

OLD ENGLISH AND ITS SCHOLARS — AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF SELF-PERCEPTION

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The term Old English is used to describe the language of the Anglo-Saxons in England from about, say, 500 to 1100 A.D. Old English is the direct ancestor of Modern English; our vocabulary may be larger and show the influence of Latin, French and so on but our most frequently used words and our basic grammatical structures are still very much the same as in Old English.

Old English has been studied from about 1550 on.¹ In considering the habits of Old English scholars, I want to let them be heard in their own words as far as possible and though it is, of course, my purposes in shaping this paper which permit them to contribute, I have tried to be fair, to select passages which, though striking, are also consistent with the general attitudes of an individual scholar or those of a period of scholarship.

In 1833, Jakob Grimm, of the famous Brothers Grimm of fairy tales, famous to his contemporaries as a scholar in early Germanic languages, wrote to John Kemble asking if there were any references to the animal fable of "the wolf and the fox" in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (Wiley 1971:38). John Mitchell Kemble was of the famous family of English actors; indeed in later years his official position was that of Chief Censor of plays in England but his private and habitual occupation was the study of Old English.²

Kemble replied to Grimm's enquiry, "I have hitherto found no trace whatever of "The Fox & Wolf" in Anglo-Saxon: indeed it is foreign to the genius of Anglo-Saxon morality. They were an extremely dull, calm, sober, common-sense people, and as for satire, God help them! they had not an atom!" (Wiley 1971:39). And again, in another letter, "they (the Saxons) were a plain, hard-headed and excellent people, full of common-sense, but for any thing beyond, quite dull; gut uber dumm, as they taught me to say of the Austrians when I was in your fatherland." (Wiley 1971:57). Reading Kemble's words, one is moved at least to ask: why did Kemble devote his life, as evidenced by his publications and private letters, most industriously and at private cost, to the study of Old English? Obviously it was not for the intrinsic interest or stimulation of Anglo-Saxon culture, as he perceived it. I will return to the particular case of Kemble's interest, but at this stage I want to raise more general questions: why and how has Old English been studied by any of its scholars? In technical terms, I am interested in the relationship between ideology and field of discourse, that is how "subject-matter", such as "Old English", is delineated and evaluated.³

When we do look at what has been studied as Old English in the past we're quickly led to two observations. First, the delineation of the object of study has not at all remained constant. The field of discourse is usually a subset of that maximum area of potential study: all the surviving texts in the Old English language. Secondly, on the face of it, the arena of Anglo-Saxon studies might appear antiquarian and remote, and to study it perhaps a deliberate retreat from the contemporary world (like one of the dangers of enjoying the utopian novel, as described by Dr Cranny-Francis in her paper at this conference, "Ideology and Conflict in Morris' *News from Nowhere*.") And yet, on the contrary, from the 1500s on, we find Anglo-Saxon studies used in contemporary debates. The motivation for choosing a certain field of discourse from the potential area of Old English studies arises, then, from the scholar's immediate needs, primarily from his need to explore issues which he sees as relevant to his view of his world, his ideology in fact.

Despite a different focus of interest at different periods, one common assumption typically underpinned the scholar's use of Old English for contemporary concerns. Again I quote Kemble, from the introduction to his work, *The Saxons in England*, published in 1849, "the subject is a grave and solemn one, it is the history of the childhood of our own age, the explanation of its manhood" (Volume I, p. v, quoted by Wiley 1971:6). Or from the influential three volume book, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons* by Sharon Turner — the library copy I've consulted

being a seventh edition, printed in 1852, but the sentiments expressed reflecting, I surmise, the years of publication of the first edition, between 1799 and 1805, a period when "Englishness" (as opposed to continental qualities) was in sharp focus:

When they (the Saxons) first landed, they were bands of fierce, ignorant, idolatrous, and superstitious pirates, enthusiastically courageous but habitually cruel. Yet from such ancestors a nation has, in the course of twelve centuries, been formed, which, inferior to none in every moral and intellectual merit, is superior to every other in the love and possession of useful liberty: a nation which cultivates with equal success the elegancies of art, the ingenious labours of industry, the energies of war, the researches of science, and the richest productions of genius. This important state has been slowly attained under the discipline of very diversified events. The first gradation of the happy progress was effected during that period, which it is the object of this work to elucidate. (Volume III, 1-2).

Thus the importance of studying the Anglo-Saxon period is seen to arise directly out of one's sense of the all-importance of one's own period — a study in self-perception. And the assumption of that equation, "Anglo-Saxon is to Modern Englishman as child is to adult" ensures the apparent 'naturalness' of certain attitudes to Old English studies.

