'Gens Anglorum' & 'Normanitas': The Bayeux Tapestry and the Effects of the Norman Conquest on Language and the Arts

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In the Bayeux War Cemetery, within the département of Calvados in northwestern France, the largest contingent of Commonwealth casualties on French soil in World War II is interred. Immediately opposite the graveyard, a white stone memorial pays tribute to all those who perished in the Allied forces' invasion of Normandy (including approximately 1,800 troops for whom no grave is known) which took place during Operation Overlord in early June 1944.[1] At the top of this memorial, an inscription in Latin reads, "NOS A GLIELMO VICTI VICTORIS PATRIAM LIBERAVIMUS." In translation, the quotation is at once revealing and poignant: "We, [once] conquered by William, have freed the conqueror's country."[2] Nearly a millennium has passed, and yet the watershed events of 1066 continue to inspire sentiment, instigate scholarship, and invite scrutiny.

Less than a mile from the aforementioned cemetery, there survives a textile chronicle of William the Conqueror's successful invasion of England. This work, the Bayeux Tapestry, commences its tale of the Norman Conquest with the portrayal of events that took place more than a decade prior to William's departure from the coast of France and precipitous arrival in Pevensey.[3] Edward the Confessor, having returned from exile to rule as king of the Anglo-Saxons for more than two decades, reigns in absence of a successor. Uneasy lies the crown, one might observe; he is shown here in a meeting – perhaps with advisors, perchance in secret – in the opening scene. Could this signal the existence of prevailing concern about a likely succession crisis? A few panels later, Earl Harold Godwineson of Wessex, one potential heir, is depicted sailing (possibly dispatched at the behest of Edward) to meet with another: William, then Duke of Normandy.[4] What happened thereafter, as recounted in the Tapestry, has been the subject of scholarly investigation and debate almost since the events occurred: Harold swears an oath of fealty to William while in France, ostensibly to secure his own release from the custody of Count Guy of Ponthieu, and sails home to inform the king. In failing health, Edward makes a deathbed promise or "verba novissima" gift of the throne to Harold, which supersedes (in both of their minds at least) Edward's earlier "post obitum" promise to William, as well as Harold's own oath. Godwineson is then crowned King Harold II in the consecrated yet incomplete Westminster Abbey on 6 January 1066.[5] And thus begins a pivotal year in which armies clash, leadership changes, and identities merge.

While the effects of the conquest on contemporary conceptions of identity manifest themselves in a variety of ways, there are compelling reasons to examine the consequences of the invasion exclusively as they were manifested within language and the arts. First, the amalgamation and assimilation that took place between the cultures of the defeated Anglo-Saxon denizens of Britain and their victorious Norman counterparts is, on the whole, best illustrated through extant textual works, including non-literary sources such as the Bayeux Tapestry. Although there is substantial textual bias inherent in any primary source from this period (the substance of which depends primarily upon an author's origin), academics seem to agree that the contextual value of the works produced in the aftermath is paramount. The selection of words and phrases that signal subtle shifts in the accepted linguistic mores of the post-Conquest era in England yield some of the most revealing insights into the prevailing attitudes of both the victims and the

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[1] Official statistics from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) show that, of the 4,648 total burials within the Bayeux War Cemetery, a total of 4,143 are for troops holding citizenship status within the Commonwealth of Nations. For purposes of contrast, the largest CWGC cemetery in France in terms of total Commonwealth burials (Étaples Military Cemetery, near Calais) dates from World War I and holds 10,115 dead from that conflict alone (further casualties were interred during World War II – a total of 119).

[2] Translation provided by Dr. Damian Fleming, Medieval Studies Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor of English, Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne.

[3] The Bayeux Tapestry is so named because of its status as a holding of Bayeux Cathedral, which can be traced back to as early as 1476 via an inventory of the church's possessions. In point of fact, the work is not tapestry but embroidery of wool thread on a linen surface. Andrew Bridgeford, *1066: The Hidden History in the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Walker & Company, 2005), 27, 4, 3; R. Allen Brown, "The Norman Impact," *History Today* 36 (February 1986): 9-16.

