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Intertextuality in the Bayeux Tapestry: The Form and Function of Dress and Clothing

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It is no surprise that the Bayeux Tapestry is celebrated as a work of art, a timeless masterpiece of medieval embroidery. To the modern mind it is aesthetically pleasing. Few fail to be impressed by its length, bright colours, and amusing characters – though undoubtedly its age (near on 1,000 years old) adds considerably to its appeal. The fact that the Tapestry appears cartoonlike (and therefore readily accessible to a modern viewer) is captivating. For British people, in particular, the events shown are well-known: the Norman Conquest of 1066 is taught in all English state (government-funded) schools as part of the “national curriculum”. Thus, British visitors to the Bayeux Tapestry Museum are familiar with the period of history being “performed” before them. Harold is like an old friend in a school photograph, who when spotted is greeted with a spontaneous “There he is!” The familiarity of the Tapestry is also emphasized by popular culture, which makes play of its design, mostly for commerce and satire: even those who have not seen it “in the flesh” will feel as if they know it, so widely is its imagery used. The Bayeux Tapestry also epitomizes the rivalry between England and France, although it is the Normans, not the French, that appear in its imagery. Everything perceived to be good and humble about the Anglo-Saxons (English) is trodden down and destroyed by these posh, wine-drinking Continentals: the Tapestry plays well with the English national psyche and England’s love/hate relationship with its closest foreign neighbour.

Although the Bayeux Tapestry, once described as “the greatest English monument abroad”, has an important place in British culture, history, and heritage, little certain is known about it.¹ We do not even know (for sure) if the designer was

1 William Stukeley, *Palaeographia Britannica* (Stamford: Francis Howgrave, 1746), 1–4. See also Carola Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Life Story of a Masterpiece* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2006), 80–84.

an Anglo-Saxon or Norman, or even from somewhere else, as some have suggested.² Given that we have no historical records to say who the designer was, or why or where the work was made, one might well question how it is possible to “get inside” the mind of its creator.

Elsewhere I have examined the inspiration behind the Tapestry’s design, exploring how both contemporary manuscript art and – to a lesser extent – “real life” impacted upon it.³ In this study I wish to take the debate a little further, exploring how this “intertextuality”, the interweaving or interblending of art and life, helps us to further our understanding of the techniques employed by the Tapestry’s designer. Here only the Tapestry’s dress and clothing is studied, for the reason that it provides us with good examples of the designer’s narrative strategies.

Although there is not universal agreement on when, where, and why the Bayeux Tapestry was made, most scholars believe it was commissioned by Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, the maternal half-brother of William, Duke of Normandy (or on his behalf), in order to celebrate Odo’s role in the Norman Conquest of England.⁴ It is also generally assumed that the Bayeux Tapestry was made in England, predominantly on the basis of the close relationship between the embroidery and contemporary manuscript illuminations, most of which seem to have been held by scriptoria at Canterbury, in particular those of St Augustine’s Abbey.⁵ This affiliation between the possible patron and place of production means that it is extremely likely that the Tapestry was made relatively soon after the events it depicts.⁶

It is well-known that the Anglo-Saxons had a reputation for producing some of the finest illuminated manuscripts in Western Europe.⁷ These have a distinctive

2 For example, George Beech, *Was the Bayeux Tapestry Made in France? The Case for Saint-Florent of Saumur* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also Wolfgang Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry: Monument to a Norman Triumph* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1994), 44–54.

3 Michael John Lewis, *The Archaeological Authority of the Bayeux Tapestry*, BAR British Series 404 (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2005); Michael J. Lewis, *The Real World of the Bayeux Tapestry* (Stroud: History Press, 2009).

4 This theory was first presented by Honoré François Delauney, *Origine de la Tapissierie de Bayeux prouvée par elle-même* (Caen: Mancel, 1824). More recently this viewpoint has been challenged by Elizabeth Carson Pastan and Stephen D. White, with Kate Gilbert, *The Bayeux Tapestry and St Augustine’s Canterbury: A New Assessment* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014).

5 Cyril Hart, “The Bayeux Tapestry and Schools of Illumination at Canterbury”, *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (2000): 117–67; Francis Wormald, “Style and Design”, in *The Bayeux Tapestry: A Comprehensive Survey*, ed. Frank Stenton (London: Phaidon, 1957), 30–34; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, “Reading the Bayeux Tapestry through Canterbury Eyes”, in *The Bayeux Tapestry: Collected Papers*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 244.

6 Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 12–13.

