A Comparison of the Illuminations of *Liber Regalis* with those of the Coronation Book of Charles V of France

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The immediately apparent contrast between the illuminations which accompany the coronation *ordo* of *Liber Regalis*,[1] and those which illustrate the *Coronation Book* of the French king,[2] derives, fundamentally, from the adoption of the "king in majesty" symbolism in the former, as opposed to the individualised narrative of the latter. The explanation for the parallel existence of two such different approaches has long been articulated within a teleological framework concerned to chart the relative progress of different regions towards "naturalism" in representation. Thus this model explained their coexistence in terms of a disparity in technical skill: the French were able to specifically depict Charles V in their coronation book, while the English artists were only able to produce a standard "king in majesty" type in their equivalent.[3] In demonstrating the inadequacy of this approach, it is the fact that *Liber Regalis* is not the English equivalent of the French *Coronation Book*, which must be brought to the fore. The comparisons that have been made between the texts of the two *ordines* have served to associate manuscripts which in fact belong to different genres.[4] Indeed, it is this difference in the function of the two manuscripts which prompts the adoption of contrasting illustrations: the function of the manuscript was surely the overriding influence on the nature of the illustrations that accompanied it. Rather than attempting to perpetuate the untenable suggestion that English artists were unable to

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[1] London, Westminster Abbey Ms 38.

[2] London, British Library, Ms Cotton Tiberius B. VIII.

[3] A. Haseloff in A. Michel ed., *Histoire de l'art*, (Paris, 1906) vol. II, pt 1, pp.345-59; E.G Millar, *English Illuminated Manuscripts of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Paris, 1928).

[4] E.S Derwick ed., 'The Coronation Book of Charles V of France,' *Henry Bradshaw Society*, vol. XVI (London, 1899) pp. xv-xvii.

produce accurate portraits of Richard II,[5] attention should instead surely focus on why, in the *Liber Regalis,* they did not. Similarly, the portraits of Charles V included in the *Coronation Book*, need to be viewed in the context of the emerging recognition of the value of life-like representation, divorced from the cliché of a superior French technical skill, too often used as a blanket explanation. In the comparison proposed, the balance between depicting the king's physical appearance and his symbolic role, is the central one.

The thirty-four folios of the *Liber Regalis* manuscript contain the *ordo* for the coronation of a king, a king and queen and a queen alone, and end with the funeral of a king. Each liturgy opens with an appropriate, full-page illustration, which conveys a condensed, symbolic reference to the text. In contrast, the *Coronation Book* of Charles V contains thirty-eight illustrations of the individual phases of the Order, most of which run in sequences along the lower margins of consecutive folios. While no certain date or source of patronage has been associated with the *Liber Regalis*, the French manuscript is dated in Charles V's own hand, to 1365, the year after his coronation (pl. 8).

These brief observations immediately demonstrate that the *Liber Regalis* was clearly not conceived of as a phased, illustrated coronation order. Coronation texts as independent volumes were, indeed, relatively new to the fourteenth century and it must be remembered that the *ordo* included in the *Liber Regalis* formed part of a more general manuscript record of ecclesiastical ceremonies. A context for the *Liber Regalis* perhaps, then, needs to be sought in the genre of Westminster manuscripts which also contained compilations of ritual texts, and specifically ritual texts in which the role of the Abbey was prominent.

This context suggests that the *Liber Regalis* manuscript should be seen primarily as a

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[5] See for example, J.J.G Alexander and P.Binski eds., *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England, 1200-1400* (Exhibition Catalogue, 1987) p. 517, no. 713.

compilation of texts of monarchic rituals for which Westminster Abbey provided the setting, rather than a straightforward copy of the English coronation *ordo*. In this genre is another roughly contemporary illustrated copy of coronation and funeral orders of English origin now in Plamplona (pl. 4),[6] and, to a lesser extent, the Litlyngton Missal, (pl.5) a manuscript which can be more certainly linked to Westminster.[7] All three contain the final medieval version of the fourth recension of the English Coronation Order. Examination of the illuminations in the Pamplona Coronation Book and Litlyngton Missal indicates that they were executed by the same artistic hands, which are in turn identifiable with a Westminster school of illumination.[8] While the style of the *Liber Regalis* illuminations differ,[9] the manuscript was in the possession of the Abbey by at least the fifteenth century.[10] In all three of these Westminster manuscripts, a short text detailing the arrangements for the funeral of a king follows these coronation *ordines,* reinforcing the fact that they are not merely copies of a coronation service.