[4] The son of Earl Godwine of Wessex, Harold possessed vast wealth and power thanks to his family's close yet tenuous connections with the royal house of Edward the Confessor. While this connection was important politically, the Godwineson family nevertheless proved an almost constant challenge to the king's sovereignty, and many of Godwine's offspring were exiled along with their father in 1051. Harold's claim to the throne was predicated upon his sister Edith's marriage to Edward, as well as the Danish lineage he shared with several of Edward's predecessors, including Cnut, Harold I, and Harthacnut. Richard Huscroft, *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2009), 89–101.

[5] Owing to his own kind treatment by relatives during his exile in Normandy, as well as his ill feelings towards the family of Earl Godwine, Edward the Confessor seemingly favored the young Duke of Normandy for succession at an earlier point, and it is suggested by contemporary chroniclers William of Jumièges and William de Poitiers that Robert de Jumièges was sent by Edward in 1051 to offer the crown to William. Bridgeford, *1066*, 109, 94–95, 115.

victorious.[6]

Second, there is a wealth of artistic and architectural examples that expose the mingling and merging of disparate styles, reflective of both Anglo-Saxon and Norman tradition. As with the literary output of this period, there are often cultural biases to overcome; the Bayeux Tapestry, with its seemingly pro-Norman stance, is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Despite the fact that, at the time of the Conquest, the vast majority of the residents of England likely had no direct concern regarding the eventual replacement for Edward the Confessor, there does seem to be a propagandist slant to certain contemporary sources in favor of each of the "candidates."[7] While the Bayeux Tapestry was viewed for many years as being a Norman creation that perpetuates strictly Norman accounts of the invasion, recent scholarship suggests that the Tapestry was, in fact, created in England by artisans of both continental and insular descent; consequently, some historians believe it offers a somewhat subversive take on the whole affair, if examined within the proper scope.[8] It may be tempting to argue for the existence of a contemporary dichotomy that would align with the current trend towards binary comparison; however, the mingling of artistic styles and linguistic developments that took place in England after the Norman Conquest reflect that synthesis, rather than subjugation, was the primary effect of the Conquest. Further, this cultural fusion seems to have been the case whether the artifact or person in question was of Anglo-Saxon or Norman origin.

The Bayeux Tapestry, one of the best-known relics of William's age, bears out this theory of cultural synthesis, which is now enthusiastically embraced within more recent scholarship. The concepts of identity and individuality, as understood by those living in this period, have been a subject of contention among scholars for many decades. The crux of the debate seems to reside in whether these ideas were "re-discovered" (in the post-Classicism sense) in the Middle Ages, or whether that development was "the prerogative of Renaissance Europe."[9] One of the most compelling arguments for synthesis refers to the English, or "gens Anglorum," as possessing a strong Anglo-Saxon identity that successfully resisted obsolescence in the face of the "Normanitas," or distinct medieval Norman identity, of their conquerors. Instead, one sees both change and continuity, argue many scholars; the English were "willing and able to work with, absorb, and integrate the invaders."[10] Because of the arguable heterogeneity of the Normans themselves and their lack of a "strong ideological association with being a Norman," it was easy for this merger to occur over a relatively short period of time.[11] The absence of fundamental religious differences also proved instrumental in this process.

Having already discussed its opening sequence, it seems fitting to examine the Bayeux Tapestry's content, relevant context, and the many speculations regarding its purpose and provenance; this is especially pertinent given that close analysis reveals a strong correlation between the Tapestry and the overarching concepts of identity in this period. The work was long thought to be a Norman commission, embroidered by Norman artisans, and rife with Norman self-aggrandizement; one popular local legend held that Queen Matilda, William's wife, was herself responsible for its design as a commemorative souvenir of her husband's triumph, and that her ladies-in-waiting had been the

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[6] As one might imagine, "the surviving sources for the Conquest still present a far from complete picture." One must contend with a very different sense of historicity with regards to the primary sources from this age; objectivity was not of paramount concern (perhaps, for some, it was not a concern at all). Comparison of any available work with others covering the same events or time period is necessary steps in determining credibility. Huscroft, *New Introduction*, 3; see also Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 92-104, 136-65.

