

Textual errors in Serlo of Bayeux's poem about the capture of Bayeux¹

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Abstract

Current editions of Serlo of Bayeux's poem about the capture of Bayeux in 1105 contain numerous errors. The most important editions are those of Wright and Brial; I therefore focus on their editions in this article. I provide an example of an error in the Latin text printed by Wright, which probably results from the incorrect interpretation of a gloss. I then turn to Brial's editions and provide some examples of various types of error in his works. I then discuss errors common to Brial and Wright and propose solutions. Finally, I discuss an unsolved problem.

Les éditions du poème de Serlon de Bayeux sur la prise de Bayeux en 1105 contiennent un grand nombre d'erreurs. Les éditions les plus importantes ont été écrites par Wright et Brial; par conséquent, ces éditions seront examinées dans cet article. Après avoir d'abord donné un exemple d'une erreur de Wright, issue probablement de la mauvaise interprétation d'une glose, je mettrai en évidence quelques-unes de celles qui ont été commises par Brial, qui sont de divers types. J'examine ensuite les erreurs faites par les deux éditeurs et je suggère quelques solutions. J'examine enfin un problème qui n'est pas résolu.

Key Words

Serlo of Bayeux, capture of Bayeux, Latin verse, Leonine hexameters, rhyme, manuscript BL Cotton Vitellius A. xii, Medieval Latin

Serlon de Bayeux, prise de Bayeux, vers latin, hexamètres léonins, rime, manuscrit BL Cotton Vitellius A. xii, latin médiéval

1. Introduction

¹ In memory of Leonard Marshall. I would like to thank Elisabeth van Houts, Marie-Agnès Lucas-Avenel and the editorial committee of *Tabularia* for their comments. I am especially grateful to Michael Reeve, who provided numerous corrections and suggestions. Any remaining errors are mine alone.

No current edition of Serlo of Bayeux's poem on the capture of Bayeux is free from textual errors in the Latin. Some of these can be traced back to scribal errors in the ms, whilst others are due to subsequent editors. I will show why some readings are impossible or unlikely and attempt to suggest solutions to these problems.² By illustrating the deficiencies of the editions currently available, I hope to provide some justification for a new edition of Serlo's poetry, a project on which I am currently working with Edoardo D'Angelo and Marie-Agnès Lucas-Avenel.³ I will give examples even of minor errors in current editions in order to provide an indication of the mistakes that mar them.

The poem is found in only one ms (BL Cotton Vitellius A. xii, fols. 110v-112v), in which it is introduced by the following rubric: *Incipiunt uersus Serlonis de capta Baiocensium ciuitate*. It is part of a short booklet (fols. 109-135) that was written c. 1200 and contains poems from the late XIth and early XIIth centuries.⁴ The hand is protogothic (though various other names, e.g. pregothic, have been proposed):⁵ angularity is visible in, for example, the forms of *r*, *m*, *n* and *o*; the shaft of *a* is generally vertical; *f* and half-uncial (long and straight) *s* stand on the baseline; half-uncial *s* is the usual form, but uncial *s* is occasionally to be found in final position in short, abbreviated words;⁶ both the uncial and half-uncial (upright) forms of *d* occur; there are two forms of *r*; both tironian *et* and the ampersand appear; abbreviations are relatively frequent, including *g* for *con*, *s* for *sed*, *÷* for *est*, *c̄* for *cum* and *n̄* for *non*; *de* is found with the *e* attached to the top of an uncial *d*, a XIIth century development;⁷ the general abbreviational mark is a superscript line that curves upwards on the right; the final downward stroke of *h* turns towards the left; *ct* and *st* are ligatured; minims have feet that hook upwards and to the right in a fine stroke; there is little evidence of biting; the punctuation marks found are the punctus (.) level with the baseline, the punctus versus (;), the punctus elevatus and (with a similar form) the punctus interrogativus; red and green are used for initials; damage to the top of each leaf makes it impossible to see whether the scribe has written above or below the top line.⁸

The original poem must have been composed after the capture of Bayeux (April 1105) but before Serlo's death, which occurred between 1113 and 1122; if a duke referred to in the poem is Robert Curthose, then it must have been written before September 1106.⁹ Of all the poems attributed to Serlo, this one is perhaps the most historically interesting and important, because it provides an eyewitness account of Henry I's conquest of Bayeux.

