Anglo-Saxonism in Nineteenth-Century Poetry

Abstract:

This article essays the first survey of nineteenth-century poetry that imitates, alludes to, or draws on, theories about Anglo-Saxon language and/or literature. Criticism has so far overlooked such a field as forming a distinct body of literature with shared preoccupations and influences, although some previous attention has been paid to the Anglo-Saxonism of individual poets or texts. This essay, then, provides the first scoping exercise of the extent and limits of a field one could term nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist poetry. This corpus is briefly contextualized within the wider field of Anglo-Saxonist literature, itself an important sub-genre of medievalism and medievalist literature. A possible fourfold typology is offered as a framework within which further study might be continued. Some consideration is briefly paid to the use of Anglo-Saxon in the poetry of William Wordsworth, Walter Scott, Alfred Tennyson, Lewis Carroll, William Barnes, William Morris, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. The importance of antiquarianism and philology is emphasized, with passing reference made to writers such as Sharon Turner, George Marsh, and to the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. The essay addresses a neglected topic in the broader field of the reception of the Middle Ages, and in particular the recovery and reception of Anglo-Saxon, or Old English language and poetry. The essay concludes by suggesting that new narrative models of literary history made be required to accommodate the concept of 'nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon poetry'.

Since the Middle Ages large claims have often been made about the origins of the English people, language, literature, political and legal systems being located in the Anglo-Saxon period; indeed, serious modern interest in Anglo-Saxon texts began in order to try to prove that the tradition of an English church independent in some degree from the Vatican had 'always' existed since its Anglo-Saxon origins, and thus legitimize sixteenth-century English Protestantism (Douglas 19 & 52-3; Lutz 1-3). Post-mediaeval uses of the Anglo-Saxon period shed important light, therefore, on how members of English-speaking cultures have seen themselves and wished others to see themselves. This observation is particularly true of Britain during the nineteenth century, when the validating narratives of a 'Greater England', projecting itself on the world stage as an imperialist superpower, required suitable myths of origin and manifest destiny, and often posited them in the Anglo-Saxon period.[1] As nationalism, in various differing guises, remains a potent force in the English speaking world, fuller investigation and better understanding of the often highly politicized uses into which the Anglo-Saxon past has been pressed is much to be desired. Although still an emerging sub-field of the academic inter-discipline 'Mediaevalism' (the study of post-mediaeval uses of the Middle Ages more generally),[2] 'Anglo-Saxonism' is an expanding and vital area of research, and one which requires and encourages collaboration between scholars of different periods and disciplines within the Humanities.

For much of the late twentieth century the bulk of the important work on appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons was written by historians, although literary scholars are starting to become more interested in this area. In particular, a substantial body of work has been produced on the myth that a 'Norman Yoke' was imposed on 'native' Saxon-English liberties and political institutions after the Conquest of 1066, a

myth that was popularized throughout most of the nineteenth century by the opening chapter of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), in many respects the agenda-setting granddaddy of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonisms. Strands of a phenomenon as various as Anglo-Saxonism are impossible to separate off from one another, and Anglo-Saxonist poetry is inevitably informed by other forms of Anglo-Saxonist discourse, such as the view that 'native' institutions, words, and forms of cultural expression of Anglo-Saxon derivation are superior to those borrowed from other, non-English-speaking communities. Consequently the student of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist poetry might wish to familiarise her or himself with some of this scholarship, best accessed in Hill (*Puritanism and Revolution* 58-125), Horsman (*Race and Manifest Destiny*), MacDougall, (*Racial Myth in English History*), and Simmons (*Reversing the Conquest*). Of special note is literary scholar Allen Frantzen's excellent *Desire for Origins*. Frantzen's book illuminated a number of the ways in which the recovery and study of Old English poetry during the nineteenth century was ideologically driven.[3] Although less analytical than Frantzen's work, Hall ('Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Nineteenth Century') is useful in providing a comprehensive overview of the nineteenth-century scholarship that underwrote and informed the use of Anglo-Saxon in the work of contemporary poets.

