

The illustration of Antoine Vérard's Arthurian romances: paper copies and books printed on vellum



Dr Irene Fabry-Tehranchi, Curator, British Library (Romance collections)
irene.fabry-tehranchi@bl.uk



Context

The Parisian publisher Antoine Vérard (active 1485–1512) is famous for his deluxe illuminated books printed on vellum, which are hybrids between printed books and manuscripts. The contact between manuscript and printed traditions appears on several levels: textual transmission, materiality of page design and illustration. The production of illuminated printed books shows how the same actors: libraires, scribes, and illuminators, collaborated within a book trade encompassing manuscripts and printed books.

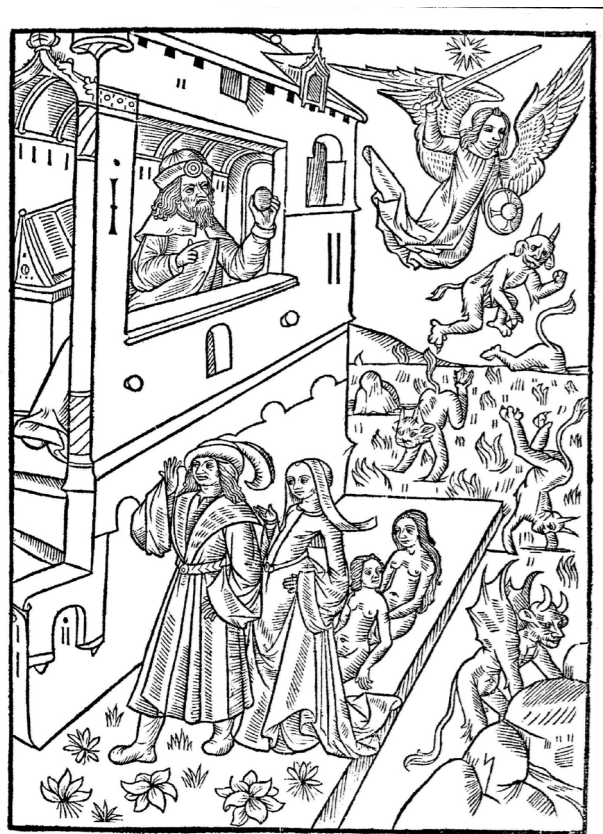
From Mansion's 1484 *Métamorphozes d'Ovide* to Vérard's 1498 *Merlin*



Bruges, Bibliothèque de la ville, 3877, f. 48v



Paris, BNF, Rés. G-YC-1002, f. 47v



Aberystwyth, NLW, CG 110, f. 1



Paris, BNF, Vélins 559, f. a1



London, BL, C.22.c.6, f. 1



Paris, BNF fr. 105, f. 126 (Paris, c. 1325)

Research questions

1. Use and reuse of woodcuts illustration and in early printed books

- *Provenance and circulation of the woodcuts* among different workshops / printers: networks of men and material. *Merlin*, 1498 reusing woodcuts from the 1484 *Métamorphozes d'Ovide* [Moralisé] (Colard Mansion) / *Bible des poètes* (Vérard, 1498); *Quatre fils Aymon* (Jean de Vingle, 1495) / *Ogier le Danois* (de Vingle 1496; Vérard 1498); Jacques Millet's *Destruction de Troyes* (Jean Bonhomme 1484; Guillaume le Roy / Mathias Huss, 1485; Jean Driart / Vérard, 1498).
- *Identification and dating of the different editions*
- *Models and copies*, textual families (special version for ms BNF fr. 103 and Vérard's *Tristan*) and contact between the iconography of illuminated manuscripts and illustrative cycles in printed books (woodcuts or illuminations).
- 'illustrative' or aesthetic function of the woodcuts?

2. Collaborations in the production of deluxe copies with hand-painted illuminations:

- *Owners and patrons*: Charles VIII, Henry VII... (dedications, heraldry...), different levels of customisation of the printed book.
- *Different illustrative techniques*, from paper copies with colour wash to the painting of the woodcut or the design of entirely new illustrations. In the vellum copies, woodcuts printed (and erased), or completely omitted? Variations between illuminated copies printed on vellum for the same text.
- *The network of the international book trade*: libraires overseeing manuscripts and printed books production and circulation between Paris, Rouen, London...
- *Style of illumination, identification of hands and artists* (who worked both on manuscript and deluxe printed books), adding to our knowledge of the production of painters in the last quarter of the 15th century (Maître de Jacques de Besançon / François le Barbier, Maître du Romuléon de Chantilly, a follower of the Maître du cardinal de Bourbon / Guérard Louf...)
- *New / different interpretations of the text provided by the illuminated cycles* of the books printed on vellum, compared to the iconography of (previous) manuscript illuminations or woodcuts cycles?



