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NEW ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST

Aleksandra McClain and Naomi Sykes

It is becoming clear that the Norman Conquest both initiated and intensified far-reaching changes at all levels of society, including culture and identity, social structure, economy, diet, art and architecture, portable material culture, rural and urban settlement, manorial and community landscapes, religion and mortuary practice, and the management of the environment. Many of these elements are either inaccessible from documentary evidence alone or have distinct material implications, and recent archaeological research is beginning to show that they have the potential to complicate traditional historical narratives of the Conquest, or take our understanding of the period in new directions.¹ Nevertheless, the vast majority of academic scholarship on the Conquest has been carried out without reference to the abundant archaeological evidence from the eleventh and twelfth centuries that has been recovered in excavation and still survives above ground. As a result, both academic and public understanding of the Conquest has been predicated primarily on its impact on the elite social classes, and on narratives that have been derived almost entirely from the wealth of documentary history available for the period. The comprehensive archaeology of the Norman Conquest and Anglo-Norman transition is therefore a story that is yet to be told.

This paper articulates key themes, research directions, and a new case study emerging from the project 'Archaeologies of the Norman Conquest', an AHRC research network led jointly by the authors.² The chief objective of the project has been to create and sustain a research community linked by an interest in revitalizing archaeological research in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in order to examine the cultural, social, and political implications of the Norman Conquest and its aftermath through an explicit focus on material culture. The network has brought together the humanistic, scientific, academic, professional and public-engagement arms of archaeology, as well as key participants from cognate disciplines, in a range of workshops focusing on themes of interpretative agendas, methodologies, international perspectives and public outreach. The central aim has been to create a materially focused research framework for the period which can be engaged with and taken forward by both archaeological and interdisciplinary audiences. This article is a first step in that direction.

The network and its activities address a prominent gap in the current research environment focusing on the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Battle and Haskins

¹ Naomi J. Sykes, *The Norman Conquest: A Zooarchaeological Perspective*, BAR International Series 1656, Oxford 2007; Ben Jervis, 'Conquest, Ceramics, Continuity and Change. Beyond Representational Approaches to Continuity and Change in Early Medieval England: A Case Study from Anglo-Norman Southampton', *Early Medieval Europe* 21, 2013, 455–87; Michael Fradley, 'Scars on the Townscape: Urban Castles in Saxo-Norman England', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer, Abingdon 2017, 120–38; Aleksandra McClain, 'Rewriting the Narrative: Regional Dimensions of the Norman Conquest', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 203–27.

² Project reference: AH/P006841/1; <http://www.normanarchaeology.org>

conferences have made strides in recent years by including more work from the fields of archaeology and material culture, including the extremely welcome addition of an annual archaeology-focused memorial lecture at Battle (see Roffe, this volume). Nevertheless, archaeology and archaeologists have customarily been a featured extra instead of core members of these two most prominent events of Anglo-Norman scholarship. The root causes of archaeology's lack of engagement with the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the Conquest itself will be discussed in more detail below, but on the whole, the problem stems less from other disciplines refusing to listen to what archaeologists have to say than from archaeology doing too little to make itself heard. For a variety of reasons, archaeologists have not sufficiently appreciated that the period is not only brimming with unexplored potential in and of itself, but can also inform much broader questions about the interactions between society, material culture, ethnicity, culture contact and political transition that are enormously relevant to many other periods of human history. While innovative archaeological scholarship on the Conquest is taking place, it has been carried out by a relatively small number of scholars often isolated by methodology or sector, without a like-minded community of material-culture specialists interested in the period to listen, read, comment and spur on further research. The network has thus offered a space in which dialogue and collaboration between the range of specialisms within archaeology can be fostered, focusing specifically on what we can do together to interrogate more fully how and why the Norman Conquest and Anglo-Norman transition happened, and the significance of the material dimensions of that process.

The Current State of Norman Conquest Archaeology

The supposed invisibility of the Norman Conquest in the material record, at least when it comes to the 'stuff of everyday life' which is regarded as the primary purview of archaeology, has posed a longstanding quandary for the discipline.³ Trevor Rowley has written that archaeologists have always been 'more conservative' in our attitudes to the impact of the Conquest than cognate historical disciplines, despite acknowledging that the spread of castles across the English landscape and the mass rebuildings of churches in Romanesque styles after 1066 were undoubtedly significant, tangible signatures of the arrival of the Normans.⁴ He argued that this conservative perspective has stemmed primarily from the lack of immediate, obvious stylistic or technological changes in more prosaic material elements such as pottery, tools, and craft materials like wood, metal, bone and leather, suggesting that life for the masses went on much as before, despite the political upheaval.⁵

Instead of facing this apparent contradiction head on, or seeing it as an opportunity to investigate a period of particular complexity, the response of the discipline was instead to avoid the subject, and leave most nuanced interrogation of the process and effects of the Conquest to documentary historians. Despite the fact that the Conquest is easily the most widely recognized event in the English Middle Ages, Rowley's 1997 work *Norman England: An Archaeological Perspective on the*

³ David Griffiths, 'The Ending of Anglo-Saxon England: Identity, Allegiance, and Nationality', in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford, and Helena Hamerow, Oxford 2011, 62–78 at 62–3.

⁴ Trevor Rowley, *Norman England: An Archaeological Perspective*, London 1997, 12.

⁵ Rowley, *Norman England*, 134; Trevor Rowley, *Norman England* (Shire Living Histories), London 2010, 1.

Norman Conquest was the first general academic book on the Norman Conquest with a specific focus on archaeology.⁶ Remarkably, there were no further attempts in the intervening twenty years, until the arrival of Dawn Hadley and Christopher Dyer's 2017 edited volume *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations*.⁷ This is in marked contrast to the many Norman Conquest overviews from a historical perspective which have been published relatively recently.⁸ The lack of scholarship is emphatically not the result of a lack of archaeological data. On the contrary, a wealth of buildings, material culture and landscape evidence exists from the period, as well as human, animal and plant remains. However, this data is most often subsumed within wide-ranging considerations of a particular type of material culture or evidence, emphasizing the developmental trajectories of a class of settlement, landscape, building or artefact over the *longue durée* of the whole of the medieval period, or the early or late Middle Ages – frustratingly, often ending at 1066 or beginning after it. Vital data pertinent to the period is also contained within large, multi-period excavations of rural sites, of which Wharram Percy, Goltho and Faccombe Netherton are three of the best known, as well as major urban excavations at such sites as Winchester, Lincoln, York and Wallingford.⁹

There is of course considerable value in couching eleventh- and twelfth-century material within the context of longer and broader developmental trends, rather than looking at it in relative isolation. Nevertheless, consistently having taken the (very) long view means that we have lacked a body of research which specifically marshals material evidence to ask probing questions about how the Conquest happened, the ways in which the material dimensions of this socio-cultural transition were important, or even about distinctive elements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the role the period played in longer trajectories. The lack of a coherent intellectual framework has resulted in work which often undertakes the essential first step of characterizing the material culture from the period, but stops short of analysing its significance in the context of wider research questions, preventing archaeologists from playing a substantive role in scholarly debates on the Norman Conquest.

Neither Rowley's, nor Hadley and Dyer's, book explicitly seeks to lay out research agendas for the archaeology of the Conquest, although some key themes can be discerned, as can the impact of broader theoretical and disciplinary developments within academic archaeology over the past two decades. Rowley focuses consistently on the coexistence of continuity and change throughout the period, emphasizing continuity at 'everyday' levels and watershed-worthy change at elite levels, and he cites the arrival of a more systematic and consistently defined

⁶ Rowley, *Norman England*.

⁷ *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer, Abingdon 2017.