It is clear from comments in the *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti* that Westminster Abbey was already seen as a repository of specialist knowledge on the liturgy of the coronation by the beginning of the fifteenth century.[11] Indeed, the prominence of Westminster in the revised *ordo*

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[6] Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarre, MS 197.

[7] London, Westminster Abbey, MS 37; produced for Abbot Litlyngton c. 1383-4, and donated to the abbey after his death; L.F Sandler *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, v* (Oxford, 1986) vol. I, p. 36.

[8] Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts,* I, 36-7, II, 177-8.

[9] Debate has centred on the extent of Bohemian influences. The case was refuted by A.Simpson, 'The Connections Between English and Bohemian Painting During the Second half of the Fourteenth Century', *Outstanding Thesis from the Courtauld Institute of Art* (New York and London, 1984) pp. 147-60, but recently reasserted in P.Binksi, 'The Liber Regalis: Its date and European Context' in D.Gordon, et al, eds., *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych* (London, 1997) pp. 233-46.

[10] Not mentioned in the 1388 inventory, but see Simpson, 'English and Bohemian Painting', p.148.

[11] *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti*, in J. de Trokelowe et Anon., *Chronica et Annales*, ed. H.T Riley (Rolls Series,1866) p.292.

indicates that the Abbey was involved in the process of revision. Such references are most prominent in the prescriptive rubrics concerning the issue of custodial rights over coronation regalia. Although Westminster had claimed custody of the regalia since the early thirteenth century, by the mid-fourteenth century much of the regalia was being stored at the Tower of London.[12]

The depiction of regalia in the *Liber Regalis* illuminations therefore symbolised the institutional office of kingship, an office which was ritually invested at Westminster. Significantly, regalia was not specific to an individual king, but instead conveyed an impersonal image of the institutional identity of the king and the formal attributes unique to the office and therefore conveyed a sense of royal continuity. This use of iconography therefore served to suggest that Westminster had been linked with the English monarchy in perpetuity, not merely with a specific dynasty or individual king. Such a long-standing connection would reinforce the claims put forward to the custody of the regalia.[13]

The depiction of regalia in the *Liber Regalis* illustrations also linked them with the image of kingship widely disseminated through the king's seal, and later through coinage. In their representations of coronations or funerals, the illustrations in the Litlyngton Missal, *Liber Regalis* and Pamplona Coronation Order therefore used an easily recognisable iconographic type. While this type was characterised by the presence of the coronation regalia, however, it precise positioning and appearance seem to have been subordinate to the overall impression conveyed.

The illuminations depicting the coronation of the king in the Westminster Missal and Pamplona Coronation Order, for example, show the figure of the king holding a rod surmounted with a floriated finial in his right hand and in neither illumination is the king shown to be holding a sceptre (pls.4,5). In the equivalent illumination in *Liber Regalis,* the king is represented with no items of regalia,

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[12] J.A.F Robinson, ed., 'The History of Westminster Abbey by John Flete', *Notes and Documents Relating to Westminster Abbey*, 2, (Cambridge, 1909) pp. 18-21, 71.
[13] *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1327-41*, p.330.

