K. Sarah-Jane Murray (Baylor University)

Medieval Scribes, Modern Scholars: Reading *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* in the Twenty-First Century

Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot) is an Old French (OF) romance from around 1180. It was begun by Chrétien de Troyes, who composed the prologue and about six thousand octosyllabic verse lines, and completed by his disciple Godefroi de Leigni, who contributed another thousand octosyllabic verse lines which include an epilogue. Together they recount how Lancelot sets out to rescue Guinevere (the wife of King Arthur, whom he loves) and gets in, on the way, to the infamous cart. Anchored carefully within the literary and cultural traditions of the classical and Celtic worlds, the poem is rich in material drawn from the *romans antiques* (e.g., *Énéas*, *Troie* and *Thèbes*), Wace's *Brut* and *Rou*, and the *Tristan* corpus. Allusions to Ovid – either direct or filtered through the mid-twelfth-century OF *Piramus et Tisbé* and *Narcissus* poems[1] – also abound. Chrétien was a learned poet who applied the knowledge he gleaned from the close reading of ancient and vernacular works to the composition of his own literary masterpieces, which occupy a privileged place in the history of OF and European vernacular literature.

Like his predecessors Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Chrétien was a court poet.[2] The *Charrette* is dedicated to the Countess Marie, »la dame de Champaigne« (v. 1), at whose bidding Chrétien composed the romance, applying only his »painne« and »antancion« (v. 29) to the »matiere« and »san« (v. 26) furnished by his patroness. The work was surely destined to be read aloud at court by a professional *jongleur* or an amateur. It has an oral and performative quality which we would do well to keep in mind.

The fame of the »Knight of the Cart« extends far beyond both the twelfth century, and France. Like the OF *Perceval* (ca. 1190), the *Charrette* underwent a series of medieval reworkings. In the thirteenth century, it was recast into the vast OF *Prose Lancelot* (ca. 1225), the primary source for Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1471); Malory in turn inspired modern retellings of Arthurian legends such as Tennyson's *Idylls of the Kings* and White's *Once and Future King*. And who can ever forget the tragic scene in Dante's *Inferno*, where the beautiful Francesca blames the story that she read about Lancelot and Guinevere's passion for her tumultuous love-affair with Paolo: »Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse« (*Canto* Five, v. 137)?[3] Such was the success of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* that it has inspired, and will continue to fascinate, countless generations of readers and authors.

But what exactly do we read when we pick up, as Paolo and Francesca might have done were they living today, a critical edition of the *Charrette*? Even the novice quickly

I would like to thank Matthieu Boyd (University College Dublin) who read the manuscript of this article in its entirety and offered many insightful comments.

[1] See Edmond Faral: *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen âge*. Paris: Champion 1913; Jean Dornbush: *Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe and Chrétien's* Le Chevalier de la Charrette. In: *Romance Philology* 36:1 (1982), p. 34–43 ; and Sarah-Jane Murray: Cil qui fist... cil qui dist: Oratio *et* lettreüre *dans Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. In: *Œuvres et Critiques* 27/1 (2002), p. 83–131, here p. 114-26).

[2] He served the count and countess of Champagne until the death of the count, in 1182, then moved to the court of Philip of Flanders.

[3] »A Gallehault was the book and he who wrote it!«

sees considerable differences between the editions of Wendelin Fœrster, Mario Roques or Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitti.[4] The editor of a medieval poem strives to present a coherent text based upon one or all of the surviving manuscripts of that work. Thus, every printed edition of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* in some way recreates and remakes the romance according to the principles adopted by the editor(s). The result is a useful and necessary scholarly tool, but it is static, and conjures up the illusion of holding Chrétien and Godefroi's twelfth-century masterpiece itself in the palm of our hand.

Yet, as the scholar and student of medieval literature understand well, no medieval manuscript is identical to its source. If we do not have a copy that the author wrote himself (and in this case, as it happens far too often, we do not), we depend upon the work of scribes. Scribes anticipate the modern editor by several centuries: each one recreates the romance. Some are careless in their copying, or seem so; others manifestly take great care, and a host of subtleties in each manuscript – marginalia, punctuation, and so on – testify to their engagement with the text. These may even guide the interpretative thoughts of modern scholars, as they constitute a kind of gloss or commentary. (There are also other reasons to be interested in the work of individual scribes; if one is a specialist in paleography, for instance.) But modern critical editions are ill-equipped to mention all these scribal interventions, however fruitful. Editors compare a number of manuscripts and, inevitably, choose one variant reading over the others, often with the intention of clearing the scribes as far as possible out of the way of what the author wrote, or might have written, or by treating the work of one scribe as the work of the author. Whatever advantages the monumental printed book may have that results from this process, it inevitably fails to reflect the fundamentally dynamic nature of medieval textuality as described, for example, by Zumthor and Pickens. The subtleties of »variance«, celebrated by Cerquiligni, are lost and in the end a good deal of precious information is disgarded.

Today it is possible to present the totality of a manuscript tradition, preserving the richness of all of the variants it includes, via the World Wide Web. Modern computer technology allows us to work with manuscripts in a form exceedingly close to what they truly are, not as they are doctored by an editor. As computers provide new possibilities for the presentation of medieval works to the public and therefore change the way we read, we are invited also to reevaluate our methods of linguistic and poetic research. These often remain locked into practices engendered by the printed book. In this article I focus on *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and the *Charrette* Project, a multi-media

