

This is a pre-publication draft of a paper that will appear in a future issue of JEGP (tentatively October 2020, 119.4) by the University of Illinois Press.

What Do We Mean by Anglo-Saxon? Pre-Conquest to the Present

David Wilton, dave@wilton.net

13 September 2019

As an undergraduate majoring in Government and Law at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania in the 1980s I regularly passed by the dedicatory plaque in the lobby of the Kirby Hall of Civil Rights, a building built in 1930 and funded by one of the co-founders of the Woolworth's retail chain. The plaque reads, in part, "To provide facilities for instruction in the Anglo-Saxon ideals of the true principles of constitutional freedom, including the right of man to own property and do with it as he will."¹ Even as a politically naïve eighteen-year-old I recognized the racially problematic nature of this use of Anglo-Saxon, and the faculty and staff had recognized it too, artfully positioning a bulletin board so the plaque was obscured from casual view. To read the plaque, one had to walk around and step behind the bulletin board. Today the field of medieval studies, and in particular the sub-field that studies pre-Conquest England, faces the same problem with the term Anglo-Saxon. In this article I will provide evidence from linguistic corpora for what is often known or assumed from anecdotal experience, that the term is an identity label associated with whiteness and is often the self-identification preferred by white supremacists. While few, if any, professional medievalists today would associate themselves with such racist views, the continued use of Anglo-Saxon by those in the field perpetuates and lends legitimacy to those views. Furthermore, by continuing to use it we place the literary and historical study of the period into a silo of national identity that is, partially

at least, also defined by origins, race, and ethnicity.² As Daniel Remein has written, “For most English speakers in North America, Anglo-Saxon means white. [...] Anglo-Saxon Studies is facing a problem of how this field itself is raced, which conditions not only our capacity to think about race in early medieval Britain, but also how students’ and scholars’ very bodies enter the field.”³

While use of Anglo-Saxon is problematic, the use of Anglo-Saxonist as a label for professional medievalists who study the period is even more fraught. The Oxford English Dictionary gives two definitions of the term, both dating to the nineteenth century: “an expert in or student of Old English language, literature, and culture” and “person who believes in the importance or superiority of Anglo-Saxon language, people, or culture (past or present).”⁴ Not only is it easy to perceive the first definition as lending support and legitimacy to the second, but such a perception is justified by the history of the field of pre-Conquest studies.

The use of Anglo-Saxon as an ethnic identifier is also reinforced by the use of Anglo as a standalone term or in hyphenates to refer to people of white or, in colonial and post-colonial contexts, mixed-race descent. In his 1785 Notes on the State of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson uses Anglo-American to refer to Anglophones living in what is now Canada, and the standalone Anglo to refer to an English-speaking resident of Upper Canada is in place by 1800. Anglo-Indian meaning a British resident of India appears by 1805 and meaning a person of mixed British and Indian ancestry by the 1830s. And Anglo referring to English-speaking Americans, in contrast to Latin Americans, is in place by the 1840s with the expansion of American territory into that which had belonged to Mexico.⁵ These uses continue to be widespread in present-day vocabulary, lending legitimacy and strength to the use of Anglo-Saxon as an ethnonym. These

colonial and post-colonial uses are fascinating both in their own right and in relation to the uses of Anglo-Saxon, but further exploration of these terms' uses is beyond the scope of this current paper.

The roots of the field in the racially tinged political, legal, and scientific thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been well documented. Reginald Horsman's 1981 Race and Manifest Destiny was the first major study to engage with the racialized history of the study of pre-Conquest England. More recently the first chapter of Malcolm X. Vernon's 2018 The Black Middle Ages summarizes this history, outlining how Anglo-Saxonism allows for an unchanging, albeit mythological, political legacy that not only stretches back into the mists of time but also limits its patrimony to whites. Allen J. Frantzen's 1990 Desire for Origins builds on Horsman's work, giving a comprehensive history of the academic field.⁶ Unfortunately, Frantzen, while thoroughly documenting the origins of the field in the racial theories of the times, ignores other inequities and biases, especially regarding gender, and is somewhat polemical in presenting his ideas about the state and direction of the field. Five articles providing a less fraught overview of the field, plus another by Frantzen, can be found in the 2001 Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature, but these articles, like Frantzen's earlier book, only consider all-male schools in their review of the history of the field.⁷ And all of these studies fail to recognize how present-day white supremacist groups rely upon and weaponize pre-Conquest culture.⁸ For example, a 2008 series of articles on the state of pre-Conquest studies, while making occasional mention of the nationalist motivations for the creation of the field, makes no mention of how white supremacists misappropriate the term Anglo-Saxon and the work of academics.⁹ It would take the 2016 discovery of Frantzen's ties to the men's rights movement

and the emergence of white supremacist groups into mainstream discourse following Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and the 2017 racist march on Charlottesville for many medievalists to recognize the field's association with these racist groups, an association that had been there all along.¹⁰ The blindness of the field to the continued potency of this association can perhaps best be seen in the 1982 words of historian Hugh MacDougall:

The events of the twentieth century which have so reduced England's (and indeed Europe's) international position have left the myth of Anglo-Saxonism badly tarnished. Its educated defenders today are few, though it lives on as part of folk prejudice. Its principles still surface whenever, for example, the present-day champions of English cultural and racial supremacy, the members of the National Front, hold a public rally; or with greater subtlety, when the Prime Minister publicly expresses concern lest traditional English culture be "swamped" by alien influence and calls for "a clear prospect of an end to immigration." Yet it is doubtful if either the ethno-centrism of a neo-Fascist populist movement or the exasperations of a Tory leader faced with intractable domestic problems can do much to revive a spent myth which has outlived its political usefulness.¹¹

It is stunning how wrong this assessment was.

The current discussion of the topic of race and medieval studies can be said to begin with the 2015 issue of *Postmedieval*, "Making Race Matter in the Middle Ages," edited by Cord Whitaker.¹² But since the shocks of 2016, a group of medievalists of color have organized and initiated an ongoing and productive discourse on critical race theory and its application to and implications for medieval studies. As a result of these and other efforts, the field is finally

starting to take steps toward addressing the problem. It is not my intent in this paper to recap this discourse, but I will touch upon some of the major products of this discussion to give the context in which this paper appears. Geraldine Heng's 2018 The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages provides an excellent overview of how race was constructed in medieval Europe, although it does not specifically address pre-Conquest England to any significant degree.¹³ In December 2016, Sierra Lomuto blogged about how the field's lack of race consciousness perpetuates false stereotypes of whiteness in the European Middle Ages and enables white nationalists.¹⁴ The following August, the group Medievalists of Color published a widely read position paper on the subject.¹⁵ Carol Symes organized a panel on race, ethnicity, and historical studies at the 2018 meeting of American Historical Society.¹⁶ Dorothy Kim has called upon white medievalists to include discussions of race in their syllabuses and proactively engage their students on the topic, and Bryan William Van Norden has blogged about the reprisals Kim suffered for publishing her piece.¹⁷

In the more specific field of pre-Conquest studies, Eileen Joy has given a lecture, available on YouTube, that re-examines Frantzen's scholarship, his connections with the men's rights movement and the alt-right, and the racist and nationalist roots of the field.¹⁸ Mary Dockray-Miller has provided a useful corrective to some of the limitations of the older histories of the field in a 2017 JSTOR Daily blog post and a book on pre-Conquest studies in American women's colleges.¹⁹ Adam Miyashiro and M. Rambaran-Olm have written about the continuing racial homogeneity of the field. And Carla María Thomas has blogged about the importance of discourse on race in pre-Conquest studies and how it should not be left to the most precarious scholars in the field: young scholars of color.²⁰

However, when it comes to the continued use of Anglo-Saxon, while many have discussed how the term is problematic, there has been little in the way of actual data on the term's use to inform the discussion. Two previous articles, one in 1929 by Kemp Malone and one in 1985 by Susan Reynolds, have addressed how Anglo-Saxon was used in the pre-Conquest era, but not only are they quite dated, they do not address its use after 1066.²¹ More recently in May 2017, Daniel C. Remein delivered a paper at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo on how the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS) should change its name. And Donna Beth Ellard has published an autoethnography on the problematic nature of using Anglo-Saxonist to describe herself, a white native of Mississippi. She also has a forthcoming monograph, not available at the time of this writing, on the subject.²² None of these studies, however, comprehensively examines how Anglo-Saxon has been used from the early medieval period into the present day.