⁸ Amongst others, Hugh M. Thomas, *The Norman Conquest: England after William the Conqueror*, Lanham 2008; George Garnett, *The Norman Conquest: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2009; Richard Huscroft, *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction*, Harlow 2009; Brian Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: The Normans in Britain, 1066–1100*, Basingstoke 2013.

⁹ *A History of Wharram Percy and its Neighbours*, ed. Stuart Wrathmell, Wharram: A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds XIII, York 2012; Guy Beresford, *Goltho: The Development of an Early Medieval Manor, c. 850–1150*, London 1987; J. R. Fairbrother, *Faccombe Netherton: Excavations of a Saxon and Medieval Manor Complex*, vols I and II, London 1990; Martin Biddle, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, vols I and II, Oxford 1990; Michael Jones, David Stocker, and Alan Vince, *The City by the Pool: Assessing the Archaeology of the City of Lincoln*, Oxford 2003; Patrick Ottaway and Nicola Rogers, *Craft, Industry and Everyday Life: Finds from Medieval York*, The Archaeology of York 17/15, York 2002; Neil Christie and Oliver Creighton, *Transforming Townscapes: From Burgh to Borough, the Archaeology of Wallingford*, Abingdon 2013.

feudal social system as a major Norman contribution.¹⁰ His stress on the widespread evidence for continuity was likely more groundbreaking in archaeological circles at the time than it seems to us twenty years on, although it should be noted that it still lagged somewhat behind the critical assessments of the variable impact of the Normans conducted by some documentary scholars.¹¹ Throughout the volume, Rowley's discussions focus primarily on the material evidence of castles, churches, and urban and rural planning. He cites the supposed 'invisibility' of the Conquest in other areas of archaeology, particularly small finds, and does not probe it much further, conceding that material culture may be a less-than-ideal medium for tracking short-term or subtle change.¹² Rowley also flirts with the idea that cultural exchange around the Conquest was more complicated than is often supposed, and although he does not address the intricacies of the issue in full, just acknowledging the reflexive influence of conquered upon conquerors was an innovative theme, and one that still remains to be substantively explored in subsequent archaeological scholarship.¹³

Hadley and Dyer's volume demonstrates that while archaeology has undoubtedly moved on in the intervening decades, some concerns remain the same. *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, like Rowley's book, focuses heavily on the duality of continuity and change in the period, as the subtitle communicates. The lack of precision in dating around 1066 is an issue that has still not been satisfactorily resolved, nor is it likely to be when style is the primary diagnostic element, although advances in the availability and precision of absolute dating such as radiocarbon have been noted.¹⁴ However, on the whole it is clear that those twenty years have brought archaeologists greater confidence in their ability to contribute to scholarly dialogue on the Conquest. In their introduction, Hadley and Dyer state outright that archaeology can provide insights to elements of the period which have no connection to political events, documentation or 'great men', and they offer no concession to archaeological 'invisibility' in the period.¹⁵ The complete lack of any mention of feudalism in the volume, even during considerations of castles, manors and the countryside after 1066, stands in stark contrast to Rowley's discussions, and demonstrates how much more comfortable modern medieval archaeology has become in moving away from the parameters of traditional historical debates.

When reviewing *Norman England*, Robert Higham wrote that of the ample archaeological evidence for change that Rowley cited, 'it would be interesting to distinguish ... those changes specifically arising from the "Normanness" of the Conquest from those which flowed more generally from the economic, artistic, military and intellectual growth which the twelfth century witnessed on a wider

¹⁰ Rowley, *Norman England*, 21, 123, 134.

¹¹ Robin Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, Cambridge 1991; Ian Short, "'Tam Angli quam Franci": Self-Definition in Anglo-Norman England', *ANS* 18, 1995, 153–75; Hugh M. Thomas, 'The significance and Fate of the Native English Landholders of 1086', *English Historical Review* 118:476, 2003, 303–33.

¹² Rowley, *Norman England*, 13.

¹³ Rowley, *Norman England*, 13, 32, 110.

¹⁴ Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer, 'Introduction', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Christopher Dyer, Abingdon 2017, 1–13 at 2. For commentary on radiocarbon dating, see Elizabeth Craig-Atkins, 'Seeking "Norman Burials": Evidence for Continuity and Change in Funerary Practice Following the Norman Conquest', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 139–58 at 155.

¹⁵ Hadley and Dyer, 'Introduction', 2.

front'.¹⁶ It is heartening to see that Higham's directive eventually became a central theme in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, which throughout stresses the strength of archaeology to contribute to our understanding of the context of broader eleventh- and twelfth-century trajectories.¹⁷ However, a full understanding of these developments requires looking beyond England to a wider European context, both to Normandy and the other countries of the British Isles, obviously, but also to regions where 1066 was a footnote rather than a watershed. Both Rowley's and Hadley and Dyer's volumes acknowledge the importance of an international perspective, and offer some parallel history of what was happening on the Continent at the time, yet there are no chapters in the edited volume which consider evidence from outside England.¹⁸ Archaeological scholarship published in English which encompasses this period on the Continent is thin on the ground, and few productive connections or discussions have as yet been made with archaeologists writing on the period in other countries – another situation which the network project has sought to improve.¹⁹

The Value of Material Approaches to the Norman Conquest

A significant part of archaeology's lack of engagement with the Norman Conquest has stemmed from our historically complicated relationship with documented periods of the past, which has been covered extensively in other work.²⁰ This tension is particularly pronounced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, due to the explosion of documentation that resulted from the establishment of Norman bureaucracies, legal frameworks and religious institutions. This remarkable wealth of written evidence has of course fuelled the long tradition of historical work on the period, but it has also perhaps intimidated archaeologists into thinking there is little we can add to the discussion, and that our efforts might be better spent where the documentary record is less comprehensive. Alongside the large body of textual scholarship that has been generated on the period, the apparent confluence between the most obvious forms of 'Norman' material culture (e.g. castles, major churches) and a story of successful Norman imposition can also give the impression that the

¹⁶ Robert A. Higham, 'Review of Trevor Rowley, *Norman England: An Archaeological Perspective on the Norman Conquest*', *Archaeological Journal* 155, 1998, 410–11 at 411.

¹⁷ Hadley and Dyer, 'Introduction', 2. See also the case study below for commentary on longer-term processes.

¹⁸ Rowley, *Norman England*, 13–19; Hadley and Dyer, 'Introduction', 6–7. Continental contexts and the 'European aristocratic diaspora' are also touched on in Keith D. Lilley, 'Urban Landscapes and the Cultural Politics of Territorial Control in Anglo-Norman England', *Landscape Research* 24:1, 1999, 5–23 at 18.

¹⁹ Two examples published in English are David Petts, 'Churches and Lordship in Western Normandy AD 800–1200', in *Churches and Social Power in Early Medieval Europe: Integrating Archaeological and Historical Approaches*, ed. Jose C. Sanchez-Pardo and Michael Shapland, Turnhout 2015, 297–338 and Elisabeth Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards and Parish Territories in the Early-Medieval Landscape of France and England in the 7th–12th Centuries: A Reconsideration', *Medieval Archaeology* 47, 2003, 1–19.

