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Leadership, Rhetoric, and Morale in the Norman Conquest of England

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WHEN King Edward the Confessor died childless on 5 January 1066, England faced a succession crisis. Some fifteen years before, Edward had named Duke William of Normandy as his successor. He later made attempts to continue the English royal house on the throne. On his death bed, he may have changed his mind yet again and designated as his heir the most powerful of the English barons, Earl Harold of Wessex. Harold was on the scene and quickly had himself crowned king, even though he had earlier sworn to support the Norman duke for the throne of England.[1] William believed he had been cheated of his rights and decided to pursue his claim by force. Having made that decision, he faced a number of enormous obstacles. There was a considerable difference between an attack on neighboring Brittany or Maine, and an invasion of the English kingdom. As John Beeler describes it, William's plan was "a gamble on a grand scale. In western Europe an amphibious operation of this magnitude had perhaps not been attempted since classical times." Moreover, even if William were to succeed initially his army would be a relatively small force of foreign invaders in a hostile land. "The odds were that they would not be able to retain what they had seized."[2]

William was a general of considerable ability, and modern historians have given him due credit for many of his great military accomplishments. While the primary sources of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are better than those for many medieval events, they are still far from ideal, and debate about their value is seemingly endless. They have nevertheless been used to credit the duke with masterfully overcoming the problems he faced of logistics and strategy. However, these same sources also show William overcoming significant problems of morale as well. Although the evidence seems to be as good on this subject as on many others, the duke has not been given sufficient recognition by modern historians as a leader and inspirer of men.

In their accounts of the events leading up to the defeat of Harold at Hastings, the chroniclers describe four different occasions when William's persuasiveness was crucial for success; he had to obtain the initial support of his barons, to assure high morale before the Battle of Hastings, and to confront two crises that threatened his men's fighting spirits. The duke met each situation with an appropriate rhetorical response.

In considering Duke William as a leader of men, we will be relying primarily on two of the most important histories. William of Poitiers, the duke's chaplain, composed a panegyric to the Conqueror sometime around 1073-1074.[3] Wace, writing a century later, recorded the written and oral tradition surrounding the Conquest of England as it had come down to him.[4] Both present problems of interpretation. They are nevertheless indispensable sources for the Norman Conquest, even if they will not allow us to draw conclusions with anything approaching absolute certainty.

FIRST of all, William had to assure himself of the firm support of his own men. This was apparently a greater problem than has often been realized. Some modern historians barely mention the difficulty of gaining support for the invasion. James H. Ramsay notes that there was considerable opposition to William's proposals, but merely adds that "as usual, William's determination carried the day." David C. Douglas simply says that many of the Normans "appear at first to have been doubtful about the risks of a projected attack on England." But "a notable unity of purpose was early achieved, and this was deliberately fostered by the duke in a series of assemblies." Other historians minimize the difficulties. Frank Stenton recognizes the very great risks the invasion involved. He notes that William could not summon his vassals to follow him as "a matter of right and duty"; he could only ask for their voluntary participation. But, Stenton concludes, "there can have been little doubt as to the response which would be made to his appeal." The prospect of hard fighting would not have deterred the Normans from an adventure for unlimited riches. Likewise, R. Allen Brown contends that "it is unlikely that many of the Norman aristocracy of this age could have long resisted a martial adventure promising such rich rewards."[5]

Several eleventh and twelfth century chroniclers, however, tell us that Duke William initially faced significant opposition from his own men that required considerable persuasive skill to overcome. Considering the military difficulties, these accounts should be taken more seriously than they often are.

