



Welcome Back

- *“If, as I believe, it is impossible for us to approach the Tapestry in exactly the same spirit as the contemporaries of those who commissioned and created it, we can nevertheless strive to enter that spirit and bring it nearer to us through a close and careful scrutiny of its details.”*

Sylvette Lemagne, conservator

Anglo Saxon Oath

- By the Lord before whom this sanctuary is holy, I will to (name) be true and faithful and love all which he loves and shun all which he shuns, according to the laws of God and the order of the world. Nor will I ever with will or action, through word or deed, do anything which is displeasing to him, on condition that he will hold to me as I shall deserve it, and that he will perform everything as it was in our agreement when I submitted myself to him and chose his will.”

Patrick Lowinger, Fordham U

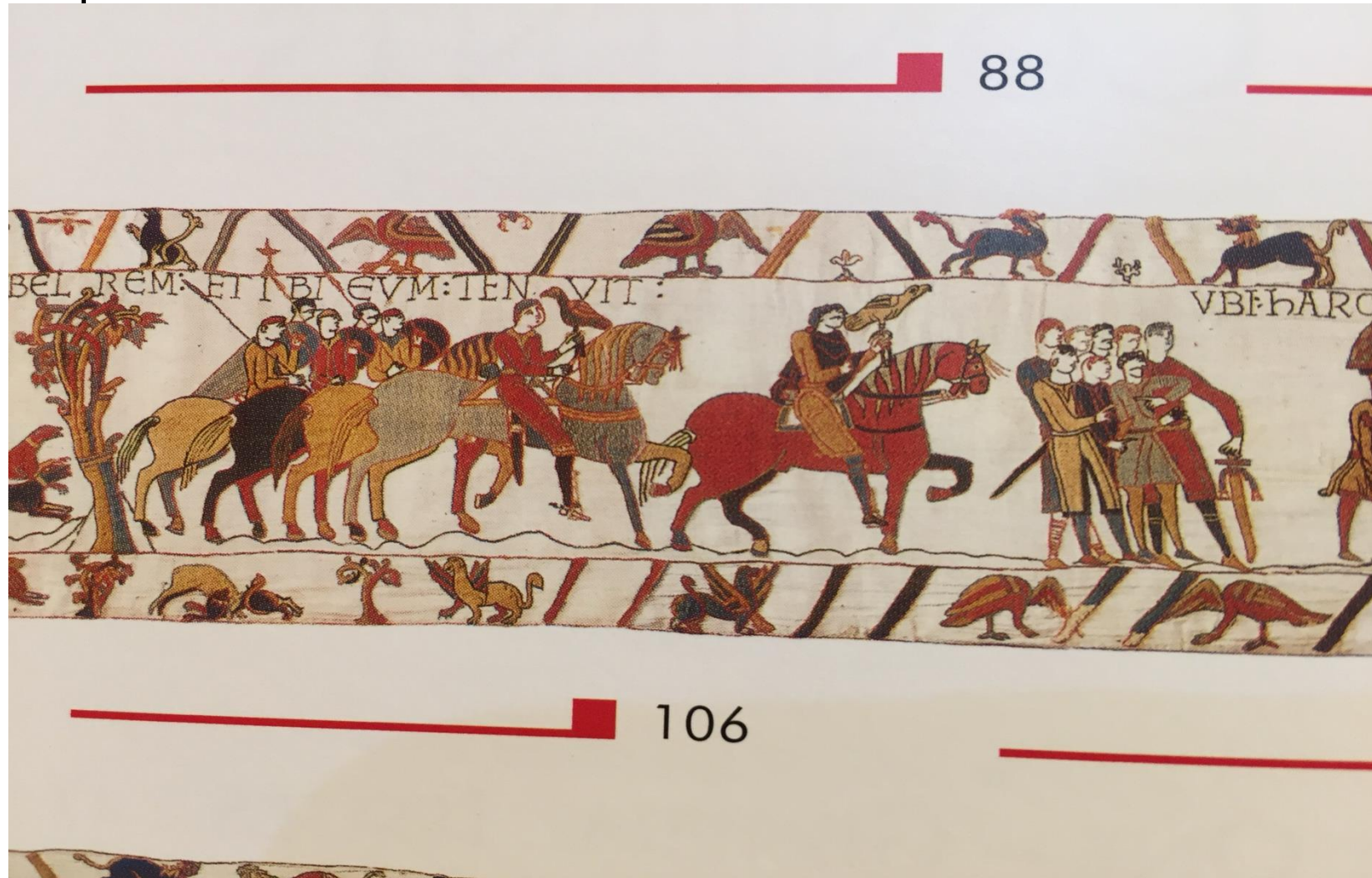
First Half (1064-Jan 1066)

