

A lesson in holy kingship: the thirteenth-century *La estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* (Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. iii.59).

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Abstract

In this article a manuscript from the Cambridge University Library, viz.: *La estoire de Sainte Aedward le Rei* is discussed with particular reference to its authorship and its possible date of manufacture as well as highlighting its special insights into the nature of medieval kingship.

The lavishly illustrated life of St Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), *La estoire de Sainte Aedward le Rei* (Cambridge, University Library MS Ee. iii. 59), is one of the more celebrated manuscripts from the mid-thirteenth century. The *Life* explores such topical themes as good government, legitimacy and the grandeur of the king's ancestry. The work provides for Henry III (1216-72) and his contemporaries an ideal model of saintly kingship acceptable to God and beneficial to the people. Its text and illustrations reflects the close association of the saint's cult with the king. Much of the scholarship around this work has, however, focussed more on Matthew Paris' possible authorship, the manuscript's date and provenance rather than the manuscript's contents and structure. While I shall consider the debates around the work's production, I am also interested in exploring the contents of the manuscript, the image of kingship that it presents and how these may contribute to an understanding of the manuscript.

This finely illustrated manuscript consists of 37 folios and its dimensions are 280 x 192 mm. It is almost complete, missing but one folio (ff. 35, 35v), with only the first page lacking illustration. The text is written in Anglo-Norman verse and is arranged in three or, occasionally, two columns, above which are placed framed tinted drawings. Beneath each illustration is also found accompanying explanatory rubric verses.

Unlike earlier eleventh and twelfth-

century illustrated *vitae* which were written in Latin and frequently kept in the monastery which housed the saint's relics, or which took their place as part of larger hagiographical collections, the vernacular text of the *Estoire* manuscript clearly indicated it was intended for a lay audience.¹ This is confirmed by its dedication to Queen Eleanor of Provence. Wormald considered the text to be closer to a romance than to a monastic *libellus*, which could include the saint's life and miracles, prayers and even music for the Office. The function of the *Estoire* text was significantly different from these earlier works, being written to entertain and inform.

One of the intriguing aspects of the work is the way that it brings together several prominent themes in thirteenth-century royal imagery within the confines of a single book. In it we find combined the Royal Court's fascination with art and the reading of vernacular texts, Henry III's patronage of the cult of St Edward at Westminster, and the interest in the deeds of kings found in contemporary histories. It also reflects concerns about the respective duties of the king and his barons in governing the land. Thirteenth-century England's political history was shaped by this issue. Henry III's reign began just two years after his father, John, signed the *Magna Carta*, and Henry himself faced several struggles with his magnates. These finally erupted in the Baronial Rebellion of 1258.² While these events were not referred to in the text, the work does mirror contemporary debates about the nature of good kingship which found more pacific expression in, for example, Henry de Bracton's political treatises.³

Much stress was placed on the legitimacy of and continuity of the royal line within the historical literature of the period, as the contemporary popularity of genealogical rolls attested.⁴ Legitimacy and nobility of blood not only controlled who had the right to

sit upon the throne, but also impacted on the nation's well-being. The most obvious example of the practical implications of an insecure succession was the Norman Conquest, resulting in part from Edward the Confessor's childlessness. The possession of saintly forebears was also considered to enhance the status of the royal family and, indeed, the nation. The presence of saints in the royal line was also of international significance. During the thirteenth century, European royal families sought to have members canonised to enhance the prestige of their lines.

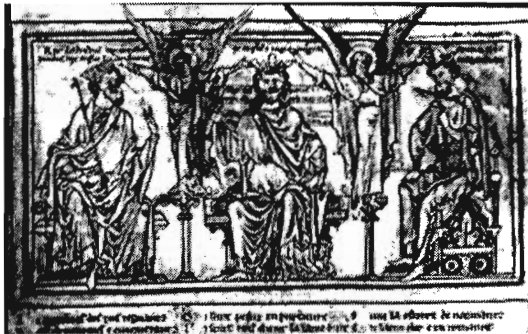


Figure 1.

Legitimacy and continuity of the royal line are strongly articulated from the very opening of the *Estoire*. England was described as unique for having had so many holy and good kings who now reigned in Heaven, as well as such great warriors as Arthur, Edmund and Cnut. (Figure 1). The poem listed kings who were powerful through good counsel and intelligence, such as Oswin and Edmund; Edward the Confessor is included in this number.⁵ Later in the poem, Edward's line was described again, emphasising his descent: he was of the sixth generation from Alfred, but the tenth King, as Cnut and his two sons were included in the list of kings, as conquerors.⁶ Reference was also made to the marriage of Edgar, Edward's grandfather, to the daughter of Duke Richard of Normandy, underlining Edward's kinship with William Duke of Normandy.⁷ The same section reminded the reader of Henry III's own familial connection with the saint, in part through its dedication to Eleanor, his wife. The work pointed to the continuing importance of his heritage for the prestige of the throne.⁸

I. The date and provenance of the *Estoire*

Most studies of this manuscript have focused on the question of its date and attribution. In most recent studies, while there has been a general agreement concerning a date to the late 1250s, the provenance remains unclear, although discussion has focused on whether Matthew Paris was the writer and illustrator.⁹

In his introduction to the 1920 facsimile, however, M.R. James dated the *Estoire* to the 1240s. He argued that work must have been completed before the Barons' Revolt because some of the text, which praised Henry and painted an image of national unity, would otherwise have been highly inappropriate.

the third Henry who has filled the [royal stock of England] with his favour, and throughout the kingdom gives both light and clear brightness everywhere, as the sun and moon. Now are kings, now are barons, and the kingdom, of a common blood of England and of Normandy.¹⁰

This text is an interesting one because it underlines the Englishness of Henry III by emphasising that his immediate ancestors, through the marriage of Henry I and Matilda of Scotland, combined both the Anglo-Saxon line of kings and their Norman conquerors. I would argue that the passage referred to the union of blood rather than to politics, and its message was directed to the Royal Court in general rather than to the barons. It also seems unlikely that the revolt would have halted the production of royal panegyrics.

James also suggested that the book was produced by Matthew Paris for presentation to Queen Eleanor of Provence, after the completion of a new shrine for the saint in 1241.¹¹ Such a dating is extremely problematic as the shrine was not completed at this time, but rather just begun. The attribution to Paris also precludes the possibility that the work was written after his death in 1259.