William of Poitiers claims that "some of the greatest magnates of Normandy sought to dissuade Duke William from the enterprise, considering it to be too difficult and beyond the resources of Normandy" ("complures majorum id ingeniose dissuaderent, ut rem nimis arduam, Normanniae viribus longe majorem"). They stressed Harold's great treasures, large fleet and skilled sailors. England was much richer than Normandy, in both wealth and military strength. How could they get a significant number of sailors? Would not that attempt ruin the flourishing province? Indeed, they said, the whole resources of the Roman Emperor would not suffice to take England. Orderic Vitalis is one of our best sources on the Normans. Following William of Poitiers, he gives a similar list of objections by William's men. Wace gives somewhat different ones. The barons objected because they were "often aggrieved." Some claimed that they were in debt or too poor to contribute to the expedition. Others said that they were afraid of the sea, and were not bound to serve beyond it. Moreover, they feared the extra requisitions of their resources would set a precedent for future demands by the duke.[6]

The chronology of William's persuasive efforts is not at all clear. William of Poitiers was closest to the events, but his account is somewhat confusing. He says that the duke took counsel with his men, and at that point he first faced opposition. However, he adds, the Norman were in the habit of "deferring to the prudent wisdom of the duke." Sometime later, they captured one of Harold's spies. William sent the spy back to England with the message that he would attack within one year. The barons were appalled by this rash statement and raised all their objections. ("Stupentes vero grande promissum primores Normannorum, multi diffidentiam suam non reticent.")

The duke's response is given in the form of a speech. He begins by reassuring them that "we know Harold's cunning very well as he seeks to alarm us. But instead our confidence grows." Harold may have many resources, but he squanders his money without increasing his power. Then follows a strange claim that seems to get its argument backwards. Harold, the duke says,

"cannot promise what belongs to me," but "I can better promise both about what is mine and also what he now possesses." Victory will go to him who can bestow what is his own and what is held by his enemy. ("Non eo animi robore, quo vel minimum quid meorum polliceri audeat. At arbitrio meo pariter quae mea sunt, quaeque dicuntur illius, promittentur atque dabuntur. Hostem haud dubie superabit, qui non minus quae hostis possidet quam propria largiri valet.") William continues with more sensible claims: "We will soon have a fleet, and will gain experience as sailors. Wars are won by courage, not by numbers. Harold will merely be trying to keep what he haswrongfully seized, we will fight to regain what we have lawfully acquired." He closes with the assurance that "we will overcome the dangers and win great honors and renown."[7]

Wace's version is much clearer. According to him, William first consulted his closest advisors, who offered their support. But they would speak only for themselves, so the duke called a full council. He addressed the assembly, condemned Harold's perfidy and introduced his plan to attack the English king. He asked the Normans how much support each would give. They said they would have to debate the question. In the discussion all their objections were raised and vehemently argued. No consensus was emerging, so William FitzOsbern, the duke's steward, rose and called on them to support their lord in his need. He offered some barely concealed threats of what might happen to them if William failed because he lacked their support. The Normans then commissioned FitzOsbern to speak for them and present their objections to the duke, presumably because he was close to the duke and could therefore speak more freely. FitzOsbern, instead of reporting their opinions, got up in the assembly and promised William that each man would give him double his owed services. The council broke into total pandemonium. Duke William left, met with the barons one by one and persuaded them to give their support. He told them individually of his need and how much they stood in his love and grace. If they gave him twice what they owed, they would do well, and he promised it would not be used as a precedent. William then had recorded the specific promises of each of the men.[8]

Although these accounts differ on the details, they do agree on the overall point. It was not intuitively obvious to all that the plan to invade England was a good one. William faced significant opposition to his proposal, and he had to use all his considerable persuasive skills to get his men to go along. Considering the military difficulties the invasion presented, one must be impressed by William's determination and the dominant force of his personality in obtaining the consent and support of his men. Although the author borrowed the words from elsewhere, we have here a perfect example of the monk of Caen's characterization when he wrote that William was fluent, persuasive, and "skilled at all times in making clear his will."[9]

THE story of the invasion itself is a familiar one and need not be detailed here. William collected an army and a fleet. He kept them together during a long and frustrating delay while waiting for favorable winds. He finally crossed the Channel and landed at Pevensey. Harold, who had just defeated the invasion of Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge, hurried south to confront the new invaders. They met near Hastings on 14 October.

