

Who Were the Women Buried in Early Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries?

Robin Fleming

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Robin Fleming is professor of history at Boston College and a 2013 MacArthur Fellow.

In Britain in the generation on either side of 400 CE, all urban life, all industrial-scale manufacturing of basic goods, the money economy, and the state disappeared; and in its eastern half Latin-speaking, villa-owning Romano-British elites, literacy, Latinity, and Christianity were vanishing as well.¹ One of the consequences of this particular constellation of events is that no contemporary texts from fifth- and sixth-century lowland Britain survive, which narrate “what happened” in these years. What we do have are contemporary texts that were written elsewhere in the Late Antique world (and which do not, in my opinion, shed much light on what was happening in Britain); and we have a series of texts that were written in what is now England, most of them only in the later seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries.

A detailed, blow-by-blow account of the fifth and sixth centuries, for example, does survive in a compilation known as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (see Figure 1). The annals in Figure 1 are typical and describe, as so many entries in the *Chronicle* do, the activities of marauding kings and their manly followers. Although historians these days often approach the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* like a dirty bomb they have been asked to defuse, even the most skeptical of readers have been affected by the content and tenor of this and other of our retrospective written sources, in particular by the fact that for all intents and purposes the only historical actors in them are men, and “Anglo-Saxon” men at that. This has conditioned us, whether we realize it or not, to write narratives focused on weapon-bearing males and to imagine the “Big Story” of the period as a political one concerned, primarily, with the actions of foreign men “invading,” “conquering,” and/or “colonizing.” So the master narrative of fifth and early-sixth century lowland Britain has been gendered male. Even those of us who do not ascribe to this particular set of arguments often write explicitly or implicitly as if men alone were the earliest in-comers to England; or that the majority of people moving into lowland Britain were men; or that the only people who were driving the narrative in this period and doing the important historical/culture-changing work—that is, the change from Roman to medieval—were men.²

495. Two chieftains, Cerdic and his son Cynric, came with five ships to Britain at the place, which is called Cerdicesora, and they fought against the Britons on the same day.

501. In this year Port and his two sons Bieda and Mægla came to Britain with two ships at the place, which is called Portsmouth, and there they killed a British man of very high rank...

514. In this year the West Saxons came into Britain with three ships at the place, which is called Cerdicesor, and Stuf and Wihtgar [the alleged founders of the dynasty established on the Isle of Wight] fought against the Britons and put them to flight.

519. In this year Cerdic and Cynric succeeded to the [West Saxon] kingdom...

Figure 1: Typical early entries from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, compiled in the ninth century, which describes the *adventus Saxonum*, or, the “coming of the Anglo-Saxons.”

Given the male-centeredness of this period’s sources and histories, it is salutary to remind ourselves that the majority of our genuinely contemporary evidence—which is material, rather than textual—is associated not with men but with late-adolescent girls and adult women. Most of it comes from cemetery excavations, where we find that more women in this early period than men were buried with grave goods and dress fittings, those buried with objects are found with more of them, and women were buried with a greater variety of objects than men (see Figure 2).³ And in spite of all the men running around both our early medieval texts and our modern historical narratives, in actual fact the basic material culture chronologies that we depend on to date things in this period are largely tethered to the metalwork objects found in the graves of the period’s dead women.⁴



Figure 2: Some objects found in early medieval women’s graves in Britain.

So, let us look at women who lived in lowland Britain in the fifth and early-sixth centuries, and think about them in relation to migration and mobility. I am going to begin, however, by talking about the graves of women not in England but in present-day Germany, because the case I will be describing very effectively underscores classic pitfalls that will help us think about similar evidence from Britain.

Archaeologists have excavated the skeletons of a number of fifth- and early sixth-century women in Germany whose skulls had been elongated through regimes of head-binding during infancy and early childhood.⁵ This is quite interesting because the epicenter of this practice lay far to the east, among Hunnic peoples settled in the Carpathian basin (see Figure 3). Not surprisingly, the women with so-called “Hunnic” skull modifications found this far west have been identified as individuals who had moved long distances over the course of their lives. One of the most interesting things about the women with modified skulls found in Germany is that they are often alone among all the people in their cemeteries who have a modified skull, or they are found with only a handful of other women who share the same body modification. These same women, however, were usually buried with the kinds of dress accessories and grave-goods we find with other women in the cemeteries in which they were laid to rest, women without modified skulls. And because no children buried in these cemeteries show signs of having had their heads bound, some of the customs associated with childrearing, which must have been part of these women’s own girlhoods, were not carried on in the communities in which they lived as adults. So, it does not look as if these women’s own natal traditions and material culture made much of an impact on their new communities. The evidence that I have just laid out has been used to support the idea that some women were moving both considerable distances and across stunning cultural divides, probably through exogamous, high-status marriages, and that these marriages may have played a central role in human mobility during the early medieval period.⁶

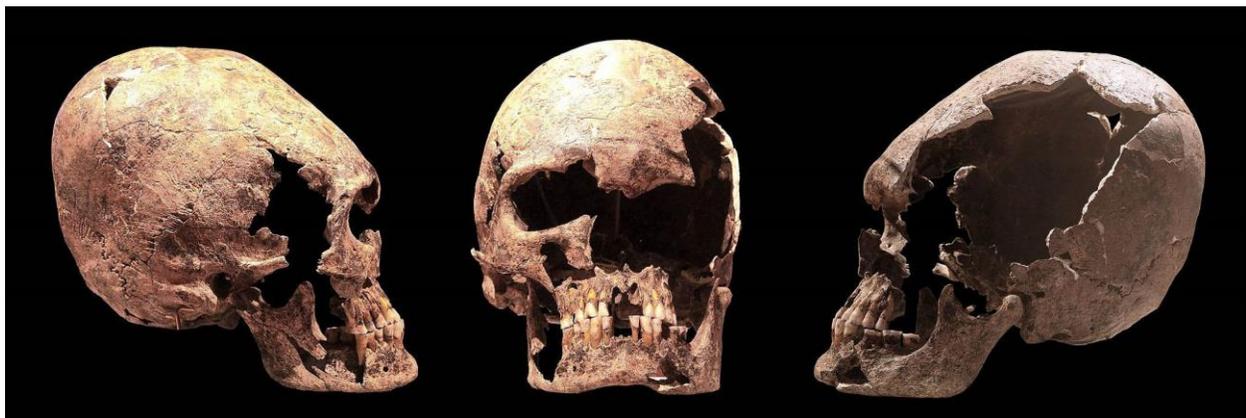


Figure 3: An excavated skull from Hungary, exhibiting “hunnic skull modification.”