7 Elzbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976). See also Thomas H. Ohlgren, *Anglo-Saxon Textual Illustration* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992).

style,⁸ inspired by Carolingian art,⁹ and are (generally speaking) best represented by manuscripts that came into the possession of Canterbury's religious houses in the centuries immediately before the Norman Conquest.¹⁰ It is also apparent that books were loaned (or gifted) across Europe, furthered by clerics who travelled from one religious institution to another. A prime example is Abbott Scotland, later of St Augustine's Canterbury, who came from Mont Saint-Michel and was consecrated abbot in 1072, and who (it has recently been suggested) may actually be depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.¹¹

As the Anglo-Saxons were admired for their textile work, it is no surprise that this art formed the basis of Odo's gift to Bayeux.¹² Although there are few extant examples, the literary evidence provides an insight into the production of furnishings, wall hangings, and high-status garments that characterize Anglo-Saxon textile history.¹³ The Bayeux Tapestry is a survival of this tradition. In 1066, King William I bestowed upon Odo the earldom of Kent, which gave him incredible wealth (second only to the king) and access to the resources necessary for creating great works of art, such as the Bayeux Tapestry.¹⁴ As bishop of Bayeux it seems perfectly feasible that Odo

8 Wormald, "Style and Design", 29–31.

9 C. R. Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 1.

10 Hart, "Canterbury", highlights many examples. See also Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 10–12, and Richard Gameson, *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 175. In "English Manuscript Art in the Late Eleventh Century: Canterbury and Its Context", in *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest: Churches, Saints and Scholars, 1066–1109*, ed. Richard Eales and Richard Sharpe (London: Hambledon Press, 1995), 125, Gameson argues that the books of St Augustine's are of a higher quality than those from Christ Church.

11 Howard B. Clarke, "The Identity of the Designer of the Bayeux Tapestry", *Anglo-Norman Studies* 35 (2013): 119–39. See also Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 172.

12 First expressed by S. L. in a "Letter concerning Queen Matilda's Tapestry", in *Gentleman's Magazine* (1803): 1225–26.

13 Goscelin, a Fleming resident in England in the second half of the eleventh century, noted in the *Vita S. Augustini* (in *Auctores VI–VII saec.*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 80 (Paris: Migne, 1850), 51–52), that English women were skilled in gold embroidery (cf. C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 45). The *Vita Ædwardi* records that Queen Edith, Harold's sister, clad King Edward the Confessor in garments "embroidered by herself or of her choice" (Frank Barlow, *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 22–25). Likewise, William of Poitiers in his *Gesta Guillelmi*, 2.42 (*The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. R. H. C. Davis and M. Chibnall, 176–77), notes that the "women of the English people are very skilled in needlework and weaving gold thread". Extant examples include the stole, girdle, and maniple worked on the order of Queen Ælflæd, wife of Edward the Elder, for Bishop Frithestan of Winchester, and a possible English textile fragment in the Museo di S. Ambrogio, Milan. See Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 6–8, for further discussion.

14 In 1049/50 William had bestowed upon Odo the bishopric of Bayeux, and shortly after the Norman Conquest the earldom of Kent (see David R. Bates, "Odo Bishop of Bayeux 1049–1097" (PhD thesis, Exeter University, 1970), 49), often leaving him *de facto* ruler in his absence.

would commission an artwork to celebrate his role in the Norman Conquest of England, in an English style, by English hands, in order to present to his cathedral church. What better gift, a depiction of the conquest by the conquered! At this time Bayeux cathedral was in the process of being rebuilt, and hence the dedication of the new building, in 1077, provided the ideal moment to make this bequest.¹⁵ It is no coincidence, therefore, that the Bayeux Tapestry places Harold's famous oath to William at Bayeux, contrary to the evidence of all other primary sources.¹⁶ Although some have suggested that the Tapestry's subject matter was not suitable for an ecclesiastical setting,¹⁷ such arguments ignore the fact that the secular versus religious divide was obscure in the Middle Ages. Also, it was in Bayeux cathedral that the Bayeux Tapestry was rediscovered in the early eighteenth century, where it was known to have been hung in the nave during the Feast of Relics and throughout the Octave since at least 1476.¹⁸

The interrelationship between the production of medieval manuscript art and embroidery is little understood, but it is important for understanding the production of the Bayeux Tapestry and placing it in its proper context. The notion that the task of the artist is to do something new, though deeply imbedded in modern cultural awareness, is a comparatively recent development, and was not readily appreciated in the late Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman period. Artists in the eleventh century were essentially copyists.¹⁹ This is not to say they did not produce original works, for they did, but in the context of the day it was not uncommon for artists to be inspired by one another, and also directly copy from one another's works. The

The Domesday Book records that Odo was one of England's largest landowners, second only to the king (Ann Williams and G. H. Martin, *Domesday Book* (London: Penguin, 1992)).