Before committing his troops to the decisive battle, William wanted to ensure that their morale was at its highest. So, just before the battle began, he exhorted his men. Three chroniclers include versions of this speech. Besides those of William of Poitiers and Wace there is another in Henry of Huntingdon's history, written in the second quarter of the twelfth century. We also have a picture of William haranguing his men in the Bayeux Tapestry, the woven pictorial record of the Norman Conquest, which dates from the 1070's.[10]

William's speech has received very diverse treatment from modern historians. Some include a version of the speech, often a composite or edited one.[11] Others reject the accounts of the exhortation as impossible since the army would have been spread out over several miles at the time.[12] Still others simply ignore the speech.[13] Such diversity invites a more detailed consideration of this oration.

Of course, none of the versions is a verbatim report of the duke's words. These speeches were all written sometime after the battle — even long after. Although William of Poitiers was the duke's chaplain, he was not present at Hastings and admits that no one has reported the speech in detail. Moreover, the chroniclers were operating in a tradition of historical writing very different from ours. The influence of rhetoric, one of the liberal arts the chroniclers would have studied, was considerable.[14] Historians were permited — even expected — to spice up their narratives with speeches to dramatize events, characterize the major actors in the great deeds they were narrating, and demonstrate or explain motives. But these speeches had to be appropriate to the speakers and situations.[15] The speeches are the chroniclers own rhetorical inventions; they are not merely copied from the classics.[16]

Even though we cannot reconstruct the duke's actual words from these accounts, they are nevertheless valuable sources of information. They testify that Duke William was very much aware of the importance of morale to his success in war, and did whatever he could to raise the spirits of his men. They also show us in considerable detail what kinds of appeals the chroniclers thought were appropriate and effective in motivating William's men when confronting the enemy forces at Hastings. We can take them as representative of the traditions surrounding the Battle of Hastings. Moreover, William of Poitiers, as the duke's chaplain and a former knight, surely knew well the sentiments and emotions involved. The speeches thus provide a general characterization of the concerns that were important to morale at the time and offer some insight into the motivation of a medieval army.

William of Poitiers' version is a most remarkable oration.[17] He first admits that he does not have a detailed report of the duke's speech but, he adds, "we doubt not that it was excellent" ("egregiam fuisse non dubitamus"). He then masterfully weaves together many different appeals in a rather short paragraph. Duke William reminds his men of their past victories under his leadership and of the renown of their fatherland. He calls on them to show their strength and courage. They are fighting for survival itself. If they are valiant, they will win honor and riches; if not, they will be disgraced and slaughtered or led captive. There is no road for retreat. They should not worry about the numbers of their foes for the English have often been vanquished, and have never been famed as soldiers. A few courageous men with a just cause and heaven's protection will prevail against a host of the unskilled.

Wace's version is somewhat different. William stands on a hill surrounded by his barons. He begins rather weakly by thanking his men for coming with him and promising more appropriate thanks in the form of land if they win. He then turns to the crimes of the English, for, he says, he has come not merely to take what he claims but also to punish the English. He describes in some detail how they treacherously slew all the Danes one night.[18] For these and other felonies, he calls on the Normans to take revenge. (These crimes, we may note, go back more than half a century.) After winning, they will take gold and silver and land. They will easily conquer the English, he continues, because the army is so brave. The men interrupt him, shouting that he will not see any cowards, that none will fear to die for love of him. He instructs them to strike hard at the beginning, and warns them not to stop in the middle of the battle to grab booty. All the spoils will be in common and there will be plenty for everyone. There will be no safety in peace or flight, he warns. The English hate the Normans, so there is no way out but to kill them. If they flee, more will die in flight than in battle. If they fight, they will conquer and win glory. William assures

them the victory will be theirs. He wanted to go on speaking but William FitzOsborn rode up and told him he was taking too long.

