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## It's Elementary: The Bayeux Tapestry as a Medieval Educational Tool

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## It's Elementary: The Bayeux Tapestry as a Medieval Educational Tool

### Cover Page Footnote

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Anne H. Muraoka

# IT'S ELEMENTARY: THE *BAYEUX TAPESTRY* AS A MEDIEVAL EDUCATIONAL TOOL

By Sarah Bulger

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Bayeux Tapestry*, a 230-foot-long, 950-year-old Anglo-Norman embroidery has baffled historians resulting in extensive (and diverse) scholarship since its rediscovery in the eighteenth century. The *Bayeux Tapestry* plays a preeminent role (outside of contemporaneous manuscripts and texts) in deciphering aspects of medieval life in England through its visual representation of the age of the Norman Conquest. Long-standing assumptions about the *Bayeux Tapestry's* commission, production, and purpose have accumulated through the years based on a single inventory document from 1476 which postulates its intended location and function as a religious ornament for Bayeux Cathedral, leading many scholars to assume the patron had been Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.<sup>1</sup> The question of who commissioned the *Bayeux Tapestry* has nevertheless been re-evaluated and within the past decade. A new, arguably more conceivable, *Tapestry* patron has been championed: “Edith Godwinson, widow of King Edward, sister of King Harold, friend of King William.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the unknown patron of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, scholars have still gleaned from its diverse scenes features of medieval Anglo-Norman life which are not readily apparent in extant manuscripts. Medieval weapons and warfare, eleventh-century armor, Anglo-Saxon and Norman architecture, folklore and fables, and a deeper understanding of the unique *opus anglicanum* (English work) style of embroidery are all dispersed throughout the *Bayeux Tapestry*.<sup>3</sup> Modern academics have explored these themes attempting to interpret them, but a relationship between the *Bayeux Tapestry* and its utility in Anglo-Norman England cannot yet be accurately constructed. Due to the lack of documentation on the *Tapestry's* origins, the approach taken by scholars in an effort to retell its story remains fixed in the idea that the Bishop of Bayeux commissioned it to serve as an ecclesiastical decoration for the consecration of Bayeux Cathedral

in 1077.<sup>4</sup> Thus, room for new ideas regarding the nature of the *Bayeux Tapestry* has been stifled. Therefore, the objective of this analysis of the *Bayeux Tapestry* is to offer a new perspective for the interpretation of the *Tapestry's* purpose in history by exploring previously overlooked facets of medieval life. Through comprehensive examinations of medieval noblewomen's prominent roles in society, Anglo-Saxon traditions in education, and the functions of fables and humor as depicted in the embroidery friezes, the *Bayeux Tapestry* is revealed as indisputably a didactic tool for eleventh-century Anglo-Norman literary and historical education, thus constructing a new narrative for the *Tapestry* as undeniably instructive rather than decorative.

## STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Research on the *Bayeux Tapestry* largely centers on supporting its functions as ecclesiastical decoration. To this end, current research on the *Tapestry* addresses various avenues of inquiry relating to its supposed religious function in Bayeux Cathedral and as a commission by Odo of Bayeux. Other areas of inquiry center on the roles of women in Anglo-Saxon society, practices in medieval education, and the use of fables in medieval art as seen in the *Tapestry*.

According to scholars such as John D. Anderson and Trevor Rowley, the *Bayeux Tapestry* presents a justification for the Norman invasion of England and eventual claim to the English throne by clearly illustrating the scenes of the Battle of Hastings.<sup>5</sup> These scenes of the Conquest are where William I of England, Duke of Normandy received his cognomen: "The Conqueror." Carola Hicks adds to the "justification" theory with the idea that the *Tapestry* may have served as propaganda for William to maintain control of the crown in light of Anglo-Saxon unrest with the new Norman customs.<sup>6</sup> The production of the *Tapestry* has even been traced from its linen ground, wool thread, and organic and mineral based dyes to southern England, with connections to Canterbury in its illustrative style.<sup>7</sup> One production anomaly, however, is the

*Tapestry's* complete lack of gold threads as Dolores Bausum has observed were typical in other Anglo-Saxon embroideries known as *opus anglicanum*.<sup>8</sup> To date, no concrete reasoning as to why the *Bayeux Tapestry* does not contain a single strand of gold has been offered.

While specific production choices in the *Tapestry* tend to be obscure, women's roles in the Middle Ages and how those roles may have influenced the function of the *Tapestry* are not. Women in Anglo-Saxon England held various positions within the family structure. As mothers they played important roles in educating their children, as abbesses they held power within the church and as wives and family members they were patrons for the preservation of familial memory.<sup>9</sup> Anglo-Saxon women held property rights and as widows retained rights to their husband's lands, or those lands given to them at marriage, until they either married again or left it to kin in their will.<sup>10</sup> They were even celebrated throughout Europe for their unique talents in the production of *opus anglicanum*.<sup>11</sup> Susan M. Johns has stated in her text on the significant role women played in Anglo-Saxon society that, "Elisabeth van Houts confirmed the importance of female patrons of historiography, and their role as repositories of family history and in the instruction of their sons, and more importantly their central role in the creation of social memory."<sup>12</sup> These characteristic features appear in the study by Carola Hicks, where she argues that Queen Edith of England was the *Bayeux Tapestry's* patron. This is in alignment with the argument for the *Tapestry's* educational function as Edith would have maintained the power to provide instruction and educational tools to young Anglo-Norman royals as the widow of the previous king, Edward the Confessor.

Medieval education as approached by scholars is often centered around evidence of the church as the main locus of educating youth, as well as the apparent vast concentration of documents favoring the records of boys' access to education over girls.<sup>13</sup> There is evidence,



however, that some girls were taught to read and write, such as Marie de France (Figure 1) who transcribed a copy of Aesop's fables.<sup>14</sup> For the literate and illiterate alike, proper character, appropriate behavior as suits an adult, and a working knowledge of social history were important to understand and were often transmitted through poetry.<sup>15</sup> History and moral behavior are two very prominent aspects of the *Bayeux Tapestry* through the scenes of the battle leading up to the Conquest as well as the fables featured in the friezes above and below the main sequence. Particularly essential to Anglo-Saxon education is the teaching of foreground memory.<sup>16</sup> Memory is a common theme found throughout this research in contexts of education, historical narrative, and the responsibilities of women to maintain familial memories. Anglo-Saxons approached education with a deep interest in writing as Irina Dumitrescu describes in her book, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*:

They wrote textbooks on grammar, metrics, and rhetoric. They commented on Scripture for literate audiences and preached it to the laity.... They copied and translated texts from the continent concerned with the basics of Latin composition, the psychological nuances of pastoral care, and the spiritual comforts of philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

In the thirteenth century, although two centuries later than the proposed date of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, Barbara Hanawalt traces a trend in the teaching of morals and good behavior to young children through childrearing books, advice poems, and manuals.<sup>18</sup> These manuals are commonly discovered in documentations of middle-class London households and are found to contain a multitude of lessons on Latin and moral behavior through proverbs, poems and, rhyme.<sup>19</sup> The tools of education no doubt developed from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries given that scholarship focused on education in earlier centuries, reference manuscripts as the only instruments used to educate, but the lessons taught remain the same. Therefore, the inclusion of

later educational manuals is still valid in discussing the educational capacity of the *Bayeux Tapestry*.

Scholars such as Howard R. Bloch, Meredith Clermont-Ferrand, Wolfgang Grape, Leslie Ling, and Kay Staniland believe Odo was the patron of the *Bayeux Tapestry* because he is portrayed in a much greater role in it than in any other contemporaneous texts or iconographic programs.<sup>20</sup> Odo was documented as having been an ambitious man, a lover of all fine things, and prone to vanity.<sup>21</sup> He regularly alienated those close to him, including his half-brother William the Conqueror. Carola Hicks states, “Some advocates have argued that Odo had even more motivation to commissioning the Tapestry in the period after 1082, when he fell from grace suddenly and spectacularly.”<sup>22</sup> In 1082 Odo had his ambitions set on becoming pope and resorted to bribery and threats of violence to get him there.<sup>23</sup> Scholars often claim that it is possible the *Tapestry* was produced during Odo’s exile after his imprisonment as an attempt to gain favor back with his half-brother, the king.<sup>24</sup> However, what scholarship has failed to explain is the secularity of the *Tapestry’s* imagery when a large-scale commission of religious art would have better suited Odo’s ambitions within the church.

The other motivation typically attributed to Odo in commissioning the *Bayeux Tapestry* was the consecration of his cathedral at Bayeux. It has been suggested often that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was commissioned during the cathedral’s construction – which was set to be finished by 1077 – for its eventual public display in the nave.<sup>25</sup> David J. Bernstein observes that a reconstruction of the *Tapestry* placed in the nave determined that its dimensions did not suit the cathedral interior. In order to display the *Tapestry* at a height where its inscriptions would be legible, it would have overlapped the arcade at a height too low for the laity to comfortably and safely pass through with their candles.<sup>26</sup> Kay Staniland breaks from the claims that the *Bayeux*

*Tapestry* was made specifically for Bayeux Cathedral by stating that it was likely made to be installed in one of Odo's principle residences, in a grand hall, to serve secular purposes.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence of the *Tapestry's* suitability for a secular setting rather than religious is found in the accompanying friezes above and below the central narrative.

The friezes surrounding the *Bayeux Tapestry* narrative contain small embroideries depicting nine popular Aesopian fables. These fables are: *The Crow and the Fox*, *The Wolf and the Lamb*, *The Pregnant Bitch*, *The Wolf and the Crane*, *The Wolf King*, *The Mouse*, *the Frog*, *and the Kite*, *The Goat and the Wolf*, and *The Lion Hunting with his Companions*. According to Carola Hicks, Aesop's fables were massively popular in the Middle Ages.<sup>28</sup> Visual literacy of the medieval period and the popularity of these fables allowed them to appear alone as illustrations while still conveying their moral message, typically aimed at poking fun at monks or those in power. Morality was particularly imperative throughout the Middle Ages and was often a topic included in the education of children. Phyllis Ackerman further adds to the significance of the Aesopian fables and their moral implications by making a connection to old Norse traditions of oath taking; a culture in which Anglo-Saxon society would share from the reign of Cnut in the early eleventh century. She states in her book, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization*:

For the true theme of the embroidery of Bayeux is the central motive of the Norse code, the sanctity of the oath. The embroidery shows William conquering England, but it illustrates this moral. William may be the hero, but Harold as the villain is of exactly equal importance, and the real protagonist is Perjury. Thus while the embroidery depicts facts, the subject is not history but fable, true episodes but fitted to the demonstration of an idea.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, although they were popular and translated by many, fables were characterized as a "low literary genre" and "vulgar" by the eleventh century theologian Egbert of Liège.<sup>30</sup> While Peter K. Klein recognizes that fables hold importance on their own in the *Bayeux Tapestry*, he claims they do not provide any deeper context to the main scenes which they surround.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, he fails to connect his own statement of the fables' primary uses in modern elementary Latin schoolbooks to the same educational utility they would have provided the *Bayeux Tapestry* in the eleventh century, thus changing its historical purpose from educational tool to propagandist decoration.<sup>32</sup>

Current scholarship on the *Bayeux Tapestry*, as presented above, is diverse in its range of subjects, yet limited still by outdated assumptions. It is the combined, in-depth investigations into the roles fulfilled by medieval women, Anglo-Saxon educational traditions, the use of fables as auxiliary decoration, and the issues rooted in assuming Odo of Bayeux was the *Tapestry* patron, that provide the means for re-interpreting the *Bayeux Tapestry* more appropriately as an educational tool. It is reasonable to assume that a woman such as Edith Godwinson could have commissioned the *Tapestry* given her skills and knowledge in producing *opus anglicanum* and her concern with fulfilling specific duties as educator and propagator of familial social memory. The *Tapestry* contains the necessary imagery for educating noble children in morality and the social history of the Conquest. A comprehensive argument for the re-direction of *Bayeux Tapestry* scholarship towards seeing the extensive embroidery as a didactic tool is possible with further research and exploration into the facets of medieval life directly connected to women, education, and fable-based humor.

## **THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY**

The *Bayeux Tapestry* (Figure 2) articulates the story of the Norman Conquest of England from an eleventh century perspective. Stretching 230 feet long, encapsulated in 72 scenes, William the Conqueror's victory over Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings is depicted in monumental form. This example of *opus anglicanum* is one of very few of its kind in that it contains no gold threads or silks like the church garments of the same style (Figure 3), and it is unique since it

tells a story in images and words like no other.<sup>33</sup> Despite missing a final scene or group of scenes at its frayed end, it is in a nearly pristine state of conservation. Its remarkable state of conservation, particularly in comparison to other extant medieval textiles, can be explained by Howard R. Bloch's suggestion that for the majority of its life the *Tapestry* lay rolled up on a winch-like stand.<sup>34</sup> From time immemorial up until the nineteenth century, the *Bayeux Tapestry* is recorded as having been stored on this device, although the stand itself has not survived the test of time. This device will become important in later sections of this paper in discussing the ease of use of the *Bayeux Tapestry* as an educational scroll.

The production of the *Tapestry* has been unanimously linked to England through its raw materials, although the patron's identity remains otherwise indeterminate.<sup>35</sup> Linen makes up the grounding of the entire work and comes from the versatile flax plant which was popularly grown in the south of England as a part of the annual rotation with oats.<sup>36</sup> The worsted threads couched into the linen segments were dyed using locally acquired pigments from animal, vegetable, and mineral products, often involving a very long, complicated, noxious fume-producing process.<sup>37</sup> At least 99 pounds of dyed wool were required to produce the multicolored narrative scenes featured in the *Tapestry*, many of which still retain their original pigments and were instrumental in keeping true to the original colors throughout modern repairs.<sup>38</sup> The *Tapestry* is composed entirely of nine separate sections of linen sewn together following the application of wool embroidery.<sup>39</sup> The planning that was necessary for this exceptionally long warp setting illustrates the skill of the weaver who would have been in charge of positioning each piece to line up correctly with its partner.<sup>40</sup> The process of producing just the raw materials to then create the *Bayeux Tapestry* would have been immensely costly. For this reason scholars believe the patron of the *Bayeux Tapestry* must have been either of nobility or of the church, often looking to Odo

the Bishop of Bayeux who had access to funds through the Catholic Church or Queen Edith of England, widow of Edward the Confessor, who had ties to English materials and monies from her landholdings.

