

The term “Anglo-Saxonism” is one “to conjure with” (2) say the editors in their introduction, and this collection of essays does just that, evoking and interrogating what it means, what it has meant, and what it can be made to mean. As a self-conscious examination of the forces that characterize a discipline through historical periods, the anthology builds on Frantzen’s influential earlier work, offering a productive expansion of both the spirit and the principles of investigation advocated by his *Desire For Origins: New language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (Rutgers University Press, 1990), and an eclectic excursion into some surprising cultural and political territory.

The introduction provides a good overview of the scope and aims of the collection, aligning it with other forms of new “medievalisms” that have contributed to the transformation of medieval studies overall, but calling attention to an important distinction - the relative exclusion of Anglo-Saxon studies from this revisionary discourse. While there is no dearth of new scholarship *within* the field of Anglo-Saxon, the editors point out that medievalisms (new or otherwise) have marginalized the period, operating on deep-seated traditional assumptions about what, and when, qualifies as medieval. The broad aim of the volume is twofold: to contribute to the more precise understanding of Anglo-Saxon England as a major historically contingent “cultural construction” (12), and to reveal aspects of the historical trajectory of this construction. The collection also aims to transcend this internal medieval divide and reach out to a wider audience interested in cultural and intellectual history. These aims are as ambitious as they are broad, but, overall, this anthology succeeds in engaging and informing on many levels, and medievalists (broadly speaking) and non-medievalists alike will find much of interest and value in this wide-ranging examination of “Anglo-Saxonism” and its many incarnations.

The collection is divided into two parts, the first containing four essays that explore manifestations of Anglo-Saxonism within the period itself and in the Renaissance; the second contains four essays that follow this thread into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and across Europe and the US; a concluding essay offers a ruminative overview of the processes by which Anglo-Saxonism not only develops but self-perpetuates. The historical sweep of the collection is just that; it excludes much, as the editors point out—their list of all the versions of Anglo-Saxonism that might have been considered is itself impressive. Readers will not find the glory of Alfred or the Nazi celebration of the Germanic past revisited here. Instead, the principle of selection is to reveal, and make specific, small segments of a vast and interdisciplinary idea.

Part One begins with an essay by Allen Frantzen, taking as its text a less-anthologized passage from Bede's *History* where Gregory simultaneously admires the angelic beauty of some English boys at a market and deplors their benighted heathenism. Frantzen's blunt reminder that these boys or youths are most likely for sale as slaves raises an issue that many Anglo-Saxonists have downplayed or ignored, and at the same invites more careful scrutiny of how Bede, and later Reformation priest John Bale, cast this incident in the service of their own Anglo-Saxonism. Although Bede's interest may be race, nation and the glory of Rome, and Bale's sex, corrupt priesthood and an England returned to pre-papal former glory, Frantzen's layered and perceptive argument reveals the operations of a powerful controlling myth—one which also elides, incidentally, the issue of exploitation of the youthful *Angli*. In Mary Richards' essay on the Old English laws we follow the mythmaking trajectory throughout the period; she argues that the use of the vernacular as the language of law enables the continuity of Germanic traditions to co-exist with commitment to Christianity, and that this distinguished Anglo-Saxon England from other continental models, hence helping to forge a separate and self-conscious nationalism. Her overview of the development of the laws shows a striking level of continuity and cooperation, in that one regional king's respect for the tradition of law might supersede individual territorial or political concerns; the laws provided a kind of nationalistic glue which Richards terms "little short of marvelous" (56). Next, Janet Thormann revisits some of the notably lesser poetry to be found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, arguing also for the means by which the *Chronicle* produces and records history. Her detailed analyses of these tenth-century entries reveal a form of literary and stylistic Anglo-Saxonism, where tropes are employed to resonate with and incorporate past Romano-British achievement, evoking the past in a seamless vision/version of a victorious present.

Thus far Anglo-Saxonism has figured largely as a form of nationalism, although Frantzen's argument opens up a complex racial and sexual dimension to the idea and activity of nation-building. With Suzanne Hagedorn's essay on the reception of Alfred's Preface to the Pastoral Care, the last in section one, we are both in and out of the period and our perspective of necessity changes. Alfred's much (over?)-anthologized Preface, which, among other things, deplors the state of learning and education in the ninth century, has a lively afterlife. Hagedorn looks at some fascinating intersections of historical scholarship and political agendas: from Elizabeth I's reclamation of the piece to further her Anglican program, to its inclusion in a seventeenth-century coffee-table volume to justify a campaign to rebuild the quadrangle at University College, and on through to the nineteenth century where Alfred's prose becomes identified with a broader claim of Anglo-Saxonism, one which connects Anglo-Saxon studies with "Anglo-Saxon liberties." The cumulative resonance of Hagedorn's skillful essay readies

us for the cultural and geographical leap of the next section, where Anglo-Saxonism takes on a continuing variety of guises.

