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THE *CARMEN DE HASTINGAE PROELIO*
OF GUY BISHOP OF AMIENS



THE *CARMEN*
DE
HASTINGAE PROELIO
OF GUY
BISHOP OF AMIENS

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
FRANK BARLOW

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PREFACE

THE ninth centenary of the Norman conquest of England, celebrated in 1966, triggered an explosion of historical commentaries on the invasion and the battle of Hastings. Most were popular in tone. But a few difficult technical problems received a scholarly airing; and one of these was the authorship and value of an anonymous poem on the Norman Campaign, *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*. The appearance in 1972 of the first adequate edition of the poem, the work of Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz, only fuelled the debate. They accepted its attribution to Guy of Amiens and regarded its account of the events most favourably. But these views were anathema to some established scholars working in the field; and since neither editor was a trained historian with an academic post, their work had a generally cool, occasionally hostile, reception.

I got to know Morton and Muntz in 1967, when they wrote to me on some matter concerning the poem. Indeed, they approached a good number of scholars for advice or to air their opinions. And, although from the start I could not accept all their views, I always thought that they were right on the authorship and respected them as enthusiastic and indefatigable workers. When the question of a second edition arose, as both Morton and Muntz had died, I offered to undertake the necessary revision. This has, perhaps inevitably, led to a much more radical rewriting than I had expected. Their Latin text, although it has been roughly handled by some critics and many corrections and 'improvements' have been suggested, seemed to me, after checking with photographs of the manuscripts, to require only a little revision. There were just a very few faulty transcriptions and two misprints. Textual improvements, beyond the correction of obvious scribal errors, should not be allowed to get out of hand. But, with regard to the editorial matter, as there has been so much new work in this field since 1972 and I have my own views on most of the topics, it seemed pointless not to take the opportunity to express them. Accordingly, the new introduction, translation, and subject notes are my own work.

In preparing this edition I have taken into account all the critical literature that has come to my notice, and have found much of it

useful, some indispensable. I have also had the advantage of two 'bequests', R. H. C. Davis's personal papers concerning *Carmen* and, from Arnold Taylor, the correspondence he had with Morton and Muntz, largely concerned with the Sussex ports. With Ralph Davis, although our views differed, I was always on friendly terms; and from my study of his papers I learnt how wide-ranging and thorough had been his investigation of the problems. Even though sometimes I could not accept his conclusions, I enjoyed his lively, lucid, and interesting treatment. With Marjorie Chibnall, who took over the editing of William of Poitiers's *Gesta Guillelmi* from Davis, I have often been in touch, and have profited from much help and many kindnesses. I wish also to thank Jean Dunbabin, Giovanni Orlandi, and Elisabeth van Houts for assistance of various kinds.

Finally, the team which saw the second edition of my *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster* through the Press in 1992, Anne Gelling, the general editors, Barbara Harvey and Michael Lapidge (now reinforced by J. W. Binns), and the copy editor, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, has again served me splendidly. Sarah Ridgard took over from Anne Gelling in the final stages; and Barbara Harvey has been a tower of strength. To all my helpers my grateful thanks!

F.B.

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ABBREVIATED REFERENCES

- AASS* *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Bollandus *et al.* (Antwerp etc., 1643–)
- ANS* Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1978–81, i–iv (1979–82); renamed *Anglo-Norman Studies*, v–xi (1983–9), ed. R. Allen Brown; xii–xvi (1990–4), ed. Marjorie Chibnall; xvii– (1995–), ed. C. Harper-Bill
- ASC* Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (conveniently translated and arranged in *English Historical Documents*, ii, ed. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway, 2nd edn., Oxford, 1981)
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- Benoît *Chronique des ducs de Normandie par Benoît*, ed. C. Fahlin, 2 vols. (Bibliotheca Ekmaniana, lx, Uppsala, 1954)
- Bouquet, *Recueil* *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet *et al.*, 24 vols. (Paris, 1738–1904)
- Brevis relatio* *Brevis relatio de Guillelmo nobilissimo comite Normanorum*, ed. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, Camden Miscellany, xxxiv, Camden 5th ser., x (1997), 1–48
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- interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry', *ANS* i (1979), 1-34
- Brown, 'The Bayeux Tapestry' S. A. Brown, 'The Bayeux Tapestry: Why Eustace, Odo and William?', *ANS* xii (1990), 7-28
- BT* *The Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. F. M. Stenton (London, 1957, 2nd edn. 1965)
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- Dawson C. Dawson, *History of Hastings Castle* (London, 1909)
- 'Discussion' R. H. C. Davis, L. J. Engels, *et al.*, 'The *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*: a discussion', *ANS* ii (1980), 1-20
- EHR* *English Historical Review*
- Engels, *Dichters* L. J. Engels, *Dichters over Willem de Veroveraar: Het Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* (inaugural lecture, Groningen, 1967)
- Engels, 'Once more' 'Once more: the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*', *ANS* ii (1980), 3-18
- Foreville, *GG* *Guillaume de Poitiers: Histoire de Guillaume le Conquérant*, ed. and trans. Raymonde Foreville (Paris, 1952)
- Freeman, *Norman Conquest* E. A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, 5 vols.: ii (2nd edn., Oxford, 1870); iii (Oxford, 1869)
- Gaimar *L'Estoire des Engleis par Geffrei Gaimar*, ed. Alexander Bell, 3 vols. (Anglo-Norman Texts Society, xiv-xvi, Oxford, 1960)
- Gallia Christiana* 16 vols. (Paris, 1715-1865)
- GG* *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. R. H. C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (OMT, 1998)
- Giles, *Scriptores* *Scriptores rerum gestarum Willelmi Conquestoris*, ed. J. A. Giles (Caxton Soc., London, 1845)
- GND* *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols. (OMT, 1992-5)