No matter who was involved as commissioner, producer, or designer, it was doubtlessly a massive undertaking to produce this wool on linen masterwork. It is important to identify that the linen and wool thread mediums are not necessarily common for the type of work the *Bayeux Tapestry* represents. Other works of *opus anglicanum* were finished in silks, gold threads, and sometimes gemstones.<sup>41</sup> It is also important to note that the story of the Battle of Hastings could have been conveyed through wall painting, illumination, or wood carving—all of which were common artistic mediums of communicating information through image and word.<sup>42</sup> This distinct stylistic choice must therefore be considered prominently as a defining factor for discussing the original intent and function of the *Bayeux Tapestry*.

A similar work to the *Bayeux Tapestry* was mentioned in the *Uber Eliensis* (ca. 1170) as a work donated to the monastery at Ely by a Lady Ælfflaed, the widow of Byrhtnoth. It was described as “a hanging embroidered (or woven) and figured (or painted or embroidered) with the deeds of her husband.”<sup>43</sup> No mention is made of it containing ornate ornamentation like gold or jewels, and the form of the hanging is unknown. It is therefore interpreted as plain and vividly embroidered as the *Bayeux Tapestry*, commemorating the life of a husband.<sup>44</sup> This is not unlike the beginning scenes of the *Bayeux Tapestry* where Edward the Confessor is shown giving his last orders as King and passing away with his Queen, Edith, by his side. This case is of a completely separate embroidered tapestry produced with similar materials but in the decades following those of the *Bayeux Tapestry*. There are also examples of the *Bayeux Tapestry* sharing stylistic and iconographic details with contemporary English manuscripts.

There is speculation of a relationship between manuscript illuminators and embroiderers of *opus anglicanum*, where the illuminators would draw designs for the embroiderers to work into their fabric.<sup>45</sup> A Renaissance example of a similar relationship exists in the 1516 workshop of Raphael of Urbino where cartoons were drawn and then sent to the workshop of Pieter van Aelst to be woven into tapestries to decorate the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel.<sup>46</sup> That such a habit might have existed in medieval Normandy of England remains unproven, but evidence abounds in the aesthetic conventions, iconography, and drawing style found in both *opus anglicanum* and manuscript illumination. Late Anglo-Saxon pictorial narrative like that found in the *Tapestry*, relies on the manipulation of proportion and exaggeration of movement and position as a tool to convey meaning.<sup>47</sup> This prescriptive narrative style is found in a scene where Edward the Confessor and Harold Godwinson appear to be speaking to one another while their index fingers are rendered as touching. This was meant to represent a “master instructing his servant” and would be readily identifiable as such by contemporary cartoonists trained in the Utrecht style.<sup>48</sup>

The ninth-century *Utrecht Psalter* is described as containing a “type of English drawing” which is also found in later eleventh-century manuscripts at Canterbury.<sup>49</sup> Wolfgang Grape states that some of the heads of figures depicted in the *Bayeux Tapestry* share that same English style, but that the transformation from penwork to needlework has modified their outlines slightly.<sup>50</sup> At Canterbury there is an English copy of a late classical book, the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, which contains a peculiar and entirely unique mode of depicting the personification of Labor with a coil of rope on his shoulder (Figure 4), rather than the prototypical boulder.<sup>51</sup> Within the *Bayeux Tapestry*, a scene depicting the Norman invaders foraging for food after arriving at Hastings depicts this same personified figure of Labor with the coil of rope over his shoulder—

an exact duplicate of the depiction within the English copy of the *Psychomachia*. The identification of a shared English style discernible in more than one source is evidence that there is communication between artists working in different mediums, and that there is significance in the drawing style chosen is implicit in that it is ubiquitous.

The material qualities, structure, and iconographical styles utilized in the production of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, although imperative to understanding its context as a work of art, do not provide for the appreciation of it as an essential Anglo-Norman historical document, akin to manuscripts and other documents of history. The *Bayeux Tapestry* depicts in its remaining 72 scenes that most critical moment in history which provides the framework for our understanding of it in Anglo-Norman English society. Following the Battle of Hastings, William the Conqueror's claim to the English throne was under constant scrutiny, making the years 1066 through 1076 important in unifying English and Norman interests through validating William's claims.<sup>52</sup> The *Bayeux Tapestry* is that perfect amalgamation of historical context and recognizable English style which quite possibly served to pacify those who had the opportunity to view it and helped to introduce a new Anglo-Norman dynasty through familiar Anglo-Saxon artistic techniques. It is in this way that the *Bayeux Tapestry* has been understood in scholarship as a propaganda piece for William the Conqueror and has also served as interpretation of the Battle of Hastings through an Anglo-Norman lens.

### **THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS AND THE *BAYEUX TAPESTRY***

Eleventh-century England, following the death of its childless king, saw the rise and rivalry of three contending noblemen vying to prove their claims to the English crown, ultimately ending in a war of conquest. The conception of the *Bayeux Tapestry* followed within two decades of this upheaval, depicting the years leading up to the Battle of Hastings and of the battle itself,



rendering it an essential document for appreciating both Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman consciousness. For this reason, the history of the Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest are imperative to understanding the *Bayeux Tapestry* not just as a work of art or a document of history, but also as a tool for the propagation of new law and the education of new kings and subjects.

The Norman Conquest of England arguably began with the death of King Edward the Confessor, the last king of the ancient Wessex line, and the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.<sup>53</sup> A passage from the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, commissioned by Edward's wife Edith, suggests that Edward had committed his life to celibacy before he married, consequently leaving him, Edith, and England without an heir.<sup>54</sup> Just before his death, also described in the *Vita Edwardi*, the dying king purportedly had a vision:

First the dying king wakes from a troubled sleep to tell a vision of two monks, who warned him of God's punishment about to fall on the English for the sins of their leaders; the kingdom will be delivered into the hands of the enemy for a year and a day.<sup>55</sup>

Whether this vision occurred or not, or whether it was true or not, is inconsequential. Queen Edith saw fit to have this story included in her commissioned work on Edward's life, which means that it must have contained some significance at the time. The interpretation provided for this vision has been as a sign of the obstinacy of the English leaders for generations and their refusal to repent.<sup>56</sup> A vision shared of a bleak future for England by an ailing king would not place hope in the hearts of those surrounding him, particularly those who must concern themselves with the succession of a new king. On January 5th, 1066, Edward the Confessor died, and his successor was never explicitly chosen. The documentation is unclear to us now—as it was in the eleventh century—as to whether Duke William of Normandy should have been the

successor or Queen Edith's brother, Harold Godwinson. Scholars often find it hard to believe that Edward had always favored William over Harold, although it is certain that at least for a short period he had.<sup>57</sup> In the end, however, England needed a king and so with Duke William far away in Normandy and Harold Godwinson at the king's side, Harold became king (Figure 5).<sup>58</sup>

Harold Godwinson, now King Harold, did not find the transition to the English throne easy, as Duke William and Harald Hardrada both contested his claim. Harald Hardrada was the King of Norway and grounded his claim to the English crown on his ancestral relation to King Cnut who had ruled England earlier in the eleventh century.<sup>59</sup> Duke William claimed to be the only legitimate direct heir to the childless Edward the Confessor, a claim largely accepted by historians today, although there is no evidence of pre-Conquest verification for it.<sup>60</sup> Duke William's claim is typically fixed in that he was kin to Edward the Confessor and that Edward as a youth had been exiled to Normandy where William's ancestors provided support for him.<sup>61</sup> For this, Edward designated William as his heir and ensured that leading figures in the English *optimates*—such as Archbishop Stigand who stood at the dying king's side, and Earl Godwin the father of Harold Godwinson—would pledge to receive William as their king after Edward's death.<sup>62</sup>

During Edward the Confessor's reign he sent Earl Harold to William's court in Normandy to confirm for him the grant of succession with an oath, making Harold William's man by swearing to be his vicar and to uphold the Duke's claim in England after Edward's death.<sup>63</sup> The swearing of the oath to William is where Harold made his most crucial mistake, independent of accepting the crown of England whether out of necessity of having a king or out of greed. Norse law, which retained influence in England from its history of Norse kings, revolves around the dependability and sanctity of the oath.<sup>64</sup> Harold, by accepting the crown and

succeeding Edward the Confessor, had broken his sacred oath to William. So it was down to these three claimants—William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson and Harald Hardrada—in 1066 to come to a mutual conclusion over who would be the rightful king. In the autumn of that year the King of Norway Harald Hardrada attacked in the North at the Battle of Stamford Bridge with the help of King Harold's brother Tostig; both Harald Hardrada and Tostig died at the Battle, eliminating one claimant.<sup>65</sup> Almost simultaneously, Duke William attacked in the south and at the Battle of Hastings King Harold died leaving one claimant to the throne, the surviving one. On Christmas Day 1066, Duke William was crowned King of the English and became known as William the Conqueror.<sup>66</sup> This story of death, a broken oath, and battle is the story told by the *Bayeux Tapestry*. In this way, the *Tapestry*, if produced for and owned by William the Conqueror, served as a cautionary story of the penalty of breaking an oath, and a didactic tool for retelling the history of the Norman Conquest of England.

The scenes of battle in the final panels of the *Bayeux Tapestry* were not always the last panels viewed and read. The *Tapestry* has a portion missing of an unknown length and unknown subject matter off the very end. Although it is speculated by most scholars who touch on the issue that if the missing piece follows the same pattern of documenting historical events in roughly chronological order then the last panel (or panels) would depict Duke William being crowned King of England. When compared to written records of the Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest produced in the first decade of William's rule, the *Tapestry's* missing panel turns out not to be the only missing feature. The figures and Latin inscriptions embroidered along the *Bayeux Tapestry* are surprising in their lack of evoking or portraying strong emotions, particularly in areas where William is involved, which differs greatly from literature produced about and for William. In the *Gesta Guillelmi*, written by William of Poitiers as a biography for

William the Conqueror, strong emotions of anger are portrayed by William on three separate occasions and always in favorable light.<sup>67</sup> The third mention of William's anger is described at the Battle of Hastings where the *Gesta* refers to it as William's "angry blade" in reference to what William of Poitiers regarded as a pursuit of a just cause claiming the crown he believed to be rightfully his.<sup>68</sup> Janet Nelson states that these incidents of anger represented in the *Gesta Guillelmi* are likely representations of symbolic anger as comprehensible within the literary canon of the eleventh century, and that their use was "intended either to drive men forward into battle, or to impose power, or to push a dispute to a negotiated settlement or a verdict."<sup>69</sup> It is clear that the symbolic anger described in William is different from bursts of real anger displayed by his enemies, as different vocabulary is chosen by William of Poitiers to brand the enemies as emotionally uncontrolled and having behaved less virtuously than William.<sup>70</sup> If the *Bayeux Tapestry* was produced for possession by William the Conqueror, and a biography for William detailing the same historical events was produced during the same decades the *Tapestry* was constructed in, then why are there differences in the ways in which William is symbolically portrayed in each? If the *Bayeux Tapestry* was produced for William's retainment and symbolic anger was truly an important part of portraying his pursuit of the crown, then evidence of emotion and symbolic anger should appear in the Latin inscriptions, or embroidered into the many dynamic scenes of action in the same way the *Gesta* embeds them into his biography; symbolic anger and blatant, strong emotions do not appear in the *Bayeux Tapestry's* inscriptions or scenes.

To answer the discrepancy between the *Tapestry* and the *Gesta Guillelmi* and the lack of symbolic anger in portraying William the Conqueror in the former, would be the *Tapestry's* capacity for transmitting multiple perspectives including pro-English ones.<sup>71</sup> If viewed from the

standpoint that the *Tapestry* could serve for both Anglo-Saxon and Norman sentiments on the Conquest, the narrative suddenly changes. The first half of the embroidery tells Harold Godwinson's story and the narrative appears to imply that he was simply a victim of fate.<sup>72</sup> The *Tapestry* seems to make clear early on that Harold did not seize, nor intend to seize, the crown illegally but was forced to choose between two oaths; one oath taken under duress at the court of Duke William, the other an oath to obey the final command of his dying king.<sup>73</sup> The multivocality hidden in the *Bayeux Tapestry's* embroidery is much like other documents produced after the Conquest, such as Queen Edith's *Vita Edwardi Regis*, in which the text or imagery did not need to be ingratiating towards William to still forge relationships with the Normans.<sup>74</sup> William the Conqueror's impact in England has been described in modern scholarship as a paradox,<sup>75</sup> and it could be that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was a reconciliation between Anglo-Saxon and Norman sentiments. The *Bayeux Tapestry* altogether presents justification for William's claim as corroborated in his biographies and placates Anglo-Saxon reluctance to accept the new Norman aristocracy.

