

**French Writing in the Cloister: four texts
from St Albans Abbey featuring Thomas
Becket and Alexander the Great, c. 1184 -
c. 1275.**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on four insular French texts produced between c. 1184 and c. 1275 that can be connected to the abbey of St Albans: Beneit of St Albans' *Life* of Thomas Becket, four fragmentary illustrated leaves known as the *Becket Leaves*, Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie* (a romance about Alexander the Great), and the anonymous *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*. Despite St Albans' wealth and status in the Middle Ages, these texts have received very little attention from literary scholars. I have rectified this by providing detailed readings of all four texts. My work also considers the texts' potential audiences, taking into account both monastic and secular reception, and reads them in the light of their contemporary literary, cultural, and political circumstances. Throughout, the thesis considers the implications of the choice of French as a language of composition. It uses predominantly literary methodologies in a historicising mode, and also examines the manuscript culture of each text.

This thesis is split into two parts, each with two chapters and an introduction setting the St Albans texts into their wider literary contexts. The first half of the thesis deals with the lives of Thomas Becket, with particular reference to how the two St Albans texts are distinct in the corpus of biographies of Becket in their approaches to Becket and Henry II. The second half covers the two narratives of Alexander the Great, which are the only surviving insular French Alexander texts. Analysis of these four exceptional texts provides an insight into the audiences St Albans was hoping to attract and also the abbey's attempt to style itself as a counsellor to those in power.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis and the research upon which it is based is my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

This work has not been already accepted in substance for any degree, nor is it being concurrently submitted in candidature at any other university, or for any other degree.

General introduction

General introduction

1. Introduction

In his *Vie de saint Edmond*, Matthew Paris, a monk of St Albans writing in c. 1250, justifies his choice of French over Latin in the following terms:

Kar chascun est de ceo bien cert

[Ke] plus est usée et seüe

Ke nule launge et entendue

De clers et lais et la gent tute

Ke le latins, ne mie dute.¹

[For everyone is certain that French is more used and known than any other language, and more understood by clerks and laypeople and by everyone than Latin, without a doubt].²

Paris's statement that French is a language that transcends the boundary between religious and laypeople provides a starting point for this thesis, which will investigate the composition and consumption of French literature in England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, using the abbey of St Albans as a case study.

In recent years the French of England has received some much-needed reassessment, to which many scholars have contributed. Ruth Dean and Maureen Boulton's 1999 catalogue of manuscripts containing insular French details the breadth of

¹ Matthew Paris, "La vie de saint Edmond," ed. by A. T. Baker, *Romania* 55 (1929): 332-81, vv. 34-8, hereafter *VSE*.

² All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

French literature produced in England during the Middle Ages.³ David Trotter and Ian Short have produced work on insular French linguistics that has explored the unique features of the language that make it distinct from its continental counterpart, which allows it to be viewed on its own terms rather than as a defective form of francien French.⁴ The diverse nature and character of insular French make it more than a plain Anglicised form of the French of the Norman conquerors. By the twelfth century, it had been permeated by other linguistic influences, both English and French. Therefore, in this thesis the term "insular French" will be preferred over "Anglo-Norman," as it is more inclusive and pays tribute to this tradition and development.⁵

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's edited volume of essays, *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England*, explores many aspects of insular French writing, both linguistic and literary.⁶ Wogan-Browne has also been very influential in the field of female literacy and has considered the reading practices of both lay and religious women in her work.⁷ Increased research on medieval multilingualism has also helped scholars to

³ Ruth J. Dean and Maureen M.B. Boulton. *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts* (London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1999).

⁴ Ian Short, *Manual of Anglo Norman* 2nd ed. (London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 2013); David Trotter, "L'anglo-normand: variété insulaire, ou variété isolée?", *Médiévales* 45 (2003): 43-54; David Trotter, "On AND On(wards)," in *Present and Future Research in Anglo-Norman: Proceedings of the Aberystwyth Colloquium, 21-22 July 2011. La recherche actuelle et future sur l'anglo-normand: Actes du Colloque d'Aberystwyth, 21-22 juillet 2011* ed. David Trotter (Aberystwyth: Aberystwyth University, 2012): 125-30.

⁵ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "General Introduction: What's in a Name: The 'French' of 'England,'" in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: the French of England c. 1100-c. 1500* ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009): 1-16. See also The French of England Translation Series, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <https://acmrs.org/publications/other/frets>: "But as a term, 'French of England' has a usefully paradoxical quality that points to the complexities of multilingual and multicultural territories; and, given that 'French' is a broader term than 'Anglo-Norman' and 'Anglo-French,' it can denote French in, of, and from medieval England, in literary and documentary genres, especially during the main francophone period from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries."

⁶ Wogan-Browne et al., *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*.

⁷ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorisations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-*

view the French of England as part of a linguistic tapestry, in which literature written in different languages performs different, complementary functions.⁸ The French of England Translation Series has made insular French texts more accessible to scholars so that it can be read alongside contemporary English and Latin material.⁹ These developments have expanded the study of insular French, and revealed new potential avenues of enquiry, some of which will be pursued by this thesis.

2. Latin and French in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

Monasteries are typically portrayed as bastions of Latinity. As Latin was the universal language of Christian life in western Europe, whether for worship, scholarship, or administration, this seems, at first glance, an unproblematic assumption. Christopher Baswell highlights the unifying properties of Latin and how “clerics, whether of European or insular origin, were linked by a similar liturgy, a considerable body of shared reading, and most of all a common learned language.”¹⁰ Due to the spiritual authority of the Church, Latin also came to be equated with learning, scholarship, and literacy.¹¹ In his study of the development of literacy in England following the Norman

1500, ed. Carole M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 61-85; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Saints' Lives and the Female Reader," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27 (1991): 314-32.

⁸ For recent work on medieval multilingualism, see Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby, eds., *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and its Neighbours* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Ad Putter and Judith Jefferson, eds., *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520): Sources and Analysis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012); Elizabeth Tyler, ed., *Conceptualising Multilingualism in England, c. 800 – c. 1250* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Robert M. Stein, "Multilingualism," in *Middle English* ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 23-37.

⁹ The French of England Translation Series, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <https://acmrs.org/publications/other/frets>.

¹⁰ Christopher Baswell, "Latinitas," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 122-51, 22.

¹¹ Such was this association that the modern word *literacy* is descended from the Latin *litteratus*, meaning "able to understand Latin." Those who could not understand Latin were described as *illiteratus* whether or

conquest, Michael Clanchy has highlighted that this is more of a construction than a reflection of reality, a result of opposing the terms *clericus* and *laicus* with *litteratus* and *illiteratus*.¹² Whether or not these divisions were accurate, they have persisted in studies of monastic environments, and some scholars have helped to support this view. In his important 2011 study of the Benedictines, James Clark asserted that “the culture of the monastic enclosure...was always avowedly monolingual.”¹³ Work on monastic libraries, such as that undertaken by Rodney Thomson and Alan Piper, likewise creates an image of the monastery as a Latinate environment by emphasising Latin book holdings and composition.¹⁴ This has sometimes been at the expense of the inclusion of materials in other languages, notably French. For example, Thomson’s study of the library of Bury St Edmunds does not mention the works by authors identified by M. Dominica Legge, despite the fact that the study covers the period when these were produced.¹⁵ Piper likewise assumes that a French book of gospels and homilies in Durham was for the use of novices only, instead of exploring the possibility that it could have been for the use of all monks.¹⁶ The focus on monastic Latinity has been guided by the abundance of Latin source material. However, with increased knowledge of the linguistic environment of the monastery, this picture can be developed into something more complex.

not they were able to read or write other languages: Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 228.

¹² *Ibid.*, 228.

¹³ James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 191.

¹⁴ Alan J. Piper, "The Libraries of the Monks of Durham," in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N.R. Ker* ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson, 213-49; Alan J. Piper, "The Monks of Durham and the Study of Scripture," in *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism* ed. James G. Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007): 86-103; Rodney M. Thomson, "The Library of Bury St. Edmunds Abbey in the 11th and 12th Centuries," *Speculum* 47 (1972): 617-45; Rodney M. Thomson, "Books and Learning at Gloucester Abbey in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Books and Collectors, 1200-1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson* ed. James Carley and Colin Tite (London: British Library, 1996), 3-26.

¹⁵ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1950), 6-18.

¹⁶ Piper, "The Monks of Durham and the Study of Scripture," 95.

Meanwhile, the growth of French literature in England has often been ascribed to the literary culture at the court of King Henry II, including the work of authors such as Wace, Benoit de Saint-Maure, and Marie de France.¹⁷ These texts, and the study of them, certainly helped to raise the status of French as a literary language, but they have also caused scholars to make an association between insular French and an emerging 'English' national identity from the histories and romances written during this time, to the exclusion of religious writing.¹⁸ Such is the view of D. H. Green, who views the development of vernacular literature as "a challenge to the clerical monopoly on literacy."¹⁹ This has helped to reinforce the ostensible linguistic divide between secular and religious environments. Such a divide has been highlighted by Simon Meecham-Jones' suggestion that in twelfth-century Britain, to choose to write in any particular language was, "inescapably, to make an ideological statement about the purposes of the text and the author's relationship to the structures of power."²⁰ French appeared to be

¹⁷ The court of Henry II has received some attention for its supposed position as a centre of literary patronage and activity, although the extent to which Henry and Eleanor were patrons of literature has recently been called into question. See Ian Short, "Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England," *Anglo-Norman Studies* XIV (1992): 229-49; John Gillingham, "The Cultivation of History, Legend and Courtesy at the Court of Henry II," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2006): 25-52; Ian Short, "Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II," in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007): 335-61; Karen Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?," *Viator* 27 (1996): 53-84. Wace was engaged to write the *Roman de Rou*, though he was replaced by Benoît de Saint-Maure, much to his irritation. Marie de France's *Lais* are dedicated to a "noble king," assumed to be Henry II; see also Martin Aurell, "Henry II and Arthurian Legend," in Harper-Bill and Vincent, *Henry II: New Interpretations*: 362-94.

¹⁸ D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 313.

¹⁹ Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss eds., *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010); Matthew Paris, *Flores Historiarum*, edited by Henry Richard Luard, 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1890), hereafter *FH*; Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999).

²⁰ Simon Meecham-Jones, "Introduction," 6, in Kennedy and Meecham-Jones eds., *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*.

the language of secular power, spoken by those of a certain status with a connection, or an aspiration to a connection, to the king.²¹

However, this binary between Latin and French is problematic. There were few languages to choose from when writing a text, and the choice of vernacular over Latin might have been less about heavy ideology than an institutional policy and a wish to reach different audiences than could be reached with Latin literature. Claims made by authors themselves support this hypothesis. Denis Piramus, a monk of Bury St Edmunds writing in the late twelfth century, explains that he wrote in French *qu'en franceis le poent entendre li grant, li maien e li mendre* [for the great, the middling and the least are able to understand it in French].²² In addition to his statement quoted above, Matthew Paris's description of French as *apert* [open], as opposed to Latin, creates an opposition between French and Latin in which French is more easily accessible.²³ This suggests that they wished to target larger audiences with composition in French.

3. The monastery as a bilingual environment

In sheer practical terms, despite the enclosed ideal of monastic life, the reality meant constant interaction with the laity, for both pastoral and practical concerns.²⁴ It was therefore necessary to communicate with them, and, as Latin was nobody's native language, including for the monks themselves, this communication was undertaken in

²¹ It is also important to note that Latin might also be a language of non-monastic authors: see A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066-1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): chapters 2 and 3 cover this period, 67-240.

²² Denis Piramus, *La vie seint Edmund le rei*, ed. Delbert Russell with an art-historical excursus by Kathryn A. Smith (London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 2014), vv. 3269-70, hereafter *VER*; translation taken from Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 1.

²³ *VER*, v. 33.

²⁴ See for example, Janet E. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 210-32.

the vernacular languages of English and French, with French having a higher status than English. Furthermore, as Julia Barrau highlights, learning Latin as a second language would not have been easy for all monks, particularly those who entered the monastery later in life, which would have necessitated vernacular communication and study.²⁵ Clearly, no monastery could have been an exclusively Latinate environment.

Instead, a more accurate view is that Latin was the predominant language in monastic environments in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but that vernacular writing, in French and English, was also there, serving a complementary purpose. It has sometimes been assumed that vernacular writing was used in female religious communities as a substitute for Latin because they were unable to understand it. There is some evidence that linguistic concessions were made for nuns, as the work of Michael Richter has shown, with French, and later English, being used for female monastic audiences in literature and administration.²⁶ However, the work of David Bell has revealed that about half of the manuscripts surviving from nunneries were in Latin, and research by Alexandra Barratt on the literary output of Barking has recently supported this claim, which suggests a more complex linguistic environment.²⁷ Although this thesis is concerned with male monastic environments, the questioning of the assumption that

²⁵ Julia Barrau, "Did medieval monks actually speak Latin?", in *Understanding Monastic Practices of Oral Communication (Western Europe, Tenth-Thirteenth Centuries)* ed. Steven Vanderputten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 293-317, 311-2.

²⁶ Michael Richter, *Sprache und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Mündlichen Kommunikation in England von der Mitte des elften bis zum Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1979), 153-4.

²⁷ David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1995); David N. Bell, "What Nuns Read: the state of the question," in *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism* ed. James G. Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007): 113-33; Alexandra Barratt, "Small Latin? The post-conquest learning of English religious women," in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A. G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday*, ed. Sian Echard and Gernot R. Wienard: 51-65. For the literary community of Barking Abbey, one of the best examples of female monastic literacy, see Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell, eds., *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012).

the use of French automatically encodes female audiences has provided a starting point for my work.

Another contributing factor to the monastic linguistic environment was that recruitment was undergoing drastic changes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Child oblation, while still practised, was becoming less and less popular as it was believed to lead to problems later on with rebellious former oblates who were not monks by their own volition.²⁸ The result was that monasteries were accepting more adults to keep up their numbers, a policy with the added benefit of bringing in more money as these adults often provided a donation to the monastery upon entering.²⁹ There were two main consequences of this. The first was that these men often came from different educational backgrounds from those who had been brought up in the monastery, and as a consequence they had less knowledge of Latin than their oblate brothers. They would therefore have needed to communicate, worship, and study in their native languages as well as Latin, and so it is possible that they would have required sacred texts in French.³⁰ Secondly, and more widely, it led to men from a more diverse range of backgrounds becoming monks. As well as children brought up in the monastery, men who had been married, who had come from aristocratic backgrounds, who had been to war, who had had secular careers, and who were elderly and wanted to

²⁸ Joseph H. Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life from 1000 to 1260: A Social, Economic, and Legal Study* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 37-8; David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain*; Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 2001). For changing practices of child oblation in particular, see Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

²⁹ Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry*, 31-2.

³⁰ For example, Dominica Legge and Ruth Dean cite the Statutes of Pope Gregory XI (1234) which required the Rule to be explained in French for those of the community who could not understand Latin: Ruth J. Dean and M. Dominica Legge, eds., *The Rule of St Benedict: A Norman Prose Version* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), xii. Norwich possessed a *Liber gallicus de passion Christi* and Dover two manuscripts of *Sermones in gallice*.

retire, could all be found in the cloister. The mixture of life experience was also likely to affect the kinds of literature those monasteries produced and consumed as these men brought their own tastes and memories of their former lives with them. Katherine Allen Smith has argued that monks from a military background in particular brought former life experiences into their monastic lives, through the use of militaristic images to describe and explore their faith.³¹

This linguistic environment naturally affected monastic literature. The presence of French literary texts in monasteries has long been noted, but it has often been interpreted as the result of gifts from laypeople or as simply a means of communicating with and interacting with the laity.³² The existence of examples of monastic book production for secular readers, such as the work of Matthew Paris for aristocratic female patrons, is evidence of this.³³ In 1950 M. Domenica Legge produced a study of French writing in monasteries, the title of which, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, highlights the fundamental role of monasteries in the composition and transmission of insular French literature.³⁴ Legge's work was a first step towards analysing the production of French literature in a monastic environment, and provided a survey identifying texts whose authors could be traced. It focused mainly on the possibility of monastic authors using

³¹ Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), especially chapter 2, 39-70.

³² For example, Dominica Legge argues that French is more prevalent in religious environments than is thought, but that it was "chiefly in order to enable the clergy to hold their own with the laity." M. Dominica Legge, "The French Language and the English Cloister," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham* ed. V. Ruffer and A. J. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950): 146-62, 146.

³³ See Wogan-Browne, "'Clerk u lai, muine u dame,'" ; Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 154-6.

³⁴ Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 87.

French “chiefly in order to enable the clergy to hold their own with the laity,” and this is certainly part of the picture.³⁵

There are hints, however, that French was more than a means of communication with those outside the monastery. For example, the survival of two different versions of the *Rule of St Benedict* in insular French, one dating from the second half of the twelfth century and the other from the first half of the fourteenth century, points to the presence of the vernacular in monastic environments; Ramsey Abbey's mid-fourteenth-century catalogue likewise lists two copies of the *Benedictine Rule* in French, although they do not appear to have survived.³⁶ Moreover, a wide variety of texts produced in French is attested by surviving medieval library catalogues, including those of Crowland, Evesham, Glastonbury, Norwich, Ramsey, and St Mary's Abbey in York.³⁷ The booklists of Dover (1389) and Peterborough (both from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) are particularly exceptional in listing a large number of texts in French.³⁸ These texts include saints' lives, *chansons de geste*, glossed biblical texts and psalters, historical works, and romances. They also include monastic texts, such as sermons and monastic rules.³⁹ The wide variety of texts held by the monasteries themselves suggests that they were consuming as well as producing this literature. Furthermore, although the phrase *in gallice* indicates that a work was written in French, catalogues which record incipits

³⁵ M. Domenica Legge, "The French Language and the English Cloister," 146.

³⁶ See nos. 710 and 711 in Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 387; see also Dean and Legge, eds, *The Rule of St Benedict*, and Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 1:27-8.

³⁷ Richard Sharpe et al., eds., *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues* (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1996).

³⁸ Karsten Friis-Jensen and James M. W. Willoughby, eds., *Peterborough Abbey* (London: The British Academy in association with the British Academy, 2001); William P. Stoneman ed., *Dover Priory*, (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1999). For a list of French manuscripts in monastic libraries, see Madeline Blaess, "Les manuscrits français dans les monastères anglais au Moyen Age," *Romania* 94 (1973) 321-58.

³⁹ Ian Short, "The Patronage of Beneit's *Vie de Thomas Becket*," *Medium Aevum* 56 (1987): 239-56.

often contain French incipits or titles without any note that the work was written in French, suggesting that there may have been more French in monastic libraries than even these catalogues record.⁴⁰ The didactic potential of French literature from this period has often been recognised, and explored in relation to the activities of itinerant canons and friars by Jean-Pascal Pouzet and David Postles.⁴¹ However, its presence for a similar purpose in a monastic environment has been under-explored. This thesis aims to address this issue by using the abbey of St Albans as a case study.

4. St Albans

St Albans is an ideal monastery to use as a focus for this study. Founded in 793 AD, it was one of the five largest medieval monasteries in England. It housed 50 monks in 1190; the maximum number of monks was fixed at 100 at the end of the twelfth century and was reached in about 1210.⁴² Its size made the abbey unusual: John Moorman noted that a population of above fifty monks was rare in Benedictine houses in England in the thirteenth century.⁴³ The size of the community implies a rich linguistic variety within the abbey's walls. Its age, wealth, and connections to the ruling élite helped to establish

⁴⁰ For example, the Dover catalogue lists texts named *Le Romonse du roy Charlemagne*; *Le Romonse de Atys et Prohlias* and *Le Romonse de la rose*, all of which are in French: Stoneman, *Dover Priory*, 41.

⁴¹ "The amount of insular French in these lists compares favourably with that found in the extant records of the other major habitual monastic consumers of French, the Benedictines, Cistercians and Premonstratensians," Jean-Pascal Pouzet, "Augustinian Canons and their Insular French Books in Medieval England: Towards An Assessment," in Wogan-Browne, ed., *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*: 266-77; Jean-Pascal Pouzet, "Quelques aspects de l'influence des chanoines augustins sur la production et la transmission littéraire vernaculaire en Angleterre (XIIe-XVe siècles)," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres. Comptes-rendus des séances* 1 (2004): 169-213; David Postles, "The Austin Canons in English Towns, c. 1100-1350," *Historical Research* 66 (1993) 1-20; David Postles, "Religious Houses and the Laity in Eleventh- to Thirteenth-Century England: An Overview," *Haskins Society Journal* 12 (2003): 1-13.

⁴² H. T. Riley, ed., *Gesta abbatum monasterii Sancti Albani*. 2 vols. (London, Longman, 1867), hereafter *GA*, 1:234; David Knowles and R. Neville Hancock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longman, 1971), 75.

⁴³ John R. H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: AMS Press, 1980): 256-58.

its importance. It was also exempt from episcopal visitation, one of only six monasteries in England permitted this, which accorded it a large degree of autonomy.⁴⁴ It was located on the main road north from London to Scotland and so was a popular stopping place for travellers. As well as its age, it also could lay claim to the authority of the oldest English martyr, something that its monks did not hesitate to invoke when necessary.⁴⁵ The abbey's possessions extended to ten priories, a hospital, and a nunnery by the end of the twelfth century.⁴⁶ Its size and wealth made St Albans Abbey a powerful presence, and, as will be seen from the following chapters, the French literature it produced demonstrates a continued wish to be involved in contemporary politics based on the demands placed on the community both by their secular ties and by the diverse background of their recruits.

5. St Albans' ties to the secular world

As discussed above, many scholars have assumed that the vernacular was predominantly used by monks for interaction with the lay world. I have postulated that French also had its place within the cloister. Due to its wealth, its relative autonomy and its ties with the higher echelons of society, St Albans makes an ideal case study for testing my

⁴⁴ Christopher Robert Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century* 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 39.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 1 below; Beneit of St Albans recalls St Alban's power when discussing Thomas Becket; similarly, Matthew Paris's *Vie de seint Auban* was produced in the thirteenth century to recall the abbey's importance in the face of Henry III's attempt to bolster the cult of St Edward the Confessor.

⁴⁶ Priories: Beadlow priory, Bedfordshire, founded 1140/6; Millbrook Priory, Bedfordshire, founded 1097-1119; Hatfield Peverel Priory, Essex, founded a. 1087; Hertford Priory, Hertfordshire, founded a. 1093; Redbourne Priory, Hertfordshire, founded 1178; Belvoir Priory, Leicestershire, founded 1076-88; Binham Priory, Norfolk, founded c. 1091; Wymondham Priory, Norfolk, founded 1107; Tynemouth Priory, Tyne and Weir, refounded c. 1083; Wallingford Priory, Oxfordshire, founded 1088/1097. The nunnery of Sopwell Priory, Hertfordshire, was founded in 1140 and the hospital of St Mary du Pre, Hertfordshire was founded in 1194.

assumptions. Before turning my attention to this matter, however, it would be advisable, though, to look at the connections St Albans had with the world beyond its walls.

The activities of the abbots in the period covered by this thesis suggest the abbey's interaction with secular and political worlds. During the abbacy of Abbot Warin (1183-95), Henry II visited St Albans and stated that it was under his protection.⁴⁷ Warin also attempted to ingratiate himself with King Richard and Queen Eleanor his mother, with some success.⁴⁸ After Warin, John de Cella (1195-1214), who had been a scholar in Paris before his monastic career, became abbot.⁴⁹ Both John and his successor, William of Trumpington (1214-34), were rebuked for associating too much with laymen and for disobeying the abbey charter (once in 1213-4 and once between 1216 and 1218), which is perhaps an indication of the monastery being *too* open to outsiders.⁵⁰ During the French invasion, William displayed his and the abbey's support for the English monarchy by refusing to pay homage to Louis and in return Louis threatened to burn down the town, which was only prevented by payment.⁵¹ William also purchased a house in London for the use of the abbot and monks of St Albans, which suggests that they travelled there frequently enough for accommodation to be a worthwhile investment.⁵² William was a witness to the reissued Magna Carta on February 11th 1225 at

⁴⁷ "Et Rex; - 'Per oculos Dei, verum est...Quicumque huic Abbati et Conventui adversabitur, et mihi adversarius constituetur,' [and the King said: "it is true before God...whoever is against this Abbot and Abbey, he is adversary to me,"] *GA*, 1:198. For a list of all visits made to St Albans, see Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, reprinted 1972), 12-3.

⁴⁸ *GA*, 1:216; Matthew Paris, *Matthæi Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Historia anglorum: sive, ut vulgo dicitur, Historia minor; item ejusdem abbreviatio chronicorum Angliæ*, ed. Frederic Madden (London: Longman, 1866-9), hereafter *HA*, 2:47; Roger de Hoveden, *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene* ed. William Stubbs, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1868-71) 3:212; *Matthæi Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica majora*, ed. Henry Richard Luard, 7 vols. (London, Longman, 1872-80), hereafter *CM*, 2:403.

⁴⁹ *GA*, 1:217.

⁵⁰ David Knowles, *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales II, 1216-1377* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67.

⁵¹ *GA*, 1:259.

⁵² *GA*, 1:289.

Westminster.⁵³ Finally, John of Hertford (1235-60) built a guest hall and put revenues from the Hartburn church towards hospitality, suggesting the extent to which the monks of St Albans were courting guests.⁵⁴ Indeed, many notable guests were received during this time, and a great variety too, both secular and religious.⁵⁵ A hospice was built for visiting mendicants in 1247.⁵⁶ The *Chronica majora* also describes how Abbot John, who died in 1260, received noble children into his care in order to educate them.⁵⁷ The idea that young men were coming to the abbey to be educated suggests that aristocratic interests and preoccupations continued to be felt at St Albans and possibly to influence literary consumption and composition.

The abbey was greatly involved in the lives of laypeople. It was responsible for running a market just outside the abbey gates until at least the end of the fourteenth century.⁵⁸ The earliest recorded medieval drama performed in England, a play about the life of St Katherine, was staged c. 1110 with the help of the monks of St Albans.⁵⁹ Clearly the potential for performance allowed the St Albans monks to reach out to laypeople and encourage them to participate in worship. James Clark has also explored the possibilities of confraternities within St Albans abbey and notes that its monks used the promise of

⁵³ J. C. Holt, *Magna Carta* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 357.

⁵⁴ Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses II*, 63, 109, *GA*, 1:314, 321.

⁵⁵ For example, the Archbishop of Greater Armenia in 1228 (*CM*, 3:161) and more Armenian visitors in 1252 (*CM*, 5:340-1). Other interesting visitors were the chaplain of the Emperor Baldwin (*CM*, 3:80-1) and an English monk from the valley of Jehosaphat, who came to sell relics (*GA*, 1:291). Henry III came several times, twice in 1244 (*CM*, 4:358, 402), in 1251 (*CM*, 5:257), 1252 (*CM*, 5:319), 1255, 1256, 1257 (*CM*, 5:489, 574, 617), and 1259 (*FH*, 2:431), and made many offerings, especially of silk hangings (*CM*, 6:389), to the church. Visits are recorded of the Earl of Cornwall (*CM*, 4:43), Queen Eleanor (*CM*, 5:653), and the King and Queen of Scotland (*FH*, 2:459).

⁵⁶ Julie Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality: The Benedictines in England, c. 1070-c. 1250* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 84.

⁵⁷ "Unde multi nobiles e regno suos liberos, educandi gratia, suae custodiae commendabant," *GA*, 1:397.

⁵⁸ T. R. Slater, "Benedictine Town Planning in Medieval England: The Evidence From St Albans," in *The Church in the Medieval Town*, ed. G. Rosser and T. R. Slater (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998): 155-76, 163.

⁵⁹ Geoffrey, later abbot, borrowed some copes from St Albans to use as costumes. When they were destroyed in a fire, he joined the monastery to make amends, *GA*, 1:73.

confraternity to encourage patrons to dedicate themselves to the abbey; there are also accounts of members of the confraternity donating books.⁶⁰ The existence of the *Liber benefactorum*, described by Clark as “possibly the most complete record of the lay patronage of a monastery to survive from any of the greater abbeys and priories of medieval England,” is further evidence of the extent to which laypeople could become involved in the workings of a monastery through their financial support.⁶¹ The *Liber benefactorum* itself was also a potential lure for patrons: it shows evidence of having been displayed, and features portraits of the abbey’s most generous benefactors, and this may have motivated wealthy laypeople to make donations in return for being memorialised in the book.

Clark describes St Albans as “one of England’s premier shrines.”⁶² A large volume of pilgrims to the abbey, as well as travellers on their way to other destinations, ensured that a steady stream of traffic and gossip entered and left the abbey.⁶³ These visitors would have required accommodation: Julie Kerr notes that “as a royal foundation, an important pilgrim site and a convenient stopping-point for travellers, the abbey would have attracted a number and variety of visitors.”⁶⁴ As well as visitors coming to the monastery, monks themselves could travel. Matthew Paris is known to have travelled to Norway by special request of the monks to help in the reformation of St Benet Holme.⁶⁵ He also mentions attending the celebration of the translation of St Thomas Becket in

⁶⁰ James G. Clark, “Monastic Confraternity in Medieval England: The Evidence from the St Albans Abbey *Liber benefactorum*,” in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1100-1400*, ed. Emilia Jamroziak and Janet E. Burton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006): 315-31, 325.

⁶¹ Clark, “Monastic Confraternity,” 316.

⁶² Clark, *Monastic Renaissance*, 38.

⁶³ James G. Clark, *A Monastic Renaissance at St Albans: Thomas Walsingham and His Circle, c. 1350-1440* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 38.

⁶⁴ Julie Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality*, 85.

⁶⁵ *CM*, 5:42-5.

1220 by Stephen Langton.⁶⁶ Sethina Watson has worked on the activities of medical monks in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and St Albans had at least one such monk, Thomas Medicus, Prior of Wymondham, a daughter cell of St Albans, in the early thirteenth century, (r. 1228-49).⁶⁷ Before his investiture as prior he accompanied William d'Aubigny, Earl of Arundel, on the Fifth Crusade as the earl's personal physician.⁶⁸ Following his return, he was made prior of Wymondham, indicating that some monks could have prolonged experiences outside the monastery either before or during their service.⁶⁹

These instances, in pastoral as well as social and political circumstances, illustrate that the monks of St Albans were constantly interacting with the laity and reacting to secular life. The abbots and monks of St Albans were important figures and they were inextricably involved in the political world. This thesis will also examine how writing literature in French could reach out to the world beyond its own precinct, while simultaneously appealing to those within.

6. Insular French at St Albans

As well as being a centre of great wealth and patronage, St Albans possessed one of the largest monastic libraries in England, and has long been recognised as a centre of literary

⁶⁶ *HA*, 2:241.

⁶⁷ I am very grateful to Dr Watson for allowing me to consult her works in progress: Sethina Watson, "Monastic Society and the Transformation of Sick Care in England 1000-1300," work-in-progress; Sethina Watson, "The Practice and Profit of Benedictine Monastic Physicians: the Schools and Careers in the Anglo-Norman Cloister," work-in-progress, based on a paper presented at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1999.

⁶⁸ *GA*, 1:274-5.

⁶⁹ Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses II*, 135-6.

production.⁷⁰ We are fortunate that there is a wealth of existing scholarship on the abbey's literary culture. Rodney Thomson studied the manuscripts produced at the abbey between 1066 and 1235, and James Clark has studied the intellectual culture of the abbey during the life of Thomas Walsingham (c. 1340-1422).⁷¹ Their studies provide a basis for understanding the intellectual, cultural, and literary life of the abbey, which they cast as Latinate, but they do not pay as much attention to the abbey's French output. Clark's work is revealing about the literary activities of the St Albans monks during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly their interest in Alexander the Great and the writing of history; however, it overlooks the abbey's vernacular literary production, making it seem as though the abbey was almost exclusively Latinate in its output.⁷² My work aims therefore to complement Clark's and Thomson's work by contributing to the understanding of the literary culture of St Albans.

St Albans is also ideal for this study because some work has already been done on its vernacular material. The *Vie de Seint Alexis*, which was copied in England in the first quarter of the twelfth century, is part of the *St Albans Psalter*, which was perhaps made for Christina of Markyate (b. c.1096, d. after 1145), who was a close friend of abbot Geoffrey de Gorham (r. 1119-46).⁷³ Secondly, the vernacular work of Matthew Paris, the most well-known writer to have emerged from St Albans in the thirteenth century, has

⁷⁰ See the *Indiculus* of Walter the Chanter, item 41 in Sharpe et al., *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues*, 550. See also R. W. Hunt, "The Library of the Abbey of St Albans," in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries*, 251-77.

⁷¹ Rodney Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey, 1066-1235*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge: D. S Brewer, 1982); Clark, *Monastic Renaissance*.

⁷² Clark gives a long list of vernacular texts owned by monasteries, but goes out of his way to say that St Albans was not one of these, Clark, *Monastic Renaissance*, 157.

⁷³ For Christina's life, see C. H. Talbot, "Markyate, Christina of (b. c.1096, d. after 1145)," rev. Henry Summerson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37281>; for Geoffrey, see James G. Clark, "Gorham, Geoffrey de (c.1100-1146)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2008, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10529>.

also been the focus of scholarly attention.⁷⁴ The fact that both Matthew Paris's works and the *St Albans Psalter* are illustrated has also led to interest in their works from art historians.⁷⁵ These studies have offered an image of St Albans as a centre of vernacular literary activity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and this study will build on their groundwork by discussing the four works they have neglected.

These four French literary texts were either produced or copied at the abbey of St Albans during the period c. 1184-c. 1275. Two of the texts, Beneit of St Albans' *Life of St Thomas Becket* and the anonymous and fragmentary *Becket Leaves* that have been attributed to Matthew Paris, deal with the cult of St Thomas Becket; the others, Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie*, and the anonymous prose *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, deal with Alexander the Great.⁷⁶ These texts have been largely neglected by scholars, and,

⁷⁴ For a brief biography of Matthew, see Simon Lloyd and Reader, "Paris, Matthew (c.1200–1259)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2010, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21268>; for a full-length study, see Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*. For Paris's vernacular works, see *La Estoire de seint Aedward le rei*, ed. Kathryn Young Wallace (London, Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1987), *La vie de seint Auban*, ed. Arthur Robert Harden (Oxford, Blackwell for Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1968), and *VSE*; for translations, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster, trans., *The History of Saint Edward the King by Matthew Paris* (Tempe: Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 2008), and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster, trans., *The Life of Saint Alban* (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010); *The Life of St Edmund, by Matthew Paris*, ed. and trans. C. H. Lawrence (Stroud: A Sutton in association with St Edmund Hall, 1996).

⁷⁵ Otto Pächt, *The St. Albans Psalter* (London: Warburg Institute, 1960); Kristine Edmonson Haney, *The St Albans Psalter: An Anglo-Norman Song of Faith* (Oxford; New York: Lang, 2002); Alison Goddard Elliott, ed., *The Vie de saint Alexis in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: An Edition and Commentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Rachel Bullington, *The Alexis in the Saint Albans Psalter: A Look Into The Heart Of The Matter* (New York: Garland, 1991). For the Christina of Markyate connection, see Jane Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter: A Book for Christina of Markyate* (London: British Library, 2005). For Christina's life, see C. H. Talbot, "Markyate, Christina of (b. c.1096, d. after 1145)"; for Geoffrey, see James G. Clark, "Gorham, Geoffrey de (c.1100–1146)"; Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press in collaboration with Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 1987); Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1300* (London: Yale University Press, 2004); Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of St Edward*; Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *Life of St Alban*.

⁷⁶ Beneit of St Albans, *La vie de Thomas Becket par Beneit: poème anglo-normand du XIIe siècle*, ed. Börje Schlyter (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1941) hereafter *VBB*; Paul Meyer, ed., *Fragments d'une vie de Saint Thomas de Cantorbéry en vers accouplés* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1885), hereafter *TBL*; Thomas of Kent, *The Anglo-Norman Alexander (Le Roman de toute chevalerie)* ed. Brian Foster with the assistance of Ian Short, 2

where they have received attention, they have often not been set in their cultural and historical contexts or considered in terms of their monastic connections. Along with the *Vie de saint Alexis* and the illustrated saints' lives of Matthew Paris mentioned above, these texts are the only insular French works to be connected to St Albans from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although 9 surviving texts in total is not a huge amount, it is still in itself a clear sign of French being taken seriously as a language at St Albans, especially since several of the texts survive in more than one manuscript, and for this reason alone these texts merit further study.

This thesis will take the texts as four case studies to illustrate some of the different applications of French in extra- and inter-monastic life. The aim is not to produce a unified theory of the use of French, as the texts themselves are extremely diverse despite their thematic similarities, but rather to provide a reading of the texts with a view to opening up the picture of its presence and consumption in a monastic environment. I will consider the French literature of St Albans abbey in its monastic context, and analyse it as much as a literature of monastic consumption as well as lay consumption, taking into account the permeability of the cloister, the involvement of St Albans' abbots and monks in contemporary politics, and the effect of writing in French. Restoring these four texts to the literary, cultural, and political context of the abbey in which they were produced will both further the study of the texts as individual works and add to the knowledge of the culture of St Albans abbey.

vols (London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1976-77), hereafter *RTC*; *La Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, MS Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum CFM 20 (unedited), hereafter *ERA*.

7. Structure and methodology

This thesis constitutes the first literary study of three of the texts, and in the case of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, it is the first study to analyse the narrative in terms of its potential monastic connections. For all of the texts, it is the first attempt to give sustained attention to the role of St Albans abbey in their composition. The neglect of these sources is all the more surprising considering the massive popularity of Thomas Becket and Alexander the Great as literary subjects in the Middle Ages, as will be discussed in the introductions to each part of the thesis. Literary study is essential to fill in these gaps in order to contribute to the picture of St Albans' literary activities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Taking Matthew Paris's argument that French is capable of transcending social, religious, and gender boundaries as a starting point, this thesis will complicate the picture of the production and consumption of French literature in monasteries, using the abbey of St Albans as a case study, taking a predominantly literary approach in a historicising mode. It will examine how the choice of French as a language of composition, copying, presentation, and circulation for texts influenced the author's choice and arrangement of material, and it will also explore the implications of these texts being consumed in monastic as well as lay contexts. The focus will primarily be on the audiences that could be reached by writing in French, and, as a secondary focus, the ways in which literary composition in French reveals attempts at self-fashioning by the texts and the abbey.

This thesis will be formed of two thematic parts, one dealing with Thomas Becket and one with Alexander the Great, each with an introduction to situate the work of the St

Albans authors within their larger literary contexts, and each containing two chapters. Chapter one will focus on Benedict of St Albans' *Life* of Thomas Becket. Chapter two will focus on the *Becket Leaves*. Chapter three will focus on the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. Chapter four will focus on the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*. Although the aim of this thesis is not to produce a detailed comparison of the two pairs of texts, setting the two pairs of texts against each other will reveal differing strategies and uses of French, encoding different audiences and speaking to different contexts. It will also reveal how very dissimilar all four of the texts are in terms of their use of French, their treatment of sources, and the environments in which they were intended to be consumed.

Each chapter will provide a detailed analysis of its text, and will begin with a close reading. The analyses will include consideration of the texts' potential audiences, and how these are encoded in the texts themselves. Consideration of audience has been paramount in this study. Attempting to reconstruct the audience for a text has helped to place the texts into their literary and political contexts. The starting consideration has been that the audience was made up of laypeople, but with the knowledge that French was also used inter- and intra-monastically, the effect of a mixed audience of monks and laypeople, or alternatively of just monastic readers, has also been considered. Throughout, an awareness of the implications of the choice of French as a language of composition has guided the analysis and interpretation of the four texts.

Where possible, the Latin source material of the texts has also been analysed, both in the introductions preceding each part and in the chapters proper. Once the themes of the texts have been brought out, the analysis will proceed to their wider contexts, including their manuscripts, their place in wider literary traditions, and their

cultural contexts. I will take a historicising approach to this part of the investigation, considering the climate in the abbey as dictated by the ruling abbot's activities and alignments and the activities of the king and magnates.

This thesis provides a reading of four texts that have been largely neglected by scholarship, and considers them both separately and also as contributors to the picture of francophone monastic activity. In the case of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, it also provides a full transcription of the text, which has never been attempted before. It considers the texts in terms of their interaction with contemporary literary trends and cultural and political events, and aims to reconstruct their potential audiences and modes of reception. It also questions the assumptions that vernacular literature was produced exclusively or predominantly to communicate with laypeople and that vernacular writing was automatically widely accessible, despite the protestations of its authors. It will argue rather for the specificity of French, for the targeted nature of the St Albans texts, and for the assertion by authors from St Albans who used French that they were claiming the language as worthy for serious literary composition on its own terms. With this thesis, I aim to restore these texts to the monks of St Albans. They did not only compose and consume these works, but they also disseminated them as part of a literary outreach programme that negotiated the distance between the monastic cloister and the secular world by recounting those stories that mattered to both of these orbits in their shared language: the French of England.

Part 1: Thomas Becket

1. Introduction

Following Thomas Becket's death in 1170 and canonisation in 1173, a massive industry sprang up commemorating his death and establishing his cult.¹ Twelve biographies of Becket were produced in the 1170s and 1180s.² Several of these texts were written shortly after Becket's death, as part of the swift development and management of his cult. The cult drew pilgrims from all over the country and from overseas to Becket's shrine at Canterbury. As well as the lives of Becket, other texts also formed part of the cult's

¹ For Becket's life, see Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Folio Society, 2002), and Frank Barlow, "Becket, Thomas (1120?-1170)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27201>. For the development of the cult and its afterlife, see Kay Brainerd Slocum, "The Making, Re-making and Unmaking of the Cult of Saint Thomas Becket," *Hagiographica* VII (2000), 3-16 and Robert E. Scully, "The Unmaking of a Saint: the Suppression of the Cult of St Thomas of Canterbury," *Hagiographica* VII (2000), 35-46.

² For all of the Latin prose Becket lives, see James Craigie Robertson, ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1875-88), hereafter *MTB*. Translations of several Latin lives were made as part of the Masters programme at Loyola University in the 1940s: Mary Annette Bocke, "An Annotated Translation of the *Life* of Saint Thomas, the Archbishop of Canterbury By William, a Monk of Canterbury," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1946); Mary De Chantal Biala, "Annotated Translation of the *Life* of Saint Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury By John of Salisbury and Alan of Tewkesbury," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1945); Mary Aimee du Sacre-Coeur Toutant, "An Annotated Translation of the *Life* of St. Thomas Becket By An Anonymous Author Number 2," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1944); Mary Imelda Horback, "An Annotated Translation of the *Life* of St. Thomas Becket By Herbert Bosham (Part One)," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1945); M. Ann Kathleen Fisher, "An Annotated Translation of the *Life* of St. Thomas Becket By Herbert Bosham (Part Two)," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1947); Mary Aelred Sinclair, "An Annotated Translation of the *Life* of St. Thomas Becket By William Fitzstephen: (Part Two)," (MA diss., Loyola University, 1944). A translation of John of Salisbury's *Life* of Becket was published by Roland E. Pepin, trans. *Two Canterbury Saints' Lives by John of Salisbury* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009). For translations of selections of many of the primary sources, see Michael Staunton, trans., *The Lives of Thomas Becket* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). For the two vernacular lives, see VBB and Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, *La vie de saint Thomas de Canterbury*, ed. and trans. Jacques T. E. Thomas (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), hereafter *VTC*; Ian Short, trans., *A Life of Thomas Becket in Verse* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2013). Although they will not be discussed here, it is important to note that there were also Middle English lives of Becket, see Hermann Thiemke, ed., *Die me. Thomas Beket-legende des Gloucesterlegendars* (Berlin: Palestra, 1919), and also Latin verse lives of Becket: Pauline A. Thompson, "An Anonymous Verse *Life* of Thomas Becket," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 20 (1985): 147-54; André Vernet, "La 'Thomaïde', poème latin inédit consacré à Thomas Becket," and Joseph van de Straeten, "Les vies Latins de saint Thomas Becket et son exil en France," in *Thomas Becket. Actes du colloque international de Sédières, 19-24 août, 1973*, ed. Raymonde Foreville (Paris: Beauchesnes, 1975), 9-39; John Allen Giles, *Anecdota Bedae, Lanfranci et aliorum. Inedited tracts, Letters, Poems, etc. of the Venerable Bede, Lanfranc, Tatwin and others* (London, 1851/New York, 1967), 201-96.

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promotional material. Collections of his correspondence both circulated independently and were incorporated into Becket lives.³ Accounts of Becket's posthumous miracles were also produced by Benedict of Peterborough and William of Canterbury, separately from their biographies of him.⁴ Furthermore, Becket's death also prompted poetic meditation, as monks sought to deal not only with the practical needs of managing and promoting Becket's cult, but also with the emotional impact and shock of Becket's murder within his own cathedral.⁵ This prolific literary output indicates how pervasive Becket's murder was in the popular imagination.

Thomas Becket has been the object of much historical study, especially by Anne Duggan, who has particularly focused on the ecclesiastical networks in which he participated and on his correspondence.⁶ However, the literary aspects of the lives of Thomas Becket have been less studied. In 1929 Emmanuel Walberg published a study of some of the Becket biographies, but did not focus on the corpus as a whole.⁷ More recently, Michael Staunton has produced a study of all the Becket lives, excepting Beneit's *Life* and the *Becket Leaves*, and also a collection of translated extracts from these lives; however, Staunton's focus is that of a historian rather than of a literary scholar.⁸ Of

³ See Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of his Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), and Anne Duggan ed., *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury 1162-1170*, 2 vols. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000).

⁴ William of Canterbury, *Miraculorum gloriosi martyris Thomae Cantuariensis* (MTB 1:137-545); Benedict of Peterborough, *Miracula Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis* (MTB 2:21-298). For more information about these miracle collections, see Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

⁵ See for example A. G. Rigg, "Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies III," *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979) 488-91; E. du Meril, *Poésies populaires latines du moyen âge* (Paris, 1847), 70-93, and *Poésies populaires antérieures au douzième siècle* (Paris, 1853), 415-26.

⁶ Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Arnold, 2004); Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007).

⁷ Emmanuel Walberg, *La tradition hagiographique de Saint Thomas Becket avant la fin du XIIe siècle: études critiques* (Paris: E. Droz, 1929).

⁸ Staunton, *Lives*; Michael Staunton, *Thomas Becket and His Biographers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

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the three insular French lives produced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, only one has received substantial attention, that of Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence. Guernes's text was reedited by Thomas Jacques in 2002, was retranslated by Ian Short in 2013, and has also been the subject of several articles about its source material, style, and sociolinguistic interest.⁹ The two Becket lives connected with St Albans have received less attention than the rest of the corpus.¹⁰ The following two chapters of this thesis will rectify this. Firstly, however, it will be necessary to examine the circumstances of composition of the other Becket biographies produced in the 1170s and 1180s, which will establish the context in which the St Albans Becket lives were written and also help to illustrate how their circumstances of composition differed from those of the other Becket lives.

2. The corpus of Becket lives

In his study of most of the twelfth-century Becket lives, Michael Staunton states that "to write about Thomas as a saint was...to advance an argument."¹¹ Similarly, Hanna Vollrath notes that "for contemporaries there were few facts about Thomas Becket – and many

⁹ For its source material, see Ian Short, "An Early Draft of Guernes' Vie de saint Thomas Becket," *Medium Aevum* 46 (1977): 20-34. For Guernes's style, see Timothy Peters, "Elements of the Chanson de Geste in an Old French Life of Becket: Guernes's *Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr*," *Olifant* 18 (1994): 278-88, and Timothy Peters, "An Ecclesiastical Epic: Garnier de Pont-Ste-Maxence's *Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr*," *Mediaevistik* 7 (1996): 181-202; Thomas O' Donnell, "Anglo-Norman Multiculturalism and Continental Standards in Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence's *Vie de Saint Thomas*," in *Conceptualising Multilingualism*, 337-56.

¹⁰ Beneit's *Life* of Becket has primarily received attention due to its unusual versification, date and source, and also because of an epilogue in one manuscript copy of it: Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 42-8, Emmanuel Walberg, "Date et source de la Vie de saint Thomas de Cantorbéry par Benet, moine de Saint-Alban," in Walberg, *Tradition*, 9-34; Ian Short, "Patronage." *The Becket Leaves* have primarily been the focus of attention from art historians: Nigel Morgan, "Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the leaves of Thomas Becket," *Burlington Magazine* 1030 (1988): 85-96; Nigel Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, 2 vols. (London: H. Miller, 1982), 1:107.

¹¹ Staunton, *Lives*, 13.

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opinions."¹² Becket was made a saint for the circumstances of his death rather than his actions in life. He had been a controversial archbishop: his behaviour had caused many of his colleagues, such as Roger of Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, and Hilary of Chichester, to criticise him heavily.¹³ Becket's capitulation to the constitutions of Clarendon in 1164, his illegal flight to France, and his persistent excommunications of those who opposed him had made him highly unpopular with other members of the clergy. Adding to this, his life before his promotion to archbishop had been a decidedly secular one.¹⁴ A biographer needed to negotiate these facts and present them in such a way as to give evidence of Becket's sainthood throughout his life; as such, all biographies of Becket are the result of considerable literary effort.

Of the twelve biographies of Thomas Becket composed in the two decades following his death, ten were written in Latin prose, and the remaining two in French verse. One of these Latin lives, that of Robert of Cricklade, has now been lost, although elements of it were preserved both in a Norse translation made c. 1200 and then incorporated into another text known as the *Thómas saga* at the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁵ The textual tradition of these works is somewhat complicated, as several of the texts borrow from each other, and their dates have also been debated, but I will follow Staunton's dates as this study is the most recent and covers all of the twelfth-

¹² Hanna Vollrath, "Was Thomas Becket chaste? Understanding episodes in the Becket Lives," *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXVII (2005): 198-209, 198.

¹³ Gilbert Foliot was Becket's chief opponent, and outlined his case against Becket in the letter *Multiplicem nobis*, which survives in a number of manuscripts; it also appears in the Canterbury letter collection and can be found in *MTB*: 5:521-44. A translation is printed in Staunton, *Lives*, 223-37.

¹⁴ See William Fitzstephen's description of the finery Becket enjoyed as chancellor: *MTB* 3:17-26; translated in Staunton, *Lives*, 48-55.

¹⁵ E. Magnusson ed., *Thomas saga erkibyskups: A Life of Thomas Becket in Icelandic*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1875-85).

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century lives except Beneit's.¹⁶ The choice of Latin as a language for the majority of the lives suggests a largely ecclesiastical audience, which would restrict the consumption of Becket's story to Latinate readers and keep it primarily within religious circles. This is a contrast to the verse vernacular lives of Becket, which have a different intended audience, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Below is a list showing the approximate dates of composition of the twelfth-century Becket biographies according to Michael Staunton:

John of Salisbury	1171-2
Edward Grim	1171-2
Anonymous II	1172-3 ¹⁷
Benedict of Peterborough	1173-4
William of Canterbury	1173-4
William Fitzstephen	1173-4
Robert of Cricklade	a1174? ¹⁸
Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence	1174 ¹⁹
Alan of Tewkesbury	1176
Anonymous I	1176-7 ²⁰
Beneit of St Albans	1184 ²¹

¹⁶ For example, there is a discrepancy between Knowles' dating and Staunton's; David Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: A & C. Black, 1970), 172; Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 3-4.

¹⁷ Sometimes known as "Lambethensis"; see Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 4.

¹⁸ Staunton does not deal with Robert of Cricklade; information about his narrative of Becket has come from E. Magnusson ed., *Thomas saga erkibyskups* and Margaret Orme, who also attempted to reconstruct the source: "A Reconstruction of Robert of Cricklade's *Vita et Miracula S. Thomae Cantuariensis*," *Analecta Bollandiana* 84 (1966): 379-98.

¹⁹ An earlier version of Guernes' *Life* was written c. 1172, but that version was stolen from him and he produced a revised version following a visit to Canterbury: Short, "Early Draft," 20.

²⁰ Sometimes identified as Roger of Pontigny; see Staunton, *Lives*, 9-10.

²¹ Staunton does not cover Beneit's *Life* apart from noting its existence, Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 6. I follow Walberg's suggested date for Beneit's *Life*, for reasons that shall become clear in the next chapter, Walberg, *Tradition*, 21.

In order to better understand these authors' relationship to Becket and their relative literary and historical biases, there now follows a short introduction to the authors of each life.

John of Salisbury (late 1110s-80), like Becket, had been a clerk in the household of Archbishop Theobald, Becket's predecessor.²² He did not always agree with Becket, but he was very loyal to him and suffered as a result, with his property being confiscated after Becket's flight to France, leaving him in financial difficulty.²³ His account, written early and before Becket's canonisation, was instrumental in the formation of the cult; however, John's work itself is brief and largely based on a letter that he wrote in the aftermath of the murder. Staunton describes it as "a disappointment" and notes that John's letters are of more use to the study of Becket's cult than his *Life*.²⁴

Edward Grim (*fl.* 1170–c. 86) was a clerk of Cambridge who was visiting Canterbury at the time of Becket's murder.²⁵ He was immortalised in Becket's story when he attempted to shield the archbishop from the blows, nearly losing his arm as a result.²⁶ Staunton notes that Grim's *Life* was used as the basis for other lives, and Ian Short has noted the parallels between Grim's *Life* and the first draft of the *Life* of Becket

²² David Luscombe, "Salisbury, John of (late 1110s–1180)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2011, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14849>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Staunton, *Lives*, 7-8.

²⁵ A. J. Duggan, "Grim, Edward (*fl.* 1170–c.1186)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11628>.

²⁶ "Is etenim, fugentibus tam monachis quam clericis universis, sancto archiepiscopo constanter adhaesit, et inter ulnas complexum tenuit, donec ipsa quam opposuit praecisa est," (*MTB* 2:437), "The same blow almost cut off the arm of this witness, who as everyone fled, monks and clerks, steadfastly stood by the archbishop, and held him in his arms until his arm was struck," Staunton, *Lives*, 202.

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by Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, suggesting that Guernes used Grim as a source.²⁷ Grim's text is supportive of Henry II and is the only one in the Latin corpus not to include some kind of criticism of him. This may be due to the time in which Grim was writing his account: if Staunton's suggested date of 1171-2 is correct, then the meeting at Avranches, at which Henry had admitted responsibility for Becket's death, had happened very recently, which may have been the cause of Grim's insistence on Henry's innocence.²⁸ He likewise may have been more hesitant to promote Becket as a saint before his canonisation.

Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence (fl. 1170-74) was a clerk from France who had seen but not met Becket.²⁹ Guernes' work existed in two versions, the first of which was stolen from him.³⁰ Following the theft, he travelled to Canterbury to interview eyewitnesses and others such as Mary, Becket's sister, who was abbess of Barking, and rewrote large sections of his text.³¹ Guernes was particularly grateful to the nuns of Barking, whom he described as having given him so many gifts that he had grown fat.³² Ian Short has observed that a manuscript of the earlier version is considerably less critical of Henry, whereas the second version contains more criticism of him, which he attributes to Guernes' increased research.³³

²⁷ Staunton, *Lives*, 7; Short, "Early Draft."

²⁸ This is despite the fact that Henry's admission of guilt was mostly a political move made to mend the breach with the papacy: "Without these external pressures, it is unlikely that Henry would have abandoned his first claim that Becket's death had nothing to do with him," Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult*, 290.

²⁹ Guernes, *VTC*, v. 359.

³⁰ See p. 37 n. 19 above.

³¹ Gervase of Canterbury notes Mary's appointment as abbess of Barking: Gervase of Canterbury, *Historical Works, the Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, by Gervase, the Monk of Canterbury, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1879-80), 1:242; Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses 1*, 208.

³² Guernes, *VTC*, epilogue, vv. 1-22.

³³ Short, "Early Draft," 21.

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Benedict of Peterborough (c.1135–93) was an eyewitness to the murder.³⁴ He was closely involved with the cult of Becket, as he was the first custodian of the shrine.³⁵ This allowed him to assemble his collection of miracles associated with Becket.³⁶ He was made prior of Canterbury in 1173, and abbot of Peterborough in 1175; he was very reluctant to leave Canterbury, and attempted to perpetuate Becket's cult at Peterborough, including using blood-stained paving slabs from Canterbury as altars in his new monastery and frequently returning to Canterbury.³⁷ Benedict's account portrays Henry as a cruel, unreasonable king who has a plot against the Church, which is unsurprising given his involvement in the promotion of Becket's cult.

William of Canterbury (fl. 1170-74) was ordained as a deacon by Becket in 1170 and was present at the murder.³⁸ He was the second custodian of Becket's shrine in Canterbury, and produced and edited a miracle collection as well as an account of Becket's life, which gave him an active role in the promotion of Becket's cult.³⁹ He presented his text to Henry sometime between 1177 and 1189, at the king's own request.⁴⁰ William's account of Becket's life displays some ambiguity toward Henry: he is never explicitly critical of him, but he does not endorse the king either, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions.

William Fitzstephen (fl. 1162–74) was a clerk in Becket's service, and was present

³⁴ Edmund King, "Benedict (c.1135–1193)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2081>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Benedict of Peterborough, *Miracula Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis* (MTB 2:21-298).

³⁷ Edmund King, "Benedict of Peterborough and the Cult of Thomas Becket," *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 9 (1996-7): 213-20.

³⁸ Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 4.

³⁹ Barlow, *ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁰ MTB 1:136.

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at Becket's death.⁴¹ He did not follow Becket into exile: instead, he petitioned the king in rhyming Latin for forgiveness, and was granted it. He remained in England, working at court, and he remained in employment as a court official after Becket's murder.⁴² Staunton hypothesises that it may be for this reason that no mention is made of William by other biographers, as his actions seem to show support of Henry.⁴³ However, Fitzstephen's work survives in two forms, one of which includes thirty-eight additional passages critical either of Henry or of Becket.⁴⁴ Staunton suggests that their removal was undertaken by someone other than William, which might hint that the *Life* was objectionable in some way to some readers.⁴⁵ The inclusion of criticism of Henry, even if it did not necessarily reach every reader, is an indication that not even those who were close to the king, and had been pardoned as William had, would necessarily suppress criticism of Henry in the retelling of Becket's life. It also illustrates the multitude of voices and views that contributed to the corpus of Becket's lives.