Quick Review

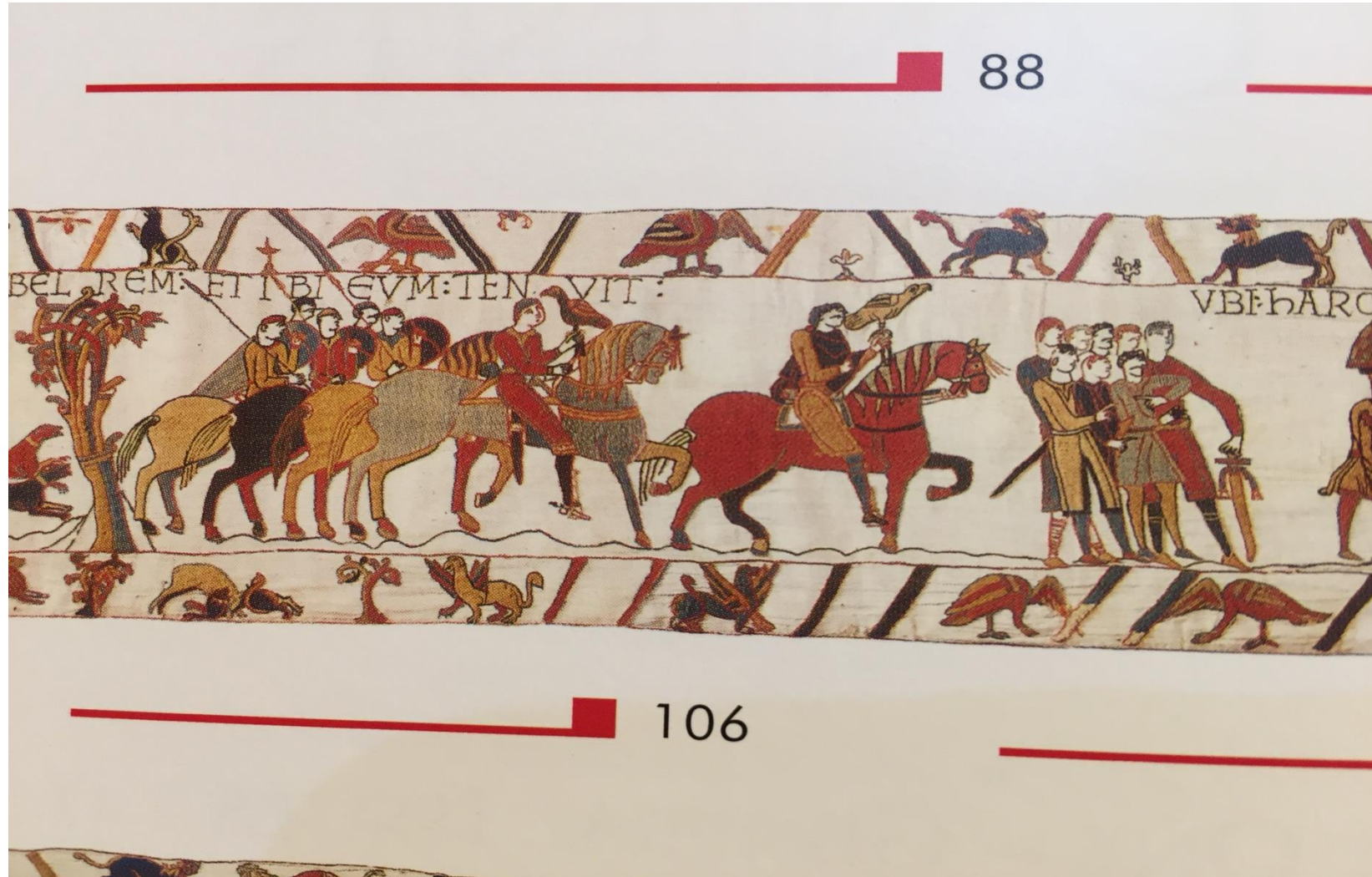


Scene One: "King Edward, where Harold": Five elements: dividers; margins; central image; text. Intended to be "read."

Harold as a respected leader



Harold goes off on ill-fated mission to Brittany, behaves well, and is rescued by William





Pourparlers officiels de Guillaume et d'Harold.

Negotiations between William and Harold.

Offizielle Verhandlungen zwischen Wilhelm und Harold.

William negotiates Harold's ransom



Harold as heroic.
Here Duke Harold carried them from the sand.



Scenes 21-4: "Where Harold took an oath to Duke William": **Language. Latin. Central Statement of Tapestry. Critical Event by which Harold will be judged. (PLUS Character differentiation. Layered Meaning. Multiple conversations. Multiple perspectives (judgements)).**

... ET VENIT AD EDWARDUM REGEM.



SCENE 25

...and came to King Edward.

Scene 25 "And came to King Edward" : (Character Ambiguity: Engagement of "Reader" -> Note facial expressions and posture - Is Harold being forthcoming?)

"Audience" know the general story, but might be guessing here, as they try to understand Harold here (to be discussed during story analysis.)

Sudden illness and Death of King Edward

(Hic) EADWARDUS REX IN LECTO ALLOQUITUR FIDELES, ET HIC DEFUNCTUS EST.



