

THE SAXON STATEMENT: CODE IN THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

Most writers consider the Bayeux Tapestry to be one of the primary authorities for the study of the Norman Conquest and its prologue, and they accept as true those events depicted in the Tapestry whenever they are corroborated by the contemporary accounts, usually the chronicles written by the Normans.¹ It is generally agreed, therefore, that the Bayeux Tapestry presents the Norman point of view toward the events of 1064-1066, a consensus which owes its popularity as much to the obvious narrative pattern of the Tapestry as it does to the exiguous nature of Saxon accounts on the matter.²

The Bayeux Tapestry is thus often largely taken at face value, and no serious attempt seems to have been made to look beyond the work's

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¹Guillaume de Jumieges, *Gesta normannorum ducum*, ed. J. Marx (Rouen: A. Lestringant, 1914), hereafter cited as Marx *GJ*. Guillaume de Poitier, *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et regis Anglorum*, ed. R. Foreville (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1952), hereafter cited as Foreville. *GP*.

²"No record of this kind Norman chronicles of the Conquest has come from the English side," and " . . . the Tapestry gives no information about the reason for Harold's journey or about the nature of his engagement with the Duke. No convincing answer has been given to the first of these questions. As to the second, it is probably safe to follow the Norman writers who make Harold swear to help William to secure the English throne."—from Sir Frank Stenton, 'Historical Background,' *The Bayeux Tapestry: A Comprehensive Survey* (London: Phaidon Press, 1957, rev. and enlarged, 1965), hereafter cited as *BTCS*, and his *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 569-570.

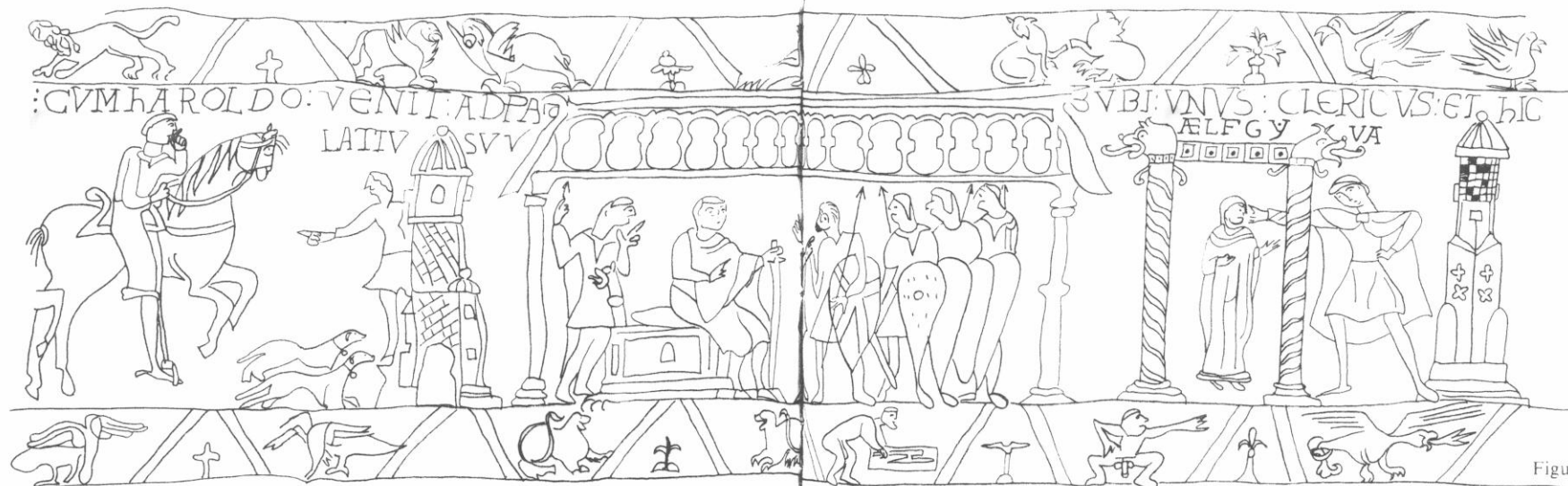


Figure 1

representation of the Norman point of view to the possibility that the Saxons who designed and stitched it might have employed covert devices in order to reveal occurrences closer to the truth, which the Designer sought to articulate even though some of the facts were suppressed by the Norman conquerors.³ This is the hypothesis which I will argue here and show to have substance, particularly as regards those events bearing on the true reasons for Harold Godwinson's journey to Normandy in 1064, and on the political necessity for Duke William and

his followers to establish a legitimate claim to the English throne.⁴

I do not wish to imply that such covert devices as may be contained in the Tapestry have the flavor or intent of some "cloak and dagger" enterprise designed to move certain elements of Anglo-Saxon society to rebellion, but that they exist in the Tapestry as items of protest. Indeed, it is possible that only those Saxons involved in the making of the work knew of the "code." Whether or not the Tapestry was to be hung in England or Normandy is, in this regard, a matter of little relevance, and any argument which might state, "Who was to interpret the code if the Tapestry in all likelihood was destined for Normandy?" is akin to asking, "How were the Trojans to know that Greek soldiers were inside that wooden horse?"

Yet, in considering that the Tapestry's ultimate destination was to be Normandy, one sees an even greater plausibility that the work contains

³The appearance of such "code-languages" of a subjected people is a phenomenon now coming widely to be recognized, even in so-called "Black American" speech. Dr. David Dalby, Reader in West African Language, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, writing in *The Times*, July 19, 1969, states: "In considering the old plantation one should not forget that attempts were made to prevent newly arrived slaves from speaking African Languages in the fear that they might be used for secret communications. At the same time the slaves had legitimate interest in deceiving their white captors and the examples we have considered indicate that a partial code may have been established among them by concealing African words with their original African meanings behind similar sounding words already existing in English. [Such words as we have listed] may be vestiges of such linguistic subterfuge." See also Dr. D. J. M. Muffett, "Uncle Remus was a Hausa Man?" *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39 (1975), 151-166.

⁴There was a real necessity to establish a clearly legitimate claim to the English throne on the part of the Normans. Only the Witan could confirm the English succession, and this it did do when it made Harold king. See also *Annales Corbiensis* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, III, 6 (*Willhelm basthard, legitimo rege Anglorum expulso, regnum sibi arripuit*). This rare reference to Harold as "legitimate king of the English" occurs in the *Annals of Kory II*, Saxony, a monastery which had links to Lindesfarne. It is also noteworthy that Harold is called *dux Anglorum* in the opening panels of the Bayeux Tapestry, a title which is emphasized by the pointing fingers of the outriders. See fig. 2.

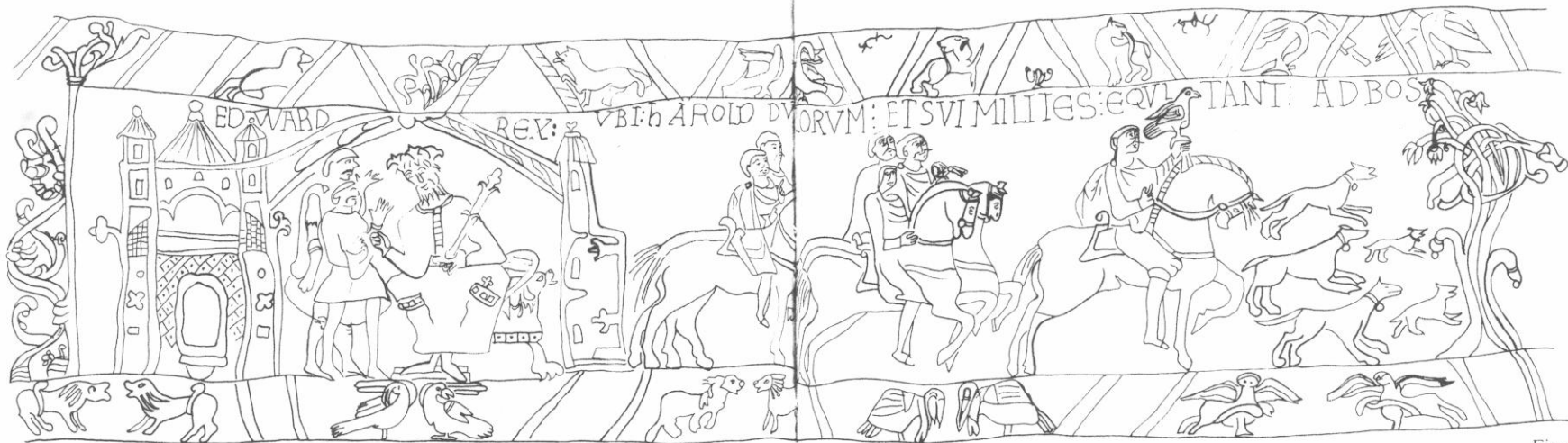


Figure 2

hidden meanings within its broad narrative structure. The Designer and those other English who knew would have taken no little measure of satisfaction from the piquant irony that the "truth" would always be there in the Conqueror's homeland.