although he is clearly shown to be both crowned and enthroned (pl.1). However, the illustration in the *Liber Regalis* that depicts both the king and queen, shows the king with a sceptre in his left hand and rod in his right (pl.2). This formula is repeated in the book of statutes presented to Richard II, probably soon after the last dated entry, on 1 December 1388 (pl.6). While these depictions do not therefore correspond exactly with each other, nor to the text they accompany, they do seem to echo the example set in chronicle representations. In the *Flores Historiarum* (pl.7), for example, King Arthur is depicted with the same formula of regalia seen in both the Litlyngton Missal and the Pamplona Coronation Order. Common to all these illuminations is also the central positioning of the king-in-majesty iconography, rather than, for example, the supporting figures of the bishops or lay peers. This focus is reinforced by use of symbolic scale, by the avoidance of a ground plane and also by the flat background. In this continuity, therefore, can be seen a further reinforcement of the idea of a continuous and impersonal lineage of English kingship, which the Westminster manuscripts in particular sought to portray.

Similarly, the inclusion of the funeral *ordo De Exequiis regalibus* in the Westminster manuscripts perhaps also indicates a corresponding aspiration to be recognised as the mausoleum of the English monarchy, on a par with the position held by Saint-Denis.[14] The illustration of a funeral in *Liber Regalis* (pl.3) supports this suggestion in the depiction of a formal royal tomb. The effigy resembles Edward III's in depicting the holding of the rod and sceptre. It also includes a canopy and gabled detailing on the tester.

In contrast to the suggested the use of symbolism and stress on the continuity through regalia in *Liber Regalis*, the French *Coronation Book* employs portraits of Charles V, and iconography specific to him, seemingly in an attempt to particularise its references to a specific king and a specific historical

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[14] Binksi, 'The Liber Regalis' pp. 239-240.

event. These elements would therefore seem to suggest that the *Coronation Book* belongs to a genre of official texts, the purpose of which was primarily commemorative. If these were the only characteristics of the *Coronation Book*, they would surely bring it close to fulfilling the criteria A.Martindale defines to classify a portrait in the modern sense.[15] Other characteristics, however, undermine such a clear definition. While the colophon written by the king (pl.8) clearly associates the manuscript with Charles V, and to 1365 as the year of composition, Charles's words describe the book as a *"Livre du sacre des Rois de France"* indicating that it might also have been intended to fulfil a wider, prescriptive function. In this sense, then, it would seem to have been conceived of as more than merely a commemoration, and as conveying more about Charles V than merely a life-like representation. In terms of Matindale's description of the emergence of portraiture, the *Coronation Book* seems to contain elements both of portraiture in the modern sense, which aimed primarily to commemorate; and of the life-like images utilised to impart wider information, which had a longer precedent.

This duality therefore makes it difficult to explain the iconography of the *Coronation Book* as the characteristics of a specific genre. In the genre of official-historical narrative it certainly lacked any comparable precedent.[16] According to literary sources, the few northern European historical representations of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century were derived from religious iconography. In a miniature of c.1250 depicting Henry I of France bestowing privileges on the priory of St. Martin-des-Champs, dependence on the dedication scheme and a diagrammatic, impersonal approach are significant characteristics.

Furthermore, previous texts of French *ordines* were not illustrated. The *Coronation Book*

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[15] A. Martindale, *Heroes, Ancestors, Relatives and the Birth of the Portrait*, The Fourth Gerson Lecture, University of Groningen (Maarssen, 1988).

[16] C. Sherman, *Portraits of Charles V of France(1338-1380)* (New York, 1969).

therefore clearly breaks with precedent in conceiving of the ceremony as an historical event, and in

dividing it into a series of clearly represented actions, which the thirty-eight illustrations accompany.

The function of the images in relation to the text is perhaps explained by the layout of the pages. Apart

from the limited number of miniatures placed in the text, many others were set out in the lower

margins, sequences running along the lower margin of the recto and verso of every page, and then

being separated by several un-illustrated folios, until the next sequence begins. The section of the

ceremony prior to the king's anointing, for example, runs from fol.46, on the recto and verso of every

folio, until 51v. Folios 46, 46v, and 47 (pl.9) depict the opening of the service itself, when the *Sainte

Ampoule* is entrusted to the Archbishop of Reims, and the king takes the oath and is presented to the

archbishop, and is followed by the sword symbolism related to Charles V's consecration as a knight.