SCENES 26-27-28

Here King Edward speaks with his followers on his bed, and here he died.

"Here King Edward, in his bed, addresses his faithful followers," "and here he died." Plot and Character and tone. Note Edward's hand and Harold's hand. Is this the "Dying Voice," appointing Harold as next king? Clearly grief Emotion and change. For "plot, note that order seems transposed—probably for convenience? Possible design complication?"

Artistry: EMBROIDERY AND INDIVIDUAL FACES

“Embroidery is not a medium which allows scope for the finer touches of physical or psychological portraiture. What matters is that the key figures appear in the right place and are readily identifiable, something which is best achieved with the aid of distinctive attributes of clothing, weaponry, or setting.”

(There are 626 people on the tapestry. Only 15 are named.)

Lucien Musset



Scene 28: "Here King Edward speaks to his followers from bed." Emotion and character and mood differentiation. For plot, note that Edward may be giving Harold "the dying voice."



Scene 28: "And here he dies." Emotion evident in facial expressions. Maybe even in roughness (e.g. bishop's left hand.) Power in the simplicity, especially given the upstairs/downstairs depiction. Power of the words: "defunctus est."



- Scene 26: “Here the corpse of King Edward is borne to the church of Apostle St. Peter.” Deliberate disproportion? Probably Intentional? Celebration of new cathedral, being blessed by God, and about to receive the remains of King Edward.

HIC DEDERUNT HAROLDO CORONAM REGIS.



SCENE 29

Here they gave the king's crown to Harold.

- Scene 29: "Here they gave the king's crown to Harold": COLOR!—and—Mid-way, so likely "protected" in folding or rolling. Woolen thread.
- STITCHES: **Stem** to outline characters; **Laid** (or couched) to fill in the clothes and bodies; **Chain** for the letters; and **Split** for letter E in dederunt
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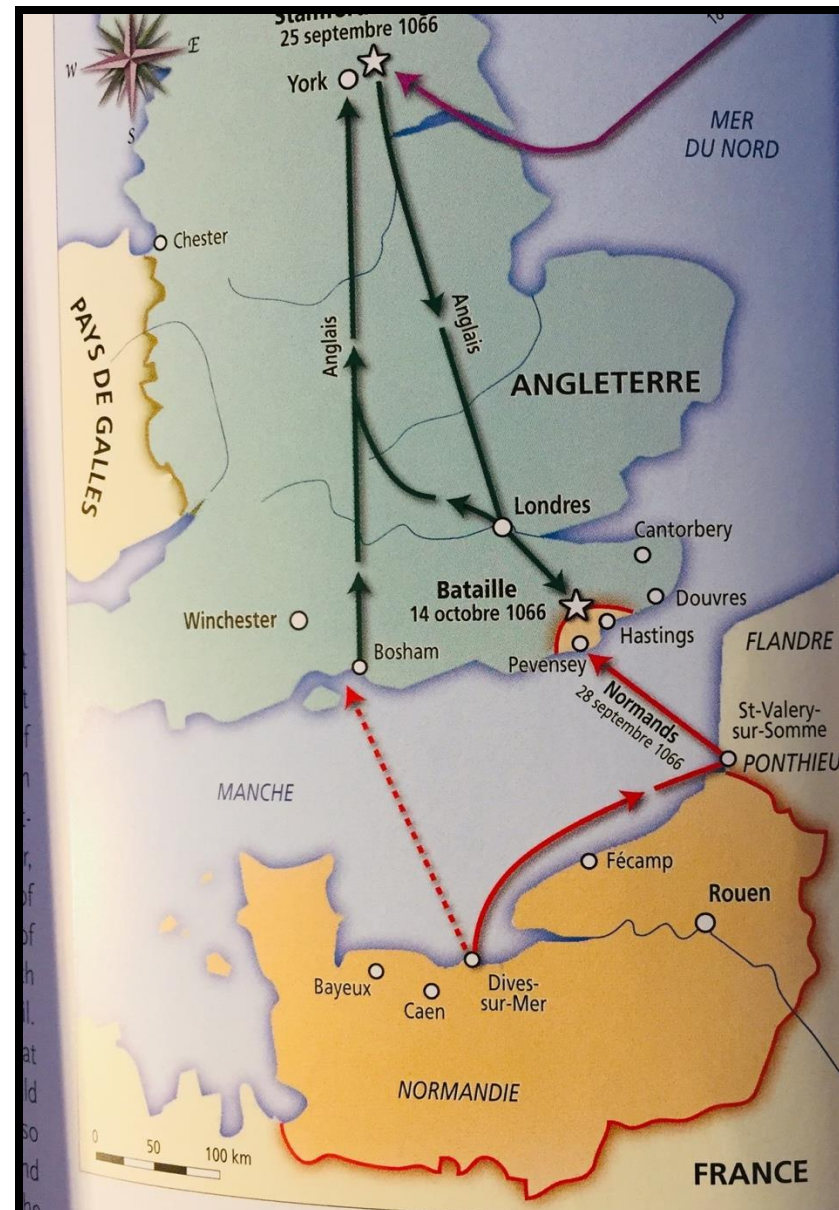


- Scene 31-2-3: "They wonder at the star." Magical elements. Line up with Plot and theme and character. Balance of persons supporting Harold (on left) and concerned about mystical meaning of his having been crowned, yet next scene is Harold on throne, with Edward's crown and the designation "REX."