The only problem with the scenario just presented is that it is almost certainly wrong. This is because when a crucial piece of biochemical evidence is added to an analysis of these women, their skeletons, and their grave-good, their personal histories begin to look quite different. So, what evidence? Chemical elements like oxygen and strontium (which are two important molecules in the cautionary tale I am about to tell) each come in a couple of different forms, or isotopes. All oxygen molecules, for example, have the same number of protons, but different oxygen isotopes have different numbers of neutrons. They are both oxygen, but they are different oxygen isotopes. There are a couple of interesting and useful things to know about these isotopes. As far as oxygen is concerned, there is a general global trend that the ratio of different oxygen isotopes present in rainwater changes at a relatively even rate as we move towards the equator, away from coastal zones, and into higher altitudes (see Figure 4). Oxygen isotopic ratios are also influenced by levels of aridity and rainfall. The particular ratio of oxygen isotopes found in the rainwater drunk by humans is incorporated into their bodies. What this means is that the oxygen isotopes found in archaeologically excavated human remains can help us determine how far north or south, how far from the coast or at what kind of altitude that person lived. The ratio of strontium isotopes found in skeletal remains, on the other hand, is determined by the hard geology upon which our food is grown (see Figure 5). Strontium isotopes move through the food chain and ground water from bedrock, to plants and animals, and into human bodies.⁷

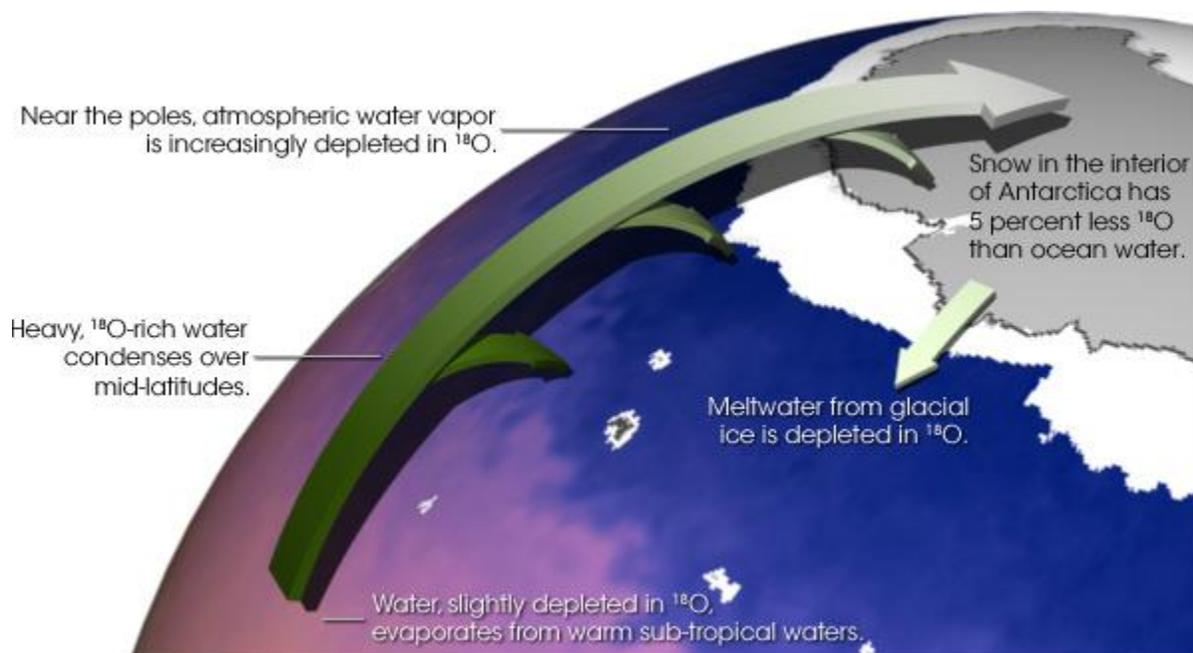


Figure 4: The oxygen cycle.

There is one more vital thing to know about these isotopes: oxygen and strontium not only accumulate in bone, but also in tooth enamel. The reason this is important is because tooth enamel is laid down early in life and unlike bones, teeth are not remodeled over time, so the strontium- and oxygen-isotopic ratios found in people's teeth are related to the hard geology and drinking water of the neighborhoods in which they spent their infancies and early childhoods.⁸ This allows us sometimes to determine if a person whose teeth we have examined was born locally, or if he or she had emigrated from some other region after early childhood.