First, if one is interested in similarities between the two societies, one will not enquire about the function of language or customs within Anglo-Saxon society itself because one's own society encompasses and exceeds those functions as an adult's language or behaviour is seen to encompass that of the child. And secondly, if one is interested in differences between the two societies, one can assume the inferiority, the barbaric, uncultivated nature of Anglo-Saxon language and customs in relation to one's own, as the child's habits are necessarily less sophisticated than the adult's. (How natural it is to regard children as "little adults" is a subject for a paper on attitudes to children rather than attitudes to Old English).

Now the most overt use of this identification between past and present was just about over by Turner's time, and certainly over by Kemble's. This was the use of Anglo-Saxon material to justify certain polemical positions regarding Church or State. Consider the following. In 1563, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, or Church of England, were published. In 1566/7, the first book ever printed in Old English appeared, *A Testimonie of Antiquitie, shewing the auncient fayth in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and bloude of the Lord here publikely preached, and also receaved in the Saxons tyme about 600 years agoe*. It was published by Matthew

Parker, Queen Elizabeth I's first archbishop of Canterbury⁴ and its principal selection was a sermon by the Anglo-Saxon homilist Aelfric, who lived about 1000 A.D., on the sacrifice of Easter Day.⁵ This sermon expressed an attitude to Christ's presence in the Eucharist which, Parker asserted, was consistent with Anglican interpretation (a figural or spiritual presence) and not with a Roman Catholic interpretation (a literal or corporal presence).⁶

Two questions immediately arise: why is there now the announcement of Old English material after relative silence for centuries ("...before 1565 manuscripts in Old English were perhaps no more than objects of curiosity and interest to a few individuals." (Ker 1957:1i)) and, as it is this early work which seeks to establish the 'naturalness' of this type of argument, what advantage is the past/present juxtaposition now seen to offer? From the twelfth to the fifteenth century it is the Britons, the Celts, rather than the Saxons, who are typically praised or celebrated in the Arthurian matter under an aristocracy conscious of a Norman, not Saxon, heritage.⁷ Even the earliest Tudors, with their Welsh association, had no self-interest, in promoting a Saxon identification. Now, however, with the need to establish the legitimacy of the English Church, it is no longer non-Saxon versus Saxon within England, but all England versus the papacy, Rome. Parker's concern is a profound one: the manipulation, the re-orientation of people's ideological perception such that a semantic reversal takes place: 'Innovation' must be redefined as 'Conservatism', that is, introduction of a new order must be perceived as re-establishment of the old order. At the same time, in this reversal of terms, papal innovation is shown as the upstart deviance from true English practices. How clearly this came to be perceived can be seen in a letter from Edward Gibson to Edward Thwaites over a hundred years later (1967), "... if you should run over the Homilies ... I hope you'll have an eye to all the passages against Popery. I doubt not, by what I have had an opportunity of seeing, but a collection of that kind would be pretty large; and it would be an undeniable evidence to all posterity, that the belief of our Papists at this day, is a very different thing from that of our Saxon—Ancestors." (Included in Appendix I, a collection of letters, in Adams 1917:119-120).

Over the next 150 years, in subsequent editions or reprintings of Aelfric's sermon, we observe an illustration of a feature of ideology and language discussed already at this conference (in his paper, "Text, Genre, Discourse," — published elsewhere (Kress 1985) — Gunther Kress discussed the use of language from different discourses in the same text): at first there is an uneasy fit between Aelfric's text and the Archbishop's polemical use of it but, progressively, these incongruities are effaced. Aelfric's original sermon actually contains material from

two sources, one following the spiritual, one the corporeal, interpretation of the Eucharist so some inconsistency of interpretation is almost inevitable.⁸ In Parker's edition, the whole text was published while annotations explained or reinterpreted what was inappropriate to the Anglican thesis. Subsequent editions, by large means or small, changed the text where its meaning didn't suit them — from omitting whole passages,⁹ to shifting one word, such as the conjunction *ac*, 'but', thereby changing the logical meaning of a sentence.¹⁰ By Turner's time, the early 1900s, that the position of the Anglo-Saxon and the Anglican Church on the Eucharist was practically identical seemed an indebateable truism: "It is certain that the transubstantiation of the Eucharist was not the established or the universal belief of the Anglo-Saxons" (Turner, 1852: Vol. III, 432).