“Part Two”

Sept-Oct 1066

Troop Movements to the Battle of Hastings: The Normans (Red) Anglo-Saxons (Green)



↓ As soon as they arrive on English soil, the Normans set about pillaging (scenes 40-41).

was defeated and killed. The Tapestry shows nothing of these events. It seems likely that William waited for Harald to

↑ Map showing military movements in September and October 1066.



Warfare in Early Middle Ages

Warrior Class

Lineage within "aristocracy"
Duty presumed by landlords ("lords" and Vassals)
Training from youth
Physical strength

Four standard weapons (very few existing examples)

- Sword
- Ax
- Spear
- Mace

Occasional Resources

- Horses
- Archers with Bows and Arrows

William learns Harold has been crowned king.
He orders preparation for war. The building of a fleet begins

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182

... IN MAGNO NAVIGIO...



SCENE 38

...in a great ship ...

Scene 38: "Here Duke William crossed the sea in a great ship." Nautical Scenes: Artistry: Top border sacrificed to allow for the glory of the sails. Density: color; detail; care in stitchery. Note horses as well as men. Particularity of the ships and crew.

VENIT AD PEVENE SÆ.



39

... and came to Pevensey.

Scene 39: "And came to Pevensey." Artistry: Effort at proportion, distance, perspective, motion. William's ship distinguished by mast, bow head, stern figure.

Artistic Authenticity

“In the embroidery of the tapestry, there is a real sense of the sea, of open waters really traversed by the fleets, and not merely of coast-hugging vessels or particular incidents. As with the cavalry action in the battle scene, one feels here that rare gift, the blending of first-hand experiences with authentic artistic inspiration in a rendering of a great event in its full breadth. And yet this neither detracts from the historical value of the images nor from their narrative impact: each tableau deserves consideration in its own right.”

Lucien Musset, p. 65

Let's look at full naval scene on tapestry.





Here is Wadard. Here meat is cooked ...

Scene 41-2: "Here the meat is cooked ." Language: Latin (understood on both sides of channel. Appropriate for object to be displayed in a church. Extreme simplicity. Captions only. "Reader" looks for the details, which are found in the graphics. In fact, this is a pause in the action—just before the battle. (Represents normal life as soldiers wait for command.)

... ET HIC MINISTRARE

RUNT MINISTRI. HIC FECERUNT PRANDIUM...



SCENES 42-43

...and here servants serve it. Here they have a meal ...

"And here servants serve it. Here they have a meal." Artistry: Setting, Energy, motion, color, clarity, human dimension. Considerable amount of information conveyed in graphic form.

OPUS CIBU(M) ET POTUM BENE

DICIT. ODO EPISCOPUS. WILLELM. ROTBERT.



“And here the bishop blesses the food and drink.” “Bishop Odo. William. Robert.”
(They are half-brothers.) Bishop Odo presented in optimal light.



Scene 48: “And they came to fight against King Harold” Understatement. Plot shift. Fully armed men in battle formation. (Horses were key to battle.) Horses in front of these have begun to gallop. Artistry: Color provides 3rd dimension. Above a scene that made Victorians blush (and airbrush.)



Estimated Fighting Forces

- Anglo Saxons (English) 7,000
- Normans (French) 7,000

Let's look at full cavalry scene on tapestry. By
Biblioteca Augustana

https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost11/Bayeux/bay_tama.html



Scene 56; "Here the French fight." Artistry: Horses differentiated with color and manes. Forward motion, horses and men. Archers



SCENE 50

He tells Harold about Duke William's army.

Scene 50: "He tells Harold about Duke William's Army." Triple trees: shift to final section--the battle scenes

LELM DUX. E(USTA)TIUS.



Here is Duke William. Eustace.