New York, Pierpont Morgan Lib. 26082, f. 1



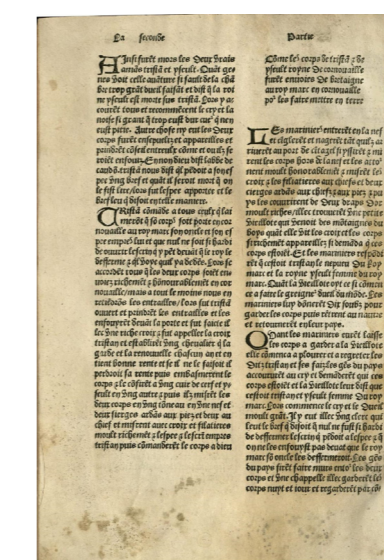
Châteauroux, Médiathèque Equinoxe, Inc. 6, f. 1

Case studies

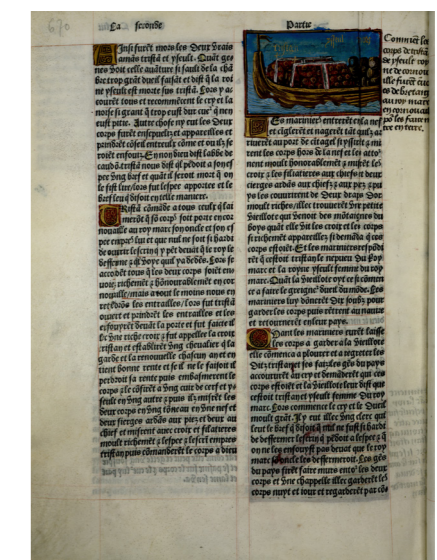
Vérard's Arthurian romances

- Lancelot* [*Queste del saint Graal and Mort le roi Arthur*] (1488, illustrated; 1494 – vellum; 1494–1503; 1504 Vérard)
- Tristan* (1489 with Jean Le Bourgeois (Rouen), not illustrated; 1496 – vellum; 1499; 1503–06 – vellum)
- Merlin* (1498 – vellum; 1493)

The end of the lovers in Vérard's 1496 *Tristan* and earlier manuscripts



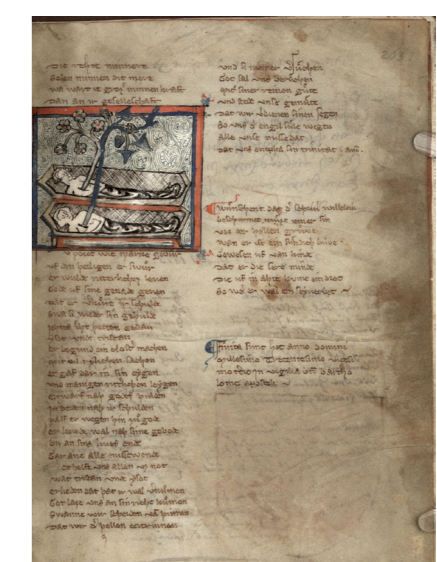
NY, Pierpont Morgan 26082, f. 143v



Châteauroux, Méd. Equinoxe, Inc. 6 f. 143v



Paris, BNF fr. 103, f. 1 (Rouen, 1450-75)



Köln, Historisches Archiv der Stadt W*88 p. 263 (1323)



Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 346, f. 174 (Swabia, c. 1465)



Paris, BNF fr. 760, f. 126 (Genoa, c. 1300)

Work in progress

- “Les imprimés sur vélin d'Antoine Vérard: d'Ogier le Danois au Merlin de la bibliothèque d'Henry VII enluminé par le maître de Jacques de Besançon (1498)”, *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, 7 (2015) <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1035768ar>
- “Du manuscrit à l'imprimé: les remplois de bois gravés dans l'illustration du Livre de Merlin d'Antoine Vérard (1498)”, *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 48 (1), 2017. <https://www.brepolonline.net/doi/abs/10.1484/J.VIATOR.5.115320>
- “L'illustration de la mort des amants: l'édition imprimée sur vélin du Tristan de Vérard (1496) et les manuscrits des textes en vers allemands”. *La tradition manuscrite du Tristan en prose*, dir. C. Ferlampin-Acher and D. de Carné. Paris: Garnier, 2018 [to be published].
- “Représentations de la décapitation dans les copies enluminées du *Lancelot* publié par Antoine Vérard (1494)”, *Babel*, 65 (2019) [to be published].

The beginning of Vérard's 1496 *Tristan*