I do not intend to include in this discussion any detailed examination of the vast body of contradictory scholarship concerning the Tapestry and the Norman Conquest.⁵ Such a task is better left to later discourse for which, it is hoped, the following remarks will provide a basis. This study merely advances a solution to some of the "mysteries" of the Bayeux Tapestry, puts them in their appropriate context in the Tapestry's narrative structure, sheds light on the scenes related to them, and suggests some new approaches to the interpretation of the Tapestry as a whole,

⁵Adequate summaries are in: David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1966), and the same author's *The Norman Conquest and the British Historians* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1946); E. A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876), is a useful but verbose work in six volumes, hereafter cited as *EAF*. Important articles which summarize the history and scholarship of the Bayeux

especially as regards incidents involving the figures in the upper and lower borders.⁶

Tapestry are: Simone Bertrand, "History of the Bayeux Tapestry," in BTCS; Frank Rede Fowke, *The Bayeux Tapestry: a History and Description* (London: Arundel Society, 1875); Achille Jubinal, *La Tapisserie de Bayeux representant la conquete de l'angleterre en 1066* (Paris: Didron, 1862), also in *Les Anciennes Tapisseries Histories, ou collection des monumens, etc.* (Paris, 1839-9); Eric Maclagan, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London: King Penguin Books, 1943); J. H. Round, "The Bayeux Tapestry," *Monthly Review*, 3 (17 December 1904), 109-126; Geoffrey White, "Problems of the Bayeux Tapestry," *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12, p. 12, and App. k, 40-44. For valuable notes and select bibliography see O. K. Werckmeister, "The Political Ideology of the Bayeux Tapestry," *Studi Medievali* (December 1976), 535 ff.

⁶Most writers consider the borders to be purely decorative, while a few have suggested that the border figurines have significance to the main narrative of the Tapestry. Even those who consider the borders to be purely decorative, however, do not hesitate in ascribing symbolic significance to certain representations when it is overwhelmingly obvious that they bear a relationship to the main narrative, i.e., the "Ghostships" beneath the reigning Harold, and Haley's Comet. See unsigned article in the *Times* (London), "Looking for Secrets in the Bayeux Tapestry" (15 April 1966), p. 14, which states: "It would be natural . . . to find in this great embroidery secret indications of what the conquered thought and felt. The rustic has always been an adept at concealing information when apparently conveying it, and a learned monk, given the need, would be even more capable of dissimulation."

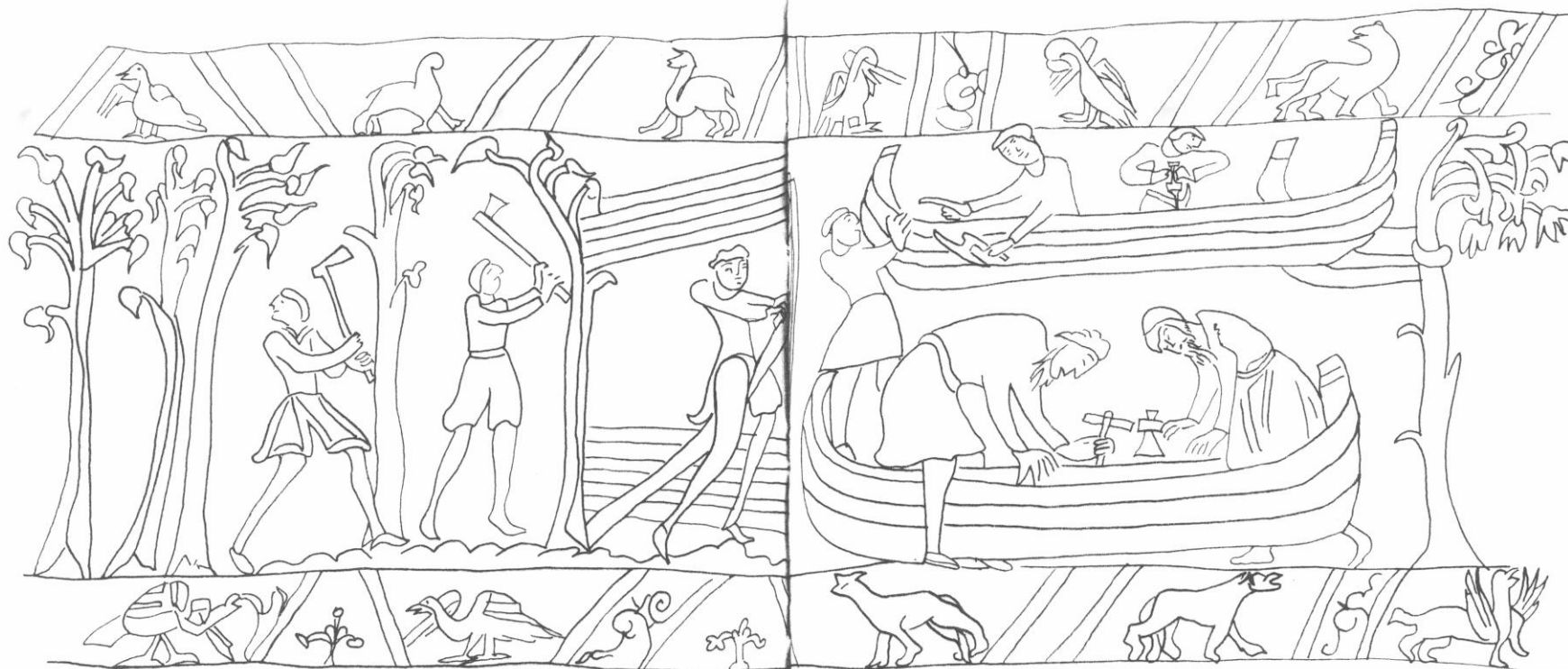


Figure 3

Finally, I will urge that Eadmer, a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury writing many years after the Conquest, be re-evaluated as a credible source,⁷ not only for material bearing on the relationship of William and Harold, but also on the role played by Edward the Confessor in Harold's visit to the Continent, as well as on the reasons for that visit and the nature and circumstances of Harold's oath to William.⁸

⁷Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, Rolls Series, ed. Martin Rule (London: Longman's 1884), hereafter cited as *RS*. Also, *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England*, trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (London: Cresset Press, 1964), hereafter cited as Bosanquet.

⁸The Norman version of the oath states: 1) that Harold would represent William at Edward's Court; 2) that he would ensure the succession of the English crown to William; 3) that he would place garrisons of Norman knights at Dover and other places and provide for them. William, in turn, ensured Harold's possessions in England.

Eadmer provides us with a highly interesting account of the events which culminated in the great battle at Hastings in 1066, and he is generally considered to be a chronicler of high integrity. Praise of him, however, is usually limited to his remarkable account of the life of St. Anselm⁹ and to portions of his *Historia*, but not to the portions of that work which deal with the events of 1064-1066. Here, in contrast to the Norman writers, he is cast in the role of "weak sister" when, in fact, he might well have had access to sources of his own which are now lost to us, and which were not, available or congenial to them.

It seems clear enough, at present, that the Tapestry represents the Norman view as derived heavily from the two Williams, but it will be

⁹*Vita Anselmi*, ed. R. W. Southern (New York: T. Nelson, 1962).



Figure 4

shown that certain particulars of Eadmer's account differ critically from theirs in being supportive of the English view, and appear in the Tapestry through the use of covert devices.