[4] Wendelin Fœrster's edition, which appeared in 1899, adhered in general to the Lachmannian principles in vogue during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, by establishing a stemma representing the textual relationship between the surviving manuscripts (two manuscripts, *G* and *I*, were unknown to Fœrster: see note 6 for the complete list of codices), Fœrster approximated the lost *Urtext* of Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette*. (Joseph Bédier pointed out the limits of such an approach in his essay on Jean Renart's *Lai de l'ombre*.) Furthermore, since Chrétien presumably wrote the *Charrette* at the court of Champagne, Fœrster opted to make the language of his edition resemble what he thought to be the *champenois* dialect of the late twelfth-century. Mario Roques adopted MS *C*, which he deemed to be the best, and emended it as little as possible. As Uitti writes, »Though literarily far more satisfactory than Roques's edition, those of Fœrster are virtually useless linguistically. Not only does one not know when the form used is that employed by Chrétien, one is not even always sure whether the scribe uses it. The form may well be Fœrster's invention« (*Background Information on Chrétien de Troyes's* Le Chevalier de la Charrette. 1997, p. 7. Available: <http://www.princeton.edu/~lancelot/context.html>; <http://www.baylor.edu/lancelot/context.html>; and <http://www.mshs.univ-poitiers.fr/cescm/lancelot/context.html>). In their edition, Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitt selected, like Roques, MS *C* as the base manuscript, which they then emended according to their editorial grid.

scholarly archive developed for its study. I shall overview the components of the Project, and go on to give examples of how one might apply the tools developed by our team to read the romance (or some other romance) in a new way, and explore the link that emerges in the manuscript tradition between poetry, performance, and punctuation.

An Overview of the Charrette Project

The *Charrette* Project began in the mid-1980s, when the late Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitti were preparing a critical edition of *The Knight of the Cart*. Conscious of the limitations of this project, Karl Uitti saw through the functions of the simple word-processing programs he had used to the extraordinary potential offered by the computer's memory and speed for the presentation of the entire manuscript tradition of a medieval romance.[5] In its current form our archive now includes: (1) digital color images of all the *Charrette* manuscripts (eight in total);[6] (2) detailed diplomatic transcriptions in XML of the manuscript images; (3) the text of the Foulet-Uitti critical edition, which serves as a reference; (4) an extensive database for the study of the language, and of the prevalent rhetorico-poetic figures (chiasmus, *oratio*, enjambment, rich rhyme, *adnominatio*). Access to the archive is available free of charge on the Princeton (<http://www.princeton.edu/~lancelot>) and Baylor (<http://www.baylor.edu/lancelot>) University servers. A French-language site is also maintained by Prof. René Pellen at the CESCM in Poitiers, France (<http://www.mshs.univ-poitiers.fr/cescm/lancelot/index.html>).

The manuscript images, which correspond to the reality of Chrétien's OF romance, remain at the heart of the *Charrette* Project.[7] They do present a substantial difficulty: the information contained on each folio cannot be processed easily by the computer. A partial solution would have been to index each image with keywords indicating, for example, the presence of an illumination or of a capital letter on a given folio. But, as Gina Greco has explained,[8] our primary concern has always been to preserve *all* of the information contained in the manuscripts. Only by creating detailed diplomatic transcriptions could we hope to achieve that.

The young scholars who coordinated this venture – Gina Greco (now Professor at Portland State University) and Peter Shoemaker (Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of America) – prepared the diplomatic transcriptions using Standardized

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[5] Karl D. Uitti: A Brief History of the Charrette Project and Its Basic Rationale. 1997, p. 1–2. Available: <http://www.princeton.edu/~lancelot/project.html>; <http://www.baylor.edu/lancelot/project.html>; <http://www.mshs.univ-poitiers.fr/cescm/lancelot/project.html>.

[6] The eight manuscripts, which date from the early- to late-thirteenth century, are as follows:

	MS *A*	Chantilly, Musée Condé 472
	MS *C*	(»Guiot's Copy«), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 794
	MS *E*	Escorial, Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo M.iii.21
	MS *F*	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 1450.
	MS *G*	Princeton, Firestone Library, Garrett 125
	MS *I*	Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France 6138 (formerly 4676)
	MS *T*	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 12560
and	MS *V*	Vatican, Biblioteca Vaticana, Regina 1725.

[7] For practical reasons, a small amount of paratext (folio number, *recto* or *verso*, corresponding verse lines in the Foulet-Uitti edition and copyright information) was added to the digital images accessible via the world wide web.

[8] Gina Greco: *L'édition électronique de textes médiévaux: théorie et pratique*. In: *L'épopée romane. Actes du XVe Congrès international Rencesvals*. 2 (2002), p. 1045–1050, here p. 1046.

Generalized Markup Language (SGML), according to the specifications of the international Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). Besides being extraordinarily flexible, this format had the added advantage of not being closely tied to any specific commercial word processing program; such a dependency could have quickly rendered the transcriptions obsolete. The leading principle of the *Charrette* transcriptions was not to provide a critical edition of each manuscript, but rather to reproduce faithfully the graphic system of the scribe, avoiding as much as possible any arbitrary interpretation. Of course, some elementary choices had to be made. Three vertical lines within a given verse might represent a number of characters: a »u« followed by an »i«, or an »m«. In such cases the transcribers opted for the obvious and necessary letter that would yield an OF word suitable to the context. If two or more words are agglutinated in the manuscript, or if one word is broken into two or more parts, the transcription meticulously preserves this organization. The physical format of the manuscript page is also included in the markup: each column and line is carefully indicated, as well as the presence, color and height of capital letters. No abbreviations are resolved and the exact punctuation of the manuscript is replicated. Finally, a set of codes (or »entities«) were developed to represent non-ASCII scribal characters, such as barred »p« or abbreviated »que«.[9] Here is an example of the SGML diplomatic transcription of vv. 31-42 of the *Lancelot* in MS *T* (I have also included the Foulet-Uitti edition of the same passage):

SGML:

31 &LargeA-3; vn ior dune a&s;cen&s;ion.
32 fu uenuz deuer&s; carlion.
33 liroi&s; artu&s;. &et1; tenu ot.
34 C ort ml&apost;t riche a camalot.
35 S i riche come au ior e&s;tut.
36 A pre&s; m&e-hbar;gier ne &s;eremu&s;t.
37 L i Roi&s; d&e-hbar;tre &s;e&s; compeign&o-hbar;&s;
38 M l&apost;t ot enla &s;ale baron&s;.
39 &et2; &s;i [unclear reason="illegible"]&punc1;[/unclear] fu la Reine en&s;emble.
40 S i ot auec lui ce me &s;emble.
41 M einte bele [unclear reason="illegible"].[/unclear] dame cortoi&s;e.
42 B ien parlant a langue fr&a-hbar;ncoi&s;e.