This paper attempts to fill this gap by using linguistic corpora and other databases to examine the history of the term Anglo-Saxon from the pre-Conquest era through to the twenty-first century, providing the first comprehensive, data-driven look at how the term Anglo-Saxon has been used over the centuries. The data shows that present-day use of Anglo-Saxon as a label of identity is by no means limited to white supremacist groups who, until quite recently, were thought to be on the fringe: on the contrary, this sense is quite mainstream, including in the academy outside the field of medieval studies. The use of Anglo-Saxon as an identity label for whiteness, with roots in nineteenth-century white-supremacist ideology, influences both how those outside the field view Anglo-Saxon studies and how those of us inside the field approach both our work and our fellow medievalists of color.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper I rely on published linguistic corpora, and wherever possible freely available ones, to provide the data underlying my analysis and conclusions. I use three corpora for the medieval period. For Continental Latin, I use the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH). While this work is not strictly speaking a linguistic corpus, its online version is searchable and can, in a limited fashion, function as one. For Old English, I use the University of Toronto's Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus and for Middle English the University of Michigan's Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse.²³ The DOE Corpus differs from the other corpora I use here in that it is a database of nearly all Old English texts instead of a representative sample. There is no readily available corpus of Anglo-Latin texts, so for insular Latin uses I have relied upon the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources and those online versions of texts I could find.²⁴ There may be Anglo-Latin uses of Anglo-Saxon that I have not discovered, but if so, none of the extant literature addressing this question makes reference to them.

For post-medieval English, I rely upon English-Corpora.org, a collection of corpora hosted by Brigham Young University. The Corpus of Early Modern English covers the period 1475–1800 C. E. and contains 40,300 texts comprising more than 1.28 million words.²⁵ The texts are drawn from the Evans Early American Imprints collection, Early English Books Online (EEBO), and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO). For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century uses I rely primarily upon the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), which contains 400 million words ranging in date from 1810 to 2009, although I only use this data through 1989.²⁶ There is a lack of readily available corpora covering non-US English from before the late twentieth century. Because data for this period is badly needed, I

include analysis of appearances of Anglo-Saxon in the Hansard Corpus, which at 1.6 billion words contains nearly every speech given in the British parliament from 1805–2005.²⁷ But care needs to be taken when comparing the parliamentary uses with general ones. The Hansard Corpus covers a specific genre—political speeches—by a specific class of individuals—British politicians—and is therefore not representative of other types of speech or writing.

For present-day English, I use four corpora. The Corpus of Contemporary American English contains 560 million words from 1990–2017. The Strathy Corpus of 50 million words contains Canadian uses from the 1970s to the 2000s. And the British National Corpus (BNC) contains 100 million words from the 1980s to 1993. Because the BNC ends its coverage in 1993, I include results from the Corpus of News on the Web (NOW Corpus) from the years 2012–13 and 2017–18 to cover more current pre- and post-Brexit/Trump uses. The NOW Corpus contains over 7.8 billion words from web-based news and magazine sites from 2010 to the present (that is April 2019). I also use the NOW Corpus for data on present-day, English-language usage in other countries.²⁸

Unfortunately, corpora containing historical data from outside the U.S. are not readily available. So those are gaps in the data and analysis presented here. There are also gaps created by my limitations as an individual researcher. I would have very much liked to query non-English corpora, especially Mexican Spanish, metropolitan and Quebecois French, and German, but I do not have the language proficiency needed to take on that task. Additionally, a corpus of white supremacist literature is needed to fully understand how those groups use and weaponize language, but the underground nature of that movement makes finding comprehensive data difficult. Assembling such a representative corpus would have delayed publication of this current

paper, perhaps by a year or more. These avenues of research should be followed up by scholars with the necessary language proficiency and, in the case of white supremacist literature, requires a longer time frame and perhaps is best conducted as part of a larger, funded project of studying these groups.

I have catalogued and coded each of the post-medieval uses of Anglo-Saxon in the corpora into one of three broad categories: historical use of the term in reference to pre-Conquest England and the Old English language; use of the term to mark ethnic or racial identity; and use of the term to mark a non-ethnic, politico-cultural distinction.

When read in context, references to pre-Conquest England are unambiguous and pose no problems in categorization. I have included descriptions of profane or plain, present-day English vocabulary in the pre-Conquest category as such descriptions are based on the belief, well-founded or not, that such words have etymological roots in Old English. Someone else might place these uses in the politico-cultural category or break them out into a fourth category, but they account for only about 2% of all uses, so their categorization does not have a significant effect on the analysis.

I have classified as ethno-racial any use of Anglo-Saxon that is applied to an individual person, that refers to physiognomy, personal appearance, DNA or genetics or ancestry, or that contrasts Anglo-Saxon with another ethnic or racial group, as well as instances of the phrase white Anglo-Saxon Protestant and the acronym WASP. For example, we find this ethno-racial use from the corpus in a discussion of cosmetic surgery:

Michael Jackson's grotesque metamorphosis is the most celebrated and egregious but by no means the only example of this trend. But the ability to reinvent

ourselves physically raises the old question of authenticity [...] most aesthetic procedures are designed to enable the patient to pass as something he or she does not feel, whether it be younger or sexier or more Anglo-Saxon than accidents of nature and birth have determined.²⁹

Here the author of the piece not only uses Anglo-Saxon to refer to physiognomic features, but she connects them with Michael Jackson, whose cosmetic surgeries had highly charged racial implications. She clearly represents Anglo-Saxon as the physiognomic and racial ideal and interprets attempts by non-whites to achieve that ideal as, at best, inauthentic and, at worst, “grotesque.”

I use the term ethno-racial because the distinction does not always fall along the lines that we today define as racial. For instance, earlier uses of Anglo-Saxon in the U.S. might distinguish between those of British and German heritage from those with Italian or Greek heritage, all of which today would fall into the racial category of white. Or present-day British usage might use Anglo-Saxon to distinguish the English from the Welsh, Scots, or Irish.

The third category contains references to the politics, economics, and culture of present-day Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and especially the trans-national characteristics that these nations share that are not explicitly ethnic or physiognomic. This third sense is often used to distinguish policies and culture of Britain and the U.S. from those of the Continent. This sense dates to at least 2 March 1877, when it was used in a speech by William Harcourt in the British House of Commons, “Upon that subject there were two distinct schools—the Continental, and what he should call the Anglo-Saxon, as the English and American writers were not divided on the subject.”³⁰ Later use of the sense appears to be influenced by present-day

French, which uses le Anglo-Saxon to refer to American and British dominance of Western political and economic institutions.³¹ For example, we find this 2010 example from the New York Times in the corpus:

For the last decade or so, the European Commission, the European Union’s policy-drafting arm, has favored the Anglo-Saxon model of loosely regulated markets over the more statist impulses of France, Italy and, to a lesser extent, Germany.³²

This use of Anglo-Saxon as a label for the flavor of capitalism practiced in and championed by the United States and Britain is quite common in economic and political discourse. While it is divorced from any overt notion of ethnicity, it remains a label for a contemporary national, or even transnational, identity.

For its part, the OED does not distinguish between the ethno-racial and the politico-cultural, providing, for the adjective, only the overarching definition of “rhetorically: designating people of English (or British) heritage or descent, or (more generally) of Germanic origin; of or relating to such people.”³³ But as can be seen from the above quotations, Anglo-Saxon is also used in contexts that are divorced from ethnicity and is used to refer to international institutions and policies and the multi-ethnic nations and societies that share linguistic, political, and cultural traditions with England.

Distinguishing between the overt ethno-racial and the politico-cultural uses is usually clear, but I have had to exercise judgment in ambiguous cases. For example, during the 2012 U.S. presidential election an aide to Republican candidate Mitt Romney said about the U.S.–U.K. relationship, “We are part of an Anglo-Saxon heritage, and [Romney] feels that the special

relationship is special. The [Obama] White House didn't fully appreciate the shared history we have."³⁴ This remark could be categorized as politico-cultural, a reference to the shared political heritage of the two nations. Or it could be categorized as ethno-racial, a throwback to the "Anglo-Saxon ideals" mentioned in the Kirby Hall plaque or as a race-baiting dog-whistle indicating that the African-American Obama does not share this common heritage. This original quotation does not appear in the corpora I have used, but the aide's remark engendered a discussion on the PBS Newshour that is captured by the corpora and the data I present in this paper:

MARGARET WARNER This comment about Anglo-Saxon.

LAUREN ASHBURN This comment about Anglo-Saxon, yes. They said that he's like Sarah Palin in a suit without lipstick and he can't talk about Mormonism, his job as a governor, or Bain. All he has to do is talk about the fact that he's white.

HOWARD KURTZ There's a racial undertone to it, but, again, we don't know how he said it or how close they are or not to the Romney campaign.³⁵

While the original remark is ambiguous, this subsequent discussion clearly interprets the remark in an ethnic context, so I have categorized these subsequent uses of the term as ethno-racial.

There are, however, only a small number of such uses in the corpora that are truly ambiguous by the criteria I use to distinguish the categories.