Robert of Cricklade (*d.* in or after 1174) was an Augustinian canon regular at Cirencester who became prior of St Frideswide's in Oxford in 1141.⁴⁶ Nothing is known of him after 1174. He is identified as the only distinguished scholar to have worked at St Frideswide's, and in witnessing a charter of Kenilworth Priory c. 1125 he described

⁴¹ A. J. Duggan, "William fitz Stephen (*fl.* 1162–1174)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9643>.

⁴² Duggan, *ibid.*

⁴³ Staunton, *Lives*, 9.

⁴⁴ Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 58.

⁴⁵ Staunton, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ A. J. Duggan, "Cricklade, Robert of (*d.* in or after 1174)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23730>.

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himself as “magister”, indicating a university education.⁴⁷ He also appears in the Biographical Register of the University of Oxford.⁴⁸ Cricklade was evidently a great admirer of Becket and had experienced a miracle first-hand following a visit to Becket’s shrine in 1171. An account of this experience appears in the miracle collection of Benedict of Peterborough.⁴⁹ Smalley notes that Cricklade’s collection also includes the story of Becket’s career, and that “he probably took the details from his own *Life* of the saint since he does not quote verbally from the other *Lives*.”⁵⁰ Margaret Orme has noted that Cricklade’s text was used as the source for Beneit’s narrative.⁵¹

Alan of Tewkesbury (*b.* before 1150, *d.* 1202), who continued John of Salisbury’s account, also had an important role to play in the furtherance of Becket’s cult: he collected and edited letters written from and to Becket, and his text, along with John of Salisbury’s text, is intended as an introduction to the collection.⁵² Nothing is known of his career before his entry into the novitiate of Canterbury in 1174 except for Gervase of Canterbury’s report that he had been a canon in Benevento in Italy.⁵³ He later became prior of Canterbury in 1179.⁵⁴ It is therefore unclear whether he knew Becket before writing his account; however, it has been speculated by Margaret Harris that he was an orphan and raised in Christ Church, Canterbury, which may explain his return there in

⁴⁷ Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout: Brepols, c. 1997), 532-33. R. W. Hunt notes that Robert had studied in Paris: “Notes on English learning in the Late Twelfth Century,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4th series 19 (1936): 32.

⁴⁸ A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (Oxford, 1957-9), 513-4.

⁴⁹ *MTB* 2:96-101.

⁵⁰ Beryl Smalley, *The Becket Conflict and the Schools* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), 198.

⁵¹ Orme, “Reconstruction.”

⁵² A. J. Duggan, “Tewkesbury, Alan of (*b.* before 1150, *d.* 1202),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/269>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

1174.⁵⁵

Very little is known about Beneit of St Albans except the information that he gives about himself in his *Life*. He describes himself as "frere Beneit le pecheur Od les neirs dras" [brother Beneit the sinner, with the black robes], which suggests that he was a Benedictine monk.⁵⁶ His reference to "seint Auban nostre patron" [our patron St Alban] and his praise of Abbot Simon leads to the conclusion that he was a monk of St Albans.⁵⁷ However, this is the only biographical information that is known about him.

Herbert of Bosham (*d. c.*1194) produced the latest account of Becket's life. He was a Paris scholar who was probably recruited by Becket to his circle before 1157.⁵⁸ He went into exile with Becket in 1164 and returned to Canterbury with him in December 1170, but he was sent away on an errand on December 27th, which meant that he was absent for Becket's murder two days later.⁵⁹ Herbert regretted this for the rest of his life.⁶⁰ His exile continued after Becket's death.⁶¹ His *Life*, written after many years of contemplation, was written after at least one interview with Henry II during which he discussed his involvement in the murder.⁶²

Both anonymous authors also claim to have known Becket personally. Anonymous 1 has been tentatively identified as Roger of Pontigny by some scholars, while Anonymous 2 was a monk of Canterbury who claimed to have witnessed the

⁵⁵ M. A. Harris, "Alan of Tewkesbury and his letters, I-II," *Studia Monastica* 18 (1976), 77–108, 299–351

⁵⁶ *VBB*, vv. 2105–6.

⁵⁷ *VBB*, v. 1453.

⁵⁸ Frank Barlow, "Bosham, Herbert of (*d. c.*1194)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13014>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

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murder.⁶³ It is of course impossible to prove that they had known Becket, but what is important in their cases is that they *claimed* to have known him, which affects the construction of their narratives.

A brief discussion of these authors reveals an immediate difference between them and Beneit: each of them, even those anonymous authors who could not be identified, had a personal connection with Becket, whether they knew him personally, experienced a cure at the shrine (Robert of Cricklade) or conducted first-hand research into his life (Guernes). Beneit's account is separated from theirs both by time (about seven years elapsed between the writing of Anonymous II's *Life* and Beneit's *Life*) and by a lack of the personal connection discussed above. This lack of personal connection to Becket makes Beneit's text unique in the corpus of Becket lives.

3. The *Becket Leaves*

The *Becket Leaves* are completely distinct from the rest of the corpus of Becket lives. They were produced in the mid-thirteenth century, long after the lives discussed above. While the other lives dealt with the development of the cult of Thomas Becket, the *Becket Leaves* instead illustrate how the cult could take on a new meaning several decades after Becket's death, responding to contemporary cultural and literary circumstances. As such, they are very different both in their approach to their central figure and in their mode of consumption. Like Beneit's text, the *Becket Leaves* are therefore distinct from all of the other lives in the corpus.

⁶³ Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 4, 7.

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Having established both the wider context of the Becket lives and that the two St Albans lives are markedly different from these other biographies, we will now move on to an analysis of the two texts in more detail.

Chapter 1: Beneit of St Albans' *Life* of Thomas Becket

1. Introduction

Beneit of St Albans' *Life* of Thomas Becket was written c. 1184 and is one of only two insular French biographies of Becket produced in the twelfth century. Aside from its edition, Beneit's text has received little attention from scholars, and has been the focus of discussion more for its form than for its content: its unusual versification, date, and potential patronage have been examined, but there has been no literary study of the text.¹ Its existence has been noted by several scholars in surveys of Anglo-Norman literature and also by Michael Staunton in his analysis of Becket lives, but aside from this brief note, it has received little further attention.²

The first part of this chapter will provide a reading of Beneit's text, focusing particularly on its portrayal of Henry II. This will offer a revision to existing studies by revealing that the text is unique amongst Becket lives in its support of Henry II in the face of popular belief that Henry was responsible for Becket's death. Although it has not been widely discussed, some scholars have noted this unusual portrayal. Jean-Guy Gouttebroze suggested that this was either because the text was a commission or written speculatively in hope of patronage.³ Contrary to this, Emmanuel Walberg suggested that Beneit's positive portrayal of Henry could have been down to fear of retribution from Henry:

¹ Ian Short, "Patronage."

² Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 1:68; Staunton, *Lives*, 11; M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 250; Legge, *Anglo-Norman In The Cloisters*, 19.

³ Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, "Henri II Plantagenet patron des historiographes anglo-normands de langue d'oïl," in *La littérature Angevine médiévale. Actes du Colloque du 22 mars 1908, Maulevrier (Hérault)* (Maulévrier: Hérault, 1981), 91-109.

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L'impassibilité de l'auteur est dictée par son extrême prudence diplomatique; écrivant...du vivant d'Henri II, il doit toujours ménager la susceptibilité du roi et retenir son indignation pour ne pas compromettre la dignité royale, et le désir de glorifier son héros est entravé par la crainte d'entrer en conflit avec les adversaires encore vivants de Thomas qui peuvent lui nuire.⁴

However, neither Gouttebroze nor Walhberg considered the implications of this portrayal, nor did they analyse it in any detail. This chapter will therefore take the portrayal of Henry as the starting point for an analysis of the text. The second part of this chapter will explore the text's wider context, including how the compositional circumstances of Beneit's text differed from those of the authors of Becket lives, the contemporary situation at St Albans, and the behaviour of Henry II following Becket's death. The third and final part of this chapter will explore the text's production and reception, focusing in particular on the contents of the surviving manuscripts and the two performance contexts for which we have evidence, the household of Simon Fitz Simon of Kyme and Dover Priory. Throughout, it will also consider the implications for Beneit's use of French.

2. A reading of Beneit's *Life of Thomas Becket*

This section will begin with a summary of the narrative of the text, and then move on to analyse the construction of the narrative voice and the portrayal of Henry II. The text begins with the lead-up to Becket's birth, including a vision experienced by his mother foretelling his sainthood, and some information about his early life. It details his secular

⁴ Walberg, *Traditions*, 15, 19.

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career, particularly his extravagant aristocratic lifestyle, and his promotion to archbishop, at which point he adopts an ascetic manner of living.⁵ It then describes his quarrels with Henry at Clarendon, his exile in France, and the coronation of the Young King Henry in 1170. The coronation triggers both Becket's reconciliation with Henry and his return to England, including his unsuccessful appeal to the Young King Henry, supported by Abbot Simon of St Albans and Prior Richard of Dover. Becket's excommunication of those involved in the coronation infuriates Henry once again, prompting an angry outburst which encourages four of his household knights, Reginald FitzUrse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Richard le Breton, to set off for England in search of Becket. The text then recounts Becket's murder in Canterbury cathedral, briefly discusses some of the miracles he performed after his death, and ends with an appeal to the reader to pray to Saint Thomas so that he may guide them to avoid sin and achieve a place in heaven, and also to pray that Henry may continue to be a good king.

The relationship of the narrator to his audience is established early in the text. In the first three stanzas, he speaks in the first-person singular, establishing himself as a narrator in control of his text:

E si wus pleist a escutier,

Sa duce vie voil mustrer

Aukes brivement.⁶

[And if it pleases you to listen, I would like to show his sweet life, fairly briefly].

⁵ This is a common motif in the Becket lives, see Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 50, and Staunton, "Thomas Becket's conversion," *Anglo-Norman Studies XXI* (1999): 193-211.

⁶ *VBB*, vv. 13-5.

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However, once the text has been introduced, Beneit uses verbs in the first-person *plural*, thereby including the audience with his every statement: “nus le creum” [we believe it], “bien le savum” [we know it well].⁷ In this way, the audience progresses from listening to the narrator to being compelled to agree with him. By constructing the text so that the audience is forced into complicity with his narrator’s opinions from the very beginning, Beneit then implies their agreement with the rest of his statements, which is important for his wider presentation of the characters and events of the text.⁸

Throughout the text, Henry is depicted positively. He is frequently praised by the narrator, which has wider implications for the text's reception. Henry makes his first appearance at v. 92. He is presented as being responsible for bringing peace to England, looking after the Church, and restraining tyrants:

Sulunc Dei porta le lei.⁹

[He carried out the law according to God’s will].

Il abati le grant desrei e la guerre.¹⁰

[He quelled disorder and war].

Il refrenat tuz les tiranz.¹¹

[He restrained all tyrants].

⁷ *VBB*, v. 21; *VBB*, v. 23.

⁸ For the active role of witnesses in medieval texts, real or imagined, see Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 70-2.

⁹ *VBB*, v. 94.

¹⁰ *VBB*, vv. 95-6.

¹¹ *VBB*, v. 104.

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La pais porta as bien voilanz e la mort a malfesanz.¹²

[He brought peace to those of good will and death to those who were wicked].

This opening presentation engages with several of the perceived problems of Henry's reign, as identified both by his contemporaries and by modern historians, and then refutes them. Beneit's portrayal of Henry as a pious king who protects the Church and upholds its laws is a contrast to the work of other authors who explicitly described Henry as an enemy of the church (perhaps unsurprisingly given his actions towards Becket). Anonymous I's account suggests that Henry had had a plot against the church:

Rex iste Henricus totius ecclesiasticae dispositionis et ordinationis summam sibi usurpaverat: nam et episcopatus et abbatias quibus volebat conferebat, jamque ipso praecipiente et constituente, sicut populus sic sacerdotes et clerici indifferenter ad saecularia judicia trahebantur.¹³

[This king Henry, following in their footsteps, usurped for himself the entirety of ecclesiastical management and organisation. For he conferred bishoprics and abbacies on whomsoever he wished, and now at his order and decree he drew priests and clerks to secular judgement, as if they were no different from the common people].¹⁴

Benedict of Peterborough similarly highlighted Henry's opposition to the church, in vivid terms that illustrate his cruelty:

¹² *VBB*, vv. 106-7.

¹³ *MTB* 4:23.

¹⁴ Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 113

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Ut ea videlicet, quae regni sui consuetudinibus viderentur adversari, et vel universalis ecclesiae libertati vel Cantuariensis ecclesiae dignitatibus patrocinari pro libitu suo aut comminueret, aut nunquam videnda recluderet,¹⁵

[This was so that any which seemed contrary to the customs of his realm, and to protect either the liberty of the universal Church or the privileges of the church of Canterbury, could at his pleasure be torn to pieces or shut up never to be seen].¹⁶

Likewise, despite the recent civil war between Henry and his sons (1173-4) and the ongoing struggles concerning succession during the 1180s, Beneit emphasises Henry's ability to bring peace, recalling that Henry's reign followed the civil war from 1139-54.¹⁷ Here he echoes Henry's self-presentation as a peace-keeper: in his coronation charter in 1154, Henry confirmed Henry I's grants, and in the Constitutions of Clarendon in 1164 he again claimed to be re-establishing his grandfather's customs.¹⁸ The purpose of this was to imply that decisions and grants made during Stephen's reign were invalid, and to portray Stephen's reign as a period of anarchy and usurpation, to which his own reign should be viewed as a contrast.¹⁹ Beneit's depiction of Henry as a peacemaker is the first of several examples of Beneit engaging with Henry's representation of his own kingship. It also contrasts with criticisms from other authors, such as William of Canterbury,

¹⁵ *MTB* 2:15.

¹⁶ Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, 204.

¹⁷ Björn Weiler, "Kings and Sons: Princely Rebellions and the Structures of Revolt in Western Europe, c. 1170-c. 1280," *Historical Research* 82 (2009): 17-40.

¹⁸ William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History to the Reign of Edward I* (9th edn rev. by H. W. C. Davis, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 158; *Select Charters*, 163-4.

¹⁹ Graeme J. White, *Restoration and Reform, 1153-1165: Recovery From Civil War in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2-3.

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whose account accused Henry of warmongering in Ireland.²⁰ Henry was also often described as a tyrant; Becket's contemporary John of Salisbury and Anonymous 1 also described him in these terms.²¹ Beneit's use of the word "tiranz" is therefore particularly significant, transforming Henry from the tyrant constructed by other authors into the means of restraining tyranny.²²

Having established Henry's own personal virtues, as well as raising and then dismissing contemporary criticism of him, Beneit then underlines the connection between Becket and Henry:

Suz ciel n'out home ke plus eust chier

Fors ses enfanz e sa mulier

Alienor.²³

[There was nobody on earth who was dearer to him, except for his children and his wife Eleanor].

By drawing the comparison between Becket and Henry's wife and children, Beneit works Becket into Henry's family circle, establishing a strong affective bond between them. The emotional connection between the two men is something to which Beneit will return later in the text. The portrayal of Henry as a family man both raises and immediately dismisses the issue of Henry's warring family despite the recent civil wars and the death

²⁰ See Bocke, "Annotated Translation of the *Life of Saint Thomas, the Archbishop of Canterbury* By William, a Monk of Canterbury," 6.

²¹ Anonymous 1, *MTB* 4:23.

²² Henry was aware that Becket and his circle described him as a tyrant and was unhappy about it; *MTB* 5:139, *MTB* 6:160. Nicholas Vincent collects many contemporary opinions of Henry in his introduction to the volume and his essay "The Court of Henry II" in Harper-Bill and Vincent, *Henry II: New Interpretations*, 278-334.

²³ *VBB*, vv. 124-6.

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of the Young King Henry in 1183, echoing John Gillingham's description of the Angevins' self-portrayal as a "family firm."²⁴ The preoccupation with family and lineage, also found in the renewed interest in historiography during Henry II's reign, suggests that this text is attempting to fit contemporary interests. In Beneit's portrayal, Henry's family is transformed from a dynasty at war into a stable family unit, and by extension a symbol of a stable kingdom, as Henry is able to keep both his immediate family and his extended family of subjects in order. By insisting, apparently sincerely despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, on Henry's love for his family and by referencing common criticism of Henry only to dismiss it, Beneit contributes to his portrait of him as an ideal king and guides his audience into accepting this new image.

There are several points in the text at which Beneit takes situations for which Henry could be blamed and instead assigns that blame to another figure. By spreading the blame, he removes the ultimate responsibility for Becket's fate from Henry and dilutes it amongst other figures. The first time this happens, it is assigned to the Devil, removing human agency from the story altogether:

Mais li diables par envie,
Ki tut est plein de tricherie,
Le volt trubler...
Esclandre mist e grant error
Entre lui e sun seignur
Par boysdie,
Par ses ministers ke a dolur

²⁴ John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 31.

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L'empererent nuit e jor

Par envie.²⁵

[But the devil, who is full of trickery, out of envy, wanted to trouble him...He made scandal and great error between him and his lord through deception, through his ministers who constantly made it worse, through envy].

Here, Beneit establishes from the very beginning of the conflict that Henry's motivation comes from the Devil's jealousy and not Henry himself. In doing so, he invites the audience to read the rest of the text in the light of this fact, one of a series of techniques to encourage them to excuse Henry.

Having established Henry and Becket's mutual respect and affection early in the text, Beneit builds on this through his presentation of how Becket responds to Henry. Becket's opening speech at Northampton begins:

Jeo aim le rey.

Jeo ne sui pas venu ici

Pur render acunte, einz le desdi,

Ke fere nel dei.²⁶

[I love the king, I have not come here to render account. I deny that, for I should not do that].

This reinforces the depiction of Becket's love for Henry and his loyalty, and also presents Becket as co-operative, in contrast to the view that he was argumentative and

²⁵ *VBB*, vv. 409-11, 415-20.

²⁶ *VBB*, vv. 573-6.

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obstreperous, as suggested by some of Becket's contemporaries.²⁷ By presenting the respect and admiration Becket holds for Henry, Beneit further forestalls criticism of him, and, as the saint is obviously supposed to be imitated in his behaviour, implicitly advises his audience to do the same.

Beneit also shows Henry responding to those who criticise Becket: those who call him “malveis traître” [wicked traitor] are later punished by Henry: “li rois lur sout puis mal gré De la folie” [The king was ill-disposed to them later because of their folly].²⁸ Henry's punishment of those who were critical of Becket highlights his support of him and underlines the connection between Becket and Henry to the exclusion of other courtiers. It is also another example of Beneit displacing responsibility for events: here, criticism of Becket is put into the mouths of other speakers to remove the emphasis from Henry. Another example of this is a letter sent to Becket from the Bishop of London, in which Becket is reminded that he owes everything to Henry:

E ke li rois trové l'aveit

Povre clerc e riche fait

Sur trestuz.²⁹

[And that the king had found him as a poor clerk and made him rich above everyone else].

Again, Beneit raises this criticism only to immediately refute it:

De ceo ke dient ke povre esteit

²⁷ See, for example, Gilbert Foliot's criticism of Becket, found in *MTB* 5:521-44, translated by Michael Staunton in Staunton, *Lives*, 223-36.

²⁸ *VBB*, v. 682; *VBB*, vv. 682-3.

²⁹ *VBB*, vv. 1036-8.

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Kant vint al rei, nen unt pas dreit

Mes unt mespris.³⁰

[Of those who say that he was poor when he came to the king, they are not correct, but they are mistaken].

These subtle changes help to pass the criticism of Becket to figures other than Henry, and strengthen the bond between the two of them. It also raises Henry above the squabbling in which all the other characters engage.

One of the pivotal events in the text is when Henry II has the Young King Henry crowned.³¹ As well as being an insult to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, this was also illegal, as the permission from the Pope – which had originally been given so that the Archbishop of York could perform the coronation instead of the Archbishop of Canterbury while that see had been vacant – had been withdrawn by the time the coronation actually took place.³² This was an ideal opportunity to criticise Henry, an opportunity eagerly taken the author of the *Becket Leaves*, who furthermore recalls the disputes Henry was later to have with his son as evidence for it having been a bad decision.³³ None of the Latin lives of Becket pass comment on this decision. Beneit, however, highlights it as a wise decision and indeed, a necessity “pur le regne en pais

³⁰ *VBB*, vv.1063-5.

³¹ Opinions of other contemporary authors differ on Henry the Young King: for a summary, see Matthew Strickland, "On the Instruction of a Prince: The Upbringing of Henry, the Young King," in Harper-Bill and Vincent, *Henry II*, 184-214.

³² A conditional papal privilege had been granted in June 1161, but was subsequently retracted, see Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 84.

³³ “Repentant fu plus e marri” [later he was repentant and sorrowful]; *TBL*, f. 3r rubric, 15.

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garder” [to keep the kingdom in peace].³⁴ Not only does Beneit support the political nature of the decision, but he also imposes a moral judgement on it:

Li rois ne fut pas a blamer,

Einz le deveint tuz loer

La bone gent.³⁵

[The king was not to blame; rather, all good people should praise him].

Here, Beneit both demonstrates his own support for Henry and also implicitly instructs his audience, if they are truly “bone gent”, to support him too. The action is no longer blameworthy, but a necessity to preserve peace. Beneit has thus converted a possibly disastrous decision into the only safe choice, and has furthermore argued that praising Henry is the only correct response.

As before, Beneit maintains the tactic of attributing blame to other characters in order to remove it from Henry. In this case, Roger de Pont l’Evêque, Archbishop of York, is particularly singled out. Roger’s death in 1181 meant that Beneit could do this without fear of retribution. Furthermore, there had been suspicion that Roger had been involved in the murder of Becket: he was believed by some to have financed the four knights responsible for his murder, and it took until December 1171 for Roger to clear his name.³⁶ In his description of this episode it is possible that Beneit was intending his readers to recall this. As soon as Roger is mentioned, his action is described as being “encuntre raisun” [against good sense] and the insult to Canterbury is underlined:

³⁴ *VBB*, v. 1204.

³⁵ *VBB*, vv.1201-3.

³⁶ Frank Barlow, "Pont l'Évêque, Roger de (c.1115–1181)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23961>.

Kar n'aveit pas la poesté
Eins toli le jur la digneté
A sun primat,
Ki arcevesque ert de plus haut sé,
De la mere eglise del regné,
E maistre legat.³⁷

[Because he did not have the power, and as such he deprived his primate of his dignity, because he was the archbishop of a higher see, the mother church of the kingdom, and the head legate].

Beneit uses the adverb “numeement” when naming the bishop of London (“numeement mesfait L'evesque de Lundres” [the bishop of London, namely, acted poorly]) which, with its connotations both of “especially” and “namely,” recalls the narrator’s frequently stated wish to name the people responsible for Becket’s death.³⁸ By concentrating on these names, he removes the emphasis from Henry. As soon as the king is mentioned, yet again Beneit attempts to divert his readers from thinking badly of the king: Henry is described as having acted “mult sagement” [very wisely], *except* for the fact that “l’arcevesque pas nel fist” [the archbishop [Thomas] did not perform [the coronation]].³⁹ Having mentioned this minor mistake, Beneit immediately moves on to condemn “cil ki la corune i mist” [he who put the crown there], saying that he “ovrat encuntre Jhesu Crist” [was working against Jesus Christ], as if to discourage the audience from dwelling on

³⁷ *VBB*, v. 1182; *VBB*, vv. 1183-8.

³⁸ *VBB*, vv. 1195-6; AND² Online edition. <<http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/nomeement>>; Accessed 20 Nov 2015.

³⁹ *VBB*, v. 1206; *VBB*, v. 1208.

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Henry's role in the coronation.⁴⁰ In the next stanza Beneit then absolutely underlines the impropriety of Roger's action:

Kar l'office a lui n'aparteneit,
Ne licence de ceo n'aveit,
Ne poesté.
Tant cum l'autre en terre viveit,
Le mester fere ne poeit
Sanz cungé.⁴¹

[For that office did not belong to him, nor did he have the authorisation or the power for it. As long as the other was still alive, he could not do this deed without leave].

The extreme criticism of Roger helps to distract the reader from Henry. It is further helped by Becket's reaction to it, which is to gain the assistance of the Pope and also God.

The narrator underlines how God is on Becket's side and also highlights how all the events of the text are part of God's plan. The Pope encourages Becket to:

Pur Deu amur seit pacient
Pur souffrir,
Tresque Deus, ke trestut veit,
De l'outrage l'en face dreit
En tel manere

⁴⁰ *VBB*, v. 1210; *VBB*, v. 1211.

⁴¹ *VBB*, vv. 1213-8.

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Ke sa eglise vengé seit

De ceus k'a tort li unt toleit

Nun de mere.⁴²

[For love of God, be patient, until God (who sees everything), corrects the outrage in such a way that his church will be avenged on those who had wrongly taken away his mother's name].

Support from the Pope and also from God helps to highlight the correctness of Becket's case, and furthermore places the emphasis on the bishops who acted wrongly and not Henry.

The next event, a reconciliation between Becket and Henry, is significant. Beneit describes it as having been motivated by God:

Desque Deus od sa puissance

Par l'apostoile e le roy de France

L'ait acordé

A sun seignor le roy Henri,

Ke pres de .vii. anz l'ot haÿ

Sur tute gent.

Ore ad Deu fait par sa merci

Kw il le tient pur sun amy

Sëurement.⁴³

⁴² *VBB*, vv. 1235-42.

⁴³ *VBB*, vv. 1246-54.

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[Until God in his power, reconciled him through the pope and the king of France, to his lord King Henry, who had hated him for nearly seven years, more than anyone, now God, through his mercy, had made it so they regarded each other as friends, truly].

Just as the Devil motivates Henry's actions earlier in the text, here God's intervention suggests a higher purpose to the events. Beneit's depiction of the reconciliation has both a spiritual and a secular dimension:

Sulum Deu e sulum la ley

Acordé sunt en dreite fey

De seinte Eglise.

L'arcevesque est bien del rey,

E il de lui si cum jeo crei,

Sanz feintise.⁴⁴

[According to God and the law, they were reconciled in the true faith of the holy church. The archbishop is well thought of by the king, and the king of him, as I believe, without deceit].

Beneit's use of the phrase "sanz feintise" has a double interpretation, both "unceasingly", but also literally "without deceit or pretence," which is significant thematically for the entire text. It is used at the very beginning of the text to refer to Becket:

De celuy ke sanz feintise

Se combati pur seinte Eglise

⁴⁴ *VBB*, vv.1255-60.

Avauncier.⁴⁵

[Of he who ceaselessly fought to advance the Holy Church].

The phrase continues to be associated with him throughout the text, at v. 4, v. 1087, v. 1260, and v. 1564. The honesty of God is another theme developed within the text. Beneit refers to it elsewhere: “Deus, ki unkes ne menti” [God, who never lied].⁴⁶ Allowing Henry into this epithet therefore imbues him with that same honesty. The king’s respect and love for Becket are made clear at the end of this meeting: following a blessing from Becket, the king helps him to mount his horse in full view of everyone else (“veant la gent”).⁴⁷ This is significant as it is the last time the two men see each other before Becket’s death, and it also emphasises the fact that their reunion is sanctioned by God and the church.

When Becket is confronted by messengers following the coronation, his first response is to assert his love for the new king (in this case the Young King Henry). The use of the future tense here is particularly significant – “Jeo aim le rei, bien le sachez, E amerai” [I love the king, you know that well, and I will love him] – as it indicates continued affection and anticipates Becket’s future role as saint and intercessor.⁴⁸ Becket will also do this just before his death: “Deus...salt e gard le roy Henri” [May God...save and protect King Henry].⁴⁹ He also emphasises that the actual coronation is not the problem:

⁴⁵ AND² Online edition. <<http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/feintise>>, accessed 18 Nov 2015; *VBB*, vv. 4-6.

⁴⁶ *VBB*, v. 1646.

⁴⁷ *VBB*, v. 1278.

⁴⁸ *VBB*, vv. 1376-7.

⁴⁹ *VBB*, vv. 1646-8.

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De ceo k'il est roi corunez

Mult par sui joius e lez...

Ke corune tolir ne li abesser

Ne me vint unkes en penser,

Ne ja ne frat.⁵⁰

[I am very happy and pleased that he is crowned king...To take the crown from him or to humiliate him never crossed my mind; nor will it ever do that].

The fact that Becket repeats that the coronation of the Young King Henry was a good idea further serves to exculpate Henry, emphasised by his hyperbole:

Eins vodrai, si poei' espleiter,

Quatre corunes purchacier

Od cele k'il ad.⁵¹

[I would like, if I could, to obtain four more crowns for him to go with the one he has].

He also lays the blame on the bishops:

Mes les evesques ki bien saveient

Ke lui coruner ne poeient,

Ai chalengé.⁵²

[But I have challenged the bishops, who well knew that they could not crown him].

⁵⁰ *VBB*, vv. 1378-9, vv. 1381-3.

⁵¹ *VBB*, vv. 1384-6.

⁵² *VBB*, vv. 1387-9.

Furthermore, he claims that his actions will help the king:

E si jeo voil k'il facent dreit,

Al rei pas peser ne deit,

Si issi est.

E si il mun conseil creit,

Joie en avra kant ke ceo seit,

Si Deu plest.⁵³

[And if I wish them to do what is right, it should not bother the king if it is so, and if he believes my advice he will be joyful no matter what happens, if it pleases God].

This maintains the portrayal of Becket as supportive of the king, and as before stresses the legitimacy of Henry's decisions. It also gives Henry's actions validation through Becket's approval, and if Becket approves of Henry, then the audience, who are told to imitate him, may be encouraged to do so as well.

Another key moment in the narrative is a scene in which Henry's angry outburst is interpreted by his knights as an instruction to murder Becket. Beneit cannot deny that Henry made an outburst of some kind that led to Becket's assassination, yet he does his best to mitigate it by pointing out the lack of direct instruction in the king's speech.⁵⁴

⁵³ *VBB*, vv. 1393-8.

⁵⁴ At Henry's visit to Canterbury in July 1174, Gilbert Foliot asserted Henry's innocence but also asked forgiveness for the words he spoke which led to the murders setting off to Canterbury, which suggests that the outburst definitely did take place. Thomas K. Keefe, "Shrine Time: King Henry II's Visits to Thomas Becket's Tomb," *Haskins Society Journal* 11 (1998): 115-22.

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Beneit's description of Henry receiving the news of Becket's actions shows Henry's anger:

Curecé devint e marri

Sanz mesure.

Dist que mal gent aveit nurri,

Kar vengé fust s'il ust ami,

Assez le jure.⁵⁵

[He became angry and vexed beyond all measure, said he had supported wicked people, for he would be avenged if he had any friends, indeed, he swore it].

However, the lack of any specific instruction in the speech, and the fact that Becket is not named but rather the catch-all term "mal gent" is used, suggests that Henry's statement was open to misinterpretation. Again, this removes Henry's agency from Becket's death, something supported by the next stanza of the text:

De lui mal fere plus ne dist

Ne comandement a nul ne fist

Ne haut ne bas.⁵⁶

[He did not say to do him any further harm, nor did he give a command to anyone, whether high or lowly].

Beneit's use of the conditional also removes a degree of responsibility on Henry's part, suggesting doubt that Henry did anything wrong in the first place:

⁵⁵ *VBB*, vv. 1550-4.

⁵⁶ *VBB*, vv. 1555-7.

S'il par ire rien mesprist

Merci li face Jhesu Christ

E seint Thomas.⁵⁷

[If he did anything wrong because of his anger, may Jesus Christ and Saint Thomas have mercy on him].

By following it with a request for mercy for Henry from both Becket and Christ, the narrator constructs an inverted power relationship between Becket and Henry: Becket now has power over Henry's soul, whereas Henry once had power over Becket's life.

Beneit's use of two of the murderers' names, William de Tracy, "dunt vus sovent avez oÿ" [of whom you have often heard] and "Hughe de Morvile l'oï nomer" [I have heard him named Hugh de Morvile]), further puts the emphasis on the murderers and takes it off Henry.⁵⁸ Beneit continues to insist that the murderers' names are widely known, drawing his audience into complicity with him and also referring to common knowledge, as though to spread the blame and to remove the responsibility from himself for having named them since his audience has often heard them named already. As before, Beneit's use of the second-person plural is another hint of his complicity with the audience, by implicating their knowledge in his construction of the narrative.

The text ends by recalling the complicit audience that Beneit constructed at its opening. The narrator instructs his readers to go to Canterbury and make a pilgrimage to ask for Becket's mercy on England, and on the king.⁵⁹ He also adds an affective dimension

⁵⁷ *VBB*, vv. 1558-60. Italics mine.

⁵⁸ *VBB*, v. 1604; *VBB*, v. 1611.

⁵⁹ *VBB*, vv. 2063-70.

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by recalling “vostre rei ke vus amez” [your king whom you love].⁶⁰ By insisting on his readers’ love for Henry, Beneit draws them into agreement with his portrayal of him. In this way, Beneit turns the audience into his own authenticating witnesses. He ends his text by urging the reader to pray that Henry may continue to govern England well, and also for his wife and children, to give them good morals, and to make their deeds, however big or small, successful.⁶¹ This assigns them the task of continuing to promote and support Henry through their pilgrimage and prayer just as the text has done.

The positive portrayal of Henry in Beneit's *Life of Becket* has been attributed both to fear of Henry and to the potential for recognition from him.⁶² However, the fact that Henry was still alive did not prevent other authors from being critical of him, and it certainly did not induce any of them to write in praise of him. If authors who were writing around a decade before Beneit produced his text could be critical of the king if they so wished – even if they, like William Fitzstephen, were royal officials working at the court – then it seems unlikely that fear of the king was Beneit’s primary motivation for writing his text as he did.⁶³

The portrayals of Henry and Becket in Beneit’s text required a certain amount of complicity between the author and his audience in order for them to be successful, a complicity that Beneit builds through the narrator's voice. The irony that Henry was responsible for Becket’s sainthood through also being responsible for his death could not be hidden, and Beneit’s reinterpretation of the events of Becket’s life needed to engage with this. Despite this, Beneit's promotion of Henry appears to be entirely genuine, with

⁶⁰ *VBB*, v. 2069.

⁶¹ *VBB*, vv. 2071-6.

⁶² See pp. 47-8 above.

⁶³ See pp. 38 above.

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explicit statements of Henry's innocence and the portrayal of the friendship between Becket and Henry as being motivated by mutual love and respect. However, the knowledge that the events were not as Beneit depicts them may well have influenced how Beneit's audience received his text. Beneit's insistence on the audience's cooperation with his views and repetition of Henry's innocence suggest that he was attempting to influence them through sheer weight of argument. Through its positive presentation of Henry, Beneit's text is unique in the corpus of Becket lives. Placing the text in the context of its composition and reception will illustrate how this stance allowed St Albans to participate in contemporary politics and to make a case for the abbey's importance in Becket's life.

3. Situating Beneit's text in a wider context

The positive portrayal of Henry II suggests that Beneit was engaging with his contemporary literary, linguistic, and political climates. This section will now situate Beneit's text in several different contexts: the other lives of Thomas Becket produced in the 1170's; the behaviour of Henry II; the situation at St Albans at the time of the composition of the text, and the possible benefits to St Albans of Beneit having written a biography of Thomas Becket.

3.1 Other authors of Becket lives

A comparison of the circumstances of composition of Beneit's *Life* of Becket alongside those of other Becket lives reveals that Beneit was in a unique position when he wrote his text, both in terms of when it was composed and in terms of his choice of language.

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Apart from Herbert of Bosham's text, Beneit of St Albans's account of Becket's life was the last to be written. Furthermore, the majority of the Becket lives were produced in the initial flurry after Becket's death and around the time of his canonisation, which took place on 21st February 1173: of the twelve lives, two were produced pre-canonisation, six were produced in the year of Becket's canonisation or the following year, and of the remaining four, two were produced within four years of the canonisation. During this time, the cult became established, miracle collections were recorded and circulated, and Becket's sanctity was officially ratified. There was then a hiatus of around seven years between the composition of Anonymous I's account and the account written by Beneit. This time distance marks Beneit's account out as unusual.

Furthermore, the relationships of these authors to Becket are also worth examining. To restate, of the twelve authors listed in the introduction to part 1, eight definitely knew Becket. Of these, John of Salisbury, Edward Grim, Anonymous II, Benedict of Peterborough, William of Canterbury and William Fitzstephen were in Canterbury at the time of his murder; Herbert of Bosham was one of Becket's close companions, but was sent on an errand to the French king just before Becket's murder, to his great regret, and Anonymous I claimed to have met Becket while he was at Pontigny.⁶⁴ Of the remaining authors, Alan of Tewkesbury was responsible for collecting Becket's letters and continuing John of Salisbury's account of Becket's life, and may have had a Canterbury connection prior to his arrival there in 1174; Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence came to England in order to carry out extensive first-hand research for his account of Becket's life including speaking to Becket's sister Mary, following the theft of

⁶⁴ See Barlow, "Herbert of Bosham."

his previous version.⁶⁵ Robert of Cricklade experienced a cure when he visited Becket's shrine, an account of which appears in the miracle collection of Benedict of Peterborough.⁶⁶ Of all the twelve authors who produced lives of Thomas Becket during the 1170s and 1180s, therefore, Beneit is the only one not to have had some kind of personal connection to Becket as man or martyr.

His distance of time and experience from Becket made Beneit unique. He was not an eyewitness, and so did not have to get his own testimony across, yet he was also dependent on the accounts of others in order to produce his own account, whether written or oral. He was not personally connected to Becket, and so was not motivated to memorialise a friend or colleague. Becket had already been canonised for a decade, so Beneit did not have to promote him as a saint or assist the fledgling cult as it gained popularity. Becket's shrine continued to be a massive draw for both domestic and foreign visitors.⁶⁷ Furthermore it was situated in a city whose cult was one of the biggest rivals to the cult of St Alban, so promoting that cult might seem at first to have been contrary to their interests. The more the circumstances of composition for Beneit's text are examined, the more evident it becomes that they were very different from those of the other authors of Becket lives. The choice of French over Latin is a further point of difference: it suggests a wish to reach a different audience and to perform a different function to the Latin lives produced earlier. In particular, the use of French may be read as an attempt to display alignment with the court of King Henry II. A brief examination of

⁶⁵ It has been speculated by Margaret Harris that he was an orphan and raised in Christ Church, Canterbury, which may explain his return there in 1174, Harris, "Alan of Tewkesbury and his Letters, I-II," 77-108, 299-351.

⁶⁶ *MTB* 2:96-101.

⁶⁷ For information about the income of the shrine, see Benjamin John Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), 147-54.

Henry's behaviour following Becket's death and canonisation will illustrate his reaction to the Becket cult and may allow us to draw some conclusions about a potential audience for Beneit's text.

3.2 Henry II's response to Becket's death

Following Becket's murder, Henry II had to do some swift political manoeuvring. In the immediate aftermath, Henry acted distressed, but in a letter sent to the Pope in 1171 entitled *Ob reverentiam*, he asserted his innocence.⁶⁸ However, due to external pressure he had to admit responsibility for Becket's death, and to atone for it, but also in a manner that would not lose him too much face. He did so at Avranches in 1172 and also at Canterbury in 1174.⁶⁹ His first admission of responsibility at Avranches on 21st May 1172 was intended as a legal act to mend his breach with the papacy rather than a result of any moral discomfort. On that occasion, Henry formally purged himself of direct complicity in Becket's death, and promised to undertake a series of penances, which included a pledge to undertake a crusade (which he never actually fulfilled). It was not until two years later, when Henry made his penitential pilgrimage to Canterbury, that he seemed to express any real guilt; even so, this may have been motivated more by Henry's fear of the rebellion by Henry the Young King than by anything else.⁷⁰ Henry also prayed to Becket at Canterbury on the eve of a battle in Scotland against the allied Scottish and

⁶⁸ *MTB* 7:440.

⁶⁹ For further details, see Anne Duggan, "Diplomacy, Status, and Conscience: Henry II's Penance for Becket's Murder," in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte. Peter Herde zum 60. Geburtstag von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen dargebracht*, ed. Karl Borhardt and Enno Biinz, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), i.265-90, 265-70, and Anne Duggan, "Ne in dubium: The Official Record of Henry II's Reconciliation at Avranches, 21 May 1172," *English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 643-58.

⁷⁰ See Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult*, 267, 290.

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French forces, in which he was successful, and attributed his success to Becket's support.⁷¹

The victory that followed was something of a turning point for Henry's behaviour towards Becket. Having ostentatiously atoned for Becket's death, Henry then moved to appropriate it, transforming himself from the villain of the piece into the means by which Becket could be accessed by pilgrims. Rather than denying his involvement in the Becket controversy, he instead underlined his Canterbury connection, promoting Becket as an English national saint and hosting international visitors to the shrine. He visited Canterbury frequently, in 1174, 1175, 1177, 1178, 1179, 1181, 1184 and 1187.⁷² These visits were often used as a means of displaying to Henry's opponents that Becket was on his side, as he brought both his rebellious son Henry and also Philip of Flanders to the shrine as a subtle reminder of Becket's support of him.⁷³ As the cult spread throughout Europe, and attracted more and more pilgrims, a positive change in public attitudes towards Henry can also be observed, as is charted by the miracle collection of William of Canterbury.⁷⁴ Indeed, because of their connection during Becket's lifetime, Henry became an earthly means of accessing him, mediating, facilitating and stage-managing pilgrimages to Canterbury enacted by foreign dignitaries, including Louis VII of France, Philip of Flanders, Theobald count of Blois, and archbishop William of Rheims.⁷⁵ He also included his family in the spread of Becket's cult to other countries in Europe, through

⁷¹ Keefe, "Shrine Time," 116; however, Keefe also notes that "political gain does not rule out the possibility of sincere religious conviction," 116.

⁷² Ibid., 118.

⁷³ Keefe, "Shrine Time," 118.

⁷⁴ Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, 156.

⁷⁵ Keefe, "Shrine Time," 115.

the marriages of his daughters Joan and Eleanor.⁷⁶ Henry's admission of guilt and his behaviour in the aftermath of the murder show a development from his initial seeming lack of concern to the styling of himself as a special recipient of St Thomas's grace.

3.3 Literature at the court of Henry II

Literature also played a role in Henry's self-fashioning. The late twelfth century, and the court of Henry II in particular, has received a great deal of attention from scholars, and there has been especial interest in the extent of Henry and Eleanor's involvement with literary production.⁷⁷ Their court has traditionally been viewed as a thriving intellectual centre, and while opinion is divided as to the exact extent of this, we can draw some conclusions about it. Simon Meecham-Jones argues that Henry was aware of the potential use of literature in the construction of the monarchy and that he had an "implicit recognition...of the paramount importance of the written text as a potent weapon in the establishment of political and royal authority."⁷⁸ Henry's patronage of historical texts legitimising the Angevin rule of England also allowed him to become involved in the national narrative, as did his interest in Arthurian legend. His involvement with the production of literature throughout his reign therefore sets up a model for a two-way relationship between an author and the king, in which authors write to please the king and the king's behaviour constitutes a narrative construction in

⁷⁶ Henry's daughter Joan married William the Good of Sicily in 1177, where Minrekae Cathedral was dedicated to Becket; Eleanor married Alfonso III of Castile c. 1174 and founded a chapel dedicated to Becket in Toledo Cathedral.

⁷⁷ This began with R. W. Hunt, "English Learning in the Twelfth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19 (1936): 19-42. See further Short, "Patrons and Polyglots"; John Gillingham, "The Cultivation of History, Legend and Courtesy at the Court of Henry II," in Kennedy and Meecham-Jones eds., *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, 25-52, Short, "Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II," and Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?"

⁷⁸ Kennedy and Meecham Jones eds., *Writers of the reign of Henry II*, 1.

its own right which is then textualised by authors. It is important not to overstate the possibility of Henry's involvement with literary patronage, as Karen Broadhurst has indicated, but even cautiously we can say at least that the two texts definitely commissioned by him, Wace's *Roman de Rou* and Benoît's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, were both attempts to justify Henry's rule in England and Normandy.⁷⁹ This illustrates Henry's awareness and exploitation of the role of literature in fashioning a national ideology.

3.4 Production: the place of St Albans

In 1184, St Albans had recently lost Abbot Simon (d. 1183) and gained a new abbot, Warin. Warin was very different from Simon: Simon was characterised as a man of learning and scholarship, whereas Warin was a much more practical administrator.⁸⁰ He is known to have attempted to ingratiate himself with Richard I and Eleanor the Queen Mother, and it is possible that he may have attempted this with Henry II as well.⁸¹ A pro-Henry account of Becket's life such as Beneit's could therefore have been influenced by Warin's interaction with the royal family. It is difficult to imagine such a narrative being produced during Simon's abbacy, as he was a close friend and supporter of Becket. The change in abbot provided an opportunity for a new perspective, and perhaps a closer relationship with the king than Simon might have allowed. Henry visited St Albans abbey

⁷⁹ In Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?", she lists the texts which can be definitively connected to Henry and Eleanor, of which there are very few, and concludes that "the demonstrable patronage of vernacular literature by Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine was severely limited," 84.

⁸⁰ C. H. Talbot, *Heads of Religious Houses 1*, 67; *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England: A Biographical Register* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1965), 372-3; *CM*, 6:43, 53-61.

⁸¹ *GA*, 1:216; *HA*, 2:47; Roger de Hoveden, *Chronica*. 3:212; *CM*, 2:403.

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in 1184, at which time he declared himself protector of it.⁸² It would be impossible to prove that Henry's presence at the abbey in 1184 influenced the writing of Beneit's text; however, what can be said is that the production of Beneit's text in 1184, Henry's visit to the abbey and the new political stance brought about by Warin's abbacy in 1184 all combined to suggest a new aspiration at the abbey for alignment with the king.

Beneit makes a case for the role of St Albans abbey in Becket's life. He refers to Becket's friendship with Abbot Simon, who arranged hospitality for the archbishop when he was staying at nearby Harrow. Beneit shows Simon to be the first of the friends to whom Becket turns when in need of help. The abbot is the first man to be mentioned in the scene in which Becket requires a messenger, and Beneit is quick to establish his merits, both as a man and as a friend and advisor: his wisdom, "duçur" [sweetness] and "amur" [love] are emphasised, qualities with affective and intellectual connotations.⁸³ Simon is also described as

Uns hom de grant perfectiun,

Ke tuz jurs ama religiun

E moniage.⁸⁴

[A man of great perfection, who loved religion and monastic life all his days].

Beneit also highlights Simon's learning and devotion, ("estudie mist tute sa vie" [he had devoted his life to studying]), which is something for which Simon was especially

⁸² See p. 23, n. 47 above.

⁸³ *VBB*, v. 1440; *VBB*, v. 1437.

⁸⁴ *VBB*, vv. 1456-8.

known.⁸⁵ The way in which Beneit highlights the friendship between Abbot Simon and Becket insists upon the importance of St Albans abbey in Becket's story as well as outside it by highlighting the abbey's links with key ecclesiastical figures. The connection between Abbot Simon, the monks of St Albans and Becket is underscored linguistically, as they too are described as acting "sanz feintise."⁸⁶ The abbot of St Albans' participation in the story is an argument for his importance, showing how a member of the monastery had interacted with the leading contemporary saint and the crucial role that this had played in his life. The only other man named in the scene in which Becket requests help is Richard, prior of Dover, who is described as being "de bone part" [good, just].⁸⁷ Richard also played a significant role in this late stage of Becket's life: he was sent as a messenger to Henry the Young King at Winchester on Becket's behalf, he accompanied Abbot Simon to Woodstock to intercede again with Henry the Young King, he performed Becket's funeral, and he was Becket's successor as archbishop of Canterbury.⁸⁸ This is both a hint of a Dover connection to Beneit's *Life* of Becket, which will be explored in more detail below, and a memorialisation of Richard, who had died in 1184, around the time the text was being composed.⁸⁹

Beneit's *Life* is the only one of all the lives to expand in any detail on the role of Simon and Richard in Becket's intercession to the Young King Henry: none of the other lives describe them. Simon only appears once, in William Fitzstephen's *Life*, and Richard appears in the lives by William Fitzstephen, William of Canterbury and Guernes de Pont-

⁸⁵ *VBB*, v. 1471. Simon was responsible for building up the St Albans library: *GA*, 1:184; see also Rodney Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 1:51-62.

⁸⁶ *VBB*, v. 1466.

⁸⁷ *VBB*, v. 1459.

⁸⁸ William Urry, *Thomas Becket: His Last Days* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 145.

⁸⁹ See Charles Duggan, "Richard (d. 1184)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23514>.

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Sainte-Maxence. In Beneit's text, they are not only mentioned, but also briefly characterised and shown to have a personal, affective connection with Becket. By weaving them into Becket's story, Beneit stresses Becket's important connections to the monastic communities at St Albans and Dover.

Just as Beneit uses Becket to bestow authority on Abbot Simon, he also uses St Alban as a means of bestowing authority on Becket. Beneit's text recalls Saint Alban to the audience's mind as the first martyr of England and therefore one currently in the company of Saint Thomas. This strengthens the association of St Albans with these two powerful saints. Beneit promotes these saints to the exclusion of all others. In all of the Latin Becket lives, except for those of Edward Grim and Benedict of Peterborough, Becket calls on Saint Denis before his death. However, he does not do so in Beneit's narrative; the only saint whose name is mentioned is St Alban. Beneit's omission of Saint Denis's name may be significant, as Saint Denis was the patron saint of France and therefore may have constituted a rival cult, particularly given the periodic tension between England and France during Henry's reign. As Beneit recalls, Alban was the first martyr of England and therefore a vital source of saintly authority for Thomas Becket.⁹⁰ Like Henry and Becket in the earthly sphere, Alban and Becket reinforce each other in the heavenly sphere: the mention of the proto-martyr Alban lends the newly-made saint Thomas Becket some authority, while the story of Becket allows fresh interest to be generated in Alban.

Recalling the importance of St Alban and St Albans might have been especially necessary given that the popularity of the Becket cult may have been at the expense of

⁹⁰ *VBB*, v. 1481.

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other cults. It can therefore be read as a display of the monastery's anxiety about the potential threat to their own cult posed by Becket. Furthermore, St Albans was in debt: Abbot Robert, the predecessor of Abbot Simon, had left the abbey owing 600 marks following extensive building works and work on the shrine of St Alban, which was perhaps another indication of a wish to boost their profile.⁹¹ The discovery of the bones of St Amphibalus, the companion and teacher of St Alban, in 1178 led to Abbot Simon ordering the rehousing of Amphibalus's relics and also the commissioning of William of St Albans' Latin *Passio sancti Albani*, which is equally suggestive of attempts to revive interest in St Alban.⁹² Simon had continued work on the shrine following Becket's death despite these debts, perhaps hoping to benefit from a renewed interest in English martyrs following Becket's death, as well as the power of Alban's shrine to attract pilgrims in its own right. Beneit's argument for the importance of St Albans and Abbot Simon, therefore, may be an attempt to increase this benefit; by recalling the first English martyr, and Becket's connection to him, Beneit has woven St Albans abbey into the story of Becket's life, making an argument for the abbey's importance in the wake of the late twelfth-century cult of Thomas Becket. By showing the connection between St Albans and Thomas Becket, Beneit also highlights his monastery as an important site of ecclesiastical power.

Like Henry, St Albans appropriated Becket's story in order to claim their role in his sainthood, and also could use Henry as a new means of accessing Becket. Becket's cult needed authors like Beneit to continue to promote it by producing new and engaging

⁹¹ *GA*, 1:193-4.

⁹² William of St Albans, *Passio sancti Albani, Acta sanctorum* (June IV, 22), translated by Thomas O' Donnell and Margaret Lamont in Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *Life of St Alban*, 139-60.

narratives of his life; Henry needed the story of Becket to reflect his own self-fashioning, and St Albans needed the royal and ecclesiastical support and authentication both Henry and Becket could give them. By uniting Becket and Henry in a text and promoting both of them, Benefit's text allowed St Albans to draw on some of the most potent sources of both religious and secular power in the country, and benefit from its intimate connections with both.

3.5. The role of French

Benefit's choice of language is significant, not only for his own text but also because of what it suggests about the attitudes at St Albans during its time of composition. By choosing French, Benefit widened his potential audience, as it could include both monastic and secular listeners, both of whom encountered the text, as will be explored later. The composition of French hagiographical texts at St Albans suggests a policy intended to attract a lay audience; there is a precedent for this in the insular French *Chanson de St Alexis*, which was produced c. 1120-45 and possibly displayed at the abbey.⁹³ This was happening alongside the composition of Latin hagiographical texts at St Albans, suggesting that the abbey could target its texts for specific and varied audiences. Given the abbey's centrality in town life, the production of entertainment with a spiritual value may have helped to encourage donations to the abbey, to cement the bonds between the abbey and the townspeople. For those coming from further afield and lodging at the abbey, French saints' lives would have provided a source of entertainment, an important component of the increased monastic hospitality which can be observed in

⁹³ Kathryn Gerry, "The Alexis quire and the cult of saints at St Albans," *Historical Research* 82 (2009): 593-612.

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the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁹⁴ These visitors were not limited to laypeople, but could also include monks visiting from other monasteries. The use of French in such a well-known Latinate environment, particularly given Abbot Simon's efforts to increase the abbey's library and reputation for learning, was a powerful statement of the abbey's relevance to all areas of life, both secular and religious. It also allowed the abbey to speak to secular and religious audiences simultaneously.

Secondly, by choosing to write in French rather than in Latin, Beneit distinguished himself from all but one of the accounts produced in the previous decade. The text is already distanced from the Latin lives by its portrayal of Henry II; French increases this distance, as it capitalises on the ideological association of the vernacular with secular power discussed above. The use of French allowed the monastic community to communicate with the outside world, but it was predominantly the language of the élites, it also displays a particular wish to align itself with the behaviour of the king and the court. A pro-Henry text, written in the king's mother tongue and the language of the court, engages with other secular literature produced at this time such as the vernacular histories produced by Wace, Benoît de Saint Maure and Jordan Fantosme. In contrast to many other French works produced in the late twelfth century, Beneit's prologue does not mention that his text is a translation; this is not revealed until v. 2108, at the very end of the text. Acknowledging a Latin source was a means of bolstering a text's authority, so for Beneit to deny this until the end of his text seems to suggest that French

⁹⁴ "As a royal foundation, an important pilgrim site and a convenient stopping-point for travellers, the abbey would have attracted a number and variety of visitors," Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality*, 85.

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is authoritative enough in its own right to tell Becket's story.⁹⁵ It may also indicate an intended audience that is less preoccupied with scholarly concerns and more concerned with the narrative.

Having examined the cultural circumstances of the text's composition, we will now look at its consumption, focusing on the manuscripts in which the text survives, and its reception, including two further contexts for its consumption, the household of Simon Fitz Simon of Kyme and the town of Dover.

4. Consumption and reception

This section will now explore the contexts of consumption and reception of the text.

4.1 Consumption: manuscripts

There are seven surviving manuscripts of Benefit's *Vie de Thomas Becket*, and all of them are composite manuscripts that set the text in multiple contexts. The survival of seven manuscripts is unusual for an Anglo-Norman hagiographical text: of the 86 hagiographical texts listed by Dean, only eleven survive in four manuscripts or more (one of these is Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence's text, which survives in eight manuscripts, the highest number of surviving manuscripts for any listed hagiographical text), compared with five texts surviving in three manuscripts, 22 texts surviving in two manuscripts, and 48 surviving in one manuscript.⁹⁶ Although the importance of those

⁹⁵ Examples include Clemence of Barking, the Nun of Barking, Wace's *Brut* and *Vie de Seint Nicholas*, the *Vie de Seint Clement*, and Marie de France's *Lais*. Guernes' text does not seek to gain authority from a Latin source either, but instead focuses on contrasting the inability of many to write with the authority of his own account, Guernes, *VTC*, vv. 1-10.

⁹⁶ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 278-322, lists all known Anglo-Norman hagiographical texts.

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should not be exaggerated, as the number of surviving manuscripts may not be an indication of how many manuscripts there originally were, it is worth noting that both French Becket lives appear to have circulated in multiple copies, and that compared with the Latin Becket lives, only John of Salisbury's text, which survives in 36 manuscripts, has more manuscripts than either of these.⁹⁷ This suggests that the Latin lives may have had a more restricted circulation, which is in keeping with the potential of vernacular literature to achieve increased circulation and potential audiences.

A summary of the manuscripts of Beneit's text is as follows, arranged in order of the date of Beneit's text they contain:

Manuscript	Contents
Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 123 (60)	The flyleaves in this manuscript are the earliest surviving witness of Beneit's text, dating from c. 1200. They also include the address to Simon Fitz Simon. The manuscript itself is later, dating from the late thirteenth century, and the rest of the manuscript contains two Latin texts, the <i>Summa Medulle Codicis</i> , and a commentary on the first three books of the <i>Institutiones</i> . ⁹⁸
Cambridge, Clare College 12 (Kk.3.13)	A manuscript of an unknown provenance dating from the early thirteenth century. A complete quire of eight leaves from Beneit's <i>Life of Becket</i> begins and ends the manuscript, which contains a collection of medical texts in several hands (ff. 1r-4v, 230r-3v).

⁹⁷ Manuscripts are listed in Sharpe, *Handlist of Latin Writers*, 309-10.

⁹⁸ M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Gonville and Caius College*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1907-8), 1:133.