²⁰ The best-known discussion is still found in David Austin, 'The "Proper Study" of Medieval Archaeology', in *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology*, ed. David Austin and Leslie Alcock, London 1990, 9–42. For two more recent perspectives, see also Martin O. H. Carver, 'Marriages of True Minds: Archaeology with Texts', in *Archaeology: The Widening Debate*, ed. Barry Cunliffe, Wendy Davies and A. Colin Renfrew, Oxford 2002, 465–96 and the chapter 'Archaeology and its Discontents' in Guy Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992–2009*, Leiden 2010.

period is both straightforward and already well understood. Until very recently, the Conquest seemed to incite in us what Richard Bradley has called archaeology's 'loss of nerve' – the silence that results when we fear we cannot say anything valuable about the past, or in this case, anything that history has not already said.²¹

In general, historians have been considerably better at parsing the impact of the Conquest and critiquing the 'story' told by the documentary evidence than have those who deal with material culture. Particular patterns or lacunae in late eleventh- or early twelfth-century material evidence have been explained by attributing them to the simple existence of the Norman Conquest or some feature of it, such as the Harrying of the North, without further interrogation.²² A lack of thorough engagement with the relevant historical scholarship on the period has resulted in archaeologists at times framing our interpretations around grand narratives which have already been critiqued, questioned, or deconstructed by historians – a problem which Guy Halsall has noted in other historical periods as well.²³ While archaeology should not be subordinated to history's research questions any more than history should be subordinated to ours, the solution is not for archaeology to avoid engaging with historical agendas and evidence, as David Austin once argued.²⁴ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is actually becoming clear that archaeology's agendas increasingly align with or complement those of historians, especially as economic, social and cultural histories have come to the fore alongside the traditional subjects of legal, military and political history, and, most significantly, with the advent of the material turn in history and other humanities.²⁵ Best practice will allow these areas of confluence to be identified and developed in collaboration with each other, while still leaving each discipline free to explore research questions and avenues which are more particular or disciplinarily specific.

As an antidote to archaeology's sometime intimidation in the face of highly documented periods, Halsall has argued instead that the more extensive the written record in a period, the greater the potential of archaeology to complement that record, but also to question and challenge it, in order to provide better insight into social and ideological structures. A much richer understanding is possible in periods where the material and documentary records are both substantial, rather than when one or the other dominates.²⁶ In raw material terms, therefore, the untapped collaborative and interdisciplinary potential of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is clear. However, the volume of documentary evidence, or scholarship, is in some sense irrelevant to the value of material culture to this period. Material culture has much to add to the study of the Norman Conquest, or indeed any period of transition, not only because

²¹ Richard Bradley, 'Archaeology: The Loss of Nerve', in *Archaeological Theory: Who Sets the Agenda?*, ed. Norman Yoffee and Andrew Sherratt, Cambridge 1993, 131–3 at 133.

²² Pamela Allerston, 'English Village Development: Findings from the Pickering District of North Yorkshire' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 51, 1970, at 106; Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth van Houts, Woodbridge 2002, 165–90 at 171; Nigel Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 2009, 24.

²³ Halsall, 'Archaeology and its Discontents', 76.

²⁴ Halsall, 'Archaeology and its Discontents', 87; Austin, 'The "Proper Study"', 12–13.

²⁵ Hugh M. Thomas, 'History, Archaeology and the Norman Conquest', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 283–300 at 283; *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey, Abingdon 2009; Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, 'Introduction. Material Culture Studies: A Reactionary View' in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, Oxford 2010, 1–21 at 1.

²⁶ Halsall, 'Archaeology and its Discontents', 84.

it is valuable to us now, as some of the best surviving evidence of past social behaviour, but also because it was enormously important to people *at the time*.

Humans are uniquely material animals, set apart by our creation of artefacts, art, technology and an extensive built environment and anthropogenic landscape. Indeed, 'material culture' itself may be a redundant term, as it is not really possible to define a form of human culture which is not materially enacted in some way.²⁷ In periods of social pressure or intense change – for which the Norman Conquest undoubtedly qualifies – material expression would have been especially communicative and meaningful.²⁸ It provided a tangible outlet through which to display identities and allegiances, and was a means of social competition and orientation, both of which have already been noted as increasingly important features of eleventh- and twelfth-century lordship and elite culture.²⁹ Material culture was also both a symbol and a tool of power and control, and an important means of maintaining, subverting or negotiating social norms.³⁰ In periods of transition, material culture could be central to processes of stabilizing and reifying political and cultural change, through reorganization of the natural and built landscapes, monetary systems, and cultural practices, such as personal adornment, fashion and style, and cuisine. As strategic remembering and forgetting of meaningful places, monuments and cultural practices were a part of every political transition, the necessity of engagement with material evidence in order to fully interrogate processes of social change in the past is clear.³¹

Archaeological evidence is also valuable in that it allows us to access a greater proportion of society than we can through documents alone, providing insights into modes of communication with diverse audiences that did not rely on literacy of either party. This potentially opens up much wider avenues of enquiry into how change happened and who it affected. In classic terms arguing for the value of archaeology, this has typically been the lower and marginalized classes, who are rarely documented ('the voiceless'),³² but there is also considerable opportunity to reveal the huge swathes of the middling sort and lower elite, who are also less often represented in documents. Of course, even the high elite who *are* frequently present in textual evidence also had rich material lives. All strata of medieval society had material dimensions which we need to understand, not just those absent from documents.

It is important to emphasize here that while material culture does offer access to a wider spectrum of society in the eleventh and twelfth centuries than contemporary texts do, we do not take the view that it is necessarily a superior form of evidence, or that it offers a more 'real' view of the past than documentary history. Material culture is no more objective, apolitical, unbiased, or able to 'speak for itself' than documents, although it has at times been treated that way.³³ They are simply

²⁷ Dan Hicks, 'The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect', in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, Oxford 2010, 25–98 at 27.

²⁸ McClain, 'The Archaeology of Transition', 25.

²⁹ Gardiner, 'Manorial Farmsteads', 100.

³⁰ Following the recursive social model of structuration in Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Oxford 1984, 9; John C. Barrett, 'Fields of Discourse', *Critique of Anthropology* 7, 1988, 5–16 at 10.

³¹ Paul Greedy, 'Introduction', in *Political Transitions: Politics and Cultures*, ed. Paul Greedy, London 2003, 1–26 at 2.

³² Kenneth L. Feder, *Linking to the Past: A Brief Introduction to Archaeology*, Oxford 2007, 77.

³³ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*, 2nd ed., New York 1996, 259; Catherine M. Hills, 'History and Archaeology: Do Words Matter More than Deeds?', *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 14, 1997, 29–36 at 33. Both cite material culture as more 'objective' than other forms of evidence.

different forms of evidence, with distinct strengths and weaknesses. As such, documents and archaeology may well tell different stories about the Conquest, and that is not inherently problematic.³⁴ While there inevitably will be disconnects between the interpretations drawn from texts and those drawn from material culture, the interpretations of different types of material culture do not always easily align either. The pasts spoken to by eleventh-century pottery and a Romanesque cathedral are potentially as distinct from each other as those spoken to by pottery and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Even the same class of material culture is fully capable of offering distinctive insights and apparently conflicting narratives about the period. For example, Gareth Perry's examination of Torksey ware pottery from Lincolnshire has shown that it flourished in Lincoln and York from the ninth to the mid-eleventh centuries, becoming those towns' dominant Anglo-Scandinavian ceramic type by *c.* 1000. It then steadily declined beyond that date and had ceased production by the late-eleventh century, its decline apparently aligning with changing styles and modes of production after the Conquest.³⁵ Stamford ware, another Lincolnshire type, also arose *c.* 900 and was distributed widely across eastern and midland England in the period immediately before the Conquest.³⁶ In contrast, however, production of Stamford ware continued uninterrupted not only through the Conquest and transition, but as late as *c.* 1250, and seems to have responded little to the arrival of the Normans or the production of new ceramic types.³⁷ These apparent disconnects that we see arising between texts and material culture, and between different types of material culture, emerge precisely because the texts and artefacts were created by a wide array of people, for variable audiences, and for specific purposes. They are the products of complex people doing complex things in complex situations, so we should not expect the stories they tell us to be simple ones.