The attribution of the work to Paris is a controversial one; scholars seem to be divided on this issue by discipline. The principal textual scholars, Vaughan and Wallace, support the traditional case first

proposed by James, while art historians, in particular Nigel Morgan, challenge this on stylistic grounds.¹² These differing opinions highlight one of the inherent tensions in the study of illuminated manuscripts, the relationship between text and image. Each may be the work of separate artists though, unless the illustration is to be purely decorative, the imagery is dependent on the contents of the written page. While this principle is accepted when discussing such texts as Psalters, in the present case the temptation to identify both tasks with a particular figure is strong, especially as Matthew Paris is known to have written and illustrated similar works. Yet even with Matthew Paris' saints' *vitae*, this separation can be made, notably in the London *Lives of the Offas* (British Library, Cotton MS Nero D. I.) where only the first four folios were in Paris' hand, the rest being illustrated later in the fourteenth century.¹³ In that example the identification with Paris was obvious as we have an autograph text. It has been suggested that because neither the script nor the illustrations of the *Estoire* are in Paris' own hand, the manuscript may be a close copy of a now lost original, that was produced in the St Alban's scriptorium.¹⁴

While the case for Paris' authorship is disputed, the arguments for linking the *Estoire* with Matthew Paris' *oeuvre* are compelling. The manuscript was closely connected with Westminster and with the Royal Court, not only in its subject but also in the text's references to the King and to Queen Eleanor. Paris' connection with the Court has been well documented, notably in his own writings.¹⁵ More conclusive evidence for any argument ascribing the text to him, however, is the note found in Paris' own hand on the second fly leaf of the *Life of St Alban* (Dublin, Trinity College, MS E. I. 40). This suggests that not only did Paris write French vernacular saints' lives but that he lent them to women of the Court and possibly also had them illustrated by other artists.¹⁶ If the *Estoire* text was written by Paris, this may have been the case in this instance.

The *Estoire* was written with the expectation that it would be accompanied by illustrations. This was indicated by the

text itself.

Now I pray you, gentle King Edward,
To have regard to me a sinner,
Who has translated from the Latin,
According to my knowledge and genius,
Your history into French,
That memory of thee may spread,
And for lay people who letters
Know not, in portraiture
Have I clearly figured it
in this present book ...¹⁷

From this evidence Vaughan has argued that it would be unlikely that two different people would translate and illustrate a *Life of St Edward* at this date, and that the *Estoire* was probably the same *Life* referred to in the Dublin manuscript.¹⁸

Thus, on the basis of these references, and as the manuscript is illustrated in a technique close to that used by Matthew Paris, it was not surprising that James and Vaughan should ascribe the works to him, although neither considered it to be an autograph copy.¹⁹ While the documentary evidence for their case is strong, it is on stylistic grounds that this attribution and, indeed, the dating of the manuscript itself, is most convincingly challenged.

The text's most recent editor, Wallace, has suggested that it was possibly written as early as 1236; she argues that the praise of Queen Eleanor was strongly reminiscent of an epithalamium, with its references to her husband's devotion to the saint.²⁰ This is possible, although Henry's intense interest in patronising the cult and the abbey's building works reached their peak in the 1240s and 1250s and thus postdate his marriage. One wonders how useful a model Edward the Confessor provided for a royal marriage given the vow of chastity he and his wife, Edith, took on their wedding night.²¹ Wallace accepted James and Vaughan's attribution to Matthew Paris as "hardly to be contested".²² Consequently, she did not carry out the critical comparison between the text and others more securely linked to Paris' *oeuvre*, for which she would have been qualified.

The earlier identification of the artist for the *Estoire* manuscript as Matthew Paris has been placed in doubt by more recent

research. Morgan has argued that the work is a London manuscript and not from St Albans as James suggested.²³ Suzanne Lewis argues convincingly that Matthew Paris did not have a workshop, but worked in isolation.²⁴ The concept of a "Court School" centred around Westminster has also been challenged by R.K. Lancaster, whose extensive work on the surviving documents has found no evidence for such a School's existence.²⁵

Nigel Morgan's extensive study of mid-thirteenth-century manuscripts has led to a reappraisal of the dating of these works. He has dated the *Estoire* to between 1255 and 1260, placing it in London with a group of manuscripts that he argues are connected.²⁶ All show a clear French influence in their use of the new angular fold style and in their head types.²⁷ This would suggest a London provenance for the *Estoire*. At least two artists were involved in the preparation of the *Estoire*, and the style gradually changes from folio 5v.²⁸ While Morgan does not favour the idea of a Court School, he does point out the close ties these manuscripts, including the *Estoire* manuscript and the Chetham *Flores*, have to Westminster Abbey and the royal family.²⁹ Probably the most convincing argument for placing the *Estoire* with these London-based manuscripts is found in Morgan's study of the *Life of St Thomas Becket* leaves, on loan to the British Library. Here he shows that, while these leaves share a common format with Paris's *Life of St Alban*, they probably predated it and possibly represent an already established format which Matthew Paris followed. The *St Alban* Life also differed from *Estoire* and related manuscripts such as the *Roman de toute chevalerie* (Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.9, 34), being smaller and using a different system of page organisation. This suggests a common centre of production, which produced a variety of texts including Romances and Apocalypses.³⁰ It also suggests that the format used in the layout of the *Estoire*, once associated particularly with Matthew Paris, was already prevalent before Paris produced his various *vitae*.

The questioning of the *Estoire* manuscript's connection with Matthew

Paris has come mainly from art historians. The literary historians who have discussed the written text have not reviewed the attribution to Matthew Paris, so that these issues of visual evidence have not been addressed by them. Wallace has argued that there was no other known candidate who fitted the manuscript as well as Paris.³¹ If, as Morgan has suggested, there was a tradition of illuminated vernacular saints' lives outside St Albans, Wallace's argument loses much of its force. Indeed, information dismissed by Wallace now now becomes potentially more significant.³² The *Liberate Rolls* (1244-45), for example, contain a reference to Henry the Versifier who was paid ten pounds for writing the Lives of two royal saints, Edward and George.³³ This writer has sometimes been identified with Henry of Avranches and the work, with the *Estoire de Sainte Aedward le Rei*; Wallace discounts this suggestion on the grounds that there is no evidence that these *vitae* were in Anglo-Norman, nor that Henry of Avranches ever wrote in that language.³⁴ What the reference does suggest, however, is that more than one life of this saint was produced in the mid-thirteenth century, and thus it strengthens the possibility that Matthew Paris is not the only possible candidate for the authorship of this text.