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London, British Library Cotton Vespasian D.IV	<p>This is a composite manuscript. The first part of it dates from the second half of the thirteenth century and contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a summary of world history (ff. 2r–5r);• Guillaume le Breton, <i>Gesta Philippi Augusti</i> (ff. 5r–44r);• Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Speculum historiale</i> (ff. 44r–66v);• Paris Chronicle, AD 1249–69 (ff. 66v–72r); <p>The next part of it, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alfred of Beverley, <i>Historia de gestis regalibus regum Britannie</i>, books vi–ix (ff. 73v–125r);• <i>Libellus de Bruto et Britonibus secundum Bedam</i> (ff. 126r–48v)• The text of Beneit of St Albans, <i>La Vie de Thomas Becket</i> (ff. 149-71) dates from the first half of the thirteenth century.
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<p>London, British Library Harley 3775</p>	<p>“A composite miscellany formed by manuscripts of different date and origin” which contains:⁹⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beneit’s <i>Life</i> of Becket, dating from either the second half of the thirteenth or the first quarter of the fourteenth century (ff. 1-14v);• A Crusading song attributed to the Chastelain de Coucy (f. 14v);• <i>Gui de Warewic</i>, dating from either the last quarter of the thirteenth or the first quarter of the fourteenth century (ff. 15-26v);• Latin chronicle, AD 1-1135 (ff. 34-61), with additions up to 1266, dating from the second or third quarter of the thirteenth century (ff. 61v-73);• a prose <i>Life</i> of Saint Robert of Knaresborough possibly dating from the fifteenth century (ff. 74-7);• a London chronicle from c. 1429-30 (ff. 78-99);• the St Albans's Annals, datable to 1428-31 (ff. 100-20);• the St Albans's register of burials (ff. 129r-37r);• a fragment of the Book of Genesis in Anglo-Norman verse from the last quarter of the thirteenth or first quarter of the fourteenth century (ff. 140-9v);• Geoffrey of Vinsauf, <i>Poetria nova</i> from the thirteenth century (ff. 150-78).
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⁹⁹ British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7378&CollID=8&NStart=3775>.

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<p>London British Library Cotton Vespasian B.XIV</p>	<p>This manuscript dates to the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century and contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie de France's <i>Lanval</i> (ff. 1r-8v); • <i>Le livre de Reis de Brittanie</i> (ff. 8v-18r); • <i>Carmen de excidio Troie</i> (ff. 18r-v); • Marie de France's <i>Fables</i> (ff. 13r-32v); • <i>Quadriologus de uita sancti Thome Cantuariensis</i> (ff. 33r-92r); • royal constitutions (ff. 92r-v); • letters of Pope Alexander III concerning Thomas Becket, (ff. 92v-4r); • <i>Translatio sancti Thome martyris</i> (ff. 94r-5r); • Beneit of St Albans, <i>La Vie de Thomas Becket</i> (ff. 95v-113r); • lists of the archbishops of Canterbury, archbishops of York and bishops of Durham (f. 113r).
<p>London, British Library Add. 59616</p>	<p>This is a composite manuscript made up of three different parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latin customary of Becket's shrine, dated 1428 (ff. 1-11); • Complete text of Beneit's <i>Life</i> of Becket, probably copied in Oxford at the end of the thirteenth century (ff. 12-26); • Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence's <i>Life</i> of Becket, probably copied in Canterbury at the end of the 13th century (ff. 27-141). <p>The text in this manuscript is the one used by Schlyter in his edition.</p>

<p>Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale franç. 902</p>	<p>This manuscript dates from the fourteenth century and contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a French translation of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Kings up until the reign of Ezechias (ff. 1-96); • a French play about the resurrection (ff. 97-9); • Robert de Grosseteste's <i>Le Chastel d'amour</i> (ff. 99-108); • the passion of St George in French (ff. 108-17); • Wace's <i>Life</i> of St Nicholas in French (ff. 117-25); • a treatise on God's love and the fear of the Last Judgement (ff. 125-9); • Beneit's <i>Life</i> of Becket, dating from the second half of the thirteenth century (ff. 129-35); • the passion of Little St Hugh of Lincoln in French (ff. 135-7); • Guillaume li Norman's <i>Bestiaire divin</i> (ff. 137-59); • a verse paraphrase of psalm 44 in French apparently made for Marie countess of Champagne (although not written in her dialect) (ff. 159-62); • a calendar from 1236-1817 (f. 163).
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Table 1.1: manuscripts of Beneit's *Life* of Becket.

As can be seen from the table, five copies of the text (as distinct from the manuscripts which contain them) were produced in the thirteenth century. The earliest manuscript dates to c. 1200 and the latest to the first quarter of the fourteenth century, indicating that the text continued to be copied for over a century after it was written. In the case of

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some of these, such as the two Cambridge manuscripts, folios of the text appear to have been reused as flyleaves for other, unrelated manuscripts, and its preservation is thus rather arbitrary. It is striking, however, that the Clare College manuscript contains a collection of medical texts from the early thirteenth century, which could indicate a connection with St Albans, as the abbot at this time was John de Cella, a trained physician.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, two of the four texts in the thirteenth-century section of Cotton Vespasian D.IV are concerned with continental French history, while the other two texts, the *Speculum historiale* and the summary of world history, show more of an interest in universal history. The other historical material from the fifteenth century adds texts on the history of Britain. It is unclear how Beneit's text fits into this context, and, given that its date does not match those of any of the other texts in the manuscript, it is possible that it too has survived somewhat arbitrarily. In all other cases, the text appears to be complete and deliberately selected for inclusion in the manuscript.

The text's presence in composite manuscripts makes it more difficult to determine its original surroundings, but some conclusions can be drawn from the contexts into which it was put by later compilers. There is evidence of both monastic and secular circulation. The epilogue at the end of the Gonville and Caius manuscript suggests at least interest, if not actual patronage, from a secular reader, since it is addressed to Simon Fitz Simon. In addition, the medieval library catalogue of the Benedictine priory at Dover refers to two copies of Beneit's poem.¹⁰¹ Both of these contexts will be explored further below.

¹⁰⁰ *Heads of Religious Houses I*, 67; *Medical Practitioners*, 130-1.

¹⁰¹ Items 170c and 390g in Stoneman, *Dover Priory*; see also Short, "Patronage," 245.

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The Harley manuscript combines Beneit's *Life* of Becket with both secular and religious material. The latter material in the manuscript is partly made up of administrative texts from St Albans, which suggests that the manuscript was made there and that the monastery retained at least one copy of Beneit's text. If that is the case, it is also possible that the French *Genesis* was copied at or at least owned by the abbey, reflecting an interest, or perhaps a need, for vernacular biblical translations.

London, British Library Add. 59616 combines Latin and French material about Becket's cult. The presence of the customary of Becket's shrine from 1428 may indicate that the manuscript was bound in Canterbury, and, indeed, the copy of Guernes's *Life* of Becket that it contains was also copied in Canterbury.¹⁰² The text of Beneit's *Life* could have been brought to Canterbury by a reader from Oxford.¹⁰³ The presence of the *Life* in Canterbury suggests that the text could have been read in both monastic and secular contexts, perhaps to mixed audiences of pilgrims to the shrine, and the use of French increases the size of the potential audience. London, Cotton Vespasian B.XIV also contains a mixture of Latin and vernacular Becket material: there are two lives of Becket, including Beneit's text, the other being the *Quadrilogus*, the source for the *Becket Leaves*. It is possible therefore that this manuscript may have originated from, or at least spent time in, St Albans. The other Latin material also seems to be of ecclesiastical interest, as it comprises letters from Pope Alexander III, information about Becket's translation, and a list of bishops and archbishops. It is possible therefore that these manuscripts represent

¹⁰²British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8363&CollID=27&NStart=59616>. For the *Quadrilogus*, see p. 118-9 below.

¹⁰³ British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8363&CollID=27&NStart=59616>.

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a monastic interest in Thomas Becket and his cult. The inclusion of the list of bishops of Durham along with the archbishops of York and Canterbury may suggest a link to Durham Priory, which did possess some manuscripts in French.¹⁰⁴ The presence of texts about French history, including information about the kings of Brittany and also about Troy, which echoes the *romans d'antiquité* and also texts such as Wace's *Roman de Rou*, secular narratives by Marie de France, and Latin history in this manuscript display the diverse interests of the compiler. The manuscript reflects the many interests of a monastic community and the audiences it contained in secular French writing, for which there are many precedents in other library catalogues.¹⁰⁵

The Paris manuscript contains French hagiographical, devotional, and biblical material. The selection of devotional material and saints' lives could have been made for the interests of a particular patron, or alternatively could have been intended as a compendium of examples to encourage the recipient to live a religious life. The *Chastel d'amour* and the *Bestiaire devin* may also have been intended to be educational. The inclusion of a play particularly highlights the performative qualities of insular French, and is another suggestion that this manuscript was made partly with a secular audience in mind, as dramatisations of saints' lives as miracles were a means of involving an audience in the practice of their faith.¹⁰⁶ It could have been both read privately and also read out loud to an audience. The inclusion of Becket's *Life* in this manuscript alongside

¹⁰⁴ See Piper, "The Monks of Durham and the Study of Scripture."

¹⁰⁵ See the example of Reading Abbey and also the list of secular manuscripts in monasteries: John Frankis, "The Social Context of Vernacular Writing in Thirteenth-Century England: The Evidence of the Manuscripts," *Thirteenth Century England I* (1986): 175-84; Blaess, "Manuscrits français."

¹⁰⁶ Rachel Bullington notes the French technique of farced epistles, which combined Latin and French and were performed during church services, and argues that "such a presentation would still be embedded in the liturgy, but with exploitation of the dramatic aspects of the story: a mini-'Passion'," Bullington, *Alexis*, 110.

other vernacular saints' lives, including Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, shows an interest in both contemporary saints and saints from antiquity.

None of these manuscripts bears any obvious sign of being one of those listed in the Dover Priory catalogue, such as shelfmarks or an *ex libris* mark. However, given that several of the manuscripts are composite, this could mean that texts contained in them were originally in the Dover manuscript, especially given the presence of the *Quadrilogus* in both the Dover catalogue and British Library Cotton Vespasian B.XIV.¹⁰⁷

4.2 Versification

The choice of French for this text also enhances its performative qualities. The verse form particularly contributes to this. The form used is tail rhyme: stanzas of six lines each, in the pattern 8a-8a-4b-8a-8a-4b.¹⁰⁸ There are frequent irregularities of syllables in the lines, which is a common feature of Anglo-Norman versification and which Schlyter further attributes to a possible combination of the Old English technique of versification through stressed syllables and the French technique of syllabic versification.¹⁰⁹ This form, known as *rime couée* in French, appears to be lyrical in origin, and to be descended from Latin hymns (the French name for it comes from Latin *caudate*). Rhiannon Purdie has noted that this form was especially used in insular French literature, and that "its usage was extended to narrative material in the form of saints' lives, sermons, debates, tales

¹⁰⁷ See also K. V. Sinclair, "Evidence for a lost Anglo-Norman copy of Octavian," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 79 (1978): 216-8.

¹⁰⁸ This is an unusual form of versification, which at the time of editing had only been observed in two other Anglo-Norman poems: a fragment of the thirteenth-century *Miracle de S. Madeleine* and *De la bonté des femmes*, a poem by Nicholas Bozon written c. 1300; Schlyter, *VBB*, 23. Schlyter does not offer further comment on this form. Anglo-Norman versification is a notorious area of discussion; for more information, see Roger Pensom, "Pour la versification anglo-normande," *Romania* 124 (2006): 50-65. See also Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*.

¹⁰⁹ Schlyter, *VBB*, 24-5.

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and drama."¹¹⁰ Beneit's text is the earliest known example of *rime couée* in insular French, although Dominica Legge notes that "Beneit's use of the stanza bears all the marks of a long history behind it, and its adoption in English long before the extant examples is to be suspected."¹¹¹

As Beneit's text opens with the verb *chanter*, this at least draws on the associations of the verse form with singing, and perhaps even suggests that the text was intended to be sung in performance contexts.¹¹² The use of a Latin lyric form may have been intended to draw on its associations of hymns and worship, and the repurposing of the form to tell a vernacular story is another indication of Beneit's authorial innovation. The mention of singing furthermore invokes the both performative tradition of the *chansons de geste* and the performance of saints' lives as a means of engaging laypeople.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Purdie, *Anglicising Tail-Rhyme*, 6.

¹¹¹ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 250.

¹¹² *VBB*, v. 3.

¹¹³ There is a precedence for the use of the verb "canter" in the *Life* of St Leger, which opens as follows:

Domine deu devemps lauder
Et a sos sancz honor porter
In su amor cantomps del sanz
Quae por lui augrent granz aanz.
Et ore temps et si est biens
Quae nos cantumps de sant Lethgier.
[To God our Lord must we do praise
And to His saints [our] honour bear.
In love of Him we sing of saints
Who for Him suffered great torments.
And time it is – and meet is so –
That we [now] sing of Saint Léger.]

La Vie de St Leger, ed. by W. Foerster and E. Koschwitz, *Atlfranzösisches Übungsbuch*, col. 77, printed in and translated by Rachel Bullington, *Alexis*, 114.

4.3 Reception: audience

Both of the vernacular narratives of Becket's life provide evidence of performance. Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence describes reading his narrative out loud at Becket's tomb, while Beneit's text contains clues as to its intended mode of reception. Beneit's epilogue in the Gonville and Caius manuscript, in which he instructs the recipient's wife to "suvent le face recorder" [have it read to her often], gives further evidence as to Beneit's intended model of textual consumption.¹¹⁴ If the text was intended to be heard rather than read, this suggests a collective audience, including perhaps an audience of monks and visitors in St Albans Abbey. The relatively short length of the text, along with the narrator's comment that he will tell the tale "brivement", also suggests that the poem was intended for performance as group entertainment; 2000 lines or so could comfortably be read over a couple of hours in the evening, and Beneit's text is 2125 lines long in Schlyter's edition.¹¹⁵ Of course, it is easy to take these qualities at face value to mean that they were intended for performance rather than intended to evoke it.¹¹⁶ However, Beneit's versification, his frequent narratorial asides, and the epilogue's instruction to Simon Fitz Simon do particularly raise this as a very likely possibility.

The high status of the intended audience is encoded in Beneit's use of aristocratic language and motifs in his descriptions of Becket. Beneit spends a considerable period of time establishing Becket's courtesy, which cements him as an ideal hero for an aristocratic audience, using adjectives such as "curteis" [courteous], "facunde out bone

¹¹⁴ Epilogue edited in Short, "Patronage"; "Epilogue," v. 400.

¹¹⁵ *VBB*, v. 15 and v. 2026.

¹¹⁶ D. H. Green warns of taking claims of orality or textuality at face value, and also highlights that the two were not necessarily mutually exclusive: D. H. Green, "Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 267-80, 272; see also D. H. Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction 1150-1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35-54.

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de parler” [with a good way of speaking], “quointes e...pruz” [elegant and virtuous], “vaillant, Curteis e pruz e bien parlant” [brave, courteous and well-spoken] and “nul n’i out el regne si cunquerant Del roi server plus enpernant” [there was nobody in the kingdom so victorious or more enterprising in serving the king].¹¹⁷ The use of these romance motifs to describe Becket makes him familiar to a secular audience, and they can be read as common shorthands to demonstrate a character’s value and virtue.¹¹⁸ Becket’s secular life, which is described by authors of other Becket lives such as William FitzStephen, also features in Beneit’s text.¹¹⁹ Beneit particularly notes Becket’s extravagant lifestyle when he was Henry’s chancellor, and spends plenty of detail on the gifts given to Becket by Henry, including castles, gold, silver and rings, honours, cities, treasures, bishoprics, abbeys, and the care of baronies and counts.¹²⁰ This tremendous array of gifts, spanning both the secular and the spiritual, is significant, as it seems to be attempting to appeal to the interests of both a secular and a religious audience. However, this does not mean that Becket is entirely preoccupied with secular things. To offset his opulence, Becket is shown giving gifts to “povres clers e as prisuns Priveement” [privately to poor clerks and prisoners] and

As cunttes e as baruns

Beaus chivaus, osturs, falcuns,

Veant la gent.¹²¹

[Fine horses, hawks and falcons to counts and barons, in full view of people].

¹¹⁷ *VBB*, v. 204; *VBB*, v. 205; *VBB*, v. 211; *VBB*, vv. 217-8; *VBB*, vv. 220-1.

¹¹⁸ See Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 181-2.

¹¹⁹ See Fitzstephen’s description of the finery Becket enjoyed as chancellor: *MTB* 3:17-26; translated in Staunton, *Lives*, 48-55.

¹²⁰ *VBB*, vv. 133-74.

¹²¹ *VBB*, vv.182-3; *VBB*, vv.184-6.

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The dichotomy between Becket's private and public personae is an implicit argument for Becket's sainthood even before his promotion to archbishop.

There is evidence for two separate instances of the text's reception, which provide contexts and audiences for it. This collective audience could extend beyond an audience of monks and visitors in St Albans Abbey. It might have included an audience in a wealthy noble household such as that of Simon and Isabel of Cuckney, and also audiences in the town of Dover, whose priory held two copies of the text.

4.4 Simon Fitz Simon

The family of Simon Fitz Simon of Kyme (later of Cuckney) provides one example of an audience of Beneit's text, as Simon is the addressee of an epilogue in one fragmentary manuscript of it, Cambridge Gonville and Caius 123 (60). Ian Short has produced an edition of this epilogue, which gives insight into the reception of Beneit's text and also shows recognition of female literacy, as it is Simon's wife Isabel who seems to be the intended recipient of this text.¹²²

Simon Fitz Simon (1135-99) was the second son of Simon of Kyme. The lands of the Kyme family were greatly augmented by marriage, firstly Simon senior's marriage to a certain Agnes, who may have been the heir of Baldric de Lindsey and therefore very wealthy, and secondly that of Simon's son Philip, who married the heiress Hawise of Kyme. Their marriages made the Kyme family extremely powerful.¹²³ Simon junior's

¹²² Short, "Patronage," 239.

¹²³ "In 1166, in addition to a small tenancy-in-chief and about fifteen knights' fees held of the earl of Chester, [Simon's] son Philip...held over fourteen knights' fees of ten lords in five counties, especially Lincolnshire, which made him more powerful than many barons," Paul Dalton, "Kyme family (*per. c.* 1080–*c.* 1380)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54509>.

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marriage to Isabel of Cuckney, a royal ward, likewise increased his status.¹²⁴ Through his own family connections and those made by his marriage he was linked to many religious institutions: his father founded Bullingdon Priory, his brother Philip founded Kyme Priory, and his sister founded Hagneby Priory; furthermore, his father-in-law founded Welbeck Abbey.¹²⁵ Simon and Isabel also made gifts to religious institutions in their own right, giving the mill of Cuckney to Welbeck Abbey.¹²⁶ Simon had died by 1199, meaning that his copy of the text must have been made before this time.¹²⁷

The epilogue appears to have been written by Beneit himself, given the proprietorial way in which it describes the text. It stresses Simon's nobility and piety, encourages him to keep the text safe, to have it read out often to his wife Isabel in order that she may benefit from it as much as possible, and tells him to take example from the saint's life. The first two aspects of this epilogue deserve further exploration. Beneit insists that the text must be kept safe:

Meis del livere voil preier,
E defendrë e cummander
Par amur,
Kë il ne s'en lest desacher,
Nel par païs nel lesst voler
A deshonor.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Isabel is noted as the wife of Simon fitz Simon in K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday Descendants: A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066-1166 II: Pipe Rolls to Cartae Baronum*, (Woodbridge; Boydell, 2002), 424.

¹²⁵ Short, "Patronage," 243.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Dalton, "Kyme family."

¹²⁸ "Epilogue," vv. 394-9, in Short, "Patronage," 245.

[As for the book, however, I wish to beg, strongly urge and kindly request that he does not allow himself to be dispossessed of it or dishonourably permit it to fly around the country].¹²⁹

Ian Short explains this as Beneit's fear of dishonour if his text reaches unfriendly eyes.¹³⁰ However, given what we have already seen of the dissemination of Beneit's text, I think this explanation is unlikely; there is nothing in the original text that suggests that Beneit was anxious to restrict its circulation. I think it more likely that Beneit encouraged Simon to keep the text for himself and to guard it well so that he could receive the full benefit of it; to allow it to be lost or taken from him would be the dishonourable action. This is supported by the next part of the epilogue, which encourages Simon to cherish and keep the text safely for his wife's benefit. The warning may even have been a literary topos: Tony Hunt notes a similar warning to the patron of a thirteenth-century chess treatise.¹³¹

The instruction to Simon to keep the text for his wife merits further analysis, as it provides another model of reception for Beneit's text. Simon's wife Isabel appears to be the intended recipient of the text, as he is instructed to have it read to her often.¹³² The specific mention of Isabel is another illustration of the benefits of writing in French: in this case, it allows a male monastic author to communicate with a secular female reader and her household, suggesting the versatility of Beneit's text.¹³³ It is furthermore possible that Isabel may have been the motivation for Simon's request for the text, as it is

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 246.

¹³¹ Tony Hunt, "The Anglo-Norman Book," in *The Cambridge History of the Book*, ed. Nigel Morgan and Rodney M. Thomson, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998-), 2:367.

¹³² "Epilogue," v. 403, in Short, "Patronage," 245.

¹³³ For more about the importance of female patronage of male monastic authors, see Geoff Rector, "En sa chambre souvent le lit: literary leisure and the chamber sociability of early Anglo-French literature," *Medium Aevum* 81 (2012): 88-125.

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her consumption of the text and not Simon's that Beneit specifically mentions. The address of female readers has a precedent in other Anglo-Norman literature, such as Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, which notes how Constance fitz Gilbert, his female patron, would often read it in her room.¹³⁴ Ian Short has hypothesised that this address to Constance may have been in the hope of the text reaching a larger aristocratic reading community, and it is possible that Beneit, by addressing his text to Isabel and Simon, may have been attempting to secure a similar audience.¹³⁵

Short's article explores the possibility that Simon was the original patron of Beneit's text.¹³⁶ However, he concludes that it is more likely that Simon was an interested reader who, hearing of Beneit's text, requested a copy for himself.¹³⁷ He cites Beneit's use of the verb "escrire" in the epilogue, which suggests that the text was copied out rather than composed for Simon.¹³⁸ Like Short, I would not call Simon a (or the) patron of this text, and would also add that the mention of him at the end of the text, rather than at the beginning, the more conventional position for the mention of a patron, adds weight to this.¹³⁹ He also does not seem to have had any particular royal connection that might explain why he would have commissioned a pro-Henry text. If Simon was not

¹³⁴ Rector, "En sa chambre," 111. For more on female reading communities, see Wogan-Browne, "Saints' Lives and the Female Reader," and "Powers of Record, Powers of Example: Hagiography and Women's History," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 71-93.

¹³⁵ Ian Short, "Introduction" to Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis: History of the English*, ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), xxix.

¹³⁶ Short, "Patronage."

¹³⁷ "We could see Simon not as a direct commissioning patron, but rather as a pious nobleman interested and influential enough to know of, ask for and secure a copy of an already existing monastic poem," *ibid.*, 247.

¹³⁸ "Epilogue," v. 388, *Ibid.*, 238.

¹³⁹ Other Anglo-Norman texts written at this time name the patron at the beginning, such as Wace's *Roman de Rou*, *Waldef* (although the author does not name his patron) and the Nun of Barking's *Life of Edward the Confessor*. However, it is worth noting that this is not always the case, as Benoît's *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie* first mentions its patron at v. 2158, and Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* does not mention the patron until the epilogue of the text at vv. 6435-532, see Rector, "En sa chambre," 109.

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the original patron of the text, this suggests that he encountered it elsewhere and requested his own copy; this is further evidence that Beneit's advice to Simon to keep a close hold on his text was motivated more by his wish for it to be beneficial to him rather than authorial paranoia. Short highlights that Simon's interest in the story of Becket may be explained by the religious connections of his family: both Hagneby Priory, in the Kyme lands, and Beauchief Abbey, a daughter cell of Welbeck Abbey and 15 miles from Simon's estates in Cuckney, were dedicated to Thomas Becket. Furthermore, Simon's lands were close to Beaulieu, in Bedfordshire, and Belvoir Abbey in Lincolnshire, both dependencies of St Albans.¹⁴⁰ These offer a variety of possibilities as to how Simon could have encountered Beneit's text. Houses established in Becket's name may well have obtained texts about their namesake, and Simon could have discovered the text there. Alternatively, the proximity of his lands to daughter houses of St Albans may have meant that he encountered a copy of Beneit's text there on loan from the main abbey. Either way, his active participation in religious networks offers a potential explanation for his encounter with Beneit's text.

Simon's request for his own copy of the text brings new depth to the model of twelfth-century French literacy. Rather than being a relationship entirely conducted through patronage, it seems that this relationship could also be formed with the text as a starting rather than an end point. Simon's reception of his own copy of Beneit's *Life of Becket* gives a new dimension to the relationship between authors and readers in the twelfth century, and the specific mention of Isabel in the text's epilogue is further illuminating in terms of female literacy. The variety of performance situations into which

¹⁴⁰ Short, "Patronage," 246.

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Beneit of St Albans' text fits is an illustration of how the use of the vernacular could propel texts towards different audiences, ensuring wide reception and opportunities for performance.

4.5 Dover

The second context of the consumption of Beneit's text is the coastal town of Dover in Kent, about 16 miles from Canterbury. There are two copies of the text listed in the 1389 library catalogue of Dover Priory, and it is the only vernacular biography of Becket to appear there.¹⁴¹ The presence of not one but two copies of the text illustrates both its popularity and also the demand for vernacular narratives of Becket's life, unsurprising perhaps given the large volume of pilgrims to Becket's shrine. The proximity of Dover to Canterbury inevitably made it a place of accommodation for pilgrims visiting Becket's shrine, especially given its use as a port for foreign visitors. The priory itself, inns in Dover, and, for visitors of sufficient importance, the castle, would all have provided accommodation for the pilgrims coming to visit Canterbury.

There is no concrete explanation for how Beneit's text reached Dover Priory; however, there is evidence of a close connection between Dover and Christ Church, Canterbury, including the sharing of books. The chronicle of Christ Church was passed between the houses of Canterbury and Dover, with the Dover chronicle being used to supplement the Canterbury text.¹⁴² There is also evidence that Christ Church exchanged books with other large monastic houses, including St Albans: the St Albans library contained books copied from exemplars at Canterbury, established during the time that

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 245.

¹⁴² See *Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, 2:xxiv.

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Lanfranc of Canterbury (1070-89) and his kinsman Paul of Caen (1077-93) were in charge of Canterbury and St Albans respectively.¹⁴³ R. M. Thomson suggests that "in most cases, a two-way deal was involved, in which some form of benefit was passed from the community wanting the exemplar to the community that made it available."¹⁴⁴ It is therefore conceivable that Canterbury, given the influx of pilgrims and also the fact that vernacular narratives of Becket are known to have been performed at his tomb, might have requested another narrative of Becket from St Albans, which could then have been borrowed and copied by Dover.

Another explanation for how the text could have come to Dover is its mention of Richard, prior of Dover who later became Archbishop of Canterbury. Although he had died before the text was produced, it may have been a source of prestige for Dover Priory to own a text which promoted the role of one of their own in Becket's life; it may be recalled that out of all of Becket's friends and supporters, only Abbot Simon and Richard of Dover are named in the text. Performances of the text in the priory may therefore have reached a wide audience of pilgrims and subtly increased their sense of the importance of Dover in Becket's story, in the same way that the text promotes St Albans. It is also possible that the text was written with this Dover connection in mind.

Aside from the priory, Dover Castle is particularly significant as a possible location of performance of Becket's text. It had been undergoing renovations since the 1160s, but Becket's death seemed to prompt Henry to transform the castle into a symbol of royal power. Between 1180 and 1185, the Great Tower, or keep, was built. The cost of

¹⁴³ Rodney M. Thomson, "Monastic and cathedral book production," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 2:136-67, 142.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 143. This article also gives examples of other exchanges of texts between monasteries.

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the renovations was nearly £7000, a massive sum of money; for some perspective, the total cost of building Orford castle in Suffolk from scratch from 1166-73 was about £1400.¹⁴⁵ The fact that Henry began the improvement of the keep shortly after Louis VII's pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1179 suggests that the French king's visit inspired him to create a means of impressing foreign visitors. John Goodall argues that Henry's construction work at Dover was also a reaction to the rebuilding of Canterbury cathedral as Becket's cult grew, a cult with "strongly anti-monarchical overtones."¹⁴⁶ The keep was intended to house Henry's court and also to welcome and impress visitors to England, which was particularly relevant given that there were large numbers of pilgrims visiting Becket's shrine in Canterbury. Visitors hosted by Henry would have been reminded of his public penance following Becket's death by the chapel dedicated to Becket on the second floor of the Great Tower.¹⁴⁷ Less distinguished visitors who were not staying with Henry would have been unable to miss the gigantic castle as they arrived at the port, its imposing size an indication of royal presence even in Henry's absence. The struggle between Thomas and Henry therefore continued architecturally after Becket's death through these two massively symbolic buildings at Canterbury and Dover, with the new keep transforming Dover into a town entirely dominated by royal influence.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ "The greatest English building operation of the period, the rebuilding of the great fortress at Dover, absorbed nearly £7000 between 1180 and 1191," Howard Colvin ed., *The History of the King's Works*, 6 vols. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1963-82), 1:66. For castle maintenance, see Charles Coulson, "Peaceable Power in English castles," *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIII* (2000): 69-95, and R. Allen Brown, "Dover Castle," *The Archaeological Journal* 126 (1969): 205-11; 262-4.

¹⁴⁶ John Goodall, *The English Castle 1066-1650* (Yale University Press; New Haven and London, 2011), 141.

¹⁴⁷ The date of dedication of the chapel is not known, and it is first recorded in an account from 1286 detailing this repair of leads over the Thomas Becket chapel (National Archives E101/462/II f. 51r, quoted in Goodall, *English Castle*, 144).

¹⁴⁸ "The magnificent square keep at Dover, with its surrounding mural towers raised majestically above the white cliffs in sight of an old Roman lighthouse...might have been fashioned to deter the odd invader, yet daily spoke with eloquence 'this is my kingdom' to the more numerous pilgrims and princes intent only on going as far as the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury," Thomas K. Keefe, "Henry II (1133-1189)," *Oxford*

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Dover was the port most commonly used by foreign visitors to Becket's shrine, due to its proximity to Canterbury. Philip of Flanders landed at Dover on April 20th 1177 and thence proceeded to Becket's shrine, and on 22nd August 1179, Louis VII, Count Philip of Flanders, William, Earl Mandeville, Henry Duke of Louvain and Baldwin Comte of Guisnes landed at Dover, where they were met by Henry, on their way to Canterbury.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Henry himself sailed to Dover when visiting Becket's shrine was his purpose: he landed there in June 1184 and went on to London via Becket's shrine. The combination of the symbolic power of Dover Castle and an audience of pilgrims travelling to the shrine presented Henry with the ultimate opportunity for self-promotion in a space permeated by his authority.

Dover was also an important location for court business. As the last stop before embarking for France, it was the king's last chance to seal official documents before his departure. People often travelled to Dover to have their charters sealed: an illustration of this is 2nd-10th January 1156, when Henry signed charters at Dover pertaining to Canterbury, Leicester, and the granting of the earldom of Oxford before embarking for Witsand.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, as the king and his entourage waited for the correct conditions to cross the sea, they were often stranded there for several days waiting for the weather to change.¹⁵¹ This could lead to large gatherings of people at Dover. A court thus

Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2008, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12949>.

¹⁴⁹ R. W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of Henry II* (Taylor and Co, London, 1878), 228, 212.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-6.

¹⁵¹ An example of this is 10th April 1185, when Henry visited Dover in order to confront Prince Richard, but did not sail until 16th April. He was accompanied on this occasion by "Richard, [Bishop] of Winchester; John, [Bishop] of Norwich; Herbert, Archdeacon of Canterbury; Hubert Walter; John, Prior of Winchester; Roger de Molins, Master of the Hospitallers of Jerusalem; Garnier de Neapolis, Prior of the same house in England; Ranulph de Glanvill; Herbert, brother of the Temple; Master Stephen of Rheims; Master Hamon, Physician; Master Richard, Physician; Master Robert de Buketorp; Master Thomas Griffin; Jordan de Turri;

stranded would have required entertainment, and so may have been encouraged to turn to the library of the priory or the castle in order to find something to amuse them.

There is a precedent for monasteries lending their books to outside readers: M. R. James, in his edition of the Canterbury and Dover library catalogues, refers to a list of books borrowed from Canterbury library which had not been returned.¹⁵² Similarly William P. Stoneman in his edition of the Dover catalogue notes several instances of books being borrowed by Christ Church monks.¹⁵³ If the monks lent their books to other abbeys, it might also have been the case that they lent them to the nearby castle when its visitors were in need of entertainment in the form of a literary performance. It is therefore possible that the text could have been loaned or brought to the castle from the nearby priory – only a mile away – for the entertainment of visitors, including the royal court. The possession of a French text gave the Dover monks the ability to communicate with the castle and its surroundings, and the existence of a French history of Dover castle produced at the priory is further evidence for the monks' use of French as a means of connecting to secular environments.¹⁵⁴ The opportunity for conversation and engagement with different places, often significant bastions of secular power, may have been a motivation for the priory to procure and consume French literature.

Thomas de Gaiherst; Hugh de Gaiherst; Thomas de Tornaco; Joceline de Risendon; Geoffrey de Niuport; Robert de Cicester, and Ranulf de Gedding," in *ibid.*, 263. This group was made up of a host of important lay and ecclesiastical magnates and officials, illustrating the prestige of potential audiences.

¹⁵² Printed in J. Brigstocke Sheppard ed., *Litterae Cantuariensis* (Canterbury: Christ Church Priory, 1980).

¹⁵³ Stoneman, *Dover Priory*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ SP E.VII 224e in Dover Priory catalogue.

5. Conclusion

The aims of this chapter have been threefold: firstly, to demonstrate that Beneit of St Albans' *Life of Thomas Becket* displays an intriguing pro-Henry narrative stance; secondly, to explore the literary, cultural, and political contexts of the text as a means of determining how these might have influenced the portrayal of Henry and how this might have been valuable for St Albans; and thirdly to consider the text's audience and to connect it to known locations in which the text was consumed outside of St Albans itself. By taking the fact that the circumstances of composition for Beneit's text were unusual in the corpus of Becket lives as a starting point, this chapter has explored the means by which Beneit promoted Henry despite the criticism the king had received from other authors, the common belief that he was responsible for Becket's death, and his admission of such. By engaging with criticism of Henry and refuting it, as well as attributing responsibility for Becket's ultimate fate to other characters, Beneit's portrayal of Henry engages with the king's own self-fashioning. The way in which he established his audience as complicit is a large factor in this achievement, guiding them to share his support of Henry.

Beneit of St Albans' *Life of Thomas Becket* reflects the circumstances of its composition, both inside and outside of the abbey. The cult of Thomas Becket had captured the national imagination; by recalling their own part in Becket's story, St Albans could argue for their continued relevance and attempt to capitalise on Becket's popularity. Furthermore, the death of Becket's close friend Abbot Simon offered the abbey an opportunity to make fresh contact with the royal family, a relationship that was apparently cultivated both by Abbot Warin and by Henry II. Through its positive

portrayal of Henry, Beneit's text can be interpreted as participating in this policy, and it appears that it may have been successful, as it did indeed find its way to Dover, which was a significant site of royal power. This does not prove that Henry was involved in the composition of the text; what is significant is that Beneit's portrayal of Henry fits so well with Henry's own actions, displaying his engagement with the contemporary political narrative.¹⁵⁵

The attempt to communicate with the king and court suggests that the abbey was attempting both to show its support of the king and to state its importance in secular politics, demonstrating its ability to communicate with and influence the king. Henry II's commissioning of French literature at this time indicated his interest in the production of 'officially sanctioned' material, and a two-way communication between the king and his subjects. The use of the king's language, in which so much other literature dealing with history and royalty was produced, is an example of the abbey's participation in contemporary politics. St Albans was therefore building on its reputation as a place of Latinate learning by including a French dimension, indicating the capacity and the desire to be involved in current affairs. Beneit's portrayal of Henry is an example of this, speaking directly to the king and displaying the abbey's united front with the monarch, endorsing and disseminating a positive account of Henry's behaviour to a wider audience and promoting him in the face of potential criticism from other monastic communities. Further afield, the text represented St Albans demonstrating its role even outside the

¹⁵⁵ Whether his text was commissioned by Henry or not may not be important: Meecham-Jones highlights that "whether texts that magnified and sustained Anglo-Norman rule were commissioned by the king and queen themselves, or by their aristocratic adherents, modifies scarcely, if at all, the role of texts within the ideological construction of the Plantagenet legacy," Meecham-Jones, "Introduction," in Kennedy and Meecham-Jones eds., *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, 4.

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abbey walls. By using the king's language and speaking about the king, the abbey, led by the newly appointed Abbot Warin, engaged with Henry's self-presentation and constructed connections both to Henry and to Thomas Becket through their own recent history.

The performative contexts of the text are also enlightening, ranging from St Albans abbey itself, various locations in the town of Dover including the priory and possibly the castle, even before the royal court, and the household of Simon Fitz Simon. This is an illustration of the permeation of French literature into many different areas at this time, including those which would be hard to reach in Latin, particularly female reading communities. The fact that Beneit's *Life* of Becket has so many indications of performance also shows the dynamic qualities of French literature, and its ability to combine entertainment with religious instruction. Beneit's use of a highly unusual verse form displays the level of innovation at St Albans, indicating that it was so much more than the Latinate community suggested by most of its surviving texts.

By choosing French, Beneit immediately reaches a wider audience, both monastic and secular. He can therefore address multiple groups and also capitalise on the performative possibilities of French. However, despite the fact that the text was rendered *more* accessible by the choice of French over Latin, this does not mean that it was intended to be universally accessible. Instead, it allowed the text to be directed towards specific audiences, in this case, the court and the king. Unlike Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, who describes reading his text to audiences of pilgrims visiting Canterbury, Beneit directed his narrative towards a powerful audience, in an environment sympathetic to the king. Guernes was independent of a monastery and could personally

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direct his text to a wide audience, while Benefit represented a community which wanted to display its loyalty to the king and needed to recall its own importance to those in power; Guernes had the support of Becket's sister and her nunnery; Benefit was part of an institution which wanted to reach the ear of the other side in the Becket conflict. It was a political necessity for St Albans authors to use French if they wanted to communicate with the royal court, and rather than access, French is here used predominantly for engagement and outreach.

Chapter 2: The Becket Leaves

1. Introduction

The *Becket Leaves* are four manuscript leaves with French text and rubrics, illustrations, and Latin headings that recount the life of Thomas Becket.¹ Paul Meyer published an edition of the *Leaves* in 1885, but since then they have attracted little literary attention, probably due to the fact that they are fragmentary. In my MA dissertation, I produced a new edition and translation of the *Becket Leaves* which differed from Meyer's edition in that it attempted to preserve the Anglo-Norman versification of the text, as Meyer's edition tends towards amending or adding to the text in order to make it fit the 8-syllable line: "il est arrivé...que ces corrections, tout en ayant pour but de satisfaire au sens ou à la grammaire, ont en même temps apporté quelque amélioration à la mesure."²

However, despite the literary neglect of the *Leaves*, they have attracted attention from art historians. Janet Backhouse and Christopher de Hamel produced a facsimile of the manuscript in 1988.³ Their discussion has largely focused on the possibility that they were written and illustrated by Matthew Paris. Nigel Morgan examined the case for Paris's authorship in an article in 1988.⁴ Similarly, Paul Binski has examined the *Leaves* for the part they played in thirteenth-century hagiography.⁵

Finally, the *Leaves* have been studied for their contribution to knowledge of women's literary culture in the thirteenth century. Once again, this rests on their potential connection to Matthew Paris, whose illustrated saints' lives produced in the

¹ See the Appendix for full-colour reproductions of the *Leaves*.

² Katharine Bilous, "Reading The *Becket Leaves*: A New Edition and Translation," (MA dissertation, University of York, 2008); Meyer, *Fragments*, xxxvi.

³ Janet Backhouse and Christopher de Hamel, *The Becket Leaves* (London: British Library, 1988).

⁴ Nigel Morgan, "Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the leaves of Thomas Becket," 89.

⁵ Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 125, 127.

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mid-thirteenth century are known to have been circulated amongst and consumed by aristocratic female audiences.⁶ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has examined how the *Leaves* use their combination of text, image, and rubric to convey their narrative.⁷ This aspect of the *Leaves* is particularly significant and will be explored in detail in this chapter. The *Becket Leaves* have no definite connection to St Albans; however, their visual and thematic similarity to the work of Matthew Paris raises that possibility, and at the very least suggests that they may have been consumed by a similar audience as Paris's works, if not actually composed by him at the abbey. Paris's work provides the *Leaves* with a context; while not definitely a St Albans production, they were certainly engaging with this unique style of writing and illustrating saints' lives.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, it will provide a detailed reading of the *Becket Leaves* in order to explore their depiction of Becket and Henry, as well as the way in which the narrative is apportioned throughout the different media on the page. It will also consider how the text relates to its source, the Latin compilation known as the *Quadriologus*, in order to give it the same literary scrutiny that other biographies of Becket and other thirteenth-century saints' lives have received.⁸ By doing so, it will build on the work of scholars such as Christopher Baswell, Victoria Jordan, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne in reading the text and images as a composite narrative, as well as treating the *Leaves* to sustained literary attention for the first time.⁹ Secondly, this chapter will set

⁶ J. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*.

⁷ Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 159.

⁸ J. C. Robertson (ed.), *Quadriologus* in *MTB*, 4:266-430.

⁹ Christopher Baswell, "King Edward and the Cripple," in *Chaucer and the Challenges of Medievalism: Studies in Honor of Henry Ansgar Kelly* ed. Donna Minkova and Theresa Tinkle (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 15-28; Victoria B. Jordan, "The multiple narratives of Matthew Paris' *Estoire de seint Aedward le rei*: Cambridge, University Library MS Ee. iii. 59," *Parergon* 13 (1999): 77-92; Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 159.

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the text in its cultural context, in particular the activities of King Henry III and his attempts to establish a national cult of St Edward the Confessor, and also the behaviour of Stephen Langton and Edmund Rich, two thirteenth-century archbishops of Canterbury. As part of this, it will consider contemporary ideas of sainthood, which in part were influenced by Thomas Becket's life and *vitae*, and will build upon the work of scholars such as Paul Binski who has examined the role of Thomas Becket in the cultural imagination of England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁰ Thirdly, this chapter will examine the potential reading cultures in which the *Becket Leaves* could have participated, again building on the work of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster on female reading cultures associated with St Albans Abbey.¹¹

The purpose of this chapter is not to argue for or against Matthew Paris's authorship of the *Leaves*, nor is it to produce a detailed comparison between the *Becket Leaves* and Beneit's *Life* of Becket discussed in the previous chapter, although both of these matters will be mentioned. It will instead look at the text on its own terms and explore its context to consider how an abbey such as St Albans may have deployed this text to relate to its various readerships.

2. Reading the *Becket Leaves*

This section of the chapter will now examine the manuscript, possible authorship, and source of the *Becket Leaves*, and also explore how the text constructs its narrative through text and image.

¹⁰ Paul Binski, "Reflections on *La Estoire de saint Aedward le rei*: Hagiography and Kingship in Thirteenth-Century England," *Journal of Medieval History* 16 (1990): 333-50.

¹¹ See Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *Life of St Alban*, 32-5.

2.1. The manuscript of the *Becket Leaves*

As the text is fragmentary, it presents an interpretative challenge. Backhouse and de Hamel estimate that the fragments are “the first, second, fourth and fifth leaves of a gathering of eight leaves.”¹² It is difficult to know exactly how much of the total narrative the surviving leaves represent: they do not cover key events such as Becket and Henry's relationship prior to Becket's archiepiscopacy, or Becket's death and canonisation, and therefore it is likely that there were at least two other gatherings in the original manuscript, one preceding and one following the surviving text. Despite the fact that the *Leaves* are incomplete, they can be explored for the way they construct a narrative through text, rubric, and image, and also the presentations of Becket and Henry on the surviving *Leaves*. It is also necessary to consider the illustrations as part of the overall reading of the text, as they are an inseparable part of the construction and a vital location for some of the information that the *Becket Leaves* convey. I will produce a reading of the *Leaves* arguing that the presentation of Thomas Becket is structured so as to emphasise his isolation from the rest of the Church, to focus attention on his physicality, and to promote the idea of Henry and Becket as opposites.

The surviving portion of the *Becket Leaves* deals with Henry's expulsion of Becket's relatives from the country, Becket's excessive fasting (which endangers his life until he alters his habits), and the contemporary problems with the papacy which meant that Pope Alexander III (r. 1159–81) was exiled in France, as was Becket himself. Becket is shown to be a close friend to Pope Alexander, as he accompanies him for part of the way on his journey out of France. The text then deals with Becket's reaction to his

¹² Backhouse and de Hamel, *The Becket Leaves*, 13.

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relatives being exiled, which was to excommunicate the royal servants responsible, and Henry's rage at Becket's behaviour and the subsequent negotiations between Becket and Henry with King Louis of France acting as mediator on papal advice. However, the council is a failure and Becket departs from the two kings on bad terms. Becket then has a vision of his martyrdom. Meanwhile, Henry arranges the coronation of his son, the Young King Henry, which has terrible consequences when Becket finds out. Becket is hurt and furious, and on the Pope's advice excommunicates those involved. Becket then prepares to return to England, despite being counselled against it. He arrives in England and is greeted by the common people, who are delighted to see him return, and by knights sent by the king and Ranulf de Broc, who are furious about Becket's excommunication of those involved in the coronation of the Young King Henry. At this point, the *Leaves* end.

2.2. Matthew Paris

It is important to note the possibility of Matthew Paris's involvement with the *Becket Leaves*. Matthew Paris was a hagiographer, historian, and illustrator, and he had many connections among the nobility, including King Henry III.¹³ He is known to have written a biography of Thomas Becket, as evidenced by two independent sources: firstly a record in the St Alban's *Liber benefactorum* by Thomas Walsingham that Paris produced and illustrated lives of St Thomas and St Edmund Rich, and secondly in a note in Paris's own hand on the second flyleaf of the *Vie de seint Auban* manuscript, reading "G., send, please, to the lady Countess of Arundel, Isabel, that she is to send you the book about St Thomas

¹³ For a list of Matthew Paris's informants, see Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 13-7.

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the Martyr and St Edward which I translated and illustrated.”¹⁴ An account of the wardrobe of Eleanor of Castile, Henry III’s daughter-in-law, reveals that there was also a manuscript circulating in the late thirteenth century that contained biographies of both St Thomas Becket and St Edward the Confessor.¹⁵ This information does not prove that the *Becket Leaves* are Paris’s biography of Becket, or a copy of it, but it certainly raises it as a possibility, given the similarity in layout of Matthew Paris’s other French illustrated saints’ lives and the *Becket Leaves*.

Broadly speaking, art historians have tended to argue that Matthew Paris is not the author of the *Leaves*, while literary scholars have tended to argue that he is. Nigel Morgan has noted that both the estimated dates of the work and the drawing style do not fit with what is known about Matthew Paris:

The stylistic character of the St Thomas leaves is best paralleled in works of the period 1220-40 rather than in the twenty years 1240-60, during which all but the earliest examples of Matthew Paris’s work were produced.¹⁶

The figures in the Thomas are more angular in form and jerky in pose, the lines not so rounded in the fold patterns, and the facial types have a smaller range of expressions than the work of Matthew.¹⁷

¹⁴ Thomas Walsingham noted “Matthæus Parisiensis...Thomæ et Edmundi, Archiepiscoporum Cantuariæ, conscripsit et depinxit elegantissime,” in *Annales Monasterii S. Albani* ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1965); “G. mittatis si placet ad dominam comitissam harundell’ Isabellam ut mittat vobis librum de sancto thoma martire et sancto [ed]wardo quem transtuli et protraxi.” Translation M. R. James, *La Estoire de seint Aedward le rei; the Life of St. Edward the Confessor, Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique Manuscript (Cambridge University Library Ee.3.59) Together with Some Pages of the Manuscript of the Life of St. Alban at Trinity College, Dublin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 21.

¹⁵ “Libros reginae de vita beati Thome et Sancti Edwardi,” [The queen’s books of the lives of the blessed Thomas and St Edward], PRO E101/352/11 mem. 2, cited in Binski, “Reflections on *La Estoire de seint Aedward le rei*,” 339.

¹⁶ Morgan, “Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the Leaves of Thomas Becket,” 89.

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He also rejects the theory that the *Becket Leaves* could be a copy made from an original by Matthew Paris, arguing that the illustrations are more similar to the earlier style found in Westminster.¹⁸ Furthermore, Morgan highlights the differing dimensions of the *Becket Leaves* when compared with Matthew Paris's other illustrated saints' lives.¹⁹ However, as this manuscript could be a copy rather than the original text, it is possible that its dimensions do not match those of the autograph copy. Also, as identified above, the fact that the *Becket Leaves* do not match other examples of Matthew Paris's handwriting and drawing style need not necessarily mean that this version is not from his original design, as he is known to have made maquettes of his work for other scribes and artists to copy; this did not stop the attribution of the similar-looking *Estoire de seint Aedward* to Matthew Paris on just these grounds.²⁰ Morgan connects the *Becket Leaves* to London on the basis of the similarity of the page size to other books produced in London during the 1230-40s, such as the drawings added to the Westminster Psalter and a copy of the *Flores Historiarum* produced for Westminster Abbey, although as the latter went back and forth between Matthew Paris at St Albans and Westminster this does not decisively prove his point.²¹ He concludes that they are

very probably by an unknown poet, and...illustrated by an artist whose name was not recorded. Matthew Paris later produced another version (now lost), based on

¹⁷ Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, 1:107-8.

¹⁸ Morgan, "Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the Leaves of Thomas Becket," 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-3.

²⁰ Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of St Edward*, 25-6.

²¹ Morgan, "Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the Leaves of Thomas Becket," 94.

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this text, in which he used the format of illustration already established by the anonymous London artist.²²

This theory appears to account both for how Matthew Paris can have produced a life of Thomas Becket *and* how the *Becket Leaves* can be so different in style to Matthew Paris's work and appear to be of an earlier date. Indeed, if the *Becket Leaves* predate Matthew Paris's work, it is possible that he encountered them and that they inspired him to produce his French saints' lives. However, I would like to suggest an alternative.

Paul Binski also rejects Paris's authorship of the *Leaves*. Noting instead their similarity to Paris's illustrated hagiographical works, and stating that they demonstrate the popularity of such illustrated hagiographical texts, he dates the *Leaves* to c. 1230.²³ However, there are no other illustrated hagiographies attested from this time that are laid out in the same way as the *Becket Leaves*, and this does not seem to be a sufficiently robust argument for a different authorship. Backhouse and de Hamel, in their facsimile of the *Becket Leaves*, seem more in favour of Paris's authorship, but still refrain from making a final decision, merely stating that it "seems probable" that Matthew was their author.²⁴ The date of the *Becket Leaves* is also significant here: Morgan and Backhouse and de Hamel both suggest a date of 1220-40, but they use this information in contrasting ways, Backhouse and de Hamel to argue for Paris's involvement, and Morgan to argue against it.²⁵ These arguments, made in the same year, use the same evidence to

²² Ibid., 94.

²³ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 21, 124.

²⁴ Backhouse and de Hamel, *The Becket Leaves*, 18.

²⁵ "The stylistic character of the St Thomas leaves is best paralleled in the works of the period 1220-40 rather than in the twenty years 1240-60, during which all but the earliest examples of Matthew Paris's work were produced," Morgan, "Matthew Paris, St Albans, London, and the Leaves of Thomas Becket," 90;

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make opposing points. The answer depends on whether the reader believes that Matthew Paris was active at this time, which is not easy to determine. He entered St Albans in January 1217, and he took over writing history on the death of Roger of Wendover in 1236, so he was certainly writing by that date, but he could easily have been active as a writer and artist before then.²⁶

These arguments are based on artistic style alone: they do not take into account the great amount of linguistic and literary evidence for Matthew Paris's involvement. In his edition of the text, Paul Meyer was unsure of the text's authorship, but he did draw comparisons between it and Paris's *Vie de saint Auban* and *Estoire de saint Aedward le rei*.²⁷ He tentatively suggested a date of 1230-60.²⁸ The first to attribute the *Leaves* to Matthew Paris was M. R. James, based partly on the statement from the *Liber benefactorum* mentioned above and also on some linguistic similarities.²⁹ Richard Vaughan follows James's attribution of the *Leaves* to Matthew Paris.³⁰ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster also believe Paris to have been the author, including the *Becket Leaves* in their list of saints' lives attributed to him in their translations of Paris's *Estoire de saint Aedward* and *Vie de saint Auban*.³¹

Without an extensive linguistic study, it would be impossible to prove Matthew Paris's authorship of this text.³² What can be said is that there is certainly no other

"The style of the script and decoration in the Becket fragments suggest a date of around 1220-1240, consistent with the decades of Matthew's great activity," Backhouse and de Hamel, *The Becket Leaves*, 17.

²⁶ Lloyd and Reader, "Paris, Matthew (c.1200-1259)."

²⁷ Meyer, *Fragments*, xxxiv.

²⁸ Meyer, *ibid.*, xxvii.

²⁹ M. R. James, *La Estoire de saint Aedward le Rei*, 26.

³⁰ Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 168-76.

³¹ See Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of St Edward, 1, Life of St Alban*, 59.

³² Some linguistic research was undertaken by M. R. James in his edition of *ESA*, but it was not an in-depth study.

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identified author who was producing saints' lives like this in the thirteenth century, and that Matthew Paris's authorship provides a context for the production and consumption of these lives. The readers of Matthew's French texts included Queen Eleanor (1236-91), the Countess of Arundel (Isabel de Warenne, 1226x30-82), the Countess of Cornwall (Sanchia of Provence, sister of Queen Eleanor, 1243-61), and the Countess of Winchester (Vaughan suggests this was Matilda de Bohun, d. 1255, while Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster propose either Matilda de Bohun or her successor Eleanor de Ferrers, d. 1274).³³ Whether Matthew Paris was the author of the *Becket Leaves* or not, the fact that illustrated saints' lives with the same combination of Latin captions and French rubric and text are known to have been consumed by this élite secular female audience in the mid-thirteenth century provides a context for the consumption of the *Becket Leaves*, and this potential readership will be explored in more detail in section four of this chapter.³⁴

I would suggest a date of c. 1240 for the *Becket Leaves*, as this is roughly contemporary with the date of the other illustrated saints' lives which give them context. This would place the composition of the *Becket Leaves* during the abbacy of John of Hertford (1235-60), and close to the canonisation of St Edmund of Abingdon in 1246. My proposed dating could explain the thematic similarities between the *Becket Leaves* and the *Vie de saint Edmond* by Matthew Paris, which will be explored in more detail later.

³³ Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 288; Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *Life of St Alban*, 33.

³⁴ However, it is worth noting that this is not the only context for the reading of Matthew Paris's vernacular saints' lives, as the presence of his *VSE* in the Campsey manuscript will attest. For more on vernacular hagiography in a female religious environment, see Brown and Bussell, *Barking Abbey*.

2.3. The *Quadrilogus* and the *Becket Leaves*

The source of the *Becket Leaves* is a text known as the *Quadrilogus*, a combination of four narratives of Becket's life made up of portions of the accounts by Herbert of Bosham, Alan of Tewkesbury, William of Canterbury, John of Salisbury, and Benedict of Peterborough. As Alan of Tewkesbury's account only contains some of the story, it is replaced towards the end of the text with that of Benedict of Peterborough, and so there are never more than four accounts being used at the same time. The original compiler was Elias of Evesham and it was dedicated to Henry de Longchamp, abbot of Crowland.³⁵ In his dedication to Henry, Elias draws an analogy between the four Gospels and the four accounts used to create the *Quadrilogus*.³⁶ Fittingly, the *Quadrilogus* itself was the product of many editors as well as many authors: Abbot Henry, and Roger, another Crowland monk, were also involved in its production. Roger's edition expanded the original text and inserted letters and extracts from letters concerning the Becket controversy into Elias's text. Elias's version of the text seems to be the one used by the *Leaves*.

The *Quadrilogus* in its various forms survives in over twenty manuscripts.³⁷ The text was first compiled in 1189-90 and Roger's newer version was sent to Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, in time for Becket's translation in 1220.³⁸ The *Quadrilogus* continued to be copied and expanded, supplemented by other accounts, throughout the Middle Ages, and was extremely popular: it was also translated into

³⁵ Sharpe, *Handlist of Latin Writers*, 111. There is an article about one version of the *Quadrilogus* by Anne Duggan, "The Lyall Version of the *Quadrilogus* life of St Thomas of Canterbury," *Analecta Bollandiana* 112 (1994): 105-38.

³⁶ *MTB* 4:xix.

³⁷ Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of his Letters*, 205-6.

³⁸ Duggan, "Lyall Version," 107.

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English and incorporated into the *South English Legendary* during the thirteenth century, an indication of a continued demand for vernacular versions of Becket's life.³⁹

Paul Meyer's edition of the *Becket Leaves* includes an analysis of how the French author used the Latin source.⁴⁰ His work reveals that they follow the source closely and in a linear fashion, but they also make some omissions in order to simplify the narrative.⁴¹ However, the biggest change made to the source, which Meyer does not mention, is the addition of images. Their presence affects the construction of the narrative and allows a more complex distribution of material than a text without illustrations.

The adaptation of the Latin source made the account available to readers of varying literacies. As will be seen in the next section, the use of images in combination with the vernacular had great implications for the audience of the text and for the effect it created.