If the sixteenth and early seventeenth century were particularly concerned with ecclesiastical subject-matter in Old English, the seventeenth and eighteenth century, extending the latter to, say, 1820, were principally concerned with legal and historical writings. At the earliest period of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, civil and ecclesiastical matters were not clearly distinguished. Certainly the lives of the earliest scholars in both areas were intertwined. William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief Secretary of State, employed Laurence Nowell,¹¹ whose work in Anglo-Saxon directly benefited William Lambarde,¹² who, under the encouragement of Archbishop Parker, published in 1568 a collection of Anglo-Saxon laws under the title, *Archaionomia*.¹³ This book was the only collection of Anglo-Saxon laws printed for a century.¹⁴ The greater interest in ecclesiastical writings at this period suggests that statesmen as well as churchmen felt it obligatory to establish the 'moral right' of the state. On this ideological rock the house of legality could the more firmly be constructed.

Later, in the seventeenth century, the *Archaionomia* assumed great importance when the common lawyers, arguing the constitutional case against James I and Charles I, used the Saxon laws to demonstrate the 'immemorial antiquity' of the English constitution (Pocock 1957:36). The prominence of these debates led directly to an upsurge of interest in Anglo-Saxon history and laws. At this period, such interest encouraged (that is, financial support was forthcoming for) the close study of Old English texts, both for publication of an individual text and for the more general work of lexicography or grammatical studies.¹⁵ Though the individual scholar may strike us as devoted to antiquarian study for non-polemical reasons, his opportunity to pursue such study usually rested on a polemical power-base. Humfrey Wanley was on the point of abandoning scholarship for his trade of drapery, when, as Sisam writes, "...about this time (1693), his interest in

manuscripts attracted William Lord, Bishop of Coventry, who encouraged Burnet in the writing of his *History of the Reformation* and was one of the Seven Bishops of 1688. Lloyd saw at once the value of Wanley's talents in a time of active historical study ... In 1695 Lloyd arranged for him to enter St. Edmund Hall (Oxford) to assist the Principal (in an edition of Greek Gospels)... Next year ... Wanley became assistant ... to Hyde, Bodley's Librarian" (1953:261).

After the publication of George Hickes' "monumental" *Thesaurus* (which included Humfrey Wanley's catalogue of Old English manuscripts and printed books) in 1703/1705, the flurry of activity which had characterised, especially, the so-called 'Saxonists' at Oxford died away.¹⁶ Eleanor Adams comments, "It is hard to assign any causes for the rapid decline of interest in Old English in the second half of the eighteenth century ..." but she goes on to suggest "... since there were no controversies, civil or religious, in which it could serve as testimony, Old English had no place in Georgian England, which did not as yet recognize the literary treasures existing in the early language" (1917:107-8). (Adams' last remark nicely locates the critical approach of her day — the 'literary' text as an object of value.)

On the other hand, Janice Lee has suggested in a recent article that there was a civil controversy in which Old English could serve: by the mid-eighteenth century, the "old issue of regulating royal power" was not the object of reformers using reference to Anglo-Saxon institutions; rather they "sought historical precedents to justify and confirm the popular role in government" (Lee 1982:166). The old object of equating the past and present/future remained. Here is William Fawkes, author of a tract on the historical justification for an extension of the franchise, as late as 1817, describing why political freedom in England would not bring about the same disastrous consequences as in France (original italics):

We bow to the *accumulated wisdom and experience* of ages. When they (that is, France) had *curbed* their *old* government they had a *new* one to make; when we get rid of our '*virtual representation*', we shall fall into the *old current* and feel ourselves *at home* again. (Lee 1982:168)

Did ever language make a reform programme sound less threatening? (The 'man' of the 'child/man' analogy is now presumably the prodigal son.) And academically, as late as 1807, the polemical use of Old English is still seen as the primary justification for its study: in his *Inaugural Lecture on the Utility of Anglo-Saxon Literature* at Oxford, James Ingram repeated the old arguments about the usefulness of Old English for "proof" of the "antiquity and Englishness of the civil and ecclesiastical establishment." (See Murphy in Berkhout & Gatch

(1982:13) Ingram was the second occupant of the Rawlinson chair, established in 1755.)