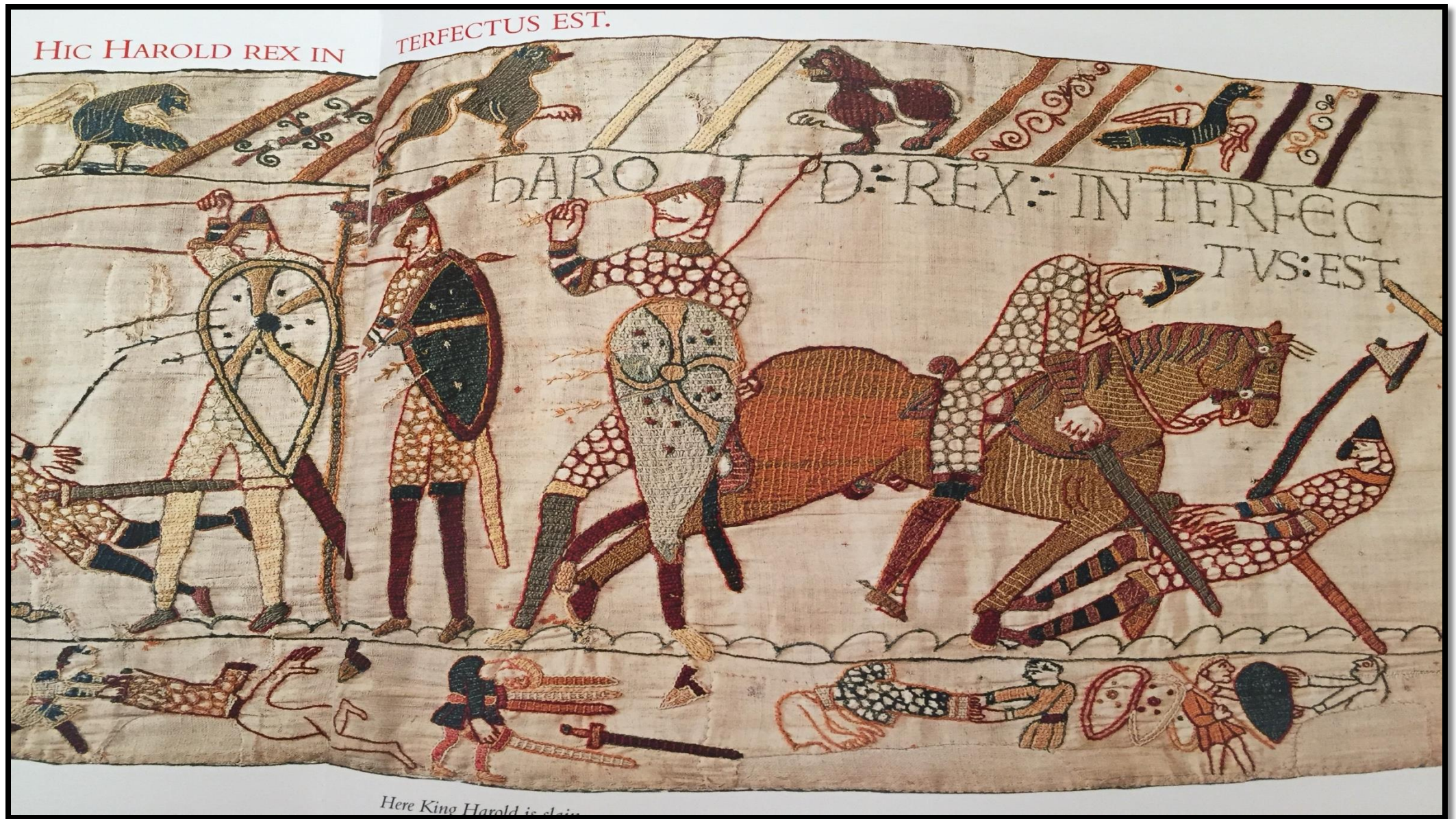
“Here is Duke William.” “Eustace.” Artistry: Character differentiation. (In earlier scene, William has encouraged men
”Here Duke William tells his soldiers to prepare manfully and wisely for the battle against the English army.” Here, he
turns to reveal himself to inspire men in the final push. Also, re plot, archers, below, were key to plot (battle success).



Fierce fighting; English hold hill, French attack from the field. Casualties mount.