² In all quotations from modern editions I have standardised the orthography (i.e. spellings and the use of capital letters), but I have left the editor's punctuation intact. In quotations from the ms I have classicised the orthography and adapted the punctuation.

³ See also the article by D'Angelo and Lucas-Avenel in this volume of *Tabularia*.

⁴ RIGG 1992, p. 150-151.

⁵ See DEROLEZ 2003, especially p. 56-71.

⁶ Cf. DEROLEZ 2003, p. 63-64.

⁷ BISCHOFF 1990, p. 122.

⁸ The move from writing above the top line to below it occurred in the XIIIth century: see KER 1960.

⁹ VAN HOUTS 2014, p. 72.

Other poems attributed to Serlo are of interest for the study of the history of clerical marriage.¹⁰

The ms is mostly legible: it was damaged in 1731 by the fire that broke out at Ashburnham House in London, where the Cotton library was kept. The top of each leaf was damaged, rendering some lines partially or totally illegible. The poem consists of 339 Leonine hexameters arranged in two columns on each page: lines 1-20, fol. 110v, column 2; lines 21-62, fol. 111, column 1; lines 63-104, fol. 111, column 2; lines 105-146, fol. 111v, column 1; lines 147-188, fol. 111v, column 2; lines 188-229 (line 188 is repeated by the scribe), fol. 112, column 1; lines 230-271, fol. 112, column 2; lines 272-313, fol. 112v, column 1; lines 314-339, fol. 112v, column 2. Unlike the dactylic hexameter of Classical Latin, the Leonine hexameter rhymes the two syllables preceding the caesura in the third foot with the final two syllables of the line, e.g. *corde fero tristi quod tam cito capta fuisti* (line 1).¹¹ In this poem there is always a masculine caesura in the third foot.¹²

The two most important editions of the Latin text are BRIAL 1833 and WRIGHT 1872. The editions of Pillet and Pluquet are both based on BRIAL 1827. PLUQUET 1829 is directly based on BRIAL 1827,¹³ whilst PILLET 1839 is based on PLUQUET 1829 (and is therefore indirectly based on BRIAL 1827).¹⁴ BRIAL 1833 includes some extra notes but is otherwise almost identical to BRIAL 1827. I therefore use 'Brial' to signify the consensus of the 1827 and 1833 editions. BRIAL & DELISLE 1880 is identical to BRIAL 1833. Of all these editions, only PLUQUET 1829 offers a translation (into French). BÖHMER 1897 discusses various poems attributed to Serlo; with regard to the poem on the capture on Bayeux, Böhmer notes numerous discrepancies between WRIGHT 1872 and BRIAL & DELISLE 1880. He sometimes indicates his objection to a reading by adding an exclamation mark in parentheses after it; he rarely offers any explanations or comments.¹⁵

Wright's edition does not print line numbers, so I have added them myself. Note that the line numbers in Brial's editions differ from the ones I have added to Wright's edition after line 255 (see below for an explanation for the discrepancy). Where the line numberings of Wright and Brial diverge, I use square brackets, e.g. [328], to represent the line number in Brial's editions; line numbers without brackets correspond with the ms and Wright.

¹⁰ See, for example, VAN HOUTS 2014.

¹¹ See D'ANGELO 2014 for a discussion of Serlo's hexameters. See RIGG 1996 for a very brief overview of Medieval Latin metrics. More detailed discussions can be found in the following: RIGG 1992, p. 313-329; NORBERG 1958 (in French); NORBERG 2004 (an English translation of NORBERG 1958, with a new introduction by Jan Ziolkowski); LEONHARDT 1989.

¹² D'ANGELO 2014, p. 312.