In Henry of Huntingdon's version, William begins by claiming that the men do not really need to be exhorted because their courage has never failed in the past. Some two-thirds of a relatively long speech is then devoted to a detailed list of Norman victories, going all the way back to the ninth and tenth centuries. Their Viking ancestors Hasting and Rollo had beaten the French in their own land and forced the cession of Normandy. Their fathers had captured the French king, made him restore Normandy to the boy Duke Richard, and imposed humiliating conditions on the king. That same Duke Richard led the Normans to the Alps and forced Mirmande into submission. Indeed, he even wrestled with the devil and won. They themselves had put the French to flight at Mortemer. William concludes this section with a challenge: if the English, who have often been beaten by the Danes and Norwegians, can show that the Normans have ever been defeated, he will return to Normandy. He then derides the English warriors as incompetent in war and often conquered. He is thoroughly indignant about Harold's crimes of perjury and murder. He calls on the Normans to avenge the spilled blood. Henry has by far the best story about the end of the speech. The Normans, he says, were enraged and attacked before the duke was finished, leaving him speaking to himself.

The Bayeux Tapestry seems to support Henry's story. It shows William mounted and haranguing his men who are already riding away from him to the battle. The inscription explains, "Here Duke William exhorts his soldiers that they prepare themselves manfully and wisely for battle against the English army."[20]

ALTHOUGH the three versions differ they do preserve in common several things of the tradition surrounding the Battle of Hastings. Most notable, perhaps, is the fact that all three versions are addressed largely to Normans, even though William had recruited knights from other lands.[21] The well-established tradition of victory in war, and the "nation's" glorious reputation were important motivators. In these speeches, they are predominantly Norman. William of Poitiers mentions the Normans' past victories under Duke William's own leadership. The renowned fatherland ("patria") he praises is Normandy. Wace tries to widen the appeal a bit with references to Normans and others (whom the English have injured: "mult ont fait mal a mes parenz/ mult en ont fait a altres genz"). But the focus is always on the Normans. Henry of Huntingdon's long list of past victories are all Norman victories. Now, William had drawn up his own men under his personal command in the center of the line.[22] The Norman focus would therefore have been an appropriate rhetorical strategy.

Appeals to the martial, chivalrous virtues were, of course, very important. In all versions William asks his knights to be bold, to be men worthy of the name. They should bear themselves valiantly, for they will then win honor. If they are not valiant, they will lose and incur abiding disgrace. William recalls to their minds their inherent courage; he calls them the most valiant of men. Indeed, they are assured of an easy victory for nowhere in the whole world is there so brave and proven an army as they.

It apparently helped to be assured that they were superior to the English. While the Normans are valiant and strong, William of Poitiers, as well as Henry of Huntingdon, has the duke stress how weak and cowardly the enemy are. The English are poorly armed and unskilled in war. They have never been famed as warriors. Indeed, they have often been defeated. (There is a similar characterization in another much disputed source. In the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio,* the English are said to be just like sheep or foxes terrified by thunder.[23]) This appeal seems somewhat strange. Earlier, Henry had said that the Normans feared the warlike English. William of Poitiers had also earlier stressed that the Normans thought the English were militarily powerful. One would think that the chroniclers would consistently build up the valor and power of the enemy, to enhance the reputation of the Normans who were able to defeat such a mighty foe. But only William of Malmesbury noticed the anomaly.[24]

Most striking, in contrast to the last two appeals, is the picture of the duke pleading with his men not to flee from the battle. This was included in the tradition from the very beginning, as it plays a major role in William of Poitiers' account. It was still told a century later, as Wace records. Indeed, Wace and the Battle Abbey chronicle go even further. William, they claim, had even dismantled his ships so no one would be tempted to make a run for them.[25] The chroniclers, we may note, do not seem to think it is in any way disgraceful or demeaning to the Norman army to claim that they had to be warned not to flee. The warning, of course, is not only an historian's rhetorical topos (which is, in fact, quite common in medieval battle speeches).[26] It is also good, sound military advice, which can be found in the standard military treatise of the time, Vegetius' *Epitoma rei militaris*.[27] Vegetius advises a commander never to corner an enemy, always to leave them an escape route. If they think they can flee to safety, they probably will try, and can be cut down from behind as they run. If they have no possibility of escape, they will fight to the bitter end out of sheer desperation.[28] William's men were in precisely the latter position, as the speeches stress.