I use the term "supportive" in referring to Eadmer's *Historia* because, although this study relies a great deal upon the written account of Eadmer, the earlier "chronicler" is really the *Designer* of the Tapestry himself, who must be considered as contemporary to the events of Hastings as any Norman. Eadmer undoubtedly wrote from what he heard and read, and it may well be that his and the Designer's sources were the same. Although we may never know who they were, it is quite likely that they were reliable to the extent that their verity would have been displeasing to the Normans. The Designer of the Tapestry, working under the direction of the work's Norman commissioner, could not do otherwise than place in his more

obvious narrative those details of events most complimentary to the Norman cause.

As for the Designer's identity, it is reasonable to assume, in light of convincing evidence, that he was another monk of Canterbury.¹⁰ His existence and his work, at any rate, have given the world something other

¹⁰That the Tapestry was made in Canterbury and by Saxons is now scarcely doubted. There were superb drawing schools at Christ Church and St. Augustine's which had no equal on the Continent and whose style matches the style of the Tapestry. See Eric Maclagan, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London: King Penquin Books, 1943), pp. 18-20; R. S. Loomis and Max Förster, cited by F. Wormwald in *BTCS*, p. 29; C. R. Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French Secular Epic," *Burlington Magazine*, 58 (1966), 549; F. Wormwald, "Style and Design," *BTCS*, p. 34; F. Wormwald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952); C. R. Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination: 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1954). The Tapestry was commissioned

than the panegyric and sycophantic utterances of Norman historians whose accounts have probably been accorded more truthfulness than they deserve.

It is fortunate that, in spite of at least two notable threats to its existence,¹¹ the Bayeux Tapestry has survived, for without the Tapestry we should have no contemporary Saxon view. It is fortunate too that we have Eadmer's *Historia*, for without it the Tapestry's "code" would never have been discovered, nor would we have been provided with a key with which to unlock other casements in the Designer's structure, especially in what can be rightfully called the "peripheral narrative" of the Tapestry's borders.

Before we begin our discussion of individual elements in the Bayeux Tapestry, it might be well to summarize and comment upon the generally accepted pattern of events which constitute the Hastings prologue.

Some years previous to Harold's journey, no later than 1042, Edward, having succeeded to the English throne in that year, is supposed to have promised his crown to William of Normandy upon his, the confessor's, death. In 1064, the time of Harold's journey, Edward, finding himself near death, charged Harold, then the Earl of Wessex, with a special mission to the Norman Court, where Harold was to confirm Edward's old promise to William. Harold immediately set out across the English Channel to fulfill Edward's wishes, but was driven by an inclement wind to the coast of Ponthieu where he was incarcerated and held for ransom by an unfriendly vassal of Duke William's named Guy.¹² William learned of Harold's imprisonment, and subsequently ransomed him from Guy.

and finished between 1067 and 1082, by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, Duke William's half-brother and Earl of Kent until his deposition in 1082. It is a matter of extreme interest to us that Eadmer, born several years before the Conquest, was presented as a child to the monastery of Christ Church where he remained throughout his life. He began to write before the end of the eleventh century, and was already famous by then.

¹¹In 1792 there was an attempt to use it as a pack-cloth for wagons and, in 1794, it was almost cut up as a decoration for a float! See Simone Bertrand, "The History of the Bayeux Tapestry," *BTCS*, pp. 76, 78.

¹²William of Malmesbury (*Gesta Regum Anglorum*) tells us that Harold left England on a fishing trip and was shipwrecked on the Coast of Ponthieu. It is unlikely that Edward the Confessor was near death in 1064, for we are told that in 1065, Harold, at Portskewet in Wales, "got together many goods and thought of having King Edward there for hunting," *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, rev. trans. ed. D. Whitelock and D. C. Douglas (New Brunswick: Rutgers U.P., 1962), p. 137.

Harold was honorably received in William's court, and the two great men became friends. Harold assisted William in some military campaigns, for which he received arms from William. At some point in his stay, Harold swore certain sacred oaths to William, the breaking of which later provided William with the reason he needed to invade England.

The background of these occurrences is colored by the existence of two hostages in William's possession, an intriguing aspect which is mentioned or implied in all of the important accounts. Probably in 1051, the son and grandson of Earl Godwine, Harold's father, were supposed to have been given as hostages. In the pro-Norman accounts of the incident, the hostages were offered to ensure Edward's promise to William.¹³ In Eadmer's account, however, the hostages, Hakon, son of Godwine's son Swegen, and Wulfnoth, Godwine's son, were turned over to Edward by the Godwine family as a surety for peace, and later delivered to William for safekeeping.¹⁴ Few deny that Edward promised William the English crown at some time in their relationship, and it may well be that the hostages served a dual purpose: they could have been used to ensure the Godwines' promise of peace in England as well as their acceptance of the promise of succession.¹⁵ The existence of the hostages is important

¹¹Foreville *GP*, p. 32.

¹²Eadmer *RS*, p. 6: *Wulnothus itaque filius Godwini et Hacun filius Suani filii sui obsides dantur, ac in Normanniam Willelmo comiti, filio scilicet Roberti filii Ricardi fratris matris suae, custodiendi destinantur.*

¹³Possibly through the mediation of Robert the Norman, then Archbishop of Canterbury. See Foreville *GP*, pp. 30 ff. See also Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 167-170 and the same author's "Edward the Confessor, Duke William of Normandy and the English Succession," cited in *William the Conqueror*, *EHR*, 68 (1953), n.p. Also T. J. Oleson, "Edward the Confessor's Promise of the Throne to Duke William of Normandy," 72 (1957), 221-228; C. T. Chevallier, "Introduction," in Dorothy Whitelock, et. al., *The Norman Conquest: Its Setting and Impact* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1966), pp. 10-11. See also Kenneth Cutler, "The Godwinist Hostages: The Case for 1051," *Annuaire Mediaevale*, 12 (1968), 70-77. Eadmer places Edward's promise around 1041 when Edward was detained in Normandy and out of gratitude offered his director William the crown. Eadmer has been unjustly criticised on this point, primarily because scholars have relied, for many decades, on an erroneous translation of the Eadmer passage which describes Edward's early promise, a translation evidently first done by Freeman. Sten Körner's treatment of this event and its account of it by Eadmer (*The Battle of Hastings, England and Europe, 1035-1066* (Lund: Skanska Centraltryckeriet, 1964), p. 120), compels me to suggest that

to the present discussion because it figures universally in the chronicles and, from the Norman standpoint, forms an adjunct to Harold's oath.

The hostages were given, so insist the Normans, in support of William's succession, and they are never discussed by them in any other connection. After Harold's oath to Duke William, Hakon is allowed to return to England with Harold, while Wulfnoth, at William's insistence, remains behind to be delivered to Harold whenever William should come to England as King. So say the Normans. Bargaining for the hostages is certainly implied here, but at this stage William, understandably, dictates the conditions.

As it has been stated, Eadmer tells us that the hostages, Hakon and Wulfnoth, the nephew and brother of Earl Harold, were given to King Edward as surety for peace and then placed in Duke William's hands for safekeeping. In contrast to the Norman historians, who attribute Harold's mission to Edward's desire to confirm the promise that William would succeed to the throne, Eadmer makes it quite clear that Harold went to Normandy (*against Edward's better judgement*) for the single purpose of securing the release of the hostages.¹⁶ We may gather from this that, between the time of Edward's promise and the giving of the hostages, the political climate in England had so changed, especially in the status of the Godwin family and in the relationship between Edward and Harold, who by then had grown in ability, influence, and power, and was called by a later writer, *sub regulus*, that the reasons for the hostages being in

Körner did not consult the primary material of the *Historia*, but relied upon traditional readings of the Eadmer text. See my "Eadmer as Historian of the Norman Succession: Körner and Freeman Examined," *American Benedictine Review*, (March 1979), p. 32 ff. See also my "Duke William's Messengers: An 'Insoluble Reverse-order Scene' of the Bayeux Tapestry," forthcoming in *Medium Aevum*. The first study discusses in detail the misrepresented passages in the Eadmer *Historia*, and the second shows that portions of the Bayeux Tapestry's main narrative can only be fully understood through a reading of Eadmer's *Historia*.