That other versions of St Edward's *vita* did exist is also indicated by miniatures depicting scenes from the saint's life in the near-contemporary *Domesday Book* (London, PRO E 36/284).³⁵ This work has been dated to between 1250 and 1260.³⁶ The two versions of St Edward's *vita*, *La estoire de Sainte Aedward le Rei* and the *Domesday* scenes, are obviously unrelated. The *Domesday* version has no text and the illustrations bear little resemblance to those in the *Estoire*, or to any later versions of the cycle. The *Estoire* had a greater sense of narrative, while the images in the *Domesday Book* focused on the miracles of the saint, often excluding the saint. Thus we are shown the Seven Sleepers without Edward.³⁷ These illustrations did not include explanatory texts and presumed prior knowledge of the miracles surrounding St Edward's cult. The decoration of legal works such as the *Domesday Book* became more common in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth

centuries, when compilations of statutes in French and Latin, known as the *Statuta Angliae*, were increasingly produced.³⁸ Given the importance of the St Edward to King Henry, it is possible that more than one version of his life may have been prepared for the royal court.

Binski's two articles on the manuscript are together the most extended study yet published. In them he argues Paris was the author of the text and his role as its probable designer. He dates the prototype manuscript to before 1250. In his 1991 *Archaeologia* article, he argues that Abbot Berkyng's tapestries which featured a series of images relating the Life of St Edward, donated to Westminster by 1246, represented an iconographical tradition independent of the imagery found in the *Estoire*, although both were drawn from the same source, Aelred's *vita*. Binski supports this argument by reference to the late fourteenth-century manuscript (Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 10. 2, ff. 39-44v) which contains 19 illustrations of St Edward's *Life*. These correspond closely to the sequence of recorded captions from the now lost tapestries, and to those appearing on the sculptured cycle of Edward's life on Westminster's high altar, erected in 1441. From these examples, Binski argues for the existence of a Westminster tradition separate from the *Estoire*.³⁹ However, while the tapestries may have provided a useful model for Westminster-based works from the fourteenth century, they cannot prove the existence of an established tradition. Nor can Binski produce any other works, contemporaneous with the tapestries, which share its iconography. The existence of the *Estoire* and the *Domesday Abbreviate* (London, PRO E 36/284) indicates that there was no established canon before the fourteenth century. Furthermore, Binski's argument does not necessarily prove that the *Estoire* was produced by Matthew Paris, rather than a London-based workshop.

To summarise, with Morgan's recent work the issue of the authorship of the *Estoire* has become further clouded. He argues that the writer was associated with either Westminster Abbey or its patron, Henry III. This does not exclude

Matthew Paris, whose own connections with Westminster can be seen in their adaption of his chronicles in the *Flores Historiarum*, part of which was written in his own hand.⁴⁰ Until, however, a comparative textual study of the related Anglo-Norman saints' lives has been completed, incorporating the questions raised by Morgan, the identity of the author must remain uncertain.

II. The Contents of the Manuscript

While Morgan's dating of the manuscript itself to between 1255-1260 is now generally accepted, that of the text is still disputed.⁴¹ Through an examination of the themes expressed within the text itself, a dating to the early 1250s is possible. The 1250s were a portentous decade for Henry III. It saw Henry vow to go on Crusade, his involvement in papal plans to control the Sicilian succession and, finally, in 1258, a rebellion by his leading magnates.⁴² In addition, the works at Westminster Abbey, the most tangible expression of Henry III's support of St Edward the Confessor's cult, were at their height.

While Edward the Confessor's cult was closely linked with royal power from the time of his canonisation in the twelfth century, Henry III was particularly noted for his great devotion to the saint.⁴³ This took a very practical form. Henry financed and personally oversaw the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey from 1245, including the new choir and sanctuary, the north and south transepts and the four easternmost bays of the nave, as well as the chapterhouse. He established a special exchequer of works to control the finances of the works.⁴⁴ In addition, he commissioned a new shrine for the saint which was begun in 1241 and finished in 1271, as well as dedicating chapels and altars to the saint in his manors and castles. Artworks depicting the saint also appeared in his palaces, the best known being the *Coronation of St Edward* in the Painted Chamber in Westminster Abbey.

Although there is no direct reference to these events within the text, the *Estoire* does deal with related themes. The presentation of Edward's planned pilgrimage to Rome, and the resultant building of Westminster Abbey, the references to baronial counsel and to Edward's

international reputation seem particularly relevant.

In his 1990 essay, Binski drew on both the text and the illustrations to argue that the manuscript reflected contemporary concerns about what constituted good government. The positive presentation of baronial counsel and parliament led him to suggest that Edward “emerges as a paradigm of constitutional monarchy”, with Westminster Abbey as a physical embodiment of cooperative government. I would argue, however, that the focus was much more on the person of the king, given the stress on legitimacy of descent and the unusual number of coronation scenes represented. Binski overlooked their contemporary significance. The images, the text and the rubrics worked together to present an ecclesiastical ideal of kingship. The coronation is central to this ideal, as it represents the moment of clerical recognition and blessing of the monarchy. The importance of ecclesiastical approval is highlighted by the reign of Edward’s successor Harold who, in the text, turns his back on godliness, seizing the throne despite his oath to support William the Conqueror. This is particularly borne out in the “Coronation of Harold”, where the king sits with his barons, but without supporting clergy. This absence of clerical approval both signifies the illegitimacy of Harold’s rule, demonstrated by the subsequent disaster of his reign and, in contrast, the positive model that St Edward the Confessor provides. An examination of different textual and visual elements that make up the work highlights how this image of good kingship is represented (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

The *Estoire* consists of three components: the illustrations that run

across the top of the page, the rubrics that usually occupy part of the central column of text and the text itself.⁴⁵ Each provided an account of the saint’s life. While it is reasonable to presume that what is discussed in the main text is repeated in summary in both the illustrations and the rubrics, this is not always so. For example, on folio 5v there is a three-part narrative scene showing Edmund Ironside in single combat with Cnut, the two kings embracing in truce, and the death of Edmund. This scene describes Edmund’s attempt to regain England from the Danish King Cnut who, knowing that he could not defeat the young King, convinced him that they divide the kingdom between them. Edmund was subsequently murdered by an unnamed traitorous duke. While the image summarises this neatly on one page, the text is spread over three. The images on the two accompanying pages do not coincide with the text, but rather continue the visual narrative.