## **MEDIEVAL WOMEN IN ANGLO-SAXON AND NORMAN ENGLAND**

In the context of the Middle Ages, women are a marginal group frequently on the fringes of historical study and understanding. Women in the context of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, likewise, are underrepresented in the historical understanding of the embroidery, its creation, and its sponsorship. Women in Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, royal or otherwise, rather played vital roles in society which scholars like Carola Hicks and Susan M. Johns have brought to the forefront of medieval scholarship.<sup>76</sup> Although Johns' research focuses on women of the twelfth century, it is still possible to understand women of the eleventh century through her work, because the roles women typically played in the century following the Conquest were influenced

mainly by those roles of the preceding century. Twelfth century noblewomen in England shared some influences of state, but primarily wielded power in the production of innovative secular literature, an area of patronage in which women were the vanguards of the time.<sup>77</sup> Women in twelfth century England are an example of the type of woman Carola Hicks argues commissioned the *Bayeux Tapestry*; a woman who was educated, powerful, and interested in recording history through a secular lens.<sup>78</sup>

The powers of royal women in England were concentrated within the home, but they held sway over the development of the state as well. Women exerted influence through cultural patronage and literacy, although they were often excluded from the religious and political establishments most associated with literacy and development.<sup>79</sup> One of the roles medieval English women played was that of family historiographer for the creation and preservation of social memory.<sup>80</sup> Women from powerful and noble households, as repositories of family history, subsequently commissioned literature in the form of manuscripts to fulfill the role of historiographer. Beginning with Alfred the Great, the idea of a proper education for a noble boy included knowledge of history and family history, making these manuscripts fundamental to the instruction of sons.<sup>81</sup> Women took on the role of the educators themselves, as is the case with Queen Edith, the widow of Edward the Confessor. A passage from her own commissioned work, the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, remarks on her role in rearing, educating, and showering “with motherly love those boys who were said to be of royal stock.”<sup>82</sup> Edith had no children of her own but held the responsibilities of a queen for the children of royal blood as if they were her own.

Within the home specifically, women exerted power through other kinds of literary creations. Personal letters and charters, poetry, and literary texts are recorded as being some of the most common forms of literature patronized and produced by women in medieval England.<sup>83</sup>

These are not unlike artistic creations such as embroidery, another common form of literary or historical production unique to women. The wife of an East-Saxon leader in 991 was recorded to have commissioned a family history in the form of embroidered wall hanging depicting his many deeds in his memory.<sup>84</sup> This intersection of female commission, literary influence, and preservation of family and social history is where the *Bayeux Tapestry* neatly falls and should therefore be understood in the same way (Figure 6).

Royal Anglo-Saxon women, such as Queen Edith, commissioned family histories as preservation of *memoria*, or a commemoration of the dead.<sup>85</sup> This participation in the creation of social memory, as stated above, was a major role in a noblewoman's life. That participation, fulfilled by Edith on at least one other occasion, is part of the process by which 1066 was remembered and is likely the impetus for the creation of the *Bayeux Tapestry*. The *Tapestry* contains the history of two men important to Edith's life and their deaths, as would a written *memoria*, are recounted along-side the social history of the events of their lives for educational purposes. Textile production is also ordinarily associated with women rather than men through archaeological and textual evidence.<sup>86</sup> Queen Edith was described by chroniclers, most notably William of Poitiers, as "intelligent as a man" owing to her striking education.<sup>87</sup> Edith's education, connection to textile production as a woman, and her pre-identified role in preserving social memory combine to weave the tale of her own hand in the creation of the *Bayeux Tapestry*. Edith, after all, played a more than ornamental role in Edward the Confessor's court according to Hicks, even having her own throne.

Land ownership in medieval England is associated with men in most cases, but in a few documented cases, land was held by Anglo-Saxon women as well. This period in England's history is sometimes portrayed as something of a "golden age" for women, particularly in law

and landholding.<sup>88</sup> Although this may not be entirely true, as women were still essentially pawns for political, social, and religious power, it speaks to the amount of extant written evidence which supports the idea. Anglo-Saxon women may not necessarily have had equality with men, but the evidence available seems to suggest that they held more power over their own properties than Norman women or women after the Conquest. Queen Edith may have been accustomed, therefore, to a certain level of self-sufficiency prior to the introduction of Norman law in England.

Mavis Mate quotes Christine Fell in asserting that for Anglo-Saxon women in particular, land known as the morning gift, or land that is given to the bride from her bridegroom and his family after marriage, is for the bride to “give away, sell or bequeath” as she chooses.<sup>89</sup> In the world of landed property, women had the freedom to move with as much assertion and right as men.<sup>90</sup> The *Domesday Book* commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086 has scarce records of women landholders, attributable to the imposition of Norman law and the takeover of many Anglo-Saxon lands by Normans. It is also stated that, “Women, whose claims on land might be debatable or temporary, were not desirable predecessors and Domesday may underestimate women’s landholding in 1066 as a result.”<sup>91</sup> Edith, unlike others in her family post-Conquest, is recorded in the *Domesday Book* as having retained possession of her lands until her death.<sup>92</sup>

The study of medieval English women’s lives would be remiss without the inclusion of *opus anglicanum*, a prominent and unique feature of Anglo-Saxon women. Anglo-Saxon women’s marked talent for embroidery distinguished them from their European neighbors.<sup>93</sup> Embroideries in the style of *opus anglicanum*, such as the *Bayeux Tapestry*, were largely unfamiliar and unperfected in Normandy during the eleventh and twelfth centuries having no comparable tradition and therefore required the commissioning of English women for its



production.<sup>94</sup> Praise of *opus anglicanum* is found in cathedral inventories, wills, early historians' writings, and in papal records describing popes from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries ordering their vestments specifically from England.<sup>95</sup> Documentary evidence from the early Middle Ages reveals that there were women in the English community who possessed the highly sought after and rewarded talent for working with, and even producing, the gold threads which are so prominently featured in *opus anglicanum*.<sup>96</sup> The *Bayeux Tapestry*, a unique example of *opus anglicanum* as it is meant to be displayed rather than worn and contains no gold thread, bears witness to a high level of skill in technique and represents a corpus of decorative works now entirely lost.<sup>97</sup>

Edith as Queen ran a royal embroidery workshop producing textiles for churches and for Edward's robes of state and her sewing talents were lauded in the *Vita Edwardi* as comparable to her skills in literature and linguistics.<sup>98</sup> Some extant English documents include the names of other craftswomen accompanied by some form of payment for their work. A ninth century embroideress Eanswitha was granted a lifetime lease of a two hundred-acre farm by Denebert Bishop of Worcester, on the condition that she dressed the priests serving in the cathedral with her embroideries.<sup>99</sup> The *Domesday Book* contains an entry for a woman named Leofgeat who "in 1086 as in 1066 did gold embroidery for the king and queen."<sup>100</sup> Leofgeat was included in the *Domesday Book* as a landholder from the king, but it is not made clear whether or not her gold embroidery earned her any other gifts or rewards; it is implied that her reward was the maintaining of her lands post Conquest. Queen Edith, Eanswitha, and Leofgeat represent in the written record what is understood about medieval embroidery: that the celebrated *opus anglicanum* had no comparable tradition of embroidery as an art form in pre-Conquest

Normandy, as is evident in the proliferation of English embroideresses in post-Conquest England.

## **MEDIEVAL EDUCATION**

Formal education in the Western world today is far more ubiquitous than that of the Middle Ages, but that is not to say that medieval children were not educated. The same is true of medieval adults, although those who were not able to receive an education as a youth still maintained a certain level of visual knowledge and literacy through the church. Education in the medieval era, as described by most scholars, was centered within the church and focused on preparing children for ecclesiastical life through the learning of Latin texts and Scripture.<sup>101</sup>

Tutors and teachers outside of the church, however, did exist and were very much present in the lives of medieval noble children and their households. Women, as mothers, often played a role as well in the education of their own and others' children.<sup>102</sup> Reading into education of the medieval age and its social and art historical implications provides the background knowledge necessary to understanding the educational functions of the *Bayeux Tapestry* to an Anglo-Norman court.

In the Anglo-Saxon period, the education of youths is famously recounted in the stories of Alfred the Great. King Alfred, in the ninth century, sought to provide education for all, taking inspiration from his own childhood in which he was encouraged to learn.<sup>103</sup> His policy on education, recorded in his book *Pastoral Care*, was that every boy of free birth or any boy who was not a vassal or slave, should be taught to read and write English no matter if they were destined for the church or life as a warrior in the service of the King.<sup>104</sup> He even goes so far as to advocate that those not set to "any other employment" should decide for themselves to continue their education in the instruction of Latin.<sup>105</sup> This early example provided by King Alfred

demonstrates the Anglo-Saxon's lingering propensity for the education of boys and the value which they placed on an educated, literate society.

Much of the documentation of Anglo-Saxon and medieval English education comes to us through writings completed after Alfred the Great's lifetime (his being the earliest comprehensive example for the advocacy of education). Those who taught medieval children were recorded in these later texts including letters, charters, and other personal documents of the household, much like the document commissioned by Queen Edith which records her own education at Wilton Abbey, suggesting it was an education provided by nuns.<sup>106</sup> King Alfred's life and education, as chronicled by his biographer, the monk Asser, mentions that his was provided by tutors within the royal home rather than in the church.<sup>107</sup> The employment of tutors or other scholars rather than nuns or monks to educate children on reading and writing demonstrates occasional discretionary exclusion of the church, which would indicate that the church after all was not always the principal setting of medieval learning. King Alfred even chose for his own sons *and* daughters to be taught by tutors. He strategized the development of education within the royal household by allotting one-eighth of his revenues to the cost of schooling and "sent" his sons Edward and Æthelweard, and his daughter Ælfhryth to the school (which was really held within the household or castle).<sup>108</sup> Nicholas Orme also writes that the tutors employed were perhaps both male and female in alignment with both sons and daughters attending the school.<sup>109</sup> The church still very much played a role in educating children throughout the medieval period, but it is important to recognize that it was not the only option and that secularization appears in many areas of society at this time.

Beyond the schoolroom, education was provided in the home and by women. Mothers assumed the role of instructor to their sons in imparting family history and social memory.<sup>110</sup> In

some circumstances a woman would fulfill the role of instructor for a relative's child, as was the case with either Edgar Æthling or Harold son of Earl Ralph, great-nephew of the king as established in the *Domesday Book*. A passage in the *Vita Edwardi* remarks on Queen Edith's rearing, educating, and showering with motherly love "those boys who were said to be of royal stock."<sup>111</sup> Queen Edith had no children, so it is possible that a child or multiple children of the extended royal family may have been placed in her care as an early form of adoption, to learn the family history, and absorb social memories of England from the Queen. Although there is no evidence for formal adoption procedures in England in the eleventh century, it can be found in cases like Edward the Confessor naming his great-nephew Edgar, 'ætheling,' or throne-worthy, effectively adopting him into the royal household.<sup>112</sup> To quote Pauline Stafford on the importance of motherhood and education in eleventh century England, "Such substitute parenting merely underlines how far motherhood is a source of female power. The care of an infant or future king and the care of the kingdom went together."<sup>113</sup> Education in England during the Middle Ages was highly valued within the community of the nobility and aristocratic households, and that value can be seen entrusted in women, tutors, and the church. This provides a basis for seeing Queen Edith, an educated woman, as capable of undertaking the transmission of social memory through educating young Anglo-Norman royals with the *Bayeux Tapestry* as her carefully designed tool.

The extant physical tools of medieval education are most often manuscripts which provide tangible proof for the importance placed on the ability to read and write in Anglo-Saxon England. Grammar books, study books, primers, glosses, and the manuscript margins contain substantial evidence of the methods and techniques employed for teaching early stages of reading.<sup>114</sup> The methods of instruction for reading in the tenth century come from ancient Greek

and Roman systems of pedagogy, a system of such longevity that it continued to be used through the early modern period.<sup>115</sup> Students were to first learn the alphabet forwards and backwards, and then combine the letters into different syllables emphasizing a familiarity with the letters themselves and gain competence with manipulating them until eventually full sentences could be formed.<sup>116</sup> Purposefully recorded alphabets survive in the form of a few marginal notes inside of manuscripts from the tenth century onwards, making sure to demonstrate the peculiarities employed for writing in English by including after the letter “z” the special characters for “w,” “th,” and “ae.”<sup>117</sup> English and Latin were the primary languages taught to children in the tenth and eleventh centuries in England and it was important to distinguish the differences in characters of each language.

Of particular note for this time period is the creation of the first vernacular grammar book along with a grammar book dedicated to understanding Latin. Ælfric, born ca. 950, was determined to become a better teacher than the poor rural priest who taught him and, through his shortcomings, produced *Grammar* explicitly for children to explain Latin grammar rules and in the process formulated another grammar text for Old English.<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Orme states of Ælfric’s achievements that, “Twenty-four manuscripts or fragments of his *Grammar* are known attesting to its popularity in England up to and after the Norman Conquest.”<sup>119</sup> Study books and glosses from the tenth and eleventh centuries show that young monks in particular were expected to learn these two languages, and often through the reading of patristic texts comprising Priscian, Sergius, Cato, and the Venerable Bede.<sup>120</sup> The system for the instruction of reading in medieval England was one which encouraged thought, a playful attitude towards written language, and a mindset delighted by anagrams, ciphers, and rebuses.<sup>121</sup> This mindset was unique to England

over Normandy, and the tradition for literary education in Anglo-Saxon England can be read in the Anglo-Latin inscriptions of the *Bayeux Tapestry* (Figure 7).

The evidence for education in Anglo-Saxon England made available to boys or girls of lay or aristocratic standing is found most often within the church institution. Most evidence gives the impression that boys' education was valued more so than those of girls, as monasteries and local churches required a steady supply of boys educated in Latin to copy manuscripts and read the Scriptures.<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, in the period of the tenth and eleventh centuries, when neither laymen nor laywomen were commonly literate, some noblewomen were able to receive a comparable education to the male religious.<sup>123</sup> Aristocratic girls were not excluded from a literary education.<sup>124</sup> To quote Sally Crawford on the topic, "The education of boys and girls was a commonplace among the elite rather than an exception."<sup>125</sup> But what of girls receiving an education within the church that are not aristocratic or evidence of girls' education within the church at all?

