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**Review Essay: Frantzen, Allen J. and John D. Niles, eds. *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity***

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to reflect on the various types of criticism so often raised against the Jesuits. He takes note of their ban in 1773 by the pope, which was lifted in 1814, but quickly passes over this major interruption, focusing primarily on the constructive contributions by Jesuits worldwide. The article concludes with a final section on the Jesuit state in Paraguay and with a general praise of the beneficial consequences of Jesuit missionary work. The author compiled a brief bibliography, dividing it into the individual areas covered in each section.

The articles on all the other monastic orders receive similar attention and are arranged according to the same principles outlined above. At the end we find a cumulative bibliography, a list of the most important Catholic orders, a glossary of significant terms for orders, a general glossary, and a name index. The informational value of this reference work is superb, and both the structure of the articles and the style used by the various authors must be highly praised. It would be very desirable to have a comparable survey of monastic orders written in English.

Albrecht Classen  
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Frantzen, Allen J., and John D. Niles, eds. *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1997. 242 pp., illustrations. \$49.95.

This collection of nine essays, most of which began as papers delivered at Berkeley's Old English Colloquium in 1994, extends the research program envisioned by Allen J. Frantzen in *Desire for Origins* (1990). In that book Frantzen downplays philological approaches to Old English works in favor of exploring the shifting cultural contexts of Anglo-Saxon studies. Like its precursor, *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* focuses on the history of Anglo-Saxonism as an idea and cultural force. The authors are especially interested in how Anglo-Saxonism has been used over the centuries to sponsor various and sometimes surprising notions of political, religious, and racial identity. As several of these essays demonstrate, this "series of purposeful appropriations"—the editors' working definition of culture—was well underway even during the Anglo-Saxon period. This point alone disables the predictable criticism that the contributors have forsaken the investigation of Anglo-Saxon

language and literature in favor of trendier cultural studies. It is more useful, perhaps, to regard this collection as the thoughtful multifaceted analysis of an elusive but persistent desire for an unmediated encounter with the past and its literature.

The Reformation provides the backdrop for the first study, in which Frantzen shows how a particular notion of Anglo-Saxonism emerges from John Bale's sixteenth-century commentary on Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. In one episode of Bede's work, itself a strong statement of eighth-century Anglo-Saxonism, Gregory the Great notices a group of boys at the marketplace in Rome. Told that they are called "Angli," or English, Gregory puns on the Latin word for angel. Following established anti-Roman rhetorical strategies of his day, Bale implies that Gregory's interest in the boys was sexual. By doing so, Frantzen claims, Bale "queers" Bede by calling attention to the possibility of homosexual relations in the episode. At least one of Bale's contemporaries took the bait; in 1565, Thomas Stapleton's translation of Bede's *History* calls Bale a "venimous spider being filthy and uncleane himself" who deliberately injected Bede's account with "poisonned sence and meaning." Rather than vilifying Bale for this rhetorical strategy, Frantzen argues that Bale's anti-Roman diatribe "must be understood in the context of this idealization of marriage and his ardent defense of women's position" (27). Frantzen concludes the essay by contrasting two versions of Anglo-Saxonism: Bede's, which emphasizes the lasting conversion of the English by the Roman church, and Bale's, which emerges as a response to Roman domination.

The next two essays examine the role of Anglo-Saxon kingly literature in shaping an English national identity. Mary P. Richards notes that the structure of the Anglo-Saxon law-codes resembles that of their Germanic counterparts on the Continent, though the Anglo-Saxons use of the vernacular is distinctive. She argues that the codes of Ine and Alfred in particular "reinforce the social structure, values, and sense of nationhood that appear as elements in the earlier royal codes" (45). Drawing their authority from both oral tradition and Christian ideology, these codes both reflected and helped to forge a self-conscious nationalism. They also provide a splendid example of culture as a complex "series of purposeful appropriations." Janet Thormann treats the poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, paying rather more attention than Richards to the performative quality of such literature. Viewing nationhood as a symbolic product, Thormann asserts that power must be reconfigured in

discourse for a nation to emerge. Not just any discourse will do. According to Thormann, the chronicle's list of events must be supplemented by narrative: "History takes form as a discursive production when chronological succession is motivated and directed by law, by the imposition of an arbitrary rule governing human relations, a rule which, in turn, depends on power" (61-62). Furthermore, Thormann argues, the traditional language of heroic poetry was especially suited to this task: "The prestige and traditionality of the verse language sponsor West-Saxon power as a national identity. In this sense, the poems are performances: they reactivate poetic tradition in order to assert a new discourse of history" (65).