2.4. The *Becket Leaves*: text and image

The text, rubric, and images of the *Becket Leaves* provide their audience with three different sources of narrative. There has been no complete study of the way in which they interact to produce the narrative; however, Christopher Baswell and Victoria Jordan have each examined how the text and images in Matthew Paris's *Vie de seint Auban* and

³⁹ Ibid., 106; Carl Horstmann ed., *The Early South-English Legendary* (London: Early English Texts Society, 1887), 106-77.

⁴⁰ Meyer *Fragments*, viii-xxvi.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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Estoire de seint Aedward work together to make a composite narrative.⁴² In addition to this, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has analysed the image of Becket and the doctor on folio 1r:

The visual image of the sick saint is an important link between him and female audiences (of whatever literacy) since it confers prestige on the ascetic devotional practices common to the representation both of male ascetics and of chaste widows; the Latin caption in the illustration offers both a cartoon dramatisation of what the doctor is saying about the saint's over-zealous fasting, vigils and self-mortification *and* a visual image of a learned language for Latin-less readers; the red French captions beneath the illustration offer one kind of summarised narrative, open to more rapid perusal; the black ink verses beneath them offer the full text in a form suitable for reading aloud; and the Latin inscriptions above the illustration offer a further form of brief summary (perhaps as a key to clerical readers taking Latin-less female patrons through the narrative).⁴³

This illustrates how the different sources of narrative on the page combined to make the story accessible to audiences of multiple literacies. It also raises the issue of the gender of that audience: Wogan-Browne's gendered reading of the leaf suggests that the author/illustrator of the *Becket Leaves* was inviting a female audience to identify with Becket. I will consider both of these in my analysis of the *Leaves*.

⁴² Baswell, "King Edward and the Cripple"; Christopher Baswell, "The manuscript context," in Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *Life of Saint Alban*; Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200-1400* (New Haven; London, Yale University Press, 1995); Jordan, "The multiple narratives of Matthew Paris' *Estoire de seint Aedward le rei*."

⁴³ Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 159.

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The *Becket Leaves* is unique among the texts discussed in this thesis in that its illustrations are integral to its interpretation. The *Roman de toute chevalerie*, the subject of chapter 3, exists in illustrated manuscripts, but its text can function without the illustrations, as witnessed by the 14th-century Durham manuscript.⁴⁴ However, in the case of the *Becket Leaves*, the images form an essential location of narrative in their own right.

The presence of images gives the author of the *Becket Leaves* the option to double the impact of some parts of the narrative by featuring them both in the text proper and in the image. An example of this is folio 2r, where the text, rubric, and image all deal with the same subjects. Alternatively, the images also offer the opportunity to condense the narrative by converting text into images: on folio 1r, which corresponds to pages 347-9 in the edited *Quadrilogus* text, the first image condenses almost a page of source text into one image. A similar tactic is used on folio 2v, when the image condenses the long account of Becket's parting from the kings following the council into a visual depiction of the frustration and animosity between the two parties.

In order to display the way in which the text is structured, I will head the analysis of each leaf with a 'map' showing the distribution of information. The images may be consulted in the Appendix. The 'maps' have been colour-coded so as to display the different languages: Latin headings are in black text, images are in blue, rubric is in red, and the French text proper is in green. These are not translations of the text, but summaries intended to show how the information is distributed throughout the different forms of narration.

⁴⁴ The Durham manuscript has no illustrations and uses the image rubrics as chapter headings.

Folio 1r

Becket's family are exiled.	In Pontigny Becket becomes ill through excessive voluntary fasting.	
Henry excommunicates Becket's relatives; rough-looking soldiers push them out of the image.		Becket lies ill and is consulting a doctor.
Henry exiles all of Becket's relatives and spares nobody.	Becket's confessor persuades him to change his ways.	Becket is ill from fasting, prayer, vigils, and afflictions. He is persuaded to change his habits.
Becket's fasting and suffering.	Henry is furious at the situation between himself and Becket. Messengers go back and forth to the Pope.	The Pope tells Henry not to disturb Becket. He says they need to have some mediation. Becket insists on there being a third voice in the discussion so as not to mislead the Pope.

Table 2.1: Map of folio 1r of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 1 in the Appendix.

Folio 1r juxtaposes images of Henry and Becket with accounts of their activities: the image and rubric of Henry excommunicating Becket's relatives tops a column describing

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Becket's ascetic activities, and the image and rubric of Becket tops a column which deals mostly with Henry's actions. The effect of this is that the king and archbishop literally overshadow each other's actions, highlighting the link between them even when they are physically separated. Furthermore, the image and rubric of the first column are complementary to the text proper, as the text itself does not relate the expulsion of Becket's relatives. That section of the narrative is condensed into the image, which vividly depicts the act of expulsion: Henry's words are held in a scroll brandished at Becket's family members like a weapon, underscoring their hostile effect. Henry is seated on a throne, whereas all other figures in the image are standing or sitting on the floor, reflecting the power dynamic between king and subjects. The soldiers in the image are particularly violent, with drawn swords: they have crammed Becket's family into the far right of the image, and one of them even treads on a seated woman holding a baby. This adds to the presentation of Henry's actions and men as violent, which is a consistent strategy of presentation used throughout the *Leaves*. The rubric underneath the image supports this, as it stresses that

N'est espari

Ne li jounes ne li enchain,

Ne la femme k'en gisine

Tient sun enfant a sa peitrine.⁴⁵

[Neither the young nor the elderly are spared, nor the woman in childbed, who clutches her child to her chest].

⁴⁵ *TBL*, f. 1r, rubric, 1-2; Meyer does not number the lines for the rubrics, but prints them separately, so references to the rubrics will be to the pages on which they are printed. Meyer also does not number the text continuously, so references to line numbers will be preceded by the folio number.

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These figures are all found in the image, and the rubric draws attention to them, highlighting the extreme cruelty of Henry's actions and the vulnerability of those figures.

In the second image, Becket is reclining while speaking to a doctor. The figure of Becket is mostly uncoloured, which highlights his pallor and weakness.⁴⁶ The inclusion of a doctor, who can be identified by the urine flask he holds, reinforces the theatre of the sickbed. The rubric shows Becket participating in some of the classic activities of the aristocratic martyr-saint: “jeunes e uraisuns, veilles e afflictions” [fasts and prayers, vigils and afflictions].⁴⁷ The rubric does not specify by whose instructions Becket changes his ways, but this is expanded in the text: it is “un suen secret confessor” [one of his private confessors] who encourages him to make the change.⁴⁸ Becket's spiritual focus in the text contrasts with his physical concerns in the image. However, the doctor's presence does provide an instant visual clue that Becket is unwell, which might not have been conveyed so efficiently with a confessor. The fact that it is the confessor and not the doctor who eventually motivates Becket's change of behaviour shows the spiritual rather than physical motivation behind Becket's actions. The combination of an image of Becket's suffering with the suffering of his family creates a link, as though their mutual misery has a shared impact. The reader seems to be invited to draw a parallel between Becket and the nursing mother: they are in similar positions, both suffering from bodily incapacity, and equally vulnerable to the display of violence from Henry. Locating a

⁴⁶ It is worth pointing out that some of the images in this manuscript appear to be unfinished, and so it is possible that this image is uncoloured because the illustrator was intending to go back and finish it; however, if this is the case then the coincidence still helps to reinforce Becket's invalid state.

⁴⁷ *TBL*, f. 1r, in Meyer, *Fragments*, 2.

⁴⁸ *TBL*, f. 1r, v. 15.

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feminised Becket in the images makes it impossible to miss the connection between him and the reader, whatever their level of literacy.

The text proper on this leaf devotes exactly half of its total space to Becket's ascetic practices. Image and rubric help to establish his asceticism, and also the physicality of his symptoms to emphasise his weakness. It also stresses Becket's own delicate constitution: "mais co li est de sufrir gref: tendre fu nurri e suef" [but this is difficult for him to suffer, as he was brought up gently and tenderly].⁴⁹ The physicality of Becket's torments is not seen in Beneit's *Life of Becket*, which suggests that it was a new trend in the writing of saints' lives in the thirteenth century. It also emphasises Becket's physicality, vulnerability, and isolation, which the narrator highlights throughout the text. Becket's extreme bodily mortification foreshadows that he will eventually suffer martyrdom, the ultimate sacrifice in the quest for closeness to God.

When Henry is first mentioned midway through the folio, the first thing that is said about him is his anger: "tant est irez ne set ke fere" [he is so angry he does not know what to do].⁵⁰ Irrational anger is a typical topos attributed to pagan kings in other texts, such as the *Vie de seint Auban* by Matthew Paris.⁵¹ However, here the anger of an invader's threat to Christianity is replaced by an internal, and therefore more dangerous, figure, in Henry the Christian king. In his anger, Henry's first concern is for his reputation:

Creistre voit de jur en jur

Sun repruver e deshnour.

⁴⁹ *TBL*, f. 1r, vv. 5-6.

⁵⁰ *TBL*, f. 1r, v. 28.

⁵¹ *VSA*, vv. vv. 543-4: "de ire e mautalent tut mue la culur, e puis li a dit par curuz e irur."

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Mut est laidiz e escharni

E maudit: ço peise li.⁵²

[He sees his dishonour and criticism growing day by day. He is greatly vilified, mocked and cursed. This weighs on him].

Here the narrator suggests that Henry's concern with public opinion rather than remorse is what motivates him to attempt a reconciliation. The concern with outward appearances rather than spiritual peace portrays Henry as a shallow and greedy man, and this first encounter with him sets the tone for the negative depiction of him throughout the rest of the *Leaves*.

Becket has the final word on this leaf, as he expresses disagreement, not on his own behalf, but rather for God:

"Ne place a Deu ki fist le mund,

E pur nus mort suffri en croiz,

Ke ni eusse la tierce voiz."⁵³

["May it not please God, who made the world and suffered death for us on the cross, that there may not be a third voice at this meeting"].

He even places himself above the Pope:

La Pape par faus creire

Purroit faus jugement feire.⁵⁴

⁵² (*TBL*, f. 1r, vv. 29-32).

⁵³ (*TBL*, f. 1r, vv. 50-2).

⁵⁴ (*TBL*, f. 1r, vv. 53-4).

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[The Pope, through false belief, could make a false judgement].

The way that Becket presents himself as the voice of God is another suggestion of his forthcoming martyrdom, as is his concern that the Pope may make a mistake. By having Becket bypass the hierarchy of the Church on earth and speak directly for God, the author of the *Leaves* alludes to a connection between Becket and Christ, a connection referenced several times throughout the *Leaves*.

Folio 1v

<p>Becket accompanies the Pope part of the way back to Rome. They encourage each other to stand manfully in their causes.</p>		
<p>The Pope and Becket embrace in the centre of the image, with members of their entourage to either side.</p>		
<p>The Pope understands that a third voice is needed in the dispute.</p> <p>The dispute between the Empire and the Pope is settled. The Pope leaves France.</p>	<p>When peace was established between the Church and the Empire, the Pope departs from France and sorrowfully takes leave of Becket in Bourges.</p>	<p>Henry becomes envious. He threatens the Cistercians for sheltering Becket saying that this damages him and that he will take their lands and possessions as punishment.</p>
	<p>The Pope and Becket separate, never to see each other again in this life.</p> <p>Becket returns to Pontigny for a life of peace and study. However, the Devil envies this.</p>	

Table 2.2: Map of folio 1v of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 2 in the Appendix.

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As in the previous leaf, the image only shows part of the story, but it overshadows the events in the text and shapes the reading of them. The image of Becket's farewell to the Pope in Bourges underscores the affective connection between them. In contrast to Beneit's text, where Becket's emotional focus and support is Henry, here the focus is redirected to the Pope. The two men are shown to be so in sync that even their horses are in step, and the fact that Becket is bestowing a kiss on the Pope may recall another event from Becket's life not covered by the surviving leaves, when he refused to bestow the kiss of peace on Henry.⁵⁵ The Pope's presence in the image even as he physically departs from the narrative acts as a reminder that the Church administration supports Becket, when this was not necessarily the case during the actual Becket controversy.⁵⁶ The combination of the Pope and Becket emphasises how much Henry is in the wrong, as he is acting against the Pope as well as Becket. The text proper supports this with the Pope's warning to Henry at the beginning of this leaf that "en nul guise Tant froit cuntre seinte iglise" [in no way was he to do anything against Holy Church].⁵⁷ The warning about acting against the Church both foreshadows that Henry will do just this and reminds the reader that he already has done so.

The inclusion of the wider background of the Becket controversy helps the reader to situate the coming events. It provides a potted history, with the text conveying a great deal of information in a short space while the image provides an emotional focal point. An emotional focal point is also offered in the text: the central column shows the

⁵⁵ This was the reason for the failure of peace talks in Montmartre in Paris on 18 November 1169. Barlow, "Becket, Thomas (1120?-1170)."

⁵⁶ The Pope was reluctant to give unequivocal support to either Thomas or Henry, as Henry was an important supporter of his papacy against Emperor Fredrick's candidate. Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 134-7.

⁵⁷ *TBL*, f. 1v, vv. 59-60.

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departure of the Pope from France and again underscores their emotional connection: “ne le vit unc en ceste vie” [they never saw each other again in this life].⁵⁸ Following this,

Becket returns to Pontigny:

E meine solitaire vie

En escripture e estudie,

En jeune e en uraisun,

Veille e contemplaciun.

U mut aprent d’escripture

Kar il i met entente e cure

N’aprist tant avant meint an.⁵⁹

[And leads a solitary life in writing and study, in fasting and prayer, vigils and contemplation, when he learnt a great deal of scripture. He put so much effort and care into it that he had not learnt so much in many years].

The reference to academic study constructs the image of Becket as a scholar, and may also be referring to the work carried out by Becket and his circle while at Pontigny.⁶⁰

The envy that the Devil experiences towards Becket (“Tost envie en out Sathan...Ki tost disturba cele pes” [Soon Satan envied this, and quickly disturbed this peace]) rebounds to affect Henry, and, as in Beneit’s text, is the catalyst for what happens next.⁶¹ The description of Henry as a “tirant” endorses and engages with the popular

⁵⁸ *TBL*, f. 1v, v. 80.

⁵⁹ *TBL*, f. 1r, vv. 83-9.

⁶⁰ Lena Löfstedt, “La loi canonique, les Plantagenêts et S. Thomas Becket,” *Medioevo romanzo* 15:1 (1990) 3-16.

⁶¹ *TBL*, f. 1v, vv. 90, 92.

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criticism of Henry highlighted in the previous chapter.⁶² Like Satan, Henry is also depicted as envious, resenting “ke l’arcevesque est tant a ease,” [that the archbishop is so at ease].⁶³ Again, here Henry’s actions do not seem to be motivated by a genuine desire for peace, but rather by his own envy. This leads him to threaten the Cistercians, who are sheltering Becket, specifically to deprive them of material possessions: “grant aver,” “granges,” “maisuns,” “pecuine,” and “possessions” [great wealth, granges, houses, money, and possessions].⁶⁴ The preoccupation with possessions suggests that Henry is more interested in what he can gain materially from the crisis than by how to resolve it, and also depicts him as a bully who does not respect the sanctity of religious houses.

⁶² *TBL*, f. 1v, v. 95. See p. 52 above.

⁶³ *TBL*, f. 1v, v. 96.

⁶⁴ *TBL*, f. 1v, vv. 108-10.

Folio 2r

Becket excommunicates the sinners.	The great council of kings and bishops where Becket suffered many torments.
Becket is excommunicating a threatening-looking group of people.	Becket opposes Henry and Louis at the council, surrounded by a hostile audience.
When the archbishop heard about those who had damaged his people and property, he excommunicated them all.	The two kings, their barons, and Becket hold a council. Only Becket supported God during this conference.
The Pope does not know what to do. He does not want to anger either King Louis or King Henry.	The Pope arranges that Louis will be present at the council. He is relying on Louis to be the voice of reason. Louis agrees to his request.

Table 2.3: Map of folio 2r of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 3 in the Appendix.

Here, as before, the image and rubric are complementary to the text proper. The two images together invert many of the tropes found on f. 1r. The image and rubric display Becket's retaliation to Henry's persecution of his relatives and property. Becket is holding a book and an extinguished candle, which show him to be in the act of excommunicating them. As before, the act of banishment is not dealt with in the text proper, but its consignment to the image and rubric conveys a large amount of

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information in a dramatic image while offering a visual parallel to Henry's actions on f. 1r. The excommunicants make threatening faces, and three of them have raised their hands in gestures of rejection. Like Henry's throne and crown in f. 1r, Becket is using symbols of his powers: his ecclesiastical vestments and the book and candle. The language likewise mirrors that of the rubric captioning the first image on f. 1r: compare "Clers e lais, nuls ne esparnie. En la escuminaciun tuz lie" [he did not spare any of them, either cleric or layperson. They were all laid under the excommunication] and "n'est esparni ni li jounes ne li enchani" [he did not spare either the young or the elderly].⁶⁵ Here, Becket inverts the show of power that Henry displayed on the first leaf, and betters him by using spiritual rather than temporal symbols of power.

The second image and rubric shows Becket in debate with the two kings. It is another active image, as shown in the rubric, which describes "grant estrif e noise" [great strife and noise]. Again, the use of hand gestures displays conversation and interaction. Also, as on the first leaf, the artist has inverted Henry's use of words as weapons by giving Becket a similar speech scroll, which he again brandishes like a weapon. The words on the scroll are significant, as they refer to the honour of God, which was such a point of contention in Becket's negotiations with Henry and also throughout this text. Becket's isolation is emphasised by having him stand alone on one side of the image while the other side is crammed with figures, all making mocking gestures and faces at Becket. The rubric emphasises this in stating "sul li arcevesque Thomas l'onur Deu ne

⁶⁵ *TBL*, f. 2r, rubric, 9; *TBL*, f. 2r, rubric, 10; *TBL*, f. 1r, rubric, 1-2.

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ublie pas” [only the archbishop Thomas did not forget the honour of God], recalling this important phrase.⁶⁶

The first column of the text proper continues from the previous page and details the Pope’s anguish and indecision. This section sets up a contrast between Henry and Louis. Louis is described as necessary for maintaining the peace, as without him it would not be possible: “si li rois ne se entremette Lowis, ne siet quant pes i mette” [if King Louis does not intervene, he does not know when peace will be made].⁶⁷ Later, this is supported by the description of Louis as “mult est de descreciun, De mesure e de grant resun” [he is very discreet, calm and reasonable].⁶⁸ Finally, the narrator makes clear that the Pope has faith in Louis: “en lui ad fiance” [because he had faith in him], and Louis grants his request “bonement” [good-naturedly].⁶⁹ Louis's behaviour is implicitly contrasted against that of Henry, who is portrayed as greedy, prone to outbursts, petty, bullying, and unreasonable. The narrator shows how Henry is “tut encuntre e en travers” [completely against and at cross purposes] with everyone, and responsible for the conflict.⁷⁰ By showing all of the good qualities of Louis and remaining notably silent about Henry’s qualities, the narrator offers portraits of two different kings and invites consideration about their relative merits. However, despite all of Louis’ virtues, he is unable to defend Becket, and he is almost interchangeable with Henry in the images, with similar facial expressions and clothing. This may be a commentary on the limits of temporal power, as even Louis does not recall the honour of God, which the narrator

⁶⁶ *TBL*, f. 2r, rubric, 10.

⁶⁷ *TBL*, f. 2r, vv. 15-6.

⁶⁸ *TBL*, f. 2r, vv. 17-8.

⁶⁹ *TBL*, f. 2r, v. 20; *TBL*, f. 2r, v. 26.

⁷⁰ *TBL*, f. 2r, v. 14.

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identifies as the most important aspect of the conference. It also fits with the author’s policy of highlighting Becket’s isolation.

Folio 2v

<p>King Louis and King Henry and their accomplices.</p>	<p>Becket retreats after his ill treatment by the kings. Only the poor people ask for his blessing.</p>
<p>To the left of the image, the two kings and their retinue face Becket and make derogatory hand gestures. To the right of the image, Becket gesticulates back and approaches a group of common people seeking his blessing.</p>	
<p>The council is over. People recall that only Becket promoted God’s honour.</p>	<p>Becket commends himself to Henry, “saving the honour of God.” This provokes Henry into a rage.</p> <p>Henry turns to Louis and says that Becket has caused a great discord by his use of the phrase “saving the honour of God.”</p>
<p>A council with all three, Becket, Henry, and Louis, is the only solution. Louis makes the arrangements.</p> <p>All are assembled: the kings, their barons and the literate. Becket humbles himself there.</p>	

Table 2.4: Map of folio 2v of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 4 in the Appendix.

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Both the heading and the image refer to the fact that people ask blessing from Becket and recognise his efforts to safeguard the honour of God. The image on this leaf refers to a common topos that Becket was a friend to the ordinary people.⁷¹ The people that Becket meets are the opposite of the people mentioned in the text, “li roi, li cunte e li lettré” (kings, counts and clerks).⁷² “Lettré” could mean interpreted variously as literate, Latinate, or educated people, or else it could mean clerks; either way, it excludes the common people who are seen supporting Becket on this leaf.⁷³ If the audience is indeed female, this allows them to identify with those who are excluded from the council, implicitly putting them amongst Becket’s supporters.

The phrase “sauf l’onur de Deu” has already appeared on the previous leaf, but here the text proper sets it in context. The details of the council are given while the image shows its outcome, providing a condensed version of the text. None of the text proper deals with the outcome of the council, so this is left to the image to communicate. Perhaps the image was intended to be explored after the text, so that it could give the next part of the story, or alternatively it could act as a kind of ‘trailer’ for the events that will occur in the text on this leaf.

This leaf vividly depicts Becket's isolation. The heading highlights the fact that the conference has been unsuccessful for Becket and also that the kings have been hostile to him (“recedit beatus Thomas multis lacesitus iniuriis et derisus a magnatibus” [Saint

⁷¹ See Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 22-3: "Becket's biographers rapidly assimilated his cause to the notion of the ancient communal liberties of England, which could be represented by virtuous kingship as manifested in St Edward. His promotion as a saint of the English served to tie him to, and so refresh and radicalise, the powerful Anglo-Saxon tradition of sanctified rulers and bishops which was central to the formation of the idea of English nationhood and *communitas regni*, and which offered a stark contrast to the contemporary clerical critique of Angevin despotism."

⁷² *TBL*, f. 2v, v. 44.

⁷³ The Anglo-Norman dictionary defines this as "clerk, educated (usually Latinate) person," AND² Online edition, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/lettré>.

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Thomas retreats, wounded with many injuries and derided by the great ones]).⁷⁴ Likewise, the image, in which Becket and the two kings and their retinues exchange hostile hand gestures, reveals to the readers that the conference has been unsuccessful before the text proper does. As on the previous page, the rubric recalls that Becket alone supported God in the council: “Veez le leal advocate Deu ki sul pur li combat” [see God’s loyal defender, who alone argued for Him].⁷⁵ The common people being the ones to recognize this also highlights Becket’s connection to them, while Becket’s rejection by elite society further adds to his status as an isolated martyr.

The continued project of showing Henry to be unreasonable and irascible while Becket is reasonable and peaceful can be seen in the depictions of them in this scene. Henry comes to the council “ke l’arcevesque seust defi Se mettroit tut en sa merci” [that they knew for certain that the archbishop would put himself completely at his mercy].⁷⁶ This seems to take place, for Becket does act humbly towards Henry, “as pez le rei Henri se plié” [he bows at King Henry’s feet], asking him politely to listen, and allowing Henry free rein:

Ma cause tute a vus cumand,

Faites ent vostre cumand

Trestute a vostre plaisir.⁷⁷

[I commend my cause entirely to you, do with it as you will, completely at your pleasure].

⁷⁴ *TBL*, f. 2v, heading, 10.

⁷⁵ *TBL*, f. 2v, rubric, 10.

⁷⁶ *TBL*, f. 2v, vv. 41-2.

⁷⁷ *TBL*, f. 2v, v. 46; *TBL*, f. 2v, vv. 49-51.

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However, he adds the crucial phrase “sauf l'onur de Deu” [saving the honour of God].⁷⁸ As soon as these words are spoken “atant mue li roi Henris semblant” (*TBL*, f. 2v, vv. 53-4) [at this, Henry's expression changes, and he becomes very angry. The narrator compares him to an animal – both a dragon and a lion – emphasising his savagery and cruelty.

Henry accuses Becket of handling his gifts poorly: “Tant mal assis Les biens u par moi es mis” [you have used the good things which I gave you very poorly], a preoccupation with wealth and material goods consistent with the presentation of Henry throughout the text.⁷⁹ The comparison to animals is also reminiscent of the depiction of pagans in other hagiographical narratives, which is another suggestion that Henry takes the place of the traditional pagan antagonist found in these narratives.⁸⁰ Henry's reaction to Becket's behavior also seems to be rather exaggerated, as Becket appears to have offered him anything he likes saving God's honour. Henry's language displays the severity of his reaction: “dece Vance,” “descord,” “schism,” “wenelaz,” “sophism,” and “descord,” (the repetition of “descord” emphasizes the chaos).⁸¹ The contrast between the behaviour of Becket and Henry emphasizes the difference between them, reinforcing their depiction as opposites.

⁷⁸ *TBL*, f. 2v, v. 53.

⁷⁹ *TBL*, f. 2v, vv. 57-8.

⁸⁰ *VSA*, vv. 521-2: “Plus est chescuns esmeuz ke n'est quant est bersee leonesse, u saerpent, quant ele se sent blescee” [each one is more angered than a hunted lioness or serpent when it feels itself to be injured].

⁸¹ *TBL*, f. 2v, vv. 60-3.

Folio 3r

<p>The Young King Henry is crowned by the hand of Roger de Pont l'Evéque, archbishop of York instead of Becket.</p>	<p>At the feast, Henry acts as servant to his son and entrusts the kingdom to him.</p>	
<p>The Young King Henry is crowned, surrounded by bishops.</p>	<p>Henry serves his son at the feast.</p>	
<p>Becket is told by one of his clerks that he predicts martyrdom for Becket. Becket accepts this.</p> <p>Henry arranges for his son Henry to be crowned, which has terrible consequences.</p>	<p>King Henry crowns his son Henry king. Roger of York wrongly undertakes to crown him.</p>	<p>King Henry acts as a servant to his son, and says in the earshot of many people that the young Henry alone is king. However, this peace will be short-lived and lead to discord between the two Henrys.</p> <p>When Becket hears of this, he feels very insulted and appeals to the Pope for help.</p>
	<p>All of the English clergy are at the coronation. This is against the honour of Canterbury.</p>	
	<p>A great feast is held in the young Henry's honour.</p>	

Table 2.5: Map of folio 3r of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 5 in the Appendix.

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Becket is entirely absent from the image on this leaf, representing his marginalisation through Henry's decision to have his son crowned in defiance of the dignity of Canterbury. Instead, the image and caption concentrate on Henry and his son. The rubric focuses on the first of the two images, in which the Young King is crowned, and the narrator warns that there will be terrible consequences arising from the decision: "repentant fu puis e marri" [later he was regretful and sorrowful].⁸² It also identifies Roger de Pont l'Evêque as being largely responsible, as he was the one who performed the coronation. The Latin speech scroll in the second image, "ecce majestas nimis inclinata" [behold His Majesty, excessively debased] identifies that Henry is behaving like a fool.⁸³ It reinforces an overall portrayal of him as unreasonable, undignified, and cruel. The rubric highlights both the moral and emotional consequences of the event and also the disloyalty of the other members of the church present at the coronation.

The text proper of this leaf begins with the fallout from the council on the previous leaf. There is no text dealing with the separation of the two kings and Becket, so it can be concluded that the author chose to portray this event only visually. It is unclear where this is taking place, whether this is the immediate aftermath of the council or whether Becket has subsequently moved somewhere else. The description of Becket at the opening of the text is an immediate contrast with Henry's behaviour on the preceding leaf: "en pes se tient e pacience Ne remaudit, grundist ne tence" [he holds himself in peace and patience, he does not curse, complain or protest].⁸⁴ This further emphasises the contrast that the author is constructing between them. The premonition of Becket's

⁸² *TBL*, f. 3r, rubric, 15.

⁸³ *TBL*, f. 3r, heading, 15.

⁸⁴ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 1-2.

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martyrdom – “par vostre mort seinte iglise Cunqueira pes e franchise” [by your death Holy Church will achieve peace and freedom] – is the most explicit indication so far that Becket’s life is part of providential history.⁸⁵ His conflict is no longer against Henry; now, the entire future of the Church is at stake.

Henry’s decision to crown his son here is explained as his desire to “confirmer” and “seürer” [confirm and make sure] his kingdom, rather than a wish to maintain peace, as Beneit has it.⁸⁶ However, there is also a hint that Henry’s decision is deliberately intended to insult Becket:

Entamer

La droiture e la franchise

A l’arcevesque e sa iglise.⁸⁷

[To damage the right and the free status of the archbishop and his church].

Henry is portrayed as spiteful and also as deliberately setting out to injure the church as well as Becket. The drastic consequences of the event are also foreshadowed: “grant gent i estoit banie, De clergé e de chevalerie” [many people were banished because of it, both of the clergy and of the knighthood].⁸⁸ As in the council scene, this description unites the educated and the wealthy classes, those responsible for and present at the coronation, against the common people, who have been already identified as Becket’s supporters.

The narrator gives many indications that the coronation was a disastrous event. He interjects frequently to comment on the foolishness of the event: “las l’ure, Mut en

⁸⁵ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 9-10.

⁸⁶ *TBL*, f. 3r, v. 13-4.

⁸⁷ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 18-20.

⁸⁸ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 21-2.

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avint mesaventure” [alas for that hour! Great misfortune came from it].⁸⁹ These interjections continually interrupt the narrative, as though the narrator himself is wracked with grief for it. He attempts to recount how Henry the elder acts at the feast for his son, and just as in the image and Latin caption, makes him seem foolish and undignified. Again, the narrator seems distracted by knowing the eventual outcome of Henry’s coronation:

Dunt mut apres se repenti.

Mut s’endolut en apres,

Kar poi dura l’amur e pes.

Apres poi dure s’en dulut

K’il au pere guerre mut.⁹⁰

[[The Young King] repented of it greatly afterwards. He was very sorrowful about it afterwards, for the love and peace did not last long. After a short period of time he was so sorry for it that he made war on his father].

The narrator also passes a moral judgement on the events and identifies them as

Le primer entuchement

Du pecché lu roi Henri,

Ki seint Thomas tant pursui.⁹¹

[The first poisoning of sin in King Henry, who so pursued Saint Thomas].

⁸⁹ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 31-2.

⁹⁰ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 44-8.

⁹¹ *TBL*, f. 3r, vv. 50-2.

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The reader is left with no possibility for misinterpretation: the coronation is a mistake, and it will have wide-ranging implications not only for Becket but also for the royal family.

The effect of this on Becket now appears on the page. Just as he is absent from the image, he has been marginalised to the edges of this leaf in the text proper. As before, there is a great preoccupation with honour and dignity, as Becket feels “despersoné” [slandered], with his honour “blescé” [wounded] and his church’s dignity “mut desmembrée e maumise” [much damaged and injured].⁹² Both Becket and Henry are concerned with their honour, and Henry’s plan to injure the church is shown to have succeeded.

⁹² *TBL*, f. 3r, v. 55; *TBL*, f. 3r, v. 56; *TBL*, f. 3r, v. 58.

Folio 3v

<p>Becket is saddened by reports of the coronation.</p>		<p>These things are reported to the Pope.</p>
<p>The Pope commands Henry not to act against the Church or the realm, but Henry ignores him. There are terrible consequences: suspension and excommunication of bishops, exile, and civil war. The Young King Henry, much admired by the narrator, dies in the prime of his youth.</p> <p>News spreads throughout the land of the coronation.</p>	<p>Becket receives a messenger.</p>	<p>Several messengers are received by the Pope.</p>
	<p>The archbishop is grieved by the news. He asks the Pope for help and to excommunicate those involved.</p>	<p>When the Pope hears this, he gives Becket the power to excommunicate those involved, as he is more grieved by this than by the king's behaviour.</p>
	<p>When Becket hears about this, he is very upset. This is an insult to his office as archbishop of Canterbury. He asks the Pope for help.</p>	<p>Becket does not know what to do. Both the Pope and the kingdom of France is sympathetic to him.</p> <p>William of Sens, who is feeling sad for Becket...[the next leaves are missing].</p>

Table 2.6: Map of folio 3v of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 6 in the Appendix.

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Folio 3v deals with the consequences of the Young Henry's coronation, which were foreshadowed on the previous leaf. Even the images seem to have been compressed in order to deal with the enormity of the disaster resulting from Henry's actions and their consequences for Becket, as they head only two columns instead of the usual three. Becket's connection with the Pope also underscores this scene, as the Pope intervenes with Henry and asks him to change, although the king ignores him. The images highlight the connection between Becket and the Pope, as they are both depicted receiving messengers, and wearing complementary colour schemes of red and blue. This helps to make the argument that the Pope and Becket are in the right by aligning them together. The rubrics are also similar, dealing with the reception of messengers, the discussion of excommunication and the granting of it. The rubric is interesting in that it highlights that the Pope is more grieved by the coronation than by the origins of the Becket controversy: "plus li greve cest desrei ke persecuciun de rei" [this disarray grieves him more than the persecution of the king] and this will be echoed by Becket in the text proper.⁹³

While the images deal with Becket and the Pope, just as on the previous leaf, the text marginalises Henry by pushing him into the first column of text. Henry's disobedience and its moral consequences are again made obvious: "tut cuntre lur conscience E cuntre seint obedience" [completely against their consciences and against holy obedience].⁹⁴ God also passes judgement on the coronation: "a Deu lur ovre pas ne plut" [their work was not pleasing to God]. On this leaf, for the final time, the narrator interrupts the flow of the narrative to dwell on the consequences of Henry the Young

⁹³ *TBL*, f. 3v, rubric, 16.

⁹⁴ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 73-4.

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King's coronation.⁹⁵ He states that “mult envint mal e encumbrer” [much evil and difficulty came of it]. He then lists the consequences, which are variously social, political, and moral:

Sanc de arcevesques espanduz

Autres evesque suspenduz

E li autre escumengez

E cunfunduz e exillez

E guerre entre fiz e pere

Meve mortele e amere.⁹⁶

[The blood of the archbishop was spilt, other bishops were suspended, and others excommunicated, and banished and exiled, and [there was] war between father and son, mortal and bitter conflict].

The narrator then ends with a lament for Henry the Young King, with the statement that “vus empurroit mut dire Mais ço seroit hors de matire” [he could say more about this but that it is not relevant], which is particularly ironic given that a great proportion of this leaf and the preceding leaf have been given over to the Young King, and even more ironic when just a few lines later the narrator again explodes into praise of him: “ki tant fu beus, E pruz e franc juvenceus” [the young man, who was so fair, and noble and virtuous].⁹⁷ He notes Henry's “beuté,” “largesce,” “bunté” and “pruesce” [beauty, generosity, goodness,

⁹⁵ *TBL*, f. 3v, v. 76.

⁹⁶ *TBL*, f. 3v, v. 77; *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 79-84.

⁹⁷ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 91-2; *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 99-100.

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and prowess].⁹⁸ The narrator's fixation with the Young King is particularly unusual given that his death had taken place several decades ago and ten years after Becket's death. However, this could be intended as a contrast to both Henry's kingship in this text, in the distant past, and John's kingship, which was more recent and equally disastrous. It could also be an indication of the kind of reader the author was envisioning for the *Leaves*. The preoccupation with a lost son, who haunts the pages of the *Leaves*, may also have been a preoccupation of the aristocratic women who made up the target audience for the text.⁹⁹

This leaf builds a connection between Becket and the Young King Henry. The narrative conflates several events to make it seem as though they happened much closer together. The coronation of the Young King Henry took place in 1170, but his rebellion did not happen until 1173; he fled to France again in 1182 and died in 1183 following an illness.¹⁰⁰ By referring to the Young King's rebellion and death on this leaf, the narrator of the *Becket Leaves* suggests that these events were a direct result of his coronation, when in reality they were more spaced out and unconnected. Henry II's disobedience in allowing the Archbishop of York to crown his son is therefore given a human cost that affects him directly. There are obvious parallels in the lives of Thomas Becket and the Young King: their flight to France and their opposition of Henry are two examples, and the narrative extends this to suggest that Henry's actions are responsible for both of their deaths. Furthermore, the Young King purported to be carrying on Becket's work after his death as he challenged his father for not respecting ecclesiastical liberties; in the

⁹⁸ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 89-90.

⁹⁹ For an account of how some aristocratic women memorialised their dead sons, see Sethina Watson, "A Mother's Past and Her Children's Futures: Female Inheritance, Family and Dynastic Hospitals in the Thirteenth Century," in *Motherhood, Religion, and Society in Medieval Europe, 400-1400: Essays Presented to Henrietta Leyser* ed. Conrad Leyser and Lesley Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 213-49.

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Hallam, "Henry (1155-1183)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12957>.

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words of Björn Weiler, “the Young King was portrayed as the defender of the very values for which Thomas Becket had died.”¹⁰¹ There had also been a campaign, led by Eleanor of Aquitaine and some of the Young King’s supporters, to canonise him following his death.¹⁰² The fact that such a large amount of space is devoted to the Young King supports the suggestion that the author of the *Becket Leaves* may have been intending his readers to draw a parallel between him and Becket.

Becket’s isolation on this leaf is emphasised by the fact that he is described as “lur pere e lur prelat Ki sul pur eus tuz combat” [their father and their prelate, who alone fought entirely for them], which continues the portrayal of Henry as neglectful of the Church and disrespectful towards Becket.¹⁰³ There is also a reminder of Henry’s limitations: the adjective “mortel”, meaning both “mortal” and “deadly”, recalls both his deadly power over Becket and also the fact that Henry’s power is limited to the mortal world.¹⁰⁴ This is particularly significant given Becket’s role in the providential history recounted in this text.

The description given to the Pope in the rubric is applied to Becket in the text proper: “plus li greve ceu desroi Ke la grevance lu roi” [this disarray grieves him more than the difficulty with the King].¹⁰⁵ Just as the image draws a similarity between Becket and the Pope, the shared reaction to the news of the coronation also presents them as a united front. The reaction of the Pope and the King of France also show them to be on Becket’s side: “la Pape quant l’ot mut en est muz E du regne de France tuz” [when the

¹⁰¹ Björn Weiler, “Kings and Sons: Princely Rebellions and the Structures of Revolt in Western Europe, c.1170–c.1280,” *Historical Research* 82 (2009): 17-40, 21.

¹⁰² Thomas Agnellis, *De Morte et Sepultura Henrici Regis Junioris*, in *Radulphi de Coggleshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. Joseph Stephenson (London: Longman, 1875), 263-73.

¹⁰³ *TBL*, f. 3v, ff. 113-4.

¹⁰⁴ *TBL*, f. 3v, v. 85.

¹⁰⁵ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 117-8.

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Pope heard it he was very moved, and so was the entire kingdom of France].¹⁰⁶ In particular, Louis, who did not really distinguish himself in the council of the two kings, is rehabilitated, as he makes a personal request: “li rois de France Prie k’en preinne vengeance” [the king of France asked [the Pope] to avenge this]. However, this is because he wants to be well-thought-of by the Pope (“cum il sun servise E amur veut sanz feintise” [because he truly wants his service and love]); as a king, even one who has more redeeming features than Henry, Louis is still concerned with his reputation.¹⁰⁷

Another of Becket’s powerful friends makes an appearance at the end of this leaf: “Willame li prelat de Sanz Des maus Seint Thomas doillanz” [William the prelate of Sanz, sorrowful about the evils Saint Thomas had suffered].¹⁰⁸ It is possible that this was setting the scene to move on to another discussion of Becket’s powerful friends, but the next leaves are missing, and so there is a gap in the narrative.

¹⁰⁶ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 125-6.

¹⁰⁷ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 127-8; *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 129-30.

¹⁰⁸ *TBL*, f. 3v, vv. 131-2.

Folio 4r

<p>Becket considers the weather. Milo the fare collector does not take any money and warns him of danger.</p>	<p>Others who are arriving announce the same.</p>	
<p>On the left, Becket and a companion are talking to Milo, who is in the centre of the image. To the right, a ship arrives from England.</p>		
<p>Becket meets Milo and thinks he is coming to ask for a fare. Milo warns him that men are waiting in England to kill him. Becket is still determined to return to England.</p>	<p>Milo comes from the count of Boulogne to warn Becket that armed men are awaiting him in England.</p>	<p>Other men arriving from England confirm this news: men are awaiting Becket on the shore to arrest him.</p>
<p>Becket sees a ship arrive.</p>	<p>A man from England says that there are rumours that Becket has returned, which has pleased the people. However, another warns him that there is an army waiting for him.</p>	<p>Roger de Pont l'Evèque, Reynaud de Warenne, the viscount Gervase and Ranulf de Broc, all of whom are furious with Becket, are watching the shore for him.</p> <p>When the company hears this, they are amazed.</p>

Table 2.7: Map of folio 4r of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 7 in the Appendix.

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The narrative on the next surviving leaf describes Becket's attempts to return to England. The image is full of activity: a ship arrives on the far right and three figures encounter each other in the left and centre. The extended hands and gestures suggest that a conversation is taking place. The narrative structure is emphasised by the rubric: the text describing Milo is underneath him, and the description of the arriving sailors is underneath their boat. The rubric identifies that the count of Boulogne is involved, another high-status ally who is attempting to help Becket. The second rubric develops the threat mentioned in the first: as these are eyewitnesses, they can give more information and authentication. They give the number of the men – a thousand – and also the gruesome consequences that await Becket when he returns to England (“soiez tuz tost detrenchez” [you will very soon be cut down]), which increases the threat to Becket.¹⁰⁹

The text proper details the encounters depicted in the images in more detail. The emotive quality of Becket's fate is outlined by Milo's description of his and his master's mental state: “de part le cunte triste e dolent Nel vus puis sanz lermes dire” [on behalf of the sad and sorrowful count; I cannot tell you about it without crying].¹¹⁰ Becket's determination to return to England highlights his courage – “feint sui si pur tant passer les” [I would be a coward if I let this pass] – and combines with the courteous descriptions to depict him as a knight of God.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *TBL*, f. 4r, rubric, 23.

¹¹⁰ *TBL*, f. 4r, vv. 8-9.

¹¹¹ *TBL*, f. 4r, v. 16. This is in keeping with other biographies of Becket, as noted by Paul Binski: “Thomas's biographer show comfortable familiarity with the ancient language of martyrs, gladiators and athletes of Christ in illuminating the lives of their spiritual hero,” *Becket's Crown*, 23; some examples may be found in *MTB* 2:19, 2:299-300, 2:436, 3:145, 3:429-30, 3:479.

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The arrival of the boat from England brings more information. The sailors make the threat to Becket clear: “retraez vus, chaitifs, Semble il vus lunges k’estes vifs” [“turn back, wretches, do you think you will live long?”].¹¹² This also promotes a sense of battle, in accordance with the likening of Becket to a knight on this leaf. The statement “mut est la terre esmeue” [the whole country is in uproar] is another indication of the universal importance to the story.¹¹³ The sailor summarises the situation awaiting Becket when he returns to England and foreshadows his death. Again, archbishop Roger is blamed, along with other bishops whom Becket has excommunicated. He then lists some of Becket’s other, secular enemies: Renaud de Warenne, the viscount Gervase, and Ranulf de Broc, men, especially de Broc, frequently associated with Becket’s persecution.¹¹⁴ By naming all of these men, the author has made it evident that Becket has many enemies. Again, the threat to Becket is repeated in gruesome detail, with the verb “detrenchez,” which foreshadows his own dismemberment.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *TBL*, f. 4r, vv. 31-2.

¹¹³ *TBL*, f. 4r, v. 37.

¹¹⁴ Ranulf de Broc is identified as an enemy of Becket in almost all of the Becket lives. He was responsible for the exile of Becket’s relatives, he and Becket were entangled in a dispute over Saltwood Castle in Kent, which Becket had requested for an ecclesiastic palace and which instead had been given to de Broc by Henry, and he seized a transport ship carrying Becket’s wine on its return to England.

¹¹⁵ *TBL*, f. 4r, v. 56.

Folio 4v

<p>Becket arrives in England</p>	<p>His joyful compatriots come running towards him</p>	<p>Only the men from the king are threatening.</p>
<p>Becket's ship arrives at the shore. Becket's cross on display and Becket's eye fixed firmly on it take up most of the image. To the right is a group of common people and a group of soldiers.</p>		
<p>Becket's men advise him against leaving, but Becket is determined to return to England.</p> <p>Becket sets out to sea and arrives in Sandwich, avoiding Dover because of the king's men. The army hears about his arrival and moves to find him.</p>	<p>Many are waiting for Becket on the shore: poor people asking for blessing and men from the king asking him to explain his excommunication of the king's prelates.</p> <p>The cross on the ship causes Becket to be recognised. The common people celebrate his return.</p> <p>A mob of knights arrives and asks Becket what he is doing.</p>	<p>The men threaten Becket with the king's anger.</p> <p>Becket's simplicity and good sense assuage their rage. He says that he is not here to contradict the king, but rather the clergy who were present at the coronation.</p>

Table 2.8: Map of folio 4v of the *Becket Leaves*, corresponding to Fig. 8 in the Appendix.

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The final leaf has another dynamic image, in which Becket arrives in England to be greeted firstly by supporters and secondly by his enemies. The Latin headings show the progression of this as well. As before, the common people, who are shown to be those who appreciate and welcome Becket, are contrasted with the hostile soldiers, on the right of the image. The rubric summarises the two groups of people who are awaiting Becket – the “povres” and the “reaus” – continuing the dichotomy established earlier in the text.¹¹⁶

In the text proper, Becket responds to his men’s fear expressed on the previous leaf like a general reassuring an army, but in very individual terms, focusing on his own destiny:¹¹⁷

Ne place a Deu ki fist le mund
Ke jo pur tant tel pour eie
Ke de mon purpose me retreie.¹¹⁸

[It does not please God, who made the world, that I should be so afraid of such a thing that it should draw me back from my purpose].

It shows his determination to suffer martyrdom:

Si sai de fi
Aturné m’est occisiun
De mort i suffrai passion.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *TBL*, f. 4v, rubric, 24.

¹¹⁷ For more on the use of military motifs in hagiographical writing, see Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 112-55.

¹¹⁸ *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 64-5.

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[If I know with certainty I am prepared for death, I will suffer my passion there].

This determination reminds the reader of Becket's close connection with Christ and of his forthcoming martyrdom.

There is then an interruption to the narrative to remind the reader that this text comes from a reliable source: "cum nus en escrit lisum" [as we read written down].¹²⁰ It also specifies the date of Becket's return, perhaps an attempt to reinforce the reliability of the text:

L'an del incarnaciun...

Mil e cent seissante e dis,

De sun exil setime m'est vis

El second jur u terz d'avent.¹²¹

[The year our Our Lord 1170, in the seventh year of his exile as it seems to be, on the second or third day of advent].

The concrete information helps to establish the trustworthiness of the story.

Becket's cross on the front of his ship foreshadows his oncoming martyrdom. The enthusiasm of the common people to see him arrive is emphasised by the text:

Li paisant teu joie en unt

Ke tuit i acurru sunt

En la mer cuntre lur prelat

¹¹⁹ *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 68-70.

¹²⁰ *TBL*, f. 4v, v. 72.

¹²¹ *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 71, 73-5.

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Vunt pur li receivre a joie.

Dient li en haut k'il oie

"Benoit seit ki est venuz

El nun Deu soit receuz."¹²²

[The peasants were so joyful about it that they came running to the sea to meet their priest to receive him with joy. They said loudly so that he could hear:

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"].

The quotation of the Bible verse describing Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, which also references the text of the *sanctus* from the Mass, implies a further connection between Becket and Christ.¹²³

However, the joy of these people is contrasted with the responses of the soldiers. They communicate "a grant gorgées" [with wide throats], an image that expresses their animalistic nature and makes them seem more frightening.¹²⁴ They accuse Becket of having acted through "orgoil" [pride].¹²⁵ Becket is also accused of having caused great disturbance in the kingdom: "la terre mis en tel truboil" [you have put the land into such turmoil], "si tost avez medlé Tut le regne e le clergé" [you have so soon upset the realm and the clergy].¹²⁶

The "ire" and "rage" of the soldiers is contrasted with Becket's "sen" and "simplesce" [sense and simplicity], just as Becket's humility is contrasted with Henry's

¹²² *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 85-92.

¹²³ Matthew 21:9; Psalm 118:26, Douay-Rheims bible, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.drbo.org/>.

¹²⁴ *TBL*, f. 4v, v. 96.

¹²⁵ *TBL*, f. 4v, v. 97.

¹²⁶ *TBL*, f. 4v, v. 98; *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 109-10.

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pride and rage in the council scene.¹²⁷ His final speech emphasises his reasonable nature: “a sa bone voillance e grace Droitz est ke justice face” [to his good wishes and grace it is right that I do justice], and highlights that his grievance is not with the king, but with “mes sugez nomeement Ki furnet al coronement” [those of my subjects who were at the coronation].¹²⁸ The choice of “sujets” is significant, as it emphasises Becket's position as the supreme head of the church in Britain. This brings the surviving *Leaves* to a close.

The presentation of Becket in the *Becket Leaves* emphasises his physical frailty and also his isolation from others. He is consistently portrayed as reasonable, meek, patient, and concerned with the spiritual, as contrasted with Henry's irrational and unreasonable anger and preoccupation with material wealth. The literary Becket can be read alongside the events at the time of the text's composition, and we will now move on to an exploration of its cultural contexts.

3. Composition: literary and cultural context

The production of the *Becket Leaves* in the mid-thirteenth century, several decades after Becket's death, is a testament to the enduring popularity of his story. The circumstances of their composition were therefore completely different to those of the lives discussed in the previous chapter and in the introduction to part 1. Rather than establishing the cult or communicating with those who had been involved in the crisis, the distance of time and emotion from the event allowed the author of the *Becket Leaves* to put a fresh spin on Becket's life. This does not mean that he was not still an important cultural presence, but rather that his image had changed over time.

¹²⁷ *TBL*, f. 4v, v. 112.

¹²⁸ *TBL*, f. 4v, cc. 117-8; *TBL*, f. 4v, vv. 212-2.

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Paul Binski has written about the persistence of Becket's myth in the English literary, artistic, and cultural imagination in *Becket's Crown*.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Anne Duggan has highlighted the threefold significance of Becket's martyrdom on political, ecclesiastic and spiritual grounds.¹³⁰ The continued demand for French narratives of Becket's life at this time may be seen from the fact that both Beneit's and Guernes's lives of Becket continued to be copied in the thirteenth century.¹³¹ The production of the *Becket Leaves* further supplemented this literary demand, and the inclusion of illustrations suggests that an élite audience of mixed literacies was intended, making it arguably a different audience from that of the texts by Beneit and Guernes. We shall now take a moment to look at the different kinds of sanctity that were endorsed by the king and by the archiepiscopate in the mid-thirteenth century.

3.1. Royal sanctity

Some of the actions of Henry III (r. 1216-72) and his queen Eleanor of Provence (r. 1236-72) in the 1230s and 1240s reveal Becket's persistence in the national consciousness. His symbolic power was such that the king and queen were married in front of his shrine on January 4th 1236.¹³² Furthermore, at the birth of Eleanor's fourth child in 1245, 1000 candles were lit around Becket's shrine in Canterbury.¹³³ These actions indicate that he was still viewed as an important saint for the royal family. However, aside from Becket,

¹²⁹ Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown*.

¹³⁰ Duggan, "Cult of St Thomas Becket," 30, 41-2.

¹³¹ Of the nine manuscripts of Guernes's *Life*, five were produced in the thirteenth century. Of the seven manuscripts of Beneit's *Life*, at least four were produced in the thirteenth century. Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, nos. 508 and 509.

¹³² *Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, 2:130.

¹³³ Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 45; *Calendar of Liberate Rolls 1240-45* (HMSO, 1916), 275.

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there was another saint who held even greater significance for them: St Edward the Confessor.

Henry's attempt to promote Edward as an English national saint and, in connection to this, his rebuilding of Westminster Abbey, indicate that he was as aware of the power of symbols and sanctity in national myth-making as his grandfather Henry II had been. Paul Binski and David Carpenter have studied why the Confessor may have appealed to Henry in personal and political terms.¹³⁴ They both cite Matthew Paris's *Estoire de seint Aedward* as an example of a text that encapsulates this appeal.¹³⁵ The text promotes Edward as a courteous and virtuous king, who rules his kingdom in peace and chastity. It also portrays Henry III as the spiritual successor to Edward. The text was dedicated to Queen Eleanor, and encouraged her to love and cherish St Edward, as he is also dear to her husband.¹³⁶ For this reason, David Carpenter has argued that it was written for her shortly after her marriage, perhaps c. 1237, as he argues that she would be unlikely to need to be educated about her husband's favourite saint after she had been married to him for long, although there has been some debate about the text's date.¹³⁷

As it was produced with the royal family in mind, Matthew Paris's *Estoire de seint Aedward* gives evidence both for the kind of sanctity that appealed to the royal family in the 1230s and 1240s and also for the kinds of sanctity that the abbey of St Albans

¹³⁴ Binski, "Reflections on *La estoire de seint Aedward le rei*"; David Carpenter, "King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor: The Origins of the Cult," *English Historical Review* 498 (2007): 865-91 considers the origins of the cult; Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*, ch. 2, "The Cult of St Edward," explores the relationship between Henry and Edward; David Carpenter, "The Burial of Henry III, the Regalia and Royal Ideology," in *The Reign of Henry III* (London, 1996), 427-62, and "Westminster Abbey in Politics, 1258-1269," *Thirteenth Century England VIII* (1999): 49-59.

¹³⁵ Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of St Edward*, 18-20.

¹³⁶ *ESA*, vv. 75-8. Wogan-Browne, *Saints Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 55, Wogan-Browne and Fenster, 54.

¹³⁷ Carpenter, "Henry III and Edward the Confessor," 885-6. However, there has been some debate about the date of the text; for a summary of the different arguments, see Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of St Edward*, 25-7.

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themselves wanted to promote. Edward's court is described as the centre of courtesy, which ennobles all who come into contact with it. Edward is also portrayed as a wise and gentle ruler, the opposite of the irrational tyrant Henry II in the *Becket Leaves*. Both texts contrast an irrational, cruel ruler with a peaceful, patient figure: Henry and Becket in the *Becket Leaves*, and Earl Godwin and Edward in the *Estoire de seint Aedward*. The depiction of Edward is of a man who puts the spiritual needs of his subjects first, and who directs the kingdom into a programme of worship. It can therefore be read as a text that promotes a model of kingship that is guided by religious concerns over material concerns.

The production of the *Estoire de seint Aedward* at St Albans and its presentation to Eleanor of Provence illustrate how Matthew Paris could reach the ear of the most powerful couple in the land. By writing about Edward the Confessor, he could both argue for the importance of spiritually guided leadership, and he could also attempt to control and direct the image of Edward the Confessor. Like Beneit's *Life of Becket*, the *Estoire de seint Aedward* exploits a saint important to the king in order to remind him of the continued importance and relevance of its author's monastery.

3.2. Archiepiscopal sanctity

Becket's life, both actual and literary, was also tremendously influential for certain archbishops of Canterbury. He was depicted on the seals of both Stephen Langton (1207-28) and Edmund Rich (1234-40), which suggests that his image was viewed as

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something of a talisman against royal interference in the church.¹³⁸ Both Langton and Rich seemed to be consciously imitating Becket in their dealings with their kings (John and Henry III respectively): both quarrelled with their respective kings, both were persecuted as a result, and both sought exile in the Cistercian abbey of Pontigny, where Becket had also spent time.¹³⁹ Like Becket, Edmund Rich was canonised shortly after his death, in 1246.¹⁴⁰ The choice of Pontigny as a haven for these two men cannot have been accidental, but rather intended to invite comparisons between themselves and Becket, perhaps seeking support for their own causes from the saint's power and example and also implying that they were right to do so by imitating him.¹⁴¹ This *imitatio* was further suggested by the way that both men referenced Becket at other times in their lives. Langton organised a magnificent translation ceremony for Becket's relics on 7th July 1220, which was attended by Matthew Paris, and Edmund Rich reported a vision of Becket which inspired him to continue in his vocation.¹⁴² Also like Becket, both men were the subjects of Latin biographies by Matthew Paris; Paris later translated his account of St Edmund into French for Isabel of Arundel, who knew Edmund personally.¹⁴³ The *Vie de seint Edmond* enjoyed both monastic and lay circulation: Isabel was the text's addressee, but the manuscript in which it survives is the Campsey manuscript, which

¹³⁸ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 64 for Langton's seal, 113 for Rich's seal. Christopher Holdsworth, "Langton, Stephen (c.1150–1228)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16044>; C. H. Lawrence, "Edmund of Abingdon [St Edmund of Abingdon, Edmund Rich] (c.1174–1240)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8503>.

¹³⁹ Stephen Langton was exiled from 1208 to 1213 (Holdsworth, "Langton, Stephen");

Edmund Rich was reportedly exiled from England in 1240 (Lawrence, "Edmund of Abingdon").

¹⁴⁰ C. H. Lawrence, "Edmund of Abingdon [St Edmund of Abingdon, Edmund Rich] (c.1174–1240)."

¹⁴¹ For the connections between the abbey of Pontigny and the French and English monarchies, see William Chester Jordan, "The English Holy Men of Pontigny," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 43 (2008): 63-75.

¹⁴² Matthew Paris wrote an account of the translation in *HA*, 2:241-2.

¹⁴³ For more about the relationship between Matthew Paris and Isabel of Arundel, see Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 151-90.