There were fewer abbeys for women in the tenth and eleventh centuries than monasteries for men, but where there were abbeys, girl recruits would have received the same education as their boy counterparts to exist within the church.<sup>126</sup> Excavations at Whitby Monastery and other similar sites have unearthed copious evidence of "busy *scriptoria*" where nuns, using their education in Latin, copied manuscripts.<sup>127</sup> Queen Edith was one such aristocratic girl who spent much of her childhood at Wilton Abbey where she received an education in music, languages, and grammar, before returning to court to fulfill her duties as the daughter of an Earl.<sup>128</sup> As an aristocratic child, however, the ample education she received outside of literacy should not be understood to be typical. So the existence of monasteries and abbeys in Anglo-Saxon England requiring a year-round workforce of monks and nuns capable of reading and copying Latin

establishes the availability of a literary education for boys *and* girls of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The education of royal children, as with other aristocratic children, could have been conducted within the church. However, various documents and biographies of the medieval period indicate that other educational methods were often taken up within the royal household, sometimes to the detriment of the child. For all of King Alfred's love of knowledge and literacy, he did not learn to read until he was twelve years old, though he was taught by his own parents at the royal court.<sup>129</sup> Asser, Alfred's biographer, wrote of this and of Alfred's subsequent efforts to improve literacy at court by "obliging mature noblemen and experienced soldiers to join their children at the school bench, much to their discomfort," to quote Crawford.<sup>130</sup> This glimpse into the ninth-century royal schoolroom paints a picture of boys and men of differing station, sitting along a bench (repurposed from the dining hall perhaps?), attempting to learn to read among much grumbling and probable confusion. The effectual outcome of this method of instruction is dubious, and the practices of literary education after King Alfred are not widely recorded.

Later references to the education of royal children are often less detailed, attesting to the uniqueness of Asser's biography of Alfred's life. William the Conqueror is noted to have provided carefully for the "Christian" education of his own children, including sending his third son, William Rufus, to be educated in the household of Archbishop Lanfranc.<sup>131</sup> The decision to have his eventual successor educated in the household of the Archbishop could indicate the importance of a royal child learning and understanding the hierarchies of power, the nuances of which could not be easily conveyed in the seclusion of a monastery. In the case of royal girls, it would seem their education remained within the church. Queen Edith, as mentioned above, was educated at Wilton Abbey, and William the Conqueror's daughter Cecilia became abbess of

Holy Trinity in Caen where it is assumed she received an education befitting an ecclesiast.<sup>132</sup> In some cases it is not clear where a royal woman received her education, and it is not until the twelfth century when it becomes well-defined that some secular royal women could read in both vernacular and Latin, making clear that they were not excluded from the knowledge of the language of law and learning.<sup>133</sup>

The particular case of educating the laity and peasantry in the tenth and eleventh centuries, where ecclesiastical training was not always an option, is both difficult to discern and is scarcely documented. To an extent, there seems to have been no formalized period for education in lay secular life, meaning there was no age where it was deemed appropriate and necessary for a child to begin learning to read and write or otherwise.<sup>134</sup> Members of the clergy, moreover, particularly abhorred the idea of literacy in lay society.<sup>135</sup> The cleric-chronicler Henry Knighton even compared laymen's literacy to women's involvement with the written word as essentially "casting pearls before swine."<sup>136</sup>

Education and training of lay and peasant children belonged in the home in medieval England,<sup>137</sup> and although physical evidence of this in the historical record does not appear until the thirteenth century that does not mean the concepts were not already in use. Advice manuals and poems of morality and history were the tools of lay parents, as Scripture and manuscripts were the tools of the church. Barbara Hanawalt shows in her examination of life in medieval London that booklets similar to reading primers, written explicitly for young children and babies with titles such as "The ABC of Aristotle," were used by parents to teach and raise a desirable child.<sup>138</sup> These manuals of childrearing were "as spiced with proverbs as is Polonius's advice to Laertes."<sup>139</sup> Socialization in the home as a form of education instilled the rudimentary traits thought to be necessary to thrive in medieval society; moral attitudes of honoring father, mother,



and master, general courteous behavior, and principles of clean living were enforced in the home.<sup>140</sup> Evidence by the thirteenth century for the learning of moral behavior from home, social history from poetry, proverbs from stories, and Scripture from church may indicate that earlier generations of peasant and lay society valued these as well, possibly dating back to the eleventh century as it is well known that Anglo-Saxon's valued education overall.

### **HUMOR AND PLAY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND**

The concepts of play and humor were essential to Anglo-Saxon society and their embeddedness in daily life attests to the importance placed on entertainment in pre-Conquest England.<sup>141</sup> The nature of Anglo-Saxon humor, where our word “fun” derives from, is often cited as frequently vulgar, connected with the senses, and characteristically rude.<sup>142</sup> The Anglo-Saxons as well had a churlish habit of nicknaming others based on personal idiosyncrasies, an oft-used example of their rude-humored tendencies.<sup>143</sup> In light of some of the more uncouth examples of Anglo-Saxon humor, laughter was treated as a therapeutic instrument at this time and justified the performance of music, literary narration, and drama.<sup>144</sup> Entertainment was enjoyed by most social classes indicated in the popularity of distinctly secular Old English riddles.<sup>145</sup> Elements of “play” can be tracked still today through place names such as Plaistow in Essex, derived from a pre-Christian name for an adult theater, and Gamfield Hundred in Berkshire, derived from the Anglo-Saxon “game-field.”<sup>146</sup> Pleasure and entertainment were recognized as essential aspects of medieval culture and received abundant attention which becomes particularly clear with any examination of medieval literature.<sup>147</sup> The service which entertainment provided to medieval society was in all probability the same as it is used today: a therapeutic release of tension.

The use of fables in this period benefitted the purpose of both educating and entertaining adults, particularly when employed within the church. The first Bishop of Exeter, Leofric,

presented the *Exeter Book* to his cathedral in 1046 which contained in it: legends of Saints, gnomic verses, riddles, and allegorical descriptions by means of animals, much like the allegories and moral tales of Aesop.<sup>148</sup> Vincent of Beauvais in the thirteenth century demonstrates the practice of preachers rousing their congregations by relating an Aesopian fable with the Scripture.<sup>149</sup> The intersection of entertainment and education happen within the adult world as much as it is found for children in this period, as children's and adult's lives were largely intertwined.

For adults, finding the time to play games or enjoy some form of entertainment was essential, and as Sally Crawford states, "If adults could find time for games, there is no reason to think that children were deprived of play."<sup>150</sup> By the thirteenth century, as with education, it becomes clear within the historical record that adults understood that children would and should play.<sup>151</sup> Although the physical and documentary evidence of children's play appears in the centuries following the Conquest, the essential nature of play to Anglo-Saxon culture would indicate that these values seen in the thirteenth century stemmed from an earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition. It is abundantly clear, after all, that Anglo-Saxon parents allowed children time to play and recognized that a child's good memory, linked with education, was bolstered through play.<sup>152</sup>

The encouragement for children to play is evidenced through artifacts found in children's graves which resemble toys or otherwise had no proper function for a child and therefore may have been adopted as a toy.<sup>153</sup> A worn and broken gilt bronze brooch found buried with a twelve-year-old girl at Winnall has been interpreted as such a "toy" since it is not likely the girl wore it, but rather that she coveted it for its beauty and it became a plaything.<sup>154</sup> There is less evidence, however, of the toys themselves than of the social encouragement to play in the Anglo-Saxon

world.<sup>155</sup> Documents from the post-Conquest period record toy houses and hobby horses made of sticks, sailing ships from bread, swords from sedge, and dolls from cloth and flowers, all ephemeral materials not likely to survive through to modern-day excavation.<sup>156</sup> Rather, just the documents of medieval childhood are what remain, recording the items of their imaginative play and thus affording a glimpse into the utensils of childhood entertainment.

The descriptions of children at play in documentary sources, such as in the *Harley Psalter*, depict them oftentimes borrowing their playthings from the adults.<sup>157</sup> This is because much like adopting common objects as toys, children would adopt adult things and activities as their games. The adults recognized too that this could be used to the advantage of the child later in life. Children in the medieval period lived and played alongside adults and their play occasionally took the form of imitating or “helping” them, “the most effective form of learning and preparing for the adult life.”<sup>158</sup> Archaeological evidence combines with documentary records once more to suggest that Anglo-Saxon children’s period of childhood was relatively prolonged and was recognized by adults to be a period wherein play was an outlet for childish exuberance.<sup>159</sup> This period of growth was transformed into a learning tool by adjusting the child’s educational needs to the basic requirements of integration into society as an adult.<sup>160</sup> It is interesting to note here that this combination of play and education for the medieval child has spilled over into modern day research. A majority of scholarly research which discusses medieval childhood, more often than not combines “play” and “education” into the same chapter, using one or the other to prompt discussion of their dual roles. The intermingling of play into children’s education, and humor into adult life in the medieval period, despite the limited physical evidence in the archaeological and documentary record, communicates the essentiality of both concepts to daily life in Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest England.

## THE FAULTS INHERENT IN ODO'S PATRONAGE

Previous scholarship on the *Bayeux Tapestry* has labored under the assumption that Bishop Odo of Bayeux, William the Conqueror's half-brother, commissioned the *Tapestry* for display within Bayeux Cathedral in the year 1077.<sup>161</sup> Some scholars disagree that it was created for the cathedral and argue that it was rather created to adorn a more secular setting.<sup>162</sup> The choice of materials and design of the *Tapestry* have also presented scholars with issues in interpreting its function. Other extant examples of *opus anglicanum* typically contain gold thread, but the *Bayeux Tapestry* contains none, a deliberate choice which should indicate some difference in its purpose.<sup>163</sup> These multi-faceted issues facing scholarship with interpreting the *Bayeux Tapestry's* historical record (or lack thereof) are evidence that the presupposed patron and purpose, until further investigation, are ill-fitting assumptions. In this section, an analysis of the arguments supporting Bishop Odo of Bayeux as patron and the *Tapestry* as religious decoration will be presented and re-evaluated against the historical record. This will demonstrate why it is improbable that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was commissioned by the Bishop for either religious or secular decoration and instead must have been consigned by someone else to serve a more didactic purpose.

Arguments in favor of Odo of Bayeux as patron often include the argument that the *Bayeux Tapestry* is "quite clearly" told from the Norman perspective. That perspective, however, is wholly unclear throughout the *Tapestry* as it is based on accounts from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, and Norman hagiographical works from William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers.<sup>164</sup> These distinctly Anglo-Saxon and Norman records respectively influenced the *Tapestry's* account of events, creating both an Anglo-Saxon and Norman perspective. The assumption that Odo was the sole patron of the work, however, remains. It is

proposed that he came about the commission when it was realized, post-Conquest, that Norman authority would need to be qualified within the Anglo-Saxon population through psychological process and that military might would not suffice.<sup>165</sup> The *Bayeux Tapestry* therefore endeavors to place William the Conqueror's authority squarely in the social memory of post-Conquest England.

The *Tapestry*, as much as it instills Norman authority, places Odo directly within the events of the Conquest, although he does not appear until well into the middle of the *Tapestry*. His inclusion in the embroidered scenes gives him a "greater role in the campaign than contemporary writers did."<sup>166</sup> The importance the *Bayeux Tapestry* appears to bestow upon the Bishop would seem to emphasize his centrality in its creation, given that no other historical chronicle gave him that same importance.<sup>167</sup> He is portrayed in at least four separate contexts in the *Tapestry* including as advisor to his brother the Duke, as a priest, a comforter to Norman troops, and as a warrior.<sup>168</sup> Whether or not he actually fulfilled these roles as depicted in the *Tapestry* is unclear, but one question remains: Why does his appearance within the *Tapestry* dictate that he was the patron despite any others who are also identified? Carola Hicks suggests that his sycophantic depictions in the embroidery were meant to serve as much of a psychological purpose as the *Tapestry* itself.<sup>169</sup> The tactful flattery of the Bishop, being almost equally as powerful as his half-brother, would have been to the benefit of former Anglo-Saxon royalty in maintaining good relations with the new Norman rule.<sup>170</sup> Thus, making Odo a main character in a large-scale embroidery documenting the Norman Conquest of England would further assuage tensions between the two families.

The few historical records outside of the *Bayeux Tapestry* which contain entries on Bishop Odo of Bayeux are those which record his questionable actions and character. Odo was

by no means a traditional bishop, and David J. Bernstein suggests that he was a man who rather lived and fought like a feudal baron instead of a member of the church.<sup>171</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records for the year 1082 that “In this year the king arrested Bishop Odo” but gives no reason as to why.<sup>172</sup> According to Orderic Vitalis’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* (ca. 1140), Odo attempted to buy his way into the position of pope, and to help him in this effort had enticed certain prominent lords to follow him to Italy to claim the papacy.<sup>173</sup> It was just before Odo and his bribed lords set sail to Italy that his half-brother, William the Conqueror, seized him, stripped him of his title as Earl of Kent, and imprisoned him at Rouen in Normandy.<sup>174</sup> Some scholars advocate that Odo’s motivation to commission the *Bayeux Tapestry* came after this period as an attempt to mend his relationship with his brother and to assert his religious authority.<sup>175</sup> This subsequently extends the date of the production and completion of the *Tapestry* far beyond 1077, and nullifies those arguments claiming it was a purposely-built religious work to coincide with the consecration of Bayeux Cathedral. If Odo the Bishop of Bayeux was willing to go to extremes to become pope and extend his religious power, why then would he commission an entirely provincial work of art? The only reasonable answer is that he did not.