Most of the subsequent essays focus on the reception of Anglo-Saxon literature. Suzanne Hagedorn's discussion of Alfred's preface to *Pastoral Care* supports her thesis that a single reception history allows us "to see in microcosm the larger cultural forces that have informed the discipline of Anglo-Saxon studies as a whole" (87). After tracking Alfred's preface through its various incarnations, Hagedorn concludes that "the reception history of Alfred's preface may serve as a capsule history of Old English scholarship as a whole, as the text appears in the context of sixteenth-century religious controversies, seventeenth-century political propaganda, eighteenth-century encyclopedic scholarship, and nineteenth-century nationalist and racialist ideas" (101). Robert Bjork's review of nineteenth-century Scandinavian scholarship, which he characterizes as remarkably vigorous despite its current obscurity, offers ample proof of Hagedorn's comments on the role of nationalism in Anglo-Saxon studies. J. R. Hall's piece on Anglo-Saxon studies in nineteenth-century America also provides a case study of that process and reveals two contradictory views of Anglo-Saxons, each exaggerated: on the one hand, a noble people whose institutions and laws prefigured liberal democracy; and on the other, "a mere handfull of hard and desperate Barbarian banditti, without letters, arts, property, moral or social institutions, or any other possession to make their own homes worth living at" (143). Gregory VanHoosier-Carey argues that postbellum Southerners identified with the post-Norman Conquest English as the defenders of a democratic society, robbed by an invading force of political freedoms, who preserved their language and eventually reclaimed their distinctive culture. Velma Bourgeois Richmond shows how Edwardian historical novels, especially juvenile literature, enshrined "Anglo-Saxon" values that, she claims, "should be recognized as one key factor in the emergence of

attitudes that produced, among many glorious achievements, a war of unparalleled proportions" (195).

The volume concludes with John D. Niles's sometimes playful reflections on culture as appropriation. After outlining five "laws" governing this process, Niles notes that "people appropriate what they will, from wherever they can get it, as part of an effort—whether conscious or unconscious, implicit or explicit, successful or unsuccessful—to shape the ground on which the historical present lies" (220). This claim is undoubtedly true. As we know from recent and painful experience, however, not all appropriations are intellectually or morally equal. (The introductory essay mentions, but the volume does not treat, the Nazi appropriation of Anglo-Saxon literature.) This book successfully depicts the persistence and plasticity of our desire for a usable past, but it also suggests how pernicious that desire can be if left unchecked by a critical historical imagination.

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Jolly, Karen Louise. *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1996. x + 251 pp. \$39.95/\$16.95.

The various Old English charms and cures drawn from tenth- and eleventh-century manuscripts such as *Bald's Leechbook* (MS Royal 12. D. XVII) and the *Lacnunga* (MS Harley 585) represent an obscure and intriguing corner of the Anglo-Saxon literary corpus. They integrate, in varying combinations, elements of Germanic folklore, classical medical theory, and Christian liturgy. They are not often studied, due in part to their utilitarian nature and in part to their generic instability; twelve of them are included in the sixth volume of the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* as poems, while the remainder are regarded as prose. They are most often studied as windows into Anglo-Saxon paganism or as source material for studies of medicinal or magical practices during the period. Karen Jolly of the University of Hawaii at Manoa provides a new perspective from which the charms can be considered: as components of the religious practices of late Saxon England.

Jolly's study brings together research into the nature of popular religion in England during the tenth and eleventh centuries and a detailed