The layout of the manuscript therefore indicates that the illustrations were intended to function

alongside the rubric as specific visual examples of the general textual directions. Composition, setting

and spatial construction are also designed with this end in mind. The plain frame and rectangular shape

of the individual illumination allows an uninterrupted lateral progression of the scene from folio to

folio.

That many of the illustrations were set in the lower margins of the page also perhaps indicates

that the king had directed a more comprehensive programme of illustrations, in accordance with his

statement that he had taken an active role in the correction and illustration of the text (pl.8). While this

could be explained in terms of the *Coronation Book's* commemorative function, it also accords with its

prescriptive nature. Indeed, his description of the manuscript as a book for French kings (pl.8), was

borne out on 7 May 1380, when he deposited a copy of the *ordo* in the coronation treasury of the Saint-

Denis.[17] In recording the events of his own coronation in this way, Charles V, it seems, intended his own coronation to serve as a precedent on which later coronations should be modelled.

Despite disparities in feature or proportions due to different hands, the miniatures do attempt to present a consistent portrait type of Charles V. The king figures in twenty-seven illuminations. Although no explicit textual reference identifies the king as Charles V, a comparison with contemporary portraits reveals a similarity in features and facial type. His best likenesses (pl.10) are distinguished by strong modelling.

Importantly, however, the individual portrait characterisation is limited to Charles V. The contrast between the king and the concrete figures surrounding him seems to suggest that a separate hand executed Charles V's portraits. The important figures of the archbishop of Reims, Jeanne de Bourbon and the peers of the realm, the latter identifiable by their heraldic costume, are completely conventional. Attention is given to their costume, consistent with the illustrative purpose of the illuminations. In the scene depicting the support of the peers (pl.11), the Archbishop of Reims and the Bishop of Beauvais are identifiable among the clerical peers, while the Count of Toulouse, the Duke of Bourbon and Count of Flanders, are depicted among the lay peers on the left of the king.[18]

This combination of iconography was being employed for the specific purpose of focusing attention on Charles V and his personal interpretation of the power of the monarchy. The use of heraldry to depict the other characters acknowledged the existence of the wider social milieu, but clearly set the king at its head. The combination of heraldry and portraiture also shows its position it the context of the emergence of portraiture. Life-like representation, which was re-emerging as a

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[17] R.A. Jackson, *Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill and Lonodon, 1984*)* pp. 34: a contemporary marginal note in the inventory records that Charles VI took the manuscript for his coronation.

[18] Derwick, *Coronation Book*, pl.24, (fol.59b).

means of identification in the later fourteenth century, was being utilised, but not as an end in itself. Martindale demonstrates that many of the characteristics of the *Coronation Book* illuminations had as their basis those family cycles which, in the later fourteenth century began for the first time to use life-like representations; cycles such as the Karlstein, genealogy of Emperor Charles IV and of the *Sala del Gran Consiglio* in the ducal palace at Venice.

Such examples also incorporated the new feature of leaving spaces vacant with the intention of adding a prospective element to the sequence. Similarly, the *Coronation Book* utilises the portraits of Charles V to impart information and is prospective, although less public than the examples which Martindale describes. Certain of its characteristics, however, overlap between the preceding category, and that of "modern" portraiture; notably its commemorative nature, and the fact that it is portable and more private than the cycles that preceded it. The *Coronation Book* was personal, in that it referred to a particular king, and looked forward to the continuation of a particular dynasty; whereas the genre of Westminster manuscripts to which the *Liber Regalis* belonged were concerned with establishing a sense of continuity in the links between the Abbey and English kingship as an institution, not as a particular dynasty.