[7] In addition to William of Normandy and Harold Godwineson, there was a third 'dark horse' potential heir to Edward the Confessor: Edgar *Ætheling*, the teenaged grandson of King Edward's half-brother Edmund "Ironside," who had been living in exile with his father in Hungary. Although he was elected by the *Witenagemot* (aristocratic assembly) to the throne following Harold's defeat at the Battle of Hastings, he was never crowned. Just before William's coronation, Edgar was taken to submit to him formally at Berkhamsted, ending his brief and unconsummated reign. Huscroft, *New Introduction*, 96–109; see also Antonia Gransden, "1066 And All That Revised," *History Today* 38, no. 9 (September 1988): 47-52.

[8] In his authoritative and exhaustive examination of the Norman Conquest, Freeman maintained and furthered the accepted scholarly opinion that the Tapestry told the tale from a decidedly Norman perspective, yet allowed for its creation on English soil. Edward A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England: Its Causes and Its Results* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1876), 3:563-75. Many historians, led by the pioneering studies of David Bernstein (*The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*) and Richard D. Wissolik ("The Saxon Statement: Code in the Bayeux Tapestry," in *Annuale Mediaevale*, Volume 19), have begun to question the previously unchallenged view that the Tapestry is a solely pro-Norman piece of sentimental propaganda. Bridgeford, *1066*, 311, 334, 341; Brian Golding, *Conquest and Colonization: The Normans in Britain, 1066-1100* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 28; Elizabeth van Houts, "The Trauma of 1066," *History Today* 46, no. 10 (October 1996): 9-15.

[9] Alcuin Blamires, "Individuality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker, and William Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 479; Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, 4:16-17, 326; Marjorie Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England, 1066-1166* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), 208; John Hutchinson, "Debate on Krishan Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity*," *Nations & Nationalism* 13 (April 2007): 182-86; Ann Williams, *The English and The Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 1995), 1-6.

[10] Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and The Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066-c.1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 20-45.

[11] Thomas, *The English and The Normans*, 53.

embroiderers.[12] The Tapestry's past has been shown through focused scholarship, however, to be just as intertwined with the English side of the Channel as the French.[13] In the last century, scholars of the Conquest have examined the possible patronage of the Bayeux Tapestry, looking at those who might be termed 'the usual suspects' within the debate.[14] The historical 'winner' of this contest has been William's half-brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux (made, post-conquest, Earl of Kent), but several new theories exist which offer Count Eustace II of Boulogne as another likely candidate.[15] The idea of a non-Norman patron would have been dismissed as ridiculous until just a few years ago, given the ostensibly one-sided narrative provided by the Tapestry. Today, however, it is thought of as a logical possibility given what is now known about (and what one can interpret within) the work itself.

      Intended to serve as a wall hanging, possibly around the walls of a castle's dining hall, the Bayeux Tapestry itself – its physical properties – are some of the best clues to its origin. Embroidery was a skill attributed to many an Anglo-Saxon woman; the best of their products were collectively described as "*opus Anglicanum*" or "English work," and the custom of hanging the results was particularly insular.[16] Further, since the pioneering research of art historian Francis Wormald in the 1950s, the notion that has been established and reinforced within the scope of the textile arts contends that the designer of the Tapestry took inspiration from several contemporary illuminated manuscripts that were amongst the holdings of two monasteries in Canterbury: Christ Church Abbey and St. Augustine's Abbey.[17] And while "the letter forms themselves cannot date or localize the Tapestry," the Latin inscriptions within the Tapestry "indicat[e] a strong likelihood that it was made in England."[18] Some art historians have also attempted to show differences in method that might indicate insular (English) versus continental (Norman or French) workmanship, but while techniques are too similar to reveal definitive evidence, the vegetable dyes used to tint the eight colors of woolen yarn used within the Tapestry are also found in cloth traditionally woven in England at that time.[19] While there is no absolute certainty on the subject given the time that has elapsed since, it seems reasonable to infer that the tangible evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry favors an English origin.