While my criteria draw a sharp distinction between the ethno-racial and politico-cultural denotations of Anglo-Saxon, it is often impossible to discern the connotations, either intended or received, that the term may carry in any particular instance. For instance, a reader may see ethnic implications in an economic discussion that refers to the Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism.

Moreover, if one uses Heng's definition of race as "a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences" and not limited to the conventional, present-day understanding of race as being more narrowly defined by physiognomic or genetic factors, then this third, politico-cultural category may also be construed as racial, as it articulates differences between one transnational group and the rest of the world.³⁶ It is, therefore, more useful to view both the ethno-racial and the politico-cultural usages as identity labels that use different criteria to articulate difference. I have maintained the distinction in my analysis here because it is useful to know the incidence of the term's explicitly ethnic denotations.

PRE-CONQUEST USE OF ANGLO-SAXON

In the pre-Conquest era, there was a sharp distinction between continental and insular use of Anglo-Saxon. In England, the term was not commonly used as an ethnonym for the Germanic peoples who emigrated there beginning around the year 450, but continental usage, including that of English writers on the Continent, was different. The earliest known use of something like the term, albeit not in its exact form, is by Alcuin, who in a 786 letter refers to a synod held in "Anglorum Sax[o]nia"³⁷ (Saxony of the English), a reference not to an official synod as such but to a visit of papal legates to Mercia and Northumbria in that year. Alcuin refers not to a people but to a region—England—and he uses the term to distinguish those who live there from their continental forebears. Alcuin is using the term as a toponym, not an ethnonym—Mercia and Northumbria were Anglian, not Saxon, kingdoms, and Alcuin, Northumbrian by birth but writing from the Carolingian court, would not likely be mistaking the ethnic identity of his own people. Shortly after this letter, Paul the Deacon, in his Historia Langobardorum (a. 796), clearly uses the term in the form that we know it today, "vestimenta vero eis erant laxa et maxime linea, qualia

Anglisaxones habere solent”³⁸ (their garments were loose and mostly linen, such as the Anglo-Saxons were in the habit of wearing), and unlike Alcuin he uses it as an inclusive ethnonym, combining the Angles and Saxons into a single people. There are twenty appearances of the term in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, ranging from the late eighth through the twelfth century. Eighteen of these appearances are as inclusive ethnonyms, conflating and erasing ethnic distinctions by using it to refer to all English-speaking persons. Additionally, the two toponymic uses are relatively early ones, Alcuin’s and one from the ninth-century Vita Bertuini. The appearances in the MGH are listed in the appendix to this article.

Insular use of the term Anglo-Saxon, however, is quite different. It appears only three times in Toronto’s Dictionary of Old English Corpus,³⁹ and I have found thirty-seven Anglo-Latin texts from the period that contain the term, excluding variant copies. All but one of these texts are charters and use the term in royal titles, where the term does not refer to England or the English in general, but, as the OED notes, specifically to the union of the Anglian Mercia and the Saxon Wessex under Alfred and his heirs.⁴⁰

The earliest of these Anglo-Latin uses is found in an 891 charter that refers to Alfred as “Anglorum Saxonum rex”⁴¹ (king of the Anglo-Saxons). Nineteen of these insular uses, just under half, refer to either Alfred or his son Edward. In these, the reference is clearly not to all of the English-speaking people of Britain, as Alfred and Edward did not rule, nor did they claim to rule, all the kingdoms in what is now England—in particular Northumbria. It is, instead, a reference only to the Angles of Mercia and the Saxons of Wessex. And all the insular appearances through the year 930, during the reign of Æthelstan, twenty-four in number, are in a similar form to the one quoted above. Additionally, there is one Alfredian charter, Birch 561,

that does not use the term Anglo-Saxon per se, but refers to Alfred as “rex Anglorum et Saxonum”⁴² (king of the Angles and the Saxons), indicating that these were considered distinct peoples. But starting with Æthelstan, royal titles become more complex and exhibit greater variation.

Three earlier charters refer to Æthelstan with the older, simpler form. Then in 934 he becomes “Angul Saxonum necnon et totius Britanniae rex”⁴³ (king of the Anglo-Saxons and indeed all of Britain), and by the end of his reign he is designated “AngulSexna and Norphymbra imperator, paganorum gubernator, Britannorumque propugnator”⁴⁴ (emperor of the Anglo-Saxons and Northumbrians, governor of the pagans, and defender of the Britons). Here again the term Anglo-Saxon does not encompass the Angles of Northumbria, but probably still refers only to Mercia and Wessex. It also distinguishes the Britons as a separate people with a different relationship to the king, a lesser people needing royal protection. The pagans in the title may be a reference to Danish inhabitants or perhaps to anyone who lives outside the normal conventions of the Christian polity, a designation of alterity that extends the king’s authority to all persons in the realm. As the kings’ dominions grew beyond Mercia and Wessex, the land of the Anglo-Saxons, their titles grew more complex to reflect the growing diversity of their realms.⁴⁵ The one non-titular, Anglo-Latin use of Anglo-Saxon, in Lantfred’s life of Swithun, refers to people coming to be healed by the saint from “diversis Anglosaxonum finibus”⁴⁶ (diverse Anglo-Saxon regions). Given that Swithun was bishop of Winchester, it is likely that this is also a reference to regions in Mercia-Wessex, not Britain as a whole. But then, given the hagiography’s late date from c. 1000, it may be more encompassing, reflecting a later sense of political unity.

But while Anglo-Saxon was commonly used in Latin texts of the pre-Conquest period, it

is vanishingly rare in Old English ones. The three Old English uses of the term do not appear until the tenth century and mirror the uses of the insular Latin. And two of these three are macaronic, blending Latin and Old English, hinting that the use of the term in these texts stems from Latin, rather than Old English, usage. A 934 charter refers to Æthelstan as “Ongolsaxna cyning & brytænwalda eallæs ðyses Iglanðæs”⁴⁷ (king of the Anglo-Saxons and wide-ruler of all this island), and one from 955 refers to “Angulseaxna Eadred cyning & casere totius Britannie Deo gratia”⁴⁸ (Eadred, by the grace of God, king of the Anglo-Saxons and emperor of all Britain). There is one poetic use of the term, in the tenth-century macaronic poem Aldhelm, which reads:

Ealdelm æþele sceop etiam fuit

ipselos on æðele Angolsexna, byscop in Bretene⁴⁹

(Aldhelm, a bishop in Britain, he was also exalted as a noble poet in the land of the Anglo-Saxons).

Aldhelm was of the Wessex royal house and served as abbot at Malmesbury and as bishop of Sherbourne, so the Angolsexna here may again refer to Mercia-Wessex, or, given the later date of the poem, it may be a reference to all of England.

So, the evidence from the pre-Conquest period indicates that continental sources unambiguously referred to English-speaking people as Anglo-Saxons, but Anglo-Latin sources avoided this wider definition, at least until the reign of Æthelstan and the emergence of a kingdom that comprised all of what is now England. Instead, they restricted the term’s use almost exclusively to royal titles, where it referred, not to all the English-speaking kingdoms, but only to Wessex and Mercia. And more strikingly, the term is all but absent in Old English texts.

But if the Germanic peoples of Britain did not use Anglo-Saxon as a collective term for themselves, they did use the term's two roots separately. There are 450 appearances of seax (Saxon) in the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, most of which, 407 in number, are in compounds like westseax (West-Saxon), eastseax (East-Saxon), or suðseax (South-Saxon), indicating that the standalone seax was not widely used as an inclusive term in Old English.⁵⁰ The pre-Conquest English even distinguished insular Saxons from continental ones, referring to the latter as ealdseax (Old Saxons) 20 times in the DOE corpus. Earlier insular Latin texts also use saxon as the collective term, but there is no documented use of the term angli in Britain before the eighth century.⁵¹ Bede, of course, popularized that term with his gens anglorum, although this phrasing is not original to him. Bede's use of the term appears to have been influenced by Gregory the Great, who, unlike his contemporaries, used angli in his own writing.⁵² This preference for Angle/English is carried forward in the extant Old English texts, most of which postdate Bede. Most, but not all; for instance, the earliest attestation of the word engliscmon (Englishman) is in Ine's law code (a. 726), applied to the people of Wessex, a Saxon kingdom.⁵³ So the preferred Old English, inclusive term for the Germanic peoples of Britain was englisc, which appears some 225 times in the corpus as an adjective or substantive adjective and some 350 times as a noun, or angelcynn, which also appears some 225 times.⁵⁴ In other words, while saxon and seax had currency early in the pre-Conquest period, that root gave way to englisc, largely due to the influence of Bede, leaving compound forms of seax to refer to specific Saxon sub-identities.