The personal intervention of the king therefore appears to have encouraged considerable innovations, in order to convey his individual interpretation of the powers and achievements of the monarchy. Composed in 1365, the manuscript must therefore be seen in the context of his initial programme of patronage designed to raise the prestige of the monarchy. Indeed, by Charles V's accession the monarchy's authority and military strength was still undermined by the defeats suffered during the reigns of the first two Valois kings, most notably at Crécy in 1346 and at Poitiers ten years later. Indeed, at Poitiers, the future Charles V had to flee before an English attack. The vacuum of power had created the civil disturbances of the conspiracy of Charles le Mauvais de Navarre, and the

Jacquerie. The lack of an heir also had the potential to cast a shadow over the coronation of Charles V.

In response, the text of the new *ordo*, probably compiled in May 1364, and recorded in the *Coronation Book*, emphasised matters of political interest.[19] In one of the newly inserted prayers, for example, a call is made for God's benediction upon the king and his army, while God was to be "a breastwork against the troops of the enemies." The political implications of these liturgical additions are clearly relevant in the context of the conclusion of the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360. Such changes to the *ordo* also justify the attribution of political motives to the iconography of the accompanying illustrations. The use of heraldry and portraiture, rather than the regalia of kingship, in this sense distinguish the beginning of Charles V's reign from the failures of Valois predecessors. While the Westminster claims in the *Liber Regalis* were reflected through the impersonal iconography of regalia, the *Coronation Book* illustrations used individualised iconography to espouse a clear political motive. The elaborate coronation rites were specifically intended to celebrate the accession of the third ruler of the Valois dynasty to the French throne at a crucial moment.

The choice and number of miniatures devoted to certain sequences therefore emphasised the particular rites which distinguished the powers of the French monarchy. The climatic section, for example, describes in detailed fashion the preparation for the unction with the oil of the *Sainte Ampoule*, the unique source of the supernatural powers of the French kings (pl.9). The illustration of Charles V exercising the royal privilege of taking communion directly in both kinds also stresses the king's elevation above lay status.

Undoubtedly, Charles V's programme of patronage immediately following his succession encouraged portrait development. Indeed, many images appear in works closely connected to the

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[19] Jackson, *Vive le Roi!* pp. 26-34.

king's political aims. Thus, the Saint-Denis tombs and Louvre staircase programme of 1364-5 used strong portrait characteristics to stress dynastic strength; while the *Coronation Book*, completed in the same year, employed the same technique to depict the elevated sources of royal power. Many dedication portraits also appear in translations of such works as Aristotle's *Ethics* (pl.13) or John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, (pl.14) which served to strengthen the crown's theoretical sources of authority and Charles' own reputation for wisdom, reflected in his *le sage* epithet.[20] Interestingly, the *Policraticus* frontispiece represents the king in the setting and with the attributes of the ancient author or Evangelist. Despite the *fleur-de-lis* mantle and crown, the king is represented primarily as a scholar. The portrait therefore offers a *specific* image of Charles V as an incarnation of the wise king who rules with a divine blessing, an association that would have not been as explicit had the symbols of monarchy alone been used to indicate Charles' association.

Similarly, Jean Golein's *Traite du sacre* inserted in his translation of Durandus' *Rationale divinorum* stressed the anointing of the king during the coronation ceremony with the sacred balm as a revelation of the divine source of the authority of French kings. Golein used the fourteenth century legends of the miraculous origins of *fleur-de-lis* and the *oriflamme* in same spirit. He identified these particular attributes of French royalty with the Trinity: the *fleur-de-lis* associated with God, the *oriflamme* with the Son and the unction with the Holy Ghost. Sherman comments that it is consistent with Charles V's promotion of these claims that the visual equivalents should appear in his portraits.[21] This misses the point, however, that in their use of portraiture, illustrations such as those of the *Policraticus* frontispiece or the *Coronation Book* were associating these general claims with Charles V's *personal* interpretation of the powers of the monarchy. Thus the portraiture functioned by

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[20] C. Sherman, 'Representations of Charles V of France (1338-1380) as a Wise Ruler', *Medievala et Humanistica*, vol. 2 (1971) p. 83.
[21] Sherman, *Portraits of Charles V,* p.14.

associating the longstanding attributes of the French monarchy referred to in the text, with Charles V in particular.

