

William Morris's unpublished Arthurian translations

Roger Simpson

The Arthurian legend was a continual source of inspiration for William Morris. From his purchase in 1856 of Robert Southey's edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, to his own Kelmscott Press publication of *Syr Percyvell of Gales* in 1895, he adopted Arthurian subjects for his verse, murals, easel paintings, stained glass, embroidery and tapestry. To this list should be added a pair of translations he made of early Arthurian French romances, both of which have escaped serious attention by literary critics.

As part of a bequest by May Morris, the British Library holds a notebook (BL Add MS. 45329) which contains an unfinished fragment of a translation of *Tristram* made by her father in about 1870-1871. It consists of ninety-nine leaves, the first eighty-eight being written in his 'ordinary hand', the remainder in his 'fair' hand of the period. Considerably more substantial, however, was Morris's second venture into Arthurian translation, which ran to over six hundred leaves. Among May Morris's bequests to the Society of Antiquaries were four notebooks containing an unfinished translation, dating from 1870-1874, of the *Lancelot du Lac* (Paris, 1513).¹ As with his *Tristram*, in these notebooks Morris writes only on the recto of each leaf, leaving the verso blank. The first volume (905.1) is numbered 1-166, the second (905.2) from 167-285, while the third (905.3), which bears the initials GBJ [Georgiana Burne-Jones], was originally numbered from 286 onwards, but was later renumbered 1-307. A fourth notebook (905.4) contains a calligraphic fair copy of folios 1-76 of 905.1.

As both translations survive in manuscripts held by major British institutions, are listed in their catalogues, and have been made available in microform, it is remarkable that they have not attracted a wider notice.² May Morris, who knew of both works, includes in the edition of her father's *Collected Works* a facsimile page from one of these (*Lancelot du Lac*), which she correctly describes as being from 'a copy my father had begun to make of his translation of the French romance',³ but as later writers (such as Norman Kelvin and Nicholas Salmon) quote only her earlier statement that it is a 'portion of a manuscript in a very

beautiful Italian script',⁴ readers of these scholars may perhaps have assumed that Morris was merely copying an original rather than making a translation.⁵ Fortunately Florence Boos has recently broken the critical silence by making a large part of the *Lancelot* MS available on the admirable William Morris Online website sponsored by the William Morris Society of the United States and the University of Iowa.⁶

The translations were undertaken during the early 1870s, a period when Morris was actively continuing to create patterns for tiles, printed textiles and embroidery, besides definitively mastering new designs for wallpaper – not to mention running a successful business. So it might be supposed that having completed his massive verse narratives of *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1870), he would allow his literary work to lie fallow for a time, yet he restlessly continued to explore many fresh literary approaches as he diversified into some very different genres: a novel of contemporary life (*The Novel on Blue Paper*, 1872), an elaborate masque (*Love is Enough*, 1872), and a series of translations beginning with *The Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869), before moving on to *The Story of the Volsungs* (1870), *Three Northern Love Stories* (1875) and *The Aeneids of Virgil* (1875). A letter to Aglaia Coronio in January 1873 admits that he would:

be glad to have some poem on hand, but it's no use trying to force the thing; and though the translating lacks the hope and fear that makes writing original things so absorbing, yet at any rate it is amusing and in places even exciting.⁷

Perhaps, too, the routine activity of translating another man's creations would also provide an emollient, distancing him from the pressures of daily business and the heartache caused by his marital troubles.

Morris's interest in medieval romance was, of course, of long standing, his early attraction to it having been nurtured by access to illuminated manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, and he soon began to assemble his own collection of manuscripts and early printed books. The catalogue of his library drawn up by F. S. Ellis in 1896 lists a hundred and seventeen manuscripts and over two hundred and eighty early printed books.⁸ Among these latter appear many Arthurian items, not only the to-be-expected Thomas Malory's *Kynge Arthur* [*Le Morte Darthur*] (1557), but also Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Titurel* (1477), and the great French medieval prose romances; for example, copies of *Merlin* (1498), *Gyron le Courtoys* (n.d.), *L'hystoire du Sainct Greaal* (1523), *Meliadus de Leonnoys* (1528), *Roman de Perceforest* (1531), *Perceval le Galloys* (1530), *Lancelot du Lac* (1513 and 1533), and *Tristan* (1496 and 1533). Unlike other collectors, however, Morris took it upon himself to translate some of the items he owned, and the two he selected, a *Tristan*⁹ and a *Lancelot* (1513), depicted heroes who continuously exerted a magnetic pull on his imagination, for they featured in many of his other works in a range of media: the Oxford Union murals, *The Defence of Guenevere*, stained glass, and

the Holy Grail tapestries.