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[12] Some scholars continue to support the notion that the Bayeux Tapestry "allege[s]" the facts of the conquest from an exclusively Norman viewpoint. Golding, *Conquest and Colonization*, 28. In *Monuments de la monarchie française*, published in 1729, Benedictine historian Bernard de Montfaucon recounted the traditional tale alongside a sketch of the Tapestry in its entirety; even today, many French residents can recount the 'myth' of "La tapisserie de la reine Mathilde." Bridgeford, *1066*, 30-31.

[13] Thomas, *The English and The Normans*, 152-153; Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England*, 20; M. K. Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings, 1066* (Stroud, England: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2003), 75-85.

[14] One interesting theory suggests that the monks at St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury (one of the richest abbeys in England, if not Christendom) commissioned and oversaw the creation of the Tapestry in an attempt to foster allegiance between themselves and another more powerful secular authority – perhaps Bishop Odo of Bayeux, possibly Count Eustace II of Boulogne. Bridgeford, *1066*, 160-61, 305-6.

[15] Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 173; Golding, *Conquest and Colonization*, 32-33; Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 103-4. The importance of Odo having been made Earl of Kent by his half-brother the King is directly linked to an alternate theory surrounding the same provenance. This explanation certainly makes sense, even though it has merely circumstantial evidence lending support: Odo, who was granted extensive landholdings in many English counties (including Kent), could have commissioned the work from an abbey within his purview. His landholdings according to the Domesday Book include lands adjacent to the aforementioned St. Augustine's Abbey, in what was then a town on the outskirts of Canterbury, known as Garrington / Warwintone. John J. N. Palmer and George Slater, "Canterbury," in *Open Domesday* (Kew, England: Anna Powell-Smith); Richard M. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through The Ages*, 10th ed. (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), 407-8. Given that both Odo and Eustace appear as characters within the Bayeux Tapestry, in addition to their relative influence and wealth at the time, either seem plausible as one who might choose to commission such a work. Both are featured, and although Odo receives greater focus (he is depicted four times, while Eustace appears only once), there has been some suggestion that the commission was intended as a "peace offering" for Eustace's old allies, the Normans, following several years of estrangement. This provenance would also work to explain, in part, any perceivable undercurrent of pro-English and pro-French sentiment. Bridgeford, *1066*, 304-5.

[16] In his *Gesta Guillelmi*, William of Poitiers describes the Anglo-Saxon women as being "very skilled at needlework and weaving gold thread." Embroidery as a peculiarly English art is also held up within the Domesday Book, wherein certain needleworkers were not only "esteemed for their art" but also "in possession of land." Bridgeford, *1066*, 157-58. In the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf*, a potentially related form of wall hanging is described as a "web of beauty" that "gleam[s] on the walls"; these types of room decoration are referenced in other texts of the Anglo-Saxon period as far more sumptuous than the comparatively ordinary Bayeux Tapestry would have seemed. However, it is imperative to consider the size of the Tapestry: at nearly 230 feet long, it "could hardly be considered practicable" to utilize gold thread and expensive silks for such a hanging. Dick Ringler, trans., *Beowulf: A New Translation for Oral Delivery*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), lines 1988-1989; Bridgeford, *1066*, 11; David M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Complete Tapestry in Color with Introduction, Description and Commentary* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 201; Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 103-4.

[17] Elizabeth Coatsworth, "Stitches in Time: Establishing a History of Anglo-Saxon Embroidery," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles I*, ed. Robin Netherton & Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2005), 25. These works include the *Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, the *Canterbury Miscellany*, and *The St. Augustine's Gospels*. Bridgeford, *1066*, 159-61; Henry Loyn, *The Norman Conquest* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 91-93.

[18] Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 204.