¹⁶Eadmer RS, p. 6, and Bosanquet, p. 6: *Is, elapso modico tempore*, [after Harold succeeds to the earldom of Wessex] *licentiam petivit a rege Normanniam ire et fratrem suum atque nepotem qui obsides tenebantur liberare, liberatos reducere*. Foreville (*GP*, p. 114, n. 1) feels that Harold's purpose for going to Normandy was to secure the release of the hostages: *Il est possible que le but essentiel de l'ambassade de Harold fût d'obtenir la libération des otages.*

Normandy in the first place were no longer viable.¹⁷ Indeed, according to Eadmer, Edward warns Harold of William's ruthlessness, and that the Earl's trip to Normandy could result in ruin for the English Kingdom.

Eadmer differs from the Norman writers in another important aspect. As part of the oath to which Harold agreed, Eadmer includes the stipulation that Harold would betroth his sister to a Norman noble.¹⁸ Eadmer, moreover, states that Harold took the oath under duress.¹⁹

The unique role of the hostages and the mention of a sister of Harold in Eadmer's account are the principal subjects of this study. The early panels of the Tapestry, as we shall see, are of critical importance; it is in them that we may find particularly strong evidence of the Saxon use of a "code", and it is in them that the depiction of events carries the greatest threat to William's legitimate claim to the throne of England. For Norman purposes, Harold simply could not be shown travelling to Normandy for any other reason but to confirm the old promise of King Edward that William would succeed to the English throne upon the Confessor's death.

Among the various episodes of the Bayeux Tapestry's main and peripheral narratives which we will now scrutinize in some detail, one especially is well known, primarily because of its firmly established reputation as a "mystery." The great irony of this "mysterious" scene is that it has simply been misread by all but a few writers (and these latter not necessarily

¹⁷See C. T. Chevallier, in D. Whitelock, *et al.*, *The Norman Conquest: Its Setting and Impact* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1966), p. 11: "... a dominant motive for the journey can be found in Harold's loyal desire to recover his brother and nephew, and his sanguine belief that, with Godwine long dead and after his own successful government of England for ten years, William would consider the situation entirely altered and would freely give up the hostages." Eadmer is again misrepresented by Körner (*Battle of Hastings*, p. 120), and his summary of Eadmer's description of the discussion between Edward and Harold at the time of Harold's departure cannot be made to fit the meaning of the primary text of the *Historia*.

¹⁸Eadmer RS, p. 7, and Bosanquet, p. 7: "... sororemque tuam quam uni de principibus meis dem in uxorem te ad me tempore quo nobis conveniet destinaturum, necne filiam mean te in conjugem accepturum fore promiseris ..." William also stipulates that Harold will marry his daughter.

¹⁹Eadmer RS, p. 7, and Bosanquet, pp. 7-8: *Sensit Haroldus in his periculum unidque; nec intellexit qua evaderet, nisi in omnibus istis voluntati Willelmi adquiesceret. Adquievit itaque*. William of Malmesbury (*GRA*, p. 254), also presents Harold as being under duress but has him creating the oath as a means of escaping from prison in Ponthieu.

Tapestry specialists), a situation which explains, perhaps, why the facts relating to it, though known to scholars for some time, have never been properly connected or exploited. It is the scene between a woman named *Aelfgyva* and a cleric.²⁰ (See fig. 1).

The "mystery" of the *Aelfgifu*²¹ scene has caused so much perplexity in the study of the Bayeux Tapestry that, in recent times, the tendency has been to pass it off with such summary statements as "no amount of conjecture can identify or place it in the narrative²²," or, "whose meaning and significance are now lost²³." Some studies have ignored it altogether, and one of them arrives at the astonishing conclusion that "it contributes nothing to the story, except a moment of confusion,"²⁴ and promptly omits the scene from the edition. Others have conjectured that *Aelfgifu* was the daughter of William the Conqueror, whose betrothal to Harold formed part of Harold's oath to William.²⁵ Those inclined toward this conjecture have proceeded to exchange the names of William's various daughters (Adele, Adelaide and Agatha) for the name *clearly* recorded in the Tapestry, *Aelfgyva*. It is difficult to dispute the fact that Harold agreed

²⁰The literature on *Aelfgifu* is extensive. All of the various *ubi unus clericus et Aelfgyva* interpretations were extant in the last century and are summarized by Fowke, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, pp. 31-35. Roger Sherman Loomis in "The Origin and Date of the Bayeux Embroidery," *Art Bulletin*, 6 (1923), 3-7, "originates" the "scandal theory," but he is really anticipated in this by several previous writers. The article by Loomis is not nearly as seminal as supposed.

²¹Following standard scholarly procedure, the spelling *Aelfgifu* will be used throughout this paper except when the Latin caption of the Tapestry is quoted. *Aelfgifu* is the normal Saxon spelling, sometimes appearing as *Aelfgyfu*, with a dotted "Y" as in the drawing of King Canute and his wife in *Liber Vitae: Register and Martyrology of New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, ed. Walter de Gray Birch, Hampshire Record Society (London: Simpkin, 1892), front. Hereafter cited as *Liber Vitae*. See also Wormwald, *English Drawings*, pl. 15. The Tapestry's spelling of the name is not unusual, since it has merely kept its Saxon flavor with the last two letters of the suffix Latinized. The dotted "Y" in the Tapestry's spelling is offered as one of the philological proofs that the Tapestry is of Saxon origin.

²²Robert Furneaux, *Conquest 1066* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), p. 43.

²³Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, "Notes on the Plates," *BTCS*, fig. 19 and p. 166, sec. 19.

²⁴Norman Denny and Josephine Filmer-Stankey, *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Story of the Norman Conquest, 1066* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 4.

²⁵Simone Bertrand, *La Tapisserie de Bayeux* (St. Leger-Vauban: Zodiaque, 1966), p. 87. See also fn. 18. This interpretation is much in vogue and has at times been given great prominence in William's reasons for the invasion. See Eadmer *RS*, p. 8, and Bosanquet, p. 8. Also *EAF*, III, 222 ff.

to his own betrothal, but it is not very likely that the Tapestry's *Aelfgifu* really is a daughter of William.²⁶

All writers of note agree, even when they play down the *Aelfgifu* scene, that it represents an event well understood by contemporary observers of the Tapestry, and a number of them even suggest that the scene alludes to some notorious scandal of the day, possibly involving a clerical/secular indiscretion.²⁷

The "mystery" of *Aelfgifu* is further enhanced by the consistent assumption that it is a separate scene, placed in the Tapestry by the artist to depict a well-known event, but having no real place in the logic of the narrative. Also contributive to the confusion is the repeated observation that the scene is rendered even more meaningless by the absence of a verb in the caption. It has thus been read: *ubi unus clericus et Aelfgyva* ("where a cleric and *Aelfgifu*"). The whole scene will become meaningful, however, if it is shown that it is not a separate episode at all, but rather must be integrated into the previous one (Fig. 1), which shows Duke William in council with Harold and some others.

I propose, then, that the council and *Aelfgifu* scenes are not each autonomous, but must, in fact, be closely related. The combined captions should read: *Hic dux Wilgelm cum Haroldo venit ad palatium suum, ubi unus clericus et Aelfgyva* ("Here Duke William and Harold come to his palace, where [are] a cleric and *Aelfgifu*"). Viewed in this manner, the

²⁶*Aelfgifu* is purely a Saxon name meaning 'elf-gift,' and it has many variants: *Alveva* (*Domesday Book*), *Aleve*, *Elgive* (French), and *Algiva*, *Elgiva* (Latin). There is not much likelihood that *Aelfgifu*, *Adele*, *Agatha*, and *Adelaide* would have been used interchangeably or as homonyms, since their roots are different and no stretch on the imagination or twist of the tongue will make them sound alike. Others have been tempted (see *EAF*, III, appendix W) to treat *Aelfgifu* as a title similar to *Aetheling* because of its association in Saxon genealogical charts with *Emma*, notably *Aelfgifu-Emma* (*DNB*), wife of Athelred and Canute. The association exists, however, because *Aelfgifu* was used by the Saxons as a substitute for the Norman *Emma*, which the Saxons found too foreign. At times, *Aelfgifu* became confused with *Eadgifu*, especially among the Normans. See Charlotte M. Yonge, *History of Christian Names* (London: MacMillan, 1884; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research, 1966), p. 381; W. G. Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1899), pp. 358-359, and the same author's *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1897); Sir Henry Ellis, *A General Introduction to Domesday Book* (London: Commissioners of the Public Records, 1833), II, 309.