- GR William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, i, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (OMT, 1998)
- Guillot, *Le Comte* O. Guillot, *Le Comte d'Anjou et son entourage au XI^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1972)
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- Körner, *Hastings* Sten Körner, *The Battle of Hastings: England and Europe 1035–1066* (Lund, 1964)
- Lemmon, 'The campaign' C. H. Lemmon, 'The campaign of 1066', *The Norman Conquest: Its Setting and Impact*, ed. C. T. Chevallier (London, 1966), pp. 77–122
- M. & M. *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens*, ed. Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz (OMT, 1972)
- OMT Oxford Medieval Texts
- Orlandi, 'Recensione' G. Orlandi, review of M. & M. in *Studi medievali*, 3rd ser., xiii (1972), 196–222
- Orlandi, 'Some afterthoughts' 'Some afterthoughts on the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*', in *Media Latinitas: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Occasion of the Retirement of L. J. Engels*, ed. R. I. A. Nip *et al.* (Instrumenta Patristica, xxviii, Turnhout, 1996), pp. 117–27
- OV Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (OMT, 1969–80)
- Owen, 'Epic and history' D. D. R. Owen, 'The epic and history: *Chanson de Roland* and *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*', *Medium Ævum*, li (1982), 18–34
- Petrie, *Monumenta* *Monumenta historica Britannica*, ed. H. Petrie and J. Sharpe (London, 1848; in print from 1833)

- PL* *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
- Prou, *Recueil* *Recueil des actes de Philippe I^{er} Roi de France*, ed. M. Prou (Paris, 1909)
- Regesta* *Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I (1066–1087)*, ed. D. Bates (Oxford, 1998)
- RS *Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, Published under the Direction of the Master of the Rolls (London, 1858–96)
- Tanner, ‘The expansion’ Heather J. Tanner, ‘The expansion of the power and influence of the counts of Boulogne under Eustace II’, *ANS* xiv (1992), 251–86
- van Houts Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, ‘Latin poetry and the Anglo-Norman court, 1066–1035: the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xv (1989), 39–62
- Wace *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols. (Société des Anciens Textes Français, Paris, 1971)
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- Williams, *The English* Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995)

INTRODUCTION

I. THE DISCOVERY AND RECEPTION OF THE POEM

ORDERIC VITALIS, the Anglo-Norman monk and historian at Saint-Évroult, states twice in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, in sections written c.1124–5, that Guy, bishop of Amiens (1058–74/5), was the author of a poem in which he described the battle of Senlac, reviled Harold, and praised William.¹ This information was generally available to scholars after André Duchesne included Orderic's work in his *Historiae Normannorum scriptores antiqui*, published at Paris in 1619. And in 1807 Francis Maseres reminded English readers of it when he published at London, in his *Historiae Anglicanae circa tempus Conquestus Angliae . . . selecta Monumenta*, excerpts from Duchesne's great work, including extracts from Orderic. But on the occasion of Orderic's second mention of Guy's poem, in the context of Matilda's coronation as queen at Westminster in 1068, Maseres annotated dismissively (p. 212):

Here we see, that this Guy, bishop of Amiens, in Picardy, had already, in the spring of the year 1068, composed a Latin poem on King William's great victory over King Harold at the battle of *Senlac*, or Hastings. There seems to be no reason to suppose that he continued his account of King William's exploits beyond the events of that important day, and therefore the loss of this work of his (which was only a complimentary poem) is not much to be regretted.

However, in 1826 the German scholar G. H. Pertz, archivist to the king of Hanover, discovered an epic poem on the Norman invasion of England in two manuscripts in the Royal Library at Brussels; and within ten years it was in print in both France and England.² In

¹ OV ii. 184–7, 214.