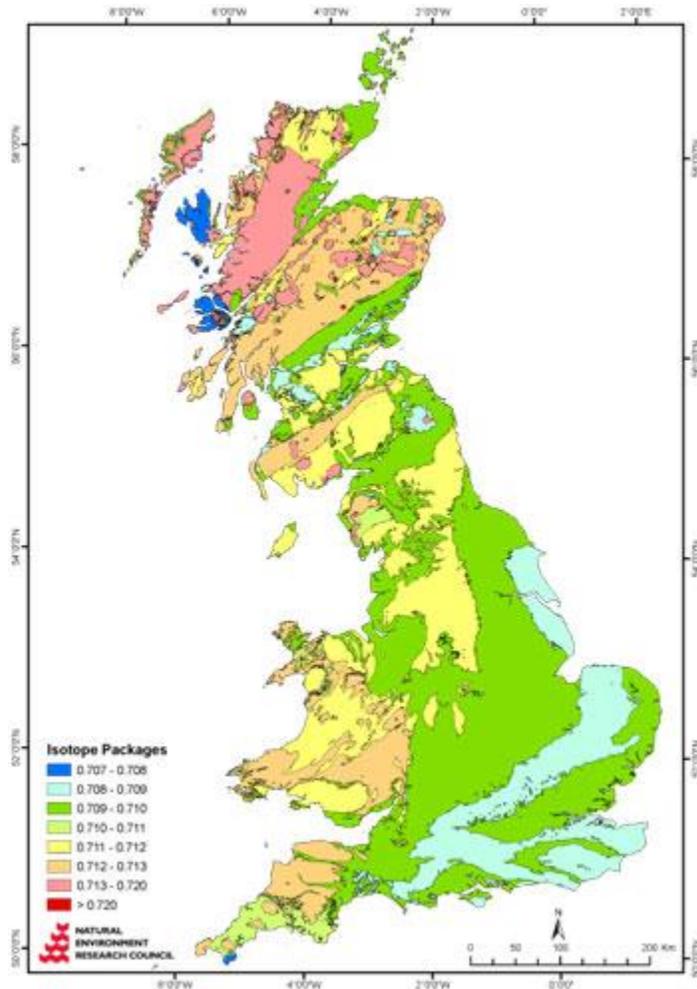


Figure 5: Map illustrating the different strontium 87/86 ratios found in the underlying hard geology of Britain.

With this information in mind, let us return to our women in Germany with modified skulls.⁹ Isotopic analysis of the tooth enamel of twenty-one women with skull modifications who were excavated from these cemeteries suggests that at least nineteen (out of twenty-one) were born locally.¹⁰ What we

need to take away from this is that grave goods and even body modifications are not reliable evidence for migration.

This is a salutary tale, one we need to internalize and take to heart as we move to a discussion of material culture in fifth- and early sixth-century lowland Britain, much of which is associated with the period's dead women. Let us now turn to the evidence excavated from the cemetery at West Heslerton, in North Yorkshire. Burial in this cemetery took place between c. 400 and c. 650, and in total archaeologists uncovered 300 inhumations and a handful of cremations there.¹¹ Janet Montgomery, Paul Budd, and others have done oxygen and strontium stable isotope analysis on a number of skeletons excavated from the cemetery—we have data for both strontium and oxygen for twenty-seven individuals and for strontium alone for a further five.¹² In what follows, we will examine the bodies, burials, and grave goods of just seven of the women and children for whom we have isotopic data, and use them to help us think about women, migration, and material culture in early medieval Britain.

The teenage girl buried in Grave 117 was not put in the ground with any metalwork dress-fittings. She had neither the brooches with close parallels to ones found in Scandinavia (where we think many people were emigrating from) nor wrist-clasps, little hooks and eyes attached to the cuffs of women's sleeved undergowns, a Norwegian dress fashion adopted by women in the north and east of Britain beginning in the late-fifth century;¹³ this in spite of the fact that many women in the cemetery had both.¹⁴ She was, however, buried with a fairly extensive collection of beads, some of which are quite rare, and hark back to those worn by women in Britain in both the pre-Roman Iron Age and during the Roman period itself.¹⁵ She was placed in the ground in a crouched position, a burial posture that had a very long history in northeastern Britain stretching from the Neolithic all the way through the early Middle Ages.¹⁶ Two other women—the ones found in Graves 133 and 159—lay supine in the ground and were buried with no metalwork dress accessories or grave goods, although the woman in Grave 159 had been buried in a coffin. Both this stripped-down, no-grave-goods, supine form of burial, along with coffin burial, had been practiced by large numbers of people during Roman Britain's last century.¹⁷ Given the large number of women in the West Heslerton cemetery with Germanic-style brooches and wrist-clasps, it is tempting to identify these three as native British women—lower-status members of the West Heslerton burial community (dominated by “Anglo-Saxon” immigrants from the Continent) without access to, or perhaps without a taste for, the newfangled dress fasteners that immigrant women sported, but with hints—their beads, their burial positions, their lack of grave-goods—which suggest that some indigenous traditions persisted in the neighborhood in the face of large-scale migration from across the North Sea. But, the signatures of the oxygen isotopes in their teeth tell a different story. These three women, along with the toddler in Grave 169 (out of twenty-seven sets of early medieval remains for which we have data on oxygen isotopes), had drunk water as children with an isotopic signature found nowhere in Great Britain

(see Figure 6).¹⁸ Although this information enables us to label, with some confidence, these women and the child as immigrants, it is more difficult to pinpoint where they had come from. But the general best practice in stable isotope studies (as in much else in life) is to keep Occam's razor firmly in mind, knowing that the simplest explanation is likely the best one. Given the ratios of oxygen isotopes in these four individuals' tooth enamel, the closest place where they might have spent their childhoods is Scandinavia or somewhere in the eastern Baltic.¹⁹