¹³ PLUQUET 1829, p. 140.

¹⁴ PILLET 1839, p. 5.

¹⁵ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

Appendix 2 of VAN HOUTS 2014 contains full references (citing mss, editions and secondary literature) for nine poems attributed to Serlo.¹⁶ In Appendix 3 of VAN HOUTS 2014 I offered a new text and translation of this poem, as well as brief textual notes that sometimes cover points that will be discussed below.¹⁷ The opinions in this article supersede those earlier ones.

2. Errors in Wright's edition

George Rigg quotes Sidney Lee's judgement that much of Wright's "work was hastily executed, and errors abound, but his enthusiasm and industry were inexhaustible"; Rigg specifically mentions that Wright sometimes transcribes the ms incorrectly.¹⁸ The following reading appears to be an example of this phenomenon:

Wright 329 *et pretio dantis, uel doni me decorantis.*

"(clothes doubly welcome to me,) because of the worth of my benefactor or of the gift adorning me."

Wright sees that something is wrong: "So the MS apparently".¹⁹ The previous line has *causa duplici mihi gratum*, "(clothes) welcome to me for a double reason". Hence *uel* is out of place here, since the clothes are welcome not for either one reason or a different reason, but for both reasons. Long before Wright, however, Brial had printed the following text (which Böhmer subsequently supported):²⁰

Brial 329 [328] *et pretio dantis, tunicae quoque me decorantis.*

"(clothes doubly welcome to me,) because of the worth of my benefactor and of the cloak adorning me."

Wright's error is easily explained by an examination of the ms, which presents the following text (which I have redrawn):

† doni
TUNICE

Clearly *doni* is written by the scribe as a gloss introduced by an abbreviation for *uel*. Since *uel doni* was able to replace *tunicae quoque* without making the line metrically impossible, *tunicae quoque* was replaced in the transcription provided to Wright.

¹⁶ VAN HOUTS 2014, p. 81-85.

¹⁷ VAN HOUTS 2014, p. 86-105.

¹⁸ RIGG 1977, p. 115.

¹⁹ WRIGHT 1872, p. 251.

²⁰ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

It is odd, however, for the general term (*doni*) to be used to gloss the specific term (*tunicae*). The reverse would be more common, since *tunicae* explains what the *doni* is. The sense would also be improved by having *dantis* contrasted with *doni*. Perhaps Serlo wrote *doni quoque*, after which *doni* was glossed as *tunicae*; the scribe of the Cotton ms could then have swapped the positions of *doni* and *tunicae*.

The comment by Wright interestingly suggests that he did not examine the ms himself. Presumably he was relying on the report of someone else: when he examined their transcription, he was not able to be sure that it was incorrect, since he could not examine the ms himself. Doubting the text, he therefore added a comment in order to indicate that he did not entirely believe the transcription.

3. Errors in Brial's editions

Since the failings of Wright's editions are already well known, I turn now to some of the errors in the editions by Brial.

(i)

Brial 81 *nam re sic gesta (et potior mors esset honesta)*

Line 81 in this form seems unlikely for two reasons.²¹ Firstly, the elision in this position in the line is unparalleled in the rest of the poem. In fact the only other clear example of elision is in line 141 (*quando est multorum conuersio facta uirorum*, “when the conversion of many men was accomplished”).²² Given how rare elision is in this poem it would be wise to be sceptical about line 81. Secondly, it is worth noting that the elision in 81 affects the final syllable of *gesta*, which forms the rhyme with *honesta*. Should we therefore emend this line? In fact emendation is unnecessary, because an examination of the ms reveals that *et* was not present in the first place. There is, however, a punctuation mark between *gesta* and *potior*: obviously this mark was misread as an abbreviation for *et*. Böhmer sees that the elision here is problematic and that *et* needs to be deleted, but clearly does not know that the ms does not have *et*.²³ The text as it stands makes perfect sense:

ms 79 *plebs Baiocarum, nimis esse probat tibi carum*
 80 *uitae mortalis cursum trepidatio talis.*
 81 *nam re sic gesta potior mors esset honesta.*

²¹ The difference in vowel length (*gestā...honestā*) is not a problem. Rhymes such as *uultīs...multīs* and *prōnus...bōnus* are perfectly acceptable in Leonine hexameters: see RIGG 1992, p. 315 and STRECKER 1968, p. 76.