Challenges and Opportunities

Improving material approaches to the eleventh and twelfth centuries involves a range of methodological challenges and opportunities. A primary hindrance in maximizing our knowledge and use of relevant datasets for the eleventh and twelfth centuries has been the lack of integration between the academic, professional and heritage sectors of archaeology. Contract archaeologists digging for units often generate relevant material, but their ability to fully publish new excavations is limited, so results are held in grey literature repositories, and old excavation archives often sit in storage. Similarly, there are a number of important sites curated by heritage bodies, as well as artefacts held in national and regional museums, but the pressures of time and public funding limit the scope of these institutions to initiate interaction with academic archaeology. Excavation archives, grey literature reports,

³⁴ See McClain, 'Rewriting the narrative' for an extensive discussion of the contrasting pictures of the aftermath of the Harrying of the North as portrayed in chronicles versus the evidence from churches and commemoration.

³⁵ Gareth J. Perry, 'Pottery Production in Anglo-Scandinavian Torksey (Lincolnshire): Reconstructing and Contextualising the *Chaîne Opératoire*', *Medieval Archaeology* 60, 2016, 72–114 at 77; Ailsa Mainman, *Anglo-Scandinavian Pottery from 16–22 Coppergate*, *The Archaeology of York* 16/5, York 1990, 427.

³⁶ Chris Cumberpatch *et al.*, 'A Stamford Ware Pottery Kiln in Pontefract: A Geographical Enigma and a Dating Dilemma', *Medieval Archaeology* 57:1, 2013, 111–50 at 112.

³⁷ Kathy Kilmurry, *The Pottery Industry of Stamford, Lincolnshire, c. AD 850–1250*, BAR British Series 84, Oxford 1980, 201–3.

and museum and site stores therefore represent a considerable opportunity to make better use of extensive and so-far unexploited existing datasets.

Due to the dominance of 1066 as an epoch-dividing date, accurate dating has always been a primary concern in the period. Because much archaeological dating has been reliant on typologies and chronologies built on progressions of form and style, hybrid products and technological or stylistic continuity through the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries have made it difficult to assign a wide range of material culture to either late Anglo-Saxon or Norman contexts.³⁸ Uncertainties in these chronologies have then had knock-on effects on relative stratigraphic sequences, as it has often been difficult to correlate archaeological horizons, based primarily on ceramic and numismatic chronologies, with pre- and post-Conquest activity.³⁹ To more effectively engage with the Norman Conquest, we therefore need both improved chronologies and dating wherever possible, and also to find more productive ways of dealing with inevitable chronological uncertainties. The inability to place a particular object, building, or artefact on one side of 1066 or the other should not be taken as precluding us from saying anything useful about the Conquest, or as a shortcoming of archaeological data or methods. Rather, the fact that a particular class of material culture is difficult to place on one side or the other of a major cultural and political breakwater should be seen as interesting in and of itself, and an opportunity to ask why.

The primary opportunities concerning absolute dating for the period involve recent methodological innovations in radiocarbon dating. The considerable numbers of surviving stone buildings from the eleventh and twelfth centuries provide opportunities for the dating of mortars used in these structures, allowing us to confirm or challenge current stylistically derived architectural chronologies, particularly given that some buildings (e.g. major churches, castles) are known to be post-Conquest, while others (e.g. parish churches) are uncertain.⁴⁰ A previous study dating Carolingian mortars has also been able to elucidate patterns of the reuse of broken-down Roman limestone in early medieval mortars, which has considerable potential for illuminating debates in England over new quarrying and the reuse of Roman materials in both the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods.⁴¹ Another advance has been in the dating of both charred food and lipid residues on pottery sherds, which

³⁸ David Stocker and Paul Everson, *Summoning St Michael: Early Romanesque Towers in Lincolnshire*, Oxford 2006 and Richard Gem, 'The English Parish Church in the 11th and Early 12th Centuries: A Great Rebuilding', in *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950–1200*, ed. John Blair, Oxford 1988, 21–30 have addressed this dilemma for church architecture. McClain, 'Rewriting the narrative' has done so for funerary sculpture, and Craig-Atkins, 'Seeking "Norman Burials"' for burial practice. Rosie Weetch, 'Tradition and Innovation: Lead-Alloy Brooches and Urban Identities in the 11th Century', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 263–82 and David Hinton, *Gold, Gilt, Pots and Pins: Possessions and People in Medieval Britain*, new ed., Oxford 2006, 1 have considered dating issues in metalwork.

³⁹ Rowley, *Norman England*, 12.

⁴⁰ Methodological advances are detailed in Asa Ringbom *et al.*, '19 Years of Mortar Dating: Learning from Experience', *Radiocarbon* 56, 2014, 619–35 and Roald Hayen *et al.*, 'Mortar Dating Methodology: Assessing Recurrent Issues and Needs for Further Research', *Radiocarbon* 59, 2017, 1859–71; medieval case studies in Jan Heinemeier *et al.*, 'Successful AMS 14C Dating of Non-Hydraulic Lime Mortars from the Medieval Churches of the Åland Islands, Finland', *Radiocarbon* 52, 2010, 171–204 and Juan Antonio Quiroz-Castillo *et al.*, 'Dating Mortars: Three Medieval Spanish Architectures', *Arqueologia de la Arquitectura* 8, 2011, 13–24.

⁴¹ Sophie Hueglin, 'Time Framing Earl Medieval Stone Building North of the Alps—A Discussion of Recent Challenging Results', *Radiocarbon* 59, 2017, 1657–75; Richard Morris, 'Churches in York and Its Hinterland: Building Patterns and Stone Sources in the 11th–12th Centuries' in *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950–1200*, ed. John Blair, Oxford 1988, 191–9.

has been carried out primarily in prehistoric periods.⁴² The direct dating of lipids particularly is opening up new avenues for archaeological chronologies, and has the potential to clarify Saxo-Norman pottery sequences, as well as illuminating whether usage changes even if the ceramic style or form does not. Even just gaining more dates from traditional radiocarbon dating sources, as seen in Jim Leary's recent project coring Norman mottes, will be exceptionally useful for clarifying eleventh- and twelfth-century sequences, given that the period has comparatively rarely been a target for investigation.⁴³

In addition to dating methods, there are a number of scientific analytical techniques which have been used to great effect in prehistoric archaeology, but which have not often been applied to the medieval period generally, or the eleventh and twelfth centuries particularly. These techniques can be employed to inform us about past health and diet, animal breeding and husbandry, the animal products used to make artefacts, leather and parchment, the sources of pigments used in wall paintings and illuminated manuscripts, and the movements of human and animal populations and individual people over their lifetimes.⁴⁴ The application of scientific approaches to newly generated evidence, as well as to the extant datasets and archives discussed above, greatly expands the scope of how we can interrogate past people and things in the context of the Norman Conquest. Some of the implications of these techniques for the eleventh and twelfth centuries will be discussed in the case study below, hopefully illustrating that new archaeologies of the Norman Conquest will not be Peter Sawyer's 'expensive way of telling us what we know already', but rather untapped sources of evidence opening up novel lines of enquiry about people and society, which all historical disciplines should have an interest in.⁴⁵

Case Study: Animals, Economy and Cultures of Cuisine

In 2005, *Anglo-Norman Studies* published a paper that summarized Naomi Sykes's doctoral thesis, which was later published in its entirety as a monograph in 2007.⁴⁶ This research synthesised all available published zooarchaeological data from mid-fifth- to mid-fourteenth-century AD sites, as well as the results from original analyses of archived material, the aim being to see if any Conquest-related shifts in assemblage composition were observable. The main conclusions of the study were that, indeed, there was a dramatic increase in wild-animal exploitation on post-Conquest sites of high status, namely castles and manors. This was accompanied by evidence for new hunting rituals that were apparently associated with the arrival of the exotic fallow deer (*Dama dama*). In turn, the fallow deer's introduction brought the necessity of emparkment, the fashion for which increased in the post-Conquest period, directly in correlation with rising fallow deer populations. Sykes argued that all of

⁴² Melanie Roffett-Salque, 'From the Inside Out: Upscaling Organic Residue Analyses of Archaeological Ceramics', *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 16, 2017, 627–40; Dai Kunikita, 'Dating Charred Remains on Pottery and Analyzing Food Habits in the Early Neolithic Period in Northeast Asia', *Radiocarbon* 55:3, 2013, 1334–40.