What about the women and girls at West Heslerton who were buried with metalwork that we think of as "Anglo-Saxon" or even Scandinavian? The woman lying in Grave 84 was probably in her early twenties when she died.²⁰ She was buried with a mismatched pair of brooches—a cruciform brooch (one of the earliest forms found in the cemetery) and a small long brooch, along with a set of beads strung between the two in typical "Anglo-Saxon" fashion.²¹ The woman in Grave 102 shared her final resting place with the body of a child.²² She was buried with a string of beads suspended between a pair of annular brooches, and mourners placed a lathe-turned, maple bowl beside her corpse. The way her brooches and beads were worn and the use of a wooden bowl as a grave offering are both things we think of as typically "Anglo-Saxon." Another woman, the one in Grave 89, was wearing wrist-clasps, a fashion, as we have seen that originated in western Norway.²³ These three women, in short, were buried with dress-fittings and objects that have close parallels to the material culture of "Germanic" peoples on the Continent. But because of the evidence laid out earlier in this paper, the reader may think that I am going to argue that these women and girls were born locally. But I am not, and apparently they were not. Both the strontium and oxygen isotopic signatures of their teeth argue that neither they nor the three men buried in Graves 109, and 145, and 75 (the latter with weapons) spent their early childhoods in and around West Heslerton; nor did they come from Scandinavia or the Baltic—their combination of oxygen and strontium values do not match those found in Denmark, Sweden, or Norway (see Figure 6).²⁴ Instead, the closest region that would produce both their oxygen and strontium isotopic signatures is Britain west of the Pennines.²⁵ That region lay in the British-culture zone in the fifth and early sixth centuries—a region, so far as we know, without any Continental migration. In short, these women may have been born in ethnically British communities (indigenous, not "Germanic") and had migrated eastward, rather than westward.

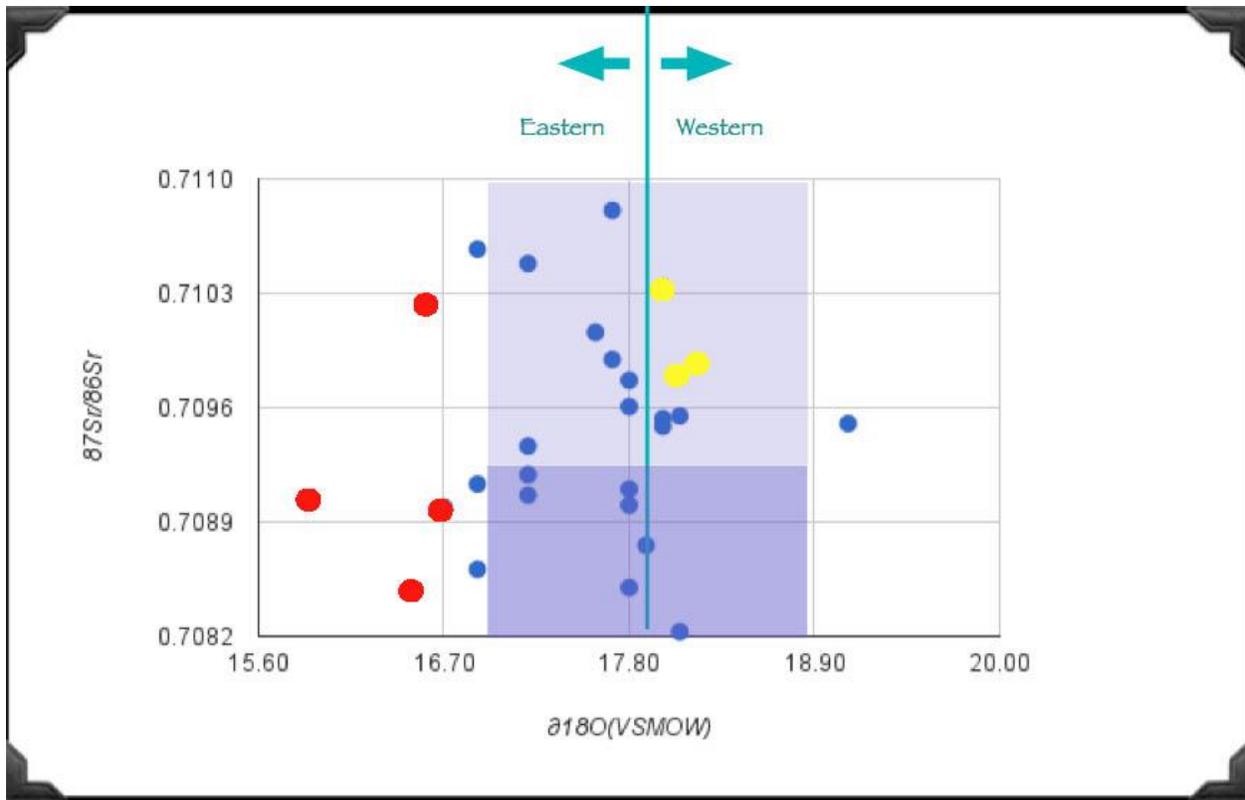


Figure 6: West Heslerton oxygen and strontium isotope plot. Those individuals falling within the dark purple box of the plot have both strontium and oxygen isotopic ratios consistent with the area around West Heslerton. Those falling in the light and dark purple box represent people who have oxygen isotopic ratios consistent with the region around West Heslerton. The red dots represent women and children with “non-UK” oxygen isotope signatures (UK O isotope range is 16.8–18.81).²⁶ The yellow dots represent women with “non-local” strontium isotope signatures and UK “high rainfall” oxygen isotope signatures. (UK O range is 16.8–18.61. The higher rainfall range is 18.0–19.3. Those with Sr over .7092 at West Heslerton are considered non-local.)²⁷ The purple dots are all other individuals at West Heslerton for whom we have data.

The evidence just presented is suggestive, and argues that women’s individual stories of migration are not reflected in their grave goods: some women who may have come from the Baltic or Scandinavia were buried in ways we might expect native British women to have been buried, and some women whose origins may have lain on the far side of the Pennines or elsewhere in Britain were dressed in ways that might lead us to identify them as Scandinavian immigrants.