In summary, the information salient to the present study that emerges from such a body of scholarship is that during the nineteenth century there were in essence two controlling ideas at work related to the Anglo-Saxon: that Anglo-Saxon culture was primitive, or even uncivilized; and that Anglo-Saxon culture contained, in embryonic form, the expression of subsequent English (or British, or Anglo-Saxon American) national traits, therefore seen as somehow essential or even timeless. The first controlling idea, that the Anglo-Saxon is primitive, could itself take one of two aspects: Anglo-Saxon primitiveness expressed vigour and cultural resilience (something akin to Rousseau's idea of 'the noble savage'); or alternatively the Anglo-Saxon primitive was imaged as rude, barbaric, and in need of refinement and evolution. In this latter case the Norman Conquest was typically identified as providing the necessary civilizing catalyst to progress. The first inflection of the 'primitive thesis' could also (although need not) be deployed in conjunction with the second controlling idea, to argue that a primitive toughness still characterised the English/British/global Anglo-Saxon character and institutions, or that it ought to, if that character and those institutions were maintained in a manner true to their supposed origins. Or, to put the relationship between imagined past and present the other way around, it is believed that a germ of primitive vigour found in pre-Conquest culture prefigured and guaranteed the future greatness of the English people and their diaspora. But the 'proto-English' thesis could also be held independently of the primitivism thesis, and therefore either implicitly or explicitly irreconcilable to it. According to such a point of view all the hallmarks of a highly sophisticated and civilized culture, in particular democratic political institutions and artistic achievements, were already in evidence, and recognisably familiar as 'English', before the Norman Conquest. The course of history had only to make small, gradual refinements to these institutions, rather than revolutionize them wholesale.

If the relationship between these two prevailing ideas, and the ways in which they modified one another, sound less than clear-cut, then the situation has been accurately understood; through the existence of these controlling frames some writers were able to express both admiration and distaste for the Anglo-Saxon simultaneously and

without an apparent sense of self-contradiction. We can take the English historian Sharon Turner as an indicative example, as his multi-volume *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, first published between 1799 and 1805 was immensely influential during the nineteenth century, having been reissued in seven editions by 1852. Turner always saw the Anglo-Saxons as proto-English, stating at the beginning of his work: 'The present composition aspires to relate the history of this celebrated nation, with whose antiquities our present state is so essentially connected.' (Turner 1: 2-3). Yet Turner was equally capable of writing about the ancestral culture as both sophisticated, and crude by turns:

> During that period which it is the office of this work to commemorate, it [Anglo-Saxon poetry] existed in a rude and barbaric state. It could, indeed, have been scarcely more uncultivated, to have been at all discernible. (Turner 4: 374)

> This language [Anglo-Saxon] has been thought to be a very rude and barren tongue, incapable of expressing any thing but the most simple and barbarous ideas. The truth, however, is that it is a very copious language, and is capable of expressing any subject of human thought. [...] books of history, belles lettres, and poetry, may be now written in it, with considerable precision and correctness, and even with much discrimination, and some elegance of expression. (Turner 4: 511)

Turner manages to make this apparent contradiction partly cohere by suggesting that an evolutionary process of gradual sophistication took place even during the Anglo-Saxon period, and before the Norman advent; thus the Anglo-Saxons were primitive at the time of their migration, and culturally mature by the eleventh century. Certainly Turner is to be praised for not treating a six-century period of history as one of complete cultural stasis, in wait for the coming impact, whether negative or positive, of the Conquest. Nevertheless, the philological scholarship available to Turner was not sufficient to allow him to construct with any degree of accuracy the kind of literary history he desired. Consequently, the chronology of Turner's narrative had to be assembled on the basis primarily of value judgments: 'crude' poems were early ones, 'sophisticated' poems, late. Needless to say, modern scholarship is not always in agreement with Turner's dating, but even within the *History*, there is much jumping around and juggling of the two positions on the supposed primitiveness of the Anglo-Saxons.