It was important to the Normans to believe that they were fighting for justice. All three versions of the speech have the duke refer to the righteousness of their cause, although William of Poitiers merely mentions it. The invaders are about to fight for the rights of the duke to the throne of England. The other side of this coin is also stressed: the enemy are fighting for an unjust cause. Harold has wrongfully seized the throne. Moreover, he is guilty of perjury, since he had vowed to support Duke William and had broken his oath. To add persuasive impact, William is said to have worn around his neck the very relics on which Harold had sworn his oath.[29] William had also gone to great lengths to obtain the church's approval for his cause. Pope Alexander II sent a banner, which the Normans carried into the battle.[30]

Wace and Henry of Huntingdon go even further into the evil deeds of the enemy, and dredge up English crimes going back over half a century: the murder of Alfred in 1036 and the massacre of the Danes in England on St. Bryce's Day in 1002, ordered by King Aethelred. They seem to believe that the Norman invasion had an element of the blood feud in it, as they have William call on his men to take revenge for these dastardly deeds to their ancestors.

In both William of Poitiers' and Wace's accounts, the duke assures his men that they will win. Indeed, if they are brave, the victory will be easy. The fruits of victory were very important, and both versions promise not only glory and honor, but also wealth. While the earlier version only promises riches in general, the later one is much more specific: they will take the enemy's gold and silver and their rich manors. Lust for plunder always poses a danger as well and Wace has the duke warn his men not to stop fighting in the middle of the battle to grab for loot.

THIS comparison of the three versions of William's oration has thus shown us what the chroniclers thought were the most important elements of morale at the Battle of Hastings. Even though they do not give us the Conqueror's own words, there is at least enough agreement on a number of themes to show us something of the psychology of courage in the Norman invasion of England.

Did William give such a pre-battle harangue to his troops? Some of the most important modern accounts, we have seen,

either ignore the event or give contradictory answers to this question. Obviously Duke William did not address his entire army of 7,000 or so, but surely the size of his force is no proof that he did not exhort all those around him. The evidence indicates that he did indeed give some kind of speech to some of his men before the battle began. We have the direct testimony of two contemporary sources — William of Poitiers and the Bayeux Tapestry — as well as the two later accounts by Wace and Henry of Huntingdon. That William did harangue his men is thus as well attested in the sources as many other specific events in the Norman invasion of England.

Moreover, the inherent probability of some exhortation is very high. William certainly realized the crucial importance of morale to his success and a speech before the battle would be an appropriate motivator. Vegetius recommends that a general should speak to his troops to rouse their fighting spirits.[31] It was widely believed that exhorting an army before battle was important. Many chroniclers include such speeches for their battle scenes. William of Malmsebury, whose histories do not contain elaborate battle orations, nevertheless recognizes that it is a general's duty to exhort his men, and tells us that William encouraged his troops by his voice.[32] Before a battle, it would certainly be natural for a commander to exhort those around him. It is therefore entirely reasonable, on the basis of our evidence, to conclude that Duke William did indeed address at least those Normans close enough to hear him before the Battle of Hastings began.

There were also two crises in morale just before and during the battle that the duke overcame with instant persuasive responses. As he was arming himself, William got his hauberk on backwards. The men around him took this as a terrible omen and it threatened to break their fighting spirit. William of Poitiers says that the duke laughed and did not allow it to disturb him.[33] Some twelfth century chroniclers indicate that the crisis in morale required more of a response. Wace, the Battle Abbey chronicle, and the *Brevis Relatio* state that William agreed that it could be taken as an unlucky sign but, he said, he had never believed in omens and did not like fortune tellers. He always placed his trust in his creator. Wace and William of Malmesbury have the duke re-interpret the omen as a favorable one: it signifies that the duke will be changed into a king.[34] The Battle Abbey chronicle adds that William then vowed to found a monastery on the battle site "for the salvation of all and especially for those who fall here, to the honor of God and his saints." Whatever he did or said, William's calm reaction persuaded his men to carry on and put the incident out of mind.