⁴³ <https://roundmoundsproject.wordpress.com/>

⁴⁴ Relevant examples include G. Marucci *et al.*, 'Raman Spectroscopic Library of Medieval Pigments Collected with Five Different Wavelengths for Investigation of Illuminated Manuscripts', *Analytical Methods* 10, 2018, 1219–36, and Matthew D. Teasdale *et al.*, 'The York Gospels: A 1000-Year Biological Palimpsest', *Royal Society Open Science* 4, 2017.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Philip Rahtz, 'New Approaches to medieval Archaeology, Part 1', in *Twenty-Five Years of Medieval Archaeology*, ed. David A. Hinton, Sheffield 1983, 12–23 at 15.

⁴⁶ Sykes, 'Zooarchaeology of the Norman Conquest' and *The Norman Conquest*.

these elements – hunting rituals, fallow deer and parks – formed an elite cultural package introduced from the Norman kingdom of Sicily following the Conquest.⁴⁷

In many ways, Sykes's Battle Conference paper was an important marker. Not only was it one of the earliest archaeological articles to be published in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, but it also set out the intellectual agenda upon which a number of subsequent research programmes were built. For instance, it underpinned the interdisciplinary project 'Dama International', which sought to explore the extent to which the biocultural history of the fallow deer was a legacy of the Norman empire.⁴⁸ The project's results are now forthcoming and, intriguingly, they are challenging the interpretations presented in the 2005 article, providing unexpected new data and requiring new narratives to be constructed for our understanding of trade and human–animal–environment relationships through the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In this section we will present the data from this and other recent research projects, with the aim of highlighting how archaeological investigations – in particular those that combine multiple forms of evidence, and facilitate collaborations between the humanistic and scientific arms of archaeology – can generate powerful new data to reinvigorate old questions and interpretations.

Before presenting these new results, it is first necessary to examine some of the broader economic and dietary trends that were presented in Sykes's book of 2007, but not considered in the 2005 article. Figure 1 shows basic zooarchaeological representation data for pigs and chickens on medieval sites. They indicate that both species are better represented on elite sites dating to the Norman period, with pigs also demonstrating a post-Conquest increase on low-status rural sites. These subtle shifts have been suggested to reflect Norman dietary preferences, since French medieval sites show high frequencies of pigs and chickens on sites of all types.⁴⁹

The evidence for cattle and sheep representation shows no Conquest-related change, but instead suggests a long-term, gradual trend (seventh to fourteenth centuries AD) towards increased sheep, which is undoubtedly linked to the growth of the wool industry. An emphasis on wool is also reflected by the sheep age profiles, which demonstrate that animals were kept to increasingly older ages in order to obtain the maximum number of wool-clips from each individual.⁵⁰ Against these overarching trends, however, there are some noticeable anomalies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries which are particularly observable on low-status rural sites. Figure 2 illustrates the cattle and sheep ageing data from these rural 'producer' sites, and it can be seen that the mid-eleventh to mid-twelfth centuries represent a point of inflection, whereby the number of animals slaughtered under 12 months of age drops substantially, with more animals being slaughtered between 1 and 3 years. These variations suggest a post-Conquest shift away from dairying, indicated by the high frequency of animals slaughtered prior to 6 months of age in pre-Conquest assemblages, and towards meat production. An emphasis on meat production would also be consistent with the already noted increase in pigs and chickens, both of which are predominantly food-producing animals, in the form of meat and eggs.

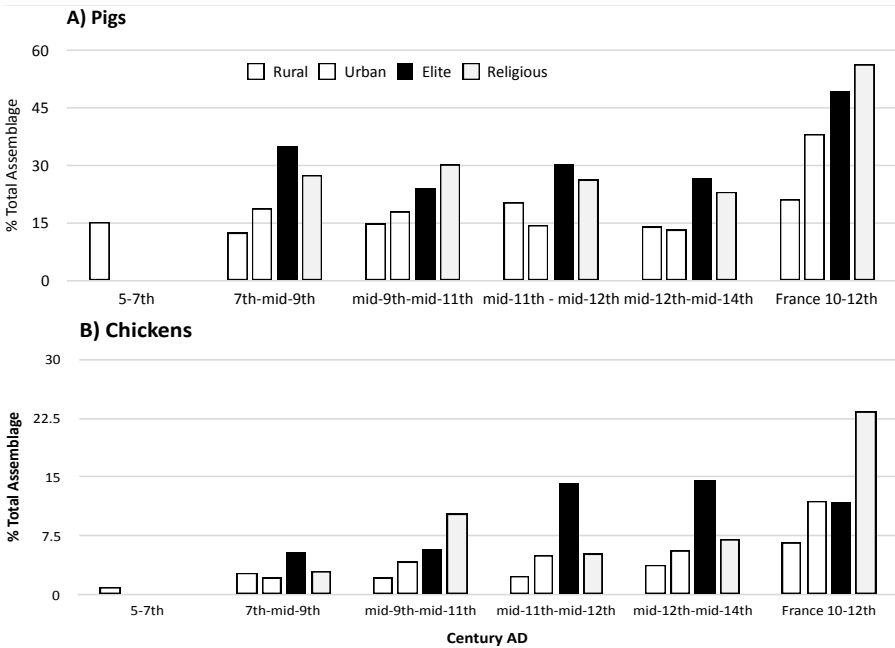
⁴⁷ Sykes, 'Zooarchaeology of the Norman Conquest', 197; Naomi J. Sykes *et al.*, 'Wild to domestic and Back Again: The Dynamics of Fallow Deer Management in Medieval England (c. 11th–16th century AD)', *STAR: Science & Technology of Archaeological Research* 2:1, 2016, 113–26.

⁴⁸ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2F1026456%2F1>

⁴⁹ Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*.

⁵⁰ Naomi J. Sykes, 'From Cu and Scep to Beffe and Motton: The Management, Distribution, and Consumption of Cattle and Sheep in Medieval England' in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, Oxford 2005, 56–71 at 62.

Figure 1: Changing zooarchaeological representation of A) pigs and B) chickens through the Middle Ages, and by site type



These zooarchaeological findings are given greater weight when combined with evidence from pottery lipid analysis, a technique that allows fats preserved on the interior of pottery sherds to be extracted and analysed to reconstruct the ingredients that were cooked within the vessel.⁵¹ Traditionally, this method has been applied almost exclusively to prehistoric material culture, but the potential for exploring medieval ceramics is now being recognized.⁵² For example, the study of vessels from the rural Anglo-Norman site of West Cotton (Northamptonshire) was able to highlight a shift from dairy fats in the Anglo-Saxon pottery towards adipose (body) fats in the post-Conquest period, indicative of the consumption of beef, lamb and pork. In line with the zooarchaeological evidence, they also found no evidence for dairying in the post-Conquest ceramics.⁵³ A similar observation has recently been made in a forthcoming analysis of ceramics from Saxo-Norman Oxford. Dairying markers were found only in the pre-Conquest pottery, and high quantities of pig fat were found only in post-Conquest sherds.⁵⁴