In general, the rubrics follow the illustrations rather than the main poem. Thus, on folio 32v, while the text refers to St Edward’s posthumous cures, both the illustration and the rubrics relate to the Battle of Stamford Bridge. These rubrics are generally in the central column of the text. There are exceptions; on folios 16, 36 and 36v the two verses of rubrics are placed in the outer two text columns, while on folios 21 and 24v they appear on the central and right columns.⁴⁶

This dislocation between image and text occurs throughout the manuscript. Scenes sometimes appear a page before they are recounted in the text, sometimes after. Visually this is not disruptive as the scenes are generally self-explanatory; for example Edmund Ironside’s brief reign is neatly summarised in one illustration. It does raise the question of how the work was used, as the image cannot be read with the text. Yet, within the manuscript there are references that indicate that the contents are to be read and heard, with the pictures aiding the unlettered.⁴⁷ It is possible that the work was first read and then the images referred to afterwards, acting as an *aide-memoire*.

The location and contents of the illustrations are not simply a response to what is written below. The scenes are spread

across two or three columns. While this may, in part, reflect the requirements of the written work, it also creates an independent visual narrative. For example, the opening sequence of images that begin with Alfred, Edgar and Athelstan (f. 3v) and conclude with the triumphant return and coronation of Edward (f. 9), (Figure 3) are united thematically by the text. This tells of the anarchy that befell England with the defeat of its legitimate kings.⁴⁸ On folio 6, which shows the blinding of Aulred, the scene is divided in half. The left half shows the crime, watched by Godwin, with King Hardacnut, while the right shows the tyrannical treatment of all levels of society, including the clergy, that follows almost inevitably with a corrupt government.



Figure 3.

The coronation of the youthful Edward foreshadows a period of prosperity. The format of the pictures complement the narrative movement towards this moment, as each illustration in this sequence is spread across a full page. It is only after the coronation scene that the picture sizing changes. In the scene where Edward confronted a demon seated on the collected Danegeld (f. 9v), the picture was only two column wide. Picture size accents scenes of significance and creates a visual rhythm to the story independent of, though complementary to, the written account.

The text of Edward's life begins with an account of the greatness of England's rulers. On the second page, the *Estoire* opening illustration shows the three ancestral figures: Alfred, Edgar and Ethelred, with angels (f. 3v). (Figure 1). Alfred holds a sceptre while Edgar holds a coin in his right hand, a detail for which the text offers no explanation. Two angels, standing on columns, reach out to touch

each king's crown. Each monarch is identified by rubrics. The scene complements the accompanying text which extols the English monarchy, its antiquity and the continuing worthiness of those who wear the crown. In the account of Edward's lineage, these three figures are singled out: Alfred is described as holy and wise; Edgar as a "King peacable as Solomon"; Ethelred, Edward's father, as a good governor who was fierce in war. The linking of Edward to these kings and, in particular, to Alfred, whose importance was celebrated in other manuscripts from the period, reinforced his place within a noble line.⁴⁹ Edward the Confessor is included amongst those who conquered the temptations of the flesh, the devil and the world to attain spiritual purity. He conquered the flesh through chastity, the world through humility and the devil through his virtues. This section formed a versified genealogical prologue, reminiscent of genealogical texts found in other historical texts of the time.⁵⁰



Figure 4.

The text then describes the misrule and devastation experienced in England as a consequence of the Danish invasions. The second illustration (f. 4) depicts the violence of Sweyn's raids on the land. It shows the taking of captives, and robbing of unarmed men and, to the right of the scene, the flight of Queen Emma and her children, Alfred and Edward, to Normandy (f. 4r)(Figure 4). The depiction of their flight on horseback is one of the few obvious visual parallels drawn between St Edward and Christ in the *Estoire*. It recalls the Flight into Egypt, an allusion further emphasised by the threatening knights and the violent attacks on peasant, reminiscent of the Massacre of the Innocents. This connection is also reinforced by the portrayal of the Queen as a Madonna-

like figure with the infant saint on her lap.

The next six pages of the text describe the events following the Danish invasions. These include the presentation of Edward and Alfred to Duke Robert of Normandy; the death of Sweyn and the confrontation between Edmund Ironside and Cnut. This section is followed by a sequence of four scenes, spread over two pages, depicting Earl Godwin's betrayal of the Atheling, Aulred; the youth's torture and the Danes' oppression of the English people.

The depiction of the oppression suffered by the people strengthens the theme of royal legitimacy found in the text. Harold Harefoot, Cnut's bastard son who seized the throne by subterfuge, is described as an illegitimate king. His reign is marked by war and cruelty.⁵¹ Hardacnut, although legitimate, is also a tyrant, who turned his back on God. His reign, too, was marked by atrocities: the murder of women, children and the elderly; the destruction of homes and the dishonouring of the Church through the dispossession of monks and hermits, the robbing of bishops and the disregard of papal privileges. To underline his essential wickedness, Hardacnut is shown dying suddenly at table without benefit of clergy.⁵² With his death, the text continues:

Before it was ill, now it is worse;
 Now are bolder his enemies.
 The gentlemen of legitimate line,
 Especially those of royal blood
 Are dead, and taken and exiled:
 The ills increase more than enough.⁵³

The manuscript then takes up the story of the exiled prince, Edward. The illustrations recount the events in the text economically. Bishop Brithwold, described as Bishop of Winchester although actually bishop of Ramsbury, features prominently; he has a dream which prophesies the prosperity of Edward's forthcoming reign. The imagery in this section begins with the death of Hardacnut, shown sprawled across a table. On the same page, separated by a column, Brithwold is portrayed praying to God, as he kneels before a crucifix for the well-being of the kingdom which was "like a sheepfold

delivered up to lions and wolves."⁵⁴ On the following page (f. 7v), Brithwold is shown in two scenes (Figure 5). In both he is depicted sleeping before a bare altar. These images present Brithwold's vision of Edward's future coronation. The young King was shown kneeling before St Peter who is depicted as a bearded, tonsured monk. St Peter touches the king's crown and blesses him. The saint, descending from clouds, then explains his dream to Brithwold. The next two scenes show Brithwold recounting his vision, and Edward praying before an altar, this latter scene echoing the preceding ones. In the accompanying text, St Peter promises peace and plenty to England when ruled by Edward, and that he, St Peter, would be his protector and St John the Evangelist would provide a model on which he can base his chaste and holy life.⁵⁵



Figure 5.