To summarize, the pre-Conquest English people simply did not refer to themselves as Anglo-Saxons. And when they used the term in Anglo-Latin texts, they did not follow the

continental practice of using it to refer to all the Germanic peoples of England, but limited its meaning to the unified kingdom of Wessex and Mercia and its context to intitlature. They did occasionally, especially prior to the eighth century, use seax as an inclusive ethnonym, but more commonly compounded that root to refer to smaller ethnic groups. Instead, the terms that they overwhelmingly used as an inclusive ethnonym for themselves were englisc and angelcynn. But this pattern of usage would change with the Norman Conquest.

USE OF ANGLO-SAXON IN NORMAN AND EARLY-MODERN ENGLAND

Since its insular use, especially in Old English, was rare before the Conquest and almost exclusively limited to royal titles, it is not terribly surprising that following the arrival of the Normans the term Anglo-Saxon dropped out of English use, while the roots, English and Saxon, often in the Anglo-Norman form Sessoun, continued to be used.⁵⁵ Yet this continued use of Saxon was entirely in historical contexts, applied to pre-Conquest people and language, while English continued to be used for contemporary people or language.⁵⁶ And while texts continued to make marked reference to people like the West Saxons, the unmarked, standalone Saxon was revived as an inclusive term for pre-Conquest peoples. For instance, Lydgate's fifteenth-century The Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund says the East Anglian Edmund "was in Saxonie born of the roial blood."⁵⁷

While Anglo-Saxon is absent from the Middle English corpus, the OED does, however, cite two early uses of English Saxon. The first is in John Trevisa's 1387 translation of Higden's Polychronicon. Higden, paraphrasing the line from Paul the Deacon that is quoted above, uses "Angli-Saxones," which Trevisa translates as "Englisshe Saxons." In contrast, the anonymous fifteenth-century translation of Higden in BL, MS Harley 2261 renders Higden's Latin as

“Ynglische men and Saxons.”⁵⁸ Then in 1566, the Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Stapleton refers to Old English as the “english Saxon tounge.”⁵⁹ Like the earlier continental sources, Trevisa and Stapleton use the term to distinguish the Saxons of England from those on the Continent.

Anglo-Latin use of Anglo-Saxon continued sporadically through the late medieval period, Higden’s use of the term, cited above, being one example. Its revival was inspired by William Camden’s 1586 Britannia, where he uses it as a section title. He would go on to use the term in the body of his 1607 revised edition, where he displays awareness of how the term was used in the pre-Conquest period, noting:

Hi sunt Germaniae populi qui Britanniam occuparunt, quos vnam gentem suisse communiq; nomine nunc Saxones, nunc Anglos, & Anglo-Saxones ad differentiam eorum in Germania, ex Gilda, Beda, Bonifacio, Paulo Diacono, & alijs verissime colligatur : sed frequentissime Gens Anglorum Latine, & sua ipsorum lingua, quod idem valet, Engla-theod dicta.⁶⁰

(These are people of Germany who occupied Britain, who are joined into one common people, sometimes by the name Saxons, sometimes Angles, and Anglo-Saxons, most correctly gathered together according to their different [regions] in Germany, according to Gildas, Bede, Boniface, Paul the Deacon, and others, but most frequently gens Anglorum in Latin, and which is also signified in their own language by the words Engla-theod.)

Camden’s usage was picked up by George Puttenham in his 1589 The Arte of English Poesie, the first post-Conquest, English-language use of the term Anglo-Saxon.⁶¹ Puttenham also uses

the term English Saxon, indicating that he, like Trevisa and Stapleton before him, is using the terms to distinguish between continental and insular Saxons.⁶² Other English writers followed Puttenham's lead, and by the mid seventeenth century Anglo-Saxon was in use as an unambiguous term for the pre-Conquest, English-speaking peoples.⁶³

It is worth noting that this is the same period when the classification of the Middle Ages emerged. Indeed, Camden was one of the first to use that term in his 1605 Remaines of a Greater Worke where he gives samples of medieval poetry: "I will onely giue you a taste of some of midle age, which was so ouercast with darke clouds, or rather thicke fogges of ignorance, that euery little sparke of liberall learning seemed wonderfull."⁶⁴ So the revival of the term Anglo-Saxon appears during a period of looking to the past to revive a national patrimony.

There are 173 distinct appearances of Anglo-Saxon in the Corpus of Early Modern English, 49 from the seventeenth century and 124 from the eighteenth. While this increase hints that the term became more common over time, the lack of published information about the chronological distribution of texts in this corpus prevents firm conclusions about diachronic change within it. Of these 173 uses, all but one are references to the people and language of pre-Conquest England. The one exception is quite late, appearing in the transcript of the March 1794 sedition trial of Joseph Gerrald in Edinburgh. This text uses Anglo-Saxon to refer to the contemporary English legal and political system, in contrast to the Scottish:

The doctrines which I have advanced are founded upon the great and immutable principles of reason and of truth; that they are the sentiments of the most revered writers, Locke, Sydney, Jones—that even Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond formerly professed to act upon them; that they are perfectly congenial to the spirit

of the Anglo-Saxon government, and not in a great degree differing from the principles of the old constitution of Scotland.⁶⁵

That the use of Anglo-Saxon as a contemporary reference to England should come in a legal context is unsurprising, given that use of pre-Conquest legal codes as precedent for contemporary laws began with Laurence Nowell in the fifteenth century and in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would fully flower into the belief that the ideals of political liberty had roots in pre-Conquest England.⁶⁶ This use of Anglo-Saxon as a contemporary reference antedates the citations in the OED, which only records such contemporary references from the mid nineteenth century. Additionally, this politico-cultural use antedates its use as a contemporary ethnonym, which appear in the corpora beginning in 1830.

So Anglo-Saxon fell out of use for a time following the Norman Conquest, before being revived in the late sixteenth century. These first reappearances were in Latin, but the term quickly moved back into English usage. Still, these early-modern uses were almost all historical, referring to the pre-Conquest period. It is only at the end of the eighteenth century that we start to see the term being applied as a contemporary reference, and only in reference to the political and legal system of England, as opposed to Scotland. By the end of the eighteenth century, Anglo-Saxon is beginning to be used to mark contemporary English culture as distinct from others.

USE OF ANGLO-SAXON: 1800–1990

In the early nineteenth century we begin to see the three senses of Anglo-Saxon—the historical, the politico-cultural, and the ethno-racial—that have been in use through to the present day. Use of the term as a historical reference to pre-Conquest England continues; its use as a

contemporary, politico-cultural identifier grows and broadens to encompass the political, legal, economic, and cultural systems of the United States and British colonial dominions; and its use as an explicitly ethno-racial identifier appears by 1830.

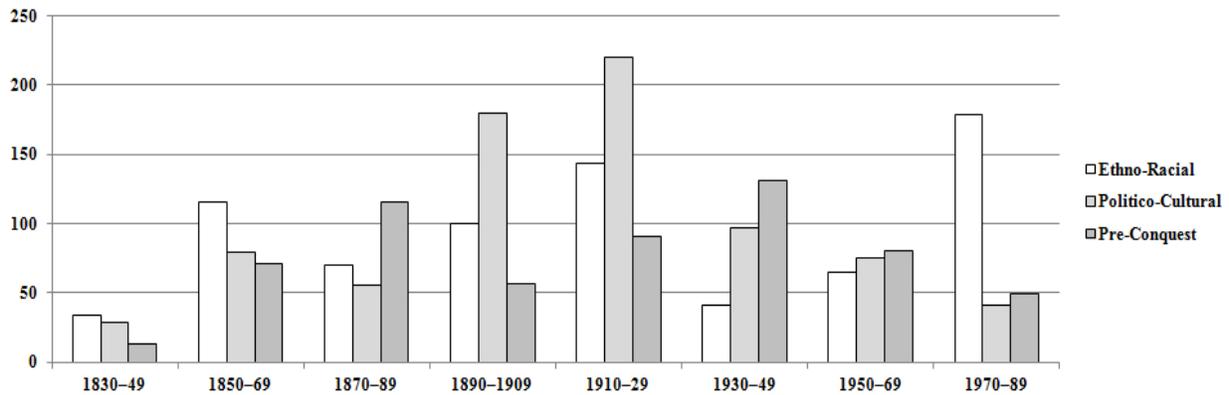
Unfortunately, comprehensive data for nineteenth-century British usage is lacking, but using data from the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), we can see that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there is an increase in the use of Anglo-Saxon in the United States. The first appearance of the term in the corpus is from 1830, and the distribution among the three senses through to 1990 is roughly equal, with about one third for each. But these overall numbers mask shifts within this 160-year period. Table 1 and Figure 1 give the appearances in COHA broken out into twenty-year periods. (Finer gradations in time result in low absolute numbers and too low a “signal to noise” ratio to be useful.)