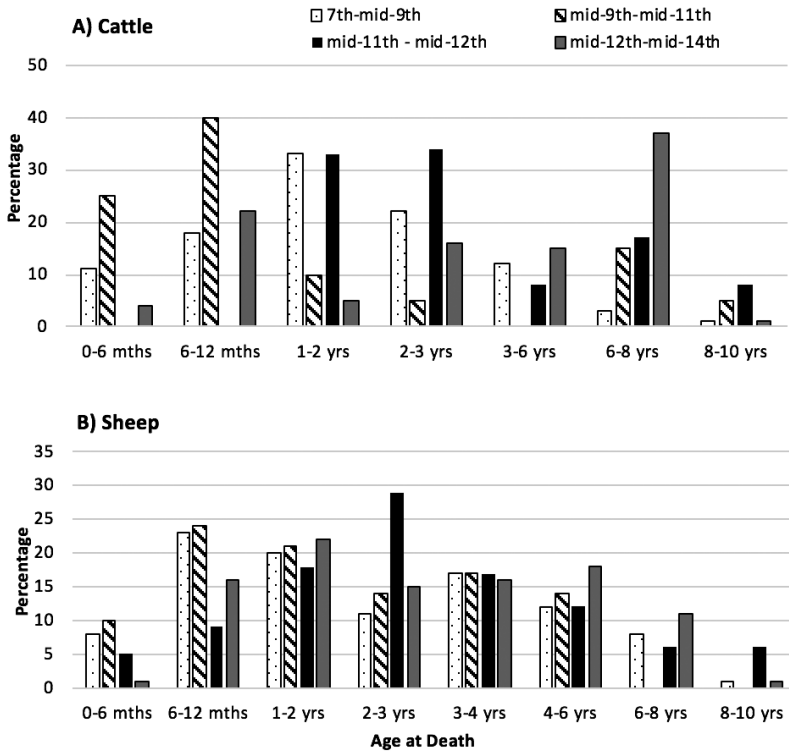
⁵¹ H. R. Mottram *et al.*, 'New Chromatographic, Mass Spectrometric and Stable Isotope Approaches to the Classification of Degraded Animal Fats Preserved in Archaeological Pottery', *Journal of Chromatography A*, 833, 1999, 209–21.

⁵² M. S. Copley *et al.*, 'Direct Chemical Evidence for Widespread Dairying in Prehistoric Britain', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 100:4, 2003, 1524–9; Alan K. Outram *et al.*, 'The Earliest Horse Harnessing and Milking', *Science*, 323:5919, 2009, 1332–5.

⁵³ Richard P. Evershed *et al.*, 'Identification of Animal Fats via Compound Specific $\delta^{13}C$ Values of Individual Fatty Acids: Assessments of Results for Reference Fats and Lipid Extracts of Archaeological Pottery Vessels', *Documenta Praehistorica* 29, 2002, 73–96.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Craig-Atkins, Ben Jervis, Allie Taylor, Helen Whelton, Sandra Nederbragt, Lucy Cramp and Richard Madgwick, 'The Dietary Impact of the Norman Conquest: A Multi-Proxy Archaeological Investigation of Medieval Oxford', in preparation.

Figure 2: Temporal changes in age profiles for A) cattle and B) sheep from medieval rural assemblages



At the late Saxon manorial – and potentially ecclesiastical – site of Flixborough (Lincolnshire), a slightly different pattern was observed. Dairy-dominated ceramics were more common in the eighth- and ninth-century wares, whereas the ninth- and tenth-century ceramics overwhelmingly revealed mixed cattle/sheep dairy and body fats, suggesting that methods of food preparation and cooking at the site were already changing by this time. One particularly important finding was that chicken fats were identified in Flixborough pottery, which also tallies with the zooarchaeological record, in that very large quantities of chickens were recovered from this site.⁵⁵ Indeed, it would seem that a high frequency of chickens is a feature of late Saxon ecclesiastical assemblages, as a similar emphasis has also been noted at other major sites, such as Lyminge (Kent).⁵⁶ Figure 1 highlights that increased frequencies of chickens are first observable in assemblages from religious houses dating to the mid-ninth to mid-eleventh centuries. Fothergill *et al.* have argued that this period witnessed the first attempts to actively manage high levels of chicken production, a

⁵⁵ Andre C. Colonese *et al.*, 'The Identification of Poultry Processing in Archaeological Ceramic Vessels Using In-Situ Isotope References for Organic Residue Analysis', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 78, 2017, 179–92.

⁵⁶ B. Tyr Fothergill, Julia Best, Alison Foster and Beatrice Demarchi, 'Hens, Health and Husbandry: Integrated Approaches to Past Poultry-Keeping in England', *Open Quaternary* 3, 2017, 1–25.

situation which may even be responsible for the shifts in chicken genetics which others have been able to date to approximately AD 1000. It may be that religious beliefs, in particular the idea that chickens and eggs could be eaten during periods of fasting, may have prompted the move to intensive poultry farming.⁵⁷

Similar arguments have been proposed to explain the ‘fish event horizon’, which saw large-scale marine fishing taking place across northern Europe, also around AD 1000.⁵⁸ The widespread rise in commercial fishing may also have been instigated by monasteries, where the first evidence for large-scale marine fishing is found.⁵⁹ In this way, neither an increase in fish consumption in the eleventh century, nor the increase in chicken frequencies seen on elite sites, can be seen as purely ‘Norman’ innovations; both trends were already present and developing independently in pre-Conquest England. That does not mean, however, that these trends were not influenced or accelerated by the Conquest. Given the Norman proclivity for ostentatious expressions of religiosity, most often seen through church building and monastic patronage, the post-Conquest secular elite may well have adopted the frequent consumption of both fish and chicken as a way to overtly demonstrate their piety. With this in mind, it is noteworthy that in the Norman dining scene on the Bayeux Tapestry, the assembled company are sitting down to a meal of fish and spit-roasted chickens (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Scene from the Bayeux Tapestry, eleventh century, showing the Norman contingent cooking and dining; chickens, along with other meats, are being prepared on spits over the fire, and fish have been served at Bishop Odo of Bayeux's table

The deployment of pre-existing symbols of power and authority may be equally pertinent with regards to the fallow deer. *Dama International's* research, combining zooarchaeology and biomolecular analysis (isotopes, genetics and radiocarbon dating), has demonstrated that fallow deer were introduced not from Sicily, which possessed fallow deer genetically different from those which are found in England,

⁵⁷ Fothergill *et al.* ‘Hens, Health and Husbandry’, 21; For dating evidence of genetic change, see L. Loog *et al.*, ‘Inferring Allele Frequency Trajectories from Ancient DNA Indicates that Selection on a Chicken Gene Coincided with Changes in Medieval Husbandry Practices’, *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 34, 2017, 1981–90.

⁵⁸ James H. Barrett, A. M. Locker and C. M. Roberts, ‘Dark Age Economics Revisited: The English Fish Bone Evidence AD 600–1600’, *Antiquity* 78, 2004, 618–36; James H. Barrett, ‘Medieval Sea Fishing, AD 500–1500: Chronology, Causes and Consequences’ in *Cod and Herring: The Archaeology and History of Medieval Sea Fishing*, ed. James H. Barrett and David C. Orton Oxford: Oxbow, 2016, 250–72; David Orton, James Morris and Alan Pipe., ‘Catch Per Unit Research Effort: Sampling Intensity, Chronological Uncertainty, and the Onset of Marine Fish Consumption in Historic London’, *Open Quaternary* 3, 2017, 1–20.