In a deliberate contrast with his predecessors, Edward is presented as a king who will rule with justice. Edward is promised counsel, support and wealth, as well as victory over his enemies after which he would pass to glory.⁵⁶ The message of the text, together with the imagery, is explicit. All power comes from God, who anoints his kings and controls the affairs of his people.

The four scenes which follow show Edward receiving news of Hardacnut's death, his voyage to England (f. 8v), his arrival and his coronation (f. 9). (Figure 3) The first image of the contemplative young King is an unusual one, for the youth is shown with his cloak drawn over his head, a curiously isolated image at this moment of triumph. George Henderson has drawn attention to a similar depiction of the visionary exile, St John, found in contemporary Apocalypses. Binski has also suggested that it draws

attention to Edward as a “crowned monk”. It makes a telling contrast to the scene of worldly triumph, the coronation, with which it is juxtaposed. These scenes are planned to be viewed together, as compositionally they were mirrored. Clearly the viewer was meant to see that the coronation resulted from the prayers that preceded it. It reminds the viewer of the promises that the young exile had already made to God and St Peter and it places his accession within the wider perspective of divine history. In the written text, Edward has prayed to God saying that He “alone by right is the King of Kings”.⁵⁷ compared to whom such great rulers as Alexander, Menelaus and Caesar pass away like shadows. The reader was reminded that God can give and take away kingdoms at His pleasure. Edward prayed to God to protect and pity him. He gave himself and all his property to St Peter and vowed himself to his service, promising to go to Rome on pilgrimage.⁵⁸ It was only then that all the difficulties that stood between him and the throne disappeared. The penitent image of Edward thus reminded and taught that it was through God’s Will alone that he came to the throne. It was through his faith, and the consequent favour of God, that both Edward and his realm prospered. In these two pages we find summarised in miniature the *Estoire’s* moral lesson. Edward did not so much reject power as dedicate it to God.

Five coronations are shown in the manuscript. Together these coronations underline the inherent differences between good and bad kingship. Three are associated with Edward, one is that of his wife, Edith, and the fifth concerns his successor, Harold. It is possible that William the Conqueror’s crowning was also included, on the missing folios.

The first two coronations depict Brithwold’s vision of Edward’s coronation (f. 7v)(Figure 5) and the actual coronation (f. 9) (Figure 3) Both serve to show the blessing of the Church on the king. The first is unusual in that Edward is shown kneeling before St Peter who blesses the king.⁵⁹ Most English coronation scenes show the king seated while a bishop on either side touches the crown. Brithwold’s vision of Edward’s coronation, however, is more reminiscent of such Byzantine-

influenced examples as the mosaic of Roger II of Sicily in the Martorana, Palermo where Roger is shown in obeisance to Christ. There is a marked contrast between this humble image and other scenes where the king is shown seated among his courtiers, inferior to none. The second coronation is more typical of other thirteenth-century representations. Similar scenes were found in the near-contemporary *Flores Historiarum* (Manchester, Chetham MS 6712), and that commissioned for Henry III’s bedchamber in Westminster Palace.



Figure 6.

The coronation of Queen Edith (f. 11v), is less formal than Edward’s (Figure 6). She is shown standing, which in this context, suggests her inferior status to Edward. The seated king is distinguished from the standing entourage. As images of queens were unusual at this time, this depiction of the coronation of the queen, accompanied by her female entourage, is unique in thirteenth-century English manuscripts.⁶⁰

Edward’s third coronation is probably the most significant. It shows Edward’s heavenly apotheosis (f. 29). It marks the fulfilment of St Peter’s prophecy in Bishop Brithwold’s dream. As in that earlier vision, the king is shown kneeling. In this second sacred coronation the enthroned Christ blesses the king who is presented by his patrons, St John the Evangelist and St Peter. The orthodoxy of Edward’s beliefs is reinforced by the prominence given to St Peter who, in the thirteenth century, signified both Rome and the Church. Christ is placed in a mandorla, surrounded by Evangelist symbols recalling, as Binski points out, contemporary Apocalypse scenes.⁶¹ The format is unusual, as Christ is shown

reaching out from his mandorla to touch Edward's crown. Wormald has drawn attention to the rarity of this gesture, noting a parallel with the Wilton Diptych. In each case the scene represents the presentation of a ruler to Christ in Heaven. The *Estoire* is distinguished from this later work in that it is the adult Christ shown, rather than a Madonna and Child.

The companion scene, on the left, shows an hysterical Queen Edith flinging herself on the dead king's body, watched by clergy, while the king's naked, crowned, soul is drawn up to heaven by angels. This is, many ways, the climax to the *Estoire*, for here the king is shown literally passing from an earthly to a heavenly kingdom. The text makes much of this, contrasting the brevity of earthly worth to the enduring sureness of Heaven.⁶²

The placement of the monarch within a divine hierarchy is an idea that would have appealed to Henry III. He is known to have written to Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln sometime in 1245 or 1245, about the effect of the consecrated unction on royal authority. Grosseteste's answer survives. He wrote that, while the king did not receive the authority of priesthood, he did through his anointing receive the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁶³ Grosseteste refers to the Seven Gifts in the miracle of the four blind men, healed by St Edward. Edward, in his humility, ascribes the miraculous healing as descending from God, through him.⁶⁴