- 15 A theory first proposed by Antoine Lancelot, "Suite de l'explication d'un monument de Guillaume de Conquérant", *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres depuis l'année MDCCXXVI jusques et compris l'année MDCCXXX* 8 (1733), 602–68. See also Frank Rede Fowke, *The Bayeux Tapestry: A History and Description* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1913), 23.
- 16 For example, William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et regis Anglorum*, 1.42 (Davis and Chibnall, *Gesta Guillelmi*, 70–71), places the oath at Bonneville, whilst Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.2.117 (*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, vol. 2, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 134–35) says it took place at Rouen. This assumes, however, that both these chroniclers are referring to the same oath.
- 17 C. R. Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French Secular Epic", in Gameson, *Study*, 47–62; David J. Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 105. Chris Henige proposed that the Tapestry would have been displayed in a rectangular secular building, such as the keep at Dover ("Putting the Bayeux Tapestry in Its Place", in *King Harold II and the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 4, 12–19).
- 18 Simone Bertrand, "The History of the Bayeux Tapestry", in Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 76; Hart, "Canterbury", 124–25.
- 19 See M. O. H. Carver, "Contemporary Artefacts Illustrated in Late Saxon Manuscripts", *Archaeologia* 108 (1986): 118; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 24.

example *par excellence* is the Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 32), dated to 820–35, which was copied by the artists of the Harley Psalter (London, British Library, MS Harley 603) over the eleventh century, and then by those that produced the Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 17. 1) in the mid-twelfth century.²⁰ The reasons for this tradition of artistic plagiarism are easy to explain. Most medieval art depicted biblical events. Therefore it was important (in an age where few could read or write) not to corrupt the meaning of an image by breaking an accepted convention through new interpretation. The commonly used evangelist symbols are a good example. In most art works they are clearly identified through the representations of the “angel” (Matthew), “lion” (Mark), “ox” (Luke) and “eagle” (John), but where they are stylized – common on thirteenth-century enamels manufactured in Limoges, for instance – interpretation can be difficult.²¹ Early medieval artists were therefore not being lazy by copying, but were ensuring that traditional conventions continued and were suitably applied in new contexts.

It is clear that the designer of the Bayeux Tapestry had a new and difficult challenge. As far as we know the Tapestry was not a copy of an earlier work. If this assumption is accepted, then it is clear that its designer had to create a new design, celebrating a recent historical event for a specific context, but within the traditions in which he usually worked. The dearth of surviving textiles does not help scholars trying to understand this complex design process, so it can only be assumed that any designer tasked with such a commission would borrow where he could and invent where he could not. This method seems to be apparent in the Bayeux Tapestry,²² demonstrated by the fact that a number of its images seem to be direct copies of exemplars found elsewhere in art, most notably at Canterbury, further cementing the relationship between the Tapestry designer and Canterbury scriptoria.²³ As we turn to the specifics of dress and costume in the Bayeux Tapestry to explore the narrative intertextuality of the Tapestry, we shall see how the Tapestry’s imagery is used as a tool to enable its narrative to flow and be easily understood.

Dress and costume in the Bayeux Tapestry

Gale R. Owen-Crocker has made an enormous contribution to the study of Anglo-Saxon clothing and textiles,²⁴ so what better tribute than an examination of dress

20 Ed. Koert van der Horst, William Noel, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Westrenen: HES Publishers, 1996), 233–39.

21 Michael Lewis, “Limoges Enamels”, in “Portable Antiquities Scheme Report”, ed. John Naylor, *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012): 314–17.

22 Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 129–32.

23 Hart, “Canterbury”; Owen-Crocker, “Canterbury Eyes”.

24 See in particular Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004).

and costume in the Bayeux Tapestry, a discussion to which she has contributed herself.²⁵ The topic has been studied before,²⁶ but involved looking at elements of dress in isolation, rather than the holistic approach attempted here. Some of these observations are not new, and indeed owe considerable debt to the work of Gale herself, and her interest in the Bayeux Tapestry.

It might come as some surprise that most of the Tapestry's 627 figures wear civilian clothing, even in fighting scenes: only 198 figures (or parts of them) wear armour, of which 164 appear at the Battle of Hastings, a further 27 in the Breton campaign. All but three of the Tapestry's clothed figures are men. It is noteworthy that there is surprising consistency in the garments worn by most, though the colours used vary tremendously, incorporating the whole palette at the embroiderers' disposal.

Tunics

Tunics in the Bayeux Tapestry are shown long-bodied (extending to the knee) and long-sleeved (reaching to the wrist). This compares well with their depiction in late Anglo-Saxon art, although in manuscript illuminations sleeves can be closely gathered on the forearm,²⁷ as in the New Minster Charter (London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A. viii, fol. 2v), a technique that is difficult (but not impossible) to achieve in embroidery, thus highlighting the limitations of the Tapestry medium. Common in art, as well as in the Tapestry, are plain bands at the cuff and hem, probably imitating weaving or embroidery. Bands are also shown across the waist, presumably belts or girdles. Buckles and strap-ends, which are common archaeological finds, are not normally depicted in art, which is not surprising, given the relatively small scale of the images and the complexity of the medium used.²⁸

Interesting is the fact that most of the Tapestry's tunics have a rounded neckline, with a slit in front and a v-shaped border/collar, which might otherwise be interpreted as a tunic with a v-shaped neckline, over a rounded-neck undergarment.²⁹ This form is rare in contemporary manuscript art, where simple round or wavy necklined tunics are common. There are striking parallels between the garments in the Tapestry and the necklines of tunics in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. v

25 See, for example, Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "Dress and Authority in the Bayeux Tapestry", in *The Bayeux Tapestry: Collected Papers*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 1–18, and, in particular, "Telling a Tale: Narrative Techniques in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Old English Epic *Beowulf*", in *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 40–60.