The argument of Lee's article enables one to reconcile this polemical use of Old English with the comparative lack of systematic study, commented on by Adams. The reformers make reference to a mythical rather than factual past.¹⁷ Factual study provided evidence for the conservative argument; rather than emphasize the 'natural similarity' of past and present (as I earlier discussed it), the conservative, anti-reformers in the constitutional debates sought to demonstrate the 'natural difference' between past and present, the inherent inferiority of Anglo-Saxon customs, such as slavery and the inequality of individuals before the law (as evidenced in the differential system of *wer-gild*, different recompense paid for killing people of different social status) (Lee 1982:171-2). It did not require extensive scholarship to establish such facts; editions of the Chronicles and laws already existed and Old English texts were usually printed with Latin translation. More subtly, the conservatives grappled with the notion of different social contexts, with the description of 'semantic difference' between Old and Modern English: how the same form or 'signifier' (or a Modern word used to translate an Old English word, such as 'people' rather than 'thane') in both Englishes can have different 'signifieds'. "There is much *danger* and much *delusion* in a NAME. We lose sight of *truth* because people give *wrong names to things*" (original italics, quoted from an 1817 issue of *The Good Old Times* by Lee (1982:171). That this last point undermined the very possibility of using historical identification is not actively used (realized?) by the conservatives; they appear to have accepted the polemical use of the past as justified in principle, and then to have concentrated on presenting a factual picture of Anglo-Saxon England which emphasized the more restrictive, more 'barbaric' nature of that early society, the "natural inferiority of child to man".

From the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the study of Old English proceeded in two new directions. One direction was the study and teaching of Old English texts as literature (to be later discussed), the other the study of Old English for the purposes of philology, or historical linguistics, the diachronic comparison of the Germanic languages in the Indo-European family.¹⁸ Particularly associated with the latter approach was John Kemble, whom I quoted at the beginning of this paper. One now has the explanation of how Kemble could find the people dull but the subject interesting. Kemble was interested in Old English as part of a system, investigation of which required the analytic and reconstructive imagination of, say, Sherlock Holmes (I'm sure it's no accident they share the same century). Though regarded by his English contemporaries as arrogant,

Kemble, in a correspondence over several years with Jakob Grimm, reiterates the respectful and grateful thanks of a disciple. Thus he writes on May 10th, 1835:

it was your works that rescued me from many grievous errors in principles and details; but to you I owed what is above all, the scheme of a philosophical and systematic development, upon a broad and satisfying basis. (Wiley 1971:97)

The comments which Professor Halliday made in his opening remarks at this conference on “the subject of study becoming the subject of study” are relevant here. The study of philology is philology, the system of the Germanic languages. The language in its social context is not interesting, not academically relevant. Now without the social context we can’t identify the ideology — a claim of scientific detachment is always a claim to ideological neutrality. In practice ideological neutrality is impossible — as those who allocate money for different research purposes can testify. (I assert this *a priori*, given the role of ideology in the nexus of ‘words and worlds’ (see footnote 3).) Philology originated among German scholars, like Grimm, and we find in practice its practitioners pre-occupied with ‘Germanness’, just as earlier we saw Turner and Fawkes self-conscious of ‘Englishness’. E.G. Stanley (the present professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford) quotes a German poet writing in 1842 to the German scholar Etmüller:

I am glad to hear that we shall soon be able to thank you also for the *Beowulf* in Anglo-Saxon, which by your translation and scholarly investigation you have already won back for its homeland. (1964:20)

To an Old English scholar, that’s equivalent to claiming, say, *Paradise Lost* for Germany, as *Beowulf* is the most highly regarded poem written in Old English. That is an unfair quote, I admit — the poet’s position is extreme — but it is undeniable that German scholars of the nineteenth century, and English scholars like Kemble and Thomas Wright, who worked in the Germanic philological tradition, sought the ‘true Germanic voice’ (see Stanley (1964:8) for a lengthy quote giving Wright’s views). The vitality of this voice, they felt, had been sapped by Christianity and the associated non-Germanic literary influences. Stanley’s collection of papers, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, exhaustively charts these obsessions. Thus, for example, Chapter Nine, entitled “Stock views presented in German PhD Dissertations and School Programmes”, describes two main views in relation to the poetry. Under the first view, the scholar’s aim was

'disintegration': poems held to be pagan, such as *Beowulf*, were 'freed' from what were thought to be Christian accretions, interpolations. Under the second view, the overtly Christian poems, such as saints' lives, were read for knowledge of Germanic pagan antiquities. Or to quote Kemble again, writing to Grimm:

A number of curious things occur in the *Poenitentiaries* but upon careful enquiry, I found that they were nearly all taken from the works of that vile race, the Eastern fathers, and that they had no reference to anything really Teutonic. (Wiley 1971:109)

I can't resist seeing a fairly simple exchange here: for earlier Anglican, now Germanic; for earlier Papal, now Christian/Mediterranean. The old antagonisms can now be passed on to an age of 'science' and 'humanism'.