The coronation of Harold is in marked contrast to the apotheosis of the saintly Edward which precedes it. Harold is shown crowning himself, surrounded by his court. There are no clergy, as none were prepared to participate (f. 30v)(Figure 2).⁶⁵ In its composition his image is strongly reminiscent of more orthodox coronation scenes; this makes the absence of bishops all the more telling, especially as such coronation insignia as the sceptre and white gloves are included. It convincingly expresses the illegitimacy of Harold's claims, and prepares the reader for descriptions of his avarice and the destructiveness of his reign. The destruction that followed Harold's succession was foretold by Edward, when he saw Godwin's two sons fighting at a

banquet.⁶⁶ Harold, indeed, seized the crown by deceit, having sworn to support William of Normandy. Edward, close to his death, twice prophesied the forthcoming destruction of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, in his vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (f. 25v) and on his deathbed. In addition to this, Edward appeared posthumously to warn Harold, offering advice. It was only after Harold ignored him that the invasions of Harold of Norway and William of Normandy occurred. In contrast to this growing political instability, St Edward's fame increased and miracles continued to be performed.⁶⁷

Interestingly, the visual depictions of Harold and other bad kings, despite the negative portrait given in the text, are neutral, with no differentiation made between his pictorial treatment and that of legitimate kings like Edward or Edmund Ironside. Despite the absence of an orthodox coronation service, once crowned, Harold is given the same respect as other monarchs. The work presents two complementary attitudes towards the monarch which distinguishes between the flawed living king and the ongoing dignity of a divinely ordained monarchy.

The idea of good governance is tied to Edward's patronage of Westminster which is made an integral part of the *Life*, linking it with his devotion to St Peter. As the coronation church, Westminster had significance for the monarchy. The text attempts to ally the monarchy even more closely to the Abbey by means of the account of Edward's rebuilding of the Abbey which runs from folio 13 to folio 20v.

According to the *Estoire*, Edward was convinced by his counsellors to appeal to Pope Leo IX to rescind the vow of pilgrimage made while in exile.⁶⁸ His magnates suggested that he build a church with a community committed to serving God and praying for the souls of Edward's ancestors, for present and future kings, as well as for the welfare of the kingdom.⁶⁹ Leo's charter, responding to Edward's request, reminded him that it was the duty of a good king to guide the reins of justice and preserve peace, in a message rich in references to the King of Kings, through whom all kings reign.⁷⁰

At the same time St Peter appeared to a hermit near Worcester, instructing him to tell

Edward to build at Thorney, the site of Westminster. The church was to be dedicated to St Peter. The manuscript shows St Peter's arrival at Westminster by boat and his consecration of the church (ff. 15-16). In a slightly later scene St Edward is shown ordering the Abbey's building (ff. 18v-19). This emphasis on the king's close association with the abbey may support the argument that the work was produced by or for Westminster Abbey.

Much of *La estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* is devoted to Edward's miracles, highlighting his holiness. These include such visions as that of the drowning of the Danish king (f. 12); of the Christ Child, during the elevation of the Host (f. 21); of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (f. 25v), and an account of St John and the ring (ff. 26-27).⁷¹ Edward's death and burial, as well as the posthumous cures at his tomb are included in a block over four pages (ff. 28-30). The final ten pages are principally concerned with the events following his death including Harold's usurpation of the crown (f. 30v), the battle of Stamford Bridge (f. 32v) and the Norman Conquest. This is represented by William I's arrival in England (f. 34) and the battle of Hastings (f. 34v). The manuscript concludes triumphantly with the discovery of St Edward's incorrupt body and its subsequent translation into a new shrine (f. 36). William is shown bending over to kiss St Edward, while three bishops support the saint's body. The text itself concludes with a reference to the gift of a rich pall by King William to honour the fame of St Edward and the church of Westminster, which has no equal in the kingdom.⁷²

The writer presents a very clear idea of what constitutes a good king. He is seen as prosperous and generous to his people. Edward is shown, for example, distributing alms, which is evidence of saintly charity, as well as good kingship. He was not attached to worldly wealth, as demonstrated by his rejection of the Danegeld.⁷³ Edward saw a devil seated upon treasure obtained through the exploitation of his people. Edward's generosity makes a notable contrast to the behaviour of his successor Harold who is described as a tyrant and a vandal, acting

more like a merchant than a prince.⁷⁴ Edward, in contrast, is humble and attributes all the miraculous healings ascribed to him to the workings of God through him.⁷⁵

A good king is also described as one who listens to his people, not to the advice of flatterers and foreigners, this being a major criticism of Henry III's practice.⁷⁶ When presented with the barons' request that he marry, Edward listened to them, saying: "he who does not have the will of his people will have no power over them."⁷⁷ Similarly he heeded their advice over his planned pilgrimage. They reminded him of his coronation oath to listen to the advice of the commons.⁷⁸ This emphasis on conciliar government did not imply a diminution of Edward's power. The writer argues for the responsibilities of the barons, the wisest of whom were chosen as judges and bailiffs so that Edward could devote himself entirely to God.⁷⁹ Edward, indeed, reminded his people that if the commons and the lords kept well together they would fear nothing from their neighbours.⁸⁰ The model presented is similar to that found in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, which presented the body as a metaphor for the State.⁸¹

The king is presented in the *Estoire* not as a warrior but as a lawgiver and a prophet, who sits in council and keeps the peace throughout his country. He does not need to fight to protect his kingdom, because God is with him. This is most vividly shown in the account of the drowning of the Danish king where Edward, at Mass, had a vision of the Danish king's death, just as before his intended invasion of England.⁸²

According to the author of the *Estoire*, peace is dependent upon a righteous king, who comes of good stock. This idea permeates the *Estoire*. Edward is presented as a clerical ideal of secular rulership, prepared to deliver the welfare of his country completely into the hands of God, at the expense of worldly security and pride. The most obvious example of his placing pious objectives above national ones was in his vow of celibacy. Yet the benefits to the kingdom were immediate and constant. No other king in the *Estoire* was prepared to give up his power, not even "good" kings like Edmund who depended on force to preserve

this kingdom. The presentation of Edward therefore is truly as a saint, providing a model of behaviour beyond the capacities of most monarchs.