26 See Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 71–87; Lewis, *Real World*, 134–47.

27 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 248–49, highlights how the meaning of this feature has confused art historians, with some suggesting the effect was caused by the wearing of bracelets.

28 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 232–33.

29 Nevinson thought these to be collars ("The Costumes", 74, in *Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Stenton), a view dismissed by Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 247.

(fol. 6v) and the Tiberius Psalter (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C. vi, fols 9r and 11r). It is not known where the Tiberius Psalter was produced, but Cotton Tiberius B. v was probably made in Winchester, and therefore unlikely to have been known to the Tapestry designer, assuming he was Canterbury-based. A similar feature, but with a more rounded “v”, does appear in London, British Library, MS Arundel 155 (fol. 93r), produced at Christ Church, Canterbury, and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 (pages 53 and 59), also probably made there.³⁰ It therefore seems that this feature was copied from illustrations in manuscripts associated with Canterbury. Thus, drawing from a rich source of manuscript models was clearly part of the narrative strategy of the designer, creating images readily recognized within an English context.

Some tunics in the Tapestry seem to be shown as culottes, that is to say, trousered garments of one-piece construction. John Nevinson identified them as a feature of working men’s dress,³¹ but they are clearly worn by individuals of varying status. Related are baggy versions of these trousered tunics, such as those worn by Figures 442 and 443.³² Since both individuals are archers, perhaps this is a form of dress specific to their profession, though this is pure conjecture, since archaeological evidence for it is lacking. Similarly, Owen-Crocker suggests that the Tapestry designer reserved culottes for the Normans,³³ although at least one Englishman (Figure 527) is also shown wearing them. The inspiration for these garments is unclear, as trousered tunics are very rare in late Anglo-Saxon illumination, Owen-Crocker arguing that they “were not part of the English iconographic tradition”.³⁴ That said, a “trousered tunic” with banding on the inside leg worn by an individual in the Tiberius Psalter (fol. 13r) compares well with a garment worn by Figure 76 in the Bayeux Tapestry. In both cases it is plausible that these are not culottes, but instead tunics with a central slit. The interest, however, is that such garments are rare in both the Tapestry and contemporary illumination, suggesting that other art did not provide the inspiration. John Nevinson, clearly confused by these one-piece garments, said that such items could not have been worn without some kind of opening,³⁵ either at the front, sides, or rear. The same is true of the Tapestry’s trousered armour, which is

30 For further discussion of the possible influence of Junius 11 on the Bayeux Tapestry, see Michael J. Lewis, “The Bayeux Tapestry and Oxford Bodleian Library, Junius 11”, in *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Approaches*, ed. Michael J. Lewis, Gale R. Owen-Crocker, and Dan Terkla (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2011), 105–11.

31 John Nevinson, “Costumes”, 73; Bertrand, *La Tapisserie de Bayeux et la manière de vivre au onzième siècle* (La Pierre-qui-Vire: Editions Zodiaque, 1966), 92.

32 Numbers for figures in the Bayeux Tapestry follow those on the facsimile in Lewis, Owen-Crocker, and Terkla, *New Approaches*, 165–90.

33 *Dress*, 254; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, “The Bayeux Tapestry: Culottes, Tunics and Garters, and the Making of the Bayeux Tapestry”, *Costume* 28 (1994): 2–4.

34 Owen-Crocker, “Culottes, Tunics and Garters”, 2.

35 Nevinson, “Costumes”, 73.

not discussed here.³⁶ A likely explanation for their form, given the Tapestry's casual use of colour, is that these one-piece tunics might in fact be two-part garments, but coloured the same so the distinction between the two pieces of clothing is obscured. Here, then, the embroiderers might have confused the original design "sketched" by the designer, and therefore it is right also to be wary of similar elements of the design that may have resulted from "embroidery errors".³⁷ In general it seems that the Tapestry's tunics are closely related to those in art, but some elements thereof suggest an independent influence at work. Perhaps stylization for the purposes of embroidery led to simplification that is now tricky for the contemporary viewer to unravel in terms of understanding the basis of these garments, though clearly inspired (to some extent) by art.