²² There is another example (275 *o armis*), but I believe that this should be emended (see below). On elision in Serlo's poetry, see D'ANGELO 2014.

²³ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

“People of Bayeux, such fear proves that this mortal life is too dear to you. An honest death would be better than acting like this.”

(ii)

Brial 187 *ergo sacrati, metuebant qui prius uri,*

Brial comments that *sacrati* must be corrupt because it should rhyme with *uri*, so he suggests that perhaps the text should read *sacraturi*.²⁴ Böhmer uses an exclamation mark to show his objection to *sacrati*.²⁵ The conjecture *sacraturi* is unnecessary, since the ms has *securi*, not *sacrati*:

ms 187 *ergo securi, metuebant qui prius uri,*
 188 *sacra reliquerunt loca quam citius potuerunt.*

“So (the clergy), who previously feared being burned, safely left the sacred places as quickly as possible.”

(iii)

I will now examine examples of metrically-impossible readings in Brial.

Brial 50 *pulsabatque fores, ut ... interiores*
 51 *depraedaretur, si copia forte daretur.*

In a note he suggests that *recessus* could fill the gap in the ms;²⁶ *recessus* is repeated in later works, but does not scan and so must be abandoned.

50 *pulsabatque fores, ut recessus interiores*

This would only scan if *ut* were treated as short before *r*-, which is not possible. The blank space in the ms after *ut* is approximately 11 letters and/or spaces wide. This could be filled by a word approximately nine letters in length, preceded and followed by a space. This would fill the gap, but there is nothing to guarantee that only one word has been lost, or indeed that the gap is the same size as whatever appeared in Serlo’s original text. There is little that can be done beyond the suggestion of a metrically-suitable conjecture that would fit the context: we need (at least) a noun for *interiores* to modify. Various suggestions that would scan have been made: Pillet prints *ut ... interiores* and notes

²⁴ “Mendose scripta vox; sed quomodo corrigenda ut consonet ultimis versus syllabis *uri?* forte *sacraturi*.” (BRIAL 1833, p. xciv).

²⁵ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

²⁶ “Forsan *recessus*.” (BRIAL 1833, p. xcii).

“fortasse *sedes vel partes*”.²⁷ Reeve offers *gazar*. I have previously suggested *census* as an option: cf. the use of *census* earlier in the poem (34-35 *ardet succensus qui per mala plurima census/ accumulatus erat, si quis bene singula quaerat*).²⁸ It is worth noting that Wright prints *ut recessus interiores*, commenting that it is damaged in the ms, but without attributing *recessus* to Brial.²⁹

(iv)

— ∪ —

Brial 95 *litibus atque minis sit per haec tempora finis,*

Brial’s text does not scan and clearly results from an abbreviation being misunderstood during transcription. The ms has the correct reading:

ms 95 *litibus atque minis sit post haec tempora finis,*

“let there be an end after this to quarrels and threats”

(v)

— ∪ ∪ | — — | — — | ∪

Brial 225 *pace caret uenter; pugnat is indesinenter*

Note that *indesinenter* (which Böhmer supports) cannot be correct,³⁰ since a cretic cannot occur in any position in a hexameter:

— — ∪ —

indesinenter

Clearly *pugnat is* would be metrically impossible in the position in which it appears. Once again, we have transcription errors:

ms 225 *pace caret uenter, pugnant indeficienter*

“(Until it purges itself, just as so heavy a load urges,) my stomach lacks peace, fighting incessantly”

(vi)

— ∪ ∪ | ∪

Brial 232 *est itaque nudo uehemens mihi sollicitudo,*

²⁷ PILLET 1839, p. 7.

²⁸ VAN HOUTS 2014, p. 88.