Foulet-Uitti:

31 A un jor d'une Acenssion
32 Fu venuz de vers Carlion
33 Li rois Artus et tenu ot
34 Cort molt riche a Camaalot,
35 Si riche com au jor estut.
36 Aprés mangier ne se remut

[9] A list of these codes is available on the *Charrete* Project website, at the following addresses: <http://www.

37 Li rois d'antre ses conpaignons;
38 Molt ot en la sale barons,
39 Et s'i fu la reïne ensanble;
40 Si ot avoec li, ce me sanble,
41 Mainte bele dame cortoise,
42 Bien parlant an lengue françoise;

The greatest disadvantage of the TEI format is the initial complexity of the codes: when presented one after another they appear (at best) difficult to read, especially to the novice. (An alternative version of the transcriptions, which resolves scribal abbreviations between square brackets whilst preserving the word-spacing and spelling of each manuscript has been developed on the Poitiers site.) But it is important to remember that the *Charrette* team did not conceive of the original diplomatic transcriptions as objects to be read. Rather, they provided the means for carefully encoding each manuscript folio, so that it might later be processed and analyzed by the computer. The now-widespread Extensible Markup Language (XML) – a more formalized subset of SGML developed so as to be straightforwardly usable over the Internet – and the special stylesheet language (XSL) developed in order to process XML documents (in particular to customize their view through a web browser and extract data from them) offers a promising new future for the *Charrette* diplomatic transcriptions.

Alexei Lavrentiev (Senior Researcher, Institute of Philology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk) came to Princeton on a Fulbright Fellowship and began working on the *Charrette* Project in the fall of 2001. After studying the basics of PERL programming, SGML and XML under the guidance of Rafael Alvarado (Director of Humanities Computing Research Support, Princeton University), Alexei developed a PERL script to transform the SGML transcriptions into XML documents, which we can now visualize in many different ways.[10] Indeed, thanks to XML, the *Charrette* Project can provide a number of views catering specifically to the user's interests and abilities (savvy users could conceivably develop their own XSL stylesheet to process according to their own specifications the data we have collected) – all of this without tampering with the data encoded in the XML document. Here are three possible views for vv. 31-42 in MS *T*:[11]

> *View One: »Brackets«*
> In this stylesheet view, the limits of SGML entities are no longer indicated with ampersands, but with square brackets. On a color monitor, entities also display in deep maroon. Color and size appear as attributes of large majuscules. In this case, »size: 3 lines« indicates that the majuscule's height

princeton.edu/~lancelot/key.html>; and <http://www.baylor.edu/lancelot/key.html>.

[10] A minimum of training is required for students and scholars wishing to learn basic TEI and XML. Refer to the tutorials available on the TEI website (<http://www.tei-c.org/Tutorials/index.html>), beginning with Lou Burnard and C.M. Sperberg-McQueen's *TEI Lite: An Introduction to Text Encoding for Interchange* (1995, Document number: TEI U5). For an XML primer, see the brief tutorial by André Bergholz, *Extending your Markup: An XML Tutorial*, IEEE Internet Computing 4.4 (2000), p. 74–79 (The journal is available online at <http://www.computer.org/internet>).

[11] In a forthcoming article to be published on the *Charrette* Project Website Alexei Lavrentiev will describe in detail the various stylesheets developed for viewing the diplomatic transcriptions.

corresponds to three lines of text, and occupies a space left by the scribe. (Whenever the majuscule occupies more height than the space originally left by the scribe, the height is indicated as a sum. Thus »size: 3+2 lines« indicates a majuscule that is five lines high, but a space of only three lines was left blank by the scribe.) For the key to the entities, see the *Charrette* Project website.

[31] [Large **A** (color: blue, size: 3 lines)] vn ior dune a[s]cen[s]ion.
[32] fu uenuz deuer[s] carlion.
[33] liroi[s] artu[s]. [et1] tenu ot.
[34] C ort ml[apost]t riche a camalot.
[35] S i riche come au ior e[s]tut.
[36] A pre[s] m[e-hbar]gier ne [s]eremu[s]t .
[37] L i Roi[s]d[e-hbar]tre[s]e[s] compeign[o-hbar][s]
[38] M l[apost]t ot enla[s]ale baron[s].
[39] [et2][s]i [Unclear: punc1] fu la Reine en[s]emble.
[40] S i ot auec lui ce me [s]emble.
[41] M einte bele [Unclear: .] dame cortoi[s]e.
[42] B ien parlant a langue fr[a-hbar]coi[s]e.

View Two: »Italics«
In this view, brackets have been removed (except in cases where two or more consecutive entities occur) and codes appear in italics (and deep maroon when viewed with color monitor). Long »s« is depicted as an integral sign and agglutinations are indicated with an underscore. Unclear passages are highlighted.