Trousers

It is commonplace, in both the Bayeux Tapestry and other contemporary art, for trousers to be shown tight fitting, showing the form of the leg;³⁸ only Turolde (Figure 95) wears trousers with a loose cut. Whether or not this convention reflected reality is uncertain, and largely unknown, but it seems unlikely that such tight-fitting trousers were actually worn.³⁹ This feature is probably inspired by manuscript art, where it is common. It is also the case that trousers are often shown with horizontal banding, normally only from the knee down. This detail is assumed to be leather strapping (garters or leg-bindings),⁴⁰ probably used to protect the lower legs from insect bites. Examples in art include London, British Library, MS Additional 24199 (fol. 17r), Junius 11 (page 74), and the Tiberius Psalter (fol. 8v). Owen-Crocker also notes the parallels between garters worn by William (Figure 186) in the Tapestry and those worn by King Edgar in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii (fol. 2v).⁴¹ At times a diagonal band of some garter types is shown just below the knees. This diagonal band is clearly visible both in the Bayeux Tapestry as well as on the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter (fol. 2v). Likewise in Junius 11 (page 58), Malalehel's garters seem to unfurl, revealing the pattern of the banding. Owen-Crocker highlights the fact that the Normans in the Tapestry wear a wider selection of leg bands than the Anglo-Saxons, and that detail (at times) might have been used

36 Nicholas P. Brooks and H. E. Walker, "The Authority and Interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry", *Anglo-Norman Studies* 1 (1979): 19–20.

37 Michael John Lewis, "Embroidery Errors in the Bayeux Tapestry and Their Relevance for Understanding Its Design and Production", in *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*, ed. Martin K. Foys, Karen Eileen Overbey, and Dan Terkla (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 130–40.

38 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 255, highlights how in the Tapestry, in contrast to many illuminations, colours are used, rather than flesh tones, thus showing them to be garments.

39 For a discussion, see Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 255–56.

40 *Ibid.*, 257.

41 *Ibid.*, 258.

to help distinguish between them,⁴² though this distinction can be quite subtle. Here are clues, then, that the Tapestry designer employed aspects of his design for reasons other than a reflection of reality. Indeed, Owen-Crocker has identified cross-strapping as being prominent early in the second section of the Tapestry.⁴³ The fact that this motif was dispensed with may suggest that it took too long to embroider and was therefore stopped as the design progressed, or (less likely) that the embroiderer who favoured this device worked on only part of the Tapestry.⁴⁴ It is clear that even such minute details begin to throw light on the Tapestry design process.

Footwear

Footwear in the Bayeux Tapestry is normally illustrated in profile, showing a narrow, often pointed shoe with a rounded heel and toe. An exception is Edward's shoes (Figure 207), which appear like slippers and have an angular cut at the ankle. On a few occasions (see for example Figures 129, 136, and 187) the shoe upper is clearly depicted. In these instances the shoe widens gradually from the heel to a mid-point and then narrows sharply to a pointed toe. Shoes are not particularly common in contemporary illuminations, as many characters (especially in biblical scenes) are shown barefooted; hence the Tapestry designer may have been attempting to convey some sense of "real life" in his design. That said, examples of shoed figures in manuscript art are known, including in Junius 11 (pages 57, 74, 84, and 87); London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C. iii (fols 11v and 19r); and the Old English Hexateuch (London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B. iv, fols 15v, 32r, 38r, and 139v). Interestingly, these examples compare better with those in the Tapestry than the archaeological evidence of what was worn: in the eleventh century the ankle-boot became fashionable in London,⁴⁵ and elsewhere, suggesting that the inspiration for the Tapestry's shoes was probably art, more than life, though based on a form of shoe more common in the tenth century.

Minute details such as stitching or laces are (unsurprisingly) not shown in art. The only hint of embellishment on the Tapestry's shoes is a red stripe that appears along the vamp of one of Edward's shoes (Figure 3), probably used to emphasize his status. Owen-Crocker notes that vamp stripes are common on shoes in art, but are

42 *Ibid.*, 258.

43 Owen-Crocker, "Culottes, Tunics and Garters", 5.

44 Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 136–37.

45 See Frances Pritchard, "Footwear", in *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London: II – Finds and Environmental Evidence*, ed. Alan Vince (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1991), 219–29. For a comprehensive overview of Anglo-Saxon footwear, see Esther Cameron and Quita Mould, "Devil's Crafts and Dragon's Skins? Sheaths, Shoes and Other Leatherwork", in *The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), 93–115.

normally white;⁴⁶ examples include shoes in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii (fol. 2v), the Tiberius Psalter (fol. 9r), and London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A. xv (fol. 122v). Francis Grew and Margrethe de Neergaard stated that vamp stripes are first recorded in London archaeological deposits of the late eleventh century, and barely outlived the twelfth,⁴⁷ so this detail seems to reflect contemporary fashion, though art (rather than life) is more likely to have been the influence in the Bayeux Tapestry. Whatever the case, the use of this motif to emphasize the status of a particular character is important, indicating there was a need in the Bayeux Tapestry to employ such aspects to ensure that characters essential to the narrative were suitably identified.