Turner has been used here in isolation partly for convenience, but also because he inaugurates a common stock of subsequently oft-repeated views that draw on the twin rhetorical frameworks of the primtivism and nativism theses. Even from this brief summary and single illustration, it should be evident that nineteenth-century uses of the pre-Conquest past were always, to some degree, teleological – that is to say, the past was used as a tool for explaining the present, as it appeared to its contemporaries. Undergirding both the controlling ideas outlined above is an unquestioned a view of historical change as progressive (the so-called 'whiggish' view of history), and a narrative model that appeals to almost Darwinian evolutionary mechanisms as governing ethnic groups and nation states. In this respect, both theses, although aspiring to super-historical objectivity, are clearly products of their own time. Inevitably, Anglo-Saxonist poetry is often marked by one or both of these dominant ideas, in one or more of their guises, and the student of this poetry needs some basic awareness of how these frameworks operated more generally.

However, valuable as historical studies of Anglo-Saxonism have been, as yet there is no sustained overview of the use of Anglo-Saxon in nineteenth-century poetry, but only scattered secondary material on individual authors. This is perhaps surprising, given that the equivalent work has been done for twentieth-century poetry (Jones, *Strange Likeness*) and by scholars of Old Norse on the revival of interest in that literature among Victorian writers (see, for example, Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*). The relative invisibility of the subject in scholarship might itself reflect the fate of Anglo-Saxonism in the twentieth century. Tom Shippey has provocatively argued that the Anglo-Saxon world has virtually no presence in contemporary popular culture, because 'the potentially powerful image of Anglo-Saxon origins was sacrificed during the nineteenth century to the needs of an Imperial and a British, not an English ideology', and that the image of the Celtic, Romano-British Arthur became a more expedient symbol of national origins within a mixed-nation British state (Shippey 223). Andrew Sanders takes a similar position in an essay in the same volume as Shippey's (Sanders 162). In comparison with the small mountain of scholarship on Victorian Arthuriana, the relative lack of attention paid to Anglo-Saxonist poetry of the same period serves only to illustrate Shippey's point further. Nevertheless, the argument that Shippey and Sanders make is, like that of the Anglo-Saxonists they study, a teleological one. While it may have explained the situation in its present moment of composition (and since then the appearance of a Nobel prize-winning poet's translation of *Beowulf*, and a blockbusting Hollywood movie of the same poem have already diminished some of the force of that argument), we should not, as a result of its persuasive teleology, overlook the fact that appropriation of the Anglo-Saxons was widespread in many forms of literature during the nineteenth century. As Donald Scragg's valuable introductory essay on the topic, 'The Anglo-Saxons: fact and fiction', notes 'in the nineteenth century, interest in the Anglo-Saxons in general, and King Alfred in particular, reached a height greater than at any other period since the Norman Conquest' (Scragg 16).[4]

Scragg's essay (which ranges from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries) effectively demonstrates the extent to which literary Anglo-Saxonism in a number of different genres was both widespread and deeply embedded in nineteenth-century culture. However, what it does not concern itself with, naturally enough for a survey essay, is defining or describing a corpus of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist poetry, as distinct from literary Anglo-Saxonism in other genres or from other periods. This essay is, then, the first to begin to outline a disparate body of poetry that shares a preoccupation with things Anglo-Saxon, and as such does not attempt a definitive account of such corpus, but rather to open up avenues for further exploration.[5]

Broadly speaking we could posit four categories of poem that we might wish to consider when we think of the phenomenon of Anglo-Saxonist poetry. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, there are poems which allude to, or take as their material, Anglo-Saxon subjects. William Wordsworth's sonnet on King Alfred, the fifteenth sonnet of his sequence *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822) is a case in point (Wordsworth 153-4). The poem is about an Anglo-Saxon, but does not adopt or imitate forms of Anglo-Saxon poetry or language; indeed, this is far from the poem's purpose, positioning itself, through the use of the sonnet form, firmly in the mainstream of nineteenth-century English poetic tradition. In general the vantage point from which poems of this type narrate their subject is clearly that of the moment of composition. Wordsworth's 'Alfred' is quite typical in its opening injunction that the reader 'Behold' the figure of the