Estimated time in battle

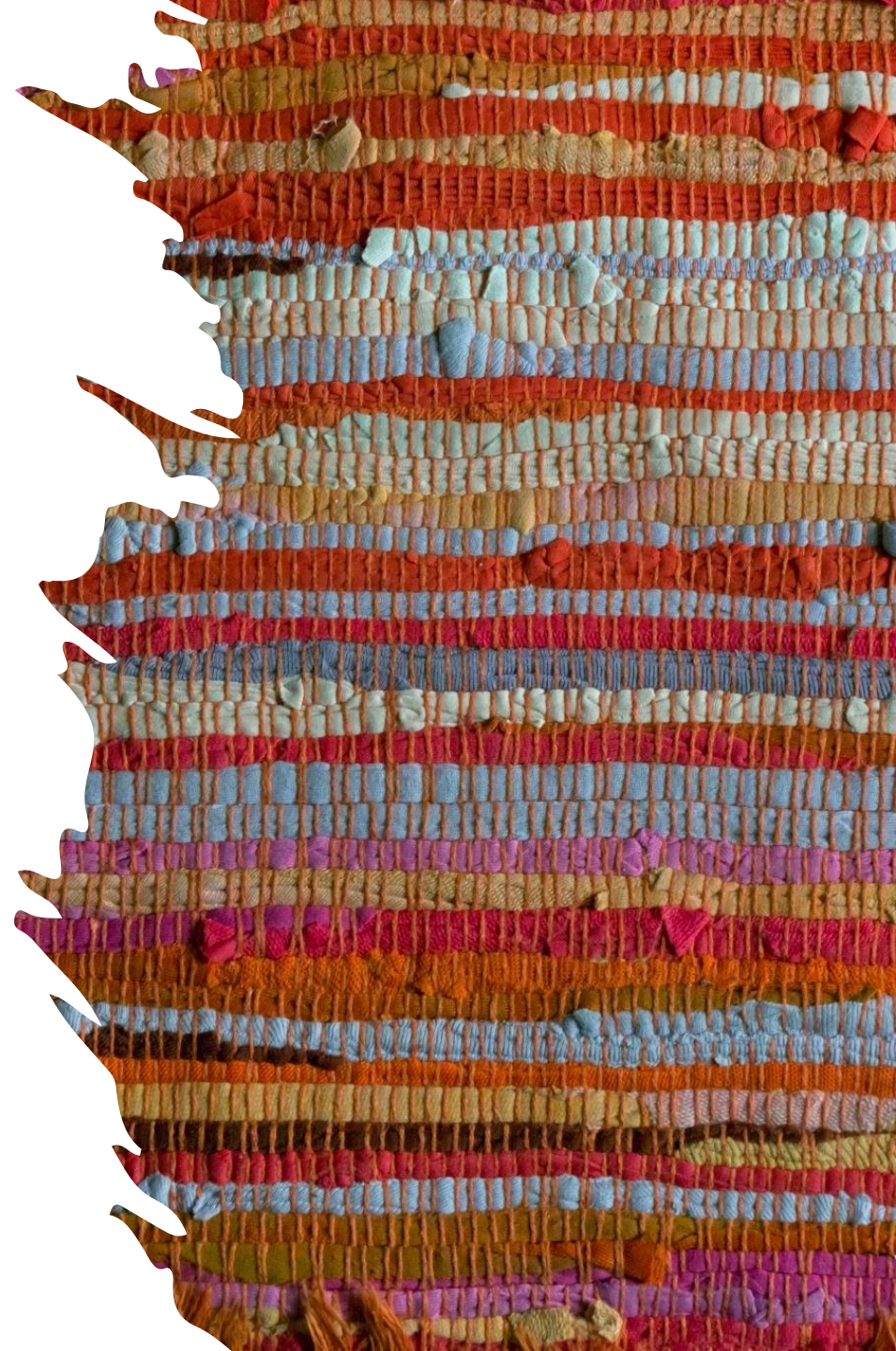
- Fighting probably commenced at 9:00 am, October 14, and continued until nightfall.



Here King Harold is slain.