[31] A3/ vn ior dune aſcenſion.
[32] fu uenuz deuerſ carlion.
[33] liroiſ artuſ. *Et1* tenu ot.
[34] C ort *ml[apost]t* riche a camalot.
[35] S i riche come au ior eſtut.
[36] A preſ m*e-hbar*gier ne ſeremuſt .
[37] L i Roiſd*e-hbar*treſeſ compeign*o-hbar*ſ
[38] *M l[apost]t* ot enlaſale baronſ.
[39] *et2*ſi *punc1* fu la Reine enſemble.
[40] S i ot auec lui ce me ſemble.
[41] M einte bele . dame cortoiſe.
[42] B ien parlant a langue fr*a-hbar*coiſe.

View Three: »Expanded«
In this view, all abbreviations have been resolved through a semi-automatic process (a PERL script is used to expand the most common abbreviations, which are verified by hand). The expanded forms appear in italics and deep

red (if expansion is uncertain) or italics and green (if expansion is certain). Long »s« appears as ASCII »s«, in italics and deep maroon. Agglutinations are indicated with an underscore, deglutinations with a mid-line dot »·«, and unclear passages are highlighted.

[31] A3/ vn ior d'une a*s*cen*s*ion.
[32] fu uenuz deuer*s* carlion.
[33] li_roi*s* artu*s*. *et* tenu ot.
[34] C·ort *molt* riche a camalot.
[35] S·i riche come au ior e*s*tut.
[36] A·pre*s* m*en*gier ne *s*e_remu*s*t .
[37] L·i Roi*s*d'*en*tre*s*e*s* compeign*ons*
[38] *Molt* ot en_la*s*ale baron*s*.
[39] *Et s*i [*punc1*] fu la Reine en*s*emble.
[40] S·i ot auec lui ce me *s*emble.
[41] M·einte bele . dame cortoi*s*e.
[42] B·ien parlant a langue fr*an*coi*s*e.

The net esthetic improvement is certainly not the most important advantage of the XML transcriptions. Stylesheets can be designed to extract data from the documents and generate tables, which can be imported by powerful database management systems (such as ORACLE). These provide the means to perform endless queries and indexing of the textual data. A fully-searchable manuscript viewer has been developed by Rafael Alvarado and is now available online.[12]

We have covered two major components of the *Charrette* Project: the manuscript images and the diplomatic transcriptions. The third part of the project, that is, the linguistic and rhetorico-poetic database, was developed using the Foulet-Uitti critical edition (available on the site in XML alongside the diplomatic transcriptions).

The goal of the linguistic database is to provide a detailed description of every word in the critical edition. Thus, for a noun we indicate the gender, number and case; for a verb, the person, number, tense and voice. For every word, the corresponding form provided by Fœrster Breuer's *Wörtebuch* serves as the DFORM (a sort of lemma). The elaboration of the linguistic component of the database has been discussed extensively by Molly Robinson, who also explores some poetic implications of the vocabulary and syntax. As the database concerns the critical edition, we can say: *Chrétien's* vocabulary and syntax, bearing in mind that in the manuscripts neither is immune to scribal influence. One can of course consult the diplomatic transcriptions in case any given word has variations.

While the linguistic aspect of the project was under development, another group of young scholars (Deborah Long, Ellen Thorington, Catherine Witt, Julia Zarankin and myself) identified occurrences of predominant rhetorico-poetic figures in the *Charrette*. Due to the constraints of time and the intricacy of the task, we chose five figures that Chrétien particularly favored: chiasmus, *oratio*, rich rhyme, enjambment and

[12] The *Figura TG* (© 2004) search interface is also accessible through the *Charrette* Project website.

adnominatio. (These are also things that scribes can alter: the remarks above hold true.) We understood very quickly that these were more than ornamentation with which our *clerc* decorated his poem. They identify the very structure of the romance both in general (chiasmus and *oratio*) and on a smaller scale (rich rhyme, *adnominatio* and enjambment).[13] A particularly compelling example is the overarching chiasmus which binds together Chrétien's Prologue, addressed to the Countess Marie, and the Epilogue by Godefroi de Leigni, addressed to the masculine »Seignor«.[14] In the Prologue, Chrétien writes: »Del Chevalier de la Charrette/ Comance *Crestïens* son livre...« (vv. 25-26).[15] Godefroi begins the epilogue in a similar fashion: »*Godefroiz de Leigni*, li clers/ A parfinee la Charrette...« (vv. 7124-25).[16] At the heart of these two passages of *oratio recta*, the romance is presented as a collaborative initiative undertaken by Chrétien, and continued by Godefroi: »Chevalier de la Charrette/ *Crestïens/ Godefroiz de Leigni/* Charrette«. The pairs of verse lines that make up this chiasmus are not rhyming, but broken, couplets (*couplets brisés*): the title of the romance and the lines containing the names of the two *clercs* are not, therefore, associated by the rhyme. Only the chiasmus poetically binds the two authors, together, with the textual artifact *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Then if we return to the database we can study the collaboration in detail, and develop what the chiasmus suggests: the database can be used to quantify, for instance, the prevalence of each rhetorico-poetic figure in Chrétien's section, and again in Godefroi's, and we can compare and contrast their styles. This is possible even *within* Chrétien's section, or Godefroi's: we note for instance that Chrétien invests the Night of Love with more rich rhyme than he puts elsewhere, and the database will even tell us how much more, and of what kind (Ellen Thorington has identified nine categories of rich rhyme).[17]

To sum up: Users of the *Charrette* database may now search the critical edition for distinct grammatical forms (tenses, moods, words, cases, genders, etc.) or poetic figures, and combinations of the two.[18] The results of such queries may then be cross-referenced with the individual manuscript images and diplomatic transcriptions to examine variation.

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[13] The results of our research were published by the Franco-German scholarly journal *Œuvres et Critique* in 2002. Input of the collected rhetorico-poetic data was greatly facilitated by the development of a text-tagging tool, *Figura* (© 2002), by Rafael Alvarado. Any electronic text can be uploaded into *Figura*. It is immediately broken into a list of words, and a number (which also serves as our primary key for the grammatical database) is assigned to each word. The text is then reassembled in the browser, on the left-hand of the screen. The user simply clicks on the appropriate words to input a figure. The same tool could easily be adapted to tag a lexical field, words that are related to a specific theme (love, religion, emotions...), metaphors, etc.