Table 1: American Use of Anglo-Saxon, 1830–1989

	1830– 49	1850– 69	1870– 89	1890– 1909	1910– 29	1930– 49	1950– 69	1970– 89
Ethno-Racial	34 (45%)	116 (44%)	70 (29%)	100 (30%)	144 (32%)	41 (15%)	65 (30%)	179 (67%)
Pre-Conquest	29 (38%)	79 (30%)	55 (23%)	180 (53%)	220 (48%)	97 (36%)	75 (34%)	41 (15%)
Politico- Cultural	13 (17%)	71 (27%)	116 (48%)	57 (17%)	91 (20%)	131 (49%)	80 (36%)	49 (18%)
Total	76	266	241	337	455	269	220	269

Source: COHA

Figure 1: American Use of Anglo-Saxon, 1830–1989



Source: COHA

The frequency of the term was highest from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s, the period when immigration from Southern Europe peaked, Jim Crow laws were instituted, lionization of the Confederacy and the “lost cause” began, and membership in the Ku Klux Klan reached its height. This period, however, is dominated by its use as a politico-cultural identity label, not an ethno-racial one, perhaps because whiteness was assumed to be the standard in American society and there was less need to make the ethno-racial factor explicit. We see that explicitly ethno-racial uses of the term spiked in the period leading up to and through the Civil War and again starting in 1970, with “white flight” from the cities in the aftermath of the race riots of the late 1960s, the coinage of the term WASP, and a growing recognition that the United States was an ethnically diverse country where whiteness could no longer be assumed to be the standard. Use of Anglo-Saxon to refer to the pre-Conquest period remained fairly steady with two spikes between 1870–89 and 1930–49.

Unfortunately, there are no readily accessible corpora of non-American usage for this period. The Hansard corpus of British parliamentary speeches provides some insight into British use of Anglo-Saxon during the period, although these political speeches are not representative of

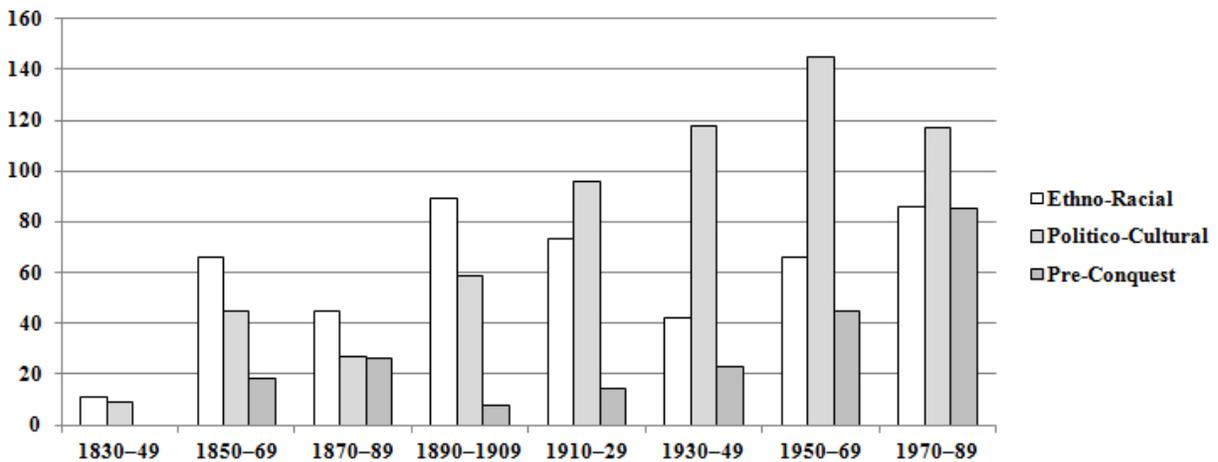
British discourse overall. We see the pattern of use in the British parliament in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: British Parliamentary Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1830–1989

	1830– 49	1850– 69	1870– 89	1890– 1909	1910– 29	1930– 49	1950– 69	1970– 89
Ethno-Racial	11 (55%)	66 (51%)	45 (46%)	89 (57%)	73 (40%)	42 (23%)	66 (26%)	86 (30%)
Pre-Conquest	9 (45%)	45 (35%)	27 (28%)	59 (39%)	96 (52%)	118 (64%)	145 (57%)	117 (41%)
Politico-Cultural	0 (0%)	18 (14%)	26 (27%)	8 (5%)	14 (8%)	23 (13%)	45 (18%)	85 (30%)
Total	20	129	98	156	183	183	256	288

Source: Hansard

Figure 2: British Parliamentary Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1830–1989



Source: Hansard

The frequency of Anglo-Saxon's appearance in parliamentary speeches increases steadily over the period. Early use is dominated by explicitly ethno-racial references, with that switching to politico-cultural references around the time of World War I and the growth of the Anglo-American political and military alliance. It should be noted that many of the ethno-racial references in parliamentary speech are in the context of distinguishing English from Welsh,

Scottish, and Irish identity. Historical references to the pre-Conquest area remain low for most of the period, which is unsurprising given this is political speech about contemporary topics, but starts to rise in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In both American general discourse and British political speech, the use of Anglo-Saxon rises throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the three senses all become firmly established. Throughout the period, the distribution of the senses varies, with the ethno-racial and politico-cultural being dominant at different periods, but throughout the two centuries the term's use as a contemporary identifier remains more common than its use as a historical reference.

PRESENT-DAY USE OF ANGLO-SAXON

This pattern continues from 1990 onward in non-British Anglophone speech. Its use as an ethno-racial identifier is predominant in American, Canadian, and Australian usage. This pattern can be seen in both academic and non-academic discourse. Its use as a politico-cultural identifier tends to prevail in most other Anglophone communities. But British use differs from the rest of the world, with the rise in pre-Conquest references seen in the later years of the Hansard corpus numbers continuing to rise until pre-Conquest references are dominant.

There are 1,250 appearances of the term Anglo-Saxon in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), running from 1990 to 2017, excluding translations and quotations from and titles of pre-1990 texts. The uses of Anglo-Saxon found in COCA can be seen in Table 3 and are graphically represented in Figure 3. The classification of source texts by genre is COCA's own. Fully two thirds of all uses are as a marker of ethnic or racial identity. That percentage drops somewhat in academic texts because such texts use the acronym WASP with less frequency. Yet the incidence of Anglo-Saxon to refer to pre-Conquest England is only

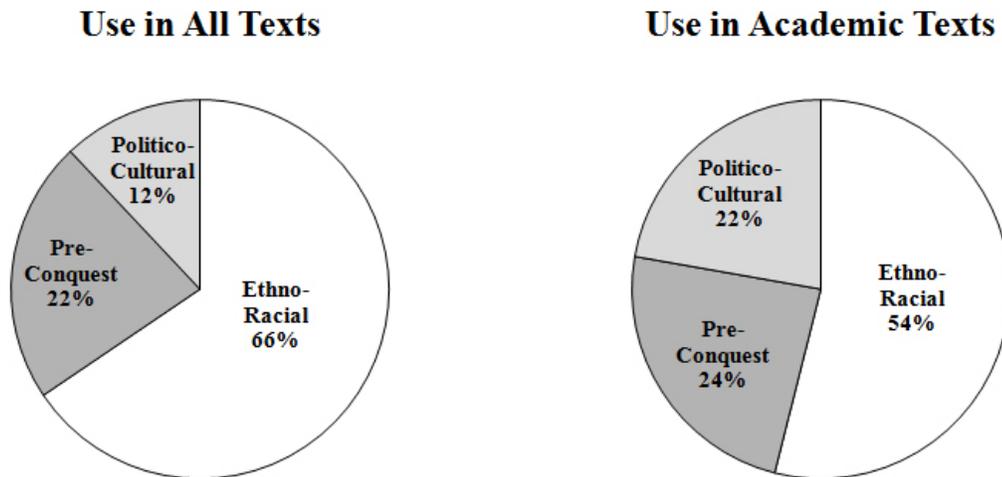
slightly higher in academic texts due to the widespread use of Anglo-Saxon in the fields of ethnic studies as a marker of whiteness, regardless of actual ancestry. For example, there is this 2011 use from American Indian Quarterly: "Instead of the term ‘colonialism,’ we might refer to the workings of the ideology of Manifest Destiny and the interests of Anglo-Saxon supremacy that it promotes."⁶⁷ The highest incidence of use of the term in reference to pre-Conquest England is in the magazine genre, primarily because of articles about pre-Conquest England in publications like History Today and Military History. As one might expect, the ethno-racial use is dominant in fiction, news, and speech.