Headgear

Few characters in the Bayeux Tapestry wear hats, as is true for contemporary manuscript illumination. Owen-Crocker notes that men are mostly bare headed in art, even in winter.⁴⁸ Conan (Figure 159), when escaping from Dol, wears a pointed hat with a large brow-band, which might be an oddly rendered conical helm commonly worn by fighting-men elsewhere. Similar hats are worn by two archers (Figures 442–43), but are shown with a slight curve to the point. Though crudely executed, these may be Phrygian caps, which are commonly found in contemporary manuscripts, including the sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS A. 27 (368), fol. 36v); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 296 (fol. 40v); and London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. v (fol. 85v). The Eastern origins of this headgear are not disputed, so if these are indeed Phrygian caps it seems likely the designer borrowed this motif from art.

Cloaks and brooches

Cloaks worn by horsemen in the Tapestry are quite short, hanging not much further than the waist, whilst those worn by others are significantly longer, falling below the knees, sometimes to the ankles. This pattern makes sense, as shorter cloaks worn by horsemen may have practical advantages, freeing the lower limbs. These cloaks contrast with those in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations, including London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius A. vi (fol. 4v) and the Tiberius Psalter (fol. 13r), which tend to be a little shorter. A notable exception is Cnut's cloak in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* (London, British Library, MS Stowe 944, fol. 6r), which hangs well below the knees. It is intriguing therefore that cloaks in Romanesque manuscripts are

46 *Dress*, 259.

47 Francis Grew and Margrethe de Neergaard, *Shoes and Pattens*, Museum of London Series (London: H.M.S.O., 1988), 10. See also Pritchard, "Footwear", 230–32.

48 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 263.

approximately the same length of those in the Bayeux Tapestry, which may reflect the post-Conquest fashion.

Cloaks in the Bayeux Tapestry tend to be plain, the exception being one worn by William (Figure 118). This has ribbons towards the back of the neck and has a decorated band at the hem, the band being embellished with three roundels. It is rare to find such ribbons associated with non-religious figures in late Anglo-Saxon art, though they are a prominent feature of Carolingian, Ottonian, and Romanesque illuminations, an exception being the cloak of Cnut in the aforementioned New Minster *Liber Vitae* (fol. 6r), which is shown with a tasselled ribbon. While it is possible that William's cloak actually had this device, it seems more likely that the Tapestry designer employed this attribute since it was an established convention to highlight status in art.⁴⁹

As noted above, dress accessories (such as buckles, strap fittings, and jewellery) are rarely shown in the Tapestry, since embroidering small items in wool was difficult and time consuming. However, brooches are relatively common, shown clipping cloaks on the right shoulder, thus leaving the sword arm free, though occasionally they are worn at the throat.⁵⁰ Such brooches are normally circular, sometimes shown with a central motif of a closed circle or dot. Similar examples are found in great numbers in manuscript art.⁵¹ These are likely to be representations of disc brooches, a type typical of the late Anglo-Saxon period. On one occasion the Tapestry illustrates a disc brooch (worn by Figure 56) with at least four inner segments, which may suggest settings or other decoration. It is probably fair to say that disc brooches are simply an accompaniment to the Tapestry's cloaks, since this was the accepted convention for fixing cloaks in art. However, much less common are square or rectangular brooches, perhaps not surprising since such objects are rare in the archaeological record: even Continental examples of early medieval square and rectangular brooches are rarely found in England.⁵² Such brooches do, however, appear in manuscript art, such as in the Boulogne Gospels (Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 11, fol. 11r) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii (fol. 117v), but they are normally plain. They are also found in the Tapestry, where they tend to have a central dot (see brooches worn by Figures 117 and 136), or a (sometimes off-centre) square (see Figures 85, 106, and 256). These types contrast with the ornate rectangular brooch worn by King Edward (Figure 207), which consists of a cruciform motif

49 That said, Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 236, has suggested the roots of these tassels might be Viking, noting both William's and Cnut's Scandinavian heritage.

50 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 235, considers it common for a brooch to be worn centrally when it was worn over a long robe.

51 Owen Crocker, *Dress*, 234–35, notes that sometimes brooches are worn at the left, which might have been for artistic effect, ensuring symmetry in some illuminations, such as *The Old English Hexateuch*.

52 Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 79–80. See Portable Antiquities Scheme dataset (www.finds.org.uk). Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 235, highlights a find of a rectangular brooch from Winchester.

with a central circle, and has clearly been used as a device by the Tapestry designer to draw attention to Edward's status. An example with similar elements, though stylistically different, is the *morse* (used to clasp an ecclesiastical cope) worn by St Benedict in London, British Library, MS Arundel 155 (fol. 133r). It is noteworthy that all the square brooches in the Bayeux Tapestry (excepting that on Figure 117) are shown joining a cloak either at the neck or at chest height, mimicking their position on ecclesiastical gowns depicted in art, including the late eleventh-century Flemish cover of New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 709. It is possible, therefore, that the Tapestry designer has understood the *morse* of ecclesiastical dress to be square brooches and represented them as such. Significant in terms of intertextuality in the Bayeux Tapestry is that cloaks (and therefore brooches by association with such garments) are mostly reserved for high-status individuals, which is not the case in illuminated manuscripts.⁵³ They are used as an important and ingenious narrative tool, enabling certain characters to be easily identified, and thus ensuring the Tapestry narrative is easily read and understood.