This disjunction between our (mis)interpretation of grave finds and the quite different reality that sometimes stood behind them, fits in with the finding of a number of recent studies. The isotope work on the fourth-century cemetery at Lankhills, in Winchester, for example, has revealed that there was little correlation in the late-Roman period between ostensibly foreign burial rights and grave goods on the one hand, and isotopic evidence for migration on the other.²⁸ What I have just described for West Heslerton, so it turns out, also fits in with increasing numbers of studies, ranging from the Neolithic period through

the Roman, which show just how mobile women were.²⁹ The findings at West Heslerton also echo results from isotopic studies undertaken for other British sites that are beginning to point towards sustained and perhaps significant migration within the British Isles and Ireland themselves from the Roman period through the early Middle Ages. The phenomenon is well attested in urban Romano-British cemeteries.³⁰ But impressive numbers of individuals, including women, buried in the early Middle Ages in England, Wales, and on the Isle of Man are turning up who have isotopic signatures that argue that they had moved from within the British Isles or Ireland between childhood and death, underscoring internal migration during this period, especially movement from the west to the east.³¹ Indeed, in spite of the fact that none of our flawed, retrospective texts mention such movements, it is likely that more people migrating from within Britain and Ireland may have been turned up in isotopic investigations of early medieval cemeteries than immigrants from the Continent.³²

Thus, what we have at West Heslerton is evidence that lots of women and girls were on the move in this period. Indeed, women were as likely to have migrated as men. They seem to have been travelling across the sea and they were likely moving overland within Britain. The evidence from West Heslerton also underscores the fact that migration was not a single event, because it has produced evidence that immigrant women were present c. 450, and that they were still coming c. 650.³³ All in all, a large minority of the people who died at West Heslerton in the two and a half centuries people buried their dead in the cemetery were likely born someplace else.³⁴ In short, the people of West Heslerton were not living in an hermetically-sealed, homogeneous, diasporic settlement, but they were residing in a mixed community made up of individuals and families who had arrived at different times and from different places and with quite different cultural baggage. Since so many late-Roman settlements were abandoned by the first decades of the fifth century, it is not unreasonable to think that people indigenous to the British Isles were on the move, busy making new settlements and new lives as newcomers from beyond the North Sea, and alongside whom many were now living.³⁵

At West Heslerton we can also see a variety of women from a variety of home-cultures experimenting with and pioneering new forms of dress and personal adornment. We should not assume that these women were paper dolls, passively dressed by the men in their lives, or that they were required to wear “ethnic” costumes by some all-powerful early medieval Anglo-Saxon Migration Association.³⁶

So, who were these women and girls at West Heslerton? Our answers to these questions over the last couple of decades have focused on identity: how people were making, remaking, or broadcasting their identities. This work has been extremely fruitful, but it is better suited to the period after c. 525, when we can begin to see the formation of larger regional, cultural, and even ethnic identities in lowland Britain. Before this time, it is perhaps more useful to ask a different set of questions of these women, their dress fittings, and their graves—questions like “How did people in the century after the fall negotiate the

extraordinary changes of the period stemming from the collapse of the production of so many basic goods?” or “How did people moving into new areas both from within Britain and outside it, who found themselves living alongside people who had come of age someplace else, respond materially?” I think these are better questions because it seems to me that what fifth- and early sixth-century women’s burials do illuminate is the very real possibility that many people in this particular time and place were not all that interested in signaling their origins or their natal affinities; but they were very interested in experimenting with new forms of material culture—out of necessity, to be sure, because this was a period of profound material and population dislocations—but also, perhaps, because they were living in a brave new world where old ways of being were not only unsustainable, but irrelevant. These people—whoever they were and wherever they came from—were occupied, above all else, with building a brand new material reality, and they were doing it with their bare hands.

If you, like me, believe that people do not just make things, but that things make people, and that material culture plays a profound role in making the world seem to its inhabitants “like the way things ought to be,” then these material transformations are crucial for gauging and understanding the period’s Big Story. We can begin to appreciate some of the difficulties of understanding this new material reality when grappling with the mixed origins and mixed signals embodied by the women of West Heslerton, who seem to have been pioneering new forms of personal adornment uncoupled from issues revolving around origins. One way to read the dress accessories we find in women’s graves at West Heslerton is as “intrusive.” But another way to think about them is how these things were being repurposed and/or used differently. So, for example, was it native British women living in West Heslerton, who, when encountering wrist-clasps, decided to adopt them, but did not think them appropriate for men (who had sometimes worn them on their trousers in Scandinavia)? Was it local women who thought it best to sew wrist clasps onto garments, rather than rivet them onto clothing, the way it had been done in Norway?³⁷ To portray the women of West Heslerton as “Anglo-Saxons” dressing like “Anglo-Saxons” makes them non-actors and does not allow us to see the ways in which they were participating in one of the Biggest Stories of the period—which was the creation of a startlingly different material Britain. Indeed, I would argue that to label people and things “Anglo-Saxon” in this period is not simply anachronistic and misleading, but that it impoverishes our attempts at re-imagining the past. Our terminology forecloses the possibility of thinking about these people and their things in the first hundred years after Rome’s fall as something other than “Anglo-Saxon,” and the new forms of material culture as something other than “intrusive.”

So, let us think for a moment about the changes in material culture and the collapse of Roman systems of material production in Britain, as well as population mobility. Groups of people, including people living in Britain in the fifth and early sixth centuries, share constellations of cultural practices,

sensibilities, values, and expectations that individuals acquire and internalize through the activities and experiences of everyday life, something we call *habitus*, which can be summed up as being the way societies think “the way things should be.” Material culture sits at the heart of *habitus*, because of its central role in social formation and social reproduction.³⁸

People who had come of age in the couple of generations that witnessed the collapse of the money economy, the state, and manufacturing practices in Britain grew up with one *habitus*, a *habitus* that became completely unsuitable and unsustainable (given the material dislocations of the period). At the same time, people on the move—both those picking up stakes within Britain and those crossing the North Sea—grew up in profoundly different material worlds than the ones in which they found themselves. And, if the mixed community at West Heslerton, with its constant influx of newcomers from a variety of homelands, is anything to go by, many were living alongside people who had come from places where ideas about “the way things should be” were quite different than their own.³⁹

Each material dislocation and each accommodation with new neighbors required some new material go-round, and led to new ways of being in the world. The end of mass-produced pottery, for example, must have caused radical dislocations in foodways and death rituals, and must have reshaped patterns of domestic labor in very profound ways. The dramatic change in basic housing styles so evident in this period, both for newcomers and indigenes, must have required profound changes in sociability and the texture of daily life. The transformations in material culture that we see hints of in the archaeological record serve as proxies for tectonic shifts in the ways people lived their lives and in their perceptions of “how the world should be.”