King; the early past is presented as if through a window-, or picture-frame that faces the viewing point of the present tense. In the closing lines of the sonnet, one is aware of an originary value being invested in Alfred's small, embryonic state, and its fledgling relationship with globalism. This, if not uniquely a nineteenth-century perspective, is certainly a way of seeing the early English past as prefiguring the present, and typical of Anglo-Saxonism in this period. In particular the notion of Alfred's Wessex as 'spark', with all the connotations that word choice suggests of initiating a subsequently larger conflagration, is typical:

> Though small his kingdom as a spark or gem,
> Of Alfred boasts remote Jerusalem,
> And Christian India gifts with Alfred shares
> By sacred converse link'd with India's clime.
> (Wordsworth 153-154)

There is nothing *per se* that distinguishes Anglo-Saxonist poetry in this category from any other literature that treats Anglo-Saxon as subject material, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel, *Harold: the Last of the Saxon Kings* (1848), or Martin Tupper's, *Alfred, A Patriotic Play* (1858). For an initial scoping of the range of work that could be included within this grouping, one should consult the aforementioned essays by Scragg and Shippey, as well as Lynda Pratt's 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes? Alfred the Great and the Romantic national epic'.

Hypothesizing a second category, we could group together poems that attempt to pass themselves off as Anglo-Saxon, imitating the forms of Anglo-Saxon verse as they were understood at the time, and, as a result, often creating imagined and desired forms. Naturally the narrative position of these poems is not at all similar to that of poems in our first category; they purport to be written in the period itself, and form an equivalent poetic genre to the historical novel. It is no surprise, therefore, that several significant early examples of this type occur within Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

To give but one example from this novel: a female Saxon character called Ulrica, who burns to death in her ancestral castle, having set fire to it herself during its siege, utters a 'war-song' with her dying breaths. Scott's own footnote to the poem tells us that while it is not typical of the 'softer' poetry of the Anglo-Saxons after their conversion, in its similarities to 'the antique poetry of the Scalds – the minstrels of the old Scandinavians', the war-song's 'wild strains', are also those of her Saxon forefathers, to which Ulrica therefore naturally reverts under the extreme pressure of the situation (Scott 517). Scott lays the poem out in four stanzas, in accord with a commonly expressed belief that Saxon poetry was often strophic. In composing this poem as 'authentically' as he is able, Scott had absorbed Turner's analysis of the style of Saxon poetry as consisting chiefly of periphrasis, repetition and violent interjections (Turner 4: 395-396). Modern scholars recognise the first two qualities and treat them as part of a sophisticated technical device now dubbed 'variation',[6] but to Turner these traits were indicative of an inability to compose verse in a hierarchical syntax, and thus a form of literary primitivism. Scott, who used Turner's *History* as a source for *Ivanhoe* (Scott xx), absorbed such opinions, as is plain from the third stanza of Ulrica's poem:

> Dark sits the evening upon the thane's castle,
> The black clouds gather round;

> Soon shall they be red as the blood of the valiant!
> The destroyer shall shake his red crest against them;
> He, the bright consumer of the palaces,
> Broad waves he his blazing banner,
> Red, wide and dusky,
> Over the strife of the valiant;
> His joy is in the clashing swords and broken bucklers;
> He loves to lick the hissing blood as it bursts warm from the wound!
> (Scott 340-341)

Although poems such as this one, ventriloquizing Anglo-Saxon, project themselves forward into modern English tradition, in effect it is rather the case that the ideals of later English poetry are written back over the imagined literature of the Anglo-Saxons. Thus a pseudo-continuity of forms is created, in order to legitimize the present as inheritor to a venerable tradition of great antiquity. In Ulrica's song the gears of such a teleological drive are stanzaic form and a vocabulary borrowed from Thomas Gray's Odes. In other instances of this kind of poetry, such as 'The Crusader's Return', and Rowena's Hymn, to suggest two more from *Ivanhoe* (Scott 191-192 & 468), or the songs by Edith and the First Thane in Tennyson's *Harold* (1876), salient features might include anachronistic use of rhyme, refrain or ballad metre. In effect, then, poetic form is used to make an argument about English literary history.

