally, was characterized by a melding of not only the secular and sacred but also the visually traditional and visually original. As noted by Alison Stones, a defined pattern is lacking in the artists' renderings of *Queste* scenes. Rather, the illuminators' adoption of various visual techniques and models appears to have functioned on a case-by-case basis, determined by factors such as the size and cost of the manuscript, the patrons' wishes, the illuminator's

74. Whitaker M. Legends of King Arthur in Art... P. 47.

textual knowledge, and even mere artistic and technical convenience. Although this resulting lack of visual concordance renders it difficult to categorize the manuscripts based purely on elements of style or iconography, it also defines their overall visual impact; one of outward discontinuity yet inward unity, achieved through the juxtaposition of the sacred and secular, two seemingly opposing yet overlapping concepts which when assembled, function as a cohesive whole.

Like *Queste* itself, characterized by narrative *entrelacement*, the pictorial cycles of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6, Arsenal 3482, and Arsenal 5218 are conceived of varying collections of interlacing elements, dichotomous aspects that work together to form a single, multivalent entity with simultaneously secular and sacred connotations. Based on the complex nature of MSS Rawlinson Q.b.6's, Arsenal 3482's, and Arsenal 5218's pictorial cycles, it is valid to posit that the illuminators of these three manuscripts actively strove to emphasize the inherently Christian nature of *Queste*, the most religiously rooted of all the Arthurian legends. Just as the style and iconography of each manuscript vary, so does the degree to which the illuminators incorporated Christian ideology into each manuscript's outwardly secular imagery. The varying degree and use of Christian visual metaphors within *Queste* manuscripts characterize the dynamic visual role of the sacred within the realms of secular Arthurian romance, illustrating that such Christian-minded artistic visualizations can, and should, be considered a defining element of early fourteenth-century French *Queste* imagery⁷⁵.

75. I would like to thank my husband and fellow medievalist, Richard Rush, for his assistance with the manuscript chart and edits.

APPENDIX

	Full <i>Queste</i> image cycle			<i>Queste</i> images relevant for comparison	
	MS Rawlinson Q.b.6.	MS Arsenal 3482	MS Arsenal 5218	MS Royal 14 E. iii	MS Add. 10294
Celebration of Pentecost			Fol. 1r	Fol. 89r	
Galahad at abbey	Fol. 318r	Fol. 405r	Fol. 10r		Fol. 5v
Meliant steals crown	Fol. 321r	Fol. 413r		Fol. 96r	Fol. 8v
Gawain arrives at abbey	Fol. 322v	Fol. 418v			
Battle between Galahad, Perceval, and Lancelot		Fol. 420v			Fol. 11v
Galahad rides through Gaste Forest	Fol. 323v				
Galahad in Gaste Forest	Fol. 324v				
Perceval meets anchoress aunt	Fol. 326v	Fol. 428v		Fol. 101v	Fol. 14v
Lancelot preached to by hermit	Fol. 334v	Fol. 449r		Fol. 109r	Fol. 23r
Gawain and Hector meet in forest	Fol. 340r				Fol. 29v
Black Knight kills Lancelot's horse		Fol. 460v			
Bors meets monk riding ass	Fol. 342v	Fol. 466v		Fol. 118r	Fol. 32v
Galahad rides through forest	Fol. 346v				
Galahad saves Perceval		Fol. 479r			
Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve	Fol. 349r	Fol. 487r		Fol. 127v	Fol. 41v
Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden				Fol. 128r	
Galahad, Perceval, Bors observe maiden on bed in boat	Fol. 352r	Fol. 494v		Fol. 125v	Fol. 44r
Galahad and Perceval pray for Bors	Fol. 355r				
Galahad, Perceval, Bors kill hostile knights		Fol. 513r		Fol. 131r	Fol. 44v
Lancelot aboard ship	Fol. 355v	Fol. 514v		Fol. 133v	Fol. 47v
White Knight on horseback, Lancelot, Galahad in ship		Fol. 517r		Fol. 134v	
Galahad heals King Mordrain	Fol. 357v	Fol. 525r		Fol. 136v	Fol. 50r
Grail carried to Sarras by Galahad and companions		Fol. 537r		Fol. 138v	Fol. 52r
Grail Liturgy			Fol. 88r		
Galahad receives host from Josephus		Fol. 538v			

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3. *Romance of Lancelot du Lac* (branches 3. *Lancelot*; 4. *Queste*; 5. *Mort Artu*). Amiens, France, c. 1320–1330 // Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Q.b.6
4. *Romans de la Table ronde*, by Gautier Map. Paris, France, c. 1325–1340 // Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3482.
5. *Li queste del saint Graal*. Tournai, Belgium c. 1351 // Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS Arsenal 5218.

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