The new material world, the new material reality, and the new *habitus* of the fifth and early-sixth centuries, far from being imported wholesale and then imposed by war bands, was invented, displayed, repurposed, and experimented with—or so it seems to me—by immigrant women and their children, as well as their husbands and fathers, and by a large indigenous British population (many of whom may have also been newcomers to the neighborhoods in which they were living), whose supplies of Roman manufactured goods had disappeared, and who had had to abandon their grandparents’ *habitus* and invent a new one. The real work of people living in Britain in the first few generations after Rome’s fall, the real “Big Story,” rather than being about one migrating war band duking it out with another the way the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* would have us believe, was the creation of an entirely and startlingly new material reality. Much of the hard work of building a new world, and much of the interesting material culture developing in this period, was by or for women. And we can see it, because it was being displayed on both their living and their dead bodies. In short, the transformations we see in material culture and life ways took place in the hall rather than the war-band. Its invention was domestic rather than martial, and

it was created by all sorts of women—indigenous and foreign, local and newcomer, now living, in many places, in the same regions, settlements, and households.

NOTES

1. Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome: The Fall and Rise of the Middle Ages, c. 400–c. 1050* (London, 2010), chapters 1–2.
2. Heinrich Härke, “Kings and Warriors: Population and Landscape from Post-Roman to Norman Britain,” in Paul Slack and Ryk Ward, eds., *The Peopling of Britain: the Shaping of a Human Landscape* (Oxford, 2002), 145–75, at 105: Härke has war-bands coming soon after Rome’s withdrawal, “closely followed” by family groups. This initial phase (later fifth through sixth centuries) was then followed by the assimilation of British populations living within Anglo-Saxon settlement areas followed by the acculturation of British enclaves during the seventh and eighth centuries (ibid, 150). Härke also argues for much larger scale male migration than female migration (Härke, “Ethnicity, Race and Migration in Mortuary Archaeology: an Attempt at a Short Answer,” *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 14 (2007), 12–18, at 8). Recently Birte Brugmann has stated that, “the existence of a Germanic military presence in Britain prior to a mass migration that may or may not have taken place has never been doubted.” (Heinrich Härke, “Migration and Endogenous Change,” in Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), 30–45, at 32.)
3. Nick Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR, Brit. Ser., 288 (Oxford, 1999).
4. Susanne Hackenbeck, “‘Hunnic’ Modified Skulls: Physical Appearance, Identity, and the Transformative Nature of Migration,” in Derek Sayer and Howard Williams (eds.), *Mortuary Practices and Social Identities in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Härke* (Exeter, 2009), 64–80, at 79–80.
5. Eric Crubézy, “Merovingian Skull Deformations in the Southwest of France,” in David Austin and Leslie Alcock (eds.), *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology* (London, 1990), 189–208.
6. Hackenbeck, “‘Hunnic’ Modified Skulls;” Susanne Hackenbeck, “Roman or Barbarian? Shifting Identities in Early Medieval Cemeteries in Bavaria,” *Post-Classical Archaeologies*, 1 (2011), 37–65; Renate Schafberg and Wolfgang Schwarz, “Eine Fremde im Thüringerreich. Eine Frau mit deformiertem Schädel aus Obermöllern,” in H. Meller (ed.), *Schönheit, Macht und Tod. 120 Funde aus 120 Jahren Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle* (Halle, 2001), 126–7.
7. For clear, up-to-date introductions to isotopic research, see R. Alexander Bentley, “Strontium Isotopes from the Earth to the Archaeological Skeleton: A Review,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 13 (2006), 135–87; M. Ben-David and Elizabeth A. Flaherty, “Stable Isotopes in Mammalian Research: A Beginner’s Guide,” *Journal of Mammalogy*, 93 (2012), 312–28; Jonathan D. Bethard, “Isotopes,” in Elizabeth A. DiGangi and Megan K. Moore (eds.), *Research Methods in Human Skeletal Biology* (San Diego, 2013), 425–47.
8. Bentley, “Strontium Isotopes,” 162; Janet Montgomery, “Passports from the Past: Investigating Human Dispersals Using Strontium Isotope Analysis of Tooth Enamel,” *Annals of Human Biology*, 37 (2010), 325–46.
9. The relevant data are published in Corina Knipper, Anne-France Maurer, Daniel Peters, Christian Meyer, Michael Brauns, Stephen J.G. Galer, Uta von Freeden, Bernd Schöne, Harald Meller, and Kurt W. Alt, “Mobility in Thuringia or Mobile Thuringians: A Strontium Isotope Study from Early Medieval Central Germany,” in Elke Kaiser, Joachim Burger, and Wolfram Schier (eds.), *Population Dynamics in Pre-History: New Approaches Using Stable Isotopes and Genetics* (Berlin, 2012), 287–310; Matthew M. Schweissing and Gisela Grupe, “Local or Nonlocal? A Research of Strontium Isotope Ratios of Teeth and Bones on Skeletal Remains with Artificial Deformed Skulls,”