Alongside these pseudo-Saxon poems, we might also wish to consider certain poetic translations from Old English into modern.[7] Tennyson's *Battle of Brunanburh*, for instance, adopts a strophic structure of fifteen stanzas of variable length, and an exclamatory syntax that is partly dependent for its effect on its sometimes abruptly short lines:

> IX
> Also the crafty one,
> Constantinus,
> Crept to his North again,
> Hoar-headed hero!
>
> X
> Slender warrant had
> *He* to be proud of
> The welcome of war-knives –
> He that was reft of his
> Folk and his friends that had
> Fallen in conflict,
> Leaving his son too
> Lost in the carnage,
> Mangled to morsels,
> A youngster in war!
> (Ricks 623-624)

Tennyson's translation has been afforded the dignity of study by scholars of Anglo-Saxon (Alexander 'Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh"' and Irving): Scott's forgery has not. Yet both are performances of what Anglo-Saxon poetry was thought to have sounded like during the nineteenth century. In common with Tennyson's 'Brunanburh' the full text of Scott's war-song deploys many lines uncommonly short by the standards

of the mainstream English tradition. These owe their existence to the practice, common among English antiquarians until the middle of the century, of setting what we are accustomed to thinking of as the Anglo-Saxon line of verse, over two lines (Anglo-Saxon poems are not lineated at all in manuscript, but written out continuously, as prose). This was in turn taken by Turner and others, as being indicative of the primitivism of the poetry; had the Saxons been more advanced they would have been able to continue their verse line for several more syllables before having to pause and begin anew. The short, 'primitive' line is not all that Tennyson owes to the antiquarian tradition here. Nineteenth-century scholars often referred to *Brunanburh* as an 'ode', identifying that form as a major genre of Anglo-Saxon verse.[8] Tennyson's performance of the poem then, re-enacts it as a native English equivalent to the Pindaric Ode, or more precisely, an equivalent to the form as it was adopted into English by Abraham Cowley as the irregular 'Pindarique Ode' (Brogan 208). Thus the cultural prestige of a major literary genre that originated in classical antiquity is re-sourced to the early English Middle Ages. This manoeuvre, of bolstering the pedigree of English literature by extending the roots of its contemporary forms and fashions further back into history, and securing them as always already English, is common to Anglo-Saxonist poems belonging to this category. Poems of this type are putatively proleptic of a future tradition that has in fact already been established. Nationalist pride and the desire for cultural superpower status clearly fuel this drive to write Anglo-Saxon into a continuous poetic tradition, by writing that tradition back over Anglo-Saxon.

Poems effecting such a strategy were eventually overtaken by philological scholarship, which usually disproved the continuities that these poems sought to make; by the time the majority of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon verse had been edited, for example, it was clear that the evidence for strophic Anglo-Saxon poetry was slight, to say the least.[9] One of the last poems to be composed in this vein was Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky', the first verse of which is claimed as a 'Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry' in the family manuscript magazine-cum-scrapbook where it appeared before being subsequently expanded and incorporated into *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll 139). Carroll's performance of Anglo-Saxon poetry as almost balladic in structure marks the descent of this strain of Anglo-Saxonism into self-parody. Twentieth-century Anglo-Saxonism distinguishes itself from nineteenth- in part by the absence of material we might think of as belonging to this type.