Gowns

Only eleven characters in the Bayeux Tapestry wear long-sleeved, ankle-length gowns. These are all high-status individuals,⁵⁴ again demonstrating how the Tapestry designer uses certain attributes to identify important characters in particular scenes.⁵⁵ Common in late Anglo-Saxon art are individuals wearing loose-fitting "classical" robes,⁵⁶ worn by royalty and religious figures, but these are not found in the Tapestry. At times seated or enthroned figures wear gowns that also appear to have an undergarment, sometimes of a different colour, suggested by a diagonal line.⁵⁷ This feature is also common in manuscript illuminations, such as London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus D. xxvi (fol. 75v) and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.34 (fol. 1r), which are the likely influence for those in the Bayeux Tapestry.

Gowns in the Tapestry are occasionally embellished with plain or embroidered bands, as on King Edward's garments in Scene 1 (Figure 3), whose dress Owen-Crocker has paralleled with "exotic dress" found in tenth-century male burials at Birka, Sweden.⁵⁸ Such embroidered bands are normally found just below the

53 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 234; Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 80, 139.

54 Nevinson, "Costume", 71; Lewis, *Archaeological Authority*, 78; Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 241.

55 Michael J. Lewis, "Identity and Status in the Bayeux Tapestry: The Iconographic and Artefactual Evidence", *Anglo-Norman Studies* 29 (2007): 104.

56 Owen-Crocker considers long gowns to be a fashion popular in some parts of Europe from the mid-seventh century, ultimately influenced by Byzantine fashions (*Dress*, 240).

57 See Figures 384 and 385. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 242, suggests this garment might have been inspired by a misinterpretation of similar garments in *The Old English Hexateuch*.

58 Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 243. She also suggests that Edward might be wearing a gold torc about his neck (which seems unlikely), and the front of the garment might have gold buttons or toggles,

knee of seated, high-status individuals. This feature also occurs in contemporary illuminations, such as Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, MS Plut. XVII. 20 (fol. 1r). The Tapestry's gowns are also occasionally embellished with other decorative elements. For example, the geometric embroidered bands with associated quatrefoil motifs found on the aforementioned gown of King Edward can be likened to those adorning the vestments of St John in London, British Library, MS Arundel 60 (fol. 12v). Items such as brooches and cloaks are used by the Tapestry designer to highlight with ease the status of certain individuals through these visual narrative tools.

Ecclesiastical dress

Only three churchmen in the Bayeux Tapestry (Figures 230, 234, and 243) wear ecclesiastical dress,⁵⁹ which consists of a straight, narrow garment, resembling an alb, shown with tight, long sleeves. Over this is worn a cape-like item, probably a chasuble, which falls in a v-shape at the front and is rounded at the back. The ecclesiastics (Figures 230 and 234) at the death of Edward the Confessor (Scenes 27 and 28) appear to wear an orphrey (an embroidered band), consisting of a collar from which hangs a centrally placed, narrow strip. These are decorated with bands of different colours and roundels. Figure 243 is named as Stigand. He wears a similar costume, though instead of an orphrey he wears a pallium, befitting his rank (archbishop). This is decorated with a design of quatrefoils between roundels, further emphasizing his status. Around his neck, half covered by his chasuble, he wears a stole, and in his left hand carries a maniple. Other religious figures are shown in the Tapestry (identified by their tonsured hair) but wear lay-dress.⁶⁰

General parallels might be drawn with the dress of ecclesiastics in manuscript art, including St Æthelwold and St Dunstan in the *Regularis Concordia* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii, fol. 2r). Both men are shown wearing a chasuble over an alb (as in the Tapestry), and, likewise, Æthelwold has an orphrey, whilst Dunstan appears to wear a pallium. The alb-like garments are more free-flowing in the manuscript than in the Tapestry, best explained by the medium used. Another important parallel worthy of note is the depiction of the “confessors” in the *Benedictional of St Æthelwold* (London, British Library, MS Additional 49598, fol. 1r), which shows St Gregory, St Benedict, and St Cuthbert. Here the church dress is a little more complicated. All three men wear similar dress, a plain chasuble (coloured blue, white, and green-blue, respectively, with golden edging) over another garment,

worn over a white shirt (242).

59 Michael Lewis, “Ecclesiastics in the Bayeux Tapestry”, in *Inside and Beyond the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Anne Henderson and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2015).