For this reason, prominence is given to the explicit connotations of portraiture, at the expense of the general symbolism of the *oriflamme* or *fleur-de-lis.* The latter are confined to the coronation robes, or the heraldic devices of the peers, while the *oriflamme* is depicted in the specific context of the blessing of the banner. Such motifs are neither prominent in the backgrounds nor the border decoration. Even the regalia, which in *Liber Regalis* was depicted in the standard formula derived from the great seal, in the *Coronation Book* is made specific to the text: Charles V grasps a sceptre surmounted by a statuette of the Emperor Charlemagne seated in majesty, which was made specifically for him in Paris.[22] The emergence of life-like images in the later fourteenth century was therefore encouraged and harnessed by Charles V for the purpose not only of reinforcing the authority of the monarchy in a general sense, but specifically his authority as its embodiment. The explanation for the particular iconography used in the *Coronation Book* must therefore be sought both in the context of the emergence of portraiture, and, more importantly, in the utilisation of this life-like representation to signify the start of the new reign of an individual king, and convey Charles V's personal interpretation of his authority.

Later, but still contemporary miniatures representing the coronation of Charles V do not emulate the historical point of view of the *Coronation Book*. The unction of the king in the *Rational des Divins offices,* for example, is "inaccurately" combined with the peer's oath and ignores the proper sequence of the costume prescribed in the *Coronation Book*.[23] Since the *Rational* concentrates on the general, symbolic meaning of the ritual, however, the indifference to chronology is understandable.

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[22] Paris, Grand Palais, *Les fastes du gothique: Le siècle de Charles V*, F. Baron et al eds. (Paris, 1981) p.249.

[23] Paris, Bibl., Nat., MS fr. 437, fol. 44v.

Indeed, such illuminations are perhaps a closer French equivalent to the *Liber Regalis* illustrations. Rather than the depiction of the factually narrative scenes of the *Coronation Book*, such illustrations employ the condensed symbolism identified in *Liber Regalis* to encapsulate the ceremony in a single image in the guise of symbols of monarchy. Ultimately, it is perhaps in the chronicle account of Charles V's reign contained in *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, (pl.12) in which the closest French equivalent to the *Liber Regalis* illustrations are to be found.[24] Although the chronicle's enthronement scenes derive from folios 59v and 70 of the *Coronation Book*, their new context and the condensation of the originals lend a new symbolism to the illustrations. From the time of Abbot Suger in the first half of the twelfth century, the chronicle kept is association with Saint-Denis; a relationship comparable to the English manuscripts and Westminster. In these French illustrations, as in *Liber Regalis*, many ties to earlier representations of rulers are maintained; notably the diagrammatic approach and impersonal tone. The narrative in the *Grandes Chroniques* is also introduced not with a depiction of the moment of coronation, but with a representation of the portion of the ceremony that occurred after the coronation proper; a symbolic expression of the support for the new king by the clerical and lay peers (pl. 11). It is this particular image of support that is also used in *Liber Regalis.* The placement of the queen next to the king is also common to both manuscripts, and therefore juxtaposes events that were, in reality, separate moments. In the genre of factually narrative and commemorative manuscripts such as the *Coronation Book* of Charles V, the use of heraldry and portraiture emphasised the prominence of a particular king and particular historical event. In the genre to which the *Liber Regalis* belonged, however, it was this symbolic, impersonal representation which

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[24] A.D Hedeman, 'Copies in Context: The Coronation of Charles V in his *Grandes Chroniques de France*', in J.M Bak ed. *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual* (Oxford, 1990).

stressed effectively the continuity of the institution of kingship, an institution intimately linked with Westminster.

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