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was used by the nuns at Barking Abbey.¹⁴⁴ Edmund's *imitatio* of Becket was continued by authors after his death: Lawrence notes that one version of his life was named the *Quadrilogus* in echo of the *Quadrilogus* written about Becket, and a life of Edmund by an author named Eustace copied complete pages of John of Salisbury's biography of Becket.¹⁴⁵

The imitation of Becket by Stephen Langton and Edmund Rich illustrates how influential his life and the literary texts that prolonged his fame had been to the English archiepiscopate. He continued to be relevant to the English church, and imitation of him was a source of power and authentication for archbishops facing opposition from secular power. Thomas Becket in literature set an example for subsequent archbishops, and they in turn ensured that his memory was perpetuated in their own lives. This reciprocity was mirrored in literature, as the literary Becket and the literary representations of Rich and Langton were transformed by Matthew Paris to fit and to promote this continuing model of contemporary sanctity.

3.3. Sanctity in the *Becket Leaves*

The sanctity presented in the *Becket Leaves* combines elements of both of these thirteenth-century sanctities. The model of sanctity they display differs from that of Beneit's *Life* of Becket. The place of the Benedictine order had changed radically since the beginning of the twelfth century, and it was constantly challenged by competition

¹⁴⁴ For this manuscript, see Delbert W. Russell, "The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives: A Re-examination of its Structure and Provenance," *Scriptorium* 57 (2003): 51-83.

¹⁴⁵ C. H. Lawrence, *St. Edmund of Abingdon: a Study in Hagiography and History* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 25, 36.

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from other monastic and mendicant orders.¹⁴⁶ Monasteries such as St Albans therefore had to adapt to this competition and to argue for their continued relevance to contemporary spiritual movements. Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang have noted that very few bishops came from monastic stock in the thirteenth century: between 1215 and 1272, only eight of the 78 bishops had been monks before their election.¹⁴⁷ Instead, they were more likely to be from the schools, and both Langton and Rich came from this background. Binski notes how attending the schools came to be a shorthand for other virtues: "The bishops' virtue and learnedness was an aspect of their *nobilitas*, for erudition added lustre to noble origins and office."¹⁴⁸ The rise of the schools evidently influenced the portrayal of Becket in the *Becket Leaves*, and he is depicted accordingly as scholarly in order to better fit this model, although he himself was not a schoolman.¹⁴⁹

Matthew Paris's illustrated lives and also the *Becket Leaves* introduce the figure of the courtier bishop saint, who, after having attained the secular perfection of the true *courtois*, progresses to the highest possible spiritual level, inwardly rejecting earthly riches whilst outwardly enjoying them in order to conform to both worlds.¹⁵⁰ Becket's life became the prototype for such a saint, given his career of first clerk in the household of Archbishop Theobald, then royal chancellor, and finally Archbishop of Canterbury. As these saints were frequently in positions of wealth and power, they would artificially

¹⁴⁶ Barbara Harvey notes: "At the beginning of the twelfth century, the Benedictines accounted for a very high proportion of all religious in England and owned an even higher proportion of the religious houses; a century later, they accounted for less than 50 per cent of the religious and owned fewer than 50 per cent of the houses," Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 9.

¹⁴⁷ Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215-1272: With Special Reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1962), 3, 5-10, 185.

¹⁴⁸ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 125.

¹⁴⁹ However, see Löfstedt, "La loi canonique, les Plantagenêts et S. Thomas Becket," for arguments that Becket did contribute to scholarship while in Pontigny.

¹⁵⁰ Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 181-2; Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 125.

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impose conditions on themselves in imitation of those suffered by ascetic Christians, such as fasting, bodily mortification, the secret wearing of hair shirts and the undertaking of exile, whether voluntary or necessary for reasons of safety, as an artificial pilgrimage. This literary model allowed the lives of pre-thirteenth-century saints to be recast by contemporary authors to fit this model. Paul Binski notes that “in its practical manifestation the new sanctity, though in important reasons aristocratic in tenor, was male and clerical, and for the most part resolutely episcopal.”¹⁵¹ He also highlights the wider importance of such conduct: “the increasing stress on the ideal of episcopal asperity – in effect ‘white’ martyrdom – in the thirteenth century reflected efforts to revive monastic standards of conduct in the secular church.”¹⁵² Edward, Edmund, and Becket were not monks. However, as Binski notes, their portrayals seem to recall elements of monasticism: their ascetic lifestyles, their scholarly activities, and their contemplative behaviour as opposed to action are all features of monastic life.¹⁵³ They are also all sexless; Edward because of his vow of chastity and Becket and Edmund due to their ecclesiastical vocations. By imposing behaviour encoded as monastic on popular contemporary saints, the authors of these saints' lives drew on their own power to legitimise their own forms of spirituality.

St Albans at this time has close connections to the court. Matthew Paris's history writing was part of the abbey's bid to portray itself as the guardian of the country's history, and its involvement with royalty was deliberate.¹⁵⁴ The abbey's expansion at this

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 127.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁵⁴ For St Albans' reputation for history writing, see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1996), 1:315–34.

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time also indicates a wish to encourage visitors: Abbot John of Hertford channelled the revenue from the Hartburn church into building a guest hall to allow the abbey to welcome more guests.¹⁵⁵ Welcoming outsiders into the monastery allowed them to encounter the monastic way of life for themselves. Visitors could come in, but also texts could come out, as we shall see in the next section.

4. Audience

The *Becket Leaves* presents its readers with a sophisticated, composite narrative requiring competent readers capable of processing the multiple forms of information it provides. The interaction between text, rubric, and image created a complex narrative that could not be divorced from its textual setting. The narrative has clearly been composed with this interaction in mind, which leads to the conclusion that the text and illustrations were designed by the same person. In this text, French is only one of three languages that interact to produce the narrative. The inclusion of Latin headings formed a dual purpose. Firstly, the presence of Latin acted as an authenticator, imbuing the pages with the authority of the language of the church. The Latin at the top of each page is a constant reminder of this hierarchy. Secondly, as the text headings and the speech scrolls and labels are in Latin, this would have required a Latinate reader for the audience to access the entire text. This would not prevent non-Latinate readers from being able to understand the greater part of the narrative, but in order to receive the complete narrative, a Latinate reader would have been necessary, suggesting that its consumption was supervised and perhaps led by a cleric.

¹⁵⁵ *GA*, 1:314, *GA*, 1:321.

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Both the layout and the subject matter of the *Becket Leaves* carry some suggestion of the kind of audience the author envisioned for his text. The similarity of layout to Matthew Paris's illustrated French saints' lives allows them to be read in this context; even if they were not the work of Matthew Paris himself, it seems clear from their appearance that they were at least aimed at a similar audience. We can therefore speculate that the *Becket Leaves* would have been viewed by a similar audience, bringing the experiences of male saints and the lessons these narratives provided into the homes of some of the most powerful elite women of the day, and, by extension, their husbands, households, and children.

The portrayal of Becket appears deliberately feminised, which may be an indication that he was designed to appeal to female readers, as noted by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne.¹⁵⁶ Paul Binski has noted how Matthew Paris praised Isabel of Arundel's bravery in confronting Henry III about her rights to wardship.¹⁵⁷ He also notes that in Paris's account, Isabel is likened to male episcopal saints, specifically Thomas Becket, Edmund Rich, and Richard of Chichester, and they are intended to be examples to her.¹⁵⁸ Binski reads this as an example of episcopal saints representing an opposition to kingship, and indeed, Becket was sometimes viewed as an "anti-establishment" saint.¹⁵⁹ However, in the *Becket Leaves*, the reverse is taking place: although Binski identifies this movement as "male and clerical," I think it more likely that here and elsewhere in these illustrated saints' lives, the central figure has been feminised. Becket's ascetic behaviour highlights

¹⁵⁶ Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 159.

¹⁵⁷ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 123; reported in the *CM* 5:336-7.

¹⁵⁸ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 123.

¹⁵⁹ Binski, "Matthew Paris and his highly placed patrons regarded the finest representatives of the episcopal class as a check on the claims of public power, if not as representatives of a wholehearted 'opposition' to kingship," *Becket's Crown*, 129.

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his physical frailty and vulnerability, which is particularly emphasised in the image on f. 1r, which displays Becket and the woman holding a child in very similar postures. There are also undercurrents of female sanctity in Becket's self-starvation: the controlled starvation and the physical weakness that equate to moral superiority recalls the behaviour of contemporary female saints such as Marie of Oignies (d. 1213) and Beatrice of Nazareth (d. 1268).¹⁶⁰ The ambiguous gendering of these saints highlights their lack of sexuality and also, by assigning them female characteristics, brings them closer to their intended female audience. The narrator's preoccupation with the Young King Henry on f. 3r, in particular his seeming regret for the Young King's death, may have been aimed at an audience who may have experienced firsthand the pain of losing a son. Sethina Watson has written about the emotional responses of mothers to losing sons and how this could be expressed in gestures of piety.¹⁶¹ Referencing this pain may have been a way for a monastic author to connect with a female audience. Furthermore, the focus on the vulnerable people in Becket's life, particularly the nursing mother amongst the persecuted family on f. 1r and the "unlettered" people who support Becket in opposition to those in power on f. 2v, suggests that the audience may identify themselves amongst those people. The use of French supports this possibility; like Beneit's text, it provides an alternative to the Latin, prose, ecclesiastical lives of Becket that were produced in the late twelfth century. By feminising Becket, the author of the *Becket Leaves* suggests a dynamic of female bodily vulnerability yet spiritual superiority contrasted with male

¹⁶⁰ "Food was flesh, and flesh was suffering and fertility. In renouncing ordinary food and directing their being toward the food that is Christ, women moved to God not merely by abandoning their flawed physicality but also by becoming the suffering and feeding humanity of the body on the cross," Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 5; Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 201-3.

¹⁶¹ Sethina Watson, "A mother's past."

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control, irrationality, and violence, shaping women alongside Becket as counsellors and contrasts to those in power.

The combination of a feminised Becket and the use of French in the *Becket Leaves* allowed a monastic author to communicate with a secular audience. The association of French and images with literature for women is part of this. Matthew Paris seemed particularly concerned with the accessibility of his works for readers of non-Latinate literacies:

Ta memoire...en purtraiture

Figuree apertement

L'ai en cest livret present;

Pur ço ke desir e voil

Ke oraille ot, voient li oil.¹⁶²

[I have also represented your story in illustrations in this very same book, for those who want their eyes to see what their ears hear].¹⁶³

The presentation of aural rather than visual literacy recalls Beneit's request that Isabel of Cuckney have his text read to her often in order to benefit from it as much as possible. Here, the combination of the vernacular text and images make the narrative highly accessible and also allows the female audience to participate in reading through pictures, using their eyes and their ears for a multisensory experience. Paris's concern with making the text accessible is clear, but it cannot be taken at face value. Similarly, the

¹⁶² *ESA*, vv. 3961-6.

¹⁶³ Wogan-Browne and Fenster, *History of Saint Edward*, 105.

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declaration in the *Vie de seint Edmond* quoted in the introduction to this thesis seems at first sight to be praising the universal accessibility of French:

Iceste estoire vus translat
De latin en franceis apert;
Ke chascun est de ceo bien cert
[Ke] plus est usée et seüe
Ke nule launge et entendue
De clers et lais et la gent tute
Ke le latins, ne mie dute.
De vostre purpos la resun
Bien crei saver et l'achaisun:
Ke ses beles vertuz et grace
Et clers et lays, chascuns les sace.¹⁶⁴

[I have translated this history for you from Latin into plain French, for everyone is very certain that French is more used and known than any other language and more understood by clerks and laypeople and by everyone than Latin. I believe I will safeguard the meaning and the motive of your intention, so that his fine virtues and grace will be known to everyone, both clerk and lay].

The description of French as "apert" and the stated intention to produce a text which would be readable by "la gent tute," as noted in the introduction to this thesis, shows that the vernacular could and did transcend the cloister, and the inclusion of "clers e lais"

¹⁶⁴ *ESA*, vv. 32-42.

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suggests a kind of solidarity that writing in French permitted. A connection is thus created between the male monastic author and lay audience of both men and women. However, this supposed universal accessibility of French is at odds with the kinds of audiences at which these texts were aimed. French was a *more* accessible language than Latin, certainly, but it was not universally spoken, and the aristocratic households in which Matthew Paris's saints' lives were consumed were exceptional. Instead, "la tute gent" indicated people who had access to these manuscripts, and ideally personal interaction with a Latinate cleric to explain and supervise their consumption; in practice, a rather closed circle. In the case of the *Becket Leaves*, I would argue that this audience was made up predominantly of female readers, who were advised by the example of Thomas Becket to be moral and spiritual counsellors to men in positions of power, like the monks who produced these narratives for them, with the presence and guiding authority of the clergy inscribed on every page.

5. Conclusion

The narrative of the *Becket Leaves* documents the continuing interest in Thomas Becket and the way in which the spectre of Becket hovered in the national consciousness even decades after his death. His conversion into the model of sainthood performed by thirteenth-century English saints documents the changing trends in modes of sanctity. The *Becket Leaves* similarly are an example of how literary trends could influence real-life behaviour and vice versa: Edmund Rich modelled himself on Thomas Becket, both real and literary, and the literary Becket took on characteristics of thirteenth-century archbishops.

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The text also adds to the picture of the uses of French literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Becket Leaves* present a feminised Becket in a format which resembles other texts by Matthew Paris produced specifically for women, and as such implies that elite women may have been part of the author's projected audience. By feminising its central figure, the *Becket Leaves* creates an alliance between its monastic author, its protagonist, and a potential female audience. The design of the text demonstrates the author's wish to capitalise on the popularity and the appeal to the elite culture that Matthew Paris's illustrated saints' lives achieved. Its construction also illustrates the sophistication of medieval authors and audiences in composing and interpreting complex narratives. However, the text is also rooted in book and manuscript culture. It cannot function merely as a textual French narrative, but relies upon the illustrations, rubrics, and headings to be fully understood. This inscribes a hierarchy, in which the monastic author with his learning and authority is present at the top of each page in the form of the Latin headings. The French text moves into closed, elite circles, but it does not do so alone: it requires the presence of a clerk, the monks' representative, to fully explain the text to the audience. The monks could not enter these environments in person, so they are represented by their texts, which travelled into otherwise inaccessible places to force an interaction between the monastic and secular worlds.

All of this would be the case regardless of whether the text was produced at St Albans. However, given that it is possible that they were produced at the abbey, the *Becket Leaves* may also be illuminating in terms of the activities of authors at St Albans. Firstly, they suggest that it was part of the abbey's focus on the production of vernacular literature in order to attract, communicate with, and influence powerful readers. The

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abbot's expansion of the abbey's guest facilities during this period is another indication of this desire; Matthew Paris's interactions with the king and court during this time are yet another. Secondly, the presence and production of this growing corpus of French literature at St Albans during this time complicates the picture of the abbey's literary production. The use of French in the construction of a sophisticated illustrated narrative suggests that it was a means of making not only religious literature, but also moral instruction, available to a wider audience. It also allowed one enclosed environment, the monastery, to communicate with another, the aristocratic household and a closed circle of readers. In doing so, it allowed the monks to communicate directly with their readers without even leaving the cloister.

The *Becket Leaves* are a fascinating example of mid-thirteenth-century hagiography. Their engagement with the cult of Thomas Becket in its thirteenth-century incarnation illustrates the development of contemporary sanctity and the reinvention of cults to suit the mood and needs of the time. The Thomas Becket of the *Becket Leaves* could bring the experience of martyrdom and saintly constancy to an audience who would normally have been cut off from that possibility, and could simultaneously play a role in constructing a vision of power that relied not on physical strength but on moral and spiritual courage.

Conclusion to part 1

Conclusion to part 1

As the two Becket lives discussed in these two chapters have both shown, vernacular literature fostered connections between the abbey and powerful figures outside of the monastery. St Albans was here constructing a vernacular readership that included not only the king and his family, but also other influential families. Beneit's text was written to tie in with Henry II's behaviour; he needed to catch the king's attention with an attractive portrayal of his actions. Unlike Beneit, Matthew Paris did not need to shout for the ear of his king: he was established as a historiographer and already had a readership, and the *Becket Leaves* take advantage of this, whether or not they were actually his work. Both Beneit's *Life* of Becket and the *Becket Leaves* were targeted towards specific audiences, but those audiences were very different from one another. Beneit's text aimed to reach a variety of locations, both monastic and secular, and spread a distinctive message of solidarity with the king, whereas the *Becket Leaves* were directed at a very select few elite readers, an established readership that already had connections to the abbey. Both lives also inscribe St Albans monastery as a crucial figure in the curation and transmission of Becket's lives. In doing so, they deliver their own version of Becket to powerful secular audiences and recall their continued importance to their readers.

Part 2: Alexander the Great

1. Introduction

St Albans' literary production throughout the Middle Ages reveals its monks' constant fascination with Alexander the Great. In the mid twelfth century, a text known as the *St Albans Compilation*, which has been attributed either to Geoffrey de Gorham (abbot 1119-46) or Ralph Gubiun (abbot 1146-51), was produced at the abbey.¹ This Latin prose text is an amalgamation of classical and Late Antique sources about Alexander the Great, and survives in two manuscripts, plus a fragment.² The twelfth-century *Roman de toute chevalerie*, the only known insular French verse narrative of Alexander the Great, may be connected to St Albans Abbey although its original place of composition is unknown, as at least one of its manuscripts was arguably produced there.³ In the late thirteenth century, the *St Albans Compilation* was translated into insular French prose as the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*. In addition to these texts, Matthew Paris' *Chronica majora* also mentioned Alexander's fight against Gog and Magog and drew parallels between them and the Tartars, of whom he was particularly critical.⁴ St Albans' interest in Alexander continued after the time period covered by this thesis, as Thomas Walsingham (c. 1340-1422) also created a compilation of Alexander material during his time at St Albans.⁵

Alexander was a familiar literary subject in the Middle Ages, so the evident interest in Alexandrian narratives at St Albans was indicative of a wider literary trend.

¹ M. R. James notes these varying attributions in his catalogue of manuscripts from Gonville and Caius College: James, *Gonville and Caius College*, 1:179-80.

² Cambridge Corpus Christi College 219, ff. 1r-64r, M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*. 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1912), 157-8; Cambridge Gonville and Caius College 154, ff. 1r-137r, M. R. James, *Gonville and Caius College*, 1:179-80.

³ See chapter 3 below, pp. 175-9.

⁴ Matthew Paris's drawing of Alexander appears on f. 12v of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 26.

⁵ Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Magni Principis Alexandri*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 299. See also Clark, *Monastic Renaissance*. The date of the work is uncertain, but Cary suggests that it "probably dates from the last quarter of the fourteenth century," Cary, 69.

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There was no uniform treatment of Alexander in medieval literary culture, but broad trends in his representation can be seen to evolve over time. In order to understand trends in continental and insular writing about Alexander, it is necessary first to examine the wider trajectory of Alexandrian literature from Late Antiquity to the thirteenth century. Modern scholarship also provides a contextual appraisal of the work of the two St Albans writers, positioning this research within a wider scholarly framework and demonstrating its important contributions to the field.

2. Modern scholarship on Alexander

In the late nineteenth century, Paul Meyer published his study of French Alexander narratives, which was the first modern literary scholarship to examine representations of Alexander the Great.⁶ Meyer's work reproduced extracts from the French texts and also gave summaries both of the French texts and of the Latin and Greek source material available to medieval authors. His work included a study of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, and it mentioned the *St Albans Compilation*, but Meyer was evidently not aware of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, as it is absent from his discussion.

The next major stage in modern studies of medieval Alexander material was George Cary's *The Medieval Alexander*, which covered the Classical and Late Antique source texts as well as medieval sources for Alexander.⁷ Cary classified the sources into broadly "negative" and "positive" views of Alexander and established their connection to each other, highlighting the intertextuality of Alexander narratives. Like Meyer's work, Cary's study includes the *Roman de toute chevalerie* but not the *Estoire*. It was important in establishing the ways in which the Greek and Latin

⁶ Paul Meyer, *Alexandre le grand dans la littérature française du Moyen-Âge*, 2 vols. (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1886).

⁷ George Cary ed. D. J. A. Ross, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

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sources related to each other and to the medieval sources that were based on them, and also in providing a basis for more detailed analyses of the texts.

Cary's editor, D. J. A. Ross, also produced a study of the illustrations found in many manuscripts of Alexander texts.⁸ These illustrations both complemented the narrative and demonstrated the high status, or at least wealth, of the owners of the manuscripts. The connection between Alexander the Great and tropes of aristocracy and luxury was frequently made by authors in the texts themselves, and the manuscripts offer a visual example of this.⁹ More recently, Mark Cruse has produced a study of the illustrations in one fourteenth-century manuscript of the continental French *Roman d'Alexandre*, which explores the role of the illustrations in the narrative of the text and the audience they encode.¹⁰ Although my work will not deal directly with images of Alexander, Cruse and Ross raise issues of narrative construction and modes of reception, and this is a context in which I will examine the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*.

Scholars of French literature have also produced studies of Alexander material, and these have often included the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, but not the *Estoire*. Martin Gosman investigated the literary and ideological uses of Alexander to authors writing in French in the twelfth century.¹¹ Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox produced a collection of essays on some of the thematic elements of the Alexander

⁸ D. J. A. Ross, *Alexander Historiatus: A Guide to Medieval Illustrated Alexander Literature* 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Athenäum Verlag, 1988).

⁹ For example, illustrated manuscripts such as MS Bodley 264 and the two illustrated manuscripts of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* discussed in chapter 3.

¹⁰ Mark Cruse, "Pictorial Polyphony: Image, Voice, and Social Life in the *Roman d'Alexandre* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)," in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images and Communities in the Middle Ages* ed. Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 371-401; Mark Cruse, *Illuminating the Roman d'Alexandre: Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: The Manuscript as Monument* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011).

¹¹ Martin Gosman, *La légende d'Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du 12e siècle: une réécriture permanente* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).

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legend.¹² French scholars have also read Alexander material alongside the *romans d'antiquité*, which provides another context for the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.¹³ In particular, the work of Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas has made a tremendous contribution to the field. She has undertaken a detailed comparison of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the continental version of the romance, with the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, exploring the different presentations of Alexander in the two texts.¹⁴ She has also produced other works on the Alexander material of the Middle Ages, including most recently the medieval historiography of Alexander and also a project entitled *The literary creation of a myth of Alexander the Great in European literatures*, which explores the transmission and reception of Alexander across Western and Eastern Europe.¹⁵ Gaullier-Bougassas's project is ongoing and will continue research into European representations of Alexander extending beyond the Middle Ages.

For Britain specifically, there have been two major studies of Alexandrian literature. Gerrit Bunt produced a study of Alexander material specifically as it pertains to medieval Britain.¹⁶ This short work surveys most texts about Alexander the Great produced in Britain during the Middle Ages; however, it gives little detail on the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, and does not cover the *Estoire* at all. Charles Russell Stone's work examines the use of the medieval Alexander legend in Britain and particularly looks at the monastic involvement in the dissemination and reception of

¹² Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, eds., *The Medieval French Alexander* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).

¹³ Laurence Harf-Lancner, Laurence Mathey-Maille and Michelle Szkilnki, eds., *Contes de Troie et d'Alexandre* (Paris: Presses Soubonne Nouvelle, 2006).

¹⁴ Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, *Les romans d'Alexandre: aux frontières de l'épique et du Romanesque* (Paris: H. Champion, 1998).

¹⁵ The Myth Alexandre project, 2015, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://mythalexandre.meshs.fr/project-summary>; Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, *L'historiographie médiévale d'Alexandre le Grand* (Turnhout; Brepols, 2011).

¹⁶ Gerrit H. V. Bunt, *Alexander the Great in the Literature of Medieval Britain* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994).

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Alexander material.¹⁷ It provides a valuable basis for reading insular French narratives of Alexander in a context of monastic composition and consumption, and the second half of this thesis will build on Stone's work in this way.

Having established the current state of research into Alexander, I will now explore the chronological and generic development of medieval writing about Alexander the Great and set up the context for the analysis of the two Alexander texts in the following chapters. The intertextuality and interplay of sources is also a key part of Alexander literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as will be seen in the following chapters.

3. Medieval views of Alexander

Alexander's interest for a medieval audience is epitomised by his inclusion as one of the three pre-Christians of the Nine Worthies in Jacques de Longuyon's 1312 text, the *Voeux de Paon*, along with Hector and Julius Caesar.¹⁸ Before examining Alexander's trajectory in medieval writing, it is worth noting that, in the words of W. R. J. Barron, "each age remade Alexander in the image of its needs, its interests, its ideals, its morality."¹⁹ There was therefore no one "medieval Alexander" as he was open to interpretation and manipulation. Alexander could be either an example or a warning, and frequently both.²⁰ Stone highlights Alexander's ability to appeal to both secular and religious audiences because of this versatility.²¹ His versatility is mirrored in

¹⁷ Charles Russell Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King: A Literary History of Alexander the Great in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

¹⁸ For an edition, see Camillus Casey, "Les Voeux du paon," (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1956).

¹⁹ W. J. R. Barron, "The Wars of Alexander: From Reality to Romance," in *Romance Readings on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative Presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. Jennifer Fellows et al. (Cardiff, 1996), 23.

²⁰ For some examples, see part 2 of Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*.

²¹ "For the one he could stir admiration (and, of course, entertainment) for his achievements, and for the other he could provoke warnings for pushing the limits of man's lot on earth," Charles Russell Stone, "A Dubious Hero for the Time," (PhD thesis, UCLA, 2009), 6.

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literature by Alexander's tendency to adopt disguises; disguises, like the different topoi available to authors, could be assumed or rejected depending on the kind of Alexander they wished to create. He was a tool to be exploited for the author's purpose, a base to be modified according to each author's need.

Literature about Alexander had always been a means of entering political discussion, but as he penetrated further into the political sphere, Alexander began to be viewed as a means of education, both as an exemplum and also as a method of exploring the wider world that surrounded him in response to an encyclopaedic impulse. He was a convenient means of learning about the East, and a story about Alexander could contain a great deal of other information as well, on diverse topics. He was interesting not just as a character, but also as a gateway into his world, an opportunity to consider his surroundings as well as his personality and deeds.

It would be impossible to reduce literature about Alexander to a uniform movement with a linear progression. This introduction therefore aims to establish general trends rather than to impose an artificial idea of development on the narratives.

3.1 Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

The sources for Alexander the Great used by authors in the Middle Ages were originally written in Greek and are descended from an account composed after 200 BC by an author known as pseudo-Callisthenes, so-called because he was at first believed to have been Callisthenes, Alexander's court historian.²² There are four recensions of the text. The α and δ recensions are particularly relevant, as their translations from Greek into Latin provided two of the main sources for "romance"

²² Date from Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 9.

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Alexander narratives. The first of these, from the α recension, is Julius Valerius's *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, produced c. 320 AD, which was later epitomised in the ninth century to produce the *Zacher Epitome*.²³ The second comes from the δ recension, which was translated into Latin c. 950 by Archpriest Leo of Naples. It was originally entitled *Natiuitas et Victoria Alexandri Magni*, but it became known as the *Historia de Preliis* in its many editions.²⁴ Cary describes it as "one of the most important sources for medieval knowledge of Alexander," and it was used as a source for many vernacular Alexander texts, including the Old French prose Alexander romance.²⁵

In addition to the works derived from pseudo-Callisthenes, there were three so-called "historical" sources of medieval Alexander material. The first is Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Gesta Alexandri Magni*, which was written during the reign of Augustus (27BC-14AD).²⁶ A supplemented version, featuring additions from Quintus Curtius himself, Julius Valerius and Justin, called the *Interpolated Quintus Curtius* by Cary, also circulated in the Middle Ages.²⁷ The second "historical" source is Justin's *Epitome of the Historiae Philippicae* by Trogus Pompeius, which features in both the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*.²⁸ The date of this source has been contested: Ronald Syme has suggested c. 390 AD, while John Yardley suggests c. 200

²³ Julius Valerius, *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, ed. Michaela Rosellini, 2nd ed. (Monachii: K.G. Saur, 2004); *Julii Valerii Epitome*, ed. Julius Zacher (Halle: Waisenhauss, 1867).

²⁴ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 11; R. Telfryn Pritchard, trans., *The History of Alexander's Battles: The Historia de Preliis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1992).

²⁵ Cary, *ibid.*

²⁶ Carlo M. Lucarini, ed., *Q. Curtius Rufus: Historiae* (Berlin; New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2009). For eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts, see Birger Munk Olsen, *L'Étude des auteurs classiques latin aux xi^e et xii^e siècles*, 3 vols. in 4 (Paris, 1982-89), 1:355-62.

²⁷ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 16.

²⁸ Justin, *Epitoma historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, ed. Franz Rühl Otto Seel, 2nd ed., (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972) hereafter *EPT*, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, trans. John C. Yardley, 2 vols (Oxford, Clarendon, 1997-2011), hereafter *EPH*. For Justin's popularity, see L. D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of Latin Culture* (Oxford, 1983), 197-8.

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AD.²⁹ The final source is Orosius' *Historia adversus paganos*, composed c. 416-7, which itself used Justin as a source.³⁰ Orosius's text was the most widely used by world-chroniclers in the Middle Ages.³¹ For both Justin and Orosius, Alexander illustrated that pre-Christian history was a cyclical process doomed to periods of conflict, corruption, and destruction as there was no possibility of salvation. Orosius' account was the most popular Alexander text in the Middle Ages, surviving in almost 250 manuscripts, but both Justin and Orosius were very widely read by medieval readers.³² The two texts often circulated together in manuscripts: Lars Mortensen names six manuscripts that contained both texts and argues that this was a particular interest for writers in southern England and Normandy and Brittany.³³ Two manuscripts that can be definitively connected to England date from the twelfth century, which testifies to what Philip Rusche identifies as a sudden explosion of interest in Justin's work at this time.³⁴

In addition to these sources, a letter purporting to be from Alexander to Aristotle about his journey through the East was worked into one of the versions of

²⁹ R. Syme, "The Date of Justin and the Discovery of Troguus," *Historia* 3 (1988): 358-71; Yardley, 1:1.

³⁰ For the popularity of Orosius, see Lars Boje Mortensen, "The Texts and Contexts of Ancient Roman History in Twelfth-Century Western Scholarship," in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London, 1992), 105-6.

³¹ Orosius, *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. Karl Zangermeister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1882), hereafter *HAP*. For a modern English translation, see Paulus Orosius, *Orosius: Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. A. T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), hereafter *SBH*.

³² Cary, 17; J. M. Batley and D. J. A. Ross, "A Check List of Manuscripts of Orosius' *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri Septem*," *Scriptorium* 15 (1961): 329-34.

³³ Lars Boje Mortensen, "Orosius and Justinus in one volume. Post-Conquest books across the Channel," *Cahiers de L'institute du Moyen-âge grec et latin* 60 (1990): 389-99, 395-7. Max Manitius, *Handschriften antiker Autoren in mittelalterlichen bibliothekskatalogen* ed. Karl Manitius, 2nd ed. (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 76-8 lists 7 English manuscripts of Justin and 243-7 lists 11 English manuscripts of Orosius. See also D. J. A. Ross, "Illustrated manuscripts."

³⁴ Philip G. Rusche, "A twelfth-century English fragment of Justinus' *Epitome*," *Scriptorium* 48 (1994): 140-6, 140. However, it must be noted that this was not a new text in England, as Julia Crick notes an eight-century fragment of Justin that was probably produced in England: Julia Crick, "An Anglo-Saxon fragment of Justinus's *Epitome*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 16 (1987): 181-96.

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the Greek pseudo-Callisthenes.³⁵ This text was incorporated into the *Historia de preliis*, and in full is known as the *Epistola Alexandri Macedonis ad Aristotelem magistrum suum de itinere suo et de situ Indiae*. The text was translated into Old English and included in the *Beowulf* manuscript. It was also translated into various European vernacular languages throughout the Middle Ages, including Middle Irish, Icelandic, French, Middle English, and German.³⁶ The *Epistola* was widely considered to be a standard, authoritative work on the East and also on natural history throughout the Middle Ages.³⁷ The author of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* translated the *Epistola* into French and incorporated it into the third book of his narrative.

The early medieval period saw much anthologising and translation of texts about Alexander. Although a detailed examination of the Anglo-Saxon Alexander traditions is beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief summary of the interest of insular authors in him in this period will help to contextualise what comes afterwards. In England, Alexander had a Latin presence, in the form of the source texts discussed above and also the Old English translation of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which Andy Orchard describes as "a breathless tale of unmitigated wonder."³⁸ He also had a vernacular presence in several different texts. The first was the translation of Orosius's work into Old English made during the reign of King Alfred (871-99), although, according to Bunt, this was "a paraphrase with a good deal of expansion and omission rather than a faithful translation."³⁹ The translation survives in four

³⁵ Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, 14-6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-6 and 60-2; Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 118.

³⁹ Bunt, *Alexander the Great*, 14.

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manuscripts.⁴⁰ Alexander was not the only focus of the Old English translation of Orosius, but his inclusion suggests that he was a subject of interest for writers and readers at this time. Furthermore, Alexander is referenced in Old English poetry, and his exploits were also recounted in the tenth-century *Beowulf* manuscript, in *The Wonders of the East* and the Old English translation of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.⁴¹ These two translations showcase two different sides of Alexander in the same manuscript: the slayer of monsters and the victim of his own pride. Andy Orchard argues that the Old English *Epistola* was altered from its Latin source in order to be more critical of Alexander's bloodthirsty and unreasonable nature, echoing the increased criticism of Alexander found in the Old English translation of Orosius.⁴²

This information can lead us to some conclusions. Firstly, Alexander the Great had a dual presence in pre-conquest England in both Latin and vernacular literature, meaning that the composition of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* were not Alexander's first vernacular appearance in England. Secondly, the emphasis was on translation and anthologising rather than on original composition, with a multiplicity of texts and views being represented in a single manuscript, such as the late-eleventh-century London, British Library MS Royal, 13.A.1.⁴³ The awareness of multiple sources, often found in late Anglo-Saxon compilations, and also multiple views of Alexander, can be seen as precursors to the technique of assembling multiple sources in one text to make a compilation such as the *St Albans Compilation*. Finally, although Alexander was always an ambiguous

⁴⁰ Janet Bately, ed., *The Old English Orosius* (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English texts Society, 1980), xxiii-xxvi.

⁴¹ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 119-20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 121-2.

⁴³ Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 13-76.

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figure, his depiction in English writing and compilation in the ninth to the eleventh centuries contained modifications from the source material deliberately designed to present a critical portrait of him. This would feed into later insular writing about Alexander and provide a contrasting view to the material produced in continental French.

3.2 Alexander in the twelfth century

In the twelfth century, writing about Alexander took a new direction. The change began in France, where eight separate vernacular texts about him were written in the period c. 1160-c. 91.⁴⁴ There was also a Latin narrative, Walter de Châtillon's *Alexandreis*, written between 1178 and 1182.⁴⁵ The *Alexandreis* quickly became incorporated into the school curriculum.⁴⁶ The use of the *Alexandreis* as a standard schools text raises the possibility that it would have been read by a wide clerical audience, including monks returning to the cloister from university who could then go on to consider Alexander in their own writing. However, this cannot be the whole story, as the vernacular texts pre-date the *Alexandreis* by several decades in some cases. The flurry of production of new texts about Alexander in France during the twelfth century suggests that authors had begun to mobilise him for a variety of new purposes. The continental Alexander narratives promoted an Alexander who was

⁴⁴ They are: Albéric de Pisançon's *Alexandre*, written in the early twelfth century; the *Decasyllabic Alexander*, written c. 1160-70; Eustache's *Fuerre de Gadres*, written in the twelfth century; Lambert le Tort's *Alixandre en Orient*, written c. 1170; the anonymous *Mort Alixandre*; Jean le Névelon's *La Venjanse Alixandre*, written 1180-1181; Alexandre de Paris's *Roman d'Alexandre*, written after 1177; Gui de Cambrai's *Le Vengement Alixandre*, written before 1191. For editions, see Edward Cooke Armstrong ed., *The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre*, 7 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937-76) hereafter *RAlix*; Jean Le Névelon, *Jehan le Nevelon: La Venjanse Alixandre*, ed. Edward Billings Ham (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931); Bateman Edwards, ed., *Gui de Cambrai: le Vengement Alixandre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1928).

⁴⁵ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 63; Walter de Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, ed. Marvin L. Colker (Patavii: In Aedibus Antenoreis, 1978).

⁴⁶ Cary notes that the "numerous manuscripts, most of them with explanatory glosses...bear witness to the popularity of the work in the schools," Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 63.

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predominantly a secular figure, legitimising the aristocratic way of life and focusing on the secular values he could promote.⁴⁷ The use of French rather than Latin seems to have aided this, offering an alternative mode for discussing Alexander and creating an alliance between vernacular literature and the concerns and interests of secular audiences. This may have driven the impulse to treat Alexander in new ways. The widespread literary composition in France contrasts greatly with the behaviour of insular authors, who were far less prolific: in the same time period, the only known texts produced about Alexander the Great were the Latin *St Albans Compilation* and the French *Roman de toute chevalerie*. Both of those texts gave a different portrayal of Alexander to the secular figure of chivalry and courtesy to be found in the continental French texts, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Charles Russell Stone argues that St Albans' interest in Alexander is part of what he sees as the Benedictine appropriation of Alexander in England.⁴⁸ He argues that this is partly to do with the source material that was popular during this time, in particular Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus.⁴⁹ Stone also argues that the use of Justin as the main source for the *St Albans Compilation* established what would become a very long tradition of subscribing to the Roman treatment of Alexander as a man whose military and political brilliance could not overcome his most destructive vices and proclivities.⁵⁰ He further notes that Justin's work uses Macedonian history as "a cautionary exemplum of the corruptive influence of success and unmitigated power."⁵¹ Stone argues that Justin's presentation of Alexander was something of a

⁴⁷ See for example Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* 2nd ed. (London: University of California Press, 1995), 99-213, which discusses the uses of ancient history for medieval aristocratic authors and audiences.

⁴⁸ Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 80-3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

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novelty in the twelfth century, as "no evidence suggests that it genuinely influenced Alexander's reception in England before William of Malmesbury's historiographical writing and [the] *St Alban's Compilation*."⁵² Justin's source provided a more thorough and detailed examination of Alexander's lineage and the aftermath of his death, which provided the author of the *St Albans Compilation* with a wider scope for consideration of Alexander.

As well as the differing concentration in source material, Stone highlights that audiences in England had a different investment in Alexander to audiences in France and Germany. The accounts of Alexander produced in those countries may be linked to the ways in which they interpreted Macedonia. Stone argues that the Macedonians, like the Trojans for the English, provided an example of empire-building and a sense of heroic ancestry for the Franks and the Saxons.⁵³ This may explain why twelfth-century continental Alexander narratives focussed on Alexander's achievements and not his destructive potential; like the contemporary history-writing encouraged by Henry II, discussed in Chapter 1, they were perhaps searching for a way to legitimise and glorify their own past. It may also be the reason why so many French authors chose him as a subject in the first place.

The production of the *Alexandreis*, the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Roman d'Alexandre* around the same time indicates a new focus of interest on Alexander. In England, Alexander was used as a means of interrogating and critiquing those in power, a purpose that will be explored in more detail in the upcoming chapters, but it is necessary to note here that this was distinct from the practice in France. England's lack of identity with the Macedonians allowed them to be more

⁵² Ibid., 86.

⁵³ Ibid., 96.

critical of Alexander, as his national identity was separate from theirs. Stone also notes that texts featuring the criticism of the behaviour of Alexander and his men come from periods of political unrest in Britain, such as the rebellion of 1088 following the death of William the Conqueror and also the mid-twelfth century Anarchy, as they display the destructive power of civil war and leaderless magnates.⁵⁴ These two competing portrayals of Alexander in continental and insular literature raised questions about whether he should be the preserve of religious or secular authors.

3.3 The education of kings: Alexander in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries

In the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England, Alexander began to transcend the boundaries of the monastery and enter into the secular world. He had always provided an opportunity to comment on those in power, but in this period he began to appear outside of narratives of his own life. He was used in the writings of Walter Map, Gerald of Wales, and John of Salisbury as a means of discussing kingship, and comparisons were also drawn between him and Henry II.⁵⁵ Stone sees Alexander's appearance in these texts as anticipating his appearance in *Mirrors for Princes* as a means of advising and critiquing those in power.⁵⁶

The genre gained impetus when, in c. 1230, a text known as the *Secretum Secretorum*, which had hitherto been available only in fragments, became available in a full Latin translation. It purported to be a letter written by Aristotle advising Alexander on statecraft, and, as Stone puts it, "promised the same education that was

⁵⁴ Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 100-1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

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the 'secret' to Alexander's success."⁵⁷ Like the *Alexandreis*, it became a school text and therefore it could travel back to monastic libraries once the students had finished their studies, either in physical copies or in the minds of those who had read it.⁵⁸ It also circulated in French translations, both insular and continental, indicating a wider audience, including perhaps a secular one.⁵⁹ The translation of the *Secretum Secretorum* coincided with, or perhaps contributed to, a rise in interest in Aristotelian philosophy in the thirteenth century.⁶⁰

The growing interest in encyclopaedic literature also meant that Alexander was an excuse for cataloguing the world, and sections exploring the geography, history, and wildlife of Alexander's adventures became common in Alexander texts. He became a symbol for exploring and processing the world, as is demonstrated by his inclusion in the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*.⁶¹ Alexander narratives were a form of education and global exploration, not just in the stories of his own life, but also in his wider environment. Bunt observes that Higden's *Polychronicon*, an encyclopaedic text that partly deals with Alexander, was "not really concerned to give us a judgement on Alexander, but rather to make use of the abundant material available to point out the lessons of human history to his readers."⁶²

While authors such as Gerald of Wales and John of Salisbury had used Alexander as a means of discussing Henry II, his grandson Henry III used Alexander in his own self-representation. His palace at Clarendon was decorated with images of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 8-9. This text should not be confused with the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which is a letter from Alexander to Aristotle.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁹ J. Monfrin, "La Place du *Secret de Secrets* dans la littérature française médiévale," in *Pseudo-Aristotle, The Secret of Secrets: Sources and Influences* ed. W. F. Ryan and C. B. Schmitt (London: Warburg Institute, University of London 1982), 73-113.

⁶⁰ J. J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 24.

⁶¹ See Naomi Reed Kline, "The World of Alexander," in *Maps of Medieval Thought* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), 165-90.

⁶² Bunt, *Alexander the Great*, 39.

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Alexander, as was the queen's chamber in Nottingham.⁶³ At the same time, illustrated manuscripts of Alexander narratives began to be produced for consumption by high-status audiences, including the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.⁶⁴ Although Alexander retained his essential ambiguity, the English royal family's interest in Alexander suggested an alteration in the way he was viewed. Not only was Alexander a means of advising kings, but kings also responded to Alexander by using him in their self-representation.

Meanwhile, the composition of Alexander narratives continued in France, with the composition of the anonymous *Prise de Defur*, written c. 1250, and different versions of the prose Alexander romance.⁶⁵ There are three versions of the Old French Alexander in prose, one dating from the early thirteenth century, one written between 1252-90, and one from the fifteenth century.⁶⁶ In England, there were two new narratives of Alexander produced in the thirteenth century. The first, the Middle English *Kyng Alisaundre*, was a translation of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* produced c. 1275, surviving in three manuscripts.⁶⁷ The second was the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, composed at St Albans around the same time.⁶⁸ The choice of prose over verse to convey narrative at this time carried with it political and literary implications, and these will be explored in Chapter 4.

⁶³ Paul Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1986); Tancred Borenius, "The Cycle of Images in the Palaces and Castles of Henry III," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6 (1943): 40-50.

⁶⁴ There are two illustrated manuscripts of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*: Cambridge Trinity College O.9.34 (1446) and Paris Bibliothèque Nationale franç. 24364.

⁶⁵ Lawton P. G. Peckham and Milan S. La Du. eds., *La Prise de Defur and Le Voyage d'Alexandre au Paradis Terrestre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935. Rpt. New York: Kraus Reprints, 196).

⁶⁶ Alfons Hilka, ed. *Der altfranzösische Prosa-Alexanderroman* (M. Niermeyer: Halle, 1920. Rpt. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1974).

⁶⁷ G. V. Smithers. ed., *Kyng Alisaundre* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957. Rpt. 1969). The Medieval Alexander Project: The Medieval English Tradition, accessed 25/05/2015,

<https://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/alexander/alexengbib.htm>.

⁶⁸ See chapter 4 below.

4. Intertextuality

There was frequent interaction between insular and continental French narrative material. Several of the shorter continental French texts were incorporated into the *Roman d'Alixandre*, and the *Roman de toute chevalerie* incorporated both the *Fuerre de Gadres* and sections of the *Roman d'Alexandre* into all of its surviving manuscripts. The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* shares a prologue with the *Old French Prose Alexander*, which indicates an ongoing textual exchange between St Albans and continental French literary networks. The two complementary and competing versions of Alexander continued to interact following their composition. The *Roman de toute chevalerie* is especially valuable because it does not only negotiate established Classical and Late Antique sources, but it also engages with the twelfth-century continental French texts *Le Fuerre de Gadres* and *Le Roman d'Alexandre*.⁶⁹

5. Conclusion

Alexander the Great was a strong presence in literary consciousness throughout the Middle Ages. As well as presenting opportunities for entertaining narratives, he was also a means of education and political commentary. His presence in school texts such as the *Alexandreis* and the *Secretum Secretorum* made him synonymous with education, and this therefore gave him the potential to enter into both secular and religious contexts, including being carried back into monastic environments, by scholars who had finished their studies. The interest of the St Albans' monks in Alexander covered both Latin and French literary composition, and can be read as a

⁶⁹ There is further evidence of the exchange and combination of continental and insular material in the *Cambridge Alexander*, the prologue of which appears in continental prose Alexander texts; see F. Arnold, "The Prophecy of Daniel in the Old French Prose Alexander," *French Studies* 17 (1963): 324-30 and D. J. A. Ross, "The Old French Alexander Romance in Prose: A Postscript," *French Studies* 6 (1952): 353.

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response to encountering Alexander in the schools. Their engagement with the continental interest in Alexander and in contemporary literary developments to produce a verse and a prose narrative of Alexander within the space of roughly a hundred years is significant, and the next two chapters will be devoted to exploring the kinds of audiences these texts could have engaged with. While Alexander was an attractive secular figure in continental French literature, in insular writing he was connected to a monastic environment. The St Albans texts can be read in the light of monastic authors attempting to recoup Alexander for a monastic audience and to wrest him away from continental secular authors.

For the St Albans monks to be engaging with Alexander in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is suggestive of a wish to enter into a dialogue about the appropriate behaviour of rulers. Given what we have already seen of their interaction with Thomas Becket, this is not surprising. Neither the *Roman de toute chevalerie* nor the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* have been analysed in the light of monastic production. The following chapters will explore the implications of connecting these texts with St Albans abbey for their interpretation and their consumption. Having established the unique context into which the authors of the St Albans Alexander texts were writing, we shall now move on to an exploration of those texts in detail.

Chapter 3: The Roman de toute chevalerie

1. Introduction

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* is the only known insular French verse narrative of Alexander the Great. Extracts from it were first published by Paul Meyer in 1886, as part of his study of medieval Alexander texts written in French.¹ An edition was produced in 1976-77 by Brian Foster and Ian Short, and the same edition was republished in France with an introduction and notes by Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas and Laurence Harf-Lancner in 2003.² The *Roman de toute chevalerie* has attracted wide scholarly attention because of speculation about its date, which has been the subject of articles by Brian Foster, Alfred Foulet, and Geert de Wilde.³ Also, its literary qualities have been studied by Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, who has made a detailed comparison of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the continental French *Roman d'Alexandre*, and most recently Charles Russell Stone, who has discussed it as part of his study of narratives of Alexander the Great in medieval Britain, reading it in the context of monastic interest in Alexander.⁴

This chapter will engage with the existing scholarship about the *Roman de toute chevalerie* in discussing the potential composition date of the text, and also how the text evolved to include continental French material. It will also read the text in the light of its monastic composition and consider how St Albans can be connected to one

¹ Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand*, 1:177-235.

² *RTC*; Thomas of Kent, *Le Roman d'Alexandre ou Le Roman de toute chevalerie*, ed. and trans. Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas et Laurence Harf-Lancner, with ed. text by Brian Foster et Ian Short (Paris: Champion, 2003).

³ Brian Foster, "The *Roman de toute chevalerie*: Its Date and Author," *French Studies* 9 (1955): 154-8; Alfred Foulet, "La date du *Roman de toute chevalerie*," in F Dethier, ed. *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune, professeur à l'Université de Liège* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1969), 1205-10; Geert de Wilde, "Revisiting the Textual Parallels and Date of Thomas of Kent's *Alexander* And Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*," *Medium Aevum* 83 (2014): 76-92.

⁴ Gaullier-Bougassas, *Romans d'Alexandre*, undertakes a thorough comparison of the two works with reference to the different writing styles, the approaches of the authors to their subject, and the characterisation of Alexander; Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 92-8.

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thirteenth-century manuscript of the text in particular. Scholars have discussed the *Roman's* connection to St Albans, but have not fully explored the implications of this monastic connection. As was seen in the introduction to this half of my thesis, Alexander the Great in continental French literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was predominantly a secular figure. Here, I will explore the possibility that the *Roman* provided a competing view of Alexander, reframing the agenda of the text from secular to monastic, in providing a detailed analysis of the narrative style to explore how the narrator portrays himself as a monk and how this allows him to advise the audience. Finally, it will look at the political and social circumstances surrounding one manuscript of the text, to examine how the text could have resonated with the political events of the mid-thirteenth century with particular reference to one episode in Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora*. As before, the author's choice of French has implications for the text's content and audience, and this will be taken into account in the analysis.

2. Text, date, and production

This section of the chapter will explore the text, possible date, and possible location of production of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.

2.1. Author, manuscripts and edition

The textual history of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* is complex. Nothing is known about the author apart from his name, Thomas of Kent. He refers to himself four times during the text. The first is at v. P20, where he says

Qui mun non demande, Thomas ai non de Kent.

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[Whoever asks for my name, I have the name Thomas from Kent OR Thomas of Kent is my name].⁵

This is the only time the author connects himself with Kent, and its meaning is unclear: the fact that he is named Thomas and received his name in Kent (i.e., was born there) does not necessarily mean that he was *known* as “Thomas of Kent,” and he may have had another name by which he was known during his lifetime.⁶ The author’s first name occurs at three further points in the text:

Ceo qe li auteur dient nous recontre Thomas.

[That which the authors say is recounted to us by Thomas].

Si Thomas en deist tant cum font li auteur.

[And Thomas speaks about it just as the authors do].

Mestre Thomas [Master Thomas].⁷

The final occurrence of his first name indicates that he had received a university education and therefore most likely had some kind of ecclesiastical connections.⁸

Some attempts have been made to identify Thomas of Kent, but nothing concrete about him has been found. Bartina Wind and Dominica Legge both considered the possibility that he was one of the other authors named Thomas

⁵ The P here indicates that this section of the edition was made from the Paris manuscript owing to gaps in the Durham manuscript used as the basis of the edition.

⁶ Earlier critics, such as Bartina Wind in B. Wind, "Faut-il identifier Thomas, auteur de *Tristan*, avec Thomas de Kent?", in *Saggi e ricerche in memoria di Ettore Li Gotti* (Palermo, 1962), 479-90, referred to the author as "Thomas de Caen;" however, as Foster has observed, "Early investigators were inclined to consider Kent as standing for Caen in the name of Thomas de Kent, but Kent was most certainly used in the Middle Ages as an identifying name in England. There was in the twelfth century a John de Kent, while in the fifteenth century there were four men at Oxford named Thomas de Kent," Foster, *RTC*, 2:69.

⁷ *RTC*, v. 6581; *RTC*, v. 6676; *RTC*, v. 6733.

⁸ Alan Cobban notes that the student, "in parallel with the secular clergy...were recognised as clerks," Alan Cobban, *English University Life in the Middle Ages* (London, UCL Press, 1999), 3.

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writing in insular French in the twelfth century, namely Thomas the author of the *Romance of Horn* and Thomas the author of the *Tristan* romance, (since Thomas was not a common Christian name before the martyrdom of Thomas Becket in 1173), but their research proved inconclusive.⁹ For now, the identity of Thomas of Kent must remain a mystery; in any case, there are more interesting lines of enquiry to pursue with the text.

There are five surviving manuscripts or manuscript fragments of *Le Roman de toute chevalerie*.¹⁰ The earliest of these, Cambridge Trinity College O.9.34 (1446), dates from the mid-thirteenth century; a one-page fragment in the British Library (Add. 46701) also dates from the thirteenth century; the remaining manuscripts, Durham Cathedral Library C. IV.27B, Oxford Bodleian Library Latin misc. b.17 fol. 140 (a one-page fragment) and Paris Bibliothèque Nationale franç. 24364, all date from the fourteenth century, with the Durham manuscript, which is the most recent, being used as the basis for Foster and Short's edition, because it is in the best condition. The Durham manuscript does not include the illustrations, but instead uses the image rubrics as headings for the text. This manuscript is believed to have been made for Richard of Bury, bishop of Durham from 1334-45, who had copyists in his service throughout the country. Richard apparently did not approve of illustrations in his manuscripts and so may have asked for a copy without them.¹¹ The illustrated Cambridge manuscript has been connected to St Albans by some scholars, as will be explored below. There has been no study of the text and images together so far, but there appears to have been some element of customisation, as the two illustrated manuscripts contain different illustrations. Space does not permit a comprehensive

⁹ See Wind, "Faut-il identifier Thomas, auteur de *Tristan*, avec Thomas de Kent?" and also Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 38-43.

¹⁰ Details taken from Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, n. 165, 98.

¹¹ Foster, *RTC*, 2:71.

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analysis of the text and images in this chapter, because a detailed comparative study of the Cambridge and Paris manuscripts would be necessary in order to determine how much the illustrations resemble each other and the likelihood of their having been copied from each other or made independently. However, it would be useful in the future to consider how the narrative interacts with the images.

It is not certain whether the continental interpolations are the work of Thomas of Kent or whether they were added by later copyists. However, it is probable that they were a later addition, as the Middle English *Kyng Alisaundre*, a translation of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, does not contain the interpolations of the continental texts found in the manuscripts. This makes it likely that there was a lost version of the text, perhaps the earliest version of the *Roman*, that did not contain them which was then translated into Middle English.¹² Brian Foster and Ian Short take this view in their edition of the text: they style it as *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, reflecting their decision to remove all material originating from continental French texts in order to best represent the work of Thomas of Kent.¹³ Their decision preserves the text as a purely insular production, but, as all surviving manuscripts of the *Roman* contain interpolations from continental texts, the edition does not reflect the text as many medieval readers would have encountered it. As no manuscript of the *Roman* without the interpolations is known to survive, whereas three manuscripts of the text survive with some interpolated text, it is possible that the *Roman* reached a wider audience with the interpolations than it did without them. The *Roman* is 8054 lines long in Foster and Short's edition, but the manuscripts

¹² See Gerrit Bunt, 21.

¹³ "In excising the [continental Alexander romance] passages we come closer to the work of Thomas of Kent, even if we cannot claim to reproduce it exactly," Foster, *RTC*, 2:18.

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suggest that was closer to 12,000 lines in its complete form.¹⁴ The edition therefore covers only two thirds of the total material found in the manuscripts, and also downplays the interaction of continental and insular material. This survival evidence further raises the possibility that the text without the interpolations was found to be insufficient by those who made later copies of it. The Paris manuscript of the *Roman* demonstrates that textual alterations could go both ways, as it shows signs of having been altered for continental readers: the name of a constellation has been changed and there are spelling changes which bring the language closer to continental French.¹⁵ It suggests that the author and copyists of the *Roman* were participating in a cross-Channel network of literary exchange. To downplay or disregard this exchange is to misrepresent the *Roman* and to isolate it from the textual trends in which it participated.

2.2. Date

The date of the text has been contested in past scholarship. The earliest study, made by Paul Meyer, dated it to between the end of King John's reign and the early years of the reign of Henry III (1199-1220), while Schneegans dated it to the second half of the twelfth century, and Groeber suggested the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁶ More

¹⁴ Foster and Short, 2:14.

¹⁵ *RTC*, vv. 4674-5 name some stars in the constellation of Ursa Major:

Ces sunt les esteilles qe nos Charle Wain nomon.

Char l'apellent Franceis [these are the stars that we call "Charle Wain." The French call them "Char].

In the Paris manuscript, the text is altered to read:

Ces sont les set esteilles ke nus Char nomon,

Char l'apelent Franceis [these are the seven stars that we call "Char." French people call them "Char"] (f. 50d).

¹⁶ Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand*, 2:294, quoted in Foster, "*Le Roman de toute chevalerie*: its date and author," 154; H. Schneegans, "Die handschriftliche Gestaltung des Alexanderromans von Eustache von Kent," *Zeitschr. f.fr. Spr.* 11. Lit, XXX (1906): 240-63, especially 242; quoted in Foster, "Roman," 154, G. Groeber ed., *Grundriss der Romanischen Philologie* 5 vols. (Strassburg, 1914), II (i):581, quoted in Foster, "Roman," 154.