The anarchy that came before and after the harmoniousness of Edward's reign demonstrates one of the manuscript's principal messages: that prosperity comes through the reign of a legitimate and godly king. The visual imagery as much as the written text supports, indeed, strengthens this theme; the miracles performed at Edward's tomb are contrasted with the confusion of the battles at Stamford Bridge and Hastings.⁸³

The contrast made between the violence wrought by corrupt governors and the peace experienced under legitimate rule is also found in other thirteenth-century works. In the *Little Canterbury Psalter* (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, MS lat. 770), the unusual David cycle that marks the liturgical division of the book is used to present a political allegory on the effects of bad government. Saul's tyrannical actions are contrasted with the Christ-like David. The Psalter celebrates Saul's destruction and David's triumph over persecution. Caviness suggests convincingly that the Psalter represents a response from Canterbury to John's rule, dating it to about 1220.⁸⁴

The parallels with Henry III and his patronage of Westminster are clear. The links between the abbey and the palace of Westminster are drawn. It is extolled not only because of its legendary dedication by St Peter and because the regalia was kept there, but also because the king's palace and high court were located there. The king is reminded that he should support the abbey because he is its true patron.⁸⁵ The strong emphasis placed upon the blessing of the Church to provide king and the nation's well-being, particularly at the coronation, also suggests the *Estoire's* monastic and, possibly, Westminster origin.

The text of the *Estoire* manuscript demonstrates a close interconnection between the English monarchy, Henry III, Edward the Confessor and Westminster Abbey. Saint Edward had become the embodiment of the glory and power of the English Crown. Dating the manuscript to the late 1250s would place it at a time

when Henry III's sponsorship of the rebuilding of the abbey was at its peak, and the production of the manuscript would then reflect the heightened interest in this royal saint. The didactic purpose of the *Estoire* was probably directed at the aristocratic audience of the Royal Court which was interested in questions of good government. St Edward the Confessor is presented to them as an ideal of holy and effective kingship relevant to the concerns of thirteenth-century English society.

Notes

¹ An important exception to this is the Oxford *Life of St Cuthbert* (University College MS 165), which D.H. Farmer has convincingly argued was produced for members of the Scottish royal family in the 1090s. Although in Latin, this extensively illustrated work contained no liturgical elements and may have been produced for private devotions.

² Probably the most succinct account is found.

³ H. de Bracton, *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Anglie*, ed. G.E. Woodbine and S.E. Thorne, Cambridge, Mass., 1968.

⁴ The most comprehensive discussion of the genealogical rolls found.

⁵ Lines 13-20, p. 1.

⁶ Lines 97-116.

⁷ Lines 125-130.

⁸ Lines 49-72.

⁹ These include Wallace (1983) and James (1920), N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, vol. 2 (London, 1987).

¹⁰ "E fruit quant li terz Henri,/ K'a repleni de sa favur/ Cestui e regnes entur,/ E luur e grant clart_dune/ Partut, cum solail e lune./ Or sunt roi, or sunt barun/ E regne d'un sanc commun,/ D'Engleterre e Normendie,/ S'en vaut meuz/ a compainie." [Lines 3846-53, translation given in James (1920) pp.12-13.

¹¹ James (1920) p. 17.

¹² R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, 1958) pp.168-169, 174-176; Wallace (1983) p. xxii; Morgan (1987) pp.95-96.

¹³ N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (London, 1982) p. 134.

¹⁴ Vaughan (1958) p. 171. James and Vaughan's suggestion that the manuscript was done under Paris's guidance by an assistant has only been taken up by Rickert. Brieger connected it with the "Westminster School" and suggested

that it must have been done before 1264, prior to the translation of the saint's relics. Only Henderson has accepted James's early date of 1245. He suggests that the surviving manuscript was a Westminster copy of the original Matthew Paris manuscript.

¹⁵ For example, in his account of Henry III's gift of a relic of Christ's blood.

¹⁶ The entry may alternatively be a private note to himself rather than an instruction to someone else. The later fourteenth-century historian, Thomas Walsingham, also wrote of Paris' writing and illustrating saint's lives, though he mentions only those of Saints Alban and Amphibalus and the two Archbishops of Canterbury, Thomas and Edmund, and not Edward.

¹⁷ Lines 3955-3966: "Or vus pri, gentilz rois Aedward/ K'a moi pecchur eiez regard/ Ki ai translaté du latin/ Sulum mun sen e mun engin/ En franceis la vostre estoire, /Ke se espande ta memoire,/ E pur lais ki de lettrure/ Ne sevent, en purtraiture/ Figuree apertement/ L'ai en cest livret present,/ Pur ço ke desir e voil/ Ke oraille ot, voient li oil."

¹⁸ Vaughan (1958) pp.175-6.

¹⁹ James (1920) p.32; Vaughan (1958) pp.221-2.

²⁰ Wallace (1983) p.xxii.

²¹ Lines 1223-1260.

²² Wallace (1983) p.xviii.

²³ Morgan (1985) p. 20.

²⁴ Lewis (1987) pp.20-21.

²⁵ There does not seem to have been an established workshop there, although Henry III's patronage of the arts did attract many craft workers to the area. [R.K. Lancaster (1983) pp.87,94-95.

²⁶ These include drawings in the Westminster Psalter (British Library, MS Royal 2 A. XII, ff. 219v- 221v), the *Flores Historiarum* (Manchester, Chetham Library MS 6712), the Morgan *Apocalypse* (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 524) and the *Dyson Perrins Apocalypse* (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig III (83.MC.72) [Morgan (1985) pp.20, 22.]

²⁷ Morgan argues against the existence of a St Albans scriptorium, pointing out the close iconographical link between both the tinted drawing *Apocalypses*, previously conveniently assigned to the St Albans workshop by James and those more painterly in style. He concludes from this that, despite the real differences in style, the iconographical similarities are strong enough to presume a close connection between the artists involved in decorating these books. [Morgan (1985) pp. 20, 22.]

²⁸ This is most readily seen in the drapery, changing from multilinear troughed folds, recalling the Morgan *Apocalypse*, to a broader, more angular form, closer to the Dyson Perrins *Apocalypse*. The excessively refined treatment of heads and hands and the changes in palette and the way colour is applied can be taken as further involvement of more than one artist in this manuscript. [Morgan (1985) pp. 93-5.

