

Panel: “War, Gender, and Identity in Medieval Europe”

Sara Jackson

Title: “‘Gens Anglorum’ and ‘Normanitas’: The Bayeux Tapestry and the Effects of Norman Conquest on Language and Arts”

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Suzanne LaVere

Paper written for: History T325: Ancient and Medieval Nations (Spring 2013)

Sara Jackson is currently pursuing an associate degree within the Department of History at IPFW. This semester she is examining the concept of identity as manifested prior to the formal establishment of nations, for which purpose this paper was developed. Other historical subjects of interest include the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine, political propaganda of the American Revolution, and the arts of the Great Depression. She hopes to continue studying the Medieval period, and looks forward to spending several days this summer getting lost in the Louvre.

Abstract

Appreciating the role of identity within the medieval period presents certain problems. Identity, insofar as we define it, does not seem to translate well to this period, where the conception of oneself seems naturally limited. While there is substantial scholarship over the course of many periods in history that highlights specific facets of identity (including ethnicity, religion, language, and government), there exists perhaps the opportunity for even greater understanding if we assess contemporary notions of identity through examining the artistic and self-expressive endeavors created within an age. This paper considers the elements of identity reflected within the creation of the Bayeux Tapestry; specifically, the research looks at the artistic style and linguistic indicators present within the inscriptions which provide insight into what might be termed the synthesis of an Anglo-Norman identity following the Norman Conquest in Britain.

Employing a rigorous examination of the existing scholarship yields what may be considered answers, but also raises further questions regarding the process of assimilation and its effects. This is true not just of the conquered, but also the conqueror. Looking at the content and context, the pictures and prose, and the materials and methods of the Bayeux Tapestry allows us to appraise the nuanced and layered alterations that developed within the English population following the invasion of their Norman neighbors. I argue that a full appreciation of the effects of the Norman Conquest on the evolution of English identity might be discernable in an examination of how those effects are represented within the Bayeux Tapestry, with an eye towards cultural synthesis rather than cultural subjugation.

Selected Bibliography

Bridgeford, Andrew. *1066: The Hidden History in the Bayeux Tapestry*. New York: Walker & Company, 2005.

Brown, Michelle P. "The Triumph of the Codex: The Manuscript Book before 1100." In *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 179-193. Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2007.

- Chapuis, Julien. "Romanesque Art". In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rmsq/hd_rmsq.htm (accessed April 02, 2013).
- Coatsworth, Elizabeth. "Stitches in Time: Establishing a History of Anglo-Saxon Embroidery." In *Medieval Clothing and Textiles I*, edited by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, 1-27. Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2005.
- Freeman, Edward A. *The History of the Norman Conquest of England: Its Causes and Its Results*, 2nd ed., Vols. 4-5). Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1876.
- Huscroft, Richard. *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2009.
- Lawson, M. K. *The Battle of Hastings, 1066*. 2nd ed. Stroud, England: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2003.
- Loyn, Henry R. *Anglo-Saxon England and The Norman Conquest*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963.
- Palmer, John J. N., and George Slater. "Canterbury." In *Open Domesday*. Open-source record of the contents of the *Domesday Book*, currently held at The National Archives. Translated by Phillimore & Co. Kew, England: Anna Powell-Smith. <http://domesdaymap.co.uk/place/TR1557/canterbury> (accessed March 14, 2013).
- Ringler, Dick, trans. *Beowulf: A New Translation for Oral Delivery*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007.
- Tansey, Richard M., and Fred S. Kleiner. *Gardner's Art Through The Ages*. 10th ed. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996.
- Thomas, Hugh M. *The English and The Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066-c.1220*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Wilson, David M. *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Complete Tapestry in Color with Introduction, Description and Commentary*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.