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recent studies have placed the date c. 1175.¹⁷ The debate was re-opened last year by Geert de Wilde, who highlighted the links between the *Roman* and the *Chronique* of Jordan Fantosme.¹⁸ De Wilde argues that the similarities between passages from the *Chronique* and the *Roman* illustrate that Fantosme's chronicle was modelled on the *Roman* and that therefore it must have been composed before the chronicle, which was written c. 1174-75.¹⁹ He suggests that the *Roman* precedes the *Chronique*, and not the other way around, because solid passages of text in the *Roman* are split up in the *Chronique*; the argument is that an author would be more likely to take passages from an existing text and distribute them amongst his own work rather than construct passages from disparate lines in a source text.²⁰

I would like to follow this theory along with the most recent linguistic analysis by Ian Short in suggesting a date of c. 1170 for the original text of the *Roman*.²¹ However, in my analysis I will particularly focus on the Cambridge manuscript, which has a production date of the mid-thirteenth century and which has been connected to St Albans because of the style of its illustrations. That the text was being copied over seventy years after its original composition suggests that it still held relevance and interest for audiences in the thirteenth century. I would like to examine the text of the Cambridge manuscript in the light of the interactions it demonstrates between the continental and insular material. This also opens up a new setting for the text,

¹⁷ "While [linguistic grounds] are notoriously unreliable for the dating of A-N. works, it would seem indeed that we are dealing with a twelfth-century rather than a thirteenth-century work, since the language and versification are reasonably correct once they are purged of errors imputable to later scribes...The period proposed is therefore between 1174 and 1200," Foster, *RTC*, 2:76. Short's view is much more specific: "In the 1170s, Thomas of Kent, in the Anglo-Norman "Alexander", is found aligning himself unambiguously with English-French bilinguals," Short, *Manual*, 16.

¹⁸ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, number 55. R. C. Johnston, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); de Wilde, "Textual Parallels."

¹⁹ Matthew Strickland, "Fantosme, Jordan (*fl.* 1170–1180)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48310>.

²⁰ De Wilde, "Textual Parallels," 84.

²¹ Ian Short, *Manual*, 16.

allowing it to be viewed in the context of thirteenth-century intellectual and political movements. If we consider the possibility that the additions in the Cambridge manuscript were the work of a St Albans copyist, this offers a new interpretation that the interpolations were a reaction to the contemporary political situation.

2.3 Monastic production

There has been some debate about the possible production site of the text. The arguments against monastic production have primarily been based on its illustrations, which, because they depict subjects such as sexual intercourse and violence, have been deemed too "immoral" to have been made in a monastery. D. J. A. Ross argued that a monastic house was unlikely to have produced such illustrations; Nigel Morgan also follows the view that the seeming immorality in the illustrations makes them unlikely to have been a monastic production.²²

However, arguments based on the illustrations alone need not necessarily rule out monastic production, as there are many other texts that were produced or owned by monasteries that contained similarly "immoral" material.²³ It is also worth noting that the violent content in the illustrations of the *Chronica majora* and the *Vie de seint Auban* by Matthew Paris, both of which were definitely produced in St Albans, are an indication that monks could and did produce this supposedly "immoral" material. Furthermore, Katherine Allen Smith has argued that monks were not distanced from the world of warfare, but rather frequently used it in their writing for allegorical

²² D. J. A. Ross, "A Thirteenth Century Anglo-Norman Workshop Illustrating Secular Romances?", in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune*, 689-94, 694, see also D. J. A. Ross, "Discussions: Thomas of Kent," *French Studies* 9 (1955): 248-351. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, 1:129. For the problems with Ross and Morgan's arguments, see below. Avril and Sternmann follow Ross and Morgan in not attributing the text to St Albans, François Avril and Patricia Sternemann, *Manuscrits enluminés d'origine insulaire, VIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1987), 137.

²³ For a discussion of the variety of illustrations to be found in medieval manuscripts, see Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992).

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purposes.²⁴ The changing demographic of monks in the thirteenth century also raised the possibility that some members of the monastery might have experienced violence and sexuality for themselves before their entry into the cloister. Ross and Morgan also do not take into account the possibility that the illustrations could have been produced separately from the text, and even in a secular workshop; there is some precedent for this, as monasteries did send manuscripts for copying and/or illustration to outside scriptoria.²⁵ Judging the text solely on its illustrations furthermore ignores several aspects of the written text that *do* suggest that it was produced in a monastery. At least in terms of the Cambridge manuscript, some similarities have been observed between the style of the illustrations in the *Roman* and other works produced at or connected to St Albans: M. R. James, who catalogued the Cambridge manuscript, attributed its illustrations to Matthew Paris.²⁶ Dominica Legge followed this and also believed that the Paris manuscript was “probably executed there,” further noting the similarity of its illustrations to those of Matthew Paris’s *Estoire de seint Aedward*.²⁷

Despite the arguments against monastic production, the text of the *Roman* itself provides evidence that it was produced in a monastic environment. Firstly, the same illustrations that seemingly disqualify monastic production also, in the two illustrated manuscripts of the text, depict the author as a monk: f. 22r of the Cambridge manuscript and f. 44v of the Paris manuscript both show the author dressed in Benedictine robes. If this is not irrefutable evidence of a monastic author,

²⁴ Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 39-70.

²⁵ Ross, “Thirteenth-Century Workshop,” 394; Binski, “Reflections on *La estoire de seint Aedward le rei*,” 339.

²⁶ “The style of both drawing, colouring and writing inclines me to hazard the conjecture that the birthplace of the volume was St Albans Abbey,” M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 3:482.

²⁷ Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 36, 38.

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at least it testifies to the persistence of the *idea* of a monastic connection to the text. Secondly, there are textual clues that the *Roman's* author was monastic. It uses a wide variety of Latin Classical and Late Antique sources, which are more likely to have been found in a monastic library than to have been accessible to secular authors; D. J. A. Ross himself made this point in an article written before his assessment of the illustrations.²⁸ The main source is Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus, and other sources include the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*; the *Zacher* epitome; the *Iter ad paradisum*; Orosius's *Historia adversos paganos*; and minor descriptive passages from Solinus, Aethicus Ister, and others.²⁹ The surviving manuscripts also contain contemporary continental French material: the *Fuerre de Gardres*, by an author known as Eustace, which describes Alexander's besieging of Gaza, and sections from the *Roman d'Alexandre* which augment the narrative of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* in areas such as Alexander's exploits in the East and the responses of Alexander's barons to his death.

As well as these points, the most compelling suggestion that the author had some kind of ecclesiastical connection is the fact he refers to himself as "mestre Thomas": as stated above, university attendance indicates probable ecclesiastical involvement at some point in his life, although it does not necessarily mean that he was a monk when he composed the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. Finally, the attitude of the narrator towards his material, which will be explored in the next section of this chapter, is another suggestion of composition in a monastic environment. Whether

²⁸ "Miss Legge is very possibly right in assuming that the author was a monk. He certainly had access to a fine library, probably a monastic one, which contained not only the usual composite volume with the *Epitome* of Julius Valerius copied together with the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which Thomas made the basic source of his poem, but also the wide range of geographical and legendary texts which, as Johanna Weynand showed, he used to supplement it," Ross, "Discussions," 351.

²⁹ Johanna Weynand, *Der Roman de toute chevalerie des Thomas von Kent in seinem Verhältnis zu seinen Quellen* (Bonn: Carl Georgi, 1911).

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this was real or imagined, it seems that the author and the illustrator wanted their audience to believe that the narrator was monastic, and also that neither the producers of the text nor its audience would have had a problem connecting the subject matter in the *Roman* with a monastic author despite its sexual and violent content.

Of course, just because the text portrays its author as a monk does not necessarily mean that he was a monk of St Albans, but the persistent interest of the St Albans monks in Alexander the Great does at least raise that possibility. Although there is no concrete link, some connections can be made between the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and St Albans. Firstly, it is very likely that the sources of the *Roman* would have been present in the St Albans library, as there is a notable overlap between the sources of the *Roman* and the sources of the *St Albans Compilation*, in particular Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus. Charles Russell Stone believes the text to be a St Albans production and describes it as a "well-researched, monastically produced text."³⁰ It would be unwise to use the illustrative style as the sole criterion for manuscript attribution, but these similarities do at least raise the possibility of a St Albans production for at least one of the manuscripts. Another suggestion of a connection between the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and St Albans abbey is the probability that the Durham manuscript was made for Richard de Bury. Richard de Bury bought and borrowed many books from St Albans, and so it is possible in his dealings with the abbey that he encountered the *Roman* and requested his own copy.³¹ These are all small points, but, when combined with the wider interest of St Albans monks in Alexander the Great, they do at least hint at a potential connection

³⁰ *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 92-3; Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 36-38, and *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, 105-7.

³¹ W. J. Courtenay, "Bury, Richard (1287-1345)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4153>, accessed 18 Nov 2015].

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between St Albans abbey and the Cambridge manuscript of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.

3. A reading of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*

Having explored the text's circumstances of composition, we will now move on to a close analysis of its narrative.

3.1 Summary of the text

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* begins with the sorcerer Nectanabus arriving in Macedonia, where he meets Alexander's mother Olympias and tricks her into becoming his lover. She later gives birth to Alexander, and it is prophesied that he will become a powerful ruler, but also that he will die young. Alexander receives a good education both in chivalry and in classical learning. When King Philip, Alexander's adoptive father, dies, Alexander assumes the throne of Macedonia. He then sets out to conquer the East and faces King Darius of Persia twice in battle. Darius flees both times. During the third battle, Darius is stabbed in the back by two of his own men, and Alexander finds him dying in the battlefield. Alexander and Darius reconcile as Darius dies, with Darius leaving Alexander his lands, wealth, and wife. Following this, Alexander visits Jerusalem and discovers that he is mentioned in the Old Testament Book of Daniel. Alexander then goes on to conquer India, defeating King Porrus, and on the way encounters many fabulous creatures and races, some of which he fights, some of which he observes. Towards the end of the text, he visits the prophetic Sun and Moon trees, which warn him of his impending death. Alexander then visits the court of Queen Candace, who has fallen in love with him via a portrait she has seen, and they have a brief love affair. When he returns to his camp, he is poisoned by his

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steward Antipater in accordance with the prophesy and dies. He apportions his empire to his followers before his death, but they destroy it by fighting amongst themselves, and ultimately all of Alexander's gains are for nothing.

3.2 Narrative techniques: audience and narrator

The Prologue of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* gives an indication of the kind of audience the text was purportedly aiming to attract:

Deliter se put bien home chevalerus

E tuit cil qui sunt de romanz coveitus.³²

[It may delight chivalrous men, and all those who are desirous of a romance].

The audience is addressed as "seignors" in the prologue, which might suggest an aristocratic audience that was exclusively male.³³ However, this should not be taken for granted, as Clemence of Barking's address to her audience in her *Vie de seint Catherine* also contains the word "seignors" when the text may have had a female audience.³⁴ The likelihood of Richard de Bury having commissioned his own copy of the text raises the further possibility of the text being consumed in an episcopal household, although this postdates the text's composition by about 150 years and so may not constitute the intended audience.

Further inferences can be drawn about the text's intended audience from the text itself. In the text, literacy is aural rather than visual: both Alexander and Darius hear their letters read out loud in front of their barons instead of reading them themselves. Furthermore, it is not just factual information that is consumed aurally in

³² *RTC*, vv. 16-7.

³³ *RTC*, v. 22.

³⁴ See William MacBain, "Anglo-Norman Woman Hagiographers," in Ian Short, ed. *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays* (London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1993), 235-50, 249.

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the text: when Alexander is at Candace's court, they hear "un nouvel son" [a new song] about Dido and Aeneas, suggesting communal aural entertainment.³⁵ The fact that the characters in the text consume texts aurally may suggest that this was the model of reception intended for the text itself.

The themes of riches, battle, and sexual conquest suggest that the text was intended predominantly for an aristocratic male audience, and it is possible that these themes were selected with the aim of attracting just such an audience in order not only to entertain them, but also to instruct them. Particular examples are the description of the world at vv. 32-45, the description of Darius's court at vv. 1599-1646, and the encounter with Candace at vv. 7543-832. In her study of the *Roman*, Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas identifies that the narrator assumes some form of education on the part of his audience, as he invites them to check his sources, which presumes that they have a means of doing so.³⁶ Furthermore, she imagines the audience to be sophisticated readers, "une élite cléricale et aristocratique."³⁷ Similarly, she notes that the narrator's moral tirades are also a method of drawing the reader into the debate by engaging their attention.³⁸ This presupposes a politically engaged audience, one willing to be drawn into debates by literature and sensitive to its advice.

The narrator adopts the persona of one who is engaged with the world, yet also separate from it. The prologue of the text sets up this dual stance and the tension it causes, firstly by stating that the only consolation can be found in worshipping God

–

Cist siecles est culvert e perillus,

³⁵ *RTC*, v. 7650.

³⁶ Gaullier-Bougassas, *Romans d'Alexandre*, 191.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

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Fors a ceus ky servent le haut Roy glorius

Qui pur sa gent dona le soen sanc precius.³⁹

[This world is extremely sorrowful and dangerous, except to those who serve the High King of Glory who gave his precious blood for his people].

– and then by seemingly contradicting this a few lines later:

Un deduit ay cho[i]si qe mult est delitus;

As tristes est confort e joie as dolerus,

E assuagement al mal as amerus.

Deliter se put bien home chevalerus

E tuit cil qui sunt de romanz coveitus.⁴⁰

[I have chosen a tale that is very delightful. It is comforting to those who are sad, and joy to those who are sorrowful, and relief for the pain of lovesickness. It can indeed delight chivalrous men and all those who desire a romance].

The details of the narrator's promised tale seem to have little in common with the heavenly consolation mentioned at the beginning of the prologue: the idea that something as trivial as a secular tale can comfort and cheer those who are sad or suffering is again at odds with the idea that only God can bring comfort, and furthermore highlights that the earthly concern of the pains of romantic love is at odds with the narrator's first insistence that the only important thing in a base world is the love of God.⁴¹ This dichotomy is an example of a familiar contradiction and tension in medieval literature between worldly and spiritual values. The terms "chevalerus," "deliter," and "romanz" also seem to indicate that the text that follows

³⁹ *RTC*, vv. 1-3.

⁴⁰ *RTC*, vv. 13-7.

⁴¹ AND² Online edition accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/deduit>.

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will be entertaining and that it will promote and endorse the secular values associated with chivalry and romance. The prologue emphasises the pleasure to be found in literature, which is a common topos in romance prologues and thus encourages the audience to associate the *Roman de toute chevalerie* with other romances.⁴² The religious world and its benefits are put up against the joys of the secular world, which are levity, (sexual) pleasure and aristocratic power. The double stance continues throughout the text, although it is clear that the narrator ultimately only views one kind of joy as acceptable. By highlighting the two competing worldviews in the prologue to his text, the narrator of the *Roman* indicates that this tension will play a large role in the narrative to come.

An example of this tension comes early in the text, when the description of the arrival of Cleopatra at court focuses on her physical appearance and her wealth:

Cleopatras chevache un[e] mule kernue
Plus blanche qe n'est neif, de fin or la sambue.
La chevesce del frein fu tuit a or batue,
Ly poitrals a pierre, la resne a or tissue.
En guise de royne fust estreit vestue
D'un drap mult envoisee a une orle menue.⁴³

[Cleopatra rides a long-maned mule, whiter than snow, with a saddle-cloth of fine gold. The fringe of the halter was made of beaten gold, the breastplate of precious stones, the reins of woven gold. She was dressed like a queen in a richly embroidered garment with a detailed hem].

⁴² Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1982). See also Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster and Delbert Russell, eds., *Literary Theory from the French of England: Texts and Translations, c. 1100-c. 1500* (Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming), for an in-depth treatment of prologues from insular French literature.

⁴³ *RTC*, vv. 715-9.

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This description of elaborate materials and equipment seems to be encouraging the audience to be impressed by the display of wealth. However, after this description, the narrator then intervenes:

Hau! Dieus souverains, Pier[e] esperitables,
Tant est cist siècle faus, cheitis e deceivables,
E freles e malveis, tornant e muables!
Tost conquest hom richesce e tost vest a dyables,
Car ly aver del mond n'est a nuly estables.⁴⁴

[Oh, Lord God, spiritual Father, how this era is false, wretched, and deceitful, and transient and evil, fickle and changeable. Man achieves wealth quickly and then quickly goes to the devil, for the riches of the world are not reliable for anybody].

In the space of 30 lines, the narrator has presented the audience with an elaborate description of wealth, ostensibly for them to enjoy, and then with harsh criticism of people who acquire wealth for themselves. The criticism echoes the opening through the use of the word “siècle”, recalling the first line of the text, and has a similar destabilising effect, drawing the audience in and then criticising them for their interest and enjoyment.

Having established that riches are to be criticised, the narrator later expands on their potential to corrupt. Darius exhorts his men to fight against Alexander and promises them wealth if they succeed in killing him:

⁴⁴ *RTC*, vv. 740-4.

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La moitié de mon regne li ert en fiu donee

E ma fille au gent corps oveques esposer.⁴⁵

[Half of my kingdom I will give to him in fief, and my daughter with her shapely body with it to marry].

The emphasise on Darius's daughter's physical appearance as part of her appeal reinforces the image of women in this text as possessions; she is part of a deal along with Darius's kingdom, and her beauty will confer status and pleasure upon the man who receives it. The result of Darius's promise is that the Persians become "orgoillus," but also cowardly for fear of losing their lives:

Del covenant tenir sunt nepurquant dotus,

N'ad nul qui ne seit de sa mort desirus.⁴⁶

[They were nevertheless afraid to keep the oath, because there was not one among them who desired his own death].

The narrator then gives another criticism of wealth:

Dieu, bel sire Pere, Roy del ciel gloriuz,

Cum l'avoir de cest mond est a toz desirus!

Ne voy nul si lasche ne si pereçus

Qe quant entent son pru ne seit vigerus,

Ne nul, tant seit hermite ne [hom] religious,

Qe de conquere avoir ne seit coveitus.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *RTC*, vv. 3125-6.

⁴⁶ *RTC*, v. 3131; *RTC*, vv. 3132-3.

⁴⁷ *RTC*, vv. 3134-9.

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[God, good lord Father, glorious king of Heaven, how the riches of this world are desired by all! I do not see anyone so negligent nor so idle that he does not make an effort to advance himself, nor anybody, unless he be a hermit or a religious man, who does not desire to conquer possessions].

If even the cowardly Persians are willing to go to great lengths in order to gain wealth, he seems to be suggesting, then they can only have a corrupting effect. This distances the narrator from his audience, highlighting his own distaste for such subjects and his status as a religious man with different concerns from those of his listeners. The insistence that religious men are exempt from this is another recollection of the prologue's statement that the only consolation can come from serving God; the potential interpretation of the word *religious* as "monastic" is another suggestion of the narrator invoking topoi of monasticism in his self-presentation.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the fate of the men who stab Alexander whilst disguised as his own men offers another criticism of wealth: their motivation for this is that "si quident a honur e hautesce venir" [they believed they would come to honour and high position in this way], and Alexander ironically fulfils this belief later when he has them raised on high to be hanged as punishment for their treachery.⁴⁹ The in-text punishment of men who place riches above honesty extends the narrator's criticism of wealth, by demonstrating the consequences of allowing riches to corrupt. In doing so, he creates an implicit link between the traitors and the audience: if this is what characters in a story will do for the acquisition of worldly possessions, what might the audience, who are similarly attracted by wealth, do in their place? This will take on a new

⁴⁸ AND¹ Online edition accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/religious>.

⁴⁹ *RTC*, v. 3665.

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significance when considering the end of the text, where the behaviour of the barons is shown to be integral to the success and survival of Alexander's empire.

The most striking example of the narrator's dual stance comes towards the end of the text in his presentation of Alexander's relationship with Queen Candace. His attitude to this episode is particularly odd, as he introduces it with "Malement en tret geste qui le mielz en oblie!" [he who forgets the best part of a story makes a poor job of telling it!].⁵⁰ As such, the narrator seems to be guiding the audience towards looking forward to this episode and creates a sense of anticipation. However, this also raises some questions. If this aspect of the story is "the best", then why does it take up so little space, and why does it not come until the end of the text? Its position suggests that it may have been more of an afterthought, placed there to cater to an aristocratic audience who would expect a romantic episode for the hero rather than intended as a main focal point. Secondly, although it purports to be a romantic episode, it is clearly based more on the exchange of goods than on any emotion from either party. Typically, an erotic encounter in a romance leads at least to personal growth for the hero, if not marriage and its attendant social promotion.⁵¹ However, the fact that this encounter is ultimately irrelevant to the rest of the text undermines this expectation. In fact, Alexander already has a wife at this point in the text, Darius's widow Roxane, although no mention is made of her until Alexander's death. Finally, although this purports to be "the best" part of the story, the narrator does not allow the reader to enjoy it, but rather interrupts it with a long diatribe on how women are not to be trusted, rich in examples of female treachery from both biblical and Classical sources.

⁵⁰ *RTC*, v. 7480.

⁵¹ Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986) discusses several examples of chivalric romance in which the central character's marriage restores him to his rightful social status, such as *King Horn* and *Havelok*, 19, 40.

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The predominance of biblical examples in this speech may be an indication of the narrator's Christian perspective and his true interest in the heavenly consolation expressed in the text's prologue. These tensions highlight that the episode is more complex and cynical than a straightforwardly romantic encounter.

The Candace episode is further complicated by the fact that it is prefaced by a criticism of romantic love. The caption of the nearest illustration to this section is "De ceo qe amant est avougle en sey" [regarding the fact that those who love are blind], which suggests the limitations of sexual and romantic love and the damage it can cause. In the tirade itself, the narrator is extremely critical of women:

Merveille est d'amur; nul ne garde reson,
Mesure ne honur quant vient a la seson.
N'ad si sage al mond, se le tient en son laçon,
Quel talent qu'il eit, nel face estre bricon.
De quei put home a femme fere compareison?
Plus est simple quant volt qe agnel ne colom,
Plus cointe qe serpent, ardante cum dragon,
Vosie cum gopil, cruele cum lion,
Plein[e] d'engin cum diable, mult ad le quer felon.
Ja nul n'en deit parler s'ele fet traison
Ou deceit son vassal ou mesme son baron,
Chevaler ou valet, damoiseil ou clergon.
De nature lur vient, de Eve ont le don
Pur qui Adam perdy tote sa descrecion,
Le delit e la joie, la Dieu promission,

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Qe ja [ne] fust perdue ne fust le son sermon.
Humanité en ot enferral mansion,
Mes par femme eumes, merci Dieu, r[e]ançon,
Quant Dieu de la Verge prist incarnation,
Si ot humanité d'enfern salvacion.
Neqedent qui en femme met sa entencion,
Sovent deit en son quer estre en suspecion.
E donc ne fu Joseph ly bels mis en la prison
Par la femme a l'eunuche, le sergant Pharaon,
E donc ne fu deceu ly pruz, ly fors Sampson,
E David exillez, mort son fiz Absolon,
E qui fu plus vaillanz del sage Salomon
Qui sa loi reniad? Feme fu l'achaison.
Troie en fu destruite par fer e par arson,
E Grece malbaillie e meint[e] autre region.
Alisandre se mist pur iceste a bandon
Entre ceaux qui ne li volent del tuit si mal non,
E qui sunt en purchaz de sa confondeson.⁵²

[Love is a marvel: nobody can keep their head, their restraint or their honour when it comes. There is no wise man in the world, if he is caught in its noose, whatever he may intend, who in the face of it could not be a fool. To what can a man compare a woman? She is more simple, when she wants to be, than a lamb or a dove; more crafty than a serpent, fiery like a dragon, cunning like a fox, cruel like a lion, full of deceit like the devil, indeed, she has a wicked heart.

⁵² *RTC*, v. 3665.

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Now none of them may speak without committing treachery, or deceives her vassal or even her lord, knight or valet, squire or cleric. It comes from their nature, they have the gift from Eve through whom Adam lost all of his discernment, delight and joy; the promise of God, would never have been lost if it had not been for her words. Humanity now has a hellish home because of it. But through a woman, thanks be to God, we will have redemption, when God became incarnate of the Virgin, then humanity was saved from Hell. Nevertheless, whoever devotes his attention to woman must often be suspicious in his heart. Then Joseph the fair would not have been put in prison by the eunuch's wife, the servant of Pharaoh; then the bold and strong Samson would not have been deceived; then David would not have been exiled; his son Absalom, who was braver than Solomon the wise, would not have died. Who denied his law? Woman was the cause. Troy was destroyed by sword and fire because of women, and Greece and many other lands ruined. Alexander entrusted himself for this reason to those who wished him nothing but ill and who sought his destruction].

This passage is damning of women and completely undercuts the narrator's promise to give his audience the "best" part of the tale. Romantic love is here presented without redeeming features, as a "laçon," suggesting capture, entrapment, and danger. By comparing women firstly to animals and then eventually to the devil, the narrator seems to be aiming to degrade the image of women in his audience's eyes. There is some consolation in the figure of the virgin Mary, by whose existence mankind is redeemed, but it is clear that she is an exception, as the other examples, both biblical and Classical, present the audience with a plethora of reasons why women are not be

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trusted. The effect of this is to overshadow the romantic encounter they are about to see with pessimism and criticism. As before, the narrator has framed the episode so as to unsettle and destabilise his audience: they have been promised "the best part" of the story only to be lectured. The narrative offers scant relief to those suffering from the pains of love, as promised in the prologue, by showing instead how women bring about the destruction of all good qualities of men. Alexander himself is one of the examples the narrator uses, which is a means of demonstrating the universality of this experience – not even Alexander can escape it – and also of highlighting the fictional, exemplum-style nature of the text as a whole.

So, before Alexander actually meets Candace, the audience's expectations of an entertaining romantic encounter have been punctured. Unsurprisingly, then, the encounter itself has overtones of cynicism. Candace has more agency than any of the other women in the text, as she chooses Alexander as a lover, announces her intentions via letter, and has a portrait of him painted secretly so that she can see what he looks like. The portrait allows her to outwit Alexander when he attempts to fool her into thinking that he is not Alexander but rather one of his men. Candace's actions are a contrast to those of other women in the text, such as Olympias, who is reliant on her son Alexander to restore her to her rightful place as queen of Macedonia after Philip's rejection of her, or Darius's wife, who is a mere means of transaction between Alexander and Darius.

However, this agency is not sufficient to keep Candace's encounter with Alexander from being overwhelmingly preoccupied with possessions. When Alexander does arrive in Candace's court, a financial exchange precedes the sexual one, as he is given an elaborate tour:

E ele ly fet mostrer ses avers plus prisez,

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Son or e son argent e ses pailles taillez,
E les tresors riches qe ele ad estuez,
E peres precieuses, dras de soie deugez.⁵³

[And she has her best possessions shown to him, her gold and her silver and her cut brocades, and the rich treasures that she had stored away, and precious stones, bales of delicate silk].

As in the transfer of Darius's wife, it is the possessions that Candace brings with her rather than her own merits which make her an attractive prospect for Alexander, and he consumes first her wealth and then her body. Candace herself seems aware that a display of wealth is the most effective means of impressing Alexander, as she organises the tour for him as a prelude to their sexual relationship.

Once Candace's deception is revealed to Alexander, his reaction is a show of bravado and military threats. Candace's response is that women have been deceiving men throughout history, and she gives evidence to support her statement in the form of two biblical examples:

Alisandre respont: "Jeo ne dout ne ne crien,
Mes de tant me poise qe m'espee ne tien,
Car si trovasse home qe fere me vousist rien,
Ainz qe morisisse, me vengeroye bien.'

Candace ly respont: 'Roys egyptien,
Moy refus[as] tes vous ainz al regne indien.
Ore vous tieng en prison; de vous fray cum del mien.

'N'aiez,' ceo dit, 'vergoyne, sire roys sovereigns,

⁵³ *RTC* vv. 7675-8.

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Si par aventure estes chai en mes meins.
N'estes le plus vaillanz, premiers ne d[e]reins,
Qe femme ad enginé; de ceo soiez certains.
Mult fu sage Adam, ly peres premereins,
E si le deceut par parole la duce femme Eveins.
Sampson qui fu si fort qui destruit les Gazeins,
Occit ses enemis e tua ses gardeins,
Enporta les portes veant les citezeins,
Les gules as lions destreint il de ses meins,
S'amie le deceut qe unqes puis ne fu seins.
Uncore est ly mond de lur engin tut pleins.
Si deceu vous ay, de ceo ne valez meins."⁵⁴

[Alexander responds "I feel neither fear nor apprehension, but it weighs on me greatly that I am not holding my sword, because if you were to find a man who wanted to do anything to me, before dying, I would avenge myself well." Candace replied, "King of Egypt, you would have refused to me the realm of India; now I have you in prison, I will do with you as I would with one of my own men." She said, "Do not be ashamed, oh sovereign king, if by chance you have fallen into my hands. You are not the bravest, nor the first or the last, who a woman has tricked; be certain of that. Adam the first father was very wise, and the sweet Eve deceived him with words. Samson, who was so strong, who destroyed the Gazans, killed his enemies and destroyed his captors, he carried away the gates in front of the citizens. He destroyed a lion's jaw with his hands.

⁵⁴ *RTC*, vv. 7712-24.

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His lover deceived him, he who was never sound again. The world is still full of their deceit. If I have deceived you, you are not less worthy for it."].

The examples are significant for a Christian audience, and Eve serves as a contrast to the narrator's mention of the Virgin Mary. By mentioning Mary before Eve, the author reverses the order in which they appear in the Bible and thus leaves the reader with an impression of Eve's treachery rather than Mary's redemption.

As if the warning of the narrator and behaviour of Candace were not enough, the morally questionable nature of this encounter is further underscored by the fact that Alexander's entrance is greeted by "un novel son Coment danz Eneas ama dame Didon" [a new song of how lord Aeneas loved the lady Dido].⁵⁵ The tale of Dido and Aeneas was an exemplum of an immoral sexual relationship, and so having Candace and Alexander listen to this tale before their own relationship begins foreshadows the fact that their relationship will be similarly licentious and fruitless.⁵⁶ The fruitless outcome is particularly significant, as the exchange of wealth is sexualised, but there is no amalgamation of that wealth: while riches are a common topos in a romance, the expectation is that they should be combined and consolidated by marriage, which leads to the birth of heirs and the continuance of the bloodline.⁵⁷ Here, however, the narrative highlights that Candace already has an adult son, and therefore is unlikely to be able to provide Alexander with an heir. The impossibility of marriage reduces their relationship to one of mutual advantage-taking.

The "nouvel son" of Eneas and Dido may be a reference to the near-contemporary insular *Roman d'Eneas* (c. 1156-60) and the other *romans d'antiquité*

⁵⁵ *RTC*, vv. 7650-1.

⁵⁶ David J. Shirt, "The Dido Episode in 'Enéas': the Reshaping of Tragedy and its Stylistic Consequences," *Medium Aevum* 51 (1982): 3-17.

⁵⁷ See for example R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and genealogies: a literary anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 70-2.

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written during the 1150s and 1160s, the *Roman de Troie* (c. 1165) and the *Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1150).⁵⁸ Scholars have compared the *Roman de toute chevalerie* with the *romans d'antiquité*, and it does share several features with them, including the medieval appropriation of the Classical past in order to show *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*.⁵⁹ The particular contrast invited by the mention of the *Roman d'Eneas* is that of an extra-marital relationship that delays the hero from accomplishing his destiny, and a marital relationship that establishes a dynasty and concludes the hero's quest. Alexander's time with Candace is like Eneas's time with Dido, except for Alexander, there is no second romance awaiting him. Eneas's empire-building and the formation of his dynasty with Lavinia is yet to come, whereas Alexander is already at the height of his empire, and all that awaits him is its disintegration. By drawing a parallel between Alexander's actions with Candace and those of Dido and Eneas, the narrator highlights the ultimate sterility of their relationship.

The *Roman d'Eneas* ends on a positive note, with the foundation of Rome, and, particularly significant for an insular audience, the future foundation of Britain by Eneas's grandson Brutus. However, the other *romans d'antiquité*, like the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, end in chaos. The *Roman de Thèbes* details the disastrous collapse of a kingdom after an incestuous and insecure succession, while the *Roman de Troie* describes a siege that comes about due to Paris's choice of adulterous love over political power or skill in battle. The themes of authorised sexuality setting up a

⁵⁸ *Le Roman de Thèbes* ed. Francine Mora (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1995), 8.

⁵⁹ For recent discussions of this, see Cristian Bratu, "Translatio, autorité et affirmation de soi chez Gaimar, Wace et Benoît de Sainte-Maure," *The Medieval Chronicle* 8 (2013): 135-64 and Levilson C. Reis, "Clergie, Clerkly Studium, and the Medieval Literary History of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances," *Modern Language Review* 106 (2011): 682-96.

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responsible succession while unauthorised sexuality brings about destruction are present in all three of the *romans d'antiquité* and also the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.

Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas furthermore highlights how this episode has been altered from the analogous continental *Roman d'Alexandre*:

Thomas de Kent transforme au contraire la mésaventure d'Alexandre en une scène comique, un conte plaisant, qui démythifie aussi bien l'amour courtois et l'image idéalisée de la femme que le héros lui-même, car ce dernier est ridiculisé par Candace. En présentant son récit comme exemplaire, il entend condamner les conséquences de la souveraineté dont jouit la dame cite *courtoise*, de son arbitraire ainsi que de sa sensualité trop vive.⁶⁰

By going to such lengths to ridicule Alexander's behaviour, the narrator of the text highlights its irrelevance to Alexander's story as a whole, and furthermore ridicules his audiences for their interest in it. This is far from providing the "assuagement al mal as amerus" [relief to suffering lovers] promised in the prologue of the text.⁶¹ There is humour as the encounter leaves Alexander looking foolish, but the joke is partially on the audience: not only have his expectations been foiled, but theirs likewise, with their system of values and tastes being criticised.

There is irony in the fact that so much space is given over to a commentary from both the narrator and his characters on the untrustworthiness of women, which seems to be foreshadowing that Alexander's downfall will also be brought about by a woman, and then his eventual betrayal being by a man, one of his own barons. The discrepancy between the narrator's warning against trusting women and the betrayal

⁶⁰ Gaullier-Bougassas, *Romans d'Alexandre*, 410.

⁶¹ *RTC*, v. 15.

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enacted by the barons of Macedonia is another hint that there is more behind the narrative of the *Roman* than initially meets the eye. Alexander's betrayal and death at the end of the text are therefore all the more surprising and unsettling given that they come from a completely different source to that which the narrator seems to be implying.

The position of the *Roman's* narrator is striking when viewed alongside that of other authors writing at a similar time. A distinction has traditionally been made between romance and hagiography, although that distinction has been subject to more rigorous analysis in recent times.⁶² While it may be better to view these two kinds of writing as part of a continuum rather than opposing genres, it is nevertheless true that medieval authors constructed them as distinct and opposed to one another. Hagiographical writing in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries typically positioned itself in opposition to romance: examples of this can be found in the prologues of French saints' lives such as Denis Piramus's *Vie seint Edmund le rei*, Chardri's *La Vie des Set Dormanz*, and the anonymous *Vie seinte Osith*, in which the authors assert that secular literature is unedifying and a waste of their efforts.⁶³ Of course, one cannot take these criticisms at face value, given that authors of hagiographical texts are notorious appropriators of the tropes of supposedly secular literature.⁶⁴ However, the authors' claims that their writing is distinct from romances is significant. The attempt to distance themselves from romances is very different to

⁶² For a recent analysis, see Bernard Guenée, "Historiographie et hagiographie: quelques réflexions," in *La Méthode critique au Moyen Age* ed. Mireille Chazan and Gilbert Dahan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 305-8.

⁶³ VER, Chardry's *Josaphaz, Set Dormanz und Petit Plet*, ed. John Koch (Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1879); "La Vie saint Osith, virge et martire: The Life of St Osith," ed. Delbert W. Russell, trans. Jane Zatta, and rev. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *PLL* 41 (2005): 339-444.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's study of Clemence of Barking's *Vie de Seint Catherine* and *La Vie Saint Osith* in "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame,'" and Jane Zatta, "The *Vie Seinte Osith*: Hagiography and Politics in Anglo-Norman England," *Studies in Philology* 96 (1999): 367-93.

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Thomas of Kent's position: rather than use romance motifs to construct a saints' life, he has infiltrated a romance with religious commentary.

Separating the two forms of literature entirely was not possible, despite the authors' posturing. Despite their supposedly opposing positions on romance, Denis Piramus and Thomas of Kent share a notable overlap in the vocabulary they use in their prologues: both Piramus and Thomas of Kent use the term "deduit" to describe their texts, but their subjects are diametrically opposed: Thomas's "deduit," a romance, is the opposite of Denis's "deduit," a saint's life. Denis notes the entertaining potential of romance:

Li rei, li prince, e le courtur,
Cunt, barun, e vavasur
Aiment cunttes, chanceuns, e fables,
E bon diz qui sont dilitables,
Kar il hostent e gettent puer,
Doel, enui, e travaile de quer,
E si funt ires ublier,
E del quer hostent le penser.⁶⁵

[The king, the prince and the courtiers, the counts, the barons, and the vavasours love stories, songs and fables, and good and pleasing tales, because they take away and cast out sorrow and the heart's troubles. They cause ill will to be forgotten and they lighten the heavy heart].⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *VER*, vv. 49-56.

⁶⁶ Edited and translated in Jocelyn Wogan-Brown, *Literary Theory from the French of England*.

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Both Thomas and Denis seem to agree on the power of fiction to console, and they also seem to have an overlap in the idea of their audience. However, while Denis then goes on to suggest an alternative, in the form of the life of St Edmund, Thomas of Kent chooses a different path. What is striking is that the authors of hagiographical literature produced at a similar time to the *Roman* seek to position their narratives as opposite to romance, as though there is no redeeming feature in romance texts and as though they are threatening the consumption of explicitly religious literature. The insistence on distinguishing hagiography from romance illustrates the anxiety of medieval authors of the overlap between the two genres.

Thomas of Kent's prologue differs noticeably from this. Instead of composing the religious literature that his contemporaries suggest is the only literature of value, he instead hijacks a romance text that purports to provide entertainment and injects it with explicitly religious instruction. This is not unique to Thomas of Kent's work. However, what *is* unusual is that the text of the *Roman* is so critical of its audience's tastes once it has a captive audience.

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* invokes many conventions of aristocratic literature, such as courtly love, intellectual advancement, battle, and exotic locations. The amount of space devoted to aristocratic tropes in the *Roman de toute chevalerie* may seem to suggest the author's fascination with the trappings of the secular world and to mirror the opinions of those who do not think it could have been a monastic production. The narrator's detailed descriptions of material wealth and exotic locations throughout the text could simply be read as giving that impression. However, the frequent digressions critiquing and rejecting secular values mark the narrator out as separate from that world. They put the narrator in a position of moral superiority, and invoke the spiritual authority of a monk. The presence of romance

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tropes allows the author to gain the attention of aristocratic readers in order to advise them while entertaining them. Furthermore, it also can be read as an example of a monastic author who is familiar with the secular world approaching, navigating, and attempting to make sense of that world by advising and therefore controlling it.

The prologue establishes the narrator's belief that only Christianity can bring consolation, and the text goes on to show the ultimate futility of worldly things. Riches, romantic love, and battle, all of which are typical topoi in romance texts, are systematically deconstructed and criticised by the narrative: the acquisition of riches is condemned and those who are motivated by wealth are punished; romantic love is displaced by an exchange of possessions and has no significance in the life of the protagonist; the conquests and territories Alexander gains during his lifetime are wasted and destroyed by his followers. Everything that the text promised at the beginning – joy, comfort, romance, chivalry – has been deconstructed and critiqued by the end.

The author of the *Roman's* decision to construct a narrative voice that marks him out as distinct from his audience allows him to engage with the values and the trappings of the aristocracy, only to reject them because his faith has ultimately superseded them. By creating this isolated and superior narrator, Thomas of Kent appropriates the genre of romance in order to speak to his audience and then to critique them. He also proudly shows how Alexander can be relevant to monastic authors and their audiences by claiming Alexander as a monastic subject. This explicitly invokes the spiritual authority of monasticism and qualifies him to advise his audience. The question of who were the recipients of this advice will be explored in section 4 of this chapter.

3.3. The end of the text: sources and analogues

As with many other narratives of Alexander the Great, the *Roman de toute chevalerie* can be read as a commentary on the behaviour of those in power. The role of the barons is particularly important in the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, especially at the end of the text. At this point, the *Roman*, two of its main sources (Orosius's *Historiae adversus paganos* and Justin's *Epitome*) and its contemporary, the continental French *Roman d'Alexandre*, all cover the same material, and it is particularly useful to examine them together in order to see how Thomas of Kent has used Alexander material in order to explore his own political agenda.

Orosius's account of Alexander's death is brief:

Alexander uero apud Babylonam, cum adhuc sanguinem sitiens male castigata auiditate ministri insidiis uenenum potasset, interiit.⁶⁷

[Alexander then died in Babylon while still thirsting for blood with a lust that was cruelly punished – for he drank poison that had been treacherously prepared by a servant].⁶⁸

This single sentence is the only space Orosius gives to Alexander's death. The description suggests that it is a divine punishment for his behaviour and does not explore the motivations of the servant for poisoning him or the feelings of those he leaves behind. The servant is not even identified by name, as if to highlight his unimportance in Alexander's death: if he had not murdered him, perhaps another equally faceless servant would have done so. For Orosius, Alexander's death provides

⁶⁷ HAP, 3.20:4.

⁶⁸ SBH, 140.

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the opportunity to muse on the immoral behaviour of pagans, and so the behaviour of his followers at this time is not important to him.

Justin's account of Alexander's death differs from Orosius's account, as it is longer and pays more attention to the motivations of Alexander's murderer. Here, the instigator is named as Antipater, regent of Greece. Antipater has performed his duties well for Alexander, but feels he has only received envy rather than gratitude for his loyalty.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Antipater's grievances are personal as well as political: his friends have been put to death and his son-in-law has been exiled.⁷⁰ Here Justin at least gives Antipater a motivation, and raises his status from servant to one of Alexander's deputies.

The continental French version by Alexandre de Paris has two lords, Antipater and Divinuspater, plotting to kill Alexander. The narrator frequently refers to them as "serfs", which underscores their low status, as "serf" translates as either "servant," "slave", or "'non-noble.'"⁷¹ As Alexander dies, his followers point out how ungrateful Antipater and Divinuspater are for disregarding Alexander's generosity to them:

"Ahi! rois, sor tous homes faisïés a prosier;
Ne vous penïes mie de vos gens abaissier
Mais a vostre pooir lever et essaucier,
Et si les faisïés en richece baignier
Et donïés l'avoir et l'argent et l'or mier."⁷²

⁶⁹ *EPT*, 12.14.2.

⁷⁰ *EPT*, 12.14.1.

⁷¹ AND¹ Online edition accessed 25/05/2015, [http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/serf\[1\].](http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/serf[1].)

⁷² *RAlix*, IV vv. 181-5.

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[“Alas, oh king! most worthy of praise amongst all men: you never sought to lower your men, but to raise them up and exalt them to your power, and you bathed them in riches, and gave them possessions and pure gold and silver”].

When Alexander dies, he himself says that “dui serf” are to blame.⁷³ The epilogue of the text emphasises that men will eventually reveal their true nature despite their position and status:

Costume enseigne a l’ome cil qui bien le chastie,

Mais nature a au loins toute la segnorie.⁷⁴

[Men can be taught good habits when they are instructed, but nature will ultimately have her way].

Alixandres le dist et mostre par raison:

Fous est qui conseil croit de serf ne de felon

Ne qui fait de nul d’aus prince de sa maison;

Se gaaig i puet faire, ne doute traïson;

Ci doivent prendre essample li prince et li baron.⁷⁵

[Alexandre [de Paris, the author] says this and shows it to be true: he is mad who believes the advice of a serf or a traitor, or who makes one of them the master of his house: if he can, he will betray him. Princes and barons should take an example from this].

This constant insistence on the value of high-status men displays the text’s anxiety about low-born men being raised to important positions which they do not deserve,

⁷³ *RAlix*, IV v. 588.

⁷⁴ *RAlix*, IV vv. 1628-9.

⁷⁵ *RAlix*, IV vv. 1664-8.

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which has been identified as one of the main concerns of Alexandre de Paris's text.⁷⁶ It is the disobedience of Antipater and Divinuspater that causes Alexander to summon them to him in the first place, which further promotes the view that the appointment of low-born men to high positions is not a good idea.

In contrast to these, Thomas of Kent attributes Alexander's assassination to Antipater, whom he names as the governor of Greece and therefore a man with a great deal of responsibility. As in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, Antipater is accused by Olympias of poor management. Unlike that text, however, there is little space devoted to Antipater's plot, but his anxiety for his position is emphasised:

Le duc Antipater voit qu'il est deposez,
Autre mis en son lu e il a curt mandez.
Il doute mult le roy, ne siet ses volentez
E creit bien qu'il soit par plusors encusez.⁷⁷

[Antipater the duke sees that he has been deposed, with another put in his place and called to court. He fears the king greatly, and does not know his wishes, and worries that he will be accused by many people].

This episode is an illustration of the reciprocal responsibilities of a king and a vassal. Antipater is a baron with an important administrative position at court, and he fears losing this position as a result of Alexander's whims. His murder of Alexander is therefore motivated by his own insecurity as well as by his jealousy and hatred of his leader. However, as a vassal of Alexander, he commits treason by murdering him, shirking his responsibilities to both his king and his country, which falls into chaos

⁷⁶ Gaullier-Bougassas, 517.

⁷⁷ *RTC*, vv. 7899-902.

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following Alexander's death. Here, Antipater's status is not important: while in Alexandre de Paris's text, it is his low birth that leads inevitably to his treason, here it is rather his dissatisfaction with his position. Through his description of Antipater's actions, Thomas of Kent emphasises the responsibility of vassals towards their lords, and illustrates the disastrous consequences when these duties are disregarded. The emotional dimension and the personal slights present in Justin's text have been removed from Thomas of Kent's account, which emphasises instead the political responsibility that Antipater has towards Alexander and further heightens the sense of his betrayal.

The ways in which these four texts end also give different views of the end of Alexander's empire. There is an air of both cynicism and finality to the end of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. Alexander dies heirless, unlike in many other texts, including the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, where a plurality of heirs is more Alexander's problem. Like his empire, the riches he has accumulated throughout the text become nothing more than spoils for his squabbling successors to fight over. Again, Thomas of Kent is doing something different to his sources here when describing the aftermath of Alexander's death.

In Orosius, the focus of the narrative is the superiority of the current world to that of the pagans, and on the passage of Alexander's empire into the hands of Christianity. This is part of Orosius's continuing campaign to strip events in the pre-Christian world of their significance; he wants his audience to view them as insignificant blips unworthy of admiration, even if his own fascination with them is betrayed by his overzealous insistence on their unworthiness. Following Alexander's death, his men draw lots for his territories and so are assigned them randomly rather than through any action of Alexander's. Orosius describes the violent consequences of

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the infighting amongst Alexander's followers, but by removing Alexander's decision in the allotting of his territories, he emphasises the chaos and disorder inherent in the pre-Christian world. Orosius ends his account of Alexander's reign and the collapse of his empire with a reminder of the moral superiority of those who share the Christian faith:

Erubescant sane de recordatione praeteritorum, qui nunc interuentu solius fidei Christianae ac medio tantum iurationis sacramento uiuere se cum hostibus nec pati hostilia sciunt.⁷⁸

[Let men, who now know that it is only through the coming of the One True Christian Faith and the mediation of sworn oaths that they live with their enemies and suffer no harm, blush indeed to remember these past times].⁷⁹

In doing so, he removes the focus from Alexander and concentrates on the moral obligations of Orosius's Christian audience, offering optimism and also distancing his audience from the narrative they are hearing.

As before, Justin differs from Orosius. He devotes three whole books to the behaviour of Alexander's followers after his death, which details exactly how the empire collapses. In Justin's narrative, Alexander has several potential heirs, but refuses to name a successor, despite the fact that his son, brother and pregnant wife all survive him.⁸⁰ His ambiguous insistence that "dignissimum" [the most deserving man] should inherit the throne coupled with a vision that predicts the suffering and bloodshed that is to follow his death is judged by Justin as a trigger for civil war: "hac uoce ueluti bellicum inter amicos cecinisset aut malum Discordiae misisset" [it was as

⁷⁸ *HAP*, 3.23.66.

⁷⁹ *SBH*, 145.

⁸⁰ *EPT*, 12.15.9.

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if by these words he had given the signal for war amongst his friends, or thrown amongst them the apple of Discord].⁸¹ However, the fault is on both sides, and Justin particularly emphasises how the source of the conflict is internal rather than external: the residents of Babylon are saddened and disbelieving when they hear of Alexander's death, whereas the Macedonians are relieved.⁸² Alexander's refusal to name an heir is what allows the Macedonian empire to dissolve into chaos, but his followers' greed and ambition worsen the situation:

Huc accedebat, quod principes regnum et imperia, uulgus militum thesauros et grande pondus auri uelut inopinatam praedam spectabant.⁸³

[Furthermore, the officers had their eyes on the empire and positions of authority, the rank and file on Alexander's war chest and its great hordes of gold].⁸⁴

The final sentence of book 12 of Justin's account of Alexander is:

Victus denique ad postremum est non uirtute hostili, sed insidiis suorum et fraude ciuili.⁸⁵

[In the end, he was brought down not by the valour of an enemy, but by a plot hatched by his own men and the treachery of his fellow countrymen].⁸⁶

By ending Alexander's life on this note, Justin emphasises his betrayal by his followers. His observation that Alexander's men were so exceptional that a successor

⁸¹ *EPT*, 12.15.8; *EPH*, 68; *EPT*, 12.15.6; *EPT*, 12.15.11; *EPH*, 69.

⁸² *EPT*, 13.1.1-7.

⁸³ *EPT*, 13.1.8.

⁸⁴ *EPH*, 23.

⁸⁵ *EPT*, 12.16.12.

⁸⁶ *EPH*, 70

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could not be chosen amongst them is particularly ironic when viewed alongside the behaviour that comes afterwards.⁸⁷ Justin's account of the civil war is vividly bloody:

Sic Macedonia in duas partes discurrentibus ducibus in sua uiscera armatur,
ferrumque ab hostili bello in ciuilem sanguinem uertit, exemplo
furentium manus ac membra sua ipsa caesura.⁸⁸

[So it was that Macedonia, her leaders split between warring factions, armed herself to stab her own vitals, turning her sword from war against a foe to shed the blood of countrymen, and ready, like the insane, to lacerate her own hands and limbs].⁸⁹

Like Orosius, Justin's account emphasises the ultimate futility of Alexander's gains, but while Orosius offers consolation, Justin's vision is much more bleak. The last sentence in Justin's account of Alexander's followers suggests, as Orosius does, that pagan wars are cyclical, but while Orosius implies that this cycle has been broken by the enlightenment brought by Christianity, Justin seems to indicate that the wars will continue eternally: "sic quasi ex integro noua Macedoniae bella nascuntur" [so it was that wars started all over again for Macedon, as if from the very beginning].⁹⁰

Alexandre de Paris, again, differs from this, as his version ends the story after Alexander's burial and a summary of his deeds:

Li Grieu s'en sont torné la petite ambleüre,
Alixandres remest dedens la sepulture...

⁸⁷ *EPT*, 13.2.3, 13.1.10-5.

⁸⁸ *EPT*, 13.6.17.

⁸⁹ *EPH*, 29;

⁹⁰ *EPT*, 14.4.25; *EPH*, 40.

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Ci fenissent li ver, l'estoire plus ne dure.⁹¹

[The Greeks turned and walked away slowly. Alexander remains in the tomb...here the poem ends, the story does not go on any longer].

By denying that the story continues, although we have seen above that two of the sources *do* carry on after Alexander's death, Alexandre de Paris allows his readers to meditate on Alexander's success and the loss to civilisation that Alexander's death brings about. However, while the continental text ends with Alexander's death and advice to its readers on how a king should behave, leaving an overall positive impression of Alexander as the central focus of the text, the *Roman de toute chevalerie* abandons Alexander and concentrates rather on how his barons brought destruction to his lands after his death. The *Roman* states:

Cil qui a conseil furent unques n'en joirent...

Plus de quinze realmes tel doel en suffrirent.⁹²

[Those who were at the council had no joy from it...more than fifteen kingdoms suffered such sorrow because of it].

La gent en fu destruite e des terres fuirent.

Povere e cheitif lur herité guerpirent.

Pur la mort Alisandre qu'il a tort mordrirent.⁹³

[The people were destroyed and fled from the lands. Poor and wretched, they deserted their heritage, because of Alexander's death, whom they wrongly murdered].

⁹¹ *RAlix*, IV vv. 1694, 1698-9.

⁹² *RTC*, v. 8047, 8050

⁹³ *RTC*, vv. 8052-4.

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This does not give much detail, but the information it does give is damning. The word “conseil” highlights the administrative function of the barons, as they are taking part in an official process designed to safeguard the kingdom. Thomas of Kent does not devote a great deal of space to the aftermath of Alexander’s death – unlike Justin's text, and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, which follows Justin in detailing the aftermath – but what it does highlight is that the ending is unsatisfactory and destructive. The sudden shift of focus from the mourning of Alexander to the destruction of his kingdom creates a destabilising effect, shattering the illusion created by the French source text that the story can be left there and reminding the audience that barons have a responsibility as well. In the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, the barons neglect this responsibility, and the result is complete destruction of the kingdom.

One of the interpolations in the Cambridge manuscript of the *Roman* is a section from the *Roman d'Alexandre* in which Alexander, on his deathbed, apportions his lands to his men before he dies. This is in contrast to the example from Orosius discussed above, in which this is left to chance. The division of territories, accompanied in the Cambridge manuscript by images of Alexander speaking to each individual baron, emphasises both the affective and the administrative dimensions of lordship. In this way, the text highlights the importance of the barons to Alexander’s realm, and the responsibilities they have to the kingdom following the death of their leader, which further underscores their betrayal of him and their failure in their duty when they tear the country apart with civil war following Alexander’s death.

The presence of the interpolations in the Cambridge manuscript suggests that the St Albans monks who were responsible for compiling the manuscript saw the text, which already critiques the role of barons in Alexander's kingdom, as insufficient to fit their political climate. By combining elements of the continental French material

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with the insular *Roman*, the St Albans monks could repackage the original text and give it a new political relevance. This suggests that the focus of the audience is more specific than "aristocratic," but is indeed "baronial," aimed at those who have both the power to advise the king and also the responsibility to ensure that his wishes are carried out.

4. Reception: St Albans abbey and political counsel

If the barons were the intended audience, then what was St Albans trying to say to them? The title of the text may be revealing when considered in this light: it purports to be about all of chivalry, and as such can be read as a kind of "mirror for barons" as well as the mirror for kings so traditionally associated with Alexandrian literature. The text is a repository of information and exempla, as Alexander progresses through life firstly as a baron for his father and secondly as a king.

The copying of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* during the mid-thirteenth century demonstrates its continued interest to contemporary medieval audiences. Furthermore, the production of a luxury manuscript such as MS Cambridge, Trinity College O.9.34 (1446) suggests that its copying was aimed at wealthy readers. Unlike the illustrations of the *Becket Leaves*, the images are not integral to the interpretation of the text; however, they do suggest that the text was regarded as prestigious. Like the objects of wealth that lure Alexander, the manuscript of the *Roman* may likewise have been a lure for an élite audience.

St Albans's involvement in the production of such a text suggests once again a wish to intervene in political affairs. The fact that the *Roman* seems to be addressing the barons rather than the king may be relevant when read in the context of the political situation of the 1250s and 1260s. The end of the *Roman* depicts the failure of

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a king to recompense one of his magnates for his services, and the result of this is regicide and civil war. The failure of Alexander and his barons to live up to their reciprocal responsibilities is what brings about the fall of Alexander's empire. This has parallels with the tensions between the king and his magnates leading up to the baronial rebellions that began in 1258.

At a similar time to the production of the Cambridge manuscript, an episode dating from 1253 in Matthew Paris's Latin *Chronica majora* likewise focuses on conflicts between barons and the king. Heather Blurton has discussed one of these episodes in an article written in 2007.⁹⁴ The narrative juxtaposes the only surviving text of the 1253 *Magna Carta* with a fictitious episode in which a king's corrupt counsellors advise him to confiscate the goods belonging to one of his knights. The knight's son, in revenge, murders one of the counsellors responsible for the decision, and the king has him hanged without trial while his father is absent. The knight abandons his king and joins his enemy's army, and subsequently inflicts tremendous damage on the army of his former lord.⁹⁵ Blurton also notes that the text of *Magna Carta* indicates Henry III's reluctance to permit his barons to rebel, something that was included in the 1215 *Magna Carta* but not in any of the subsequent reissues before 1253.⁹⁶ The combination of the charter and the story therefore gives examples of the breakdown of the monarch-magnate relationship with fault on both sides. Blurton argues that Matthew Paris refrains from entirely endorsing one side or the other, instead acknowledging both royal power and the right of barons to rebel.⁹⁷ She also reads this episode alongside the Old French epics of revolt, a context into which

⁹⁴ Heather Blurton, "From Chanson de Geste to Magna Carta: Genre and the Barons in Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora*," *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007): 117-38.

⁹⁵ For a more detailed version of the account, see Blurton, 121-2; Blurton's article includes the account, which originally comes from *CM*, 5:385-7.

⁹⁶ Blurton, 119.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

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it manifestly fits; however, I would like to suggest that it has other resonances, both with other material in the *Chronica majora* from 1252-3 and also with the *Roman de toute chevalerie*.⁹⁸

This material details conflict between Henry III and Simon de Montfort, who would go on to become leader of the rebels against the king.⁹⁹ The *Chronica majora* records tension between the two men because of Simon de Montfort's lieutenancy in Gascony, which he had held since 1248.¹⁰⁰ His appointment proved to be disastrous, as de Montfort's government of the province was held to be much too strict, and Henry was receiving complaints about it by 1249.¹⁰¹ By 1252, de Montfort had been brought before the court at Westminster to be tried, which led to a bitter exchange described by Matthew Paris.¹⁰² De Montfort returned to Gascony, but he was bought out of the office in November 1252 by a generous financial settlement.¹⁰³ A few pages earlier in the *Chronica majora*, there is an account of the French appealing to de Montfort to become one of the guardians of their kingdom, although he refused.¹⁰⁴ This takes on a particularly threatening overtone given that a few pages later, the underappreciated knight in Paris's story switches sides in order to fight for his former lord's enemies.