[14] See Catherine Witt: *Le Chiasme et la poésie courtoise. Considérations sur la pratique poétique de Chrétien de Troyes dans* Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot). In: *Œuvres et Critiques* 27.1 (2002), p. 155–220, here p. 198–203, and Murray, Cil qui fist, 2002, p. 109–112.

[15] »Of *The Knight of the Cart* Chrétien begins his book…«

[16] »Godefroi de Leigni, the *clerc*, has carried to term the *Cart*…«

[17] The obvious »differences« between rhetorico-poetic figures in the sections of the romance written by Chrétien and (allegedly) Godefroi, suggest that either Godefroi was particularly adept at composing the least complex of the figures adopted by Chrétien (to the point that he mimics them exactly) or that Chrétien himself finished the romance, adopted the writing-style of an apprentice-*clerc*. In either case, the composite romance articulates the process of *translatio studii* from master to »student«.

[18] This function is also made possible thanks to the Figura TG tool (see note 12).

Poetry, Performance and Punctuation

What else can a multimedia database like this one allow us to do? In a broader sense, what purpose does it serve? Can the computer really lead scholars to new avenues of research in medieval (or other) studies? Like Karl Uitti, I believe it can: sooner or later the computer will become indispensable to philological and literary inquiry. In this, the second part of my article, I will show how data from the Project can help modern scholars to interpret the poem, by suggesting how the medieval scribes did.

A particular form of punctuation survives in certain manuscripts of the *Charrette*: I call it »poetic punctuation«, as it is closely linked to the poetic unit of Chrétien's romance, the verse line. A definition – what *is* » punctuation«? – might be useful at this juncture. The problem is that I am not quite sure about how to define it. From one point of view, everything on the manuscript folio constitutes, at least potentially, a form of punctuation. Perhaps we might refine our working definition by agreeing that any mark that does not belong to a word is a form of punctuation. But this is still inadequate: How do we deal with contractions? When we say »I dunno« instead of »I do not know«, is that abbreviation punctuation? Perhaps, but how useful would it be to assert that? Let us proceed empirically. The English word »punctuation« comes, of course, from the word in Latin meaning »dot«. We might therefore begin by studying all the occurrences of dots in the *Charrette* manuscripts. (This would be a daunting task if we proceeded manually. The *Charrette* Project transcriptions, however, preserve and record the punctuation of the manuscripts, and this information can then be extracted by scholars who ask their own questions of the database).

The manuscripts of the *Charrette* tradition are typical examples of thirteenth-century manuscripts containing a literary work composed in verse lines.[19] The text is presented in two or three columns depending on the manuscript, and the initial letter of each verse line is capitalized and separated from the rest of the line by a blank space (see MS *G* fol. 34*v*).[20] Manuscripts *E*[21] and *T*, however, deviate in interesting ways from this convention. The first line of MS *E* fol. 1*r*, col. a, and the line immediately facing it in col. b read:[22]

D es que Ladame de champaigne. A tantes vos vn cheualie R.

Thus, as in MS *G*, the initial letter of column a is capitalized and separated from the following characters by a blank space. The scribe then places a dot at the end of the line. In column b, the initial letter is also capitalized and separated from those that

[19] This layout is also employed by scribes copying Latin verse; see M[alcolm] B. Parkes: *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1993, p. 97-114. As Parkes notes, »the role of punctuation in verse is inextricably bound up with the functions of layout and the graphic manifestation of rhyme in the presentation of texts for readers. This complex of graphic features also reflects the different ways in which readers have perceived prosodic structures, and the interaction between these and other rhetorical and logical structures embodied in verse texts« (p. 97).

[20] The images of the manuscripts referred to in this article are accessible, free of charge, through the *Charrette* Project website.

[21] See Lenora Wolfgang: The Manuscripts of the Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot) of Chrétien de Troyes: Preliminary Remarks to a New Edition: The Case of Ms. E. In: J.-Claude Faucon, Alain Labbé and Danielle Quéruel (Ed.): Miscellanea Mediaevalia. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard, 2 vols, Paris: Champion 1998 (Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age 46), p. 1477–1488.

[22] Since we are primarily concerned with punctuation in this section of the article, for clarity I will provide only the most developed and simplified form of the transcriptions, in which abbreviations have been resolved.

follow. But the same is true of the final letter of the verse line, which is both capitalized and separated by a blank space from the preceding letters. Thanks to the *Charrette* diplomatic transcriptions, we can easily verify that this is true for all folios of MS *E*. In MS *T* also, the initial letter of each column is capitalized (and rubricated in red ink); moreover each verse line generally ends with a dot (see, for example, MS *T*, fol. 41*v*), although the last letter of each verse line in the right-hand column is not isolated as it was in MS *E*. The scribes of MSS *E* and *T* seem to be drawing our attention to the octosyllabic poetic unit. Thus, in the following examples, the dots placed at the end of the verse lines by the scribes of MSS *E* and *T* do not indicate the end of grammatical sentences, but of each verse line (poetic unit):

M ais ge di tant com vne genme.
V aut depierres et de sardines.
V aut Lacontesse de Roines.
(MS *E*, vv. 16-18)[23]

D es que madame de champeigne.
V elt que romanz afaire enpreigne.
Je lenprendrai moult velentiers.
(MS *T*, vv. 1-3)[24]

Establishing a list of all the dots in MS *T* using one of the stylesheets created for the diplomatic transcriptions reveals that the scribe does not systematically dot the end of every verse line. How can we account for the omissions, which are too numerous to be simple mistakes? The following passage, containing a speech by the villain Meleagant, provides an interesting case study:

L a ou entre ses barons sist.
N el salua pas. Einz li dist.
R ois artus iai en ma prison *
D e ta terre. et de ta meson.
C hevaliers dames. et puceles.
M es ne tendi pas le noueles *
P or ce que jes te uueille rendre.
E nçois te uueil dire. et aprendre.
Q ue tu nas force ne auoir *
P arcoi tu les puisses auoir *
& saches bien qu'ainsi morras.
Q ue ia aidier ne lor porras.
(MS *T*, vv. 51-62)[25]

Asterisks mark the verse lines that do not end with a dot (vv. 53, 56, 59, and 60). From our point of view as silent readers, it is very hard to see why they do not. Perhaps we

[23] »But I say: the Countess is worth as many queens as a gem is worth of pearls and sards…«
[24] »As soon as my Lady of Champagne wishes me to undertake to write a romance, I shall do so most willingly…«
[25] »[the knight came forward] to the place where [Arthur] was sitting amongst his barons; he did not salute him, but spoke as follows: ›King Arthur, I hold imprisoned knights, ladies, and damsels of your land and household; but I do not give you news of them because I wish to return them to you; rather I want to tell you and reveal to you that you have neither strength nor resources enough to allow you to reclaim them; and know well that you will die before you ever would be able to help them.‹«

need to read aloud. This was, after all, the use for which the *Charrette* was written. Then, if we correlate the dots or lack of dots in MS *T* to the rhetorico-poetic figures in the critical edition, we see that in the vast majority of cases the scribe omits the dot at the end of a verse line during passages of direct speech (*oratio recta*) and, in a few rare cases, indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*). The scribe of MS *T* also tends to dot the middle of a verse line when that line participates in *oratio recta*. Conceivably, this adjusts the rhythm so an oral presenter can distinguish for his audience when the characters are speaking. If we read Meleagant's speech aloud, pausing where we meet a dot and passing fluidly from line to line where we do not, it begins to sound like prose. Of course it is not, since it remains structured by the verse lines and the rhyme. But the dots do not constrain it as they do the other text, written in the author or narrator's voice. There, MS *T* frequently gives final dots on verse lines even when there is enjambment (that is, when the reader must pass from one line to the next without a pause, because a subject is separated from its verb, or a verb from its complement, for example). The following quotation is from the Prologue:

> Q ue ce est la dame qui passe.
> T outes celes qui sont uiuanz.
> (MS *T*, vv. 10-11)[26]

Here the scribe insists upon the verse line as the fundamental unit of the romance. If he does not treat the text the same way when the characters speak, it may be because for him the basic unit changes. After all, we do not converse in octosyllabic couplets today and neither did Chrétien's contemporaries. They communicated in grammatical sentences. That is what the lack of dots in speech appears to privilege. The rhetorico-poetic data we have collected clearly indicates this scribal choice agrees with Chrétien's style. Our author, indeed, increases enjambment in lengthy passages of *oratio recta*[27], in an effort, it would seem, to make his characters sound more natural.[28] It is quite possible that the scribe of MS *E*, who adds a dot at the end of each and every verse line, systematically, considered enjambment alone a sufficient guide to rhythm for the educated reader.

Let us now turn to MS *C*, attributed to one Guiot. Guiot does not dot the end of every verse line but his copy is peculiar in another way. Except in a few rare instances (possibly due to wear and tear), it shows a dot at the end of each side of the folios, *recto* and *verso*. The unit the scribe thus delimits is large, and resembles the page of a modern printed book. Guiot's manuscript has been identified by scholars and editors as the least poetic of the eight *Charrette* copies[29]: the scribe apparently cares little for Chrétien's elaborate use of rich rhymes, and eliminates numerous poetic figures like the

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[26] »That she is the woman who surpasses all others who are living…«

[27] See Julia Zarankin: *Rupture et conjointure. L'enjambement dans* Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot). In: *Œuvres et Critiques* 27.1 (2002), p. 221–239.

[28] Curiously, the occurrence of enjambment is more frequent in the voice of the narrator than when his characters are speaking (Zarankin, *Rupture et conjointure*, 2002, p. 233). As a result, enjambment contributes to the oral and perfomative dimension of the narrative voice, especially when the *clerc* describes a scene of action to his audience.

[29] See Mario Roques, *Le Manuscrit fr. 794 de la Bibliothèque Nationale et le scribe Guiot*. In: *Romania* 73 (1952), p. 177–199.

chiasmus[30]. He is ambivalent with regard to the verse lines. On the one hand he goes out of his way to preserve them. The opening of the Prologue in his manuscript (vv. 1-5) has been punctuated as in MS *T*, even though it runs alongside a large capital letter eight lines high, which makes Chrétien's verse lines too long for the column. Guiot breaks them up, and then uses dots to acknowledge the structure:

P uisque ma dame
de champaigne.
vialt que romans
afeire anpraigne.
Je lanprendrai
Moult volentiers.
come cil qui
est suens antiers.
(MS *C*, fol. 27*r*, vv. 1-5)[31]

On the other hand, Guiot also puts dots in the middle of verse lines: as a result the poetic rhythm we have grown accustomed to is consciously broken and shaken up. This happens frequently throughout the text, and not only when characters are speaking. The whole romance, in this version, tends toward prose, although prose may be misleading as the dots in MS *C* are not entirely analogous to our own modern grammatico-syntactic punctuation. The dot at the end of each page rarely coincides with the completion of a grammatical sentence, as the following example demonstrates:

V eez le cheualier ueez. (MS *C*, fol. 33*r*, v. 1678)
Q ui fu menez sor la charrete (MS *C*, fol. 33*v*, v. 1679)[32]

