

## HENRY OF HUNTINGDON

### *Anglicanus ortus*

Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, England (*ca* 1088–*ca* 1154) has been admired for centuries as the author of the monumental *Historia Anglorum*. The recent discovery of the *Anglicanus ortus* opens a new window onto this important English author as well as onto the uses of poetry and the knowledge of medicine in medieval England. Written in Latin verse, the *Anglicanus ortus* describes the medicinal uses of 160 different herbs, spices and vegetables. Henry drew on centuries of learned medicine to compose this work, employing the medical knowledge of ancient authors like Pliny the Elder and Dioscorides and of medieval scholars like Walafrid Strabo, Macer Floridus and Constantine the African. But this is no ordinary herbal: the work is staged first as a discussion between a master and a student walking around a garden, inspecting the plants in their separate beds, and then as an awkward performance by the same master before Apollo and a critical audience, seated in a theatre at the garden's centre. Beyond its didactic and performative aspects, the entire work is framed as a prayer to God's generative capacity and the rational order of nature. The search for that order is virtuous: as Henry himself says, 'Happy is he who can know the causes of things, especially whatever will be the cause of health.' This critical edition is based on the five extant manuscripts and includes a complete English translation on facing pages and a commentary on every poem. An extensive introduction traces the history and relation of the manuscripts, examines Henry's poetic skill and use of sources, and establishes the place of the *Anglicanus ortus* in a pivotal era in the history of medicine and natural philosophy.

BRITISH WRITERS OF THE MIDDLE AGES  
AND THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD 3

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HENRY OF HUNTINGDON

*Anglicanus ortus*

*A Verse Herbal of the Twelfth Century*

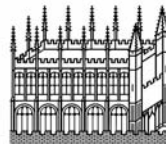
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MANUFACTURED IN CANADA

For my father,

WALLACE BYRON BLACK (1918–1996),

who showed me the flowers and showed me the weeds.

W.E.B.  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
October 2011



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## Preface

My interest in Henry of Huntingdon predated the discovery of the *Anglicanus ortus* by several years. Both as an historian and as archdeacon of Huntingdon for nearly half a century, Henry played an important role in my doctoral research on the ecclesiastical government of Lincoln diocese. It is Henry's multi-faceted nature (discernible in few twelfth-century clerics) that has kept me coming back to him: he was at once clerical administrator, chronicler, courtier, husband and father, poet, botanist, gardener and gemmologist. I am hardly the first to follow Henry down one of his many paths of interest, and I hope many more will follow thanks to the publication of his verse herbal. I am grateful to many people for their assistance with this edition, but to none more than George Rigg, professor emeritus of the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto. In a show of generosity rare in academia, George offered me the opportunity in 2003 to make my first attempt at editing using Henry of Huntingdon's herbal, which he had recently discovered. A relatively small extracurricular assignment blossomed into a complete edition, fertilized by my discovery in 2005 of Henry's verse lapidary and staked up with more manuscripts of the herbal. All along, he has provided encouragement, insight and friendship. Thank you!

My discovery of three manuscript witnesses to the herbal is due in part to Frank Klaassen of the University of Saskatchewan, who hired me in 2003 to examine hundreds of manuscript catalogues in a search for medieval magical texts, as part of his project 'The Intellectual and Social History of Learned Magic 1300–1600', funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In the process I was also able to familiarize myself with medical manuscript collections throughout the world, since herbs and spells often grew from the same bed in later medieval manuscripts. This project took on greater importance after I received encouragement from Diana Greenway; her edition of and excellent introduction to the *Historia Anglorum* are partly responsible for my fascination with Henry of Huntingdon and all things archidiaconal. Thanks are also due to Jonathan Black and Fred Unwalla of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, as well as to Fr James Farge, Bill Edwards and the late Caroline Suma of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Library. Jean Hoff and Megan Jones each provided keen eyes,

cogent criticisms and kind words to improve my work. Michael Winterbottom helped vicariously through his conversations with George Rigg. Ruth Harvey, Fr Édouard Jeuneau, John Magee, James Carley, Richard Sharpe, Monica Green, Anne Van Arsdall, Florence Eliza Glaze, Grace Desa, Joseph Goering, Nicholas Everett, Jeannette Beer, Susan Crane, and Andrew Hicks all gave advice and encouragement. My mother, Jean Blashfield Black, offered the support only a mother can give, as well as the corrections only a professional editor can give. Most of all, I owe my thanks to my wife Dr Emily Reiner and to our own sprout Gabriel Alexander Black for their support, patience and love.