There are parallels between these two episodes and the behaviour of Antipater, Alexander, and Alexander's barons at the end of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. Like the knight in Paris's narrative, Antipater suffers an injustice, and

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ J. R. Maddicott, "Montfort, Simon de, eighth earl of Leicester (c.1208–1265)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 25/05/2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19049>.

¹⁰⁰ For an account of English relations with Gascony, see Margaret Wade Labarge, *Gascony, England's First Colony, 1204-1453* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980) and Jean Paul Trabut-Cussac, *L'administration anglaise en Gascogne: sous Henry III et Édouard I de 1254 à 1307* (Geneva: Droz, 1972).

¹⁰¹ Maddicott, "Montfort, Simon de."

¹⁰² *CM*, 5:290.

¹⁰³ Maddicott, "Montfort, Simon de."

¹⁰⁴ *CM*, 5:371-2.

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enacts his revenge. His actions then lead to the downfall of the Macedonian empire, and begin a chain of events in which the barons undermine Alexander's legacy. As in Paris's narrative, the result is extremely violent and destructive. Similarly, as in the de Montfort episode, Antipater is dismissed from his position of responsibility; he, like de Montfort, is a regent for his king, and also like de Montfort, he finds himself accused by many people. I would like to argue that this portion of the *Chronica majora* and the alterations to the ending of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* combine to suggest that there was a particular preoccupation at St Albans with the responsibilities of barons and their king, reflecting the contemporary political tension. Matthew Paris and the copyist of the Cambridge manuscript of the *Roman* appear to have been engaging with their contemporary situation and intervening to show the dual responsibilities of both monarch and magnates. The possibility that the Cambridge manuscript of the *Roman* was produced at, and perhaps kept at, St Albans, is a tantalising one: the stream of visitors to the abbey, which included the king and his magnates, and perhaps the husbands of the ladies who were reading the *Becket Leaves*, would have provided the St Albans monks with an irresistible opportunity to draw on all of the authority inherent in the location of the monastery, the prestige of the illustrated manuscript, in combination with the monastic voice of the narrator, to critique and advise their secular audience.

5. Conclusion

St Albans' involvement in the production of literature that advised those in power continues the strategy seen earlier in Beneit's *Life of Thomas Becket* and the *Becket Leaves*. As before, the choice of French as the language of communication is significant. Here again is an example of the monks of St Albans using literature as a

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means to communicate with those in power; however, unlike before, where this communication was through the medium of hagiography, which was expressly the purview of a monastery, here the monks of St Albans have engaged with secular literature. The *Roman* illustrates how the abbey could offer both religious and moral guidance. The prologue to the text indicates the value of literature to the audience as a form of distraction and pleasure, but throughout the text there are reminders that the only thing to offer true consolation is Christianity. This seems to apply whether you are Alexander the Great or a thirteenth-century baron. Here, the monks take control of the narrative of Alexander, directly engaging with a continental source which portrays him as an unequivocally secular figure. They imbue the text with monastic authority, and redirect Alexander in order to assert their moral authority and suitability to advise those in power. The thirteenth-century modifications to the *Roman de toute chevalerie* when read alongside the *Chronica majora* indicate that St Albans was engaging in the political questions of the mid-thirteenth century in several different kinds of literature. The fact that French and Latin are both found to be doing this suggests a diversification in the abbey's approach. Unlike the lives of Thomas Becket, which sought to make their portrayals of the central figures align with the king and the court's self-fashioning, here St Albans delivers a criticism of its audiences' behaviour, smuggled into what is ostensibly a pleasant narrative. As before, the monks are asserting their absolute moral and spiritual superiority over their audiences, but here they have to meet them halfway, by snatching a secular figure and re-purposing him to their own ends.

Chapter 4: The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*

1. Introduction

The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* is a vernacular prose narrative of Alexander the Great produced in St Albans c. 1270.¹ The text survives in one manuscript, MS Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum CFM 20, which dates from the mid-fourteenth century.² It is a very close translation of the *St Albans Compilation*, and the fact that it is a translation of a text composed at the abbey, in the words of Ruth Dean, makes it “likely to have been made at St Albans.”³

Despite the fact that it is the only known insular French prose version of the Alexander legend, the *Estoire* has hardly received any scholarly attention, and there is currently no edition of it. This lack of attention is partly due to a case of mistaken identity. For many years it was thought to be a copy of the *Old French Prose Alexander*; it was classified as such by Paul Meyer in his 1886 study of the various versions of the Old French Alexander texts, as the two texts have identical incipits.⁴ Alfons Hilka’s 1920 edition of the *Old French Prose Alexander* established that it shared a prologue and epilogue with the *St Albans Compilation*.⁵ F. P. Magoun confirmed this in an article from 1926.⁶ However, the manuscript of the *Estoire* was missing for a time between its purchase by the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1901 and the publication of the list of uncatalogued manuscripts in their collection in 1951,

¹ Number 166 in Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*.

² Francis Wormald and Phyllis M. Giles, "A Handlist of the Additional Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 5 (1951): 205.

³ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 98-9.

⁴ Paul Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand*. There are three versions of a continental prose version surviving both in manuscript (16 copies) and in print form (11 copies), dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For the printed texts, see David J. A. Ross, "The Printed Editions of the French Prose Alexander Romance," *Library*, 5th series 7 (1952): 54-7.

⁵ Hilka, *Der altfranzösische Prosa-Alexanderroman*, xviii.

⁶ Francis P. Magoun, "The *Compilation of St. Albans* and the Old-French Prose Alexander Romance," *Speculum* (1926): 225-32.

meaning that no work could be done on it during that time. When the manuscript was discovered again in the 1960s, investigation by F. Arnold revealed it to be an independent insular version of the Alexander text, despite the fact that its incipit and prologue are the same as some continental versions of the text.⁷ No further work was undertaken on the text at that point, although Arnold evidently planned to study it further.⁸ It is not included in any of the works discussing medieval traditions of Alexander the Great, possibly because it went unrecognised for so long. It is therefore essential to restore the text to its original context and consider it both in its own right and as a part of the literary and cultural climate of St Albans abbey in the thirteenth century.

It is necessary to begin by looking at the text's source, the Latin prose *St Albans Compilation*. Although the *Compilation* has not received much attention, Charles Russell Stone has recently placed it into its context of composition and demonstrates its importance in the context of insular medieval Alexander study.⁹ This chapter will therefore use Stone's work on the *Compilation* as a starting point to discuss both the *Compilation* itself and the *Estoire*. As it is the earliest French prose text produced at St Albans, it is important to read the *Estoire* in terms of what it can contribute to knowledge of the growth of vernacular prose writing in the thirteenth century. In particular, this chapter will consider the text in comparison to other insular prose writing, and also investigate what it can contribute to knowledge of narrative and chronological maps. The role of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, it will

⁷ Arnold, "Prophecy of Daniel": "A brief examination, however, was enough to show that the Fitzwilliam MS, far from being part of the "romance" tradition of the Alexander story, is actually a careful translation of an entirely different kind of work – the twelfth-century *Compilation of St. Albans*," 325. "The prologue of the second redaction MSS of the French prose Alexander was recognized as a translation of the *Compilation of St. Albans* by Professor Magoun in 1926, but he was unaware of the existence of a complete MS of that translation," Ross, "The Old French Alexander Romance in Prose," 353.

⁸ Arnold, "Prophecy of Daniel," 57.

⁹ Stone, *Dubious Hero*.

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give a brief discussion of the text, its manuscripts, and its source. Secondly, it will give a reading of the French text, in order to examine the kind of world that the *Estoire* portrays. Finally, it will explore the potential audiences for the text, taking into account its resonance with contemporary intellectual developments.

2. The world of the *Estoire*: text and manuscript

This section will begin with a description of the manuscript, and a discussion of the date of the text, before moving on to an examination of the text itself.

2.1. Description of the manuscript

There is a basic description of the manuscript in Wormald and Giles's catalogue of manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum library, giving the measurements and material of the leaves.¹⁰ The binding of the text dates from the twentieth century. There is one instance of misbinding, as f. 41 of the present text should follow f. 29, which it originally did, as can be seen because there is a faint red imprint on f. 41 from the red ink used for the heading of Book 3, Chapter 6 on f. 29 v. The leaves have been rebound very tightly so that the manuscript is now difficult to open and the pages must be weighed down in order to be read. The pages have been edged with gold leaf, which suggests that the manuscript was reasonably high-status. The leaves are in good overall condition with occasional tears or holes in the parchment. These holes have caused no loss of text, which suggests that they were present in the parchment before the text was written.

The text is split into six books and each book is divided into several chapters. There is no set length for books or chapters and no set number of chapters per book.

¹⁰ Wormald and Giles, *Catalogue*, 205.

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At the top of each page the current book and chapter number are written in red ink. The folios have also been numbered in pencil by a modern hand.

The manuscript is written entirely in prose. The text proper is written in black ink with alternating red and blue paragraph marks. Book and chapter titles are written in red ink and usually occur at the right-hand edge of the page at the end of the preceding book or chapter. They are accompanied by large alternating blue and red capitals with blue and red decorative penwork at the left-hand side of the next line.

The hand is neat and clear and appears to be the same all the way through the text. Occasional mistakes are either corrected in the margin or crossed out and rewritten. On some folios there are later annotations pertaining to Queen Elizabeth I; there are also some devotional annotations in a similar hand, and some signatures. These annotations are in Latin and English.

2.2 Date

The manuscript of the text dates from the mid-to-late fourteenth century.¹¹ As the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* shares a prologue with the continental Alexander prose romance, this helps with the dating of it. Arnold and D. J. A. Ross have shown that the earliest continental manuscript of a prose Alexander to use the prologue of the *Estoire* dates from c. 1290-1300, meaning that the *Estoire* existed before this date.¹² I will argue here that it was written c. 1270, given its resonances with the literary and cultural movements of the time.

¹¹ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 99.

¹² Arnold, "Prophesy of Daniel"; Ross, "The Old French Alexander Romance in Prose," 353.

2. 3. Summary of the text

The *Estoire* alternates between narrating the history of Macedonia and the surrounding countries and relating the life of Alexander the Great and the aftermath of his death. The *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* has also been interpolated into the text.¹³ The text's purpose appears to be twofold: Arnold describes it as "a history book with huge interpolations of an encyclopaedic nature designed to entertain and instruct."¹⁴ This mixture of entertainment and instruction echoes the advice found in Horace that "omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, lectorem delectando pariterque monendo."¹⁵ Glending Olsen describes this statement as "probably the most familiar literary commonplace in the Middle Ages."¹⁶ There is no prologue in which the author states that the work is intended to have a particular purpose, and there is also very little guidance from the narrator during the text to point the reader towards a particular interpretation: one rare exception to this is the very end of the text, where the narrator offers judgement on those who have attempted to govern Macedonia following Alexander's death. A summary of the narrative will be helpful here in order to display the way these two main themes are interwoven.

The text begins with a history of Macedonia: its establishment as a country, wars with nearby nations, and also the genealogy of Alexander the Great. It also deals with Alexander's youth and education. However, the book concentrates mainly on Philip, whose death in the middle of a celebration at the hands of a man trusted by everyone prefigures Alexander's death later in the text.

¹³ For this text, see pp. 159-60 above.

¹⁴ Arnold, "Prophesy of Daniel," 325.

¹⁵ "He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader," 479. Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 487, 489.

¹⁶ Olson, *Literature as Recreation*, 21.

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The second book of the *Estoire* gives the history of the Persians in a similar manner to the history of the Macedonians given in the previous book. Like the Macedonian kingdom, the Persian empire is also extremely violent and unstable. Alexander reappears in chapter 2 of the second book, where he establishes himself as king and avenges his father's death. Throughout the narrative of the second book are the histories of other cities such as Tyre, Damascus and Gaza. The second book also details Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his propagation of the myth that he was engendered by a god. It ends with Darius's death and another narrative detour via Piraeus, Scythia, and Carthage.

The third book opens with Alexander taking on the bad habits of the Persians. He murders Clitus, an old retainer, when Clitus defends Philip against Alexander's criticism, and several other members of his retinue who do not want to adopt Persian customs. Alexander then progresses into India. The text then weaves narrative of Alexander's exploits in India with accounts of the things that can be encountered there. The book then ends with the interpolated *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which describes a battle at a water hole overnight, Alexander's struggle with King Porrus of India, and his encounter with the prophetic sun and moon trees, in which he learns of his impending death.¹⁷

The fourth book begins with the history of Babylon. It then returns to Alexander's increasing paranoia and his death at the hands of Antipater. Alexander's death and the discussion of who should lead Macedonia afterwards take up the rest of this book.

¹⁷ This section of the text is not present in the *St Albans Compilation*; the implications for this will be discussed in more detail below.

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The fifth book is a digression into the history of the surrounding lands: Egypt, Asia, Arabia, Scythia, Lybia, Africa, Ethiopia, Greece, Syria, Medes, Thrace, Parthia and Hyrcania. It describes the geographical position of each land and also the things typically found there in terms of plants, precious stones, and animals. There are also hints throughout the book of the problems that will occur in these lands following Alexander's death when the narrator notes to whom each of these lands is assigned. Like Macedonia in the first book of the text, the other lands of Alexander's empire are shown to be inherently violent.

The final book of the text details the collapse of Alexander's empire and the infighting between his followers. Different territories are apportioned to Alexander's men, the Macedonian royal family is murdered by Alexander's barons, and eventually the barons fight themselves into extinction. The text ends with a statement from the narrator that the end of the battle brings the end of the book (ff. 65r-75v).

The *Estoire* weaves the narrative of Alexander's life with information about the world he inhabits, which often interrupts the narrative. It is important to bear this in mind when analysing the text, as it is clear that the author of the text did not think that it would detract from the narrative to have numerous interruptions. The "digressions" are just as much a part of the text as the narrative of Alexander, and should be treated as such.

Before looking at the language of the *Estoire*, we will spend a little time looking at its source, the *St Albans Compilation*, in order to later establish how the *Estoire* differs from its source.

2.4. The *St Albans Compilation*

The *St Albans Compilation* is a Latin text dating from the mid-twelfth century. The *Estoire* is a very close translation of the *Compilation*, apart from a few significant differences, which will be discussed in more detail below. The *Compilation*'s narrative is made up of a collection of classical and early medieval texts by various authors: Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus; Orosius's *Historiae adversum Paganos*; Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*; St Jerome's *Epistola ad Laetam* and his *Commentaria in Daniele Prophetam*; Solinus's *De mirabilibus mundi*; Augustine's *City of God*; Bede's *De Temporum Ratione*; and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* and *Chronicon*.¹⁸ The narrative is split into five books. Most of the narrative comes from Justin, except for its fourth and fifth books, which draw largely on Solinus and Isidore. As can be seen from the summary of the *Estoire* given above, there is a difference in the number of books in the *Estoire* and the *Compilation*. As will be seen later, the book divisions in the *Compilation* and the *Estoire* are also different, and I will argue that this is significant when it comes to the interpretation of the *Estoire*.

There is no complete edition of the *St Albans Compilation*, although F. P. Magoun produced an edition of folios 1r-6r in 1929.¹⁹ It survives in two manuscripts, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 219, ff. 1r-64r, and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 154, ff. 1r-137r. A further fragment, copied in the fifteenth century, can be found in Cambridge, University Library MS Dd. 10. 24. The Corpus Christi manuscript was compiled in the fifteenth century, although the text itself dates from the twelfth century. It also contains the *Collatio cum Dindimo per litteras facta*, a

¹⁸ *St Albans Compilation*, hereafter *SAC*, "Incipit hystoria regis Macedonum Philippi, filiique eius Alexandri magni, excerpta de libris Pompeii Trogi, Orosii, Josephi, Jeronimi, Solini, Augustini, Bede, et Ysidori," f. 1r.

¹⁹ Francis P. Magoun, *The Gestes of King Alexander of Macedon* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929).

series of letters purportedly exchanged between Alexander and Dindimus, the King of the Brahmins in India.²⁰ The manuscript has been underlined and annotated by later readers, indicating that it may have been used for study. The Gonville and Caius manuscript, which is dated to either the twelfth or the thirteenth century, contains the *St Albans Compilation*, the *Collatio cum Dindimo*, and, amongst other texts, a “note on Alexander’s tomb and sayings of the philosophers about him,” making it an even larger anthology.²¹ James also notes that the text is from the Benedictine abbey of Bury St Edmunds, with a press-mark from the abbey on its first folio.²² This is an indication that the text circulated to other monasteries, following the twelfth-century interest in Alexander discussed in the introduction to part 2 of my thesis. The existence of the fifteenth-century Cambridge University Library fragment is particularly significant as it indicates that the text still held interest for readers three centuries after its original composition; Stone hypothesises that this may have been due to Lydgate’s translation of the *Phillipic Histories* reawakening interest in the text.²³ Throughout the manuscripts of the *Compilation*, there are annotations indicating which source is being used for the narrative, and there are also occasional in-text references to them.

Although its existence has long been noted, the *Compilation* has hardly been studied. The most significant work on it was carried out by Charles Russell Stone in his PhD thesis and subsequent article.²⁴ Stone notes that the fact that the *Compilation*

²⁰ For a list of all manuscripts of this text, see D. J. A. Ross, “A Check-List of MSS of Three Alexander Texts: The Julius Valerius *Epitome*, the *Epistola ad Aristotelem* and the *Collatio cum Dindimo*,” *Scriptorium* 10 (1956): 127-32 and Thomas Hahn, “Notes on Ross’s Check-list of Alexander Texts,” *Scriptorium* 34 (1980): 275-8.

²¹ James, *Gonville and Caius College*, 180.

²² *Ibid.*, 179.

²³ Charles Russell Stone, “Investigating Macedon in Medieval England: The *St Albans Compilation*, the *Phillipic Histories*, and the reception of Alexander the Great,” *Viator* 42 (2011): 75-111, 81, n25, 109.

²⁴ Stone, “Dubious Hero”; Stone, “Macedon.”

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uses Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus as its main source rather than Orosius represents a departure from previous insular narratives of Alexander:

The cautionary Roman portrayal of Alexander depends on his oriental empire and his extraordinary transformation, wherein he would become, to the increasing dismay of his men, more Persian than Macedonian. This portrayal was, however, hardly well known in the Middle Ages. Latin legendary narratives maintained that in defeating the villainous Persians, Alexander was beloved by his men and died an even-keeled Macedonian through and through. Even the occasional forays into historical accounts, such as that in the *Parva recapitulatio*, failed to address Alexander's orientalism, largely because Orosius (whose history had been influential in the matter since late antiquity) showed little interest in that aspect of the conqueror's character.²⁵

In this way, the *Compilation*, and therefore the *Estoire* as well, take medieval narratives of Alexander in a new direction. The arrangement of material in the *Compilation* has been very deliberate; Stone comments that the choice of source material represents both exhaustive research on the topic of Alexander and also the author's decision to present a view of Alexander that excludes some of the more "romance" episodes of his life.²⁶ The use of Justin as a main source allowed the author of the *Compilation* to construct a new version of Alexander. In contrast to Orosius, whose account of Alexander ends very shortly after Alexander's death, Justin's narrative continues for three books detailing the fate of his followers and the collapse of his empire. While the *Roman de toute chevalerie* only hints at this, with the

²⁵ Stone, "Macedon," 90.

²⁶ "The compiler's exclusion of legendary episodes is thus striking in itself (and the rarity of this decision cannot be understated when assessing the medieval Alexander), but so, too, is his exhaustive research into pagan, Christian, and Jewish accounts of Macedon," Stone, "Macedon," 84.

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pessimistic ending discussed in the previous chapter, the *Compilation* is explicit when describing the collapse of the Macedonian empire. Stone notes that this shows a wider scope for Alexander narratives:

No longer encompassing the life and death of one man, no matter how great, this history was now a much larger, cyclical construct of ambition and treachery, the *solutio* of which—both the unravelling and the explanation—ushered in a radical re-assessment of Alexander and Macedon in medieval England.²⁷

He also notes the importance of the *Compilation's* choice of sources for the Alexander texts that would follow, including the *Roman*.²⁸ His interpretation of the *Compilation* is that it works Alexander into a cycle of Macedonian violence and destruction, and that it represents an ambitious project of historical research and compilation.²⁹

The use of Justin is illuminating for the writing of history in the twelfth century. Stone argues that the choice of Justin's account as a source for authors composing Alexander narratives in the Middle Ages has not yet been fully appreciated.³⁰ He also sees this as a primarily monastic movement.³¹ The use of this text as the main source allows the wider world to be contemplated as well as Alexander's life. As Stone notes, this allows consideration of the wider world and the wider patterns of history around Alexander, whereas Orosius's account does not spend as much time on this aftermath of Alexander's rule. Both Orosius and Justin suggest that there are cycles to history; Orosius by presenting the pre-Christian world

²⁷ Stone, "Macedon," 100.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, "Macedon," 84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, "Macedon," 77.

³¹ Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 77-110.

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as sequentially ruled by kingdoms which rise and fall, and Justin by presenting Macedonia's history both before and after Alexander's rule.³² However, the use of Justin is significant for more than that: his account of Alexander is much longer than Orosius's, and therefore it opens up more history, more geography, and more encyclopaedic material for the scrutiny of the readers, aided further by the use of Solinus and Isidore. The text not only traces the life of Alexander the Great, but also attempts to create an encyclopaedic history of the East, by exploring the rulers, etymologies and people of each of its countries. It also includes discussions of the animals, plants and minerals found in these locations. By not beginning and ending with Alexander, but rather surrounding the narrative of his life with his pre- and post-history, the author of the *Compilation* was therefore given scope to introduce much more material to his narrative, and to take the opportunity for further instruction that this provided.

Given that the *Estoire* is a close translation of the *Compilation*, Stone's observations about the *Compilation* also apply to the *Estoire*. However, given the alterations to the *Estoire*, this is not the full story.

3. A reading of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*

We shall now spend some time establishing how the French text presents Alexander and his world in the next section of this chapter, before returning to an exploration of how the text differs from its source and how it displays innovations from the thirteenth century in section 4.

³² Pretty sure this needs a cross-reference.

3.1. Alexander in the *Estoire*

The focal points of this close reading are how Alexander is presented as a part of his surroundings and how his surroundings are explored independently from him. The trajectory of Alexander's life in the *Estoire* suggests that there is a cyclical nature to events in the pre-Christian world, which echoes the Orosian model of Alexander.³³ The text begins by emphasising the fact that there has always been violence in Macedonia, with a description of the country's violent history and struggles against first other kings in its territories and then neighbouring countries:

Deprimes mult furent petiz les acreis et les marches estreiz, mes puis par la proeise as reis et par la veisdie de la gent furent atit primes le vesine et apres lointaignes genz estranges contrees acquises que li empiries de Macedonie s'estendie tresqu'en Orient.³⁴

[At first [Macedonia] had few possessions and its boundaries were narrow, but following the prowess of its kings and the cunning of its people first it acquired the neighbouring countries and afterwards far-away people and lands so that the Macedonian empire extended as far as the Orient].

En cel tens li Macedonien en ourent granz guerres od la gent de Trace et de Illirie...toz los veisins espoentoent par lor los de chevalerie.³⁵

[In this time period the Macedonians had many great wars with the Thracians and the Illirians...they terrified all of their neighbours with their reputation for chivalry].

³³ For more on the use of the Orosian model of history to medieval authors, see Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 64-77.

³⁴ *ERA*, f. 1r. In this chapter I have silently expanded abbreviations and normalised u to v and i to j where appropriate for ease of reading.

³⁵ *ERA*, f. 1v.

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By beginning his account with the violence inherent in Alexander's world, the author of the *Estoire* suggests that the violence will always be present. This proves to be the case throughout the text, as not only is Alexander's life defined by battle and conquest, but after his death Macedonia returns to the state of conflict in which it began. Alexander's relatively early death then allows the author of the *Estoire* to dwell on his followers' actions in more detail, and to emphasise Alexander's insignificance in the grand scheme of the world. The final book of the *Estoire* details how Alexander's former companions murder the remaining members of the Macedonian royal family in order to destroy any rival claimants to Alexander's throne. It also covers the series of civil wars amongst these men in which the territories exchange hands multiple times while their temporary rulers fight each other into extinction. Whereas the *Roman de toute chevalerie* only foreshadows the destruction of Alexander's empire, the *Estoire* dissects it in exquisite and bloody detail.

The *Estoire* presents Alexander as a tyrannical, violent figure. This is striking because it represents a contrast to the trend of continental French Alexander narratives identified in the introduction to this half of my thesis. Early medieval narratives of Alexander tend to be critical of him. The portrayal of him as a romance hero in the twelfth century, more noticeable in continental than in insular work, is noticeably absent from the *St Albans Compilation*. According to Stone, the rehabilitation of Alexander into a means of education for princes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries led to authors presenting a more sympathetic view of him and emphasising his courtliness and his fighting prowess.³⁶ If this is the case, one might expect the *Estoire* to follow this trend. However, from Alexander's very first

³⁶ Stone, *Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 113-39.

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appearance, he is established as a cruel ruler. The description takes the form of a long comparison with his father, and between them, they seem to exhibit every possible negative personality trait:

Li peres s'esjoieit quant il ot deceu ses enemis, li fiz fu liez cum avueu toz les acraventet tot. Li peres fu plus cointe de conseil, li filz fu plus nobles de corage. Li peres son maltalent celot et a la feeie le venquit, li filz plus qu'il fu corocie ne se tariot mie de vengier, ne ne se atenprot. Ambedui furent covert de vin beivrete de sei enivrer et en lor ivreces firent diverses folies. Car al pere ert costume de son conune corre encontre ses enemis, et folement ses meimes ofrir a peril. Li filz cum il fu ivre ne se desuot mie sor ses enemies mes sur ses privez. Pur ico Felip sovent repeirot de bataille plaiez. Alixandre meinte feiz cum il de convie se departeit ses amis ot tuez. Li pere ne volt reigner od ses amis, li filz par son reigne toz ses amis traveillor. Li pere volt qu'il fust ame, li filz qu'il fust cremuz.³⁷

[The father rejoiced when he cheated his enemies; the son was happy when he had completely overcome them. The father was knowledgeable in counsels; the son was more praiseworthy of courage. The father hid his anger and sooner or later overcame it; the son once angered could not stop himself from avenging himself or calm down. Both of them desired to drink wine and to become drunk and in their drunkenness they committed various crimes. It was the father's custom to fight against his enemies, and often he got into danger. When the son was drunk he did not harm his enemies but his close friends. For this reason, Philip often returned injured from battles. Many times, by the time

³⁷ *ERA*, ff. 7v-8r.

Alexander had left a feast, he had killed one of friends who was attending it. The father did not want to harass his friends; the son tormented all of his friends throughout his reign. The father wanted to be loved; the son wanted to be feared.]

This description serves several purposes. Firstly, by including a comparison with Philip, it establishes the legacy of violence of which Alexander is a part. Alexander is no longer a singular example of corruption, but rather one link in a chain of destruction that extends beyond his life. At first glance, Philip is like a practice run for Alexander, who, according to the narrator, is “greindre de son pere en prueise et en vices” [greater than his father in prowess and in vices].³⁸ Secondly, it establishes the reasons for and the means of Alexander's death from the beginning: his will to crush his enemies completely, his lack of respect for his followers, and his love of drinking alcohol.³⁹ All of these qualities will be played out in the narrative to come, but by highlighting them early, this characterisation of Alexander is planted in the readers' mind.

At the end of the text, there is a suggestion that the whole cycle will begin again when Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, rises to prominence. Like Alexander, Seleucus has similarly pseudo-divine origins, as his mother dreams that she is visited by the god Apollo and that he impregnates her. He is also born with a birthmark shaped like an anchor on his ankle, which is interpreted as a sign that he should join Alexander's companions. After Alexander's death, he participates in the battles that follow, which are “grieves e fortes” [grievous and heavy].⁴⁰ Like

³⁸ *ERA*, f. 7v

³⁹ This quality was heavily criticized by Seneca and by authors who followed him such as Gerald of Wales, Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 114, 116.

⁴⁰ *ERA*, f. 73r.

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Alexander, he also founds a city to reflect his dual origins, naming it Antioch after his earthly father Antiochus and dedicating it to the god Apollo, his heavenly father. Seleucus gains many territories and is one of the last men standing as Alexander's empire collapses, and the last to hold Macedonia before he is killed. The section dealing with Seleucus is only four folios long, and is a kind of Alexander in miniature, another indication of the cyclical nature of the violence inherent in Alexander's world: after Alexander's death, his men continue to act as he does.

It has been observed by several scholars that Alexander absorbs and exhibits the traits of the nations that he conquers, particularly the Persians.⁴¹ The narrator makes this explicit:

Les gentils dames ki erent d'eslite belte fist a son lit venir: les unes a une nuit
les autres puis, a la maniere des reis de Perse.⁴²

[He made the noble ladies who were of a great beauty come to his bed, some on one night and some on the next, after the manner of the Persian kings].

Alexander's absorption of Persian traits can be read as a kind of contamination: he is able to subdue these nations, but not entirely able to avoid picking up their negative traits. This makes Alexander seem like a second Darius, ultimately not that much better than the king he replaces. The contamination of Alexander by the Persians leads him to decline irremediably during the remainder of his life. The variety of examples he sets make him a problematic model for a ruler, but this is in keeping with a pagan king, who can only provide so much of an example due to his pre-

⁴¹ Charles Russell Stone notes that "the cautionary Roman portrayal of Alexander depends on his oriental empire and his extraordinary transformation, wherein he would become, to the increasing dismay of his men, more Persian than Macedonian," "Macedon," 90.

⁴² *ERA*, f. 23 v

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Christian state.⁴³ As Alexander becomes contaminated by his contact with the Persians, his men become corrupted by contact with him, ensuring that the cycle of destruction will continue. The *Estoire* is particularly insistent on the fact that the unrest comes from within Alexander's camp:

Armes ourent pris ne mie encontre les Persanz mais encontre les
Macedoniens e ne mie encontre lur enemis mais encontre lur citeens.⁴⁴

[They had taken arms not against the Persians but against the Macedonians,
and not against their enemies but against their citizens].

E li barun del ost ne se targirent mie les uns les autres hair. Kar Attalun
enuelat des pouners pur ocire Perdica ki ert duc del autre part.⁴⁵

[And the barons of the army did not hesitate to hate one another, for Attalun
sent soldiers to kill Perdiccas who was a leader of another land].

The narrator's disapproval of these actions is emphasised in his description of how the war impacts on the entire populations of these countries:

Einz que Perdica e sa gent entrassent en la citet li Capadocien lor femmes e lor
enfantz de meines ocistrent e lor mesuns od totes lor richeises esprisrent.⁴⁶

[When Perdiccas and his men entered the city, they killed the Cappadocians,
their women, and their children and they took their houses with all of their
riches].

⁴³ Frank Grady, *Representing Righteous Heathens in Late Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2005); Emily Reiner, "The Ambiguous Greek in Old French and Middle English Literature," (PhD thesis, Toronto, 2008); W. J. Aerts and Martin Gosman, eds., *Exemplum et similitudo: Alexander the Great and Other Heroes as Points of Reference in Medieval Literature* (Groningen, 1998).

⁴⁴ *ERA*, f. 49v.

⁴⁵ *ERA*, f. 49v.

⁴⁶ *ERA*, f. 66r.

En ceste bataille les disconfist Antigonie e lur herberges lur tolit. E perdirent ne mie solement la glorie e le les de tantes batailles cum il ourent einz uencuez mais lor femmes e lor enfanz.⁴⁷

[In this battle Antigonus defeated them and took their shelter from them.

And they lost not only the glory and the contract of such battles that they had won in the past but also their women and children].

By emphasising the wide-ranging consequences not only for the leaders but also the inhabitants of the countries, the author highlights the destructive power of the civil war. He also contrasts the glory and honour of battles against enemies with the shame, horror, and bloodshed of a civil war.

Even after his death, the behaviour of Alexander's followers appears to work in a similar way. Once the civil war has begun in Macedonia, it spreads to other countries in Alexander's former empire, until they are all contaminated with unrest. Alexander seems to have spawned a race of mini-Alexanders, each with his own destructive force. The domino-like toppling of kingdom after kingdom is a reminder to the text's audience of the importance of a coherent rule and the destructive potential of a king's followers who do not perpetuate his legacy.

The extreme violence of the last book of the *Estoire* leads to a very dark ending, in which the entire Macedonian royal family is wiped out and collapses in on itself. This is shown to have come from poor administration and poor treatment of followers. The end of the text is completely sterile, with not only Alexander's family having been wiped out but all of his followers as well. The narrator is at such a loss that he can only state:

⁴⁷ ERA, f. 69r.

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Tel ce dit uos ai fu li terminemenz de la bataille de Macedonie e la fin. E par la u la fins eueint de la bataille ilueches fenist li liures.⁴⁸

[What I tell you was the termination and the end of the battle of Macedonia, and just as the battle ended so too does the book].

The pessimistic finality to the end of the text suggests the ultimate futility of battle and the transience of empire. When combined with the Orosian view that Alexander is limited by his pagan status, this seems to make sense: there can be no permanence to Alexander's empire as Christianity will ultimately predominate.

3.2 The *Estoire* without Alexander

It is essential to read the *Estoire* in its entirety as both a narrative of Alexander's life and an encyclopaedic text with a universal outlook. In many cases, the narrative of Alexander is an excuse for the narrator to explore ideas about the wider world, and he is often ignored for several leaves at a time while the narrator describes Alexander's surroundings. Matthew Kempshall has noted that these digressions were a typical feature of medieval historical writing.⁴⁹ An analysis of these features will indicate how important they are to the narrative as a whole.

The text behaves in some respects like a narrative map.⁵⁰ Every time a new country is introduced, it is situated in relation to its surrounding countries:

Iceste terre deuers orient auirone la mere Egeu. Deuers bise est la terre de Trace. Deuers midi est la terre de Adine. Deuers occident est Dalmace.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *ERA*, f. 75v.

⁴⁹ "Digression was much more than "just" a literary effect – it became a technique or strategy which was designed to secure approval and support from one's audience. In such situations, digressions were understood as one further example of a type of argument which could give credence to something that was in doubt," Kempshall, *Rhetoric and History*, 308.

⁵⁰ This technique is found in Orosius; see *ibid.*, 306.

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[This land is surrounded on the east by the Aegean Sea. Towards the north is the land of Thrace. Towards the south is the land of Thessaly. Towards the west is Dalmatia].

Iceste terre en departie en duos realms. Li uns est apele Egypte la Halte l'autre Egypte la Baise. La plus basse Egypte a deuers Orient Sirie la Palestine e deuers Occident si est Libie. E deuers Bise la grant mer. E deuers midi est li monz climax e si est la halte Egypte e li fluns de Nil.⁵²

[This land is split into two realms. The first is called Upper Egypt and the other Lower Egypt. Lower Egypt has Syria and Palestine to the east and Libya to the west and the great sea towards the north and towards the south is Mount Climax and then Upper Egypt and the River Nile].

The narrative situates the reader chronologically as well as geographically. He frequently references the foundation of Rome as a point of time to help readers to situate the events he references, a method taken from Orosius:

En cel tens ot Phelip xxxun anz et cinc anz ot este reis, e quatre cenz anz et vi furent puis que Rome fu fait.⁵³

[At this time Philip was 31 years old and had been king for five years, and it was 406 years since the foundation of Rome].

Puis que Darie fu morz Xerxes sis filz tint lo realme xx ans et dunkes furent passé lxxiiij ans puis que primes comencierent les Gius de joste le mont

⁵¹ *ERA*, f. 1r.

⁵² *ERA*, f. 50r.

⁵³ *ERA*, f. 2v.

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d'Olimpe o tot li vaillant bachler s'esembloent pur lor peise mostrer tote veie al quinte an. E puis que Rome fu faite cc lxxv ans furent ja passé.⁵⁴

[When Darius died his son Xerxes held the realm for twenty years and at that time 74 years had passed since the Greeks first began [to gather] by the side of Mount Olympus where all the valiant young men gathered to show their prowess every four years. And 265 years had passed since Rome was founded].

By using Rome, the central city of contemporary Christianity, as the benchmark against which all events are situated, the author of the *Estoire* gives the reader a kind of universal calendar, and places the events of the past in a recognisable Christian framework.

The narrator's frequent attempts to situate the reader in space and time shows an awareness of the universal implications of the narrative. As the narrative frequently spends time on subjects other than Alexander, it can be suggested that recounting his life is an opportunity to contemplate the wider world. The narrator also attempts to give a universal framework to the events, weaving references to biblical events into the text in order to call on his readers' knowledge of biblical history. These techniques ensure that he truly is writing an encyclopaedic text and also assumes a competence on behalf of the reader that they will be able to follow this framework:

Al dereen fut apelee Armenie de Enmenium un son rei mais li Ebriu la noment Ararath. As monz d'Armenie reposat li arches Noe apres le diluue.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *ERA*, f. 9r.

⁵⁵ *ERA*, f. 64r.

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[Finally it was called Armenia after Enmenium of of its kings but the Hebrews called it Ararat from the mountain of Armenia where Noah's ark rested after the Flood].

En Perse fu primes torneé l'art as encanteors par cele Menbroth li jaianz puis la confusion del languages ki fu faite a la tor de Babilonie.⁵⁶

[The art of sorcery was first practised in Persia by this Nimrod the giant following the confusion of language that took place at the Tower of Babel].

La primere est Taphun la maistre citee de la terre que li geiant edifierent...La fist Moyses li prophetes les granz miracles deuant le rei Pharaun dunt hom lit el liure de Xode.⁵⁷

[The first is Taphun the biggest city in the land that the giants built...There Moses the prophet performed great miracles for the Pharaoh which can be read about in the book of Exodus].

Mais puis que Adam li primiers hom peccat l'entrée en parais est estopee a home.⁵⁸

[But since Adam the first man sinned the entry into paradise is barred to men].

This forms a network of events, giving the reader a chance to build a universal frame of reference in their mind, where the Bible provides a timeline by which everything else can be measured.

The narrator's classification of everything Alexander encounters also turns the text into a kind of encyclopaedia. The interest in classifying and quantifying the world

⁵⁶ *ERA*, f. 8v.

⁵⁷ *ERA*, f. 50v.

⁵⁸ *ERA*, f. 52v.

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around Alexander is a concern of the narrator whether Alexander is actually there or not. The *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which supplements the *Compilation* as a source for the *Estoire*, was often seen as a textbook for encounters with the East.⁵⁹ I will explore why the *Epistola* could have been added to the *Estoire* in more detail below; however, one reason for using it as a source could be that it provided information about the animals one could supposedly encounter in the East.

The third book is largely devoted to an exploration of the land of India. The book is divided up so that one chapter is devoted to each aspect of India, and is an example of how the narrative takes a detour from describing the exploits of Alexander into cataloguing the world around him. The first chapter weaves the history and geography of India into Alexander's adventures, and the narrator interrupts himself in order to do so:

Mais par ico que ni anons fait remembrance d'Inde un poi dirons del estre de la terre e de sa nature e dunt la gent del pais primes comencat.⁶⁰

[But because we have mentioned India we will say a little about the state of the country and its nature and of the first people of the land].

It then leaves Alexander and is entirely given over to descriptions of India. The first are the history and geography, before a catalogue of the creatures, flora, and precious stones. With each new aspect, the narrator establishes its origin, appearance and characteristics, and the etymology of its name:

Unes genz i sunt ki sent apele Cinocephali: par co qu'il unt testes de chein kar cinos en griu est chien en romans e phalos est cief. E bien aperit qui li

⁵⁹ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 15.

⁶⁰ ERA, f. 25v.

cynocephali sunt plus ueraiment bestes que homes cumil nout mie parole dome mais ietent abai cum chien.⁶¹

[There is a kind of people there that are called the cynocephali because they have the head of a dog, because "cyno" in Greek means "dog" in French and "phalos" means "head." And it is evident that the cynocephali are more truly beasts than men because they cannot speak like men but they bark like dogs].

En Inde naiscent les elefanz que li indien apepelent Barros de lur uoiz quil ietent. Mais li griu les apellent elefanz par la grandur de lur cors kar il sunt granz cum un mont e elephio en griu en romanz sonet mont.⁶²

[Elephants, which the Indians call "barros" because of the sounds they make are born in India. But the Greeks call them "elephants" because of the size of their bodies, because they are large like mountains and "elephio" in Greek means "mountain" in French].

Monoceron une beste qu'en latine est apelee unicornus naist en Inde. E pur co est apeleet qu'en son front stait une corne de quatre piez longe: si ague e fort que quanque il empeint o touches u il le freint u trespercet. Souent prent bataille as elefanz e par le uentre le plaiet e abat. Icesteste beste apellent li griu rinoceron qu'en romanz est entrepretet corne al naraille.⁶³

[The monoceros, a beast which is called the unicorn in Latin, is born in India. And it is so named because it has a horn on its forehead that is four feet long, so sharp and strong that whatever it strikes or touches it breaks or pierces through it. Often they fight with elephants and attack and wound them in the

⁶¹ ERA, f. 26v.

⁶² ERA, f. 26v.

⁶³ ERA, ff. 27r-v.

stomach. The Greeks call this beast rhinoceros that translates as "horned nose" into French].

The author adopts the same tactics when describing the plant life of India, and then the precious stones, each given their own chapter:

Nard est une manere de boissun si cum li uns dient. Mais li altre afferment que co est herbe bien olante. E iet espies. Par co est apelet en griu nardus stachos qu'en romanz dit nard espies.⁶⁴

[Nard is a kind of bush according to some people, but others say that it is a very fragrant herb, and it also has spines. For this reason it is called "nardus stachos" in Greek which means "spiny nard" in French].

Onix e sardonix la sunt trouez. Onix e co traist son non qu'il en blans a la semblance del ungle de home kar li griu apelent ungle onitem.⁶⁵

[Onyx and sardonix are found there. Onyx takes its named because it is white like a human nail because the Greeks call nails "onitem."].

The result is a large amount of organised information, which makes it both possible and easy to browse the text. In a similar way, the fifth book of the text is a catalogue of the different countries of the East. The headings of the chapters organise the information by country rather than by theme: each country's description includes its geography, history, flora, fauna and precious stones, although the descriptions are of varying lengths. These two books form the bulk of the encyclopaedic material.

⁶⁴ *ERA*, f. 27v.

⁶⁵ *ERA*, f. 29r.

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The author of the *Estoire* also shows an interest in etymology, following the information found in Isidore's *Etymologies*. The etymology of names is frequently explored in the text, and this is an obvious development from the source because the Latin equivalents of words have been translated into French. The narrator is also ready to enter into etymological debates, noting that there are disputes about the development of certain words:

Li Athenien furent apele Ioues de Ioue de qui la contre recut non Ioue. Mais Seint Jeronmes dit al liure des Ebreus questions que Ioues cele gent ne uindrent mie del rei Ioue mais de Iauan le filz Iaphet et de lui uunt cel num.⁶⁶

[The Athenians were called Joves after Jove from whom the country received the name Jove. However, Saint Jerome says in the *Quaestiones hebraicae in Genesim* that these Joves people did not come from King Jove at all but from Javan the son of Japhet and that this name comes from him].

Li Lidien ki la habiterent recurrent cel num de Ludi le filz Sem. E la terre de Lidie at le nom de lui memes. Mais Saint Isydres dit que de primes ert apele Meome mais puis de Lidon rei recourat le nom de Lidie.⁶⁷

[The Lydians who live there received this name from Lud the son of Shem. And the land of Lydia took his name. However, Saint Isidore says that it was first called Meome but was called Lydia afterwards because of King Lidon.]

The narrator also shows an interest in etymology for its own sake. The analysis of language seems to be a large part of the pleasure of the text for him, and is part of a campaign of classifying and dissecting the world around Alexander. The focus on

⁶⁶ *ERA*, f. 58v.

⁶⁷ *ERA*, f. 61v.

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etymology and translation is significant, as it is a literal version of what the text itself is doing: taking unfamiliar things and repackaging them for an audience who does not have the original context. Just like the transfer of rule and knowledge from East to West, the *Estoire* creates a chain of knowledge, passing the words through their various locations of power until they arrive at the thirteenth-century reader of French in a form he or she can understand.

The *Estoire* is truly a text of two halves. When Alexander is the subject of the narrative he is its sole focus; however, when he is not, it is almost as though the readers need to be reminded who he is: the narrator refers to him as “Alexandre li granz,” in the narrative following his death, suggesting that when he is no longer the focus of the text he is as remote a figure as any other in its history. This is symbolic of the way in which the *Estoire* uses Alexander as a means of exploring his world.

4. Intellectual contexts and audience

This section of the chapter will explore some of the intellectual developments of the thirteenth century to see how they affect my reading of the *Estoire*. It will also attempt to draw some conclusions about its potential audience.

Nothing is known of the patron of the text or the manuscript. The fact that the manuscript was produced in the century following the text’s composition means that it may not be able to tell us much about the original patron or readers, although given its good condition, gold leaf edging and clear hand it was clearly a luxury manuscript, which suggests a reasonably high-status audience. Unlike the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, there are no illustrations. Following thirteenth-century models of lay literacy, it is likely that it could have been both read out loud to a group or read privately. The use of prose hints at the intended audience of the *Estoire*. Prose allows

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longer sentences, perhaps more suited to a private reader as they are more difficult to dramatise and more suited to contemplation. By contrast, verse text employs shorter lines than prose, and contains echoes of oral-style language, intended to evoke a performance. This can be seen in the differences between the narrative styles of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*. It also illustrates the growth of prose as a medium for insular French writing in the thirteenth century; this will be explored later in this chapter, but for now it can be said that the use of prose carries with it implications of veracity that are significant to how readers may have viewed the *Estoire*. The *Roman* has a much more linear style than the *Estoire*: although both texts contain digressions, the *Roman* focuses more exclusively on the life of Alexander himself, while the *Estoire* attempts to create more of a universal picture using Alexander as a focal point, giving great detail about the histories of the countries in the East. The choice of prose over verse, therefore, may be an indication that the author of the *Estoire* wanted to create a universal narrative rather than simply focusing on the life of Alexander.

As well as looking to the past, the *Estoire*, like the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, reflects contemporary thirteenth-century concerns. It reveals the perennial anxieties about the fitness of rulers, an interest in the East, and a questioning of the limits of Christianity. The text also fits into thirteenth-century literary and intellectual contexts, such as encyclopaedic writing, the introduction of new textual apparatus, and interaction with pre-existing compendia of sources such as the *florilegia*. The relationship of the text to its literary and intellectual contexts will now be explored in more detail. These contexts can provide more information about the text's potential use and audiences.

4.1. Thirteenth-century intellectual developments

The fact that the *St Albans Compilation* was produced in the twelfth century and translated into insular French in the thirteenth century indicates the continuing appeal of Alexander, and also an attempt to widen access to his story. Both religious and lay readers could have benefitted from this translation. It is this broadened audience, along with contemporary changes in scholarly techniques and interests, which accounts for the alterations made to the *St Albans Compilation* in the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*. These alterations are subtle, as in terms of their content the two texts are very similar, but they nevertheless contribute to the authorial strategy of improving the clarity, accessibility and narrative interest of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, as will be explored below.

4.2. *Compilatio*

Both the *St Albans Compilation* and the *Estoire* are examples of *compilatio*, the technique of creating a composite text out of many different sources. This is not to be confused with the similar technique of anthologising, which was the practise of collecting several texts into a manuscript. Both techniques appealed to collectors of Alexander material: some examples of anthologies include British Library, Royal 13. A. I, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, and Oxford, Bodley 264.⁶⁸ These practices recall that in the Middle Ages it was an author's treatment of his sources rather than originality that constituted literary achievement. *Compilatio* permitted authors to gather elements of many source texts to create their own versions of popular topics

⁶⁸ British Library, Royal 13. A. I contains the *Epitome* of Julius Valerius, the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, a short verse *Epitaphium Alexandri*, the *Collatio cum Dindimo* and the *Parva recapitulatio de eodem Alexandro et de suis*; British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv contains the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* and *The Wonders of the East*; Oxford, Bodley 264 contains *Alexander and Dindimus* and the French *Roman d'Alexandre*.

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or figures while having a host of *auctores* to fall back on should their accounts be questioned. As such, it was an extremely innovative and sophisticated form that allowed authors to follow their own interests within a certain topic, and to remake pre-existing texts for new purposes. With the wide variety of available source material about him and the combination of perennially interesting topics and the potential for engagement with contemporary political affairs that he offered, Alexander was an ideal subject for such literary treatment. Gaullier-Bougassas and Harf-Larcener identify the importance of the multiplicity of voices in the creation of an Alexander text:

L'assemblage de multiples textes d'origine diverse lui permet donc d'entrelacer et de faire dialoguer entre elles des "voix" diverses, parfois même discordantes, sur Alexandre et sa destinée.⁶⁹

Vincent of Beauvais's disclaimer at the beginning of his *Speculum maius* gives a good summary of the compiler's work:

Nam ex meo pauca, vel quasi nulla addidi. Ipsorum igitur est auctoritate, nostrum autem sola partium ordinatione.⁷⁰

[For I added a few things, or almost nothing from myself. Therefore the authority is theirs, and only the order of the parts is ours].⁷¹

The development of *compilatio* as a literary technique has been studied by scholars such as Malcolm Parkes, Alastair Minnis, and Richard and Mary Rouse.⁷² Parkes has

⁶⁹ Gaullier-Bougassas, *Romans d'Alexandre*, 221.

⁷⁰ *Speculum maius*, apologia actoris (Dijon MS.), cap. iii.

⁷¹ Quoted in Alastair Minnis, "Nolens auctor sed compilator reputari": the late-medieval discourse of compilation," in Mireille Chazan and Gilbert Dohan, eds., *La Methode Critique au Moyen-Âge* (Turnhout, 2006): 47-63, 57; translation from Simonette Battista, "The Compiler and Contemporary Literary Culture in Old Norse Hagiography," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (2005): 1-13, 2.

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observed that *compilatio* developed as a literary form during the thirteenth century to respond to its changing academic needs.⁷³ He charts the replacement of twelfth-century monastic *lectio* with the more active engagement with texts demanded by thirteenth-century scholastic *lectio*.⁷⁴ This alteration in academic methods of study, Parkes observes, led to the increased use of *compilatio*:

Thirteenth-century scholars paid close attention to the development of good working tools based on scientific principles. The drive to make inherited material available in a condensed or more convenient form led them to recognise the desirability of imposing a new *ordinatio* on the material for this purpose. In the thirteenth century this led to the development of the notion of *compilatio* both as a form of writing and as a means of making material easily accessible. Compilation was not new...what was new was the amount of thought and industry that was put into it, and the refinement that this thought and industry produced. The transmission of these refinements on to the page led to greater sophistication in the presentation of texts.⁷⁵

So, *compilatio* was not a new form, but in the thirteenth century it took on a new meaning. Alastair Minnis has pointed out that the term *compilatio* evolved in the Middle Ages from denoting a rather dubious activity to a term indicating a prestigious achievement, as evidenced in a metaphor used by Jerome to describe the compilatory

⁷² M. B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt* ed. J. J. G. Alexander and Margaret T. Gibson, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976): 115-43; Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

⁷³ Parkes, "Influence of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*," 115.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

activity of Vergil: “magnarum esse virium Herculi extorquere” [to wrench the mace from the hand of Hercules is to display great strength].⁷⁶ He also highlights the fact that the process of *compilatio* was not the same for every author, using the example of Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum maius*:

The fact that Vincent of Beauvais *cum suis* offered expanded, elaborated versions of the vocabulary of *compilatio* did not mean that their readers had to take all of them on board, any more than they had to produce compilations of exactly the same type as Vincent’s, or follow Vincent’s compilational techniques and preferences.⁷⁷

Here, Minnis illustrates the status of *compilatio* as a larger literary phenomenon, with many possible applications and outcomes. There was no one way to create a compilation, and this gave the form tremendous flexibility. Authors could use this to their advantage in order to benefit from the assembly of different texts to create their own composite account of Alexander.

There are several consequences of *compilatio* being used in the creation of Alexander texts. Firstly, this means that an author was not using their own material, but rather arranging texts originally produced by someone else. Furthermore, each compilation meant a new Alexander: each combination of sources led to a different impression being created of the central figure of Alexander and of his surroundings. The compilations could therefore be nuanced: accounts of certain events could be included or omitted to present a certain picture of Alexander. Alexander became a complex, composite figure, and his life became a patchwork of authoritative sources

⁷⁶ Minnis, "Nolens auctor sed compilator reputari," 57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

to be assembled or rejected at will. Each Alexander, therefore, is a discrete version, composed of the same basic elements, but with subtle nuances and alterations that create a unique Alexander each time.

The *St Albans Compilation* does not fit with many of the other examples of compilations cited here for two reasons. The first is its date: it was made in the mid-twelfth century, so it predates the new uses to which techniques of *compilatio* were being put as discussed above. However, its translation into French in the thirteenth century, along with the incorporation of yet more source material, can be read as a participant in this trend. Secondly, the *St Albans Compilation* has no information from the author about his intentions for the work, nor any disclaimers of authority due to his sources. It does not offer any commentary on the process of its composition, nor does it pass much comment on its events; aside from the statement at the beginning of the text indicating which sources have been used, there are no references to *compilatio* in the text. The narrator is virtually invisible throughout the text. This also transfers over to the *Estoire*, where the narrator is likewise virtually invisible. However, the main difference between the *Estoire* and its source is that the more academic aspects of *compilatio* which were developing in the thirteenth century as described above can be applied to it, and they are also supported by further alterations to the *Estoire*, which will be explored below.

4.3. Prose historical writing

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, there was a rise in the composition of French texts in prose.⁷⁸ Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay, in their 1987 analysis of

⁷⁸ This was not the earliest example of the use of French prose, as noted by Jeanette Beer, but the first literary French prose texts were produced around this time. Jeanette M. A. Beer, *Early Prose in France: Contexts of Bilingualism and Authority* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publication, 1992), 1-2.

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this rise, argue that the use of written prose in official documents led to the belief that it could contain and preserve the truth, which was contrasted with the improvisatory and oral nature of verse.⁷⁹ As culture moved from being predominantly oral to being predominantly written, more people began to be exposed to prose writing. Michael Clanchy has studied the rise of written communication and has concluded that the increased use of official documents to record and disseminate information led to an association between prose and veracity.⁸⁰ John Spence's study of Anglo-Norman historical prose chronicles likewise argued that the use of French prose in official documentation in the thirteenth century may have been a factor in the rise of prose as a medium for truth-telling.⁸¹ The rise of documentary culture coincided with, or perhaps contributed to, the appearance of critiques of rhymed verse texts: the constraints of metre and rhyme were seen to be problematic as it was believed that they encouraged authors to sacrifice accuracy in favour of scansion or rhyme.⁸² A now-lost prose vernacular chronicle edited by Paul Meyer in 1877 states "il est difficile de rimer une histoire sans y ajouter des mensonges pour faire la rime" [it is difficult to make a rhyming story without adding lies to it in order to make it rhyme], and another prose text, *La mort Aimeri de Narbonne*, states:

Nus hom ne puet chançon de geste dire

Que il ne mente là où li vers define

⁷⁹ It is important to remember, however, that the supposed orality of verse narrative texts should not be taken at face value and is often a careful construction of the author: see D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading*; "Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies," and also Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁸⁰ For the development of this, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 239-398.

⁸¹ John Spence, *Reimagining History in Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2013).

⁸² Godzack and Kittay, *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 126.

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As mos drecier et à tailler la rime.⁸³

[No one is able to recite a *chanson de geste* without lying at the place where the verse ends, to order the words and shape the rhymes].

The association of prose with truth and verse with falsehood, however artificial, persisted, leading to a rise of texts written in prose.

The use of prose allowed authors to make certain stylistic choices that were not available to writing in verse. It permitted longer, more discursive sentences, as the author was not constrained by the need to compose lines of a certain length, which was more suited to complex narratives.⁸⁴ This allowed the composition of longer texts, which were often cyclical, dealing with several generations of characters, such as Arthurian material.⁸⁵ It has also been noted that prose puts the narrator at a distance from his material and that as such communications with the audience are decreased by prose writing.⁸⁶ Godzich and Kittay note that rather than being a style, prose is "a different signifying practice"⁸⁷ Other scholars have noted further stylistic implications of prose. Michelle R. Warren notes that the prose *Alexander* "narrates the geographic, genealogical, and ethnographic domains of Alexander's conquests," reading it in the context of colonialism and arguing that the prose form is uniquely suited to texts concerned with expansion and conquest because there are no formal

⁸³ A. Meyer, "Prologue en vers français d'une histoire perdue de Philippe-Auguste," *Romania* 6 (1877): 494-8 quoted in Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 181; Joseph Couraye du Park ed., *La mort Aymeri de Narbonne: chanson de geste* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1884), vv. 3055-7.

⁸⁴ Norris J. Lacy, "The evolution and legacy of French prose romance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Romance*, ed. Roberta Kruegar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 167-82, 168.

⁸⁵ Lacy cites the examples of the prose *Tristan*, the post-Vulgate cycle of Arthurian material, and the Lancelot-Grail cycle; Norris, "Evolution and legacy," 169, 173, 175.

⁸⁶ Spiegel, *The Past As Text*, 190.

⁸⁷ Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay, *Emergence of Prose*, 191.