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10. Knipper, et al, “Mobility in Thuringia,” 290, 302–3; Schweissing and Grupe, “Local or Nonlocal?,” 99–103.
 11. Christine Haughton and Dominic Powlesland, *West Heslerton: The Anglian Cemetery*, 2 vols. (Yedingham, 1999).
 12. The data are published in Janet Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium Isotope Compositions of Human Dental Tissues as an Indicator of Ancient Exposure and Population Dynamics* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bradford, 2002); Paul Budd, Carolyn Chenery, Janet Montgomery, Jane Evans, and Dominic Powlesland, “Anglo-Saxon Residential Mobility at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire, UK,” in Grenville Holland and Scott D. Tanner (eds.), *Plasma Source Mass Spectrometry: Applications and Emerging Technologies* (Cambridge, 2003), 195–208; Paul Budd, Andrew Millard, Carolyn Chenery, Sam Lucy, and Charlotte Roberts, “Investigation Population Movement by Stable Isotope Analysis: A Report from Britain,” *Antiquity*, 78 (2004), 127–41; Janet Montgomery, Jane A. Evans, Dominic Powlesland, and Charlotte A. Roberts, “Continuity or Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England? Isotope Evidence for Mobility, Subsistence Practice, and Status at West Heslerton,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 126 (2005), 123–38; Jane A. Evans, Carolyn A. Chenery, and Janet Montgomery, “A Summary of Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variation in Archaeological Human Tooth Enamel Excavated from Britain,” *Journal of Analytical Atomic Spectrometry*, 27 (2012), 254–76, Appendix 1.
 13. John Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*, BAR, Brit. Ser., 124 (Oxford, 1984), 109.
 14. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 194.
 15. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, i, 107–14.
 16. Margaret Faull, “British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria,” in Lloyd Laing (ed.), *Studies in Celtic Survival*, BAR, Brit. Ser., 37 (Oxford, 1977), 1-55 at 5, 9. Crouched burials are very rare in the cemeteries found in regions on the Continent traditionally thought to constitute the “Anglo-Saxon” homelands. (Sally Crawford, “Britons, Anglo-Saxons and the Germanic Burial Rite,” in James Chapman and Helena Hamerow (eds.), *Migrations and Invasions in Archaeological Explanation*, BAR, Int. Ser., 664 (1997), 45–72, at 65.)
 17. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 227, 281; Nicholas Cooke, *The Definition and Interpretation of Late Roman Burial Rites in the Western Empire* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 1998), 39–40.
 18. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 297.
 19. Among these four individuals, only G133 has a strontium signature different from the local signature, but all four of these individuals’ oxygen isotopes tell a different story. All four fall into Budd, *et al*’s “population group 1a,” who the authors argue spent their childhoods drinking water outside the UK, most likely in Scandinavia or the Baltic (Budd, *et al*, “Anglo-Saxon Residential Mobility at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire, UK from Combined O- and SR-Isotope Analysis,” at 202 and 204.) For the range of strontium and oxygen isotopic variation within Britain, see Evans, et al, “Summary of Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variation,” 254–76.
 20. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 133–4.
 21. Montgomery, et al, “Continuity or Colonization,” 134.

22. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 164–6. The inhumed child, according to an aDNA analysis on the skeletal remains, was a boy. Unlike the adult woman with whom he is buried, he has a local Sr isotope signature (Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium*, 258).
23. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 144–5.
24. Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, ii, 116.
25. Oxygen isotopes suggest that all four are non-local (Budd, et al, “Anglo-Saxon Residential Mobility,” 2020), as do strontium isotopes (Montgomery, et al, “Continuity or Colonization,” 132). For the difference in oxygen isotope values between the higher-rainfall west of Britain and the lower rainfall east, see Evans, et al, “Summary of Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variation,” 759–60. For a lengthy discussion of why the Sr ratios in these skeletons are more likely to suggest a western British provenance over some putative homeland in Scandinavia or Germany, see Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium*, 261–2. For published Sr values from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, which suggest that this West Heslerton group did not originate from these places, see T. Douglas Price, “Human Mobility at Uppåkra: a Preliminary Report on Isotopic Proveniencing,” in Brigitta Hårdh and Lars Larsson (eds.), *Folk, fö och fynd* (Lund, 2013), 163–75, at 166; Carolyn A. Chenery, Jane A. Evans, David Score, Angela Boyle, and Simon R. Chenery, *Journal of the North Atlantic*, 7 (2014), 43–53, at 46; T. Douglas Price, Karin M. Frei, Andres S. Dobat, Niels Lynnerup, and Pia Bennike, “Who was in Harold Bluetooth’s Army? Strontium Isotope Investigation of the Cemetery at the Viking Age Fortress at Trelleborg, Denmark,” *Antiquity*, 85 (2011), 476–89, at 483; Susanne Voerkelius, Gesine D. Lorenz, X. Rummel, Christophe R. Quétel, Gerhard Heiss, Malcolm Baxter, Christophe Brach-Papa, Peter Deters-Itzelsberger, Stefan Hoelzl, Jurian Hoogewerff, Emmanuel Ponzevera, Marleen Van Bockstaele, and Henriette Ueckermann, “Strontium Isotopic Signatures of Natural Mineral Waters: the Reference to a Simple Geographical Map and Its Potential for Authentication of Food,” *Food Chemistry*, 118 (2010), 933–40.
26. Evans *et al*, “A Summary of Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variation,” 759.
27. Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium*, 249–54; Montgomery et al, “Continuity or Colonization,” 131.
28. Jane Evans, Nick Stoodley, and Carolyn Chenery, “A Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Assessment of a Possible Fourth Century Immigrant Population in a Hampshire Cemetery, Southern England,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 33 (2006), 265–72; Carolyn. Chenery, Jane A. Evans, Angela Lamb, Gundula Müldner, and Hella Eckardt, “Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Analysis,” in Paul Booth, Andrew Simmonds, Angela Boyle, Sharon Clough, Hillary Cool, and Daniel Poore, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester: Excavations 2000–2005*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph, 10 (Oxford, 2010), 421–8.
29. R. Alexander Bentley, T. Douglas Price, Jens Lüning, Detlef Gronenborn, Joachim Wahl, and Paul D. Fullager, “Human Migration in Early Neolithic Europe,” *Current Anthropology*, 43 (2002), 799–804; Chenery, et al., “Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Analysis,” 427–8; Kristina Killgrove, “Identifying Immigrants to Imperial Rome Using Strontium Isotope Analysis,” in Hella Eckardt (ed.), *Roman Diasporas: Archaeological Approaches to Mobility and Diversity in the Roman Empire*, Journal of Roman Archaeology, supplement 78 (2010), 157–74; Kristina Killgrove, Response by K. Killgrove to C. Bruun, “Water, Oxygen Isotopes, and Immigration to Ostia-Portus,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 23 (2010), 133–6; Stephany Leach, Hella Eckardt, Carolyn Chenery, Gundula Müldner, and Mary Lewis, “A Lady of York: Migration, Ethnicity and Identity in Roman Britain,” *Antiquity*, 84 (2010), 131–45; Janet Montgomery, Jane Evans, Carolyn Chenery, Vanessa Pashley, and Kristina Killgrove, “Gleaming White and Deadly: Using Lead to Track Human Exposure and Geographic Origins in Britain,” in Hella Eckardt, ed. *Roman Diasporas*, 199–226, at 215, 217.
30. Such movement within Britain is much in evidence in the larger urban cemeteries of Roman Britain. (Carolyn Chenery, Hella Eckardt, and Gundula Müldner, “Cosmopolitan Catterick? Isotopic Evidence for Population Mobility on Rome’s Northern Frontier,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 38 (2001), 1525–36, at 1533; Stephany Leach, Mary Lewis, Carolyn Chenery, Gundula Müldner, and Hella Eckardt, “Migration and Diversity in Roman Britain: a Multidisciplinary Approach to the