²⁹ See the descriptions in catalogue nos. 95, 96, 123, 133 in Morgan (1985) pp. 49-52, 94-8; 115-7.

³⁰ This layout of text, rubrics and pictures also differs considerably between the *Estoire* and the *St Alban* lives. The latter's rubrics run in pairs above the illustrations, while the former's are placed below, usually in the central column. In this the *Estoire* shares a similar layout to the *St Thomas* manuscript. [Morgan (1988) pp.92-3.]

³¹ Wallace (1983) p.xix.

³² *ibid*, Morgan (1988) pp.95-6

³³ Morgan (1988) pp.95-6.

³⁴ Wallace (1983) p. xix, n.21.

³⁵ M.S. Guiseppe, *A Guide to the Manuscripts Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1932) vol. 1, p.212. This text was prepared for the Chamberlain of the Exchequer in Edward I's reign. Another version of the *Domesday Book* was made for the use of the Treasurer and was held by the Treasurer's Remembrancer.

³⁶ In this version are found the following scenes: the death of Earl Godwin; the visions of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; Edward and Earl Leofric's vision of Christ at the Mass; the drowning of the King of Norway; and St Edward and St John. The *Domesday* manuscript opens with an historiated initial of a seated King holding a sceptre. Other historiated initials found in the book include figures of bishops and barons. The manuscript is one of three abbreviated versions of the *Domesday Book* done in the thirteenth century and, for all its splendour, was probably created for a practical purpose. Hallam suggests that it may have been commissioned by Peter of Savoy, a kinsman and advisor to Henry III, after he received the honour of Richmond in the 1240s.

³⁷ One Easter Sunday, when dining at Westminster, Edward saw the seven saints of Ephesus, sleeping in their cave on Mt Celius, turn over from their right to their left side, an event heralding impending disaster. He then prophesied the destruction of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. [Lines 3383-3452, 3733-3776.

³⁸ These consisted of such significant texts as *Magna Carta*, the *Charter of the Forests* and the *Provisions of Merton*. Some included images of kings, for example at the beginning of *Magna Carta*.

³⁹ Binski (1991) pp. 90-92.

^{40.} The history of this manuscript's production is complex. The most recent discussions of the *Flore Historiarum* are found in Collard (1994) pp.198-247 and N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts* (London, 1985) vol. 2, p. 52.

^{41.} Binski's recent articles, for example, do not challenge Morgan's dating of the manuscript, but rather of the text.

^{42.} Clanchy (1983) pp.263-279.

^{43.} Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970) pp. 272-285.

^{44.} *ibid*, p.97.

^{45.} In her essay on the manuscript, Victoria Brown discusses the page layout, the mechanics, rhetoric and narrative devices used in this tripartite arrangement. Curiously, however, she does not address how the rubrics, text and illustrations interact in the telling of the saint's life, although she does discuss the dissonances between images and rubrics.

^{46.} Only folio 38 lacks an accompanying rubric.

^{47.} Lines 3955 - 3966.

^{48.} Lines 19 -22.

^{49.} Lines 97-154.

^{50.} The appearance of genealogical information was not restricted to this *vita*. The unpublished *vita* of St Eadburga of Winchester, daughter of Edward the Elder, king of Wessex, by Osbert of Clare, begins with a brief genealogical introduction.

^{51.} Lines 404-406, 458-484.

^{52.} Lines 532-587.

^{53.} Lines 588-593: "Einz fu mal, ore est pis/ Or sunt plus baud si enemis./ Li gentil hume natural/ Nume[e]ment du sanc real/ Mors est e pris e exulez./ Li maus en crest plus k'asez."

^{54.} Lines 620-621: "Engleterre est cum ouaille/ As liuns e as luz livree."

^{55.} Lines 686-699.

^{56.} Lines 658-673.

^{57.} Line 743: "Ki sul ad droit es Rois dè Rois."

^{58.} Lines 737-815.

^{59.} Lines 629-701.

^{60.} Binski discusses the representation of Edith in the manuscript, describing her as "Edward's somewhat vapid queen." She is described in conventionally pious terms as a supporter of Edward's plans. He does not, however, discuss the image of her coronation. Binski (1990) pp.343-344.

^{61.} Binski (1991) p.102.

^{62.} Lines 3923-3948. This elegant scene makes an interesting contrast to the crude yet powerful image of "St Edmund in Glory" from the Pierpont Morgan *Life of St Edmund*, (M.736) f.22v. There the king is shown in an hierarchical pose, crowned and surrounded by angels, while two monks kiss his feet. Hahn convincingly argues that this scene represents the saint as "resident both on earth and in heaven". The two monks act as the representatives of his cult on earth. [Hahn (1991) p.133.]

^{63.} These are found listed in *Isaiah* 11.2: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

^{64.} Lines 3091-3128.

^{65.} Lines 3915-3923, 4095-4102.

^{66.} Lines 3383-3452, 3733-3776.

^{67.} Lines 3975-3988; 4345-4349.

^{68.} Lines 1487-1590.

^{69.} Lines 1528-1559.

^{70.} Lines 1660-1722.

^{71.} In addition several cures done in his lifetime are shown including that of the scrofulous woman, and several scenes of the healing of blind men (ff. 22, 22v and 23v-24). Edward the Confessor was the first English king credited with curing the "King's Evil".

^{72.} Lines 4661-4670.

^{73.} Lines 934-979.

^{74.} Lines 4495-4499, rubric lines 5173-5184.

^{75.} Lines 2816-2828.

^{76.} M.T. Clanchy, (1983) pp. 222-30.

^{77.} Lines 1129-1130: "Ke ki ne fait la volenté/ Sa gent n'avra d'eus pôsté".

^{78.} Lines 1575-1584.

^{79.} Lines 2482-2513.

^{80.} Lines 1451-1460.

⁸¹ This work is rich in body metaphors. For example, peasants are described as the feet of the commonweal as their humble duties enable all members of the republic to walk upon the earth.

⁸² Lines 1279-1350.

⁸³ See lines 3383-3452.

⁸⁴ The theme of sinful rulers also appeared in the stained-glass windows at Christ Church. For example, references are found to the avarice of the Emperors Julian the Apostate and Maurice Tiberius.

⁸⁵ Lines 4671-4686.

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