For the sake of argument, some scholars have offered that Bishop Odo did indeed commission the *Bayeux Tapestry* as a purposefully secular work.<sup>176</sup> The narratives are persistently unreligious; William the Conqueror as Duke William is never shown at prayer, and Odo is only once shown fulfilling his role as Bishop by making a blessing,<sup>177</sup> which can be explained as simply documenting those events leading up to the Battle of Hastings. The unmistakable lack of religious imagery in the *Bayeux Tapestry* can be attributed to its function as a historical document. History in the Middle Ages was a literary genre comprised of secular narratives.<sup>178</sup> It is known of Norman dukes that they encouraged and commissioned chronicles of

historical writings dominated by two themes: success in war and benefactions to the Church.<sup>179</sup> Odo was, however, a clergy member, not a duke with expectations of benefaction, and the only representation of his presence in war is at the Battle of Hastings in the *Bayeux Tapestry*. His success, therefore, would have been perceived as negligible at best since his role as bishop brought him no closer to that war than his attempts on the papacy. The assumption that Odo commissioned the *Tapestry* does not fit the known narrative of Norman patronage. It is believed, rather, that if Odo commissioned this secular embroidery, it was for a secular setting.<sup>180</sup> Kay Staniland summarizes that the tradition for display in Bayeux Cathedral is discredited in that the embroidery's length of over 70 meters shows it was better suited for a large hall, likely at one of Odo's principle residences.<sup>181</sup> This argument for the purposeful commission of a secular piece for a secular setting, although more believable than the religious argument, is still undercut through the historical record which documents Odo as a power-hungry bishop endeavoring to become pope at any cost.

Odo's falling out of favor with his brother and the inclusion of a certain dubious character in the *Tapestry* calls into question the timing and purpose of the commission, which when compared to the arguments for its religious or secular contexts, suggests that it was not likely Odo could have commissioned the *Tapestry*. Certain scholars are skeptical that the *Tapestry* could have been completed by 1077, citing the inclusion of a man identified as Eustace of Boulogne in one critical scene of the battle.<sup>182</sup> Eustace of Boulogne was in disgrace with King William following his rebellion against him in 1067 and suffered royal disfavor for a decade.<sup>183</sup> Assuming the *Tapestry* was set for completion in 1077, the year which Eustace would finally be welcomed back into favor, it is highly improbable that Odo would have planned the design of the *Tapestry* to display Eustace so prominently.<sup>184</sup> The completion of the *Tapestry* therefore could

not possibly be set for 1077, meaning also that the argument for its function as religious decoration at Bayeux Cathedral is out. Perhaps the argument for commission in 1082, following Odo's own exile, would be more fitting.

Odo, as is hopefully apparent by now, was not a conventional bishop in his conduct. As a member of the clergy who was power hungry and lived in a way evocative of a feudal lord, he found himself imprisoned by the King in 1082, not two decades after the Conquest.<sup>185</sup> If Odo were to have commissioned a work as large-scale as the *Bayeux Tapestry* in that year, inserting himself in the design multiple times in settings which the historical record does not corroborate, it would have been because he wanted something for public display to bolster his relationship with the king, as suggested by Carola Hicks.<sup>186</sup> This notion relies, however, on the assumption that the *Tapestry's* embroidered scenes were designed to be purely secular and displayed in a secular setting, like one of Odo's residences.<sup>187</sup> It is important to note here that it is unclear why embroidery was chosen to depict the narratives in the *Bayeux Tapestry*, but what is clear is that the embroidery techniques used to create the *Tapestry* were largely unknown and unperfected in Normandy.<sup>188</sup> Odo, having been removed as Earl of Kent, and being imprisoned in Normandy at this time, would have lost his previously held access to Canterbury where the materials and expertise required to create the *Bayeux Tapestry* resided, casting doubt yet again that Odo, even in 1082, was the commissioner.<sup>189</sup>

Interpretations of the historical record betray those arguments championing Odo as the commissioner of the *Bayeux Tapestry*. Peculiarities within the *Tapestry's* own construction also diminish the possibility that the *Tapestry* was created for display in Bayeux Cathedral. The *Tapestry* is an example of *opus anglicanum* but is vastly different from all other extant examples in that it does not contain a single gold thread.<sup>190</sup> Characteristically, *opus anglicanum* was a style



popularly used in the production of ecclesiastical embroideries, with those surviving being stitched with gold, silver, and colored silks.<sup>191</sup> Destruction of *opus anglicanum*, either deliberate or accidental, has left the historic record with little remaining to study.<sup>192</sup> Whoever designed the *Bayeux Tapestry* made the deliberate choice not to include these precious materials, which may be a major factor in why it still remains. The end portion of the *Tapestry*, which has been missing since its re-discovery, may have contained the only gold threads in the embroidery, which may be why it is the only section now missing. What does it mean then that the *Tapestry* does not contain any of the distinguishing materials of *opus anglicanum*? Perhaps the *Tapestry* was not meant to serve a religious purpose and therefore did not require any of the precious materials typical of ecclesiastical embroidery. The portability of the finished textile may also have played a factor, requiring that the weight of the materials used to be kept to a minimum, thus removing the want for gold thread.<sup>193</sup> The raw materials themselves, and the plainness and simplicity of the *Bayeux Tapestry's* manufacture, creates a narrative of practicality, placing emphasis on understanding the embroidery by paying close attention to the nuances of the scenes, rather than ogling at shimmering gold.

The dimensions of the *Bayeux Tapestry* are yet another reason to revise interpretations of its function from religious to secular or from a work to be simply viewed into one to be closely studied. The unusually long and narrow format of the embroidery is as much a deliberate choice as the choice to exclude gold since it would have been simple to stitch together the individual pieces into a more typical tapestry shape, either square or rectangular.<sup>194</sup> The *Tapestry*, because of this unique shape, does not appear to have been designed for Bayeux Cathedral or any cathedral for that matter.<sup>195</sup> A modern replica, hung column to column in the nave of Bayeux Cathedral (Figure 8), revealed that if the original had been hung low enough to view each

detailed scene and to read the inscriptions, its eleventh-century viewers would have continually knocked it down or ignited it with their candles.<sup>196</sup> If it had been raised and hung safely against the solid wall above the arcade, the images and inscriptions would have become entirely illegible.<sup>197</sup>

The discommodious fit of the *Bayeux Tapestry* within the nave of Bayeux Cathedral is indicative of the unfounded assumption that it was created for the Cathedral despite the lack in contemporary documentation, and that the supposition that Odo had it produced for Bayeux Cathedral is, therein, also flawed. The theories linking Bishop Odo of Bayeux to the *Tapestry's* commission for either religious or secular function are tenuous at best when compared to the chronicled events contemporary to the *Tapestry's* production dates. The political nature, historical narrative, and distinctive dimensions of the *Bayeux Tapestry* suggest that this unique embroidery was rather meant to be displayed at eye level in a secular context, a “topical cartoon-strip for the court, not high up in a cathedral,” as stated by Hicks.<sup>198</sup> While her assertion is that the *Tapestry* was indeed a secular piece, she does not recognize the educational functions inherent in it. Evaluation of the historical record of post-Conquest England and scrutiny of the *Tapestry's* structure and position within a cathedral space systematically demonstrate that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was not commissioned by Bishop Odo, nor was it destined for permanent display at Bayeux Cathedral.

### **THE *BAYEUX TAPESTRY* AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL**

Researchers to date have yet to combine knowledge of medieval education, Edith Godwinson's patronage, women's roles as educators, and the narrative and literary contents of the *Bayeux Tapestry* to demonstrate its seamlessness in educating eleventh-century royal students. As such, additional factors of the *Tapestry's* production and history, which also substantiate an

educational perspective, have gone unnoticed. That fact that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was made of adaptable linen and wool, and in a format similar to a scroll, would indicate it needed to be mobile, moving from place to place and read in a chronological sequence like Hicks' previously suggested cartoon-strip.<sup>199</sup> In this way, the *Tapestry* could follow a moving court and not only be consistently used in the education of the royal children, but also in educating the laity of England on the new Norman regime.

The scroll is the oldest example of an expandable book-like object, appearing well before the book in the fourth century.<sup>200</sup> The scroll's continued use in administrative documents endured well into the thirteenth century in northwestern Europe.<sup>201</sup> It is possible then, that the patron, Queen Edith, was familiar with this form of documentation, having encountered it in her own experiences with administration and therefore was aware of its appropriateness for documenting long accounts of information. Scrolls as chronicles, after all, could become quite long, including one featured in Erik Kwakkel's *Books Before Print* which measured 34 feet long and only 19 inches wide (Figure 9).<sup>202</sup> The *Tapestry*, as a chronicle of the events leading up to the English Conquest, would naturally have been very long. Given that scrolls were not uncommon in chronicling lengths of information, and the patron's familiarity as well with *opus anglicanum*, means that the *Tapestry* patron likely saw it best to document the story as a roll of embroidery, rather than a massive, unwieldy, rectangular embroidery. Unlike sculptures, monuments, or painted frescoes, the *Bayeux Tapestry* would have been able to be unrolled on a long table, where the educator and her students could have read it like a film strip, not unlike how a Byzantine courtier would have read the Joshua Roll (Figure 10).<sup>203</sup>

Further supporting the idea that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was produced as a large embroidered scroll is found in a sketch made around the time of its rediscovery of its regular state of storage.

Most of its existence, the *Tapestry* lay quietly rolled upon the winchlike device on which it was apparently stored from time immemorial until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>204</sup> (Figure 11).

The “winch-like” storage of the *Tapestry* roll has no contemporaneous record of its production or assignment to the *Tapestry* as its storage device, which may indicate that if it was made with and for the *Tapestry*, its earliest records are also missing. The image of the rolled-up *Tapestry* also serves to demonstrate the actual ability to roll that amount of fabric and provides a visual for how viewing the *Tapestry* was made possible. A few turns of the winch-like device’s handle, a gentle draping of the embroidery over a table and the story of the English Conquest is displayed before the inquiring viewer, moving in sequence like a filmstrip.

The choice of materials for the *Tapestry* could have dramatically changed the format of the work, and, as a result, the understanding of its function. The key is in the simple and flexible wool thread and linen cloth, ubiquitous in English textile production.<sup>205</sup> These materials would allow the completed *Tapestry* to be transported to different sites as necessary, in order to be displayed to as many potential allies as possible as suggested by Hicks (it is safe to assume, with the portability of the embroidery, that its educational value could have extended to the laity as the new Norman court travelled).<sup>206</sup> If the winch-like device was not handy during travel the *Tapestry* may have been folded up over itself and placed in a wooden case roughly the size of a funerary casket.<sup>207</sup> Purpose-built wooden chests for textile transportation were as ubiquitous as textiles themselves, particularly within a court setting where travel was typically frequent.<sup>208</sup>

Other options for safe transportation would be to wrap the embroidery in waxed linen covers and placed in a leather bag.<sup>209</sup> An unadorned textile, without gold and jewels like other *opus anglicanum*, would have been highly portable, and the skilled embroidery of *opus anglicanum* maintained the capacity for delicate detail and expression.<sup>210</sup>

Attention to detail was not only required of those who embroidered the *Bayeux Tapestry*, but also of those who were intended to read it. Instances of apparent anomalies in the design have led modern readers of the *Tapestry* to believe that these were areas deliberately fabricated to get the viewer to pay close attention. Border scenes line the top and bottom of the central narrative through the entirety of the *Tapestry* and consist mainly of animal figures up to the middle of the *Tapestry*. One spot, however, features a nude male figure placed directly beneath Harold (Figure 12) who, having been apprehended after landing in Normandy, could not escape meeting with Duke William.<sup>211</sup> The lower border scenes continue for a short period with animal figures until Harold appears again and in the presence of Duke William, and again a nude male figure appears in the border scene below him (Figure 13). This drastic change in border detail is suggested to have been an alert to the *Tapestry* viewer to pay close attention to Harold in the scene unfolding above.<sup>212</sup> The apparent emphasis on watching Harold is reinforced by an observation made by Richard Gameson in that the left-to-right progression of the story is violated in the scene depicting Guy of Ponthieu pointing towards Harold and ordering his men to seize the earl.<sup>213</sup> This sharp contrast in the left-to-right movement of the story happens when Harold is perceived to be in danger.<sup>214</sup> The intent of the design of the *Tapestry*, in this understanding, was for close reading and the eventual deeper understanding of the historical narrative as garnered through frequent interaction with the *Tapestry* in an educational setting. These subtleties of the *Bayeux Tapestry* narrative are not the only aspects which required the

embroidery to be viewed in close proximity; the inscriptions dotting the central story required close reading too.

As mentioned previously in the discussion of medieval education, the Anglo-Saxon tradition for literacy was popularized by Alfred the Great in the ninth century.<sup>215</sup> The popularity of grammar books leading up to and following the Norman Conquest attests to the sustained prominence literacy held within the new Anglo-Norman society.<sup>216</sup> It is for this reason that the continued education of Norman royal children in the Anglo-Saxon tradition can be conceived of through the *Bayeux Tapestry* as a didactic tool for their instruction and as a commission by Edith Godwinson who fulfilled the role of educator to the children of royal blood.<sup>217</sup>

The Anglo-Latin inscriptions on the *Bayeux Tapestry* consist of short, simple sentences dispersed throughout the central narrative, providing written corroboration for the actions depicted in the corresponding scene making them intelligible “even to viewers whose Latin is relatively basic.”<sup>218</sup> For example, a child learning to read would find it easier to comprehend the meanings of the words through the inclusion of a visual aid. The story in the *Tapestry* is placed in a visually stimulating context encouraging the reader to continue reading along the narrative scenes. The simplicity of the style of lettering makes the inscriptions all the more amiable to young readers not yet familiar with the language, while simultaneously, their meanings are reinforced by the colorful imagery.<sup>219</sup> Deliberate matching of inscriptions with images and the simplicity of the letters’ design, as described by Wolfgang Grape and John D. Anderson respectively, evoke imagery akin to colorful picture books used today. The *Bayeux Tapestry* thus transforms effortlessly into, essentially, a reading primer for royal children who, as they advance in reading the inscriptions and interpreting the scenes, begin to decipher another fundamental element of eleventh-century education: history and historical memory.