²⁷An erotic, nude, male figure with exaggerated genitals, beneath and slightly to the left of the *Aelfgifu* scene has given rise to what may be termed the "scandal theory." See fn. 20 and Fig. 1.

caption to the Aelfifu episode no longer lacks a verb but has, and *always* has had, a verb which was meant to be understood.²⁸

The omission of a verb is not uncommon in Latin, particularly in situations where structural clarity is so great that a verb would be superfluous.²⁹ Such clarity exists here, both syntactically and iconographically, and if it is not uncommon to assume a verb in a Latin utterance given the proper context, then it would be less uncommon under this circumstance, where there are several persons working together on a document (as was surely the case with the Tapestry),³⁰ and less uncommon still when the episode under consideration was still much widely known and discussed, as all agree it must have been.

In order to verify this insight further, despite clear documentation, I conducted a rather unorthodox but feasible experiment wherein I presented both captions on a single notecard to several members of the Saint Vincent Archabbey, all of whom were known to be thoroughly familiar with the Latin tongue. I did so without any special introduction except to clarify the fact that Aelfgyva was a Latinized Saxon name. Upon reading *Hic dux Wilgelm cum Haroldo venit ad palatium suum, ubi unus*

²⁸I am grateful to Dr. D. J. M. Muffett, O.B.E., of the Duquesne University Institute of African Affairs for suggesting the possibility of this interpretation. In support he quoted Cicero, *Ubi bene, ibi Patria*, who paraphrased from Pacuvius' *Teucer*: *Patria est, ubicumque est bene*. Subsequent research disclosed that Denis Butler saw the unity of the scenes (1066: *Story of a Year New York*: G. P. Putnam's, 1966, p. 73), but his arguments were unconvincing. Butler stretches credulity by assuming a verb and a pronoun ("await them"), while offering nothing convincing in support, only some cryptic comments. He proposes, also, that *Aelfgyva* is a close homonym for *Agatha* (the name of one of William's daughters) which, as has been shown (fn. 26), is not to be contemplated. Toward the completion of this study I came upon a review of Stenton, *BTCS*, by M. R. Holmes, *Medieval Archaeology* 1 (1958), 178-182, whose comments went unnoticed by scholars: "Can it be that the text of the inscription is meant to run straight on, and that the missing word is the auxiliary verb most frequently left out of Latin Texts?" Holmes, however, goes on to suggest that *Aelfgyva* is Aelfgyth, a teacher of embroidery at the time of the conquest, mentioned in Digby, "Technique and Production," *BTCS*, 37-53. White, *Complete Peerage*, also conjectures the unity of the episodes, but drops the matter.

²⁹See J. B. Greenough, *New Latin Grammar* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1903), secs. 318-319, p. 195, and Lawrence Englemann, O.S.B., *Latin Grammar*, 16th. ed. (Latrobe, Pa.: Saint Vincent Archabbey Press, 1940), pp. 430, ff. ("In a final clause, a verb may be understood").

³⁰The Tapestry is constructed of several pieces of different lengths put together to form a continuous narrative about 232 feet long by about 20 inches wide. The width was ideal for laying across several laps at one time.

clericus et Aelfgyva, all unhesitatingly included in their translations some form of the verb "to be."³¹ Is it not overwhelmingly likely that those perusing the scene in its contemporary setting, and being thoroughly familiar with the event, would have done the same?

Traditional scholarship has nevertheless treated the word *ubi* as a substitute for *ibi* or *hic*, and has given the several other *ubi* captions in the Tapestry the same quality as the various *hic* captions. Close observation, however, will show that the use of *ubi* in other captions of the Tapestry, notwithstanding the existence of accompanying verbs, is precisely the same as in the *ubi unus clericus* caption. In all these instances, *ubi* is both locative and connective. It is always linked to a place mentioned.

The most striking use of *ubi* as a link occurs in the first scene where Harold and his knights depart from King Edward: *Edward Rex, ubi Harold Dux Anglorum et sui milites equitant ad Bosham*. It is likely that this passage would have been read: "King Edward, [from whom/whence] Harold, Duke of the English, and his knights, ride to Bosham." (Fig. 2).

This use of *ubi* is again shown in the scenes showing Harold's arrival on the continent, his capture by Guy, his discussion with Guy, and the arrival of William's messengers at Beurain: *Hic apprehendit Wido Haroldu, et duxit eum ad Belrem et ibi eum tenuit. Ubi Harold et Wido parabolant. Ubi nuntii Willelmi ducis venerunt ad Widone*. It is quite plausible to read this: "Here Guy apprehends Harold and leads him to Beurain and there held him. Where [at Beurain] Guy and Harold talk together. Where [to Beurain] Duke William's messengers have come to Guy."

Language aside, other aspects of the two scenes of the Council/Aelfifu episode, including a structural consistency within the Tapestry itself, offer evidence that they cannot be considered separately without rupturing the intended narrative sequence. In support of this assertion, let us considering the following.

First, throughout the Tapestry there are several representations which exist to supply interest and continuity to the narrative. These are well-known figures and events which are independent in themselves, identified sometimes with a single name, but never with a sentence fragment.³² If

³¹One remarked, after the nature of the exercise was explained, that Tacitus, an author he had been reading at the time, frequently employed the same sort of construction.

³²*Edward Rex; Ecclesia; Tuold; Nuntii Willelmi; Rednes; Stigant Archiepiscus; Harold; Hic est Wadward; Odo Episcopus. Rotbert, Willeim; E[us]tace.*

the Aelfgifu episode were to be supposed one of these, we should have to explain why its meaning would have been obfuscated with the insertion of an adverb into its caption.

Secondly, it is usual in the Tapestry to show entrance and exit points when episodes shift from indoors to outdoors and *vice-versa*. These points consist usually of trees and towers, and are representative of a design technique peculiar not only the Tapestry but to preceding and analogous forms of art, with developmental roots reaching into classical times. When William, Harold, and their retainers enter the palace, they do so through a stylized tower, the same sort of tower which appears at the end of the Aelfgifu scene when they ride off together to Brittany. The towers, in keeping with stylistic tradition and apparent logic, are clearly used to frame what is a pair of closely related episodes, both in the Tapestry's representation of them and in, no doubt, actual historical occurrence, with the ornate pillars between which Aelfgifu appears thus becoming suggestive of an ante-chamber or arcade in the palace.³³

Third, it is not unusual in the Tapestry for words, phrases or sentences to be separated to provide room for some object or decoration, or to enable the Designer to fit a long caption into a limited space.³⁴ Both phenomena are evident here, but it is perhaps most important to consider that the Designer wished to illustrate, as graphically and efficiently as possible the opulence of William's palace, and therefore did not wish to interfere with the long, elaborate ceiling. Enough room had to be provided also, in the council scene, for an adequate number of participants, in order to add importance to the event being depicted. A pillar intervenes; the latter part of the caption then follows, arranged above the ante-chamber where Aelfgifu and the cleric engage in some action resulting from discussions in the council room.³⁵

In relating the Aelfgifu episode to the events in the council room and, subsequently, placing both scenes within the narrative structure of the

Tapestry, two questions must be asked: "Who is Aelfgifu?" and "What is she doing at Rouen, at all?" Adequate answers to these questions are implicit in two facts which, though known for some time, have never been properly connected or exploited, but rather have been approached, primarily by Freeman, with a caution which should, perhaps, remain undefined, but which seems to have been born not out of wise caution but out of reluctance.³⁶ For Freeman to have met these facts head-on, it is possible that he would have had to accept the existence of the hostages in a role which he previously rejected with long and labored argument, and he would have had to abandon his firm attachment to Malmesbury's version of the channel journey.

In reviewing these two facts, it is convenient to begin with the *Historia* of Eadmer. The first fact is the phrase in Eadmer which relates that, as part of his oath to William, Harold was supposed to betroth his sister to a Norman noble. The Eadmer statement is substantiated by the second fact, found in *Domesday Book* for Buckinghamshire, that Earl Harold had a sister named Aelfgifu.³⁷ The inference is inescapable: the Aelfgifu in the Tapestry is the sister of Earl Harold.