Both works which Morris translated were of special literary importance. Continental Arthurian romance had initially appeared in verse form by known poets during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, after which it was hugely expanded in prose versions whose authors remain unknown. The widespread diffusion of the *Prose Lancelot* (known also as the *Vulgate Lancelot* or *Lancelot-Grail*) is indicated by the survival of over a hundred and fifty manuscript copies, and the supposed reading of one of these by Paolo and Francesca, which allegedly inspired their own adulterous passions, would raise this part of the story to another level of literary fame by incorporation into Canto V of Dante's *Inferno*. These prose versions would later be among the earliest books to be printed, the *Prose Lancelot* appearing in 1488 at Rouen, the first Arthurian prose romance in French to be printed in France. Such versions of *Tristan* and *Lancelot* are markedly different in emphasis from their verse predecessors – and from most nineteenth-century treatments, including those by the early William Morris – in that rather less attention is given to fatally-doomed romantic love. In the *Prose Tristan*, for example, more regard is paid to Tristan's knightly deeds than to his affair with Iseult, while in the *Prose Lancelot* the hero's love for the Queen is initially presented quite positively: Lancelot's consequent motivation to achieve honour and renown produces beneficial results for Arthur's kingdom, and is therefore not seen as a destructive threat to Camelot.

Immensely important in their own right, the prose romances would also be reworked and assimilated into Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, a book which achieved near-canonical status in the reception of the legend in Britain. However, Malory's adaptation of his copious sources necessarily involved some omissions, and thus Morris's versions of *Lancelot* and *Tristan* contain much of this omitted material which is no longer readily available to modern readers in English. In *Tristan*, for example, which is a printing of the very lengthy *Prose Tristan* (probably composed ca 1230-1240) we gain access to early sections which have been greatly neglected by later ages.

A rare and talented exception to this neglect was Lewis Porney, a teacher of French in Richmond, Surrey, who contributed an abridgement of the *Prose Tristan* in *A New and Complete Collection of Interesting Romances and Novels* (1780).¹⁰ His version was a retelling he derived from the French *Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans*, a compendium which, in the fashion of the times, adopted an elegantly ironic tone towards its subject matter. But a complete translation of the *Prose Tristan* has still not been published in English, for even Renée Curtis's modern version excludes the opening chapters.¹¹

Morris is therefore moving into virgin territory by following the early chapters of his source, the first twenty-three of which recount the largely untoward adventures of the remote ancestors of Tristram (Morris prefers this spelling of his

hero's name) stemming from Bron, brother of Joseph of Arimathea. Throughout a fast-moving, complex tale, involving a man-eating giant, religious conversion, fire from heaven, shipwreck, murder, suicide, fratricide, parricide, abduction, rape and incest (whether accidental or intentional), the heroic line of descent runs through Bron's youngest son, Sadoc, then to his son Apollo, and thence eventually to Meliadus, King of Lyonesse.

It was at this point that Malory had picked up the story, and is the occasion for Morris to adopt his 'fair' hand and to continue translating for three more chapters. These narrate Meliadus's marriage to Ysabel, daughter of the Cornish King, and her death in giving birth to Tristram, followed by King Mark's slaying of his brother Pernehen, Meliadus's marriage to King Howel's daughter, and her unsuccessful attempt to poison Tristram. But after the sentence, 'So they said among themselves that she had deserved death, and the King said: "Then shall she die"', Morris breaks off abruptly, mid-chapter, leaving the remaining leaves of his notebook blank, having translated only about a seventh of Volume One.¹² Unlike Porney, Morris treats the story with great respect, not demeaning it with an ironic narration but maintaining the original work's declared intention of 'pricking on and moving of the hearts of noble folk to live gloriously and virtuously'.¹³ Moreover, despite the welter of picaresque incident, we are continually aware of the narrative's core themes of loyalty, dynastic rivalry and the destructive effects of adulterous love.