It is important to understand that it is highly unlikely that the *Bayeux Tapestry* was created for William the Conqueror's personal possession. It is apparent through the nature of the inscriptions that the *Tapestry* was not designed with William the Conqueror in mind as the primary viewer, as Latin was an unfamiliar language to him,<sup>220</sup> and the inclusion of inscriptions altogether would have been redundant. William had first-hand knowledge of the Battle of Hastings, negating any need for labeling of peoples and events. Rather, this clarifies that the *Tapestry* was intended for a broader audience in need of learning the social and political history of the Anglo-Norman realm. History, after all, was a literary genre distinguished by the verisimilitude of its contents,<sup>221</sup> and thus the contents of the *Bayeux Tapestry* would simply be old-hat to William the Conqueror.

The *Bayeux Tapestry* presents the accounts of the Conquest of England, incorporating a justification for William's claim to the throne, although with English voices present recalling memories of the recent Anglo-Saxon past.<sup>222</sup> Harold's broken oath of allegiance to Duke William as depicted in the *Tapestry* rationalizes William's invasion of England in 1066 for its medieval audience.<sup>223</sup> This recent history is an example of the social memory which would be communicated to Anglo-Norman royal children as they studied each panel of embroidery individually, reading the inscriptions, and interpreting the causes of each event. The invasion of England by Duke William would have directly impacted the lives of his children, requiring that they (the oldest in particular) then fully understand their new rights to the English monarchy as direct descendants of the new king.

Knowledge of history, social memory, and foreground memory was an essential component of Anglo-Saxon education.<sup>224</sup> The *Bayeux Tapestry* presents that exact Anglo-Norman history necessary for Anglo-Norman royals in its 230-foot narrative. Careful planning

was involved in deciding just how that social memory was expressed. The *Tapestry* is distinctly silent, for instance, in the scene of Harold and Edward's meeting on whether Edward had sent Harold to William's court or advised him to remain in England.<sup>225</sup> Harold's subsequent landing at Normandy and swearing of the oath to William is thus not defined as either by Edward's order or Harold's mistake. The *Tapestry's* lack of inscription accompanying this scene may be alluded to the role of history and its "presumed truth," or rather the room for interpretation on the part of the recorder of history and the reader.<sup>226</sup> The *Tapestry* designer likely chose to leave that conversation up to the interpretation of the viewer; an Anglo-Saxon viewer reading it as Harold's mistake, and a Norman reading it as Edward's order and thus the Norman justification is in both circumstances answered for. Thorough knowledge of the history of feuds, kinship, and land claims were embedded in the studies of history, including too the history of the people as affected by feuds and land claims and a retentive memory.<sup>227</sup> The *Bayeux Tapestry* conveniently answers these questions by documenting not only the Battle of Hastings, but why that Battle began. The social memory documented and retained within the *Bayeux Tapestry* is that which an Anglo-Norman royal would study as a component of their education, and, as Irina Dumitrescu aptly states, "what else is learning if not building up a store of memories?"<sup>228</sup>

Beyond the study of history and the ability to read, the knowledge of fables was also closely tied to medieval education. In the middle ages, fables were exceedingly popular, often compiled into collections or appearing individually in political writings, literature, and works of art.<sup>229</sup> Fables' mixture of naivety and mystery is "the perfect complement to the story of the Norman Conquest told in the *Bayeux Tapestry*."<sup>230</sup> The borders of the *Tapestry* contain images of animals representing Aesop's fables unaccompanied by any inscriptions. Their location in the borders belongs to a widespread tradition of "marginal images," marked by the consistency of



motifs and characteristic setting in the margins.<sup>231</sup> These border images are often associated with general meanings related to basic medieval concepts of binary contrasting values, e.g. sacred/profane, good/evil, normal/upside-down, or chivalrous/vulgar.<sup>232</sup> The fables in the *Bayeux Tapestry* appear without any identifying inscriptions because they were already popularly known.<sup>233</sup> A text famous in medieval Europe of prose by Phaedrus containing Aesop's fables, known as the *Romulus*, was recast in the eleventh century to have a more Christian emphasis of good and evil, rather than gain and loss, and is known as the *Romulus Nilantinus*.<sup>234</sup> Aesop's fables contained in this classically derived text were then disseminated throughout medieval Europe, becoming recognizable through images alone, reaching even audiences who were illiterate.<sup>235</sup> The inclusions of the fables in the *Tapestry*, with their ability to communicate binary values and the morals defined in each, indicate it functioned for communicating those ideas to illiterate lay society as well as royal children.

The exact meanings of the fables in the *Bayeux Tapestry*, in conjunction with the central scene they appear with, are highly contested. Some scholars claim that the fables function to satirize the Norman point of view rather than underscore it as a comment on the cleverness of some to take the goods of others—an example of Anglo-Saxon resistance to the invasion and subsequent bias in the *Tapestry*.<sup>236</sup> Traditionally, the fables depicted in the *Tapestry* have been interpreted as guides to noble behavior, warnings to those who behave ignobly, and as a mirror to princes, all particularly relevant to the *Bayeux Tapestry*'s story of succession, betrayal, and revenge, and germane to the instruction of young nobles on these same concepts.<sup>237</sup> Harold's predicament too is highlighted again by the fables (as with the shifts in perspective and inclusion of a rather rude naked figure beneath him). From his moment of departure from England, half a

dozen scenes of Aesop's fables illustrating cunning, treachery, ingratitude, disastrous ambition, and greed play along the borders, foreshadowing what is yet to come.<sup>238</sup>

Despite what is or is not known about the context the fables provide, if any, what is known is that fables in the Middle Ages were used as texts for elementary reading,<sup>239</sup> providing yet another reason to view the *Bayeux Tapestry* as a didactic tool complete with every Anglo-Saxon and medieval prescription for a proper education. Moreover, rather than seeing fables only as elementary texts or relating concepts of binary values, the essential reading of fables in the *Bayeux Tapestry* is within their moral value. The moral is the essential, indispensable part of the fable, without which it is simply a short tale.<sup>240</sup> Their value was heightened in the eleventh century in that they not only entertained, but imparted important moral and ethical characteristics behooving a youth to obtain no matter their social standing.<sup>241</sup> The essential nature, therefore, of the fables' presence in the *Bayeux Tapestry* is in their individual moral lessons and use in instructing early reading.

During the Middle Ages fables retain a general association with low social classes and those who are described as "rustic" and "unlearned."<sup>242</sup> These associations often caused fables to be considered a low literary genre, denounced as vulgar, although they were still primarily used as elementary Latin texts in schoolbooks, which would suggest that they were used by those who wished to be learned.<sup>243</sup> More important, however, is that fables coupled the pleasure of imaginative stories with the teaching of moral lessons, providing a means of "luring ignorant people into learning."<sup>244</sup> Although they were paired with a class of society beneath nobles, fables were still rather important, attested in the fact that they appear frequently in the historical record in works of art commissioned by those in upper classes. Fables, despite any associations they may have held, were viewed as ideal texts suited to the cognitive capacities of developing

children in the Middle Ages and were recognized as a highly effective means for impressing morals on the minds of the young.<sup>245</sup> The fables in the *Bayeux Tapestry* were implemented within the design with the social knowledge that they were apposite to the essential instruction of youths at court and in developing relations between the illiterate and the new Norman rule, perfectly placing the *Bayeux Tapestry* within the sphere of didactic tool.

## CONCLUSION

The Anglo-Norman *Bayeux Tapestry*, even with its confounding lack of contemporaneous historical documentation, has had a distinguished role in deciphering aspects of medieval life in post-Conquest England. Conventional assumptions about the *Tapestry's* commissioner and purpose have accumulated since its rediscovery, necessitating the re-evaluation of unfounded theories. Women, an underrepresented group in the historical interpretations of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, can be seen at the forefront of medieval patronage, literary influence, and preservation of family and social history. Edith Godwinson's education, her skills in *opus anglicanum* as an English woman, and her historically identifiable role in preserving familial *memoria* combine to place her in a prominent role as not only the last Anglo-Saxon Queen of England but also as the patron of the *Bayeux Tapestry*. Anglo-Saxon educational traditions are compellingly found within the *Bayeux Tapestry* as practically a textbook amalgamation of essential elements in literacy, historical memory, and moral behavior. The historical record, minute details, and distinctive dimensions of the *Bayeux Tapestry* demonstrates that Odo the Bishop of Bayeux was categorically not the patron and the suggestion that it was destined for permanent display at Bayeux Cathedral is conclusively discredited. Through comprehensive examinations of medieval noblewomen's prominent roles in society, Anglo-Saxon traditions in education, and the functions of fables and humor as depicted in the embroidery friezes, the *Bayeux Tapestry* is shown to have

been an educational tool in eleventh-century Anglo-Norman England, thus constructing a new narrative for the *Tapestry* as didactic, not decorative.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Howard R. Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God: The Norman Conquest of 1066 and the Making and Meaning of the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Random House, 2006), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Carola Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Life Story of a Masterpiece* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> John D. Anderson, "The Bayeux Tapestry: A 900-Year-Old Latin Cartoon," *The Classical Journal* 81, no. 3 (1986): 253; and Dolores Bausum, *Threading Time: A Cultural History of Threadwork* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2001), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Trevor Rowley, *The Norman Heritage: 1055-1200* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, "The Bayeux Tapestry," 253; and Rowley, *The Norman Heritage*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 43; and Wolfgang Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry: Monument to a Norman Triumph* (New York: Prestel, 1994), 24.

<sup>8</sup> Bausum, *Threading Time*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 36; and Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 223.

<sup>10</sup> Christine Fell, Cecily Clark, and Elizabeth Williams, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 76.

<sup>11</sup> Kay Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen: Embroiderers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Phyllis Ackerman, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 163-164; and McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, 220.

<sup>14</sup> Peter K. Klein, "The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry," in Nigel Morgan, ed., *Contexts of Medieval Art: Images, Objects & Ideas* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2010), 336.

<sup>15</sup> Sally Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 146.

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<sup>16</sup> Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 90.

<sup>17</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 157.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 69-70.

<sup>20</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 33; and Meredith Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda in the Bayeux Tapestry*, *Studies in French Civilization*, 33 (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2004), 4-5; Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 23; Leslie A Ling, "The Bayeux Tapestry," in Philip Lindley, ed., *Making Medieval Art* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2003), 106; and Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, "The Bayeux Tapestry," 253.

<sup>26</sup> David J. Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 38.

<sup>27</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 60.

<sup>29</sup> Ackerman, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization*, 44.

<sup>30</sup> Klein, "The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry," 344.

<sup>31</sup> Klein, "The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry," 342.

<sup>32</sup> Klein, "The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry," 344.

<sup>33</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 44.

- <sup>36</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 41.
- <sup>37</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 42.
- <sup>38</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 42.
- <sup>39</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 41.
- <sup>40</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 41.
- <sup>41</sup> Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "Woven Works: Making and Using Textiles," in Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen Crocker, eds., *The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 176.
- <sup>42</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 5.
- <sup>43</sup> Hyer and Owen-Crocker, *The Material Culture of Daily Living*, 177.
- <sup>44</sup> Hyer and Owen-Crocker, *The Material Culture of Daily Living*, 177.
- <sup>45</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 20.
- <sup>46</sup> Sharon Fermor and Alan Derbyshire, "The Raphael Tapestry Cartoons Re-Examined," *The Burlington Magazine* 140, no. 1141 (1998): 236.
- <sup>47</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 14.
- <sup>48</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 61.
- <sup>49</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 44.
- <sup>50</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 44.
- <sup>51</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 39.
- <sup>52</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 30-31.
- <sup>53</sup> David Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.
- <sup>54</sup> Stephen Baxter, "Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question," in Richard Mortimer, ed., *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2009), 84; and Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 9.
- <sup>55</sup> Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 44.

<sup>56</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 81.

<sup>58</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ackerman, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization*, 42-43; and Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 80-81.

<sup>61</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 87.

<sup>62</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 87.

<sup>64</sup> Ackerman, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization*, 44.

<sup>65</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> David Bates, "Anger, Emotion, and a Biography of William the Conqueror," in Janet Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns, eds., *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honor of Pauline Stafford* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 23-24.

<sup>68</sup> Bates, *Gender and Historiography*, 23-24.

<sup>69</sup> Bates, *Gender and Historiography*, 24-25.

<sup>70</sup> Bates, *Gender and Historiography*, 24-25.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Tyler, "The Women of 1066," in *England in Europe: English Royal Women and Literary Patronage, c. 1000-c. 1150* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017), 263.

<sup>72</sup> Carola Hicks, "The Patronage of Queen Edith," in Michael J. Lewis, Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Dan Terkla, eds., *The Bayeux Tapestry New Approaches: Proceedings of a Conference at the British Museum* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 5.

<sup>73</sup> Hicks, "The Patronage of Queen Edith," 5.

<sup>74</sup> Tyler, "The Women of 1066," 263.



<sup>75</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 57-58. Clermont-Ferrand suggests that William's story is a paradox through his representation in the *Tapestry* as a foil against Harold's posthumous fame; and Rowley, *The Norman Heritage*, 21. Rowley claims that the paradox of William's impact on England is that it was essentially negligible. The new Norman aristocracy despised English customs but operated in an English matrix until becoming Englishmen themselves.

<sup>76</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*; and Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*.

<sup>77</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 36.

<sup>78</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 29-30.

<sup>79</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 30.

<sup>80</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 30.

<sup>81</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145-146.

<sup>82</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 100.

<sup>83</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 36.

<sup>84</sup> Fell, Clark and Williams, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, 46.

<sup>85</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Hyer and Owen-Crocker, *The Material Culture of Daily Living*, 181.

<sup>87</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 30.

<sup>88</sup> Julie Mumby, "Property Rights in Anglo-Saxon Wills: A Synoptic View," in Janet Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns, eds., *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 159.

<sup>89</sup> Mavis E. Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17-18.

<sup>90</sup> Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society*, 17-18.

<sup>91</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 124-125.

<sup>92</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Bausum, *Threading Time*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 4; and Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 38.

<sup>95</sup> Bausum, *Threading Time*, 54.

<sup>96</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.