Let's Watch a Dramatic Rendering by Potion Pictures

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtGoBZ4D4_E

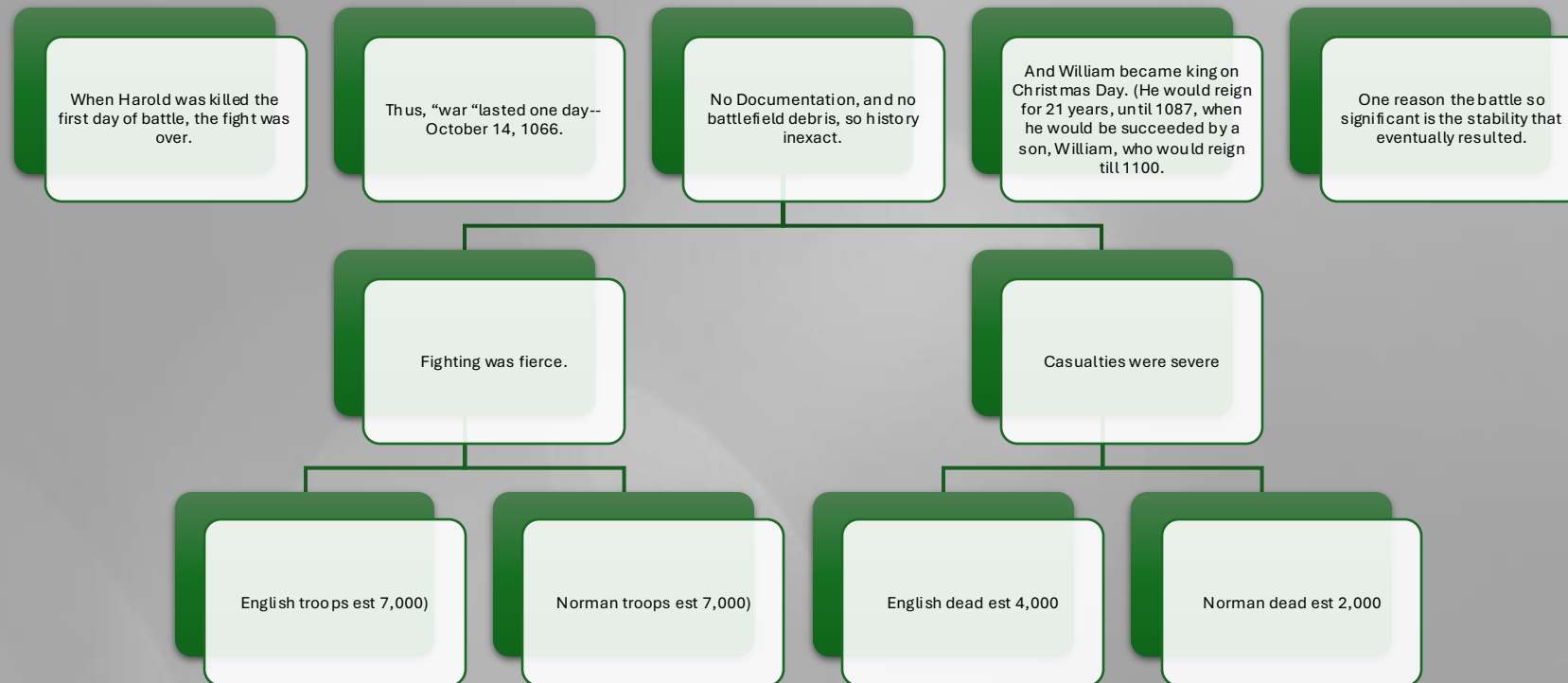


The Aftermath

The Aftermath

- “Experts reckon that the English army did not reach the battlefield until the evening of Friday 13 October, and that the Norman forces did not take up their positions until dawn of the following day. Battle was joined at about 9:00, and the English put up a fierce resistance until about 17:00. The subsequent butchery went on until nightfall. This was, therefore, a particularly long and bitter struggle, which must have cost thousands of lives. Norman losses are estimated at between a quarter and a third of those present, and English casualties must have been far heavier.
- The Normans spent Sunday burying their dead, and then regrouped at Hastings before resuming the advance into England. William headed first for Dover and Canterbury, and then made for Winchester, bypassing but also cutting off London, which he returned by agreement on Christmas Eve. His coronation took place at Westminster on Christmas Day, a little less than a year after Edward’s death.”
 - Lucien Musset, p. 264

Because Single Objective at Hastings: Succession (“peaceful transfer of power”)





“Battle scene, with King Harold falling back to left in his saddle as he is struck by an arrow through the eye.” After Cooper; 1840 mezzotint. BM



https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1890-1008-17
From the English Perspective

Reality

- William moved about country subduing all local governments and gaining fealty.
- Norman gentry moved to the cities, speaking French, intermarrying.
- Country grew more unified.
- Languages converged and "English" emerged.
- New cross-channel relationship developed.

Questions or
Comments
before we go
to discuss
Narrative –
Story Telling?



Elements of Narrative

- Setting
- Characters
 - Roles / Values
 - Relationships
 - Stasis or Change
- Plot
 - Pace and Tone of Revelation
 - Action / Conflict
- Language
- Theme

Setting

- Remarkable array:
 - Buildings:—castles, cathedral, churches
 - Interiors: dining areas, bedroom, church, kitchen
 - Exteriors: towns, beaches, woods, carpentry shop, battlefield
 - Other: Ships, animals

Character

- Primarily the three principals: Edward, Harold, William.
- Little in terms of language.
- Costume, posture, status, relationships, choices made, treatment of others, behavior within tradition and expectations.
- Attitude of others—expected, required, chosen.
- In one instance, “spirit world.”

Language

- Latin (common in Normandy and England; appropriate for church setting).
- Narrative compression.
- Neutral but intentional.
- Little commentary. Adjectives and adverbs extremely rare.
- Generalized. Of the 626 plus figures, only 15 are “named.”
- “Readers” expected to deduce meaning from the images, aided only slightly by words.
- Sometimes vital information conveyed.

Overview of narrative art

- “The prose is extremely direct, consisting of short statements which are tied closely to the pictorial narrative by such words as *ubi* (where); *hic* (here) and *iste* (a strongly demonstrative pronoun, ‘that one.’)”
- “Despite the almost epic character of many episodes, the author hardly ever invokes poetic models. ... At almost every point he uses the exact, even technical word. ...
- All the indications are, then, that this author was not writing for the sort of professionally literate readers who would have appreciated a more artful text, and that he had a becomingly modest sense of what was wanted from what might be called the Tapestry’s librettist.
- ... But the Bayeux Tapestry manages to be at once a work of art and, to some extent, a work of literature.
- “There are no obvious ethnic prejudices evident in the drawings. Victors and vanquished alike appear as men of valour, and indeed look no sense of angles of light in conflict with agents of darkness.”
- Lucien Musset

Overview of Artistry

- Overall Design: (“genius of guiding spirit”) Sylvette Lemagnen
 - Exceptional Length
 - Consistency and Variety of Images
 - Predictability and Surprise
- Aesthetic
 - Harmony and Freshness and Warmth of colors
 - Compassionate humanness
- Execution
 - Exquisite workmanship



The Meaning of Relics and Oaths

- Centrality of The oath:
- For artistry The Bayeux Stitch (the laid stitch) a closer look.
- "Vigor"
- Difficulty
- Tolerance for "imperfection"
(Probably multiple hands?);

A Manuscript Created at Mont St Michel

Note design elements, link of beauty and pragmatism, words and images blended.