⁵⁹ R. Reynolds, ‘Food for the Soul: The Dynamics of Fishing and Fish for Consumption in Anglo-Saxon England: c. A.D. 410–1066’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham 2015.

but rather the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, their programme of radiocarbon dating indicated that fallow deer were likely present in Britain prior to the Norman Conquest. The earliest dated specimen suggests an introduction date of around AD 1000, which may also help us to date the first deer parks, which we know existed in some numbers prior to the Conquest.⁶⁰

Together, the findings from these independent studies all point to *c.* 1000 as being a more significant date than 1066 for the origins of particular trends in animal and food cultures that have often been associated with the coming of the Normans to England, a chronology that chimes with interpretations from continental Europe. Despite the lack of alignment with 1066, the evidence nevertheless offers significant insight into the values and priorities of the Normans, the cultures they chose to advance in Anglo-Norman England, and the social motivations behind them. Findings such as these demonstrate the advantages of unshackling archaeological interpretations from the confines of the grand 'Norman Conquest' narrative, enabling us to deconstruct assumptions about what the Conquest involved, improve our understanding of Norman innovation versus acceleration in terms of materials and behaviours, and to tie Normandy and England into their wider European contexts.

New Agendas for the Archaeology of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

A number of themes highlighting the potentially unique contributions of archaeology to our understanding of the Norman Conquest specifically, and the eleventh and twelfth centuries generally, recur in the research which has been carried out in the early twenty-first century, and especially the individual papers in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, which has gathered together the most recent work by archaeological scholars publishing on the subject. To conclude, we shall draw out some of these themes to demonstrate how they may feed into future research agendas.

A focus throughout most recent archaeological research is the ability of material evidence to access the experience of the total population during the Anglo-Norman transition, or at least a wider segment of it than is available through documents alone. The effects of the Conquest on the peasant communities of rural settlements have been discussed alongside the choices surrounding settlement and manorial organization that were made by the Anglo-Saxon and Norman elite, as have the impacts of Norman urban reorganization of Anglo-Saxon towns on the considerable numbers of people who continued to live and work in those towns through the transition period.⁶¹ Other contributions have highlighted practices such as food choices and dress accessories on multiple levels of society, particularly in urban areas, illustrating how market forces and cultural changes began to create post-Conquest cultures where the difference between urban and rural may have mattered far more than the difference between Saxon and Norman.⁶² The potential for archaeology to

⁶⁰ Robert Liddiard, 'The Deer Parks of Domesday Book', *Landscapes* 4, 2003, 4–23.

⁶¹ Oliver Creighton and Stephen Rippon, 'Conquest, Colonisation and the Countryside: Archaeology and the mid-11th to mid-12th-Century Rural Landscape', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 57–87; Letty Ten Harkel, 'The Norman Conquest and its Impact on Late Anglo-Saxon Towns', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 14–29.

⁶² Ben Jervis, Fiona Whelan and Alexandra Livarda, 'Cuisine and Conquest: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Food, Continuity and Change in 11th-Century England and Beyond', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 244–62; Jervis, 'Conquest, Ceramics, Continuity and Change'; Weetch, 'Tradition and Innovation'.

draw out the rise of the elusive ‘middling sort’ of medieval society may be particularly pronounced in research on urban small finds and the built environment. In all of these cases, however, it is clear that we have just begun to scratch the surface of archaeology’s potential with non-elite communities. Some of the most interesting new data in the future may come from osteological data and the scientific techniques which we can apply to it. Skeletal evidence from burial excavations has given us access to the ‘everyday people’ of urban and rural parochial communities, but also unparalleled insight into unusual and marginalized groups – for instance, infants, criminals and even lepers – and how their lives and treatment in death could be affected by such a sociocultural change as the Norman Conquest.⁶³

Even within the elite strata of society, however, there is room for significant contributions from archaeology. A number of articles have addressed the complex array of manorial lords and lesser elite who flourished in late Saxon and Anglo-Norman England, and this promises to be a rich vein of enquiry for understanding the Conquest. Unlike the royal and baronial ranks, these minor elite do not as often appear in the documentation of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, yet they were equally important players in the process of Conquest, as they were in daily contact with the materials and realities of manorial and village life, interacted frequently with those both above and below them in the social hierarchy, and made day-to-day choices ‘on the ground’ which drove post-Conquest continuities and transformations.⁶⁴

In both rural and urban areas, and in elite and non-elite segments of society, future archaeology in the period will benefit from a broadening of the types of material culture that we consider to be relevant to questions about the Norman Conquest. It is not only such obviously ‘Norman’ things as castles and Romanesque architecture that can be harnessed to tell stories about the Anglo-Norman transition, but also more mundane things, such as coins, pottery, undecorated fonts and uninscribed funerary monuments. The key to exploiting this evidence is the better use of more systematic and comparative methods of analysis, deploying large-scale databases, mapping and spatial analysis, and other digital humanities technologies which allow us to take advantage of the large datasets we are capable of collecting, and to characterize them within temporal and spatial contexts.

A number of recent articles focusing on the Conquest exhibit the influence of advances in the use of social theory in archaeology, particularly surrounding the concept of identity, but also considering themes of agency and materiality. They highlight the role of material culture in constructing identities in a period of flux, a theme which echoes earlier work by Naomi Sykes with Norman animal, food and hunting cultures, and by Robert Liddiard on the elements of the ‘Norman package’ found in castle building and elite landscape design.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, the ethnic

⁶³ Craig-Atkins, ‘Seeking “Norman Burials”’; Simon Mays *et al.*, *The Churchyard*, Wharram: A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds XI, York 2009; Simon Roffey, ‘Charity and Conquest: *Leptosaria* in Early Norman England’, in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 159–76.

⁶⁴ Mark Gardiner, ‘Manorial Farmsteads and the Expression of Lordship Before and After the Norman Conquest’, in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 88–103; Michael G. Shapland, ‘Anglo-Saxon Towers of Lordship and the Origins of the Castle in England’, in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 104–19; McClain, ‘Rewriting the Narrative’, 224 and see also Aleksandra McClain, ‘Patronage in Transition: Lordship, Churches, and Funerary Monuments in Anglo-Norman England’, in *Churches and Social Power in Early Medieval Europe*, 185–225 at 215.

⁶⁵ Robert Liddiard, *Landscapes of Lordship: Norman Castles and the Countryside in Medieval Norfolk, 1066–1200*, BAR British Series 309, Oxford 2000; Sykes, ‘Zooarchaeology of the Norman Conquest’, and Sykes, *The Norman Conquest*.

and cultural identities of Normans and natives have received attention, but so too do cross-cultural 'spatial' identities which derived from the particular settlement or regional context in which an individual lived, as well as lordly identities of status and power, all of which could supersede the ethnic identities which it is often assumed would take precedence in an environment of foreign conquest.⁶⁶ The evidence suggests that cultural allegiances did not always align in a straightforward manner with post-Conquest priorities, as there are instances where Normans as well as natives saw particular value in maintaining continuity from before 1066, and strategies of assimilation, adaptation and accommodation became as key to Norman success as forcefully imposed cultural change.⁶⁷

For the native population, it is usually assumed that the imposed changes wrought by the Conquest were felt as detrimental, for example in the confiscation of land and destruction of housing stock for urban castle building, as seen in York, Norwich and Lincoln, or the frequent sweeping away of old buildings and their familiar architectural styles in favour of alien ones.⁶⁸ However, castles, churches, markets and other elements of Norman infrastructure may not always have been perceived negatively by the native population. They did fulfil military, economic and religious functions required by the Norman ruling classes, but they also may have been seen by a settlement's inhabitants as improving services and facilities and building a sense of community around shared, updated amenities. They could thus be a means of practically and symbolically enforcing the Conquest while also eroding opposition to it.⁶⁹ In the rural milieu, some native landowners who survived the Conquest took advantage of opportunities to acquire additional tenancies, construct new manor houses, and found or rebuild churches. In these instances, the Conquest was not a negative, but rather offered tools of advancement for those seeking to establish themselves and thrive within the new hierarchy.⁷⁰ This body of research highlights the complexity of identity and its relationship with material culture in the period around the Norman Conquest, as well as its further potential. For example, although archaeologists have explored material culture in relation to masculine and feminine gender identities extensively in later medieval periods, the varying experiences of both Norman and native men and women during the Conquest have so far not been considered in our assessments of the Anglo-Norman transition. Any one person could hold various identities, which were multivalent and malleable dependent on

⁶⁶ Jervis, 'Conquest, Ceramics, Continuity and Change' and Jervis *et al.*, 'Cuisine and Conquest' consider ethnic identities. Weetch, 'Tradition and Innovation' focuses on urban identities. McClain 'Rewriting the Narrative' and 'Local Churches and the Conquest of the North' highlight regional identities. McClain, 'Rewriting the Narrative', 219; Lilley, 'Urban Landscapes', 18–19; Shapland, 'Anglo-Saxon Towers of Lordship', 104; Gardiner, 'Manorial Farmsteads', 97–100, and Liddiard, *Landscapes of Lordship*, all comment on lordly identities and social competition.