Such concerns are not merely with the childhood of the man, to refer to that analogy for Old English studies, but with the unborn child, invisible to the world, which yet is assumed to exist in an extended homogeneity. Yet the producers of a text are not, like a woman bearing a child, transmitting a text unchanged. The introduction of literacy to the Anglo-Saxons accompanied the introduction of Christianity (597 A.D.), monasteries became the centres of manuscript production; any surviving written record is likely to have passed through monkish hands. To judge in texts the matter of warriors preferable to the matter of monks was to ignore, in the most literal sense, the means of production.

These attitudes strongly influenced the choice of texts offered to students beginning the study of Old English and, initially, even the availability of word-glosses in lexicons. In 1833 Kemble had written, "I am very busy with a *Lexicon Poeticum* which fills up my leisure hours: I mean it to contain all the words found in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and particularly those of *Beowulf*, *Caedmon*, *Judith*, *Beorhtnoht*, *Boetius*, and the *Codex Exoniensis*. The mere lives of saints are mostly modern, prosaic & dull and I shall not trouble myself much with them" (Wiley 1971: 34). Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* — the text-book still most commonly used by undergraduates — has a choice of extracts not too dissimilar from Kemble's list.¹⁹ In the preface to his book published as late as 1976 (unnumbered first page), T.A. Shippey comments:

Poems in established Readers get more than their fair share of critical attention; those rejected by editors of student anthologies (often in essence nineteenth-century works) get far too little.

Shippey's book is an attempt to redress the balance and its title, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English*, indicates the subject-matter of poems most likely to have been rejected. ('Wisdom' and 'Learning' are typical 'monkish' concerns, of course.)

If I have seemed to denigrate the nineteenth century Germanists this is because I have been concerned with the ideology motivating their scholarship, not with the scholarship itself. (One need not labour the historical consequences of a more general pre-occupation with Northern superiority, whether of the German or British nation.) But the scholarship itself was immense; it began to establish, for the first time in Old English, texts as 'reliable objects', such as students of texts produced initially after the introduction of printing had been able to take for granted. In particular, editions of Anglo-Saxon poetic texts began to appear.²⁰ The polemical use of Anglo-Saxon texts in the previous centuries had centred on prose writings dealing with ecclesiastical, historical and legal fields of discourse. When individual scholars did attempt to study the poetry directly from manuscripts or transcripts, the greater complexity of poetic language and the unfamiliar poetic conventions made their efforts usually unprofitable, even misleading.²¹ The philologists' concern with linguistic system made the field of a text, theoretically, irrelevant, but the concern with 'Germanic' features made the poetry especially relevant, with its 'heroic' subject-matter, or accounts of heroic behaviour or, at the least, use of heroic vocabulary even when speaking of Christian subject-matters. And recognizing a different Germanic poetics rather than an inferior²² was a necessary prerequisite to establishing the nature of that poetics.²³

At the risk of panoramic generalization, I suggest that two social changes were taking place during the nineteenth century which, in conjunction, led to the dominant approach to scholarship on Old English texts in the twentieth century. These were, first, the establishment of new Universities and the associated increase in departments or schools in the vernacular language²⁴ and, secondly, the development of the 'Romantic' image of the artist, especially the poet. The first development ensured the territorial establishment of that field of discourse, 'English Literature', where texts chosen for their 'excellence', however defined, were taken as justifiably studied for their form alone, independent of their social function.²⁵ Traditional poetry, with its obvious formal organization,²⁶ is an immediate candidate for 'literary' study. The second change, the image of the Romantic poet, ensured that where any consideration was given to the function of the poem, the latter was seen only as that of individual expression, the voice of individual perception.²⁷ This leads irresistibly

to a concern with 'theme', resting on an underlying assumption of structural unity which, in turn, rests on the assumption of the unity of the individual voice.²⁸ It can also lead to the assumption that 'didactic' and 'poetic' are somehow inherently incompatible descriptions of a text.²⁹