<sup>97</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 40-41.

<sup>98</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Bausum, *Threading Time*, 60.

<sup>100</sup> Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools, from Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 163.

<sup>102</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 30.

<sup>103</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145-146.

<sup>104</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149.

<sup>105</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149.

<sup>106</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 124.

<sup>107</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145-146.

<sup>108</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 35.

<sup>109</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 35.

<sup>110</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 30.

<sup>111</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 100.

<sup>112</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 76.

<sup>113</sup> Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 76.

<sup>114</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149; and Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 40.

<sup>115</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 53.

- <sup>116</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 53.
- <sup>117</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 40.
- <sup>118</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149-150.
- <sup>119</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 42.
- <sup>120</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149.
- <sup>121</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 53.
- <sup>122</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 150.
- <sup>123</sup> Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society*, 7.
- <sup>124</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 153.
- <sup>125</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 153.
- <sup>126</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 46.
- <sup>127</sup> Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society*, 7.
- <sup>128</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 46.
- <sup>129</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145.
- <sup>130</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145.
- <sup>131</sup> Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1066-1154* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 55.
- <sup>132</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 36; and Barlow, *The English Church*, 55.
- <sup>133</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 39-40.
- <sup>134</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145.
- <sup>135</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, 39-40.
- <sup>136</sup> Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 3.
- <sup>137</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 70.

- <sup>138</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 69-70.
- <sup>139</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 69.
- <sup>140</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 70.
- <sup>141</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 139.
- <sup>142</sup> Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, *History of English Humour* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 179; and Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 139.
- <sup>143</sup> L'Estrange, *History of English Humour*, 179.
- <sup>144</sup> Albrecht Classen, "Laughter as an Expression of Human Nature in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period: Literary, Historical, Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Reflections. Also an Introduction," in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 3.
- <sup>145</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 139.
- <sup>146</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 139.
- <sup>147</sup> Classen, "Laughter as an Expression of Human Nature," 3.
- <sup>148</sup> L'Estrange, *History of English Humour*, 181.
- <sup>149</sup> L'Estrange, *History of English Humour*, 178.
- <sup>150</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 139.
- <sup>151</sup> Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 78.
- <sup>152</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 153.
- <sup>153</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 141.
- <sup>154</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 141.
- <sup>155</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 140-141.
- <sup>156</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 141.
- <sup>157</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 142.

- <sup>158</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 142.
- <sup>159</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 152.
- <sup>160</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 152.
- <sup>161</sup> Rowley, *The Norman Heritage*, 2.
- <sup>162</sup> Ling, "The Bayeux Tapestry," 104.
- <sup>163</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 8.
- <sup>164</sup> Rowley, *The Norman Heritage*, 2.
- <sup>165</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 4.
- <sup>166</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 22.
- <sup>167</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.
- <sup>168</sup> Anderson, "The Bayeux Tapestry," 253.
- <sup>169</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Approaches*, 6.
- <sup>170</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Approaches*, 6.
- <sup>171</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 104.
- <sup>172</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. George Norman Garmonsway (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co Inc, 1953), 214.
- <sup>173</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 37.
- <sup>174</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 37; and Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>175</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>176</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57; Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 104; and Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 64.
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- <sup>178</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 41-42.
- <sup>179</sup> Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

- <sup>180</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.
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- <sup>182</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 37-38.
- <sup>183</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 38.
- <sup>184</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 38.
- <sup>185</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>186</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 24.
- <sup>187</sup> Staniland, *Medieval Craftsmen*, 57.
- <sup>188</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 5.
- <sup>189</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 23.
- <sup>190</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 8.
- <sup>191</sup> Bausum, *Threading Time*, 56.
- <sup>192</sup> Hyer and Owen-Crocker, *The Material Culture of Daily Living*, 178.
- <sup>193</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 5.
- <sup>194</sup> Hyer and Owen-Crocker, *The Material Culture of Daily Living*, 178; and Ling, “The Bayeux Tapestry,” 104.
- <sup>195</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 38.
- <sup>196</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 105.
- <sup>197</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 105.
- <sup>198</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 64.
- <sup>199</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 64.
- <sup>200</sup> Erik Kwakkel, *Books Before Print* (Croydon: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), 159.
- <sup>201</sup> Kwakkel, *Books Before Print*, 159.
- <sup>202</sup> Kwakkel, *Books Before Print*, 159.
- <sup>203</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 213.

- <sup>204</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 32.
- <sup>205</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 107.
- <sup>206</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>207</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 107.
- <sup>208</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>209</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 25.
- <sup>210</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 5.
- <sup>211</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 85.
- <sup>212</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 85.
- <sup>213</sup> Richard Gameson, “The Origin, Art, and Message of the *Bayeux Tapestry*,” in Richard Gameson, ed., *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry* (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 1997), 187.
- <sup>214</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 76.
- <sup>215</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 149.
- <sup>216</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 42.
- <sup>217</sup> Baxter, *Edward the Confessor*, 100.
- <sup>218</sup> Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 59.
- <sup>219</sup> Anderson, “The Bayeux Tapestry,” 256.
- <sup>220</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 37.
- <sup>221</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 41-42.
- <sup>222</sup> Rowley, *The Norman Heritage*, 1; and Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, 41.
- <sup>223</sup> Anderson, “The Bayeux Tapestry,” 253.
- <sup>224</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 90.
- <sup>225</sup> Ashe, *Fiction and History in England*, 39.

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- <sup>226</sup> Clermont-Ferrand, *Anglo-Saxon Propaganda*, 41-42.
- <sup>227</sup> Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 145-146.
- <sup>228</sup> Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education*, 90.
- <sup>229</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 128.
- <sup>230</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 128.
- <sup>231</sup> Klein, “The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry,” 343.
- <sup>232</sup> Klein, “The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry,” 343.
- <sup>233</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 60.
- <sup>234</sup> Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry, 750-1150* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 20.
- <sup>235</sup> Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, 60.
- <sup>236</sup> Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 129; and Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 123.
- <sup>237</sup> Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God*, 123.
- <sup>238</sup> Ackerman, *Tapestry: The Mirror of Civilization*, 47.
- <sup>239</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 22.
- <sup>240</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 17-18.
- <sup>241</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 25; and Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, 85.
- <sup>242</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 28.
- <sup>243</sup> Klein, “The Meaning of the Fables in the Bayeux Tapestry,” 344.
- <sup>244</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 23.
- <sup>245</sup> Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, 23; and Adolph Goldschmidt, *An Early Manuscript of the Aesop Fables of Avianus and Related Manuscripts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 2.



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FIGURES

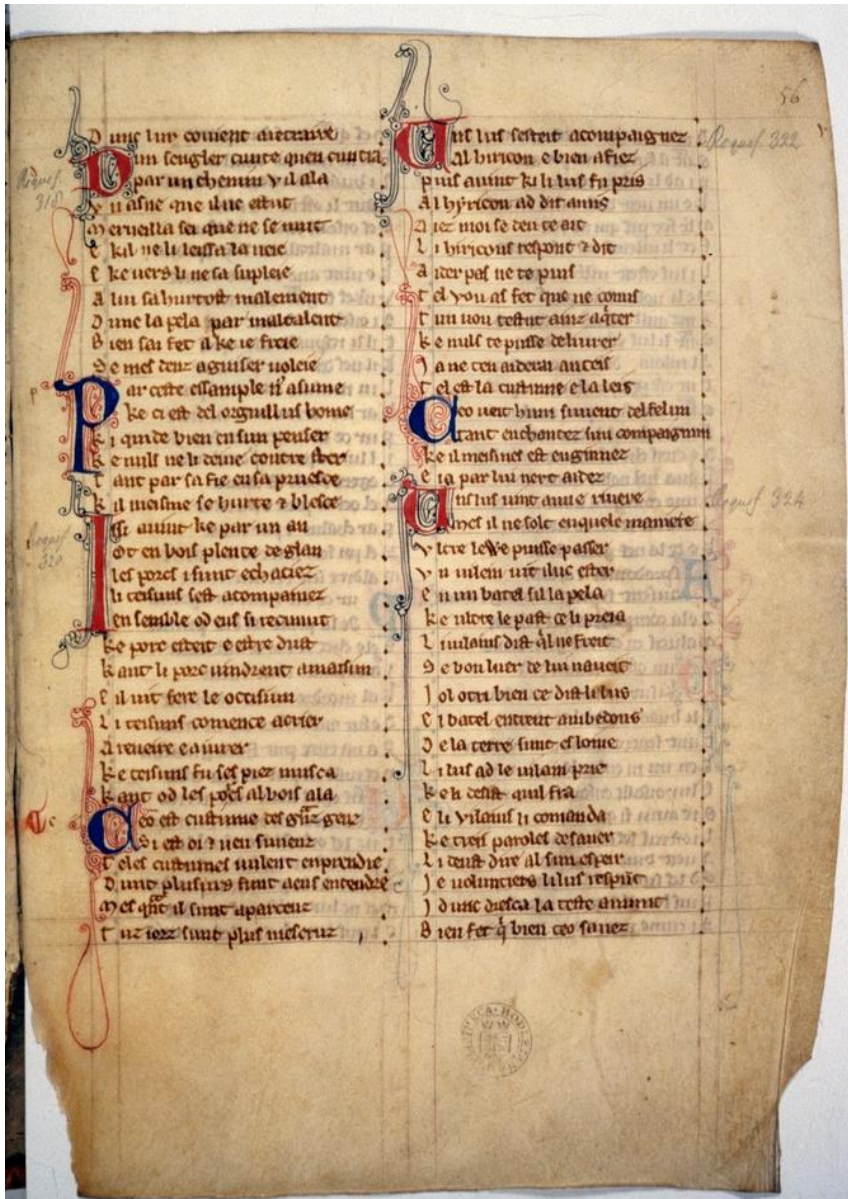


Figure 1. Marie de France. *Fables*, 13<sup>th</sup> century. Parchment. Bodleian Library, Oxford.





**Figure 2.** *Bayeux Tapestry; scene 57: Harold struck in the eye and fallen (Death of Harold), begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.*





**Figure 3.** *Chasuble (opus anglicanum)*, ca. 1330-1350. Embroidery, 51 x 30 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.





**Figure 4.** Left: *Bayeux Tapestry: Norman Forager*, begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux; Right: *Psychomachia of Prudentius: Labor and other allegories*, ca. late 10<sup>th</sup> century. Manuscript. British Library, London.





**Figure 5.** Bayeux Tapestry; scene 30: Harold, King of the English, sits with Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury (King Harold II Enthroned with orb and scepter), begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.





**Figure 6.** Bayeux Tapestry; scene 27, 28: King Edward on his Deathbed [upper], King's Body Is Prepared for Burial [lower], begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.



**Figure 7.** Bayeux Tapestry; detail of Anglo-Latin inscription using vernacular spelling: runic letter *thorn* (Ð), begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.





**Figure 8.** *Replica of the Bayeux Tapestry in the nave of Bayeux Cathedral.* Photograph. from Bernstein, David J. *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

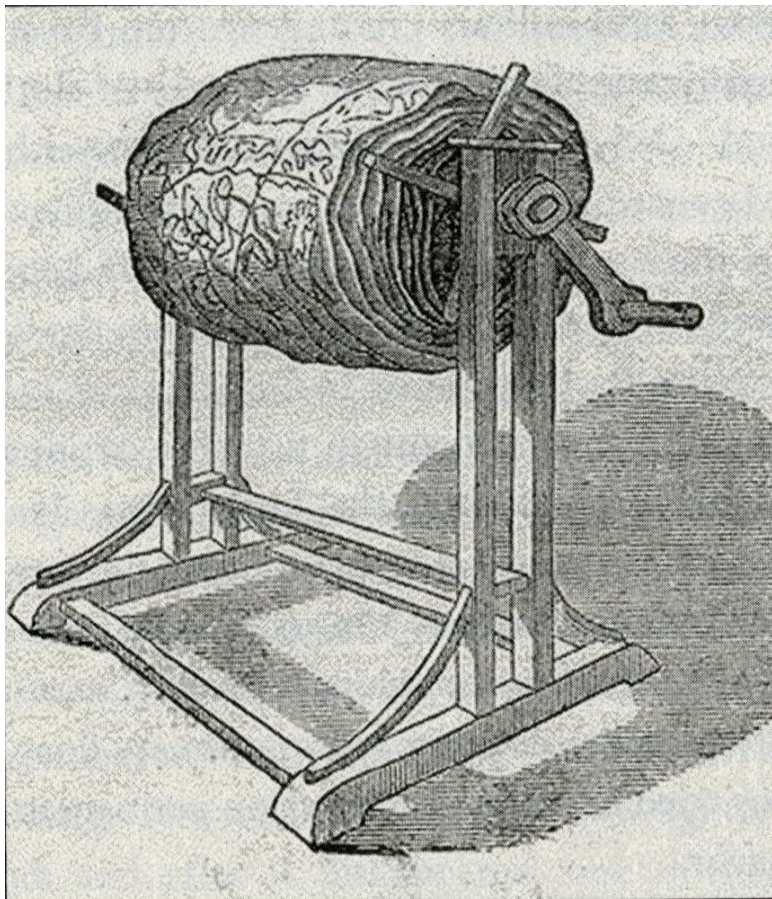




**Figure 9.** *Chronique Anonyme Universelle*, begun ca. 1470.  
Parchment roll, 50 cm wide x 10.4 meters long. Boston Public Library  
Rare Books Department, Boston.



**Figure 10.** *Joshua Roll: Joshua and the Israelites*, mid 10<sup>th</sup> century. Illumination on vellum, 12 ½ in. in height. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.



**Figure 11.** *Winchlike device*. from Bloch, Howard R. *A Needle in the Right Hand of God: The Norman Conquest of 1066 and the Making and Meaning of the Bayeux Tapestry*. New York: Random House, 2006.