On certain occasions, Guiot belies his reputation; he calls attention to poetic figures, such as enjambment:

L i cheuax <u>uoit et bel et cler</u>
<u>L e gue.</u> qui molt grant soif auoit
(MS *C*, fol. 29*v*, vv. 742-43)[33]

P ar les enarmes anbracie
T int son escu <u>li filz le roj</u>
<u>D irlande.</u> et point a grant desroj
D e lautre part ancontre luj
(MS *C*, fol. 49*v*, vv. 5950-53)[34]

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[30] See Alfred Foulet: *On Grid-Editing Chrétien de Troyes*. In: *L'Esprit Créateur* 27: 1 (1987), p. 15–23.
[31] »As soon as my Lady of Champaigne wishes me to undertake to write a romance, I shall do so most willingly, as he who is entirely hers…«
[32] »See the knight, see him, who rode in the cart…«
[33] »The horse (who was very thirsty) saw well and clearly the ford…«
[34] »Holding his shield by the straps, the son of the king of Ireland came charging at Lancelot…«

Several interesting examples also emphasize the symmetry of the verse line, as in the following alternation of feminine and masculine forms, a chiasmus (ABB'A'):

> Q u amie ami. namis amie.
> (MS *C*, fol. 32*r*, v. 1414)

Finally, we find numerous instances in which the scribal dot marks an opposition or contrast between two parts of the verse line:

> cil cheualche. cil dui charrettent
> et ansanble une uoie tindrent
> (MS *C*, fol. 28*v*, vv. 400-01)[35]

Readers familiar with the text will certainly detect, lurking in the contrast Guiot emphasizes here, Chrétien de Troyes's ironic smile. One knight (Gauvain) goes on horseback, the other (Lancelot) rides with the dwarf in his cart (»cil cheualche. cil dui charrettent«). By getting into the cart, Lancelot chooses to follow Love, and for the love of Guinevere he will go on to free the queen and all of the prisoners held by the evil Meleagant. Meanwhile Gauvain chooses to follow Reason: far be it from him to jump on the ignoble cart and be mistaken for a common criminal! He prefers to protect his reputation, and he will fail in his mission to save the queen. He will end up flapping in the water of the *Pont sous l'Eau* from which Lancelot will have to save him. The two knights are on the same physical road, but as we understand it metaphorically they are not following »une voie«, the same path, at all. So Guiot breaks them up. Even in MS *C*, punctuation is interpretive and adds to the oral and performative quality of the romance.

This brings me to my final remark on »poetic punctuation« in the *Charrette* manuscripts. As we have seen, our scribes begin every basic unit of the text, that is, every verse line, with a capital letter. It should come as no surprise that throughout the manuscripts there are larger and sometimes elaborately decorated majuscules, which we might suspect identify some larger units.[36]

A description of all majuscules in the *Charrette* manuscripts was established by Sinda Vanderpool (Department of French, Baylor University). This identifies each letter, gives its color and total height, expressed in lines of text. A detailed account of the space left by the scribe, height added by the illuminator, as well as the length, color and orientation of ligatures is also provided. Only two structural majuscules are common to all of the *Charrette* manuscripts for which the corresponding passages have survived:

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[35] »This one riding his horse, the other two in the cart, and together they took the same path…«

[36] See Sylvia Huot: *From Song to Book. The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 28–29; Roger Middleton: *Colored Capitals in the Manuscripts of Érec et Enide*. In: Keith Busby (Ed.): *Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes*, vol. 1, Amsterdam: Rodopi 1993, p. 149–193.

v.399 (MSS *A, E, C, T*): This corresponds to the passage studied above, when Lancelot and Gauvain set out once more on their journey, the former on the cart and the latter following behind on his horse.

v.3955 (MSS *A, E, C, T, V, G*): Here Lancelot is introduced to Guinevere for the first time in the romance; she appears to be quite angry at him.

These, of course, mark major turning-points: (1) the end of the episode of the cart, as Lancelot decides to get into it and earns his name (and the name of the romance) »Knight of the Cart«), and (2) Lancelot's arrival in the presence of the queen, as he has been striving towards this as long as the reader has known him. MSS *A, E, C, T*, and *V* also put large majuscules on vv. 2023 and 4755, that is, (3) when the Immodest Damsel finally goes home and (4) on the morning after the infamously lyric »night of love« shared by Lancelot and Guinevere in the Kingdom of Gorre. As we might expect, our scribes agree on the beginning and ending of at least some of the major episodes in the story, and the majuscules are often larger on these common points than elsewhere. Thus, on folio 34*r* of MS *G*, the initial »D«, followed by a much smaller »es«, is eight lines high. This large letter, the largest size appearing in the *Charrette* manuscript tradition, represents the beginning of the *Charrette*, which follows directly upon *Yvain* at the bottom of column a.[37] The need for it arises from the organization of the codex. We should also note the text itself may be divided by the author, as Chrétien writes in v. 1808 of *Érec et Énide* »Ici fenist li premiers vers«, which Peter Dembowski translates, »here ends the first part (*partie*) of my story«. Here we would expect a scribe to follow with a large majuscule.[38] Less prominent majuscules, such as the one at the beginning of v. 31 (MS *G*, fol. 34*r*, col. b) group verse lines within the romance, or identify subsections of the codex. As every manuscript contains majuscules that the others do not, there can be no doubt the scribes themselves make most of these divisions. They (re)organize Chrétien's romance as each sees fit.[39]

This can be a guide to modern scholars in their reading and interpretation of the poem; it can be a guide to how the poem was received in its cultural context. We might use it, for example, to further our appreciation of how Chrétien and Godefroi de Leigni collaborated in the *Charrette*. (Recall how this was otherwise expressed in the chiasmus we discussed.)