- Identification of Immigrants in Roman York, England,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 140 (2009), 546–61, at 555; Hella Eckardt, Carolyn Chenery, Paul Booth, Jane A. Evans, Angela Lamb, and Gundula Müldner, “Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Evidence for Mobility in Roman Winchester,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 36 (2009), 2816–25 at 2821–2; Carolyn Chenery, Gundula Müldner, Jane Evans, Hella Eckardt, and Mary Lewis, “Strontium and Stable Isotope Evidence for Diet and Mobility in Roman Gloucester, UK,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 37 (2010), 150–63, at 156; Gundula Müldner, et al, “Headless Romans,” 280–90.)
31. Susan S. Hughes, Andrew R. Millard, Sam J. Lucy, Carolyn A. Chenery, Jane A. Evans, Geoff Nowell, D. Graham Pearson, “Anglo-Saxon Origins Investigated by Isotopic Analysis of Burials from Berinsfield, Oxfordshire, UK,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 42 (2014), 81–92; Janet Montgomery, Jane Evans, Carolyn Chenery, and Gundula Müldner, “Stable Isotope Analysis of Bone,” in Martin Carver, Catherine Hills, and Jonathan Scheschkewitz, *Wasperton: A Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2009), 48–9; K.A. Hemer, Jane A. Evans, Carolyn A. Chenery, and Angela L. Lamb, “Evidence of Early Medieval Trade and Migration between Wales and the Mediterranean Sea Region,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 40 (2013), 2352–9; K.A. Hemer, “A Bioarchaeological Study of the Human Remains from the Early Medieval Cemetery of Cronk Keeillane,” *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 12 (2012), 469–486, at 475–9; K.A. Hemer, Jane A. Evans, Carolyn A. Chenery, Angela L. Lamb, “No Man is an Island: Evidence of Pre-Viking Age Migration to the Isle of Man,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 52 (2014), 242–9, at 246; Polly Groom, Duncan Schlee, Gwilym Hughes, Pete Crane, Neil Ludlow, and Ken Murphy, “Two Early Medieval Cemeteries in Pembrokeshire: Brownslade Barrow and West Angle Bay,” *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 160 (2011), 133–203, at 183–7; Sarah E. Groves, Charlotte Ann Roberts, Sam Lucy, D. Graham Pearson, Darren R. Gröcke, Geoff Nowell, Colin G. Macpherson, and G. Young, “Mobility Histories of 7th–9th Century AD: People Buried at Early Medieval Bamburgh, Northumberland, England,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 151 (2013), 462–76. A few early migrants from Britain to Frisia may have also been identified (Ellen McManus, Janet Montgomery, Jane Evans, Angela Lamb, Rhea Brettel, and Johan Jelsma, “To the Land or the Sea: Diet and Mobility in Early Medieval Frisia,” *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*, 8 (2013), 255–77.
 32. Because the interpretation of this evidence is still fit within the paradigm presented to us in our flawed written sources, researchers sometimes assume that the movement from east to west, although an explanation that best fits the evidence, “is at odds with historically documented patterns of migration,” and thus discount it. (See, for example, Evans, et al, “Summary of Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Variation,” 760.)
 33. Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium*, 255. The individuals I have just discussed were buried in different phases of the cemetery’s life. (Haughton and Powlesland, *West Heslerton*, i, 82.)
 34. Montgomery, *Lead and Strontium*, 257.
 35. Simon Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain* (Savage, Maryland, 1990), 141–61.
 36. Hakenbeck, “Roman or Barbarian,” 38–9; Philipp von Rummel, ‘Gotisch, barbarisch oder römisch? Methodologische Überlieferungen zur ethnischen Interpretation von Kleidung’, in Walter Pohl and Mathias Mehofer (eds.), *Archaeology of Identity/Archäologie der Identität* (Vienna, 2010), 51–77; John Moreland, “Going Native, Becoming German: Isotopes and Identities in Late Roman and Early Medieval England,” *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 1 (2010), 142–9; Guy Halsall, “Ethnicity and Early Medieval Cemeteries,” *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 18 (2011), 15–27; Bente Magnus, “Brooches on the Move in Migration Period Europe,” *Fornvännen*, 99 (2004), 273–83, at 280.
 37. Gale Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2004), 56–7.

38. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977), 94. Habitus is both enduring and transferable from one context to another, but it is neither fixed nor permanent. (Z. Navarro, "In Search of Cultural Interpretations of Power," *IDS Bulletin*, 37 (2006), 11–22, at 16.)
39. Kevin A. Yelvington, "Ethnicity as Practice? A Comment on Bentley," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1991), 158–68, and 168.