Where the twentieth century is richer than the nineteenth is in poems that adapt actual Anglo-Saxon poetic forms for use in contemporary compositions, rather than back-forming invented forms for pseudo-historical poetry in the image of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice. Thus a third category of Anglo-Saxonist poetry can be postulated, one that would include work that acknowledges its contemporaneity at the same time as imitating, or improvising freely on (for example) the use of four-stress lines of varying syllable length, patterns of internal alliteration, or complex subject-variation. This is not merely the equivalent of the second category, but 'getting it right' according to the standards of modern scholarship. For in reviving techniques that have not been practised in English poetry for several centuries, one is in part acknowledging, rather than arguing against, a discontinuity of tradition. It is the course of the same philological scholarship that gradually denied the primacy of the second category of Anglo-Saxonist writing which also opened up the possibilities of the third, a fact which explains why poems of this kind come to predominate in work later than the scope of

this essay.[10] Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth noting William Morris's translation of 'The Tale of Beowulf' (1895) as an early attempt by a major poet to imitate structural forms in a way that we might now think of as more' authentically' Anglo-Saxon. Morris benefitted from the specialist knowledge of his collaborator on the project, the Anglo-Saxon scholar A. J. Wyatt, and, without attempting to follow the alliterative patterns of Anglo-Saxon verse slavishly, managed to approximate the accentual, four-stress line more accurately than his poetic forebears, even if the whole is somewhat marred by cod mediaevalist archaisms.

> The wolf-bents they bide in, on the nesses the windy,
> The perilous fen-paths where the stream of the fell-side
> Midst the mists of the nesses wends netherward ever,
> The flood under earth. Naught far away hence,
> But a mile-mark forsooth, there standeth the mere,
> And over it ever hang groves all berimed,
> The wood fast by the roots over-helmeth the water.
> (Morris. Lines 1358–1364)

While most modern critics have little patience for this experiment, Morris's work was judged successful in its time,[11] and exerted some influence on the practice of Ezra Pound. Thus the dominant form of twentieth-century poetic Anglo-Saxonism is anticipated and partly established towards the end of the nineteenth.

However, a more distinctively nineteenth-century form of poetic Anglo-Saxonism existed, and one that we might think of as constituting a fourth category, that is poetry that had absorbed the tenets of the philological drive behind Anglo-Saxon studies. For it was during the course of the nineteenth century that the history of English, and the whole Indo-European family of languages, became well understood.[12] Linguists in this period were naturally enamoured by the romance of recovering earlier (and sometimes even lost) verbal forms of contemporary languages, a discovery that seemed to open access to the far past in new ways, and was surrounded by the same glamour and excitement of the great archaeological investigations into the far past, such as at Troy. Writers on language often subscribed to a myth of linguistic origins, believing that earlier, more 'primitive' words were more poetic, powerful and meaningful than decadent, contemporary language. American poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson is typical in his expression of this view in his 1836 work *Nature*:

> As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols. [...] The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language.
> (Emerson *Nature* 37)

A few years later, in 'The Poet' (1844), Emerson makes the analogy with archaeological recovery more explicit:

> For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry.
> (Emerson 'The Poet' 457)

For writers in English, this myth of origins meant that words derived from Anglo-Saxon (the earliest form of the English language for which we have records) were held to be superior to those which had evolved, or come into the language at a later stage in its history. The American philologist George Marsh (with whose writing Gerard Manley Hopkins was familiar) is unambiguous in this respect:

> The popular mind shrinks from new words, as from aliens not yet rightfully entitled to a place in our community, while antiquated and half-forgotten native vocables, like trusty friends returning after an absence so long that their features are but dimly remembered, are welcomed with double warmth, when once their history and their worth are brought back to our recollection.
> (Marsh 176)