Similarly Morris's translation from the voluminous *Prose Lancelot* (originally composed ca 1215-1235) presents material new to an English reader; material which – even more than with the early chapters of the *Tristan* – deals with incident which is importantly related to the central Arthurian corpus, for it greatly enlarges the hero's biography. Crucial to this is the story of how the infant Lancelot was rescued and raised by the Lady of the Lake. Though this story entered English juvenile literature during the twentieth century, by way of popular retellings by Blanche Winder (1925) and Roger Lancelyn Green (1966),¹⁴ it was not until Lucy Allen Paton's *Sir Lancelot of the Lake* (1929) and Corin Corley's version of *Lancelot do Lac* (1989), a forerunner of the *Prose Lancelot*, that even abridged translations of this material became available for an adult audience.¹⁵ A complete translation did not appear until Norris Lacy's magisterial edition of 1993-1996.¹⁶

Abridgements and excerpts did not do justice to the work, which is of great interest on at least four levels.¹⁷ First, is the story of a young man's search for personal identity, and his struggle to make a famous name for himself. Second, this quest is shaped by the immense power of love, which underpins the main narrative with a dramatic tension. As Lancelot's overmastering love for Guenevere is revealed in deeds rather than words, we are required to wait 162 pages for this tension to be released by the famous kiss. Magic too plays a significant role

in his success, for not only is he crucially supported in infancy by the fairy world of the Lady of the Lake, but in his first major quest he is empowered by the use of magic shields to undo the enchantments of Dolorous Garde. Finally, the entire action is set within the conventions of the feudal society of King Arthur, which is necessarily engaged in safeguarding the king and his vassals, and extending protection to the victims of injustice.

This *Lancelot* translation accordingly presents a new angle on many characters whom we previously thought we knew well. For instance, King Arthur himself is not made immune from deserved criticism. Since the downfall of King Ban is blatantly caused by Arthur's failure to send him requested aid, Arthur is publicly blamed by Banin (Ban's godson) for his failure in this respect. In this instance, of course, Arthur may have had good reason for his failure, for he was at the time militarily hard pressed at home, but on a later occasion Arthur receives a very lengthy and severe admonishment, lasting nine manuscript leaves, from a 'good man' about his alleged shortcomings in government.¹⁸

Notably Merlin plays neither a major nor a beneficent role. As he remains unredeemed from the evil of his semi-demoniac birth, Vivien attracts no blame for cunningly acquiring his lore without yielding her virginity. This she achieves in a manner which may seem unconvincing, but which evidently worked, in her case:

[she] wrought the spell on him ever whenso he came in unto her, so that she straightly cast him into slumber: on her two paps moreover she set two words of wizardry, such that so long as they abode there no man might deflower her or have to do with her carnally.¹⁹

Having extracted his secrets, she puts her new powers to excellent use in nurturing the defenceless young Lancelot and his cousins, Lionel and Bors.

Most important, Lancelot emerges as a very different figure from Malory's hero, who arrives fully-fledged at Arthur's court. We read instead of a fatherless boy unaware of his lineage, who develops into a youth self-confident enough to strike his tutor for beating his (Lancelot's) dog. Once arrived at Camelot, he is so smitten with love for the Queen that he is tongue-tied. Having contrived to receive his knightly sword from her rather than from Arthur, he leaves immediately on a series of adventures in order to prove his valour, yet is still occasionally so lost in reverie that he allows others to mock him or even risks absent-mindedly drowning himself. Only through the good offices of Gallehault, and the encouragement of the Queen, does this bashful, lachrymose knight manage to converse with her, and eventually kiss her.

Gallehault, Lord of the Foreign Isles, is the intriguing new addition. The son of a giantess, and so six inches (150mm) above normal height, he has conquered other kingdoms, and possesses designs on Arthur's. But when he arrives with a

massive army, he declines to proceed against Arthur's inferior forces lest he lose honour in gaining a one-sided victory. Arthur is therefore given time to summon reinforcements. In the eventual battle, Gallehaut is so impressed by Lancelot's prowess that he welcomes him as a friend, and soon decides to maintain this friendship by surrendering to Arthur. Then, as a further kindness, he sets up the vital meeting between Lancelot and Guenevere.