The second crisis occurred during the battle itself. An attack by William's men was turned back by the English. The Norman forces were thrown into confusion, heightened by a rumor that William had been killed. They began to flee, and the duke had to try to rally them. He took off his helmet so they could see that the rumor of his death was false. A panel of the Bayeux Tapestry shows William raising his helmet and Eustace of Boulogne pointing to him to prove he is still alive. Orderic reports that the duke threatened the fleeing men, struck them with his spear and shouted, "Look at me: I am alive and with the aid of God I will gain the victory." William of Poitiers and the *Carmen* add that the furious duke asked them where they were fleeing. They were just letting themselves be destroyed by men whom they could slaughter like cattle. They were rushing to ruin and disgrace. There was no way to escape by flight. His words restored their courage and they returned to the fight. The crisis was over, and by evening William's army was victorious.[35]

William the Conqueror has always been recognized as an outstanding military commander. But a great general needs to be more than an organizer and solver of logistical problems, more even than an inspired strategist. He must also have a powerful personality, and the ability to motivate and inspire his men. Although the sources show us these characteristics, William's forceful persuasiveness is an often overlooked component of his ability as a military leader. He had faced considerable odds in the attempt to defeat Harold, and some of the obstacles were psychological which required rhetorical responses. Several important eleventh and twelfth century sources indicate that he rose to the occasion every time. He overcame the initial opposition of many of his own men and encouraged at least his immediate followers before the decisive engagement. He met two crises in morale with just the right persuasive responses. These problems confronting him should not be minimized in an account of the Norman Conquest. For his success in surmounting them, William should be given full credit as a leader and inspirer of men.

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7. William of Poitiers, 218-220 *(EHD)*; 148-149, 156-158 (Foreville, ed.)

8. Wace, 102-108 (Taylor trans.); 110-114 (Holden ed.). Edward Freeman accepted Wace's account of these events. *History of the Norman Conquest of England*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1875), 287-300.

9. "An account of the death and character of William the Conqueror, written by a monk of Caen," *EHD*, vol. 2, 280; original in Willian of Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. Jean Marx (Paris, 1914), 148: "Erat eloquentia copiosus et exuberans, poterat que quicquid vellet apertissime expellere, voce rauca quidem, sed quae [nichilo] minus formae conveniret." The author took most of this statement from the *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, a work of the ninth century. L. J. Engels, "De obitu Willelmi ducis Normannorum regisque Anglorum: Texte, modèles, valeur et origine," *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht, 1973), 209-255.

10. William of Poitiers, 225 *(EHD)*; 182-185 (Foreville ed.). Wace, 159-162 (Taylor trans.); 159-162 (Holden, ed.). Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Rolls Series), 200-202; *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon*, trans. Thomas Forester (London, 1853), 210-211. Frank Stenton, ed., *The Bayeux Tapestry* (New York, 1965), plate 59.

11. For example, Alan Lloyd, *The Making of the King: 1066*

(New York, 1966), 209; Freeman, *The Norman Conquest,* vol. 3, 445-456, Frank Barlow, *William I and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1965), 75; Denis Butler, *1066: The Story of a Year* (New York, 1966), 236.

12. Charles H. Lemmon, "The Campaign of 1066," *The Norman Conquest, Its Setting and Impact,* ed. C. T. Chevalier (New York, 1966), 103. Alfred Burne, *The Battlefields of England* (London, 1950), 27.