Since Old English texts were now available in printed books and Old English poetry had been granted a formal legitimacy, Old English scholars could now describe a field of 'Old English Literature' similar to the field of 'English Literature' (which in practice was 'Modern English Literature'). They embraced the opportunity. Which Old English texts were seen as more 'literary' can be judged by the following: in a review article on *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature from the Beginnings to the End of 1972* (by Stanley B. Greenfield & Fred C. Robinson, Toronto U.P., 1980), E.G. Stanley has calculated that though ten times as much Old English prose as verse survives, the bibliography contains more than 3500 entries for verse and less than 1500 entries from prose (1980: 235). And one quarter of all the 5000 odd entries are on the one poem, *Beowulf* (Stanley 1980: 262, footnote 151). Stanley comments that these figures reflect the interests of the nineteenth and twentieth century, not those of the Anglo-Saxons themselves. He remarks drily that, "this predominantly literary view of the vernacular records of the Anglo-Saxons ... reminds me of *The Bible designed to be read as Living Literature*, which a New York publisher brought out in 1936" (1980: 236). The Bible undeniably has a didactic function; it is usually seen as a text to be read as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The writings which Anglo-Saxon scholars have studied as literature, especially the poetry, where by such study they regarded the text as an end in itself, were certainly written in Anglo-Saxon society, I take it E.G. Stanley is implying, for the purposes of achieving some social function, typically didactic. To ignore this social function and to study the text as 'literature' is to insist on an activity which is seen as purposeful (meaningful) in our society, to insist the text fit our social context rather than that of Anglo-Saxon society (though I don't know how many people today, outside University departments, assign any meaning to the study of form for its own sake).

Our concern with dividing 'literary' from 'non-literary' texts can also lead us to illusionary divisions. For example, as Stanley points out, Wulfstan's "form of expression" in his laws is similar to that in his homilies: "the alliterative ornament of the laws gives force — not always clarity — to the way they are expressed. Legal institutions may help us to explain texts now read as literature" (Stanley 1980: 232). (Wulfstan was Bishop of London, then Archbishop of York; he died in

1023.) The untenability of such distinctions surely confronted Robinson and Greenfield in determining their corpus for a bibliography of publications on 'Literature'. Their solution in practice, Stanley observes, is to include studies on just about everything ("except for general historical works with sections on the Anglo-Saxons, except for publications editing or concerned with charters other than the most important and comprehensive publications, and except for glossaries and non-continuous glosses" (1980: 228)).

In effect, this paper has proceeded through three different interpretations of its title, "Old English and its scholars — an historical study of self-perception". First, most obviously, it described that early period of scholarship where scholars studied Old English texts for what they perceived as direct relevance to their contemporary concerns (what I call external function). Secondly, it described the study of 'Old English Literature', especially poetry, where, at most, function was the individual self perceived through language (the 'distinctive voice'), which was always the other (the 'Author'). Both these approaches favoured the inclusion of this text, the exclusion of that, from the field of study. Finally, 'self perception' can refer to the internal function of the text: how the formal choices in a text enact and, to a reader, appear to attempt to promote a particular ideological commitment (the 'self-perception' of Old English, if you like, rather than that of its scholars). With such an approach to Old English, the whole corpus of Old English texts is restored to the field of study. 'Literary' and 'non-Literary', 'Christian' and 'Germanic', these arbitrary dichotomies no longer pre-judge the text. Given the lexical sets which dominate Old English texts, and given the undeniable co-occurrence of these sets, the focus of study then becomes something like, to appropriate the title of Jim Martin's paper, "Grammaticalizing religion, the politics of warriors and kings".³⁰

1. A comprehensive account of the early study of Old English was first given in Adams (1917). The most recent publication in this area is the collection of articles in Berkhout and Gatch (1982). See also Calder (1979) and Calder (1981) for historical studies on scholarly activities (on 'style', on 'surveys of literature') which assume the field of 'Old English Literature', as later discussed in this paper.
2. Kemble tells Grimm of his appointment as Chief Censor in a letter of June, 1840 (Wiley 1971: 198). The Grimm-Kemble correspondence as a whole bears ample testimony to his preoccupation with Old