[19] The colors used (russet, dull gold, sage green, olive green, blue-green, blue, dark blue, and black) are very common in medieval usage on both sides of the Channel, but the methods for dying the skeins of wool (and therefore the tinting agents used) seem to be unique to England. Coatsworth, "Stitches in Time," 6, 14; Bridgeford, *1066*, 158.

Further support of an English provenance can be derived from the artistic style in which the Tapestry was embroidered. The work is a unique example of Romanesque art, a mélange of Hiberno-Saxon (Insular), Carolingian, Byzantine, and classical Roman styles that informed the architecture as well as the arts on both sides of the English Channel in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.[20] A precursor to the Early Gothic, Romanesque successfully synthesized fundamental concepts from the "Channel School" of manuscript illumination (which owed significant debts to late Anglo-Saxon art), the narrative illustration traditions popular throughout the reign of Charlemagne, the figural representations of the Byzantine, and the distinctly Roman round-headed arches and use of acanthus leaves as decorative features.[21] Each of these elements seem to be found within the Bayeux Tapestry; while this fact alone fails to absolutely convince one of its English origin, given the popularity of Romanesque both on the island and the continent, it does speak to the same type of assimilation that was underway within England at this time.[22] This suggests, perhaps, a concert of influence; the idea that neither side of the Anglo-Norman divide desired to create the Tapestry as needlework invective, but instead intended the work to serve only as a pictorial record, seems to have been neglected thus far.

In terms of the content of the Tapestry's narrative, some of its rhetorical choices have already been discussed within this paper. What cannot be denied is that the decision to use the first half of the work to show events leading up to the invasion must have been intentional. Until recent scholarship suggested the possibility of non-Norman patronage, many academics retained the belief that this opening section of the Bayeux Tapestry simply put forth William's claim to the throne, Edward's assent to William's succession, Harold's oath in support of said plan, and his subsequent perjury, all as evidentiary support for the legitimacy of William's reign.[23] This pro-Norman reading makes sense; history is, in most cases, written by those who prevail. But in light of the consensus surrounding the creation of the Tapestry on English soil, and its having been potentially commissioned by a person not of Norman descent, the fact that these events are shown from a distinctly English perspective cannot be ignored.

The first third of the Bayeux Tapestry shows, from an unequivocally English perspective, the groundwork being laid for the Conquest. The Tapestry requires the audience to see the action through the viewpoints of those depicted; in order for one to see Norman shores, it is necessary to 'travel' alongside the Anglo-Saxon characters. This is accomplished with the portrayal of Harold's visit to Normandy. The viewer follows him as he sails for and lands on French soil, and is soon after seized by Count Guy of Ponthieu; next, he is seen being brought before William before accompanying him to Bayeux by way of Mont-Saint-Michel, Rennes, and Dinan (amongst other locales); and then returns with him to Edward's side in England following his oath.[24] After the king's death and Harold's coronation, this conceit is employed once again, as the observer benefits from taking "an English ship . . . to Duke William's land."[25] Upon landing, the viewer sees William's preparations for his invasion, later crossing the channel with him to Pevensey.[26] Finally, back on English soil, the ensuing conflict is depicted at a remove, almost as though one might be watching an eleventh-century newsreel: with equal weight, one sees the actions undertaken by both King Harold II

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[20] Tansey and Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 407-408; Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, 5:598-603; Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England*, 216-17.

[21] Within the Bayeux Tapestry, one sees what may be early suggestions of the "Gothic S-curve;" selected examples of this can be found in panels 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, *ff* (according to the Tapestry's circa-1800 numberings written in ink upon its circa-1724 linen backing cloth). Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 1-2, scenes 3-10); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 3-11. Michelle P. Brown, "The Triumph of the Codex: The Manuscript Book before 1100," in *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2007), 179-93; Tansey and Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 380-413. Specific manuscripts of the "Channel School" which may have provided inspiration for the Tapestry were listed earlier (see footnote 17, page 7). The renovation of the Latin alphabet encouraged by Charlemagne and undertaken by Alcuin of York is featured via the *tituli* (the inscriptions which caption many of the scenes within the Bayeux Tapestry), while the spontaneity and vivid imagery of the narrative content reveals further Carolingian influence. Tansey and Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 361-64. One can see the use of what may be acanthus flowers within the final third of the Tapestry; special reference can be made to the upper border approximately one quarter of the way along panel 52 (as marked on the Tapestry itself). Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 63.