⁶⁷ Michael Lewis, 'The Bayeux Tapestry: Window to a World of Continuity and Change', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 228–43 at 236 and 240 for the preservation of English artistic styles in the tapestry and Norman assimilation strategies; McClain, 'Rewriting the Narrative', 223 for hybrid styles in transitional grave monuments; Ten Harkel, 'The Norman Conquest and its Impact', 23 for the maintenance of pre-Conquest moneyers and minting practices; Fradley, 'Scars on the Townscape' 135 for the reuse of English systems of civic governance and their physical remnants by urban castle-builders.

⁶⁸ Keith D. Lilley, 'The Norman Conquest and its Influences on Urban Landscapes', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 30–56 at 35; Ten Harkel, 'The Norman Conquest and its Impact', 27. David Stocker and Paul Everson, 'Archaeology and Archiepiscopal Reform: Greater Churches in York Diocese in the 11th Century', in *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century*, 177–203 at 196.

⁶⁹ Ten Harkel, 'The Norman Conquest and its Impact', 27; See also Creighton and Rippon's 'What have the Normans ever done for us?' commentary in 'Conquest, Colonisation and the Countryside', 57–8.

⁷⁰ McClain, 'Rewriting the Narrative', 217.

circumstance, and different individuals and groups had distinct needs, motivations and roles to play in the post-Conquest social world, all of which could shape their particular responses to it.⁷¹ Future research directions must therefore recognize that *both* Normans and natives had agency during the Conquest and subsequent transition, and should seek to understand how various individuals and groups experienced and knowledgeably utilized objects, buildings and the landscapes they inhabited to deal with a changing society.

Two further emerging themes have the potential to allow us to reconfigure our understanding of the Norman Conquest in time and space. In 2005, Robert Liddiard, following models put forward in documentary history, insisted on the necessity of understanding the Conquest not as an event, but as a much longer, more complex process. He advocated for archaeology to adopt the concept of a 'long' Norman Conquest, disaggregating it into the relatively swift military and political takeover, and the much longer period of settlement and sociocultural and material adaptation which lasted well into the twelfth century.⁷² The 2017 articles by Oliver Creighton and Stephen Rippon on the Anglo-Norman countryside and Mark Gardiner on manorial development both take this perspective, examining evidence through to the mid-twelfth century in order to highlight traditions of settlement reorganization and manorial building which began around or even before the Norman Conquest and continued for over a century after it, influenced not only by the Conquest itself, but also by other changing social and economic forces.⁷³ Linked to this reconceptualization of the Conquest as a contingent process instead of a monolithic event is the necessity of understanding regional differences and variable responses to the Conquest based on pre-existing regional and local circumstances, material traditions, and populations.⁷⁴ Rather than speaking of 'the Norman Conquest' and attempting to characterize its effects on England holistically, we would do much better to understand it as a multiplicity of disparate and complex 'Norman Conquests', which could vary substantially in trajectories and outcomes dependent on context.⁷⁵

The above research clearly demonstrates that much of our longstanding perception of the Conquest's archaeological 'invisibility' has resulted not from inherent shortcomings in the evidence, but rather from us not asking the right sort of questions, nor thinking sufficiently critically about what the material manifestations of political and cultural change might look like, and the timeframes over which they might take shape. The Norman Conquest is only invisible if we expect to see rapid, responsive shifts across all cultural and material practice, regardless of the medium, its role in society, and the motivation for or necessity of change in that medium within the specific context of the Conquest and the subsequent transition. It is a given that in any period of transition, some things changed while others apparently did not, and archaeology has in the past two decades become adept at cataloguing

⁷¹ Aleksandra McClain, 'The Archaeology of Transition: Rethinking Material Culture and Social Change', in *The Art, Literature and Material Culture of the Medieval World: Transition, Transformation and Taxonomy*, ed. Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes and Melissa Herman, Dublin 2015, 22–41 at 40–1; Gardiner, 'Manorial Farmsteads', 99; Jervis *et al.*, 'Cuisine and Conquest', 259.

⁷² Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: A Social History of Fortification in England and Wales, 1066–1500*, Macclesfield 2005, 14.

⁷³ Creighton and Rippon, 'Conquest, Colonisation and the Countryside', 78; Gardiner, 'Manorial Farmsteads', 97.

⁷⁴ The theme is touched on in urban environments in Lilley, 'The Norman Conquest and its Influences' and Ten Harkel, 'The Norman Conquest and its Impact', and in rural environments in Creighton and Rippon, 'Conquest, Colonisation and the Countryside' and McClain, 'Rewriting the Narrative'.

⁷⁵ McClain, 'Rewriting the narrative', 204.

these instances of continuity and change on either side of 1066. However, acknowledging the coexistence of continuity and change is no longer innovative, and it is now incumbent on us to move beyond this overly simplistic model. Instead, we should ask questions about which particular things changed, which stayed the same, and *why*. We must also enquire about the forces and agents which drove continuity or change, and recognize that a wide range of knowledgeable actors, both Normans and native, could play these roles.⁷⁶ What motivations lay behind their choices? Who benefitted from these choices? Which audiences were targeted with particular actions or materials? Did specific changes and continuities affect different groups of people in varying ways? We must even acknowledge that the concept of ‘continuity’ in a sociocultural transition may be somewhat misleading. For example, recent research has demonstrated that substantial changes in foodstuffs and cooking techniques following the Conquest did not necessitate changes in the style or form of the pottery vessels in which food preparation was carried out, and quite distinctive changes in the styles and forms of commemorative markers did not necessarily mark fundamental alterations in burial practices, the class of the patrons in question, or the religious and social purposes they were intended to serve.⁷⁷ Even something which ‘stayed the same’ may have done so within a radically different social context, so its role, audience, significance and connotations might have shifted profoundly despite superficial impressions of consistency.

On the whole, for archaeology to move forward in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the ways in which we conceptualize the relationship between material culture and sociopolitical change must become more nuanced. It is a certainty that the Norman Conquest happened – archaeologists do not need to ‘find’ it in the material record in order to prove it, or to validate their worth to scholarship on the period. Instead, archaeology’s task is to reveal the wide range of ways in which people at all levels of society engaged with a hugely varied physical world during what was a long and multifaceted process of transition, and most importantly, why they might have done so in the ways that they did, considering what was going on around them.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ McClain, ‘The Archaeology of Transition’, 23, 40.

⁷⁷ Jervis, ‘Conquest, Ceramics, Continuity and Change’, 478; McClain, ‘Local Churches and the Conquest of the North: Elite Patronage and Identity in Saxo-Norman Northumbria’, in *Early Medieval Northumbria: Kingdoms and Communities, AD 450–1100*, ed. Sam Turner and David Petts, Turnhout 2011, 151–78 at 178.

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