13. For example, Stenton, *William the Conqueror;* Douglas, *William the Conqueror;* Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest;* Beeler, *Warfare in England.*

14. See, for example, the analyses by: R. W. Southern, "Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 1. The Classical Tradition from Einhard to Geoffrey of Monmouth," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series, vol. 20 (1970), 173-196. Roger D. Ray, "Medieval Historiography Through the Twelfth Century: Problems and Progress of Research," *Viator* 5 (1974), 33-59. John O. Ward, "Classical Rhetoric and the Writing of History in Medieval and Renaissance Culture," in *European History and Its Historians,* ed, Frank McGregor and Nicholas Wright (Adelaide, 1977), 1-10. John O. Ward, "Some Principles of Rhetorical Historiography in the Twelfth Century," in *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography,* ed. Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1985), 103-165.

15. Thus, Marjorie Chibnall discusses the ways in which Orderic Vitalis uses speeches in his *Ecclesiastical History*. She concludes that they appear "only when they were plausible (within the acceptable conventions) to himself no less than to his readers. He had to believe that these words or others to the same effect, might have been spoken." *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1984), 197-198. Likewise, Aelred Squire, analyzing Aelred of Rievaulx's speeches before the Battle of the Standard: "If he does not actually report their very words, we may be confident that he makes them say what they would have wished to have said. In this way he has a great deal to tell us." *Aelred of Rievaulx* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1981), 78.

16. One sometimes finds assertions that the chroniclers merely copied their battle orations from the ancient histories. For example, Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), 20. However, the only detailed analysis I have discovered in which an historian tries to demonstrate such copying is in Foreville's edition of William of Poitiers. See the following note.

17. Raymonde Foreville, who edited William's work, believes that this speech is based on Sallust's *War With Catiline.* (William of Poitiers, xxxix and 184, n.1) While William was well educated in the classics, there is very little support for the claim. Evidence of direct borrowing is almost nonexistent. The parallel appeal that they cannot flee is actually very common in battle orations in both ancient and medieval histories. In the circumstances facing the invading Norman army, this kind of appeal seems quite natural. The two authors were dealing with similar rhetorical situations. As Elizabeth Keitel argues, in a different context, "similarities in argument could be explained by the extreme situation the battle speeches address. Only so many arguments would be plausible and compelling when asking men to go into battle." ["Homeric Antecedents to the *Cohortatio* in the Ancient Historians," *The Classical World* 80 (1987), 171.] We do not need to conclude that William of Poitiers' speech is merely modeled on an ancient exemplar.

18. The St. Bryce's Day Massacre, 13 November 1002. King Aethelred, fearing that the Danes intended to kill him and take over the kingdom, ordered all the Danish men in England to be killed. Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England,* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1947), 374-375.

19. In 1036, Alfred left Normandy, where he had lived during Cnut's reign, and went to England to visit his mother. Godwin, Harold's father, had him arrested and killed some of his followers. Alfred was blinded and died of his injuries. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England,* 414-415.

20. Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry,* plate 59. In the notes by Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, he says that "the exhortation and the beginning of the action are necessarily merged" (174), but he offers no explanation why that is necessary.

21. Douglas, *William the Conqueror,* 189, 191-192.

22. Burne, *Battlefields of England,* 27, 43.

23. "Et quot sunt, ovibus totidem sunt equiparandi,/ vel vulpes pavidi fulgur is ad sonitum." *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy, Biship of Amiens,* ed. and trans. by Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz (Oxford, 1972), 22-23. Controversy over the value of this poem as a source for the Norman conquest goes back a long time. It has often been attributed to Guy, Bishop of Amiens, who supposedly wrote it before 1070. R. H. C. Davis has rejected it, concluding that it is merely a literary exercise from some twelfth century school. "The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio," *English Historical Review* 93 (1978), 241-261. L. J. Engels responded to his arguments, and defended the value of the Carmen. "Once More: The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio," *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman-Studies,* 2 (1979), 3-18. See also Morton and Muntz's appendices to their edition of the work; Frank Barlow, "The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio," in *Studies in International History,* K. Bourne and D. C. Watt, eds. (Hamden, Conn., 1967), 35-67; Geoffrey H. White, *The Complete Peerage,* vol. 12, part 1 (London, 1953), appendix L.