[22] The somewhat fanciful yet formal style of the Byzantine period aids the Tapestry in overcoming the necessary Archaic flatness of the medium. Placement of the figures is of paramount concern; the selection of what action within the narrative should be featured in the center register of the Tapestry versus the upper or lower borders seems carefully deliberated. Further, the animated gestures of the subjects reflect a distinctly Byzantine mode. Tansey and Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 286-317, 407-8; Thomas, *The English and The Normans*, 372-73.

[23] Historian Wolfgang Grape (author of a competing account, *The Bayeux Tapestry*) is a vocal proponent of the theory that the Tapestry was created as conquest propaganda. Bridgeford, *1066*, 311, 336.

[24] This sequence of events is borne out in panels 4 through 25. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 1-3, scenes 4-24); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 4-28, 172, 174-82.

[25] Translated from the Latin *titulus*, which reads: "*hic navis Anglica venit in terram Willelmi ducis.*" This inscription appears in panel 34. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 5, scene 31); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 34, 173, 183.

[26] These events appear in panels 35-39 within the Tapestry itself. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 4-5, scenes 32-36); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 35-43, 173, 184-87.

and the Duke of Normandy as the Battle of Hastings commences.[27] Rather than being relegated to positions of subordination, the key insular players at the time of William's invasion are portrayed as integral actors within this sphere. The Normans displace much of the Anglo-Saxon nobility in the years after their arrival, but one can infer an understanding of the significance of the 'gens Anglorum' from this inclusion of the Anglo-Saxon perspective within the historical narrative of the Tapestry itself. After all, this hardly seems a likely choice if the purpose of the Tapestry is to promulgate an exclusively pro-Norman version of the events.

Similarly, when looking at the *tituli*, the inscriptions that caption many of the scenes within the Bayeux Tapestry, one can find linguistic evidence that the artists' Latin word choice was influenced by Old English, French, and the Norman dialect.[28] This makes sense, given the extensive scholarship that discusses the multilingual history of the British Isles, as well as the prevalence of studies that specifically address the varied etymological underpinnings of the inscriptions featured within the Tapestry.[29] As a population previously at ease with a blend of linguistic influences, the pre-conquest inhabitants of England were well primed to facilitate such a collective endeavor.[30] Without knowing anything definitive about the individual artisans who worked on the Tapestry, one can, with restraint, make certain inferences in order to discern their linguistic identity. The use of Latin itself is unremarkable here, however, given the supremacy of that tongue in matters of church and state.

The possible influence of Old English upon the Bayeux Tapestry is best argued by the presence within the inscriptions of specific letters from the Anglo-Saxon alphabet that were utilized almost exclusively within the insular vernacular, as well as spellings that seem to be unimpeachably English. The character 'eth' (Đ / ð), which represents voiced or voiceless fricative 'th' sounds within several Scandinavian dialects as well as Old English, is used in the *titulus* that captions the deaths of King Harold's brothers, one of whom was named Gyrth.[31] Further, the character 'ond' (⁊), a Tironian note used in Old English both as the conjunction 'and' as well as a morphological placeholder to form words, can be found in the Tapestry to replace the Latin 'et' early on, "where Harold *and* Guy speak."[32] In addition, several proper nouns that appear within the Bayeux Tapestry reflect distinctively Anglo-Saxon spelling conventions. Edward the Confessor is "Eadwardi," which utilizes the harmonic diphthong 'ea' that is prevalent in Old English.[33] Hastings, site of the decisive Norman military victory, takes the Latinized Anglo form "Hestengaceastra," which employs the same diphthong.[34] An enigmatic scene featuring a woman named "Ælfgyva" refers to someone who must be a female of royal Anglo-Saxon descent, given what can be inferred from the construction of the name.[35] All of these suggest that those responsible for the embroidery of the *tituli* included persons for whom 'English' was a native tongue.[36]