- English studies. Kemble was unsuccessful in obtaining any academic position (see a letter of 1845, another of 1849 (Wiley 1971: 258 & 287).
3. I use 'field' as it is used by M.A.K. Halliday, as one of the three components of 'situation' (or 'social context') — the other two being 'tenor' and 'mode' — which are each realized by different functional choices in the semantics, which in turn are realized in particular choices of form (grammar and lexis). For a description of these terms see Halliday's *Language as Social Semiotic*, London: Edward Arnold (1978), pp. 142-5. This conventional direction of realization from situation to form ('world' to 'word') displays the communicative role of ideology — our "systematic body of ideas" about the world controls our verbal acts in it. The reverse direction, from 'word' to 'world', displays the manipulative role of ideology: the forms of our language allow only certain situations to be envisaged, "real". See Gunther Kress & Robert Hodge, *Language as Ideology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (1979), pp. 6-7.
 4. See Adams, Chapter I, "The Beginnings of Old English Scholarship in the Sixteenth Century" (1917: 16-27), for an account of Parker and the *Testimonie*.
 5. See Hetherington (1980: 25-30) on the work of John Joscelyn, who prepared the *Testimonie* under Parker's direction. For a recent edition of the Easter homily, see XV *Sermo de Sacrificio in Die Pascae* in *Aelfric's Catholic Homilies*, The Second Series Text, edited by Malcolm Godden, Early English Text Society, Oxford U.P. (1979), pp. 150-160.
 6. For a detailed discussion see "Aelfric's *Sermo de Sacrificio in Die Pascae*: Anglican Polemic in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", by Theodore H. Leinbaugh, in Berkhout & Gatch (1982: 51-68).
 7. A point implied in the "Introduction" of Berkhout & Gatch (1982), p. ix. Stephen Knight has studied the ideological usefulness to different periods of the Arthurian matter and noted a lacuna in its use by the "literary elite" from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century. ("Arthurian Authorities: Ideology in the Legend of King Arthur", *Words and Worlds*, *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*, No. 1., 1983: 122-123). This is precisely the period of polemical use of Anglo-Saxon texts.
 8. The spiritual interpretation is associated with *De Corpore* by Ratramnus, the corporeal interpretation with a eucharistic treatise Paschasius Radbertus, Ratramnus' superior, written in 831 at Corbie. See Leinbaugh's discussion in Berkhout & Gatch (1982: 60-64).
 9. In John Foxe's *Ecclesiastical History containing the Acts and*

- Monuments* (“Foxy’s Book of Martyrs”), published 1570, the miracle stories from Radbertus are omitted. See Leinbaugh in Berkhout & Gatch (1982: 56-58).
10. At page 125 of William Guild’s *Three Rare Monuments of Antiquitie*, published 1624. Discussed by Leinbaugh in Berkhout & Gatch (1982: 59-60).
 11. Cecil’s employment of Nowell enabled Nowell to use Cecil’s Anglo-Saxon manuscripts; see Hetherington (1980: pp. 2-5).
 12. Nowell gave Lambarde an annotated transcript of almost all Aelfric’s *Grammar and Glossary* as a practical text for Lambarde to learn Old English. See “Nowell, Lambarde, and Leland: The Significance of Laurence Nowell’s Transcript of Aelfric’s *Grammar and Glossary*” by Ronald E. Buckalew in Berkhout & Gatch, (1982: 22).
 13. In full, *Archaionomia sive de Priscis Anglorum Legibus Libri*. See Adams (1917: 28-29) for a list of the contents. In fact Nowell had prepared the Anglo-Saxon, and Lambarde made a Latin translation. See Sisam’s discussion in “The Authenticity of Certain Texts in Lambard’s *Archaionomia* 1568”, (1953: 232-258).
 14. The next was in 1721, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, by David Wilkins.
 15. For a detailed account of scholarly activity, see Adams (1917: 42-91), and, less detailed, Michael Murphy’s article, “Antiquary to Academic: The Progress of Anglo-Saxon Scholarship”, in Berkhout & Gatch (1982: 5-17). The period is generally covered in Douglas (1951).
 16. Recent scholarship has paid close attention to Elizabeth Elstob, who, working on Old English with her brother William, became a notable scholar herself to her contemporaries. After her brother’s death she was unable to finance scholarly projects and “disappeared” for twenty years to “run a small school in Evesham”... See in Berkhout & Gatch, “The Elstobs and the End of the Saxon Revival” by Sarah H. Collins, and “The Anglo-Saxon Grammars of George Hickes and Elizabeth Elstob” by Shaun F.D. Hughes.
 17. I have commented previously on the inverse relationship between the polemical use of Old English and the use of the Arthurian matter (see footnote 7). This ‘mythical’ use of Old English corresponds with the rise in use of medieval material generally, including the Arthurian — see “The Rediscovery of Old English Poetry in the English Literary Tradition”, by Richard C. Payne (Berkhout & Gatch 1982: 150-154). The distinction between ‘Saxon’ and ‘Non-Saxon’ is no longer important. These early matters certainly serve the purpose of projecting the self safely into the future by identification with the past but, as here discussed, such a preoccupation can serve other ideological ends than those associated with “bourgeois consolation” (Knight’s suggestion, reference in footnote 7, p. 123).