**Figure 12.** *Bayeux Tapestry; Guy brings Harold back to Duke William, begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.*



**Figure 13.** *Bayeux Tapestry; scene 14: Negotiations between William and Harold in Palace at Rouen, begun ca. 1070-1080. Embroidery, 53m x 69m. Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant, Bayeux.*

## TIMELINE

- 871 Alfred “The Great” becomes King of Wessex.
- 886 Alfred “The Great” negotiates partition treaty with the Danes and becomes King of the Anglo-Saxons.
- 899 Alfred the Great Dies.  
Alfred’s son Edward the Elder becomes King of the Anglo-Saxons.
- 910 Battle of Tettenhall where an army of West Saxons and Mercians defeat the Danish army.
- 924 Edward the Elder dies.  
Æthelstan becomes King of the Anglo-Saxons.
- 927 Æthelstan united the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy into the Kingdom of England and becomes King of the English.
- 937 Battle of Brunanburh is fought between the English led by Æthelstan against the King of Dublin, the King of Alba, and the King of Strathclyde ending with English victory.
- 976 This year was the great famine among the English according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
- 978 Æthelred II “The Unready” becomes King.
- 980 Vikings begin a new wave of raids on England.
- 991 Battle of Maldon sees a Danish victory of the English.
- 995 The star called “cometa” appeared in the sky according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
- 1002 Æthelred II orders all the Danish-men in England to be killed.
- 1016 King Æthelred II “The Unready” dies.  
Edmund “Ironside” inherits the crown from the 23 of April – 30 of November.

Cnut “The Great,” a Danish Prince, becomes King of all England after Edmund’s death and exiles Edmund’s two sons, Edward Ætheling and Edmund Ætheling.

- 1018 Cnut “The Great” inherits the Danish throne and brings the crowns of England and Denmark together.
- 1025 Edith of Wessex, daughter of Earl Godwin, sister of Harold Godwinson is born.
- 1026-1045 Edith is brought up and educated at Wilton Abbey until her marriage to Edward the Confessor, King of England.
- 1027 Duke William is born the illegitimate child of Duke Robert I in the town of Falaise.
- 1028 Cnut “The Great” claims the crown of Norway.
- 1035 Cnut “The Great” dies in Shaftesbury.  
Harold Harefoot elected Regent of England after the death of his father.
- 1037 With the support of earl Leofric, Harold Harefoot is officially proclaimed King of England.
- 1040 Harold Harefoot dies.  
Harthacnut, Cnut’s son, becomes King of England.
- 1042 Harthacnut dies.  
Edward the Confessor is crowned King of England.
- 1045 Edward the Confessor marries Edith of Wessex, the daughter of Godwin. Edith is crowned Queen of England.
- 1051 Earl Godwin falls out of King Edward’s favor and is forced to flee England with his sons, Edith is sent to a nunnery.
- 1052 The Godwin’s return to England through force, Edith is reinstated as Queen of England.
- 1052 Duke William marries Mathilda, daughter of the Count of Flanders.
- 1054 Duke William defeats the French King Henry I at the Battle of Mortemer.

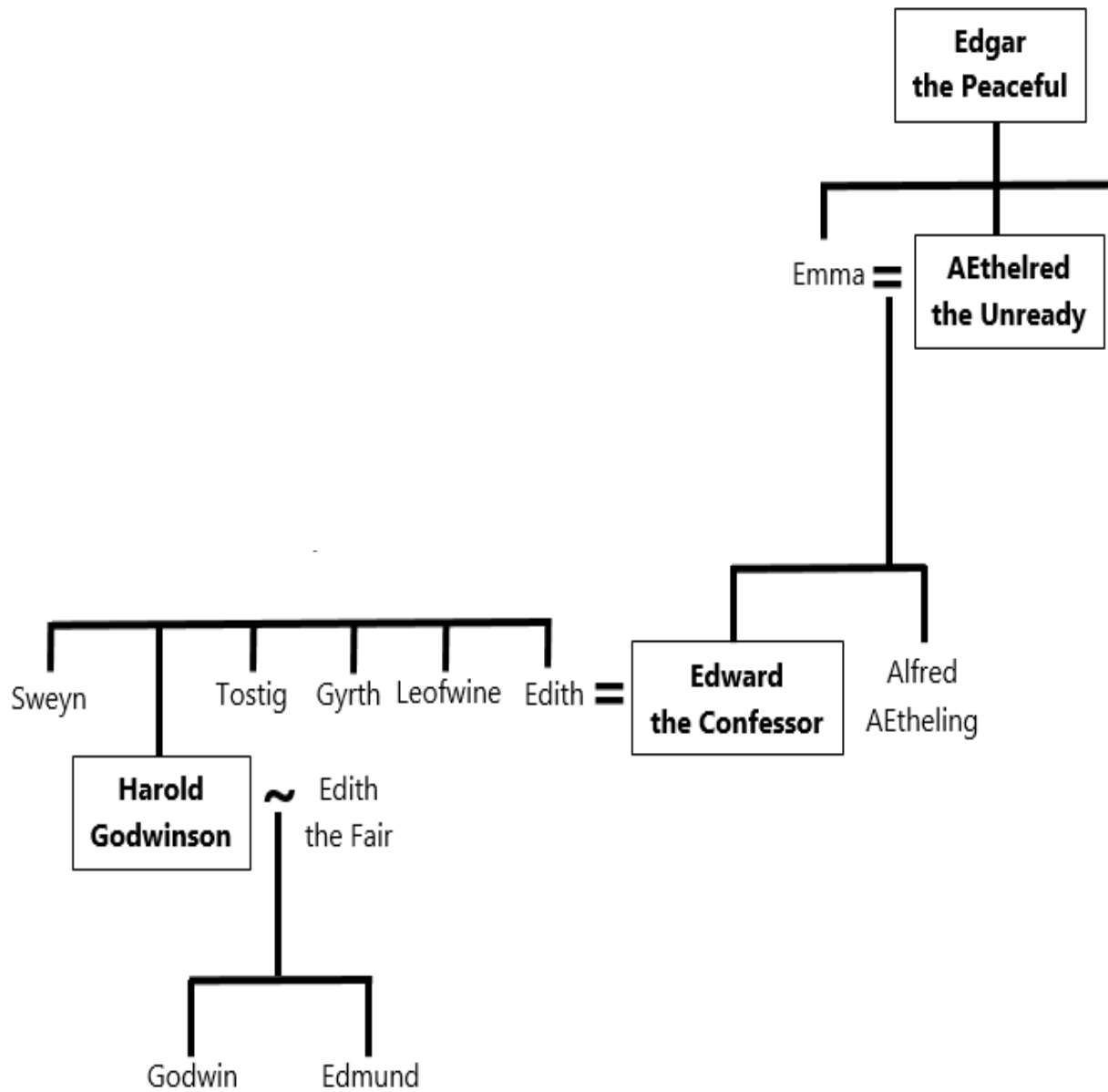


- 1054 The Great Schism of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.
- 1066 Edward the Confessor dies and is buried at Westminster on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January. Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, brother of Edith, is crowned King of England on the same day.
- October The Battle of Hastings.  
Harold Godwinson dies at the Battle of Hastings.  
William the Conqueror is crowned King of England, permanently changing England's language and culture.
- 1070-1080 Estimated commission and production of the *Bayeux Tapestry*.
- 1077 Consecration of Bayeux Cathedral.
- 1082 Odo the Bishop of Bayeux leads a rebellion of Kentish Lords against William.
- 1086 William the Conqueror orders commission of the *Domesday Book*.
- 1087 William I King of England, Duke of Normandy dies.  
William II, William the Conqueror's son, inherits the crown of England.
- 1100 William II is shot by an arrow, under suspicious circumstances, while out hunting and dies.  
Henry I, William II's younger brother, quickly claims the crown of England.
- 1105 Henry I invades the Duchy of Normandy controlled by Duke Robert Curthose.
- 1106 Henry invades Duchy of Normandy again and is successful in gaining control but cannot legally remove the Duchy from the control of his brother, Robert Curthose.
- 1120 William Adelin, only legitimate son of Henry I, dies in a shipwreck. Henry attempts to install his daughter, the Empress Matilda, as successor but is unsuccessful.
- 1135 Henry I dies.  
Stephen of Blois, Henry I's nephew, becomes King of England.  
Civil War breaks out in England over issues of succession, called The Anarchy.

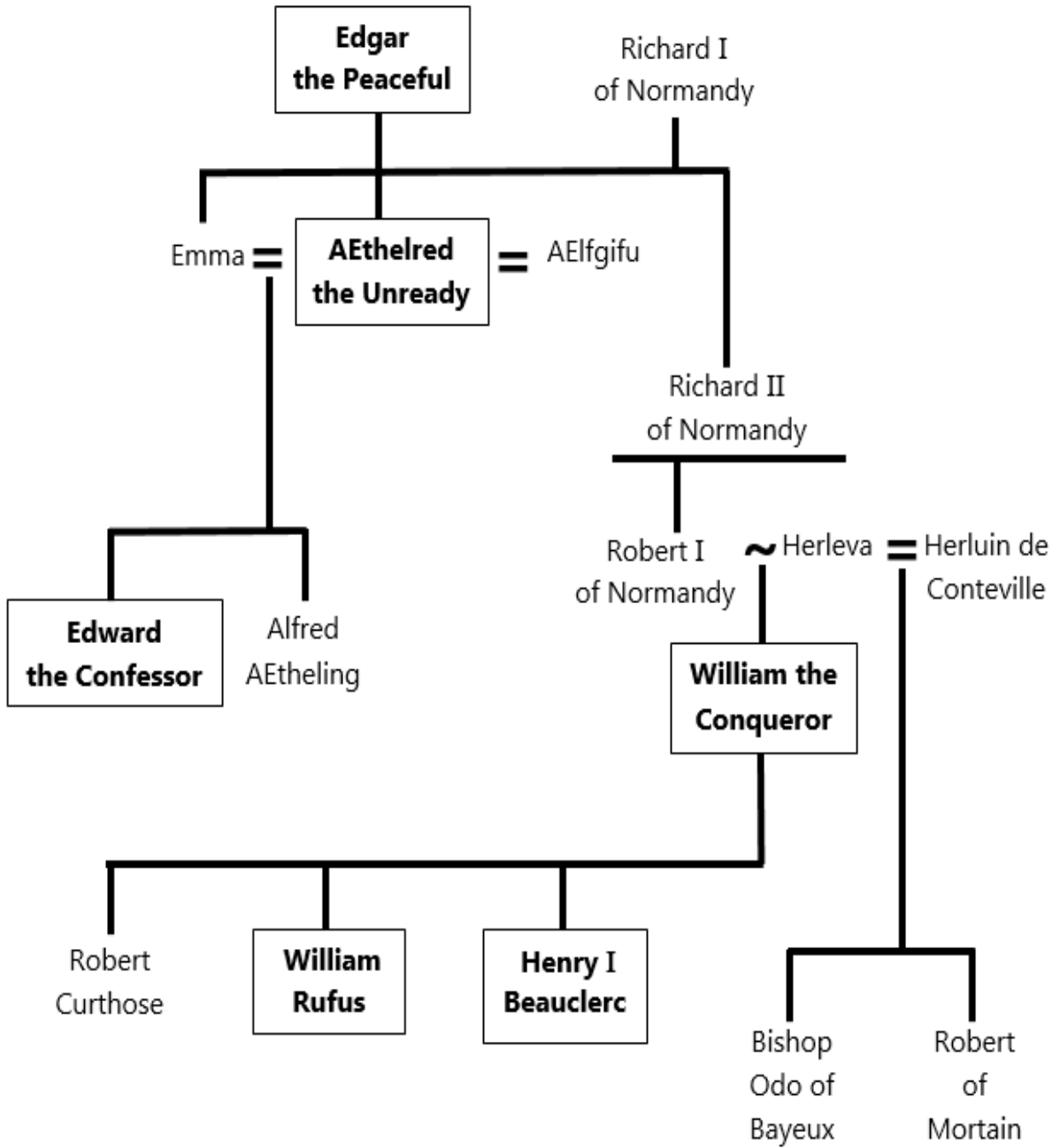
- 1140 Orderic Vitalis composes his *Ecclesiastica*.
- 1153 The Treaty of Wallingford is signed stating that Stephen remains as King of England and Henry II, son of Empress Matilda, will succeed him. This ends The Anarchy.
- 1154 King Stephen dies.  
Henry II Plantagenet becomes King of England.
- 1163 The controversy between Henry II and Thomas á Beckett Archbishop of Canterbury begins over the King's relationship and power of the Church.
- 1170 Thomas á Beckett is murdered.
- 1173 Henry II's heir "Young Henry" rebels (The Great Revolt) in protest of inheritance of the Empire his father created.
- 1174 Henry II ends The Great Revolt through military action against his son.
- 1183 "Young Henry" and his brother Geoffrey revolt again resulting in "Young Henry's" death.
- 1189 Henry II dies.  
Richard I "The Lionheart" succeeds his father as King of England, but spends only six months of his reign in England.
- 1189 Richard I "The Lionheart" sets out on the Third Crusade to the Holy Land.
- 1192 Richard I "The Lionheart" is captured on return to England by Henry VI Emperor of Germany.
- 1194 Ransom for the release of Richard I is raised in England and Richard is returned to England.
- 1195 Richard leaves England to fight in France and never returns.
- 1199 Richard "The Lionheart" dies.  
Richard's brother John is proclaimed King of England.

- 1200 Treaty of Le Goulet is signed by King John and Phillip II of France to bring an end to the war over the Duchy of Normandy. The treaty was a victory for Philip in asserting his legal claims over John's French lands.
- 1209 King John is excommunicated from the Catholic Church by Pope Innocent III.
- 1215 The Magna Carta is signed.
- 1216 King John dies.  
Henry III becomes King of England.

## FAMILY TREE OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR



## FAMILY TREE OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR



## FAMILY TREE FOR ELEVENTH-CENTURY KINGS OF ENGLAND