While there are clear influences of Old English throughout, it should be noted that the Bayeux Tapestry also reflects, as has been stated, a synthesis of multiple linguistic backgrounds. The usage of vernacular elements within the Latin inscriptions here follows the upsurge in a mixed vernacular writing within the late Anglo-Saxon period, where letters and words were retained from Old English, but prevailing grammar and syntax was increasingly of either Latin or French derivation.[37] In close analyses of the Tapestry, scholars have recently posited a high likelihood that one or more of the artists responsible for the embroidered inscriptions spoke French as a native language.

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[27] The Battle of Hastings is shown in panels 48-58. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 7-8, scenes 45-59); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 52-73, 173, 188-95.

[28] Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 203-4.

[29] Speaking directly to the existence of linguistic communities in medieval Britain, it has been noted that the historian Bede, writing in the early Middle Ages, "identified five languages and four nations" occupying the British Isles. Several scholars assert that language was, in fact, the single greatest indicator of cultural identity during this time. Helen Fulton, "Regions and Communities," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker, and William Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 532-33.

[30] Francis James West, "The Colonial History of The Norman Conquest?" *History* 84, no. 274 (April 1999): 219-36.

[31] The name "Gyrth" is seen in panel 52 of the Tapestry itself. René Lepelley, "A Contribution to the Study of the Inscriptions in the Bayeux Tapestry: *Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," in *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Richard Gameson (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 1997), 45; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 64, 203; Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 7, scene 51), 170.

[32] See panel 9. Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 45; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 9, 204; Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 1-2, scenes 7-8), 170.

[33] "Eadwardi" appears in panel 26 within the Tapestry. Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 45; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 29, 204; Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 3, scene 25).

[34] See panel 45-46 for "Hestengaceastra." Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 45; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 49-50, 204; Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plates 5-6, scenes 41-42).

[35] See "Ælfgyva" in panel 15 of the Tapestry. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 17; Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 3, scenes 17).

[36] Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 39-45; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 203-4.

[37] Jacqueline Stodnick, "Emergent Englishness," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, edited by Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker, and William Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 498-99.

The choice of Latin cognates that correspond more closely to French rather than English vernacular is supportive of this conclusion.[38] In the same scene used earlier to illustrate the use of the Old English 'ond,' one sees Earl Harold converse with Guy of Ponthieu using "parabolant"; this is a natural selection for a native French speaker who would have used the verb 'parler' as opposed to the more common Latin 'loqui.'[39] Later, when the horses disembark after the landing at Pevensey, they are not 'equis' but "caballi," which has an Old French counterpart: 'chevaus.'[40] (The Old English 'friþhengest' again offers no clear cognate.) After passing Mont-Saint-Michel, the notorious quicksand of the surrounding marsh is called "arena," a cognate of 'areine' in the Old French dialect, rather than 'sabulo,' which might be considered a closer fit for 'sand' in Old English.[41] All of these facts have led medieval linguistic specialists to theorize that the person responsible for the overall content (if not the fabrication) of the *tituli* was an artist "whose first language was French."[42]

While one must remember that 'French' does not necessarily equate to 'Norman' or vice versa, there exists a distinctively Norman flavor brought to the work through the use of the letter 'W' in several names seen in the Bayeux Tapestry. If one returns to the spelling and construction of King Edward's name within the work, a new salient point emerges: the usage of 'W' rather than the more Anglo-friendly 'wynn' (Ƿ / ƿ) in the Tapestry reflects the Norman dialect's retained Norse and proto-Germanic characteristics.[43] Other examples of this are seen in the usage of the 'W' within the names of the Conqueror's brother, Leofwine ("Lewine" within the Tapestry), as well as in every appearance of the Conqueror's own name within the text.[44] One particularly interesting observation with respect to 'William': representing a similar phoneme to the Old English 'wynn,' the 'W' was especially employed within Latin to render Germanic names.[45] Were all the artisans involved of French descent, the likeliest Latin cognate would have been 'Glielmo,' which closely corresponds to the French equivalent, 'Guillaume,' and is seen in the aforementioned Bayeux War Memorial frieze. Hence, the argument is made that from the hands of many demographically divergent artists came a single masterpiece of embroidery and amalgamation.