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restrictions of prose composition, and therefore no restraints to what the reader may encounter and, by reading, intellectually possess.⁸⁸

As well as the stylistic ramifications of the use of prose, it has also been argued that it had some political implications. Gabrielle Spiegel has studied the rise of prose in continental French historical texts, which she connects to a changing view of history as the arena of man rather than the arena of God, and the political utility of history.⁸⁹ Spiegel also highlights the political value of prose:

The emergence of prose in place of verse (and history in place of fiction) represents the displacement of linguistic mediation towards a low mimetic (or “realistic”) literary mode as a means of enhancing the credibility of aristocratic ideology by grounding it in a language of apparent facticity, in contradistinction to the overt use of fantasy in epic and romance.⁹⁰

Furthermore, Spiegel comments that prose was appropriated by the aristocracy as a way of legitimising their modes of behaviour, particularly in terms of asserting an aristocratic identity independent of the monarchy.⁹¹ She reads the composition of these historical texts in the light of the struggles of the French-speaking Flemish aristocracy to assert their power in the face of the actions of Philip Augustus of France.⁹²

Spiegel’s analysis is useful, but, as it is based on continental French sources rather than insular texts, it has some limitations when applied to insular literary composition. There has been no full study of the development of insular French prose.

⁸⁸ Michelle R. Warren, "Take the World by Prose: Modes of Possession in the *Roman d'Alexandre*," in Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, *The Medieval French Alexander*, 143-60.

⁸⁹ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*; Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 12-3.

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There is some overlap between continental and insular trends: prose was evidently used for historical writing on both sides of the channel, and popularity of the prose *Brut* is a testament to this.⁹³ However, the situation is not entirely analogous. The earliest examples of the prose *Brut* did not appear until the late thirteenth century, as it continues up until the death of Henry III in 1272.⁹⁴ By this stage in continental France, prose history writing and prose romance cycles had been being composed and circulating for almost a century. That is not to say that French prose was not in use in England at this time. However, the kinds of texts that were written in prose seem to suggest that prose was viewed differently.

Ruth Dean's catalogue of Anglo-Norman literature gives many examples of prose texts. One of the most striking uses of prose in insular French writing is the production of genealogical chronicles and rolls. The position of the aristocracy is again at stake, but while the continental French authors are arguing for the importance of the aristocracy in current politics, the insular authors seem instead to be more concerned with creating an unbroken link between the colonisation of Britain by Brutus and the island's present-day inhabitants.⁹⁵ Item 6 in Dean's catalogue is a group of texts described as "genealogical chronicles," which include eight manuscripts from the thirteenth century, the earliest two of which date from

⁹³ There are 55 manuscripts of the various insular French versions of the *Brut* surviving. Manuscripts also survive in Latin and Middle English: for a full list, see Lister M. Matheson, *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), 1-9; and Lister M. Matheson, "Historical Prose," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press 1984), 209-48.

⁹⁴ No. 42 in Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*.

⁹⁵ R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles, 1093-1343* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

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the mid-thirteenth century and the remaining six of which date from the last quarter of the century or later.⁹⁶

Another category of prose writing in insular French was lapidaries, which, as Dean observed, seem to reflect a particular insular interest.⁹⁷ Dean's catalogue lists eleven separate lapidaries, six of which were written in prose.⁹⁸ The earliest of these dates from the mid-twelfth century, and each of the prose lapidaries survives in thirteenth-century manuscripts.⁹⁹ Other insular French prose texts from this time include a version of the *Secret of Secrets* (Dean no. 239, dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century), and geographical texts such as a prose description of England (Dean no. 5, dating from the first quarter of the thirteenth century), a geographical description of Asia and Africa (Dean no. 331, dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century) and Matthew Paris's itinerary from London to Jerusalem (Dean no. 334, surviving in three manuscripts all dating from the mid-thirteenth century). Prose here seems to be a means of recording and communicating knowledge. Dean's catalogue lists the *Estoire* under the category of romance, which separates it from other contexts into which it might fit more naturally. All of the categories listed above in which prose writing can be found are also covered by sections of the *Estoire*: as discussed above, it is heavily preoccupied with describing, exploring, and cataloguing the world. I would argue that the use of prose in the *Estoire* has more resonances with these texts than it does with the continental French histories produced at the same time. The role of prose here seems to be linked to

⁹⁶ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 7-8. For more on genealogical chronicles, see Jaclyn Rajsic, "Britain and Albion in the Mythical Histories of Medieval England," (PhD thesis: Oxford, 2013) and John Spence, "Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles and their Audiences," in *Regional Manuscripts 1200-1700*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2008): 27-59.

⁹⁷ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 192. For more information about Anglo-Norman lapidaries see Paul Meyer, "Les plus anciens lapidaires français," *Romania* 38 (1909): 44-70, 254-85, 481-552 and Joan Evens and Paul Suder, eds., *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* (Paris: Editions Champion, 1924).

⁹⁸ Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature* nos. 348-59; prose texts are nos. 350-53 and 358, 359.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 350.

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instruction and science, rather than to political argument. The author of the *Estoire* appears to be exploiting the authority and veracity associated with prose in order to legitimise the use of French for instruction.

The *Estoire's* monastic composition placed the curation of history into the hands of the monks, and mediated it through a structure of religious rather than secular power. This aligns with St Albans' reputation and self-promotion as the keepers and guardians of history, continuing the work of authors such as Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris.¹⁰⁰ The use of prose in the *Estoire* seems to draw on both the authority and veracity of prose identified by Spiegel and Spence above, but it also seems to be doing something else. Instead of attempting to justify an aristocratic way of life, I would argue that the author of the *Estoire* seems to have exploited the authority inherent in the use of prose over verse in order to augment the feeling that this text is a scholarly work, worthy of being taken seriously. The addition of scholarly textual apparatus and the imitation of the Latin compendia discussed above likewise helped the *Estoire* to appear as a kind of vernacular encyclopaedia. The author's decision to follow his source in using prose rather than verse allows him to exploit the possibilities offered by writing in vernacular prose. At first glance, it might seem as though the use of prose to translate prose was not exceptional. However, as Godzich and Kittay have observed, this was not always the case, as Latin prose texts were often translated into verse; they cite the examples of the prose *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth translated by Wace into the octosyllabic *Brut* and St Bernard's prose Latin sermons translated into verse.¹⁰¹ However, this was a deliberate authorial choice, as the associations of prose with scholarship, veracity,

¹⁰⁰ For St Albans as a location of history writing, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 1:315–34.

¹⁰¹ Godzich and Kittay, *Emergence of Prose*, xv n. 8.

and the recording of information seen in the discussion of insular French prose above are in keeping with the author's choice of material to include in the *Estoire*.

4.4. The inclusion of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*

The biggest difference between the *Compilation* and the *Estoire* is that the third book of the *Estoire* interpolates the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*. This adds 15 folios to the text and makes up chapter eight of book three of the *Estoire*. The addition of this text to the *Estoire* may be a reflection of thirteenth-century literary tastes. Charles Russell Stone has identified that Aristotelian material became increasingly popular throughout the thirteenth century due to the rise of scholasticism and the consumption of Aristotle's political and ethical works.¹⁰² Aristotle's works were translated from Arabic in the mid-twelfth century, beginning with early scholastics such as Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, and continuing in the work of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰³ Works that were attributed to Aristotle, such as the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* translated in the 1270s by Roger Bacon, were included in this.¹⁰⁴ Stone also argues that the popularity of Aristotelian material helped to rehabilitate Alexander and to emphasise his usefulness as an example of good morals and good

¹⁰² Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 113.

¹⁰³ See for example Richard C. Dales, "The Understanding of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy by the Early Scholastics," in *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University: Essays in Honor of Otto Gründler*, ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 141-50.

¹⁰⁴ For the *Secretum Secretorum*, see Robert Stelle, ed. *Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi*, fasc. 5, *Secretum secretorum cum glossis et notulis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920). For the *Secretum Secretorum* as a didactic text, see Steven J. Williams, "The pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets* as a Didactic Text," in *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita Feros Ruys, 41-57; Steven J. Williams, *The 'Secret of Secrets': The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Steven J. Williams, "The Vernacular Tradition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets* in the Middle Ages: Translations, Manuscripts, Readers," in *Filosofia in volgare nel medioevo*, ed. Nadia Bray and Loris Sturlese, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 451-82; Steven J. Williams, "Giving Advice and Taking It: The Reception by Rulers of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* *asaspeculum principis*," in *Consilium: Theorie e pratiche del consigliare nella cultura medievale*, ed. C. Casagrande et al. (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004).

military prowess.¹⁰⁵ This is clearly not the case for the *Estoire*; however, the addition of the *Epistola* may have been an attempt to exploit the contemporary interest in him. Furthermore, the amount of information about Alexander's surroundings to be found in the *Epistola* – George Cary described it as "a textbook on the East" – may partly explain why it was added to a work that was so focused on their geography and nature.¹⁰⁶

4.5. Scholarly textual apparatus

Another side of the interest in classification can be seen in the growth of textual apparatus during the thirteenth century, specifically the use of chapter headings. Mary and Richard Rouse attribute the growth in the ordering of material in texts to "the emergence and growth in the thirteenth century of literature professions such as parish priests, lawyers (canon and civil), professional civil servants, physicians, and estate managers, to all of whom the written word was a basic tool."¹⁰⁷ M. B. Parkes, supports this, stating that "there was more ostensible 'packaging' of the text, and in copies of the works of thirteenth-century writers the *ordinatio* of the work was more clearly defined."¹⁰⁸ These changes can be seen in the way other twelfth-century texts were approached by thirteenth-century writers and readers. One example is the *florilegia* produced in the twelfth century such as the *Florilegium Angelicum*, the case of which is cited by the Rouses.¹⁰⁹ Two thirteenth-century copies of the text exemplify the contemporary approach to books: one was rewritten into a small preacher's

¹⁰⁵ Stone, *Tyrant to Philosopher King*, 125.

¹⁰⁶ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ See Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*, 7, and more generally as a background of the developments in medieval scholasticism.

¹⁰⁸ Parkes, "Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*," 121.

¹⁰⁹ Rouse and Rouse, *ibid.*, 127.

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handbook, with the text arranged thematically by subject heading, and the other was embellished with extra material.¹¹⁰

Like these repackagings of the *Florilegium Angelicum*, the *St Albans Compilation* has been simultaneously arranged and supplemented in the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*: not only has the author subdivided his books into chapters, with clearly indicated headings to summarise the central theme of each chapter, but he also includes an index at the back of the manuscript to aid in its navigation. These features render the text at once easier to digest by dividing its chapters into smaller sections, and also easier to navigate to a specific section, as each chapter indicates a change of theme. In this manner, before changing a single word of the source, the author of the *Estoire* has produced a radically different text, suited to the needs of a contemporary audience in both language and organisation. The chapter headings point the readers towards the themes of the text, and are the author's intention for the text writ large: the text guides the readers around the world, and the headings guide them through the text. This attempt to guide readers and engage their interest can also be seen in those instances when the author gives readers a "preview" of what is coming in a book or a chapter, a technique which is not paralleled in the Latin version. Similarly, there are points during the narrative where the narrator alludes to other parts of the text, referring the reader to where they might find more information:

Li reis Daries si cum la derire le deimes...¹¹¹

[King Darius, as we were saying earlier...].

De la terre d'Egypte e des altres que ci avom nomee vos dirom ki eles sunt.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 127-8.

¹¹¹ ERA, f. 19r

¹¹² ERA, f. 50r.

[Of the land of Egypt and others which we have named we will tell you which they are].

Del mont Caucason parlames la derire.¹¹³

[We spoke about Mount Caucason above].

These allusions suggest that the reader was expected to navigate the text like a reference work rather than to read it in a linear fashion. The systematic organisation of the text supports this argument, as it helps the reader to find the information more quickly.

4.6. Alterations made to the book divisions of the *St Albans Compilation* in the *Estoire*

The most obvious difference between the *St Albans Compilation* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* is their division into separate books. The French text is made up of six books, while the Latin text only has five. The extra book can partly be accounted for by the interpolation of another text into the *Estoire* and will be discussed below; however, the insertion of an extra book does not on its own account for the different divisions, as the books do not typically start and end with the same events.¹¹⁴ Below are two tables illustrating the differences between where the books begin and end:

¹¹³ *ERA*, f. 62v.

¹¹⁴ This occurs in other translations of Latin texts into the vernacular, such as the bilingual *Rule of St Benedict* in MS Durham, Cathedral Library, B.IV.24, and the Gospel translations in MS Cambridge University Library, li.2.II, both dating from the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

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	<i>SAC</i>	<i>ERA</i>
	Beginning of book	Beginning of book
1	<p>Macedonia ante a nomine Emathionis vel Emathii regis.¹¹⁵</p> <p>[Macedonia was first named after the name of King Emathionis or Emathius].</p>	<p>La terre de Macedonie primes fu apelé Emathedol nun a sun rei Emathum, ki en cel liu los de cheualerie primerames esleva.¹¹⁶</p> <p>[The land of Macedonia was first named Emathedol after its king Emathum, who first raised the praise of chivalry in that place].</p>
2	<p>In exercitu Philippi sicuti varie gentes erant ita eo occiso diversi motus animorum fuere.¹¹⁷</p> <p>[Just as there were many different peoples in Philip's army, thus there were different motives for killing him].</p>	<p>Li Persan sunt si appele de Persen lo filz Jovis et Daries. Icist dcc et lx et ij anz devant ico que Rome fu feite.¹¹⁸</p> <p>[The Persians are called after Persen the son of Jovis and Daries. This happened 762 years before Rome was established].</p>

¹¹⁵ All foliation is taken from the Corpus Christi manuscript of the *St Albans Compilation*; *SAC*, f. 1r.

¹¹⁶ *ERA*, f. 1r.

¹¹⁷ *SAC*, f. 11v.

¹¹⁸ *ERA*, f. 8r.

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<p>3</p>	<p>Alexander in persequendo Dario amissos milites magnis funerum impensis extulit: reliquis vero expeditionis eius sociis tredecim milia talentorum divisit.¹¹⁹ [Alexander buried the soldiers whom he had lost in pursuit of Darius with great honour: amongst the rest of his men from the campaign he divided thirteen thousand talents].</p>	<p>Alexandre, cum il fut sire de tote Perse, enorguillassanz mult pur les bones aventures de ses batailles e pur ses victories, puis se prist as costumes des Persanz.¹²⁰ [Alexander, when he was lord of all Persia, became very arrogant because of the good outcomes of his battles and because of his victories, and then took on the customs of the Persians].</p>
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¹¹⁹ SAC, f. 22v.

¹²⁰ ERA, f. 23v.

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4	<p>Extincto in ipso etatis ac victoriarum flore Alexandro Magno; triste apud omnes tota Babylone silentium fuit.¹²¹</p> <p>[So Alexander the Great was killed in the flower of his age and victories: there was a sad silence throughout the whole of Babylon].</p>	<p>Nembroth li geianz li filz Chus premerens apres le diluvie fundat al champ de Samiar la citet de Babilonie, ot la tur ki ert de merveilluse halteice e apela la citet Babel co est confusion pur les languages de eus ki la tur edefierent ki la erent confuses e departies.¹²²</p> <p>[Nimrod the giant, the son of Chus, firstly after the flood founded the city of Babylon in the fields of Samiar, with a tower which was of a marvellous height, and he called the city "Babel," that is, "confusion," because of the languages of those who built the tower who were confused and separated there].</p>
5	<p>Igitur Alexander per duodecim annos trementem sub se orbem ferro oppresit, principes vero eius quatuordecim annis dilaniaverunt.¹²³</p> <p>[Consequently Alexander had crushed the trembling world beneath himself for twelve years, but his princes tore it to pieces in fourteen years].</p>	<p>La terre de Egypte e d'Asie e d'Arabie e une partie de Libie vindrent par sort a Ptolomeu que li reis Alexandre ot eslevet d'un soldeer chevalier.¹²⁴</p> <p>[The lands of Egypt, Asia, Arabia and part of Libya came by chance to Ptolomy, whom king Alexander had brought up from a soldier knight].</p>

¹²¹ SAC, f. 37v.

¹²² ERA, f. 45r.

¹²³ SAC, f. 55r.

¹²⁴ ERA, f. 50r.

6		<p>Cum Alexandre tut le siècle, ki par la pour de lui tremblout duze anz, par force e par armes out deprint, ses compaignuns, ki erent princes de son ost, par quatorz ans apres sa mort le deguasterent e si cum li caels fameillus ki detraient la preie ki granz leuns at abatue e les uns les autres estranglent en meeme la maniere il entre sei deprimés estriverent e les plus forz al plus febles lor regnes tolirent e els destrurierent.¹²⁵</p> <p>[While Alexander had oppressed by violence and arms the whole world, which had trembled in fear of him, for twelve years, his companions, who were princes of his army, laid waste to it for fourteen years after his death, and, like the hungry cubs which scavenged the prey which the great lion has killed and then strangled each other, in the same way they firstly struggled together and the strongest took the lands away from the weakest and destroyed them].</p>
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Table 4.1: beginnings of books in the *St Albans Compilation* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*.

¹²⁵ ERA, f. 65r.

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	SAC	ERA
	End	End
1	<p>Postremo ab Alexandro victus et a cognatis occisus vitam pariter cum Persarum regno finivit.¹²⁶</p> <p>[Finally he was defeated by Alexander and, killed by his kinsmen, he ended his life along with his rule of the Persians].</p>	<p>Mes ainz parlerum briefment dont li Persan comencierent del estre de la terre et des reis qui i regnerent de Scire le premerein rei tresque a Darie ki fu li dereins.¹²⁷</p> <p>[But now let us speak briefly about how the Persians began to be in that land and of the kings who reigned there from Scire the first king up until Darius the last king].</p>

¹²⁶ SAC, f. 11v.

¹²⁷ ERA, f. 8r.

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<p>2</p>	<p>Hec ubi Alexandro nunciata sunt viso corpore defuncti tam indignam illo fastigio mortem lacrimis profectus est: corpusque regio more sepeliri et reliquias eius maiorum tumulis inferri iussit.¹²⁸</p> <p>[These things were announced to Alexander, when, the body of the dead man having been seen, he deplored so indignant a death on that peak with tears: and he ordered that the remains be brought to the tomb of his ancestors and buried in a kingly fashion].</p>	<p>Mais puis ses citeens a lui rendirent mal gueredun par son servise u vout mie meniz de peril: que de veisdie kar puis la mort Alexandre cum il repairat a Cartagine si li mistrent sus; qu'il la citet volt al rei vendre.¹²⁹</p> <p>[But afterwards his citizens gave him a poor reward for his service where he expected peril the least, except trickery, for after Alexander's death, when he came back to Carthage and they put him above them, he wished to sell the city to the king].</p>
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¹²⁸ SAC, f. 22v

¹²⁹ ERA, f. 23v.

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3	<p>Victus denique ad postremum est non virtute hostuli sed insidiis suorum et fraude civili.¹³⁰</p> <p>[Finally in the end he was defeated not by the strength of his enemies but by the treachery of his own men and by civil deceit].</p>	<p>Mais par ico que Babilonie ert iadis la plus noble citet del siècle e la plus hantee avenant est que briefment rencont le commencement de li e de sa grandor.¹³¹</p> <p>[But because Babylon was at that time the most noble city of the age and the most praised, it is appropriate that I briefly speak of its origin and its grandeur].</p>
4	<p>Qui cum ea precipue loca in quibus exarsere poplati sunt reliqua omnia terrore rumoris quasi fumi caligine turbaverunt.¹³²</p> <p>[Then they, who when the places were kindled in which all the rest were devastated, were agitated by the fear of the rumour just as smoke agitated the gloom].</p>	<p>En la divisium des contrees dunt des ore en auant parlerun mosterun a quels barons par non quels terres par non vindrent par sort e de plusors des terres brefment reconteron les estres e les genz dunt e les primes vindrent e dirom plusors coses ki miracle ressemblent e sunt bien dignes de remember.¹³³</p> <p>[In the division of countries of which we will speak henceforth, we will name which lands came to which barons, according to fate. And we will briefly speak of the living things and the peoples of many lands and how the first of them came there, and we will speak of many things which seem marvellous and which are very worthy of remembering].</p>

¹³⁰ SAC, f. 37v.

¹³¹ ERA, f. 45r.

¹³² SAC, f. 55r.

¹³³ ERA, f. 50r.

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5	<p>Denique hec solutio belli Macedoinei et his finis fuit, perindeque qui belli finis: idem et libri sit.¹³⁴</p> <p>[Finally this ended the Macedonian war, and it was the end of them; let the same go for this book].</p>	<p>En cest sisme livre ensuant sunt les batailles que firent li compaignuns Alexandre puis que li realms furent entre els departiz.¹³⁵</p> <p>[In this following sixth book will be the battles which the companions of Alexander fought after the realm was divided amongst them].</p>
6		<p>E par la u la fins ene de la bataille ilukes finist li livres.¹³⁶</p> <p>[And by this way in which the battle ended, the book ends in the same way].</p>

Table 4.2: endings of books in the *St Albans Compilation* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*.

As can be seen from these two tables, the books are not divided in the same places, although the overall narrative begins and ends in the same way. Although the changes in book divisions do not affect the content of the text, they nevertheless provide a subtle-yet-significant shift in direction: from the opening and closing sentence of a book, a reader receives direction as to what the important events in the narrative are, as these are the events which divide one section from another. In the *St Albans Compilation*, the book divisions are character-driven: in eight out of ten cases of book openings and closings, the subject of the first or last sentence is a specific figure or

¹³⁴ SAC, f. 64r.

¹³⁵ ERA, f. 65r.

¹³⁶ ERA, f. 75v.

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specific figures to do with the narrative of Alexander's life, as opposed to the peripheral material narrating the lands, peoples and creatures of the east: Alexander, his followers, Philip, or Darius. The remaining two cases deal with firstly Macedonia and secondly the battles for Alexander's empire and the end of the narrative. In contrast, in the case of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre*, seven out of the twelve beginnings and endings of books deal with peripheral narrative material, such as the backgrounds of Persia and Babylon, and only five mention figures specific to Alexander's narrative. The author of the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* evidently wanted to focus his readers' attention on the world surrounding Alexander rather than just Alexander himself, something supported by the fact that Alexander is referred to anecdotally when he is no longer the main focus of the narrative, as though the audience will need to be reminded of who he is. This consciousness of the wider world is an indication that the *Estoire's* author had a different focus to the author of his source, and this will be explored in more detail in a moment.

4.7. Minor additions to the *Estoire*

As noted above, the biggest changes to the text are made to its structure rather than its content. However, this is not to say that the translation does not occasionally alter the source text. These alterations are subtle, and, like the addition of chapter headings, are more about guiding the reader's interpretations of the text without the need for narrative intervention than about changing the events of the text. The fact that it is such a close translation means that every change was deliberate, as the author saw fit to follow the source exactly except in these small instances.

The first of such alterations made by the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* is found on the first page of the text. Below are the Latin and Anglo-Norman incipits:

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Incipit hystoria regis Macedonum Philippi filiique eius Alexandri magni.¹³⁷

[Here begins the story of Philip the king of Macedonia and his son Alexander the Great].

Ici commence le primer livre del estoire le Roy Allixaundre et des altre Roys que devant luy et apres lui el royaume de Macedonie regnerent.¹³⁸

[Here begins the first book of the story of King Alexander and of the other kings who reigned before him and after him in the kingdom of Macedonia].

As can be seen, the Latin text not only mentions Philip first, but also only mentions Alexander in terms of his relation to him, making him seem like less of an exceptional figure and more the second half of a team. In contrast, the narrator of the French text not only mentions Alexander alone, but also highlights him as a focal point for the history which he is narrating: Alexander is the central, pivotal point for all of the kings Macedonia has ever had, but he is also only one in a line. This mirrors the narrative, and also the alteration of the book divisions, as stated above: it starts as a wide overview of history, narrows to focus on Alexander, and then broadens again to give a general overview of the events following his death. The subtle shift in the incipit of the French text guides the audience's interpretation of Alexander, inviting them to see him as a singular figure rather than a follower of his father.

Another embellishment shows the author's need to make things clearer to vernacular readers as the material needs to go through an extra stage of translation: "kar torpedo en Latin est perece en romanz" [Because "torpedo" in Latin means "to

¹³⁷ SAC, f. 1r.

¹³⁸ ERA, f. 1r.

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pierce" in the vernacular].¹³⁹ For obvious reasons, this sentence is unnecessary in the Latin. Similarly, in the *Estoire*, an additional clause may be found in the French further explaining the role of Judith in Jewish history:

Puis Cires: Cambises ses filz tint lo realme viii anz. En cels jors fu escrit le storie de Judith ki Olofernen ocist et delivra la cite de Jerusalem et les Jeues,¹⁴⁰ [After Cyrus his son Cambises held the kingdom for eight years. During this time was written the story of Judith, who killed Holofernes and freed the city of Jerusalem and the Jews].

In contrast, the explanation in the Latin is less detailed:

Cyro succedens Cambises filius eius annis octo regnavit sub quo Judith historia conscribitur.¹⁴¹

[Cyrus is succeeded by Cambises his son who reigned for eight years, during which time the story of Judith was written].

This small change would seem to support the theory that the French translation was made to widen access for a secular audience, as a monastic audience might be expected to know the story of Judith without being given any additional information, while the vernacular audience is apparently given an extra reminder. In the bible story, Judith saves the city of Bethulia; however, in the Middle Ages, "Bethulia" was often taken to mean "Jerusalem." Although this alone may explain the choice of Jerusalem over Bethulia in the *Estoire*, it nevertheless creates an implicit comparison between Alexander and Judith: both of them visit Jerusalem, both of them deliver it

¹³⁹ *ERA*, f. 41r.

¹⁴⁰ *ERA*, f. 8v.

¹⁴¹ *SAC*, f. 10v.

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from a threat (in Judith's case, Holofernes; in Alexander's case, the threat that he himself posed), and both of them are proto-Christians. However, the additional of Holofernes to develop the *Estoire's* version of the story from that of its source also carries negative connotations: Alexander, like Holofernes, was considered to be a tyrant in the Middle Ages. In this way, a small alteration to the *Compilation's* text helps to create parallels between Alexander and a biblical heroine and villain, and works him further into the Christian world of his audience.

4.8. Imagined pilgrimage and Christianity

Following on from the idea of Alexander as a universal figure, the *Estoire* also plays with other ideas of universality through the prism of Christianity. In its universal history, the text frequently relates the events it narrates to Biblical events and the foundation of Rome. The cyclical nature of events discussed above results in the transfer of empire from one "caretaker" to another until Christianity can assume its rightful place. Alexander is obviously a limited figure because he does not know the enlightenment of Christianity. In his unstoppable conquest across the East, Alexander provides a model of how hopefully Christianity could do the same, albeit for eternity. As a pre-Christian, Alexander is limited. However, a contemporary reader, with their Christianity, is not: by reading about Alexander's exploits, they can send their Christianity into the East with him on a part-pilgrimage part-Crusade.

The text's interest in and descriptions of the geography of the Orient can also be read as an example of *peregrinatio in stabilitate*, a process by which an enclosed person could undertake a pilgrimage of the heart and mind rather than of the body, a

technique first examined by Dom Jean LeClerq.¹⁴² Daniel Connolly has expanded this theory in his book on the maps of Matthew Paris:

[The appreciation of Paris's maps], their reception and comprehension by a medieval monastic audience, for whom these maps were made, suggest that different connotations would have attended their workings and manipulations. For in their day, these pages brought the space of Europe and the Holy Land before the desirous gaze of the cloistered monks of St Albans abbey, England. They made available for their perusal and scrutiny those distant lands, along with the stories and legends that made up the medieval sense of the world and its place in geographical and eschatological history. For these Benedictine monks, who were discouraged from travelling and who sought an idea of stability in the cloister, these maps must have provided a wonderful opportunity to contemplate journeying through a distant world beyond their monastery's walls.¹⁴³

Connolly goes on to explore how the cloister could in fact be liberating for the monks, as it freed them to focus on Christian meditation:

Monastic authors praised the prison-like qualities of their cloister precisely for the focus and direction it could give their devotions...By staying in one place, the monk was able, through the labour of others, to travel to all places.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Jean LeClerq, "Monachism et peregrination du IXe au XIIe siècle," *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 53-60.

¹⁴³ Daniel K. Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris: Medieval Journeys Through Space, Time and Liturgy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 5-6. For more information on how the cloister was viewed as a prison, see F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq eds., *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris, 1914), s.v. "cloître."

¹⁴⁴ Connolly, *ibid.*, 33.

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He also highlights the fact that “the plethora of travel literature...similarly provided their readers with the chance to engage in such 'armchair' travel,” meaning that narratives of Alexander can fit into this context even though they are not explicitly Christian.¹⁴⁵ *Peregrinatio in stabilitate*, although the term was not actually used in the Middle Ages, is exemplified by other thirteenth-century texts such as Matthew Paris’s *Itinerary to Jerusalem*, an interactive map allowing those in confined monastic spaces to undertake a virtual pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹⁴⁶ This helps to explain why many monastic texts, such as the insular French lives of St Brendan and St Catherine featured exotic lands and fabulous journeys; far from being irrelevant to a monastic audience, it seems that there was a high demand for such literature in order that its consumers might make a pilgrimage of the mind.¹⁴⁷ In reading the *Estoire*, a Christian reader, whether lay or ecclesiastical, might likewise have been able to take his or her Christianity into these non-Christian spaces as a substitute for pilgrimage. The Jerusalem encountered by Alexander is a pre-Crusade Jerusalem, and the Jews there perhaps symbolise a kind of wishful thinking that the city could be populated with these virtuous citizens and the fight for the Holy Land no longer necessary. Alexander as a proto-Christian force enters Jerusalem and learns that his conquest of Persia has been prophesied in the Book of Daniel, thereby winning him the nearest thing to Christian authority he could have at the time; furthermore, he enters Jerusalem with much more ease than a contemporary pilgrim would have been able to manage, finding it a city willing to welcome him. Alexander sweeps through the East absorbing

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 31n.

¹⁴⁶ Paris’s *Itinerary to Jerusalem* survives in various manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 16 (vol. II); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 26 (vol. I); London, British Library Royal 14 C.VII. Daniel Connolly has shown that these maps had a possibly interactive function. See D. Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris,” *Arts Bulletin* 81 (1999): 598-622.

¹⁴⁷ Ian Short and Brian Merrilees, eds., *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); Clemence of Barking, *The Life of Saint Catherine by Clemence of Barking*, ed. W. MacBain, (Oxford: B. Blackwell for Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1964).

everything he finds, and it seems to be the author of the *Estoire's* wish that Christianity could do the same thing.

4.9. Readership

The *Estoire* does not change much of the content of its source text. However, the addition of paratextual apparatus, extra source material, and different book divisions makes Alexander's surroundings radically different to the text's source. Their presence suggests that the text could have been used both as a reference tool and also for teaching. The appearance of this textual apparatus on an insular French text is striking, as it brings university apparatus to a vernacular audience, using the associations of authority carried by prose and the technology of encyclopaedic literature to make learning possible for a wider audience. The *Estoire*, with its frequent digressions, appears to have been written to be used as a reference work rather than being read from start to finish. The construction of the narrative organises the work around the wider world of Alexander rather than Alexander himself, and the addition of chapter headings and an index aid in its navigation, allowing readers to move between sections to follow their own interests. Although it does not function exactly like an encyclopaedia, there are enough encyclopaedic elements to suggest that the text could have functioned as a reference work for readers learning about the wider Christian world.

As has been discussed above, the use of French has implications for the consumption of the text. The obvious one is that the translation of the *Compilation* would make the text accessible to more readers. The addition of the chapter headings, extra source material, and the organisation of the text around Alexander's world as much as Alexander himself, are all hints that there was an educational purpose to the

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Estoire. By adding the university apparatus to the *Estoire*, the author has widened access to the text and brought the possibility of study to a wider potential audience. We will now spend a few moments considering what kind of audiences could have benefitted from this text. There is also evidence that other texts were used in this way in monastic environments. Ilya Dines has recently studied a manuscript of a bestiary that belonged to Gloucester Abbey in the mid-thirteenth century, noting that this text may have had a role in teaching monks.¹⁴⁸ I would like to suggest that the *Estoire* could have been used both for teaching monastic readers who were not as proficient in Latin as they were in French, but also perhaps for outreach to secular visitors to the monastery who were receiving tuition there.

There is some precedent for the use of vernacular material to assist in the teaching of monks. Rebecca Stephenson has noted the use of Old English as a teaching tool in monastic environments from before the Conquest.¹⁴⁹ Stephenson has also shown how even in a reformed Benedictine context the monks would read the vernacular and Latin material side-by-side, as a kind of parallel text, and it is likewise possible that this could have been the case with the *Compilation* and the *Estoire*.¹⁵⁰ As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the demographic of the monastery was changing during the thirteenth century. The dwindling of child oblation and the rise of adult monks joining the monastery led to differing levels of Latinity.¹⁵¹ This may have led to the need to find ways to educate monks with the help of vernacular materials, and the *Estoire* could have functioned like a textbook in this circumstance.

¹⁴⁸ Ilya Dines, "The Bestiary in British Library, Royal MS. 2 C.XII and its Role in Medieval Education," *Electronic British Library Journal* (2014): 1-22.

¹⁴⁹ Rebecca Stephenson, "Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*: The Effectiveness of Hermeneutic Latin," in *Conceptualising Multilingualism*, 121-43, 122.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵¹ "Within a short time the idea arose, expressed in an ecclesiastical decree after 1215, that infant oblation was not only undesirable but in fact unlawful," Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 421.

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As well as education for its own monks, St Albans may have been involved in the education of laypeople, using texts like the *Estoire* to do so. Although David Knowles has observed that “in England there is no trace of a systematised lay or clerical education in the monasteries,” there are still hints that laypeople could have been received there for education.¹⁵² Elizabeth Gardner has noted that:

There are, however, a few indications that boys were occasionally accepted for education and brought up within the monastery with no intention of remaining there as monks. It seems likely that this was a kind of private tuition which was reserved for the sons of distinguished neighbours and benefactors... It was a tradition of chivalry to send a boy to some other court, and a great abbot's house *was* a court.¹⁵³

There is some little evidence that this was the case at St Albans during the abbacy of John of Hertford, as the *Chronica majora* notes that he received noble children into his care.¹⁵⁴ Although the *Estoire* was written after John's abbacy, it is possible that this practice continued and that French texts such as the *Estoire* could have been a means to educate them as well, given the role of Alexander the Great as a teaching tool for the nobility. I would argue that the presence of so much university apparatus and also its use of prose to imitate other teaching texts make it likely that it was used to bring the university experience to those who could not have attended the schools for themselves, both monastic and lay.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 491.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth J. Gardner, "The English Nobility and Monastic Education, c. 1100-1500," in *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, ed. John Blair and Brian Golding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 80-94.

¹⁵⁴ *GA*, 1:397.

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In translating the *St Albans Compilation* into French and through the addition of university rubric, St Albans was making a radical statement about the value of French literature to instruct. That this could have been read in both lay and monastic environments is an illustration of the versatility and status of French, and also an illustration of how St Albans abbey was at the forefront of the production and appropriation of history for both political and cultural purposes.

5. Conclusion

The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* looks simultaneously back to the Latin origins of its source and forward to the future in which vernacular prose is an emerging medium for narrative and instruction. Its ostensible subject of Alexander the Great roots it in the past, and yet it is a very contemporary text, concerned with the expanding world and the spread of Christian influence. It combines the academic rigour of the schools with the wider accessibility of the vernacular, and recalls the permeability of the abbey to lay students.

The use of French to translate the *St Albans Compilation* is a powerful statement from St Albans. It played on their self-fashioning as the keepers of national history, begun by Matthew Paris and continued into the fourteenth century. The use of the emerging medium of vernacular prose to tell Alexander's story engages with developments in literary culture and creates an alternative model to the secular histories produced at this time both in England and on the Continent.

The *Estoire* and the *Roman*, despite their shared source material, are two very different texts. The narrator of the *Roman* is very present, stating his intention clearly at the beginning of the text and speaking directly to his audience. The construction of the narrative voice is crucial to the interpretation of the text. By contrast, the *Estoire's*

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narrator is noticeably absent, even though it was usual for an author of a compilation to state their intention. It does not offer any commentary on the process of its composition, nor does it pass much comment on its events; aside from the statement at the beginning of the text regarding which sources have been used, there are no references in the text to a compilation. Both texts are compilations – which displays the tremendous variety of forms open to the compiler – but the author of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* is much more open about this than the author of the *Estoire*. This is perhaps unsurprising if the *Estoire* is not intended to be read in a linear fashion but rather as a reference work.

Alexander the Great was many things to many people in the Middle Ages, but to the monks of St Albans, his was a cautionary tale, whatever the literary climate around them was doing. Their use of Justin and Orosius as source material to produce their accounts of Alexander in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries rejected the nationalising narratives found on the other side of the Channel and instead focused on educating those in power rather than attempting to legitimise them, whether that was by advising the barons who were so crucial to the running of the country or furthering the education of those who passed through the monastery.

The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* is the "odd one out" amongst the four texts which are the subject of this thesis for several reasons. The first is its form, which, I have argued, is an attempt to invoke the authority of prose writing in order to create for itself the status of an authoritative scholarly work. The *Estoire* is half narrative of Alexander the Great and half compendium of knowledge and exempla for a reader to peruse. The constant interruptions to the narrative with catalogues of the marvels to be found in the East must have meant that the text was not intended to be read in a linear fashion. The use of chapter headings would have allowed a reader to choose

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what he or she wanted from the text, whether that was a narrative of Alexander or information about the world he inhabited. It can be read as a thirteenth-century textbook, an index for readers who wanted to be educated about the world as it was known and understood at the time of writing.

The second major difference between the *Estoire* and the three other texts discussed in this thesis is that the environment that the *Estoire* depicts is devoid of Christianity. The two saints' lives are devotional texts, recounting the narrative of Becket's life in order to encourage the reader to meditation and prayer. The *Roman de toute chevalerie*, although it presents a secular narrative, also gives a message of Christian consolation and the rejection of secular values. The *Estoire*, which lacks the active narrator of the *Roman*, has nothing like such explicit guidance, instead presenting a variety of exempla from which the reader may draw their own instruction. This move away from explicit instruction may be an indication of St Albans attempting a different kind of outreach programme, adding secular education to its established role as a spiritual guide.

These conclusions have significant implications for the abbey and monks of St Albans. Their engagement with contemporary intellectual trends as well as contemporary politics may be indicative of a wish to widen the abbey's remit in terms of the laymen it served. The abbey was more permeable than ever at this time, with young noblemen being encouraged inside the abbey to further their education, and the use of French prose at this early stage, coupled with the employment of techniques used in scholarly works, may have been part of a campaign to engage intellectually as well as spiritually with the laity. The *Estoire*, with its information about the extent of the known world and its demonstration of the limits of a world without Christianity, may have been the perfect text to further this aim.

Conclusion to part 2

Conclusion to part 2

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* both exploit the figure of Alexander the Great, but achieve radically different effects. While the *Roman de toute chevalerie* can be read as a handbook for the nobility, the *Estoire* is a kind of handbook for monks, a textbook to provide a substitute for a Latinate university education that was not accessible for everyone inducted into the monastery. Both texts reveal an interaction with the scholarly and literary trends revealed in the introduction to this half of my thesis. However, they are markedly different from the contemporary continental material, in that they focus heavily on adapting Alexander to make him suit the purposes of monastic authors. As they represent the sole insular French writing about Alexander the Great, this raises significant questions about the place of Alexander for thirteenth-century insular authors and readers. In the space of only two decades, the figure of Alexander is used both for advising readers outside of the monastery, but also to educate those inside it, turning the focus increasingly inwards and highlighting the necessity of French not just to speak to external audiences, but also to communicate with their own brethren.

General conclusion

General conclusion

This thesis has explored four French texts that were produced at or connected to the abbey of St Albans in the period c. 1184-c. 1275, with the aims of providing readings of these texts, in three cases for the first time, exploring their literary and cultural contexts, and considering the audiences the texts could attract. My intention was not to develop a unified theory, but rather to present four little-studied texts as case studies for the possibilities presented to monastic authors by literary composition in French. The results of this study therefore hint at what was a wider monastic movement, and open up space for new avenues of scholarship in order to make the picture of French literary composition in monasteries more complete. The benefit of this concentrated approach is that it has revealed the development of literary production in French at this time, and provided long-awaited context for the work of Matthew Paris.

Until this point, French has been viewed as a rival to Latin monastic literature. However, instead of being a challenge to clerical writing, this thesis has suggested that French was an intrinsic part of it. Instead of there being two entirely separate worlds, one Latinate and religious, the other vernacular and lay, there was in fact a large amount of overlap between the two cultures. My work has demonstrated the dialogue between Latin and French sources, particularly in Chapter 2, where Latin headings complement the French and pictorial narratives, and in Chapter 4, where the French translation updates a Latin source to bring it closer in line with contemporary trends. From these examples, we can see that the monastic writing environment was much less clear-cut than previous scholarship suggests.

As the monks of St Albans engaged with the massive subjects of St Thomas Becket and Alexander the Great, while fashioning themselves in relation to their wide

General conclusion

and varied audiences, it becomes clear that French was the ideal choice of language in which to do so. In this thesis, I have developed the notion of "French for laypeople" by revealing that there were several different audiences who could be reached by literature in French. These texts do not speak to "an audience," but rather *audiences*, with each text being specifically targeted towards a particular group of readers and being encoded as such. In some cases, these would be secular figures: kings, noblewomen, and magnates. In others, these would be other monks, sending a message about St Albans's predominance and participation in new trends of learning. It is vital to examine the French texts of St Albans against these two contexts, with an awareness of the ability of French to meet the needs of both of these groups.

The four texts have each presented different environments for the consumption of French literature, revealing multiple means of communication between monastic authors and their audiences. Beneit of St Albans' *Life of Thomas Becket* presents at least two very different environments for the consumption of French literature, the household of Simon Fitz Simon and the library of Dover Priory. What we know about the text's reception indicates both public and private consumption. The monks of St Albans and Dover Priory, and their guests, including pilgrims, could have received Becket's story in group performances, and Simon Fitz Simon, after reaching out to the author, received his own copy for the edification of his wife. In disseminating a story of Becket's life which argued both for the importance of St Albans and for the innocence of King Henry II, Beneit of St Albans was making a powerful statement about his abbey's alignment with the king in the language associated with secular power whilst exploiting the contemporary popularity of Thomas Becket to recall his own monastery's continued relevance and importance as a source of ecclesiastical power.

General conclusion

The *Becket Leaves* mobilised Thomas Becket for a very different reason. No longer able to rely on the cult's universal appeal several decades after his death, they instead represent Thomas Becket as a figure to appeal to an élite group of aristocratic ladies who had the ear of powerful men in the country. The narrative of Thomas Becket, both written and pictorial, presented through languages that included rather than excluded women, created a link between monastic men and secular women, who were united with Becket in their piety and spiritual superiority. Again, St Albans' production of French literature was allowing them to speak to those in power, cultivating special relationships between the abbey and a female reading circle that had the power to influence their husbands and sons. While the text travelled into the homes of these ladies, it carried with it the stamp of monastic spiritual and intellectual superiority, with Latin literally overseeing and authorising the audiences' spiritual developments.

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* explicitly invokes the spiritual authority of a monastic narrator in order to present an ostensibly entertaining and comforting narrative with a hidden moral agenda. The St Albans copy made in the mid-thirteenth century demonstrates how the abbey could engage with contemporary continental literature in order to produce a text that addressed some of the most powerful people in the country. By involving himself with a European-wide literary subject, and by producing the only verse narrative of Alexander in insular French, a St Albans author again transcended the cloister, allowing monastic advice to permeate into secular strongholds, critiquing their values and asserting the superiority of the religious life. The Cambridge manuscript proudly claims Alexander as monastic property, as appropriate as Thomas Becket for advising and critiquing the secular world. Read in the context of episodes from Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora*, it reflects

General conclusion

contemporary anxieties about tension between monarch and magnates, whilst acknowledging that the only way to rise above such conflicts is through the Christian consolation. The *Roman* also continued the exchange between continental and insular French after its incorporation into the St Albans literary canon, displaying the potential of monastic texts to enter a wide array of literary networks.

Finally, the *Estoire le rei Alixaundre* displays St Albans's participation in the literary movements developing during the thirteenth century, at the forefront of vernacular literary innovation and the beginning of the use of insular French prose. By combining the authority inherent in Latin source material and the scholastic rigour of university textual apparatus with the emerging medium of French prose and the possibility of reaching a wider audience through vernacular writing, they created a unique text that is halfway between an encyclopaedia and a history, a kind of textbook for monastic recruits. The *Estoire* engaged with the contemporary educational needs of readers requiring knowledge of their world but unable to obtain it at a university, particularly given the changing nature of monastic recruitment in the thirteenth century leading to fewer monks who had had intensive training in Latin. It looks predominantly inward to the needs of its own monks rather than to those outside the cloister. Ironically, for such an innovative text, it appears to have been the last French text produced at the abbey; however, that the sole manuscript of the text was produced roughly a century after its composition suggests something of its value to readers.

These four case studies have shed new light on some of the possibilities of French literary production and consumption in monastic environments. They have also helped to complete the picture of St Albans as a centre of book production in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This thesis has illustrated some of the possibilities

General conclusion

for monastic authors writing in French in the high Middle Ages, and paved new ways for the study of the literary and linguistic activities of other monasteries.

My work has been a first step, a case study which has illustrated the role that French literature could play both inside and outside of a monastic environment. It has filled in some of the gaps left by the study of the French work of Matthew Paris, and helped to complete the picture that suggests that he was one of several authors at St Albans producing French literature. It appears that Matthew Paris was less of an exception and more of an illustration of the flourishing French literary culture that continued at St Albans throughout the high Middle Ages. The example of how one monastery could use French to communicate with different yet still very targeted audiences could be expanded to other monastic environments. Such study would also be illuminating for other monasteries which are known to have possessed French literature. Dominica Legge already suggested that Bury St Edmunds might prove to be one such location; to that list I would also add Dover Priory, given its large holdings of French material and its potential for continued royal interaction.

To finish, I will return to the quotation from Matthew Paris that I cited in my introduction:

Kar chascun est de ceo bien cert

[Ke] plus est usée et seüe

Ke nule launge et entendue

De clers et lais et la gent tute

Ke le latins, ne mie dute.

General conclusion

[For everyone is certain that French is more used and known than any other language, and more understood by clerks and laypeople and by everyone than Latin, without a doubt].¹

The assertion that writing in French permitted communication to "clers and lais" has been borne out by my analysis, as these four texts in French appear to have been consumed in both lay and religious environments. However, Paris's claim that writing in French is accessible to all is clearly disingenuous: French was the language of the élites, and the kinds of audiences the authors of St Albans were attempting to reach did not include "la gent tute," but were rather carefully chosen and included both the highest-ranking members of society and the needs of their own community. Instead of there being a French of St Albans, I would suggest that there were *Frenches* of St Albans: a series of dynamic discourses, reaching a variety of audiences, that the St Albans authors exploited in order to shape, guide, and instruct their world.

¹ *VSE*, vv. 34-8.

Appendix: reproductions of the *Becket Leaves*



Fig. 1: The *Becket Leaves*, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library, BM 3570, f. 1r.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.



Fig. 2: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 1v.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.

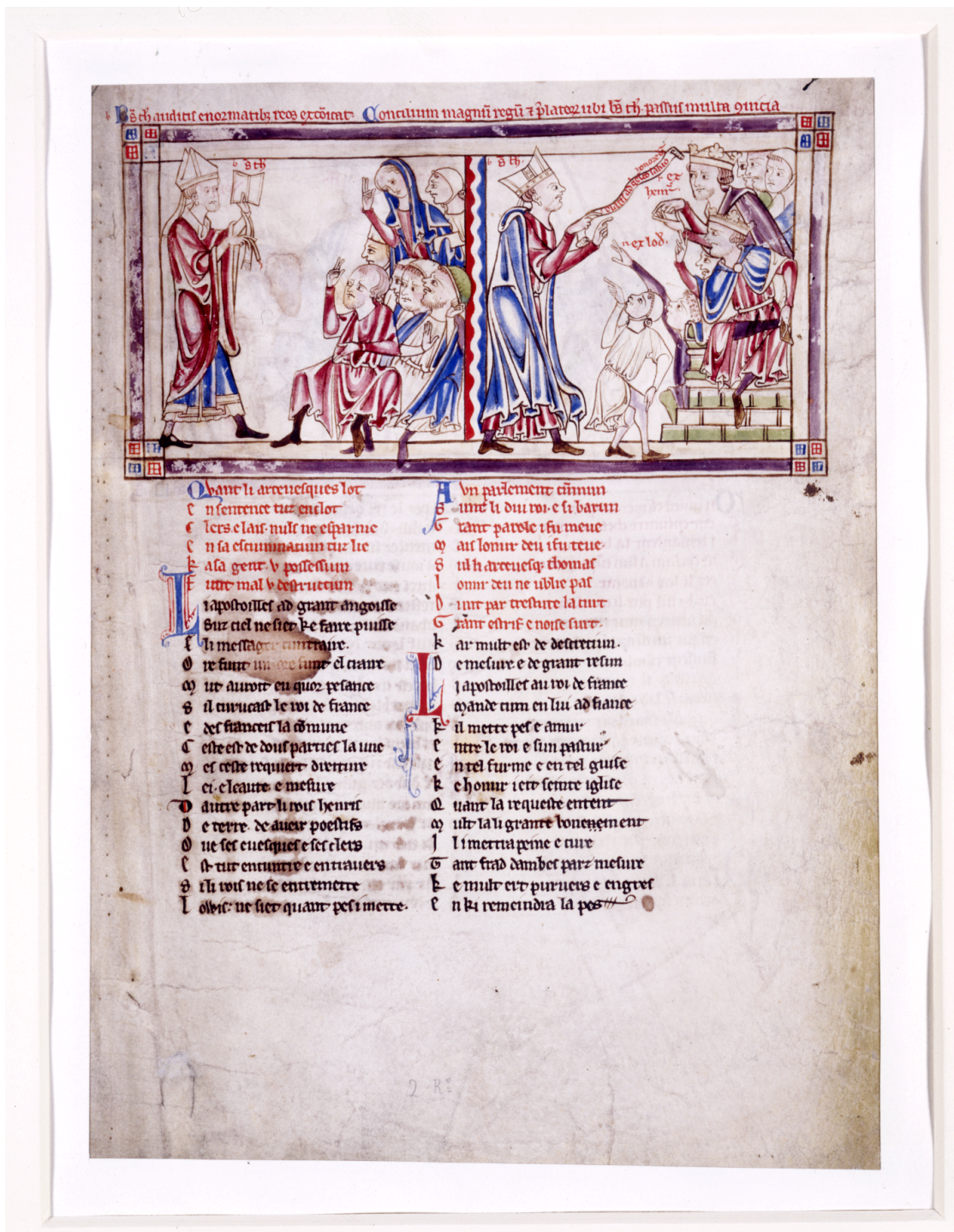


Fig. 3: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 2r.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.

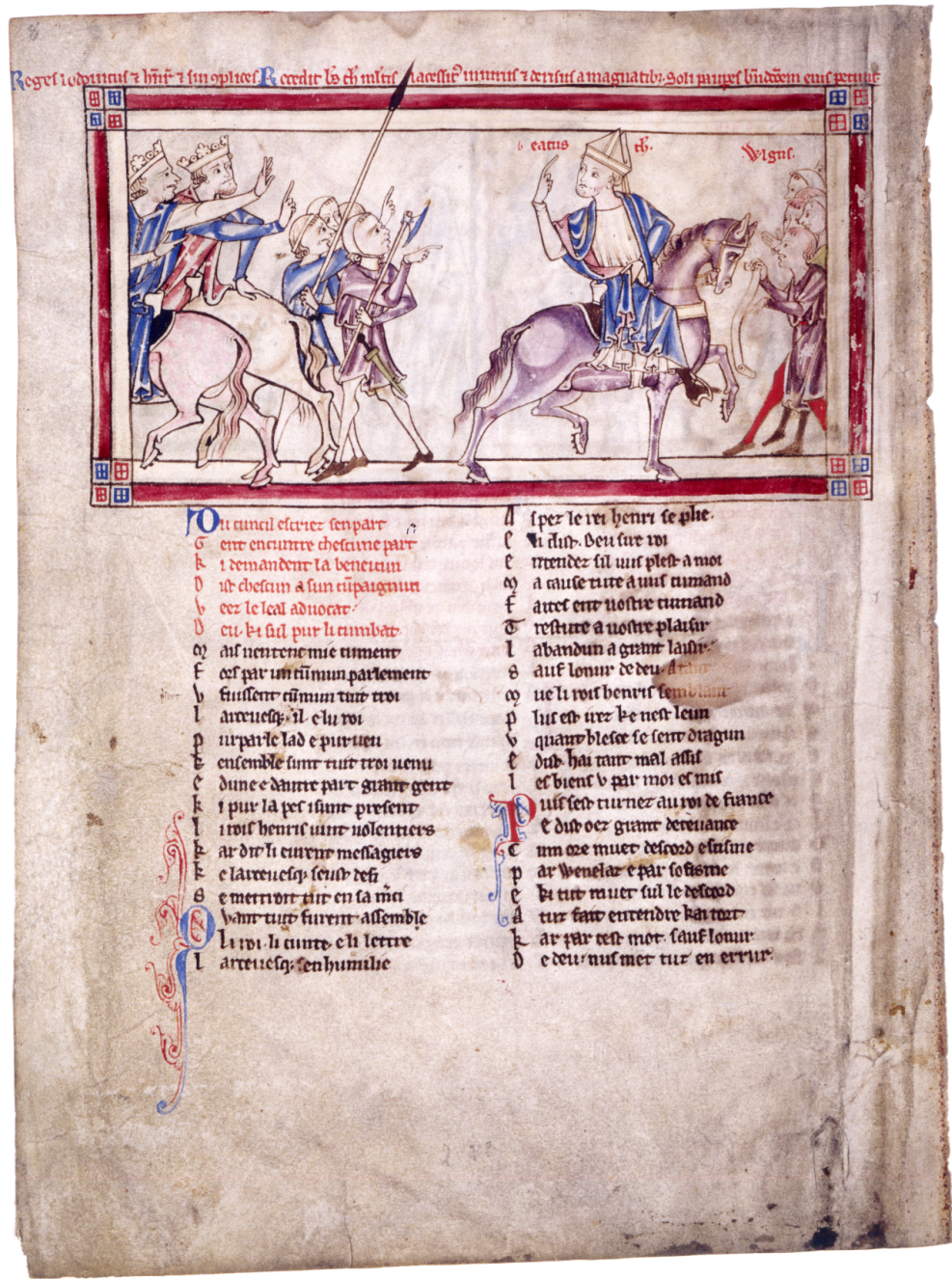


Fig. 4: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 2v.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.



Fig. 5: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 3r.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.



Fig. 6: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 3v.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.



Fig. 7: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 4r.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.



Fig. 8: The Becket Leaves, High Wycombe, Wormsley Library BM 3570, f. 4v.

Image reproduced by kind permission of the Wormsley Library.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

- CM* *Matthæi Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica majora.* Edited by Henry Richard Luard. 7 vols. London, Longman, 1872-80.
- EPH* Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus.* Translated by John C. Yardley. 2 vols. Oxford, Clarendon, 1997-2011.
- EPT* Justin. *Epitoma historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi.* Edited by Franz Rühl and Otto Seel, 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972.
- ERA* The *Estoire le rei Alixaundre.*
- ESA* Matthew Paris. *La Estoire de seint Aedward le rei.* Edited by Kathryn Young Wallace. London, Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1987.
- FH* Matthew Paris, *Flores Historiarum.* Edited by Henry Richard Luard. 3 vols. London: Longman, 1890.
- GA* *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani.* Edited by H. T. Riley. London: Longman. 1867.
- HA* *Matthæi Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Historia anglorum: sive, ut vulgo dicitur, Historia minor; item ejusdem abbreviatio chronicorum Angliæ.* Edited by Frederic Madden. London: Longman, 1866-69.
- HAP* Paulus Orosius. *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII.* Edited by Karl Zangermeister. Leipzig: Teubner, 1882.
- MTB* Robertson, James Craigie, ed. *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket,* 7 vols. London: Longman, 1875-88.
- RAlix* Armstrong, Edward Cooke, ed. *The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre,* 7 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937-76.
- RTC* Thomas of Kent. *The Anglo-Norman Alexander (Le Roman de toute*

Abbreviations

- chevalerie*). Edited by Brian Foster with the assistance of Ian Short. 2 vols. London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1976-77.
- SBH* *Orosius: Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*. Translated by A. T. Fear. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.
- TBL* Meyer, Paul, ed. *Fragments d'une vie de Saint Thomas de Cantorbéry en vers accouplés*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1885.
- VBB* Beneit of St Albans, *La vie de Thomas Becket par Beneit: poème anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle*. Edited by Börje Schlyter. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1941.
- VER* Denis Piramus. *La vie seint Edmund le rei*. Edited by Delbert Russell with an art-historical excursus by Kathryn A. Smith. London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 2014.
- VSA* *La vie de seint Auban*. Edited by Arthur Robert Harden. Oxford, Blackwell for the Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1968.
- VSE* "La vie de saint Edmond." Edited by A. T. Baker, *Romania* 55 (1929): 332-81.
- VTC* Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence. *La vie de saint Thomas de Canterbury*. Edited and translated by Jacques T. E. Thomas. Louvain: Peeters, 2002.

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- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 219.
- Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CFM 20.
- Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 154.
- Cambridge, Pembroke College 30.
- Cambridge, Trinity College O.9.34 (1446).
- Durham, Cathedral Library C. IV.27B.
- Hereford, Cathedral Library MS O.3.X.
- London, British Library Add. 46701.
- London, British Library Royal 14 C.VII.
- Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce 299.
- Oxford, Bodleian Library Latin misc. b.17.
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