Marsh is hopeful that 'we may recover and reincorporate into our common Anglican dialect' words of Anglo-Saxon origin that have long been forgotten (87), and is encouraged to detect a greater proportion of words of Anglo-Saxon derivation being used by nineteenth-century writers than by eighteenth-century writers (126-127). Philological primitivism of this kind fed into the work of Hopkins, who often plays on the etymological meaning of words of Anglo-Saxon derivation in his poems. In 'Harry Ploughman', for instance, Hopkins works to portray the ploughman's strength and muscularity as supple, and even fluid (images of liquidity abound), rather than solid (Gardner 104). Accordingly, Harry's thigh is 'lank', a puzzling word choice until one considers its derivation from Anglo-Saxon *hlanc*, 'flexible'. Likewise, Harry's plough is said to 'wallow', a word which Hopkins hopes we will understand not only in its contemporary senses, but also with the connotations of Anglo-Saxon *wealwian*, which could mean 'to revolve', or 'roll', as a wheel does, but could also be used of the motion of a ship through waves. This lexical Anglo-Saxon nativism can also be detected in the work of William Barnes, who has a predilection for compounding new words from purely Anglo-Saxon roots, rather than using polysyllabic Latinate vocabulary, and in some of the later work of William Morris. Matthew Reynolds has written well on Tennyson's use of Anglo-Saxon-derived vocabulary in *The Princess*, and in *Idylls of the King* (Reynolds 239-243 & 267-270) and some good work has been done on this aspect of Hopkins's poetic practice (mostly in passing throughout Milroy and Plotkin),[13] but in general this branch of nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist poetry still lacks an overall study, and is ripe for further exploration.

Naturally, these four groupings are not intended to be rigid or exclusive; in practice some Anglo-Saxonist poems display characteristics representative of more than one category. In particular Tennyson's work can be seen as overlapping several of the distinctions I have been drawing above. But however provisional such a typology as the one essayed here might be, it will at least provide a first attempt at a map with which the student can begin to explore this rich territory. There is much groundwork still to be done in this area. Once some of the basics are established there are significant implications for the place of Anglo-Saxon within standard English literary histories, as well as opportunities for re-theorizing literary history more generally. Arguably Anglo-Saxon poetry 'belongs' in the nineteenth century as much as it does in the ninth. If this argument were to be accepted, a new way of writing literary history, one less reliant on the sequential division of literature into discrete, period-bound chapters would have to be sought. This will require scholars to risk more by working 'outside' their period (although even such a language for thinking about scholarly expertise might usefully be

dispensed with), but it will also require scholars to collaborate more across period boundaries, even across periods that are not coterminous. And that might be both about time, and *about* time.

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[1] Although see D'Arcens 'Inverse Invasions', for an excellent example of how the history of pressing issues of contemporary political concern can be explored in nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist writing from outwith Great Britain, and without falling into the trap of being glibly presentist.

[2] Of which, the most recent book-length study is Alexander *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in the Modern World*.

[3] See in particular pages 27-35, 62-77, 190-198 & 207-213.

[4] See also Simmons, who notes that a golden Saxon age is posited in the Victorian period by the Victorians. Simmons *Reversing the Conquest* 7.

[5] Although for more in-depth consideration, see Jones *Fossil Poetry*.

[6] For further explication of this technique, see Robinson *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, especially, but not exclusively 3-28; and Lester *The Language of Old and Middle English Poetry*, 67-74.

[7] Longfellow made some translations from Anglo-Saxon in a similar manner. His poetry has not yet been systemically studied for Anglo-Saxon influence or allusions. For what has been done so far in this respect, see Woolf.

[8] See for example Richard Price's preface to his edition of Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (Warton 1: xxxix – xli); and Conybeare *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* lxxx.

[9] Certainly it is possible that there was a now vanished tradition of strophic construction. One solitary poem, *Deor*, deploys a refrain, which one might argue is evidence of division into something akin to stanzas, but nothing similar has survived.

[10] For examples in the work of Ezra Pound W. H. Auden, Edwin Morgan and Seamus Heaney, see Jones *Strange Likeness*.

[11] See Jones 'The Reception of William Morris's *Beowulf*'. For studies of the translation see Tilling and Boenig.

[12] The best introductory account of this enterprise is still Aarsleff *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860*.

[13] For discussion of Hopkins' sources for possible knowledge of Anglo-Saxon literature, as opposed to language, see Quinn.