²⁹ WRIGHT 1872, p. 243.

³⁰ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

Again, Brial's text is implausible (-*que* would have to scan as a heavy syllable here) and is clearly the result of an incorrect transcription:

ms 232 *est etiam nudo uehemens mihi sollicitudo,*

“There is another great source of anxiety for me in my state of destitution”

Böhmer uses an exclamation mark to show his objection to *itaque nudo*, but does not provide a correction.³¹

(vii)

At one point Brial omits an entire line from the ms (as noted by Böhmer),³² resulting in a difference in line numbering (as I have mentioned above):

Brial	254	<i>fias mendicus, tibi non remanebit amicus.</i>
	[255]	<i>qui mihi cognati fuerant, mutatio fati,</i>
	[256]	<i>quae censum laesit, facit ut cognatio desit.</i>
ms	254	<i>fias mendicus, tibi non remanebit amicus.</i>
	255	<i>non ipsi curant mala me quaecumque perurant,</i>
	256	<i>qui mihi cognati fuerant; mutatio fati,</i>
	257	<i>quae censum laesit, facit ut cognatio desit.</i>

This is presumably an error, since he does not comment on the omission.

(viii)

At line 263 [262] Brial has *nihil* where the ms reads *caret*.³³ This is presumably dittography caused by the presence of *nil* later in the line:

Brial	262 [261]	<i>ut locuples fiam non exercebo sophiam;</i>
	263 [262]	<i>hac mercede labor nihil, hac nil arte lucrabor.</i>
ms	262	<i>ut locuples fiam, non exercebo sophiam:</i>
	263	<i>hac mercede labor caret; hac nil arte lucrabor.</i>

We should also emend *hac mercede labor* to *hic mercede labor*, since the connection between *labor* and *exercebo sophiam* is otherwise unclear: “I will not use wisdom to become rich: such efforts are without reward; I will not profit in this way.”

³¹ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

³² BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

³³ Böhmer notes that here Brial differs from Wright, but gives no sign as to the correct reading (BÖHMER 1897, p. 717).

(ix)

Brial's editions are also not entirely clear when it comes to recording conjectures. In line 45 the ms has *properauit*, which would not scan, but Brial prints *properant*, which is clearly the correct reading (as recognised by Böhmer):³⁴

ms	44	<i>tunc clausae milia gentis,</i>
		— ∪ ∪ — — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —
	45	<i>tacta metu mortis, properauit erumpere portis;</i>
Brial	44	<i>tunc clausae milia gentis,</i>
		— ∪ ∪ — — — ∪ ∪ — —
	45	<i>tacta metu mortis, properant erumpere portis;</i>

“At that point, the thousands of people shut inside rush to leave through the doors, moved by their fear of death”

(x)

In line 198 the metre shows that something is missing:

		— ∪ ∪ — ∪ —
ms	198	<i>huius odore me paene uomendo rigauī,</i>

Brial cleverly reads *odore graui me* and by the simple addition of *grauī* restores the metre and the rhyme:

		— ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ —
Brial	198	<i>huius odore graui me paene uomendo rigauī,</i>

His solution is elegant because it is easy to see how a scribe would miss *grauī* in line 198 due to the appearance of *granis* in the line above it (line 197):

Brial	196	<i>nescio si nostis; sed ego noui, quia, tostis</i>
	197	<i>compositus granis, uix transit guttura panis.</i>
	198	<i>huius odore graui me paene uomendo rigauī,</i>

“I do not know if you know; but I have learned that bread made from burnt grain scarcely passes through the gullet. I almost spewed forth vomit at the acrid smell of it”

Yet neither *grauī* nor *properant* is marked as a conjecture. I have not necessarily included every possible example; but it should be clear that Brial does not consistently record

³⁴ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

whether he is using a ms reading or his own conjecture. This is unfortunate, because he often deserves credit for the intelligent solutions that he has proposed. As I have also shown, however, he not infrequently prints a text that is manifestly incorrect, and these errors often result from simple misreadings of the ms.