Perhaps the most effective argument in favor of this collaborative origin of the Bayeux Tapestry is a single word, used only once within the work to represent the place that would eventually become its home. During the 'visit' that Earl Harold pays to Duke William prior to the death of Edward the Confessor, the two travel through the Normandy countryside, visiting multiple locales. They end their journey in a place called, according to the corresponding *titulus*, "Bagias." It is here, the Tapestry alleges, where Harold makes his oath to William; it is here, one might observe, where the Tapestry would find its name: "Bagias," or Bayeux.[46] An examination of the construction of "Bagias" brings to light just how intermingled the languages of the conquered and their conquerors became, the layers of linguistic meaning that developed, and how relatively quickly this was accomplished. First, the name 'Bayeux' is a French word that evolved from the name of the Celtic tribe, known as the Baiocasses, who once occupied the area when it was part of the Roman province *Gallia Lugdunensis* in the first and second centuries BCE. The Latinization of the name is "fairly arbitrar[y]," according to one scholar, and is a linguistic "veneer" rather than a true translation. The final piece of this etymological puzzle involves the use of the letter 'G.' As one can quickly ascertain, this seems to replace the 'Y' in 'Bayeux;' why? The 'yod,' or sound one might understand as being represented by the letter 'Y' in both modern English and French (and is true in Old French, as well) would have found its closest Anglo-Saxon counterpart in the 'yogh,' or what is now known as the letter 'G.' Fittingly, the Bayeux Tapestry's eponymous home, as designated within its own text, is "an Anglo-Saxon spelling of a fairly arbitrarily Latinised version of a word which was certainly French" in origin.[47]

The Bayeux Tapestry offers a remarkably vital (although likely flawed) record of the events surrounding the Norman Invasion of England in October 1066, both through its content and context. After centuries of progressive scholarship, it seems that a consensus has built around the notion that there still exists the possibility for revelation, enlightenment, and wonder where the Tapestry is concerned. While it was once suggested that everything that could be said about the Bayeux Tapestry had already been published, recent scholarship (especially research pertaining to

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[38] Bridgeford, *1066*, 170–171; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 204.

[39] This is seen in the Tapestry, panel 9. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 2, scenes 8-9), 171; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 10, 204.

[40] "Caballi" can be found in panel 39. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 5, scene 36), 171; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 43, 204.

[41] As seen in panel 17 of the Tapestry itself. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 3, scene 18), 170-71; Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 19-20.

[42] Bridgeford, *1066*, 171.

[43] Helen Fulton, "Regions and Communities," 524-28; Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 45.

[44] "Leowine" is seen in panel 52. Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 7, scene 51); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plates 63-64.

[45] Brown, "The Triumph of the Codex," 186-90.

[46] Panel 25 shows the usage of "Bagias." Bridgeford, *1066*, 146-47 (plate 3, scene 22); Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, plate 25, 204.

[47] Lepelley, "*Bagias* and *Wilgelm*," 40-43.

the identity of the 'author' of the Tapestry) shows the opposite to be true. This work also provides clear artistic and linguistic evidence of the fusion of two cultures that each appear comfortable with their own complex heterogeneity. Perhaps the greatest lesson one can take from further analysis is that human expression transcends compartmentaliza-tion. Indeed, human existence in general resists reduction into expedient classification and narrow definition, despite our attempts to the contrary. The tale told in this 230-foot-long textile is one of a Norman victory, and yet it is conveyed from an English point of view, through a medley of languages, and within a blended artistic style. The Bayeux Tapestry is a profound testament to the synthesis of the 'gens Anglorum' and those possessed of 'Normanitas' – not evidence of the subjugation of one group by the other.