(One proposed “designer” resided in Mont Saint Michel before begin moved to St. Augustine at Canterbury.)



Also from Mt Saint Michel

Note colors, animals, overall originality.

This text remains at a library in Normandy—"Bibliothèque d'Avranches."



Scene famous for lower border.



Borders sometimes add social history, without language.

History OF the Tapestry: “Little Short of Miraculous”

- Probably completed 1077; probably displayed St. John's Day, July 14
- 1077-1476, little known, but probably displayed annually. Probably stored in a cedar chest.
- 1476: Described for the first time (or at least in a document we have)
 - *“A very long and narrow hanging of linen, embroidered with figures and inscriptions representing the conquest of England, which is hung around the nave of the church (cathedral) on Feast of Relics and throughout the Octave” (July 1-8).”*
- *18th Century, still displayed once a year.*
- *“Re-discovered” (for better and worse)*
- *1724, two reproductions produced (in print books).*
- *1792, narrow escape. During French Revolution, revolutionaries wanted to use it to cover a wagon). Administrator of Bayeux returned it to the cathedral, where it was confiscated and catalogued.*

History OF the Tapestry “Little Short of Miraculous”

- *1803, Napoleon, thinking of invading England, had it brought to Paris, where he displayed at “Napoleon Museum” (now Louvre), Nov 1803-Feb 1804. Returned to Bayeux.*
- *1840, put on list of historical monuments.*
- *1842, moved to Bayeux library and librarians put in charge.*
- *1913, moved to residence of dean of cathedral.*
- *1941, Hitler had brought to Sarthe—likely to be brought to Berlin.*
- *1944, August, following expulsion of German Army, exhibited at Louvre; returned to Bayeux.*
- *1982-3 examined, then returned to new home, new museum.*
- *2022-4 to be displayed in England under still-evolving arrangements.*
- *New museum being planned.*

Tone/ Theme

- This may be the most interesting, skillful element of all: **Neutrality and invitation to all viewers to appreciate all persons.**
 - No judgement of William or Harold
 - Neither criticism nor glorification
 - No judgement of Norman or English soldiers
 - Treated as parallel
 - Almost as if the outcome was fortune (as-it-was-meant-to-be), but not sacred intervention (which would imply judgement)
- Respect
 - Never word “usurper” re either man.
 - Throne changed but governance carried on.
 - No mention of William’s subsequent exploits.
- Impact enormous: language, culture, relationships.
- Acceptance by English (now as well as then, it seems, as there is an “English version,” school children are taught it with enthusiasm, and the scholarship is “bland”—not of victor and victim.)

Simplicity amid Complexity: Romanesque

“The tapestry rigidly avoids anything which might distract it from its purpose, eschewing anecdote and embellishment, the merely pious and the merely poetic alike. In common with the great Romanesque masterpieces built soon after the Conquest, it achieves its effects by the most direct methods.”

Lucien Musset, p. 33



SCENE 1

King Edward. Where Harold ...

“King Edward, where Harold:” Condition of the tapestry ends. Care / skill / decisions / restoration over the centuries.



One can see why some English folk say “Britain’s first comic strip.”



New Yorker Cover

- By Rea Irwin, July 15, 1944

What We Will Take Away

In formal terms

- Understanding of Events Depicted and the individuals involved.
- Appreciation of the Work's Artistic Merits.
- Awareness of how and why it was created and how it has survived.
- Overall Recognition of Significance to the Historical Record

Or, in simpler terms:

- What is going on here?
- Why is it a big deal?
- What's most important for me to know?
- Is it worth visiting?

Curious 20th Century Tone?

“We, once conquered by William, have now set free the Conqueror’s native land.”

- Inscription on memorial of British military cemetery , erected in Bayeux by British government as tribute to the Commonwealth soldiers who perished in the battle of Normandy during the summer of 1944. (Commonwealth soldiers arrived at Bayeux on June 8, 1944.)

- Bayeuxmuseum.com

Common scholarly Assertions I Share

A miracle of preservation

Unparalleled account of Western
European Civilization in 11th Century

Invaluable record of architecture,
agriculture, shipbuilding, navigation

Critical rendering of daily life among men
in various circumstances

Remarkably neutral post-conflict report
of event of significant consequence.

To Which I Add

Remarkably ambitious design

The horror of warfare not avoided

Skillful AND touchingly human rendering by hand

Surprising relevance to contemporary life.

Repeated thanks to Lucien Musset, Sylvette Lemegne, Pierre Pouet, Francois Neveux et al.

What Do You Think?

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