(xi)

On at least one occasion Brial makes an error that I cannot explain. At the end of line 278 [277] he has *aeternum*:

Brial 278 [277] *qui grandem quaestum, nomenque merentur aeternum.*

This is the text as it appears in BRIAL 1827 and BRIAL 1833, yet in the later edition he adds a comment noting that it should be emended to *honestum* (“Mendosissima lectio: scribendum profecto erat *honestum*”), although he still prints *aeternum* in the text.³⁵ Böhmer gives an incorrect line number (279) and uses an exclamation mark to signal that *aeternum* is wrong.³⁶ The ms has the correct reading, *honestum*:

ms 277 *nil illis gratum profert facundia uatum*
 278 *qui grandem quaestum nomenque merentur honestum.*

“The eloquence of poets offers nothing pleasing to those who deserve great riches and an honoured name.”

4. Errors found both in Brial's editions and in Wright's edition

There are times when neither the ms nor Wright nor Brial provides an acceptable reading.

(i)

At line 322 the ms (followed by Wright) provides an unmetrical text:

ms 322 — — —
 323 *pecte si leni fieret prece uatis egeni,*
 non tot ei grates deberet reddere uates;

Line 322 [321] begins with *puta* in Brial, although he comments that the text here seems corrupt:³⁷

Brial 322 [321] — —
 puta si leni fieret prece uatis egeni,

³⁵ BRIAL 1833, p. xcvi.

³⁶ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717.

³⁷ “Videtur hic mendum aliquod irrepsisse.” (BRIAL 1833, p. xcvi).

323 [322] *non tot ei grates deberent reddere uates:*

He is indeed correct, since *puta* could not scan in this position. He presumably takes *pūta* to be an imperative from the verb *puto* with the meaning ‘think, consider’. The reading of the ms is no better (*pecte* ‘comb’, as in ‘comb your hair’, an imperative from *pecto*). Böhmer notes (with his customary exclamation mark) that Brial’s *deberent* (for which the ms has the correct reading, *deberet*) and *puta* are incorrect; he suggests *pectore* for *puta*,³⁸ which could work if taken with *leni* and understood as referring to the person to whom Serlo owes a debt:³⁹

320 *et tamen est unus, cui magnum debeo munus:*
 321 *nam mihi sponte dedit, quod honestum mens mea credit.*
 322 *pectore si leni fieret prece uatis egeni,*
 323 *non tot ei grates deberet reddere uates:*
 324 *non gratis dantur, prece munera si qua parantur.*

“And there is however one person to whom I owe a great service, because he gave things to me of his own accord: that is something I consider honourable. If it were being done with a gentle heart at the request of a poor poet, the poet would not owe him so much gratitude: gifts are not given for nothing, if they are in any way obtained by request.”

(ii)

At line 333 the ms (followed by Brial and Wright) reads as follows:

333 *qui famat, seruat, laudesque merentis aceruat,*

The verb *famat* is unusual, since Serlo mostly uses vocabulary attested in Classical Latin; in this poem there do not appear to be any other examples of verbs that are only attested in Late Latin. A simple change would remove *famat*:⁴⁰

Reeve 332 *reddam thesaurum qui gemmas uincit et aurum,*
 333 *qui famam seruat laudesque merentis aceruat,*

“I will give him in return a treasure better than gems and gold, one which preserves a deserving person’s reputation and increases their praise”

(iii)

³⁸ BÖHMER 1897, p. 717. He says nothing more of *deberent*.

³⁹ I no longer support my previous suggestion, *pactum* (VAN HOUTS 2014, p. 104).

⁴⁰ Credit is due to Prof. Reeve for the identification of *famat* as a corruption and the proposal of *famam* as a solution.

