

Travel Bursary Report – Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature

Caitlin Hartigan
The Queen's College
Oxford, OX1 4AW

The Society's Travel Grant enabled me to conduct crucial on-site research for my D.Phil thesis at the Morgan Library & Museum and New York Public Library in New York City and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. My D.Phil thesis explores the crossover, appropriation, and divergence of the illustrative programmes of manuscripts and printed editions in the later Middle Ages. According to preeminent scholars, the so-called 'Print Revolution' signaled a dramatic shift in the production, appearance, and reception of books and their illustrations. Already past their 'last flowering', manuscripts and their illuminations were supposedly shelved and relegated to the status of art objects, while printed books emerged as a driving force in the market economy, with their increasingly homogenized texts and illustrations. This oversimplification of the creation, layout, and consumption of manuscripts and printed books, however, risks our understanding of the diverse and interconnected visual presentations within books. Accordingly, my D.Phil research explores the illustrative programmes of *Le Roman de la Rose* manuscripts and printed editions, a 'best-seller' of the Middle Ages with a secular text that provides an ideal platform through which to assess broader exchanges of visual transmission. Yet, certain *Le Roman de la Rose* manuscripts and incunables—integral to my research—including deluxe editions printed by Anthoine Vérard and Galliot Du Pré remained inaccessible in collections abroad at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York Public Library, and Library of Congress. Through the generous support of the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature's Travel Grant, I was able to examine these important and unique works—which will form the basis of future case studies in my D.Phil thesis—and collaborate with specialists in my field.

During my visit to the Morgan Library & Museum's Reading Room, I was able to examine notable copies of *Le Roman de la Rose* printed editions and manuscripts. I planned the timing of my trip so as to be able to view several works, including PML 553, that had been previously unavailable due to the now-completed renovation of Pierpont Morgan's Study. Viewing the Morgan's collection enabled me to observe stylistic variances in a selection of diverse works originating from the Dannie and Hettie Heineman, Richard Bennett, and Robert W. De Forest Collections. Within certain of these printed editions, varying applications of colour washes and thick overpaintings in saturated and muted tones altered the compositions and meanings of the incunables' original woodcuts. This conscious reconfiguration of narrative scenes will provide the basis of one case study in the second chapter of my thesis, which explores how late medieval illustrations interrupt, transform, and impart meaning within the layout of the page. In PML 535, for example, a mixture of 'profane' and sacred woodcuts are overpainted, thereby modifying the intended meanings of passages and creating new visual references. It was essential that I view PML 535 and other incunables in the flesh in order to assess adequately the original underlying woodcuts and preparatory sketches made by artisans (though this was sometimes a challenge). In addition, while examining the Morgan's *Le Roman de la Rose* manuscripts, I identified a miniature that had been copied from a medieval work in the late eighteenth century. Such examples of image appropriation in *Le Roman de la Rose* works help illuminate the legacy of *Le Roman de la Rose* consumption beyond the later Middle

Ages, a topic that will be addressed further in the third chapter of my thesis. Moreover, my visit overlapped with the Morgan's exhibition 'Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands', and, during our meetings, Curator Roger Wieck provided invaluable insight into trends and appearances of garments in late medieval miniatures.

While in New York City, I also accessed the New York Public Library's Spencer Collection, comprising moralized *Le Roman de la Rose* printed editions. The varying sizes and formats of the Spencer Collection's *Le Roman de la Rose* manuscripts and printed editions elicited divergent responses from contemporaneous readers. My on-site research with this collection enabled my detection of discrepancies in the usages of these works, a topic that I will address further in my third chapter, on readership. In addition, the New York Public Library allowed me to take several photographs, which will be useful tools as I expand my analysis of these works in later chapters. Finally, while in New York City, I also had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Martha Driver, a professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at Pace University, and we discussed different types of woodcut repetitions within late medieval narratives. I look forward to maintaining contact with her as I continue to explore the placement of woodcuts within incunables.

At the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., I viewed *Le Roman de la Rose* printed editions that contain unique additions and textual enhancements. Although I had anticipated viewing a single-sheet offprint of *Le Roman de la Rose* woodcuts, a cataloguing error revealed that these woodcuts were in fact photographs of a page within a deluxe *Le Roman de la Rose* printed edition in the Library of Congress's collection. This find redirected my focus, as the illuminations are masterfully executed with unique, undulating facial features. Although I have been unable to identify the incunable's illuminator, I will undoubtedly compare this work with other manuscripts and printed editions. I am indebted to Curator Dan DeSimone, who assisted me in photographing pages from this incunable and also helped me piece together the provenance of printed editions within the Rosenwald Collection at the Library.

I am extremely grateful to the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature for their generosity in awarding me a Travel Grant to support my D.Phil thesis. My on-site research at the Morgan Library & Museum and New York Public Library in New York City and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. permitted me to engage with important topics related to my research and to gain access to unique *Le Roman de la Rose* works that will form the basis of future case studies in my D.Phil thesis.