Thanks to Morris, too, we are introduced to the particular qualities of this medieval text wherein characters are made vivid through symbolic details of their appearance and habits. The young Lancelot, for instance, wore a mysteriously-supplied garland of fresh red roses which stood out wonderfully against his fine, blond hair, and wore it every day with the exception of Friday, the eve of the great feasts, and all of Lent. So too, King Claudas's ebullient character is evoked through his stylish panache:

Rivers he loved over all places, and falcons better than hounds: never rode he but on great destriers save when he rode long journeys, and then would he have a great destrier, were it in peace or in war.²⁰

Systemic, violent martial conflict has the horrific immediacy which Morris had presented earlier in his tale 'Golden Wings', and the poems based on Froissart. Weapons slash through hauberks, slice into white skin, cutting two inches into the collar bone. Nose-guards are smashed into nose and cheeks. Pommels hammer links of mail into foreheads. Lances are jabbed between nipple and shoulder. Insides are run straight through. Swords slash through teeth. Blood pours out of mouths, noses and ears.

And the social results of such violence are poignantly expressed by the dying King Ban as he watches his castle go up in flames:

And when he saw that he had no more any dwelling on earth to turn to, and he felt that he was old and weary, and his son was such that he might not help nor deliver; and his wife – young she was and good toward God and toward the world, and come withal of the high lineage of David – then great pity him seemed of all these things; whereas his son must needs grow up in poverty and great misery, and his wife be in danger of other men, and he himself old and sore grieving must wear away the remnant of his life.²¹

Such movingly-conveyed human tenderness is revealed too in the maternal grief suffered by the widowed Queen Helaine, and in the quasi-maternal solicitude felt by the Lady of the Lake for her foster-child Lancelot.

What is more, this may be a world of very hard surfaces, but they conceal rich complexities of motive and character. Claudas, for example, may behave with treacherous villainy to men and women, old and young, but he is redeemed from mere caricature by some redeeming features: he is fond of his son, possesses great

courage himself, and admires that quality in others. Throughout the narrative, too, there is considerable psychological insight into the complexity of motives, and the personal search for right conduct, as when Pharien is required to negotiate the dilemma of preserving his honour by fulfilling his conflicting obligations both to his former liege-lord, and his present one.

Such excerpts as have been quoted are not, however, typical of the entire work, which develops into a very sophisticated, intricately interlaced plot, recording knightly adventures. Morris was, of course, creator of extensive, unhurried narratives in verse and prose, but the diffuseness of this piece lies well outside his customary range of material, and greatly contrasts with the Icelandic narratives he chose to translate, which may open with complex genealogy, but soon develop into a lucid and fast-moving story. Morris's pertinacity in translating so much of the *Lancelot* is therefore remarkable.

His translation, though apparently accurate, resembles, however, those he made from Icelandic during the same period, in which he adopts a somewhat archaic idiom in both diction and syntax. This neo-medieval style has its critics, but it possesses some merit in that it determinedly sets the narrative in a pre-modern age, the quasi-Malorian/Froissartian phraseology chiming well with the aura of medieval romance. Besides, although the translation possesses value in its own right, Morris presumably does not intend to produce a modern, 'scholarly' version, but to create a 'literary' work. In this he is very successful, as his idiom possesses a simple sinewy power, and holds additional interest for us because it is created by Morris, so we read it within the context of his artistic development, aware that the 'medieval' style will evolve into the 'default' medium of his late prose romances.

Moreover, in these Arthurian translations we are reading Morris's actual hand, for beside launching himself into translation, Morris also set about producing attractive handwritten copies. Increasingly interested in illumination and calligraphy, he consulted Italian sixteenth-century writing books, taught himself both Roman and Italic scripts, and continually experimented. Between 1870 and 1875 he worked on eighteen manuscript books and many trial fragments,²² producing a total of over 1,500 pages of text.²³ The two Arthurian books thus formed a very considerable part of this achievement.

His *Tristram* is written on faintly-lined white paper, with thirty-four lines to a leaf, the text occupying only the recto sides. For the first eighty-eight leaves the writing is very plain, in Morris's ordinary hand, with an elaborate C symbol (such as was used in the 1533 printed text) and a capitalised word to mark the beginning of each chapter.²⁴ There are occasional textual corrections, and very gradually the introductory capitals are made more fanciful. After completing line 15 of folio 88, however, Morris leaves a blank leaf, and begins numbering from folios 1 to 11, but then renumbers these from 89 to 99. From 89 onwards the text

contains minimal corrections, adopts rubricated chapter headings, and is written in an italic script with a somewhat ornate letter g. It immediately appears more attractive, though with a slight loss of legibility.