I have noted above how rare elision is in this poem. At least one instance of elision should perhaps be removed by emendation. Line 275 [274] reads as follows in the ms:

ms 275 [274] *o armis ignari proceres, hebetes et auari!*

Brial erroneously reads *ignauī* in his text but adds the correct reading in a comment in Brial 1833: “Melius *ignari*”.⁴¹ He noticed, of course, that the text he had printed did not rhyme. Pillet follows Brial 1827 (which does not have the note with the correct reading) and therefore translates *armis ignauī* as “sans courage dans les batailles”.⁴² Böhmer seems to think the ms has *carmis* (rather than *o armis*) and suggests it be emended to *carminis*.⁴³

It is not only the elision in *o armis* that is cause for suspicion: the syntax is also unusual. If *armis* is a dative or ablative plural from *arma*, then it would seem natural to take it as dependent on *ignari* (just as Pillet did with *ignauī*). Yet the use of a genitive with the adjective *ignarus* would be expected even in Medieval Latin. A simple and palaeographically-plausible solution would be to read *nimis* for *armis*:

Reeve 275 [274] *o nimis ignari proceres, hebetes et auari!*

“How foolish, stupid and greedy those nobles are!”

5. An unsolved problem

I finish now with a problem for which I know of no acceptable solution. Line 147 in the ms does not make sense and does not scan:

ms 147 †*atria pleni modulo nec consona leni*.†

Brial attempts to correct the problem:

Brial 147 *atria plena rudi modulo, nec consona leni*.

He then makes a rather strange comment: “Forsan *laudi*, nisi de industria auctor *consonantiam* hic imperfectam reliquerit.”⁴⁴

Brial is therefore suggesting that *leni* should be emended to make it rhyme with *rudi*, even though elsewhere in this poem *au* only ever rhymes with *au*, and even though *rudi* is a conjecture itself. Böhmer suggests *ludi*, which is similarly unlikely.⁴⁵ I suspect that *leni* is correct and that the problem is with the text surrounding *pleni*. We can at least discount

⁴¹ Brial 1833, p. xcvi.

⁴² Pillet 1839, p. 16.

⁴³ Böhmer 1897, p. 717.

⁴⁴ Brial 1833, p. xciv. The emphasis on *consonantiam* is Brial's.

⁴⁵ Böhmer 1897, p. 717.

the possibility that this line did not contain a rhyme when it was composed. Every single line in the poem follows the same pattern; the only lines without a rhyme are not really exceptions, since they are merely corrupt. The general meaning of the passage seems to be as follows:

ms	145	<i>ergo tot et tales personae prodigiales</i>
	146	<i>hymnos cantabunt, et more nouo resonabunt</i>
	147	<i>†atria pleni modulo nec consona leni.†</i>
	148	<i>uox huius gentis Patris aures omnipotentis</i>
	149	<i>uexabit multum, grandem factura tumultum.</i>

“Then so many excellent people will sing wondrous hymns, and the halls will resound in a new manner, †ringing with loud noise rather than pleasant music.† The voices of these people will greatly annoy the ears of the almighty Father and make a huge uproar.”

6. Conclusion

Rigg noted some time ago that the absence of editions for some Medieval Latin authors is often not as problematic as the quality of the editions that have been produced.⁴⁶ In the case of this poem, correct readings are to be found interspersed between the ms, several editions and Böhmer’s article. This means that any one of these sources is frustratingly riddled with mistakes. The errors in previous editions and the ms are perhaps not always of great importance for the understanding of Serlo’s poem on the capture of Bayeux, but there are practical reasons for wanting to highlight and eliminate even the most minor mistakes. If errors in the text are left uncorrected, then scholars are in danger of basing their conclusions on a faulty text. Allowing a dubious example of elision to remain in the text risks causing scholars to draw the conclusion that such elision is acceptable in this poem and other works by Serlo. Such errors could then play a part in discussions of whether a certain text is to be attributed to Serlo on stylistic grounds.

The study of Serlo’s poetry has been hindered by the lack of published translations and commentaries for the majority of the poems attributed to him. A new edition, founded on a thorough reappraisal of the Latin texts in question, would not only make Serlo accessible to a far wider audience but also provide a useful resource for those already acquainted with his work.

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⁴⁶ RIGG 1977, p. 114.

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