60 For a discussion of ecclesiastical lay dress in the Tapestry, see Lewis, “Ecclesiastics”.

perhaps a dalmatica.⁶¹ That of St Benedict is red, and embellished with a design of sunburst-roundels, whilst those of the others are gold but plain. All three men have gold collars, or orphreys, or amices. At their necks the white of their albs can be seen. All three seem to wear pallia, embellished with crosses, each bearing its saint's name.

In general, therefore, the Tapestry's ecclesiastical garments reflect well those found in manuscript art, with some minor differences. Since ecclesiastical dress was fairly conservative, it seems likely that these costumes broadly reflect those in use at the time of the Conquest. Within depictions of dress, the Tapestry designer uses decorative elements to demonstrate the hierarchical relationship between the characters he shows.

Female dress

Women are rare in the Bayeux Tapestry, and only three (Figures 135, 228, and 402) are clothed.⁶² All seem to wear long ankle-length gowns, which sometimes trail on the ground. This style is broadly typical of the form of dress found in contemporary art, where the subjects in question are usually biblical or saintly women. Examples include women in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.3.7 (fol. 1r), *The Old English Hexateuch* (fol. 15v), and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 709 (fol. 1v). The main difference between women's clothes in the Bayeux Tapestry and those found in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations is that the former have long-sleeved garments that flare at the cuff (as they do particularly prominently on the gown of Figure 402), whereas most in art wear loose-fitting over-garments or gowns, with either straight sleeves or sleeves with a slight flare at the cuff. During the Romanesque period, sleeves protrude even further at the cuff, such as those worn by a woman in the Winchester Bible (Winchester, Cathedral Library, MS 17, fol. 331v), so it is possible that the Tapestry designer, like illuminators, responded to contemporary changes in fashion. Twice in the Bayeux Tapestry the form of such gowns is ambiguous; the sleeves trail by the sides of the robe, suggesting that the robe is a sleeveless over-garment, rather similar to a pallium-like cloak, a feature found in the Old English Hexateuch (fol. 76r).

Women in both the Tapestry and contemporary manuscripts wear a scarf covering the head, neck, and shoulders, so that no hair is showing, suggesting the women in question are married, as is known to be the case for Edith (Figure 228), and also likely for the woman fleeing a burning building with a child (Figure 402). In the Tapestry such garments are rounded about the head, whereas some in Anglo-Saxon illuminations appear as angular hoods, although others appear rounded, such

61 Sarah Larratt Keefer, "A Matter of Style: Clerical Vestments in the Anglo-Saxon Church", *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 3 (2007): 38–39.

62 Male figures are also much more common in illuminated manuscripts than women (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 232).

as in the Benedictional of Archbishop Robert (Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS Y. 7, fols 21v and 54v), the Old English Hexateuch (fols 15v, 32r, and 36r), and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 709 (fol. 1v). Owen-Crocker has suggested that the head-dresses worn by women in the Tapestry are “close fitting tie-on caps”, which might have been worn under a wimple or scarf.⁶³

In the Bayeux Tapestry women’s clothing is never decorated, which is intriguing, as it is likely that contemporary garments were heavily embellished. The only decoration of any sort is the plain-banded hem of *Ælfgyva’s* dress (Figure 135). Much the same is true of female dress in contemporary manuscript art: few clothes are decorated and such embellishments as appear are generally restricted to a plain hemline band. Interestingly, women in the Tapestry are not shown wearing jewellery, either, unlike depictions in most contemporary art. This absence contrasts with the archaeological evidence, which attests to a fairly widespread use of jewellery, particularly by women.⁶⁴

Conclusion

In general, dress and clothing in the Bayeux Tapestry compares well with its representation in contemporary manuscript art, suggesting that art is the likely source of inspiration. Some aspects imply that its designer was (at times) keen to embrace contemporary fashion, though this possibility is hard to judge, given the dearth of archaeological evidence for the forms of late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman dress. Furthermore, some elements that are less typical in art do occur in Canterbury-produced illuminations, and would have therefore been available to a designer with access to the scriptoria there. Most importantly, however, the Tapestry designer not only uses dress and clothing to drape his characters, but he also (at times) uses costume as a narrative tool. Although it is possible that high-status characters (for example) might have worn embroidered gowns in life, other attributes (like cloaks and brooches) are purposely adopted to highlight individual characters, or their role in the narrative. This intertextuality between elements that are explained by historical tradition and others that reflect contemporary reality is particularly fascinating, as it exposes how the designer uses such elements as narrative tools. Elsewhere the designer also uses other attributes, such as weaponry, to the same effect,⁶⁵ highlighting an ability to be adaptive. This skill is in fact the true genius of the Tapestry designer. Presented with the challenge of producing a large narrative sequence of a recent historical event, he is adaptive and inventive, in order

63 Personal communication.

64 See, for example, archaeological finds recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk).

65 Lewis, “Identity and Status”, 105–106.

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to ensure that his visual narrative record can be read and easily understood by both contemporaries and the modern viewer.