This answer to the first question, "Who is Aelfgifu?" leads naturally to the answer of the second, "What was Aelfgifu doing at Rouen, at all?"

³³See *EAF*, III, 227-228, and appendix W. See also Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 222, p. 5.

³⁴See *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Buckinghamshire*, William Page, ed., University of London Institute of Historical Research (London: Constable, 1905; rpt. London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1969), I, 236b, 277b (*Alveva soror comitis* [comitis interlined] *Heraldi* 'Alveva sister of Earl Harold'). J. H. Round (p. 236b, fn. 14) states: "This is believed to be the only mention of Aelfgifu, sister of Earl Harold and daughter of Godwine." Elis (*General Introduction*, I, 309) states: "... Aelueua soror Herald, of whom, if we may judge from the minute account given by Sir William Dugdale of Earl Godwin's family in the Baronage, no mention has been made by our historians." Additional references to Aelfgif may perhaps be found in *Domesday Book* and other sources. In *Liber Vitae* appears the entry, *Eadgifu, fili[a] Godwini Comitis* (p. 71, l. 21). 'Eadgifu, daughter of Earl Godwin.' This may indeed be Aelfgifu, and the scribe has written a variant of the name. If this is the Aelfgifu who appears among the list of lay brethren in *Liber Vitae*, then her existence has been thrice corroborated—in *Domesday Book*, in Eadmer's *Historia*, and in the Bayeux Tapestry. If not, then another daughter of Earl Godwine has been found who has hitherto gone unnoticed, and who must be placed in modern genealogies of the family. Eadgifu cannot be Eadgyth, the elder daughter of Godwine and wife of Edward the Confessor, for in the same list of names in *Liber Vitae* are found the entries, *Eadward Rex* and *Eadgyth regina*.

³⁵See Wormwald, *BTC*, p. 26

³⁶Some may argue here that plenty of room is left for a verb after the name *Aelfgyva*. This would be an apt consideration had it not already been shown that a verb is superfluous.

³⁷See Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London: Phaidon Press, 1973), p. 15, who makes a similar analysis in arguing the Harold was not killed by an arrow in the eye. This recent edition of the Tapestry, it may be mentioned here, does not solve the Aelfgifu "mystery," but rather follows the prevailing interpretations. This edition, moreover, omits entirely any mention of the Eadmer *Historia*.

Aelfgifu is there to be betrothed to a Norman noble. It is Eadmer from whose text we learn of the betrothal of Harold's sister to a Norman Noble, but it is the Designer of the Bayeux Tapestry from whose work we learn of her presence in Normandy in 1064.

So much for one "mystery" of the Bayeux Tapestry whose meaning becomes clear when the various aspects of the scene are read properly. Since general knowledge of the betrothal would not have been threatening to William, the event is not rendered in code, as are the events surrounding the hostages.

If Aelfgifu's presence is not of itself threatening then it is entirely possible that the circumstances of her betrothal must be. Let us return to the Bayeux Tapestry and the Council scene.

It would be easy, at first glance, to jump to the conclusion that the man being chosen by Harold from a group of knights is the noble to whom Aelfgifu is to be betrothed. Closer scrutiny, however, will determine otherwise. It is at this point that the Tapestry's "code-language" manifests itself.

There are several indications which suggest that the man Harold is choosing is not Norman, but English. Most probably he represents Hakon, son of Harold's brother Swegen, and he will, according to Eadmer, eventually accompany Harold back to England.³⁸ There is no reason to suppose that any choice of husband is taking place here, but merely a promise of betrothal, for Eadmer informs us that arrangements

would be finalized at a time to be agreed upon later, when Harold would send his sister to William.³⁹

I make the observation that Harold is choosing his young nephew Hakon from the crowd of knights because, first, great care seems to have been taken by the Designer to distinguish this man from the others in the group. He does not wear the Norman haircut, with the back of the head shaved. He sports a curious beard, on the chin only, and there is no repetition of such a beard in the Tapestry, except, perhaps, for one on an Englishman defending the hill during the scenes of the Battle of Hastings. Could this be the suggestion of a mustache, as it covers only the chin, or is it a mustache deliberately made to go askew? The mustache (together with the ax) is one way in which we are able to distinguish the English from the Normans in the Tapestry, and an overt representation of a mustache at this critical juncture, on such a mysterious yet obviously important character, might have been unacceptable to the Tapestry's commissioner, or to the Norman overseers who might have possibly been present. This is an interesting but hazardous speculation; but we shall soon see stronger evidence that the bearded man is to be particularly distinguished.

Secondly, the bearded man's shield is different, and although it is still difficult, in light of existing knowledge, to make consistently accurate interpretations of the Tapestry based on Heraldic devices, and though the same design appears on the shields of some Normans, nothing can negate the fact that the design of the bearded man's shield, in this particular scene, is remarkably different (deliberately different?) from the designs on the shields of those who appear with him. If we accept the tradition (and there is no compelling reason why we should not) that Harold was killed by an arrow in the eye at the Battle of Hastings, then the Bayeux Tapestry shows him, surrounded in *comitatus* fashion by his Huscarls, holding precisely the same sort of shield the moment he is struck. The same design, moreover, dominates the shields of the Huscarls who are with him when the final Norman onslaught occurs.

Third, beneath the figure of the bearded man, in the border of the Tapestry, is the nude figure of a man chopping wood. He is not using an adze to perform this task, as most commentators of the Tapestry have

³⁸Eadmer, *RS*, p. 7, and Bosanquet, p. 7: . . . tunc et modo nepotem tuum, et cum in Angliam regnaturus venero fratrem tuum incolumem recipies. That Wulfnoth remains in Normandy is implied by the Normans, but the name 'Wulfnoth' is given to us only in the Ordericus Vitalis "Interpolations" of the Jumieges *Gesta*, and not in the primary text of that chronicle. See Marx *GJ*, jp. 191, and EAF, "The Oath of Harold," iii, 683-686. There is some misconception that since Hakon is mentioned by Guillaume de Poitiers, there is no need to render the name in code. Eadmer, in fact, *independently* gives us the names of both hostages. Subsequent identification of Hakon as they appear in modern reprints or translations of the Poitiers chronicle are usually in brackets and are editorial additions whose authority derives from Eadmer's *Historia*. The statements in the Poitiers chronicle which mention the hostages are: 1) *Optimatum igitur suorum assensu per Rodbertum Cantuariensem archipraesulem hujus delegationis mediatorem, obsides potentissimae parentelae Godwini comitis filium ac nepotem ei direxit* (Foreville *GP*, pp. 31-32; see fn. 15 this essay); 2) *Quin etiam fratrueis ejus, alter obses, cum ipso redux propter ipsum redditus* (Foreville *GP*, p. 114); 3) *Obsides mihi dedit Godwini filium ac nepotem* (Foreville *GP*, p. 176).

³⁹see fn. 18.

erroneously observed. His tool bears no resemblance to an adze, and anyone using one in that manner would be immediately expelled from the carpenters' local. The nude man is using a broadax. An adze is used to hew wood from the top surface of a beam, while a broadax is used to hew wood from the side, as the nude figure is clearly doing. The Tapestry itself illustrates these distinctions among tools in the scenes which show William's men constructing ships prior to the crossing to England, and again when the Duke's troops are shown constructing fortifications after the landing at Pevensey. The Normans inside the hulls of the new vessels are clearly using adzes, while next to them stands a carpenter finishing a log with a broadax. It is not likely, at any rate, that basic tools have changed in shape or function since they were invented. [Fig. 3]

As we proceed, it will become compellingly clear that the Designer of the Bayeux Tapestry juxtaposed this nude, chopping figure and the bearded man in the council scene so that the informed contemporary observer would make no mistake in associating the two as being significant to the narrative.

The association of beard and ax is attested to in the Indo-European family and, indeed, in Germanic languages the words for beard and ax were the same. It is beyond the scope of this present study to investigate all of the associations, but such an investigation will uncover even more precise relationships between pointed beards of the lower chin only and barbed or pointed projections on axes, various weapons, other objects, and even fish.⁴⁰ What immediately concerns us is the juxtaposition of figures given us by the Designer of the Bayeux Tapestry.