Table 3: American Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1990–2017

	Academic		Fiction		Magazine		News		Spoken		Total	
Ethno-Racial	199	54%	199	87%	213	56%	134	77%	74	79%	819	66%
Pre-Conquest	88	24%	21	9%	144	38%	16	9%	12	12%	281	22%
Politico-Cultural	82	22%	10	4%	26	7%	24	14%	8	9%	150	12%
Total	369		230		383		174		94		1250	

Source: COCA

Figure 3: American Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1990–2017



Source: COCA

Note that COCA draws from mainstream publications and does not include hardcore racist and white-supremacist publications, like The Daily Stormer. Use of Anglo-Saxon to refer to racial identity in such circles is likely to be much higher. As mentioned above, I have not conducted a systematic survey of such literature, but here is an example of such a use from a book review posted to a white-supremacist blog. After claiming that his bona fides include the fact that he himself is descended from pure English stock, the reviewer writes:

Taylor also worries about the negative impact of miscegenation—but only the racial mixing of Whites with Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians. He is not concerned that the Anglo-Saxon race is being “denatured” by mixing with other phenotypically White ethnic groups.⁶⁸

Among some circles of white supremacists, at least, Anglo-Saxon is not only a marker for whiteness but is the term for the pinnacle of ethnic perfection among whites.

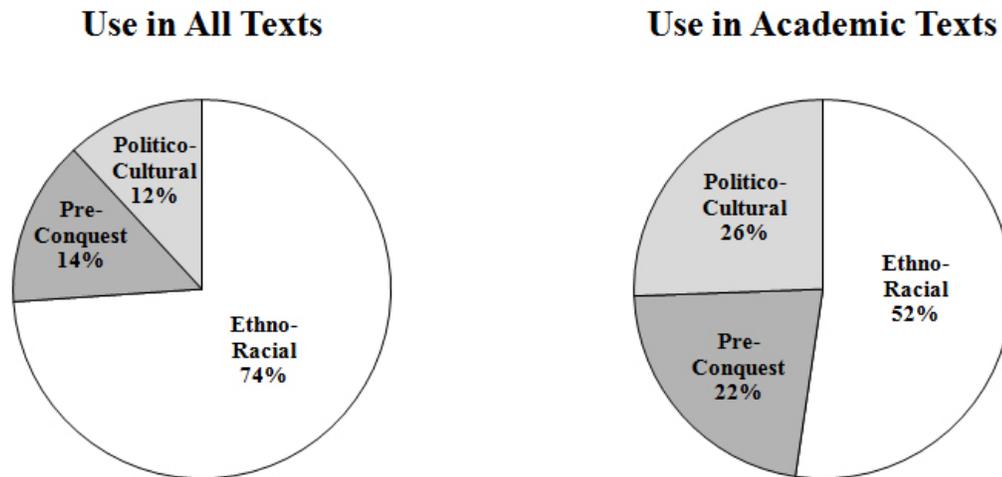
COCA only contains U.S. sources, but a comparison with the Strathy Corpus of Canadian English shows the pattern holds for Canada as well. As can be seen in the data presented in Table 4 and Figure 4, Canadian use of Anglo-Saxon roughly parallels that of the United States, although the use of the term in an ethno-racial context is higher in general discourse.⁶⁹ The pattern of usage in academic discourse is almost an exact match to that found in the United States. One difference within the ethno-racial category is that Canadians also use Anglo-Saxon, and not just Anglo, to refer to Anglophones, distinguishing them from Francophones, which may also account for the higher rate of ethno-racial usage in general discourse than is found in the United States.

Table 4: Canadian Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1970–2011

	Academic		Fiction		Magazine		News		Non-Fiction		Total	
Ethno-Racial	45	52%	23	88%	58	89%	2	38%	28	100%	156	74%
Pre-Conquest	19	22%	2	8%	3	5%	1	25%	0	0%	25	12%
Politico-Cultural	22	26%	1	4%	4	6%	3	37%	0	0%	30	14%
Total	86		26		65		6		28		211	

Source: Strathy Corpus

Figure 4: Canadian Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1970–2011



Source: Strathy Corpus

The distribution of British usage of Anglo-Saxon, however, is quite different from the North American. The British National Corpus (BNC) contains 100 million words from texts dating from 1980–93. The classification of genres differs significantly from COCA and the Strathy Corpus, but the genre of academic texts can be usefully compared. The BNC is somewhat older, with the latest texts from twenty-five years ago, but to ensure that there has not been a shift in more recent usage, particularly in the Brexit/Trump era, I have also queried the NOW Corpus of web-based newspapers and magazines from more recent years. The results from

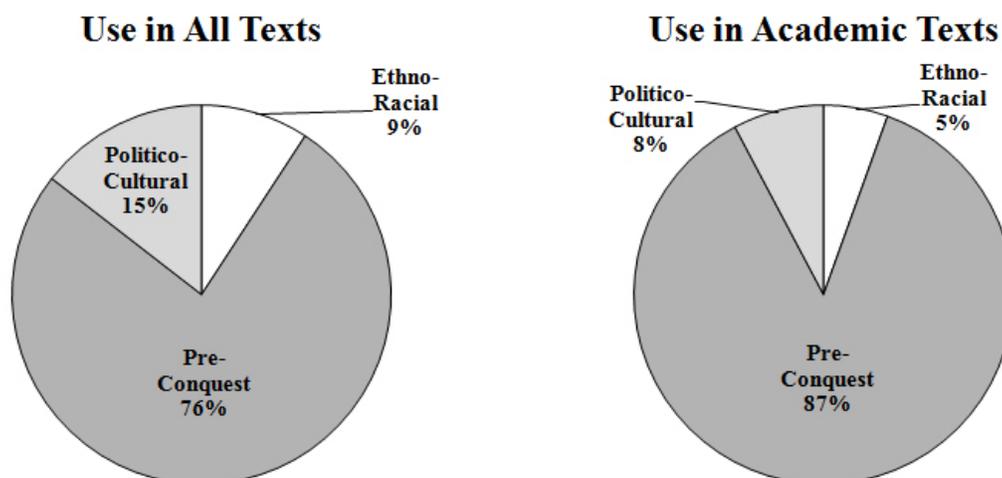
that corpus are similar to those from the BNC, so there does not appear to be any significant shift in British patterns of usage of Anglo-Saxon over the last twenty-five years. The BNC data can be found on Table 5 and Figure 5, and the NOW data is on Table 6 and Figure 6.

Table 5: British Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1980–1993

	Academic		Fiction		Magazine		Misc	
Ethno-Racial	17	6%	10	40%	10	30%	11	11%
Pre-Conquest	269	78%	12	48%	9	27%	75	72%
Politico-Cultural	24	8%	3	12%	14	42%	18	17%
Total	310		25		33		104	
<hr/>								
	Newspaper		Non-Academic		Spoken		Total	
Ethno-Racial	2	8%	8	6%	1	20%	59	9%
Pre-Conquest	15	58%	108	78%	1	20%	489	76%
Politico-Cultural	9	35%	22	16%	3	60%	93	15%
Total	26		138		5		641	

Source: BNC

Figure 5: British Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 1980–1993



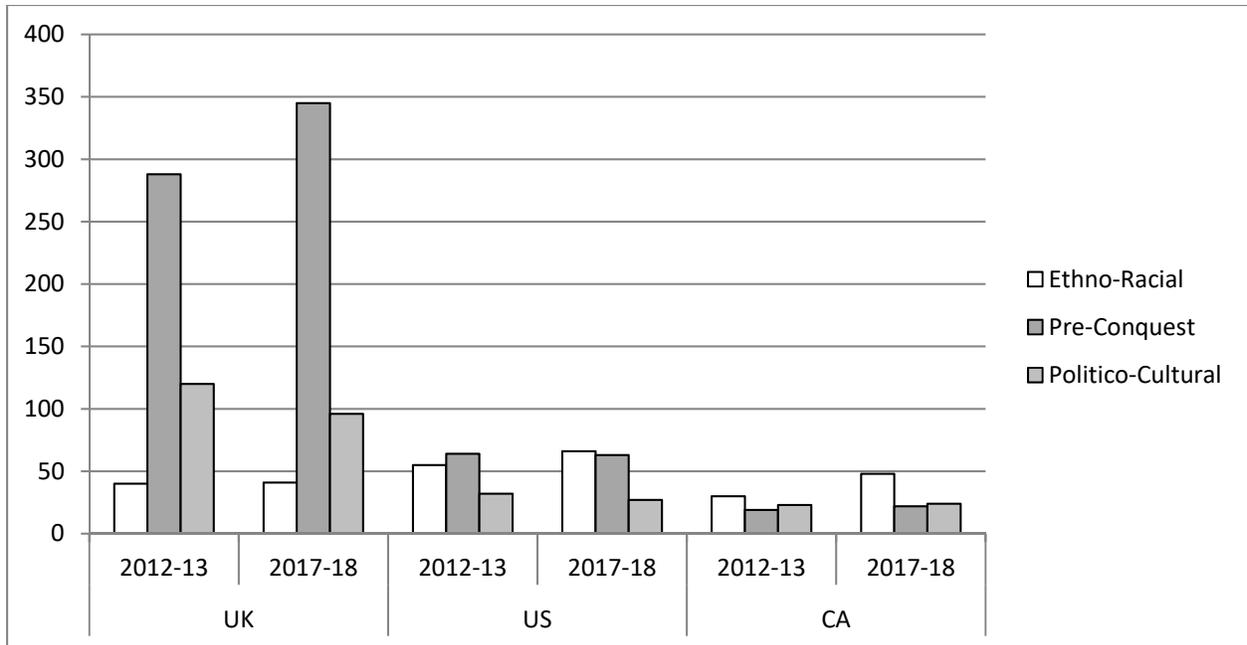
Source: BNC

Table 6: Web Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 2012–13 and 2017–18