In his more ambitious *Lancelot*, Morris's transcription reveals three main stages. Initially he uses lined blue paper, and writes in a fluent everyday script with many deletions and revisions. He supplies chapter headings and, as in *Tristram*, an elaborate C symbol as occasional section marker, and capitalises the initial letters of key sections. The result is very legible, but *en masse* appears rather dull and unvaried. There are a few signs of experimentation: the introduction of long lines to cross the letter t, a chapter heading in rubric, some more elaborate forms of S and N, and a sudden adoption of italic script for three pages.²⁵

However, the next stage, 905.3, is so markedly different and immediately impressive in style that one appreciates why Morris decided to repaginate this volume from fol. 1. Written on faintly-lined white paper in italic script, with fewer corrections, it employs rubric for chapter and page headings. Though very pleasantly varied, however, the text is not quite as easy to read as 905.1 and 905.2 because the script is smaller, and Morris introduces some finicky flourishes to the lettering. As he proceeds, he experiments increasingly and gradually adds bold stylistic flourishes to the first word of each paragraph and each chapter; many capital letters (especially A, D, G, H, I, S, T and W) are stylised and given double height; lower case letter g receives a curling tail; while y and sometimes final d are often given spidery extensions, as is the last letter of each line.

The final stage is reached in 905.4, again on white paper, and ostensibly a fair copy of 905.1, fols. 1-76, with occasional minor verbal rewording. In this part every aspect is made more decorative: not only does he occasionally capitalise in upright Roman, but he drastically increases the height of the initials of his opening words and elaborates these with leaf-designs. And yet once again Morris abandons the translation, two-thirds of the way through Part One on this occasion – a surprising place to stop, for he thereby omits not only the unusual incident of Arthur's sexual escapade with Gamille, but also two climactic points in the main narrative wherein Lancelot and the Queen become physical lovers, and Lancelot is made a Companion of the Round Table. And although Morris then begins a fair copy, he soon gives that up too.

We should not, however, read too great a significance into Morris's failure to complete this translation, for such a breaking off was not an uncommon practise of his: he completed only two of the many manuscripts he began.²⁶ Similarly, he often abandoned textile work he was engaged on, and left its completion to other hands. Most probably his initial enthusiasms were overtaken both by his innate impatience and by later projects which arose in his fertile mind.

The version we are left with may often appear unassured and even amateurish, with some particularly unsuccessful features such as the g descenders which

interfere with lines below, and it cannot compare in quality with the consummate perfection of Morris's *Virgil* or the copy of *Love is Enough* which he presented to Georgiana Burne-Jones. Elsewhere, Morris's calligraphic work was occasionally supplemented by specialist help in illustration from Edward Burne-Jones and Charles Fairfax Murray, or in coloured initials from George Wardle. There is some indication that a similar procedure was mooted for this work too. As a letter to Charles Fairfax Murray (5 November 1873) reveals, the latter had been lent a copy of the MS but Morris wished for its return, stressing that he would like to make another MS of it again himself.²⁷ Certainly, some pages from the translation, recounting with slight modifications King Ban's tragic downfall, were written in a handsome italic script in double column with fine leaf and flower decorations, and with a space possibly left for illumination by another hand. These were later bound by Sidney Cockerell, retained in Emery Walker's library, and six of these pages have recently been made available online through Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.²⁸

Nonetheless, MS 905 (Figure 1) possesses a special appeal of its own.²⁹ By being given access to Morris's own working script, with its many evident imperfections, we enjoy a very privileged close relationship with the creator; for even the recurrent errors and corrections of his text serve to bring us fresh and exciting insights into his working practice. Ink-stains on the blank verso pages reveal his impatience to turn a new leaf before the old one dries. We seem to be watching from just over his shoulder as he writes; we can almost hear him breathing, and sense his heartbeats.