In his epilogue, Godefroi states that he has carried to good term, with Chrétien's approval, the romance that was begun by his master (vv. 7120-34). Godefroi himself began to write, he adds, at the moment when Lancelot was held prisoner by Meleagant in a desolate tower, i.e. near v. 6167. MSS *F, T, V*, and *C* all contain v. 6167. In *F*, *T*, and *V* a majuscule is used, but in all three manuscripts the majuscule is relatively small, of the size used to mark a new sub-section; and MS *C* has no special letter. Clearly, none of these scribes set aside Godefroi's »continuation«, as it is sometimes called, as a separate work: all treated it as an integral (though perhaps discrete) part of the *Lancelot*

[37] MS *A* (Condé), which entirely eliminates the prologue, has this size of letter on v. 31. It is as though our copyist were not familiar with the prologue, or deliberately chose to eliminate it.
[38] An equivalent case for the *Charrette* itself is in v. 31, at the end of the Prologue, the beginning of the story proper. Apart from Guiot's copy, all the manuscripts introduce it with a large and significant capital letter.
[39] See Lori Walters*: Le Rôle du scribe dans l'organisation des manuscrits des romans de Chrétien de Troyes.* In: *Romania: Revue Consacrée a l'Etude des Langues et des Literatures Romanes*, 106.3-4 (1985), p. 303–325.

romance. How, and indeed whether, Guiot in particular weighed the humanist implications of the large capitals that are missing, so to speak, from his codex, we will never know. Perhaps by omitting both of them – at the beginning of the romance proper, and at the beginning of Godefroi's part – he draws our attention to the impossibility of separating these two narrative voices, which, as closely entwined as Marie de France's honeysuckle and hazel, bring forth together the *Knight of the Cart*. Based on this, and on the chiasmus we have already discussed, we might offer that in the *Charrette* the voices of these two humanist twelfth-century *clercs* complete one another and that, in this respect, the poem anticipates the *Roman de la Rose*.[40] We are also able to imagine how the medieval scribes who copied the (surviving) manuscripts would view a modern editor who cut the romance short at v. 6167 (by suggesting, for example, that because what comes after is not by Chrétien, it cannot be part of the »original« poem). Such an editor would be committing a grievous error and revealing his or her ignorance of the humanist ideals that animated the century in which the *Chevalier de la Charrette* came into being, and to which the scribes' work testifies.

The *Charrette* Project, then, strives to offer researchers access to the entire manuscript tradition of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, in both digital images and faithful SGML and XML transcriptions. In addition, we provide access to a set of database tools which allow users to ask their own questions. The project nevertheless remains a work in progress – a testing ground – which constantly evolves to meet the needs (and whims) of users. As Gina Greco notes, borrowing the terminology of Roland Barthes, our electronic edition of the romance is more of a »texte« than an »œuvre«. We do not always know where we are going and, like Lancelot, we have on occasion followed our instinct rather than Reason. Every voyage into the unknown requires, it seems, at least one leap onto a cart.

So where *are* we going? The *Charrette* Project might lead us to create a similar resource for the other romances by Chrétien de Troyes, or we could enlarge the project to include the whole codex in which each manuscript of our poem is bound. How medieval scribes compiled codices is an intriguing subject upon which our twenty-first century tools could eventually shed much light. Alternating both approaches – moving through all of the works in one codex, then seeking out all other manuscripts of those works, then proceeding again through each codex and so on – would eventually encompass a large corpus of medieval literature.

The second part of this article gives a point of departure for the study of »poetic punctuation«, specifically in the manuscript tradition for the *Charrette* but one day perhaps for other works, depending on how far the project is taken. As we have seen, this form of punctuation rarely obeys the modern rules of grammar and syntax associated with prose. Rather, dots and majuscules underscore the fundamental unit of the romance, the verse line. For the moment, we might say that dots can also draw attention to larger units based on rhetorico-poetic figures, such as the chiasmus or

[40] It is interesting to note that, when Chrétien hands over the romance to his alleged pupil, Godefroi de Leigni, Lancelot is imprisoned in Meleagant's tower (and separated from the woman he loves). Likewise, when Jean de Meun takes over Guillaume de Lorris's part of *Le Roman de la Rose*, Bel Accueil is locked up in a tower, which presents a great obstacle to the Lover's progress.

oratio. Majuscules introduce groupings of verse lines and offer valuable insight into each scribe's interpretation and (re)organization of Chrétien's romance.

The *Charrette* Project itself does not seek to interpret the romance, nor does it dictate to scholars how they should conduct their research. Rather, we provide data, and the means by which our users can interrogate those data. Present-day computers and the tools that we have developed for them now permit philologists to ask new kinds of questions, which could not be asked before. No critical edition faithfully reproduces the exact punctuation of each manuscript in the *Charrette* tradition; none can; to my knowledge this has neither been desired nor attempted. On the contrary, today's editors adopt modern grammatico-syntactic punctuation so that their editions appear clearer to contemporary readers. The *Charrette* Project has taken a different approach, and is different. The images and diplomatic transcriptions on our sites provide all the data that is missing from the critical editions. The accompanying rhetorico-poetic database helps us to interpret them. A simple search on the transcriptions yielded a list of all the punctuation in the eight manuscripts of Chrétien's romance (7134 verse lines long in the Foulet-Uitti critical edition), which was compared to the rhetorico-poetic data for *oratio recta* and *obliqua*. Imagine how long it would have taken to accomplish such a task by hand: days, weeks, perhaps even years spent sitting at a desk, magnifying glass in hand, diligently searching through poor-quality black and white photographic reproductions of the manuscripts for large colored letters and a few little dots. The computer, of course, will never replace the philologist: it is not about to ask the questions on its own. But with tools such as those discussed in this volume at its disposal, the future of philology is bright.

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K. Sarah-Jane Murray

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