On the one hand, it is the ax which tells the observer that Harold is choosing an Englishman, for the ax was to the Anglo-Saxon warrior what the short-sword was to the Roman Legionary and the assegai was to the Zulu *impi*. They identified their bearers with their craft and their nations. If this is so, then what identifies the bearded man as a *particular* Englishman? Quite simply, the bearded man is identified by the nude figure's undertaking. The AS verb for 'hack' is *haccian*,⁴¹ and we may be satisfied with the sound of the name and the verb, coupled with the action of the nude figure. But we must have "grounds more relative than this."

⁴⁰*hake, halberd, angelhaken, pfeilhaken, etc.*

⁴¹WGer. *hakkon; OFris. *to-hakis*; MHGer. *hacken, etc.*

Thus far in our discussion we have established, hopefully and finally, the identity of Aelfgifu as Harold's sister, and have seen some initial and compelling evidence that the bearded figure in William's council chamber is to be associated with the nude, chopping figure appearing in the border beneath him, and is further to be identified as Hakon, Harold's nephew. Let us proceed, now, to a careful scrutiny of additional figures in the Tapestry's border beneath the Council/Aelfgifu scene, in order to further establish Hakon's identity, as the Designer wished it to be established, and from there to a consideration of additional supportive evidence from other parts of the Tapestry's main and peripheral narratives as it pertains to the existence of Anglo-Saxon "code-language."

Since writers have had little success in placing the Aelfgifu episode in the Bayeux Tapestry's main narrative, the action of the cleric accompanying her has received some rather strained interpretations,⁴² but his gesture to Aelfgifu should not, by any means, be considered atypical. He is proffering a sign of peace, as it has been seen countless times over the centuries in Catholic ceremonies, greetings, blessings and sacramental ministrings, most notably in the rites accompanying the sacrament of Confirmation, when the Bishop lightly touches the cheek of the confirmed, a gesture which did not receive its militant overtones until much later than the period under consideration. The pose of the cleric, moreover, is a stylistic one, and is to be seen repeated over and over again in various drawings of the age.

Our attention, however, must here focus on another nude, male figure, mildly erotic, in the border beneath Aelfgifu and the cleric, immediately to the right of the chopping-man, and in exact reverse posture to that of the cleric. Since Eadmer's account of the Hastings prologue states that Earl Harold offered the hand of his sister in marriage to a Norman noble as part of his oath to William, it is possible that the nude figure is there to symbolize Aelfgifu's transition to a future conjugal state.

It may also be argued that the curious mirror representation of the nude figure and the cleric, a pervasive and perhaps interpretively significant technique in the Bayeux Tapestry, occurs to enhance the close structural relationship among the discussion in council, the border figures, and the lady Aelfgifu. In other words, the nude border figure welds for us the several elements of the Council/Aelfgifu episode, and it may be that

⁴²See fn. 27

what seems at first a mirror representation of the nude figure/cleric is rather more primarily a construction of images which serves to direct the reader once again to the left, so that the significance of the preceding scenes will be emphasized. The eye is made to follow naturally in this direction, as it is made to do countless times in the Tapestry as the observer is given direction by the Designer through the use of pointing fingers. Such a technique would almost by necessity have been devised by any artist in the process of designing a continuous narrative of over 200 feet in length!

What is more interesting to consider at this point, however, is the possibility that Hakon is again identified by this second nude figure, this time by a "pun" on the figure's exaggerated genitals.

'Hakon' means, as a proper name, 'high-kin' or 'strong-one', with variants of *Hagan*, *Hagen*, etc., in the various Germanic languages.⁴³ The AS *hagan* was also a word for 'genitals,' as is seen in Aelfric's *Glossary*, *Gignalia*, *hagan*,⁴⁴ and from Pokorny, who suggests the same meaning, and who also defines the MHGer *hagen* as *Zuchtstier*, 'stud-bull'.⁴⁵

The Council/Aelfifu scene and its related borders are the most crucial elements in the Bayeux Tapestry insofar as the hypothesis set forth in this paper is concerned. Let us now look elsewhere in the Tapestry in

⁴³Yonge, *Christian Names*, pp. 364-365.

⁴⁴Aelfric's *Grammar and Gloss* is BM Cotton Julius A. ii, the *Gloss* being ff. 120v-30v, now divided as MS. 47 in the Plantin-Moretus Museum at Antwerp and BM Add. MS. 32246. The fragment in Antwerp contains the gloss for *gignalia*. Junius transcribed the Julius A ii in the mid-17th century, and it is this transcription (Junius 71 in the Bodleian Library) which is cited by Bosworth-Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, i. p. 504. See Ker's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, no. 158, p. 201-202, and Madan's *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. ii, part ii, no. 5182, p. 979. Another Aelfric gloss, *hagan* for *quisquillia*, that is "hawthorne berry" associated with a 'trifle' or 'thing of no value' exists in ME as 'not worth an hawe.' It is interesting to note, in this case, that the ME vernacular for genitals is 'smalle thynges.' See Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Prologue," l. 120 ff., "That they were maked for purgacioun/of urine, and our bothe thinges smale/were eek to knowe a femele from a male,/" for one example. See also "Manciple's Prologue," l. 73, and the "Wife of Bath's Tale," l. 952.

⁴⁵Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (München: Franke Verlag, 1959), I, 522: . . . *unsicher auch ags. hagan 'genitalia', mhd. hagen 'Zuchtstier'*, . . . See also the entry in Webster's *New World Dictionary of the American Language*, College Edition, 1960: "*hatch*, akin to G *Hecken*, to breed, bring forth young and AS *hagan*, the genitals; IE base *kak, male genitalia."

order to find further substantiation for the observations thus far developed. [Refer to Fig. 2].

In describing Harold's departure, Gibbs-Smith states: "Now we see Harold *inexplicably* [emphasis mine] leading a hunting party: he rides in front, holding his hawk on his left wrist, with dogs running on ahead."⁴⁶ Dodwell also comments on the scene, but offers some explanation: ". . . he is shown leaving England with hounds and falcons—not the most obvious equipment for catching fish at sea [Professor Dodwell then refers to the account of the "most reliable of English chroniclers William of Malmesbury"]. Their presence accords perfectly with the Norman story that Harold was sent by King Edward to promise William the crown for these are gifts intended for William."⁴⁷

On the purely literal level, the presence of the hawk (there is only one initially) and hounds should present no problem: hawks and hounds were common and complementary gifts among nobles (a custom borne out by the Tapestry itself since Guy, Harold and William seem to exchange them), and hawking was an extremely popular sport among the English. Indeed, no long journey would have been taken without them, since hunting diverted the tedious passage of time along the route. It should be borne in mind, therefore, that when Harold left Edward at Winchester he still had to travel a fair distance overland, through traditional Saxon hunting forest, to Bosham on the south coast. The nature of Harold's business, moreover, need not have been considered so urgent that he should have had to proceed with undue haste. The Bayeux Tapestry, at this point, fairly sounds with the noise of happy fellows going on a trip, anxious to crowd as much pleasure into their business as possible, and there seems to have been enough time before their embarkation at Bosham for them to indulge in some worship and revelry.

On another level, however, we see in the hawk and hounds indications pertaining to the hostages, and these must be considered as additional, tangible evidence that Harold was travelling to Normandy to secure their release.

The hawk on Harold's wrist might particularly identify Hakon, and generally, both hostages. Our key to understanding these relationships lies in the practice and the terminology of the ancient art of falconry. To 'fly

⁴⁶Gibbs-Smith, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, fig. 16.

⁴⁷Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French Secular Epic," p. 554, fn. 33.

at hack⁴⁸ is a falconer's term and refers to the state of partial liberty and captivity in which a hawk is kept before it becomes a full-fledged hunter. Hakon is again identified, but the relationship of the sport to the full situation goes deeper. Even if one can argue correctly that the term 'hack' was not used in eleventh century England in this sense, it would still remain certain that the manner in which hawks were trained was practiced as it is today.

The only hawks 'hacked' are *eyeasses*, or those hawks captured from the nest or *eyrie*. While the hawk is 'at hack,' he is kept in a *hack-house* or *mews*, being allowed to come and go at will, while being fed at consistent times each day from a board called a *hack-board*. The relationship thus becomes clear.