It is uncertain what Morris's purpose was in creating these works. Were they intended for his eyes only, or for circulation among a select circle, or did he hope for a wider audience through eventual publication? There is, too, a curious paradox, by which an original medieval manuscript which was turned into print form, was then recreated as a manuscript by Morris. We are also aware that from this period of new approaches, false starts, and abandoned projects will develop the major printing achievements of the Kelmscott Press. By setting up that press Morris created printed books written by himself or by medieval authors, whose production received the skill, care and beauty once provided by medieval manuscripts. We may conclude that it was through his extensive study of early printed editions, and his apprenticeship in producing his own manuscripts, that Morris learned about such matters as the formal qualities of spacing and lettering, and acquired the expertise which would serve him so well in creating beautifully printed books.

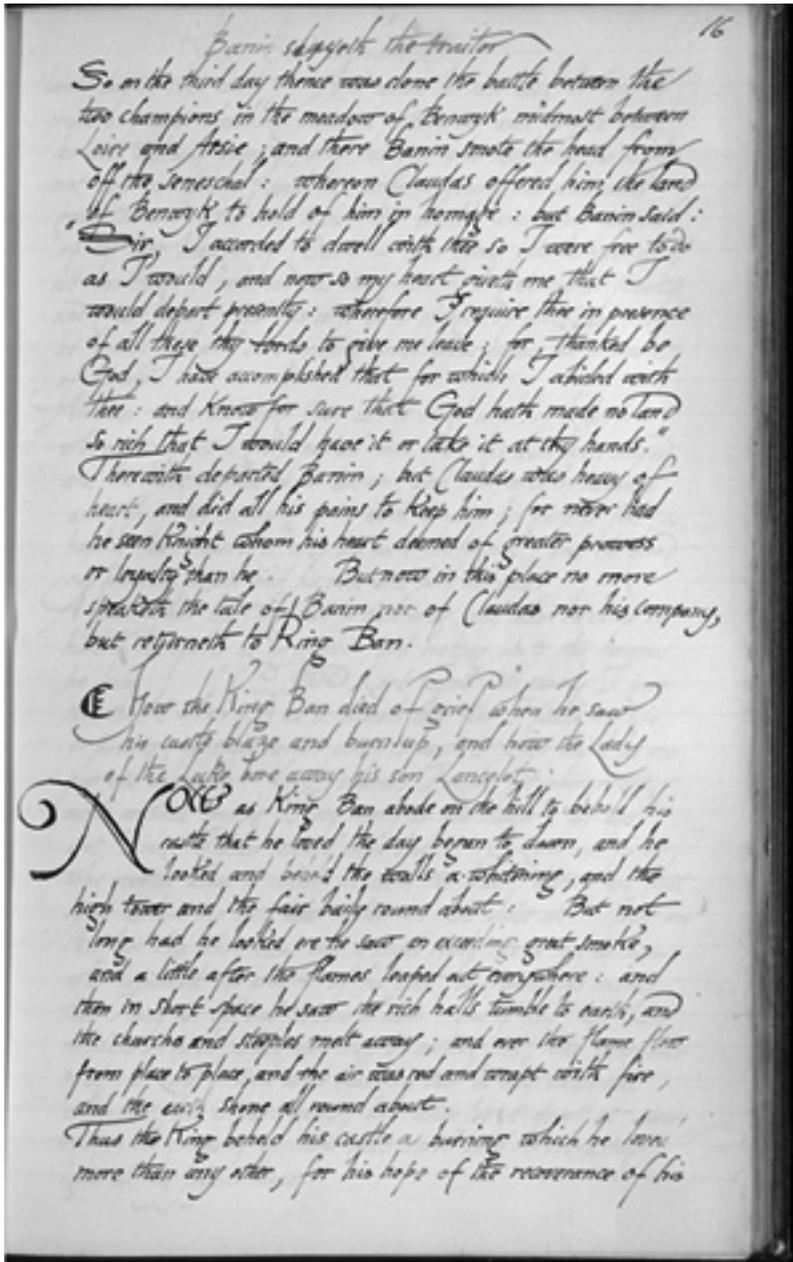


Figure 1: SA MS 905.4, fol.16. By permission of the Society of Antiquaries, London.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of London for introducing me to MS 905 in 2004, and for allowing me access to it thereafter.
2. The British Library Add MS 45329 of *Tristram* is listed in Barbara Rosenbaum, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, volume 4: 1800-1900, Part 3*, London: Mansell, 1993, p. 705. The Society of Antiquaries of London MS 905 of *Lancelot* is listed in Pamela J. Willetts, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Society of Antiquaries of London*, Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000, p. 423. Microfilm of both the *Lancelot* and *Tristram* MSS is included in *William Morris, Parts 1 and 4: Art, Book Design and Literary Papers from Kelmscott Manor, the Society of Antiquaries, London, and the British Library Department of Printed Books*, Reading: Research Publications, 1985-90. The *Lancelot* MS microfilm is listed in David and Sheila Latham, 'William Morris: an annotated bibliography, 1990-91', *Journal of the William Morris Society* 10:3 (Autumn 1993), p. ii.
3. May Morris, ed, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966 [1910-15], Vol. IX, p. xxxviii. Afterwards *CW*.
4. *CW*, Vol. IX, p. xxi.
5. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, 4 vols in 5, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-1996; Vol. I, 1996, p. 205 (Afterwards Kelvin); Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker, *The William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 69.
6. The Morris Online Edition: <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/>. I am grateful to Florence Boos and Kim Maher for their great help with the downloading of images of MS 905.
7. Kelvin, Vol. I, p. 177.
8. See Paul Needham, 'William Morris as Book Collector', in *William Morris and the Art of the Book*, New York and London: The Pierpont Morgan Library and Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 21-47, and Kelvin, Vol. IV, pp. 401-33.