Robert Bjork's analysis of the Scandinavian trajectory of Anglo-Saxonism exposes some unpleasant truths about academics, detailing dishonesty and plagiarism in the service of philologically derived nationalisms. His study of Danish, German and British struggles for philological hegemony as keepers of the keys to *Beowulf*—and the moral authority the poem ostensibly confers—examines not only the problematic linkage of the academic and political realms, but also raises the thorny issue of academic responsibility and accountability to the wider political scene, an issue that resonates throughout the varying arguments in this section. J. R. Hall picks up the thread in nineteenth-century America, taking up full-blown Jeffersonian Anglo-Saxonism, where the period and its literature provide models for morality and democracy. Hall's focus on two proponents, one strongly in favor of and one strongly against this Jeffersonian rhetoric, calls attention to the problems of academic limitations as he details ignorance and intransigence on both sides of the debate. A lament for the passing of Dixie becomes intertwined with postbellum American Anglo-Saxonism in Gregory VanHoosier-Carey's study of the resurgence of Anglo-Saxon studies in the south. This essay probes the connection between educational goals and moral and political values, and is unafraid to tackle the parallel connections of philological methodology and its "fear of linguistic miscegenation" (169) to rationalizations (Southern and Northern) for racial discrimination. Moving back to Britain and into the twentieth-century, Velma Bourgeois Richardson looks at how "the enthusiasm for the Teutonic" (192) makes a noteworthy mark on children's literature in the Edwardian period. Here morality, empire, and character are built on Anglo-Saxon models and imprinted on middle-class youthful imaginations. Richmond's memorable examples of Edwardian Anglo-Saxonism in the making call oblique attention to its gendered implications: H. Rider Haggard's stalwart hero Allen Quartermain is cast as a burly Dane, whose son by his African wife will be raised to become what an English gentleman should be (179); the popular heroine Lady Elfgiva is resourceful and a handy horsewoman, but always preserves a gentle femininity (191).

The collection is rounded out by John Niles' overview of the larger cultural processes by which Anglo-Saxonism is produced, as a series of "purposeful appropriations" (205); "stealing is a hard word" (205) writes Niles, but whether the appropriation is self-consciously ideological or otherwise, we cannot ignore the manipulative uses of the past. The North Sea oil rig named Excaliber or the repossession of St. Cuthbert by Celtic enthusiasts are small but telling reminders. Niles' essay, both whimsical and thought-provoking, ends on a celebratory note,

praising the multiplicity of the past, adding another important strand to this various and engaging anthology. As an Anglo-Saxonist myself, I found it often salutary and sobering, but also full of unexpected and delightful snippets of information, rare angles of vision, and incisive cultural commentary. This is a collection that should indeed reach out across disciplinary divides and invite other scholars to grapple with the idea that is Anglo-Saxon England.

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Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women.'* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, x + 259 pp.

Sheila Delany's critical voice has been a powerful presence for the past three decades—restive, aggressive, and intelligently committed to providing historicized readings to a wide variety of medieval and early modern texts. The publication of *The Naked Text* is thus a significant event, not only because another major book from Delany has appeared, but because it focuses upon an important and somewhat under-studied Chaucerian poem. Often skipped over in a typical Chaucer survey, *The Legend of Good Women* is quite possibly Chaucer's most straightforward take on the "woman question." With its dream-vision Prologue focusing on the vocation of the poet, the *Legend* is a collection of classical female *vitae* written putatively on command because of Chaucer's alleged misrepresentation of women in *Troilus and Criseyde*. These legends of "secular saints" thus pose a basic question of considerable significance to readers of this journal. Is Chaucer a friend of woman; or, as Delany puts it, does the *Legend* "offer a new dignity to women, or is it more of the same old thing?" (p. 8).

Delany is in fact not very interested in answering questions such as these if they are asked in political or cultural isolation. Rather, as she explains in her "Prolocutory," her book is committed to unpacking the poem's overall ideology—an ideology defined broadly enough so as to include such interrelated issues as "sex and gender," "language and nature," "philosophy and theology," "reading and writing," "hagiography and classical literature," "English intellectual life and English foreign policy" (p. 2). Delany's central metaphor is the "naked text," a richly-defined term she deftly employs to explicate a variety of Chaucerian stratagems: mostly notably, a philosophical position that uncovers the constructedness of femininity and thus the "the impossibility of nakedness";