² G. H. Pertz, *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, vii (Hanover, 1839), 1006–7; J. N. A. Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre par les Normands* (Paris, 3rd edn. 1830), ii. 411ff.; id., *Œuvres* (Brussels, 1839), pp. 390–1; *Chroniques anglo-normandes*, ed. F. Michel, iii (Rouen, 1840), 1–38; *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, ed. H. Petrie and J. Sharpe (London, 1848, but in print from 1833), pp. 856–72; *Scriptores Rerum Gestarum Willelmi Conquestoris*, ed. J. A. Giles (Caxton Soc., x, London 1845), pp. 27–51. See further M. & M., pp. lxiii–lxvi, lxxv.

neither manuscript is the work, as was common enough at the time, given a title or ascribed to an author. But, as was also not unusual, this information was in place, supplied by the prefatory 'epistle'. The salutation, which ends the second hexameter of the prologue, reads, 'L. W. salutat' (W. greets L.). As the full names would not have made the line longer than the opener, it can only be thought that the scribe, or a predecessor, considered the information of no interest. Pertz naturally was curious and was reminded of Orderic's remarks. He also conjectured that L. represented Lanfranc, abbot of Caen (1063–70) and archbishop of Canterbury (1070–89). The English scholar Henry Petrie, however, after a visit to Brussels, on Pertz's advice, in order to make a copy of the poem, decided that the author was not W. but L.; and Pertz then thought of Sigebert of Gembloux's attribution to Lanfranc of a work *De uita, laudibus et triumphis* of the Conqueror. But, as soon as he was able to refer to his own notes on the poem, he returned to his original view: the author was W. = Wido = Guy of Amiens.³

In 1830 the French scholar Augustin Thierry, thanks to an English correspondent, the politician William Wickham, who was a member of the Royal Commission on the Public Records, printed an abstract from the poem and referred to the author simply as a contemporary of the events.⁴ But by 1833 Petrie had somewhat hesitatingly accepted the attribution to Guy.⁵ In 1840 Francisque Michel published at Rouen a complete text. So dissatisfied had he been with the copy sent him from Brussels that he went there expressly in order to check it with the original, and he also had it scrutinized by his German friend, Friedrich Dübner. Michel opened his Preface with the remark that he had not the slightest hesitation in attributing the poem to Guy of Amiens. 'Lanfrancum Wido salutat', he thought, completely satisfied both sense and metre. J. A. Giles, however, in 1845 was rather scornful of this. When he reprinted a text, probably Michel's (although he excused his failure to collate the original manuscript by praising the accuracy of Petrie and Sharpe's text of 1833/48), he wrote in the Preface:

³ Pertz, p. 1007. Sigebert, writing in the early 12th c., states that Lanfranc 'scripsit laudes, triumphos et res gestas Guillelmi Northmannorum comitis;', *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* (PL, clx. 583), a claim which, rightly or wrongly, has never been taken seriously. It should be noticed that it is a good description of *GG*, usually ascribed to William of Poitiers. For Guy, see below, pp. xlii–liii.

⁴ Thierry, *Œuvres*, pp. 1–2.

⁵ *Monumenta*, pp. 95–6.

Pertz was induced to ascribe it to Guy, or Wido, from a fanciful interpretation of the letters L.W. which occur in the second line. These letters he conceives to represent *Lanfrancum Wido*. This is certainly but a slender base on which to erect such an argument, but it derives support from the known fact that Wido was the author of such a poem.⁶

And, in fact, Giles then tacitly accepted the bishop's authorship. In 1862 T. D. Hardy, in his *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials relating to the early History of Great Britain*, fell in cautiously behind Petrie and Michel. He did, however, again draw attention to the difficulty in reconciling the eminent bishop with the apparent tyro of the Introduction—'a man unoccupied and aiming at celebrity'.⁷ There was, however, less hesitation in France: Ferdinand Lot in 1894 followed Michel.⁸

Orderic, when first mentioning Guy's poem, coupled it with the prose account of the Conqueror's deeds by William of Poitiers, archdeacon of Lisieux. This work likewise survived the Middle Ages only in one untitled, unattributed, and defective manuscript (now lost), but which was, from Orderic's description of it, confidently identified as the archdeacon's. And, from the beginning to the end, both works have sat uneasily together. Thierry, in his foreword to the fourth edition of his *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre par les Normands*, thought that all the information conveyed by the poem, except for a few details of little interest and the account of the siege of London, which he printed, was to be found elsewhere.⁹ Petrie remarked, in the preface to his edition, that, if the author was indeed Guy, he would be a good, though prejudiced, source: 'In various instances, indeed, the narrative is not unlike that of Willielmus Pictaviensis; but that resemblance is only general; each occasionally, in describing the same event, exhibiting circumstances which are not to be found in the other.'¹⁰ T. D. Hardy repeated this in 1862.¹¹

Giles, however, although he printed the prose account in the same volume, took no interest in their relationship. Nor did E. A. Freeman in his *History of the Norman Conquest*, first published between 1867 and 1876.¹² As J. H. Round remarked in 1894, he was a scissors and

⁶ Giles, p. xi.

⁷ Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue*, i, pt 2, pp. 671-2.

⁸ Hariulf, p. 216n.

⁹ Thierry, *Œuvres*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ *Monumenta*, p. 96.

¹¹ *Descriptive Catalogue*, i, pt 2, pp. 671-2.

¹² Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, iii. 134-6, has a section on the counts of Ponthieu, and on p. 136, n. 4, mentions that Guy bishop of Amiens wrote the famous poem 'De Bello Hastingsensi'. His reference is to 'Will. Gemm.' = Robert of Torigny's interpolations into