24. Henry of Huntingdon, 208 (Forester trans.), 199 (RS.) William of Poitiers, 148-149 (Foreville ed.), 218-220 *(EHD).* William of Malmesbury writes: "those persons appear to me to err, who augment the numbers of the English, and underrate their courage; for while they thus design to extol the Normans, they in fact degrade them. A mighty commendation indeed! that a very warlike nation should conquer a set of people who were obstructed by their multitude, and fearful through cowardice!" *History of the Kins,* trans. Joseph Stevenson, *Church Historians of England,* vol. 3, Part 1 (London, 1854), 216; *De Gestis Regum Anglorum,* ed. William Stubbs, vol. 1 (Rolls Series), 282.

25. Wace, 129 (Holden ed.) *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey,* ed. and trans. Eleanor Searle (Oxford, 1980), 34-35.

26. John Bliese, "When Knightly Courage May Fail: The Plea Not to Flee in Medieval Battle Orations," paper presented at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan (May, 1986). I am preparing a detailed study.

27. Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages,* trans. Michael Jones (Oxford, 1984), 210-212. Bernard S. Bachrach, "The Practical Use of Vegetius' *De Re Militari* During the Early Middle Ages," *The Historian* 47 (1985), 239-255. Josette A. Wisman, "*L'Epitoma rei militaris* de Végèce et sa fortune au Moyen Age," *Le Moyen Age* 85 (1979), 13-31. Charles R. Shrader, "The Influence of Vegetius' *De re militari,*" *Military Affairs* 45 (1981), 167-172. Charles R. Shrader, "A Handlist of Extant Manuscripts Containing the *De Re Militari* of Flavius Vegetius Renatus," *Scriptorium* 33 (1979), 280-305.

28. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris,* ed. C. Lange (Stuttgart, 1967), 111-112; *The Military Institutions of the Romans,* trans. John Clark in T. R. Phillips, ed., *Roots of Strategy* (Harrisburg, PA, 1940), 164-165.

29. William of Poitiers, 180-183 (Foreville ed.); 225 *(EHD).*

30. This tradition is accepted by most modern historians. Catherine Morton rejects it. "Pope Alexander II and the Norman Conquest." Her arguments were considered by David Bates, who concludes that the tradition is probably accurate. *Normandy Before 1066* (London, 1982), 202.

31. Vegetius, 88, 95 (Lange); 144-145, 152 (Clark).

32. William of Malmesbury, vol. 2, 303 (RS); 232-233 (Stevenson trans.)

33. The tradition of the battle also included another such crisis. As he was disembarking at Pevensey, William slipped and fell, and perhaps even bloodied his nose. His men took it as an evil omen, and had to be quickly reassured. However, only one account (Wace's) attributes the successful response to the duke. William of Poitiers, 225 *(EHD);* 182-183 (Foreville, ed.)

34. Wace, 163 (Taylor trans.); 163-164 (Holden ed.) *Chronicle of Battle Abbey,* 36-37. *Brevis Relatio de Origine Willelmi Conquestoris,* in *Scriptores Rerum Gestarum Willelmi Conquestoris,* ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1845), 7. Wace, 163 (Taylor trans.); 163-164 (Holden ed.): "le non qui ert de duchee/ verreiz de duc en rei torne,/ reis serai qui duc ai este,/ n'en aiez mie altre pense." William of Malmesbury, 232 (Stevenson trans.); 302 (RS.) This incident provides an excellent illustration of the kind of controversy that surrounds virtually every event the sources relate. R. H. C. Davis includes the story among the events "which . . . seem legendary or folkloric." "William of Poitiers and his History," p. 83. Alfred Burne, on the other hand, believes that "of the many anecdotes relating to the battle, the

story that in his nervous excitement he put on his hauberk the wrong way round, is the most worthy of credence." *Battlefields of England,* 27.

35. Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry,* plate 68. Orderic Vitalis, vol. 2, 174-175. William of Poitiers, 226 *(EHD);* 190-191 (Foreville ed.) *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio,* 28-31.

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