Both Hakon and Wulfnoth are *at hack*: they are neither captive nor free, but are, as wards of Duke William of Normandy, allowed to live lives of relative freedom in the Norman court and, as the sons of noblemen, they are given whatever amenities are due to them. They are, to extend the metaphor, in the care of a falconer. They were, in addition, taken "from their nests", having been delivered to William in their infancy by King Edward, who received them from the Godwines.⁴⁹

Two highly significant items, relative to our analysis of the hostages and to hawks and hawking, must be considered as adjuncts to the scene

⁴⁸As *haec*. This is any type of casement, gate, wicket, frame or door which may be partially left open. The meaning would be metaphorical when applied to hawks *at hack*, being related directly to the construction and purpose of the *hack house* or *mews*. There is no reason to believe that the word was not used in this sense from the earliest time in England. *Hack* would have been a highly specialized sporting term, which would not have found its way into print except in a treatise on the sport, and perhaps not even then, just as many modern metaphorical sporting terms do not. The term appears in Latin as *volare huc et illuc* in Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, ed. and trans. Casey A. Wood (Stanford: Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 128-130, *et passim*. See also Gerald Lascelles, *The Art of Falconry* (London: Neville Spearman, 1892), pp. 28-50, and George Turberville, *The Booke of Faulconrie or Hawking. The English Experience*, 93 (New York: Da Capo, 1969), pp. 170-176 (contains the earliest reference to *hack-board*).

⁴⁹Hakon was probably not born before 1046, the year of Swegen's campaign against Gruffydd ap Rhyderch, after which he sent for Eadgifu (*ASC*, Abingdon, 1046). Swegen died in 1052, and Godwine in 1053. Jumieges describes Wulfnoth as being an adolescent when Harold left him behind in Normandy (Marx *GJ*, p. 191), some twelve years after he was delivered to William. [This description of Wulfnoth occurs specifically in the Ordericus Vitalis "Interpolation" to the Jumieges *Gesta*. See Fn. 38].

which shows Harold's departure from England, and to another scene, further on in the Tapestry, when hawks re-appear, which shows Harold solemnizing his promises to William. In the former, appearing in the border directly beneath Harold, are two winged figures with the heads of boys. [Fig. 2] These figures do not recur in the Tapestry, and their appearance at this critical moment, together with their juxtaposition to each other and to the hawk, hounds, and Harold in the main narrative, seem to create a solid context, thus lending further support to the hypothesis that we are meant to recognize Hakon and Wulfnoth as the dominant reasons for Harold's journey to the continent.

In the latter, appearing in a "cut-out" beneath the palace at Bayeux, are two perched hawks disposed in such a manner as to resemble remarkably the earliest drawings of hawks *at hack*.⁵⁰ [Fig. 4] The observer was no doubt meant to be reminded of the reasons for Harold's journey, at the precise time when the Earl is confronted with sacred relics upon which he is to swear the fateful oath, and when his reasons for being in Normandy in the first place have fallen by the way.

Before concluding this essay, I would like to offer my interpretation of the Council/Aelfgifu scene, based, as it must be, upon the preceding observations. William, Harold and their retainers, en route from Ponthieu, arrive at William's palace and, after some time has passed, hold council. William is seated, being advised, in a classically posed manner, by one of his nobles. The atmosphere is intense. William is turned to hear, while Harold gestures excitedly. He brings Hakon toward him, while the cleric commends Aelfgifu and her promise of betrothal; and Hakon's release is secured.

It is possible that Aelfgifu's betrothal to a Norman noble was devised by Harold as a gesture of good-will, in return for which he hoped to secure, with as little complication as impossible, the release of Hakon and Wulfnoth. The political implications of such a manoeuvre are not to be taken lightly. Chance, however, brought Harold first to Guy, and William was not one to be blind to such an advantage, especially since England now had a viable heir apparent in Earl Harold. Harold was no small threat to the Norman sovereign and his ambitions, and Edward's old

⁵⁰These drawings are Persian, as we may see in the collection of Frederick II. See *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*, Wood translation, p. 254, an illustration of a Persian chest in the Capella Palatina, Royal Palace, Palermo.

promise to William might no longer have seemed as valid as it did years before. No matter how well Harold was treated in the Norman court, and no matter in what measure of honour William held him, he was, nevertheless, a virtual prisoner, and not fool enough to believe that he would ever see England again unless he did what William wished. So Harold took the oath to William. Whether or not he was tricked into it is a matter of little relevance, since he probably did not mean to keep it.

That Harold took the oath under duress receives support in several of the Tapestry's border incidents. In the lower border of the Tapestry, beneath the messengers of Duke William, there is a curious representation of a chained bear being harassed by an armed soldier. Scenes such as this have long been considered mere representations of eleventh century social life supposedly included to add a kind of "flavour" to the Tapestry, but it is now reasonable to contemplate that they are rather more concretely bound to the main narrative. The "sport" of bear-baiting for instance, was an English sport of some popularity, and it may well be that here the Designer wished to have the chained bear stand for Harold. Indeed, there is no doubt that a bear in such a position would be under duress, and it is more interesting to note that the armed soldier antagonizing him is distinctly Norman, as one may gather by the identifying haircut.

The fables of the Bayeux Tapestry have been discussed in several studies, and it has been theorized in some that the morals of the various fables have some relationship to the Tapestry's main narrative. Most of these studies, however, suggest that the morals of the fables serve to emphasize Harold's perfidy, rather than Norman coercion.⁵¹ I treat the use of the Tapestry's fables in another study, but remarks on one of them, hitherto unnoticed, are of interest here.

The *Augustana Recension of Aesopic Fables*⁵² contains a fable called "The Stag and the Lion in a Cave," and this fable may be seen, perhaps

repeated, in the lower borders of the Tapestry which accompany Harold's capture by Guy and his subsequent rescue by William. The stag, attempting to flee hunters, runs into a cave where he is seized and eaten by a lion. Perry's translation of the moral is, "How ill-fated am I, who, while fleeing from men, have put myself in the power of a savage beast." A modern version of the moral might well be, "out of the frying pan into the fire." The application of the moral of this fable to the situation depicted in the Tapestry needs little elaboration to clarify the inference.

In summary, this discussion has shown that the Designer of the Bayeux Tapestry, as indicated through the supportive account of Eadmer, attempted to articulate a Saxon point of view toward the events of 1064-1066, and that he was successful in doing so through the use of various covert devices in the main body and in the borders of the Tapestry.⁵³ This Saxon point of view is seen to differ from the prevailing Norman view in three aspects: first, that Harold travelled to Normandy not under orders from King Edward to confirm the promise of succession to William, but for the sole purpose of securing the release of Hakon and Wulfnoth; secondly, that Harold agree to betroth his sister to a Norman noble; and third, that he took his oath to William under duress.⁵⁴

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⁵¹This is not to say, however, that all of the figures in the Tapestry's peripheral narrative contain hidden meanings, since such consistency would have violated the very logic of code. Some of the representations would have undoubtedly been left to mean nothing beyond themselves, as common aspects of design, thus securing for the Designer a greater possibility for successful deception. It is hazardous, at any rate, to suggest that the borders of the Bayeux Tapestry, produced at a time when allegorical meaning was expected to be contained in works of art, and, indeed, when observers were liable to be disappointed at its absence, are there for pure decoration.

⁵⁴The substance of this study was delivered publicly at: The McCormack Lecture, St. Vincent College, November 1976; The Richardson Series, Duquesne University, April, 1977; and the PMR Conference, Medieval Law and Politics Section, Villanova University, September, 1978.

⁵¹For such views see C. R. Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French Secular Epic," and William Richard Lethaby, "The Perjury at Bayeux," *Archaeological Journal*, 74 (1917), 136-138.

⁵²Ben Edwin Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1965), p. 435, no. 76. For important studies on the Bayeux Tapestry's fables see: Jeanne Abraham, "Les Bordures de la tapisserie-broderie de Bayeux," *Normannia*, 2 (1929) 483-518; H. Chefneux, "Les Fables dans la tapisserie de Bayeux," *Romania*, 60 (1934), 1-35, 153-194; C. R. Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French Secular Epic; Leon Herrmann, *Les fables antiques de la broderie de Bayeux*, Collection Latomus, 69 (Brussels: Latomus, 1964).