9. It is uncertain whether Morris translated the 1496 or the 1533 edition.
10. *A New and Complete Collection of Interesting Romances and Novels, translated from the French by Mr [Lewis] Porney*, London: printed by Alex Hogg, 1780. This text is accessible online: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/Camelot/porneytristan.htm>
11. Renée Curtis, tr, *The Romance of Tristan: The Thirteenth-Century Old French Prose Tristan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
12. BL Add MS 54329, fol. 99.
13. BL Add MS 54329, fol. 1.
14. Blanche Winder, *Stories of King Arthur*, London: Ward Lock, 1925, 253 pp;

- Roger Lancelyn Green, *Sir Lancelot of the Lake*, London: Purcell, 1966, pp. 8–15.
15. Lucy Allen Paton, tr, *Sir Lancelot of the Lake: a French Prose Romance of the Thirteenth Century*, London: Routledge, 1929, pp. 66–112; Corin Corley, tr, *Lancelot of the Lake*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 18–68. Although *Lancelot do Lac* precedes the *Prose Lancelot*, both are essentially the same in these early chapters.
 16. Norris J. Lacy, ed, *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, New York: Garland, 1993–1996 (5 vols).
 17. See Elspeth Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail: A Study of the Prose Lancelot*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 10–142.
 18. Society of Antiquaries MS 905.3, fols. 24–32.
 19. SA 905.4, fol.30. Morris correctly translates the ‘mamelles’ [breasts] of his printed source as ‘paps’. Interestingly, however, ‘aignes’ [groins] is the Old French MS reading given by Alexandre Micha, ed, *Lancelot*, 9 vols, Geneva: Droz, 1980, VII, p. 43.
 20. SA 905.4, fol. 40.
 21. SA 905.4, fol. 17.
 22. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, London: Faber & Faber, 1995 [1994], p. 264.
 23. Joseph Dunlap, ‘William Morris, Calligrapher’, in *William Morris and the Art of the Book*, New York and London: The Pierpont Morgan Library and Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 54.
 24. C is probably an abbreviation of *capitulum* [chapter]. I am grateful to Professor Peter Field and Dr Karen Limper-Herz for providing this information.
 25. SA 905.2, fol. 228; fols, 276, 281; fols 266–68.
 26. John Nash, ‘Calligraphy’, in *William Morris*, ed, Linda Parry, London: Philip Wilson and The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996, p. 296.
 27. Kelvin, Vol. I, p. 204.
 28. CAGM1991.1016.966.Z2 (‘Fragments translated, written out and decorated by William Morris from Sir Lancelot du Lac, the Saga of Howard the Halt, the Heimskringa, etc’. 1890s.). Cheltenham Museum has been unable to provide any further information. The Virtual Library is accessible online: http://www.artsandcraftsmuseum.org.uk/Arts_and_Crafts_Movement/Virtual_Library.aspx.
 29. I admit that because the original is slightly larger than A4 size, MS 905.3–4 is not done full visual justice when printed from a downloaded version.