	UK		US		CA	
	2012–13	2017–18	2012–13	2017–18	2012–13	2017–18
Ethno-Racial	40 (9%)	41 (9%)	55 (36%)	66 (42%)	30 (42%)	48 (51%)
Pre-Conquest	288 (64%)	345 (72%)	64 (42%)	63 (40%)	19 (26%)	22 (23%)
Politico-Cultural	120 (27%)	96 (20%)	32 (21%)	27 (17%)	23 (32%)	24 (26%)

Source: NOW Corpus

Figure 6: Web Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 2012–13 and 2017–18



Source: NOW Corpus

Unlike Anglophone North American usage, British use of Anglo-Saxon is dominated by references to the pre-Conquest era, undoubtedly due to the period's historical and archeological significance to the United Kingdom, significance which is much less pronounced in the case of North America. The higher absolute numbers of appearances of the word in the U.K. is also undoubtedly due, at least in large part, to interest in national history.⁷⁰ Additionally, what these numbers alone do not show is that in British usage Anglo-Saxon is also used as a synonym for both English and British, two distinct concepts of national identity. Occasionally, the context of the use makes it clear that the writer is using Anglo-Saxon to denote an ethnically distinct English identity, as opposed to Scottish, Welsh, or Irish. I have categorized these cases as ethno-racial. But more commonly, the term is used without clear denotation as to whether it refers specifically to English or generally to British identity. I have categorized these ambiguous cases as politico-cultural. One might have expected an increase in the ethno-racial uses of Anglo-

Saxon since the advent of the Brexit era, but the data shows this not to be the case. Any impression otherwise is probably due to increased awareness of ethno-racial uses of the term. In other words, people are only now noticing the uses that have always been there or are now reading ethnic connotations into the term that they had not before.

The NOW Corpus data from the US and Canadian websites, however, is a bit different from that of the COCA and Strathy corpora. The percentage of ethno-racial usage is lower, although still quite high, and the use of Anglo-Saxon as a modern identity label remains above 50% in all cases. And within the NOW Corpus data for the US and Canada there has been an increase in the percentage of ethno-racial usage since 2012–13.

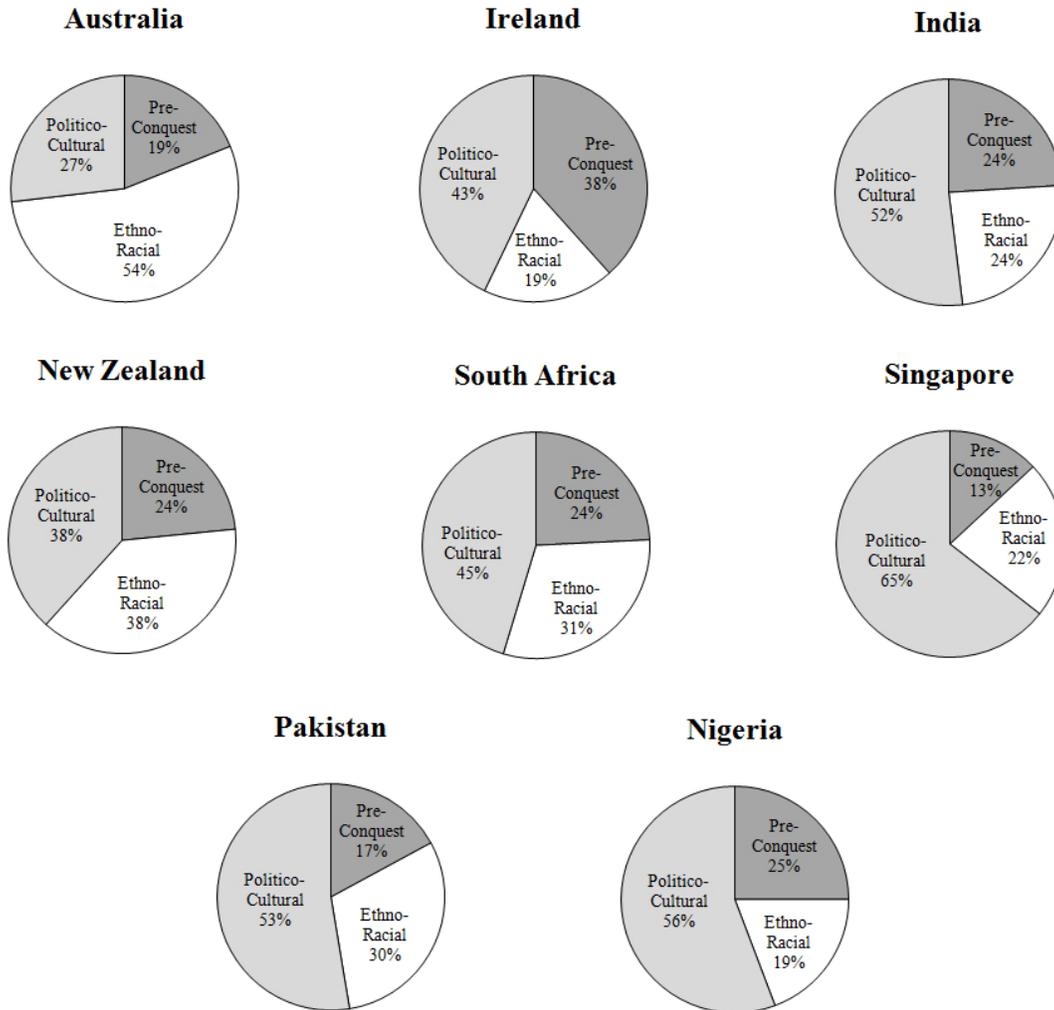
Historical data for the term's use by other Anglophone populations is not readily available, but we can look at present-day use of the term using the NOW Corpus. Table 7 and Figure 7 present English-language usage data from 2010 through April 2019 for Australia, Ireland, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, Pakistan, and Nigeria.⁷¹

Table 7: Other Nations' Web Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 2010–April 2019

	Aust	Ireland	India	NZ	SA	Sing	Pak	Nigeria
Ethno-Racial	206 (54%)	50 (19%)	49 (24%)	67 (38%)	39 (31%)	24 (22%)	23 (30%)	10 (19%)
Pre-Conquest	72 (19%)	102 (38%)	49 (24%)	41 (24%)	31 (24%)	14 (13%)	13 (17%)	13 (25%)
Politico-Cultural	102 (27%)	114 (43%)	106 (52%)	67 (38%)	58 (45%)	69 (65%)	40 (53%)	29 (56%)
Total	380	266	204	175	128	107	76	52

Source: NOW Corpus

Figure 7: Other Nations' Web Uses of Anglo-Saxon, 2010–April 2019



Source: Now Corpus

Use of Anglo-Saxon in most of these nations is dominated by the politico-cultural sense, and its use as an identity label accounts for at least 75% of all uses in all but one. In Australia, Anglo-Saxon is primarily used as an identifier of whites, and such use is rather high in New Zealand as well. Ireland, with its proximity to the U.K. and its national history closely associated with that of England, has a higher percentage of pre-Conquest references, but even there it is less than 40%.

In summary, we have a sharp divergence in the present-day use of Anglo-Saxon. U.S., Canadian, and Australian usage is dominated by the term's use as an ethnic or racial marker, and in the case of the U.S. and Canada this holds true in both academic and non-academic texts. Ethno-racial use in those two countries is somewhat less in academic texts but is still well above 50%, indicating that the difference is not so much one of scholarly versus popular use, but that use of the term by medievalists is out of step with everyone else, including other academics. And less than a quarter of uses are in reference to pre-Conquest England. The converse is true for British usage, where some three quarters of the uses of the term are pre-Conquest references and only about one quarter are identity labels, either ethno-racial or politico-cultural. In other nations politico-cultural uses dominate, and the term's use in reference to the pre-Conquest period is about 25%, similar to that of the United States.