18. From this division develops the tradition of some University English departments in which those who teach "Early English Literature" also teach "English Language" of any period. Philology was the study of language at this time.
19. First edition 1876; fifteenth edition, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Oxford, Clarendon Press, (1967). Henry Sweet himself, while utilizing the work of German philologists, resented this 'colonization' of English scholarship. In the preface to his edition of *The Oldest English Texts*, Sweet wrote, "when I first began it, I had some hopes of myself being able to found an independent school of English philology in this country. But as time went on it became too evident that the historical study of English was being rapidly annexed by the Germans, and that English editors would have to ... resign themselves to the ... humble role of purveyors to the swarms of young program-mongers turned out every year by the German universities, so thoroughly trained in all the mechanical details of what may be called 'parasite philology' that no English dilettante can hope to compete with them — except by Germanizing himself and losing all his nationality". *Early English Text Society* — O.S. No. 83, London (1885), repr. O.U.P. (1966), v-vi.
20. Most surviving Old English poetry is in four great codices. Between 1832 and 1846 editions of all four appeared, with Modern English translation, by Kemble or Benjamin Thorpe. See the bibliographies of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, Vols I to IV, editors George P. Krapp & Elliott Dobbie, New York: Columbia U.P. (1931-53).
21. See Payne (Berkhout & Gatch, 1982: 149-166) on the misapprehensions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Payne also mentions the Old English poems published by this period (p. 154).
22. John Conybeare wrote to another scholar, "Does not Mr Rask (in Rask's *Saxon Grammar*) speak on the whole too much as though he was considering an artificially constructed system of metre? I suspect that the matter lies completely on the surface, and that the good barbarians were content if their verse had rhythm enough to be sung, and alliteration enough to strike the ear at once. The system, if system it may be called, is neither more nor less than that of our old ballads, *in which the ear is satisfied not by the number of syllables, but by the recurrence of the accent, or ictus, if one may call it so...*"; "Introductory Essay on the Metre of Anglo-Saxon Poetry", *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* by John Josias Conybeare (third occupant of the Rawlinson chair at Oxford), posthumously edited by his brother William Conybeare (1826, repr. New York: Scholarly Books (1964), p. xv, footnote 1). Conybeare correctly recognised that stress was the important factor in Old English metre yet he was unable to conceive of a poetics not based on the syllable.

23. The standard — if sometimes emended — description of Germanic versification is that by Eduard Sievers, *Altergermanische Metrik*, Halle: Max Niemeyer (1893).
24. See, for example, an historical survey in “The Universities of the United Kingdom”, pp. 214-218 in the *Commonwealth Universities Yearbook 1984*.
25. A tradition taken from the study of the Classical languages, though originally the study of form served the function of a rhetorical model. See, for example, J.W.H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase*, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith (1961), p. 173.
26. Traditionally seen as a more obvious use of ‘figurative’ language but more accurately seen, I think, in the operation of Roman Jakobson’s famous *dictum*, “the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination”. “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics”, *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. (1960), p. 358.
27. In the words of a textbook used in my undergraduate days, “It is a romantic thing ... to explore by means of words the uniqueness and universality of one’s own experience”. H.V.D. Dyson & John Butt, *Augustans and Romantics*, London: Cresset Pr., (rev’d ed. 1950), p. 85. By the twentieth century, the ‘romantic’ had evolved to the ‘alienated’ image. For example, in *The Distinctive Voice: Twentieth Century American Poetry*, William Martz begins his introduction, “the basic problem of the twentieth century is the location of the individual in his world”. (p.1) and then discusses the seventeen poets of his anthology in terms of where in the world, in their poetry, they locate the individual. That these locations are different is indicated by the book’s title. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman & Co. (1966).
28. Much recent criticism is devoted to undermining these traditional views. See any title in the Methuen *New Accents* series, general editor Terence Hawkes.
29. William Martz (see footnote 27) recognized this as “a problem of modern literary criticism, we tend in our judgements of poems to proceed from certain biases, such as a bias in favor of dramatic over expository or argumentative power, though the fact that poets today are not much interested in writing a poem such as Pope’s *Essay on Man* tells us as much about ourselves as about the nature of poetry”. (p. 35).
30. It would be contrary to the general direction of this paper to suggest that we are ‘objective’, that is ‘ideologically neutral’. We are no more likely than any previous generation to study field disinterestedly, though a scholar has recently written, “we are in

a better position than our predecessors have been to analyse the literature, both poetry and prose, without preconceptions". (Calder 1981: 244). I suggest it is still external function which controls the direction of our research. Why, at this historical time, it seems to us externally relevant to study 'internal function' has been implied, I think, by previous speaker's comments on such matters as the quality of debate about nuclear disarmament.

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