ADDRESSING THE ANGLO-SAXON PROBLEM

So we've seen that in pre-Conquest England Anglo-Saxon grew out of Alfred's melding of the kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia, and its insular use, at least until quite late in the pre-Conquest period, was not only limited in scope to the people of those two kingdoms but also almost entirely limited to the context of Latin royal intitlature. Instead, the Old English terms overwhelmingly preferred by insular writers were Englisc or Angelcynn. Since Anglo-Saxon had never been in common use in England, it disappeared entirely following the Norman Conquest, not reappearing until it was re-coined in the early modern period. Continental Latin use of the word, which in contrast to the insular was rather common, grew out of a need to distinguish the Angles and Saxons of England from their continental cousins. Since the early-modern English writers revived the term based on its Latin usage, our present-day use of the term stems from this

earlier continental usage.

Our current use of Anglo-Saxon as a label for the pre-Conquest period is, therefore, anachronistic. That's not necessarily a bar to its use; many historical labels are modern coinages. But it does present two other analytical problems. First, it implies and causes us to impute a degree of political and social unity among the Germanic peoples of pre-Conquest England that probably did not exist, at least not until the reign of Æthelstan or even later. And any ideas of ethnic or national identity among the peoples of pre-Conquest England certainly did not persist over the entire five-hundred-year span of the period. As Stephen Harris notes, "the 'Anglo-Saxon' of the age of Bede is not the same as the 'Anglo-Saxon' of the age of Alfred, and that whenever we speak of their stories, we are actually talking about two different theys."⁷² Second, its use where everything pre-Conquest is Anglo-Saxon and everything afterward is English implies a diachronic discontinuity of tradition between the pre- and post-Conquest periods. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the study of Anglo-Saxon was thought to be essential for establishing the empirical and civic legitimacy of American academic institutions and English departments in particular.⁷³ But today, at least in literary studies, the term divorces the pre-Conquest, Anglo-Saxon period from the English period that follows, lending weight to arguments that the period is not essential to the curriculum of English departments. Both of these effects—the false, or at least simplified, sense of pre-Conquest social and cultural unity and the severing of English literature studies from the oldest parts of its tradition—can negatively impact our thinking as scholars and how the general public perceives our field.

But the present-day use of Anglo-Saxon as a label for ethnic, white identity or as a term for American and British political and economic policies and institutions poses a more

compelling challenge to the continued use of the term in the field of medieval studies. The data shows that how we medievalists today use the term is at odds with its use elsewhere in the academy and by the general public, especially outside of Britain. As a result, our continued use of Anglo-Saxon, wittingly or not, maintains race and ethnicity in a place at the center of our field. When anywhere from one quarter to two thirds of the uses of Anglo-Saxon are as some form of present-day identity label, the continued use as a historical label increases the chance that the field of pre-Conquest studies will be understood, rightly or wrongly, as upholding the ideals of white nationalism, not only by the general public, but within the academy by scholars in other fields. At the very least its continued use as a label for pre-Conquest England reinforces the impression held by many that the field of Anglo-Saxon studies is a whites-only one.

There are simple and obvious substitutes for Anglo-Saxon. Old English is already firmly established as a term for the language and literature of the period, and early medieval English can be appropriate when one wants to blur the silos of periodization between Old and Middle English. Early English is available as well, but the vagueness of that term poses problems. Not only is it already a term for the Gothic architectural style of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it risks confusion with early modern English, and there is no general agreement on what its chronological boundaries are, it being used to encompass anything prior to 1800.⁷⁴ Pre-Conquest can be used to refer to the period, as I have done in this paper. Specific terms like West Saxon, Mercian, and Northumbrian are available as more precise substitutes for Anglo-Saxon. And when specificity is not possible, English is available for use, and its use would alleviate some of the misperception of historical discontinuity. With that last there is the possibility of confusion between the historical era and contemporary national identity, but no more so than does the use

of Briton and British for the Celtic, pre-Conquest peoples of the island. Likewise, whenever possible we can use the more specific Peterborough or Winchester Chronicle in place of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Not only does the use of such substitutes side-step the ethnic issue, their use is often more precise and analytically rigorous.

More difficult is determining what identity label those of us who study the pre-Conquest period will claim for ourselves. There is no obvious and easy substitute for the label Anglo-Saxonist. Do we continue to call ourselves Anglo-Saxonists at the risk of continuing the historical legacy that associates the field with ethno-racial supremacy? Or do we invent a new label that risks those outside the community not understanding what we do? Academics who wish to engage in public scholarship or interdisciplinary work, apply for funding, or recruit scholars of color into the field must be mindful of how the terms Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Saxonist are received outside our narrow field. And even within the field, the continued use of these terms reinforces and perpetuates a brand of scholarship based on nineteenth-century ideas of ethnic and national identity.

The problem is also complicated by the split between North American and British usage. While academics outside Britain can relatively easily substitute other terms and reduce the field's conflation with whiteness, that may not be as practical in the U.K., where Anglo-Saxon is much more commonly used as a label for a historical period. But even so, British scholars need to take into account both how the term resonates in a global community and the fact that at least a quarter of British uses of the term function as a present-day identity label. Moreover, the domestic resonances of the term with regard to ethnic and national identity within the U.K. may also be intensified in the context of increasing xenophobia and overt English nationalism in the

age of Brexit. The fact that British, or other, scholars do not intend to use Anglo-Saxon to reinforce a white supremacist ideology is irrelevant; the term's use has that effect regardless of intention. While the problem may manifest itself most strongly elsewhere, Britain is not immune to its effects.

The field of medieval studies and the subfield of those of us who work on pre-Conquest materials are at a crossroads where we must decide whether or not—and if so, how—to use the term Anglo-Saxon. As we engage in this discussion, we need to take stock of the historical use of the term and in particular to determine whether or not, as some claim, the term is justified by the materials we study. As demonstrated above, this is definitely not the case: Anglo-Saxon was not used by pre-Conquest peoples to describe themselves. Regardless of how we as a field collectively decide to address the continued use of Anglo-Saxon, our choices should be grounded not only in an understanding of how the term was used in the past, but also with knowledge of how the term is used and understood in the present day by our colleagues in other fields and by the public. Do we wish to use a term that for a substantial percentage of the population serves as a marker of white identity? It is difficult to imagine a principled and well-grounded argument for doing so.

Appendix: Appearances of Anglo-Saxon in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)

Toponyms		
MGH Epp 4:20	Alcuin	"Synodus, que facta est in Anglorum Sax[o]nia"
MGH SS rer. Merov. 7:177	Vita Bertuini (St. Bertin)	"Vir venerabilis vitae, inclutus pontifex Bertuinus, ex provintia Angli-saxonis oriundus fuit et altus a parentibus locupletibus atque ex nobili genere ortus necnon, priusquam nasceretur, electus."
Ethnonyms		
MGH SS rer. Lang. 124	Paul the Deacon	"Vestimenta vero eis erant laxa et maxime linea, qualia Anglisaxones habere solent hornata institis latioribus vario colore contextis."
MGH SS rer. Germ. 5:31	Annales Beriniani	"Nortmanni Britanniam insulam, ea quam maxime parte quam Anglisaxones incolunt, bello inpetentes, triduo pugnando victores effecti, praedas, rapinas, neces passim facientes, terra pro libitu potiuntur."
MGH SS 1:533	Chronicun Normannorum	"Northmanni in Britanniam insulam, quam Anglo-Saxones incolunt, impetentes, triduo pugnando victores effecti, praedas, rapinas, neces facientes, terra pro libitu potiti sunt"
MGH SS 1:441	Prudentius of Troyes	"Nortmanni Britanniam insulam, ea quam maxime parte quam Angli-saxones incolunt, bello inpetentes, triduo pugnando victores effecti, praedas, rapinas, neces passim facientes, terra pro libitu potiuntur."
MGH SS 1:454	Prudentius of Troyes	"Dani in Somna consistentes, cum eis non daretur supradictus census, receptis obsidibus, ad Anglo-Saxones navigant; a quibus profligati atque repulsi, alias partes petunt"
MGH SS 15,1:39	Vita Wigberti by Lupus Servatus	"Indigenas Britanniae qui Angli-Saxones appellantur ab eis qui Germaniae septentrionalem tractum incolunt Saxonibus originem ducere, documentis certissimis approbatur.
MGH SS 3:420	Widukind of Corvey	"insula in angulo quodam maris sita est, Anglisaxones usque hodie vocitantur."

Appendix: Appearances of Anglo-Saxon in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)

MGH SS rer. Germ. 60:10	Widukind of Corvey	"et quia illa insula in angulo quodam maris sita est, Anglisaxones usque hodie vocitantur."
MGM SS 6:148	Ekkehardi Chronicon Universale	"Post mortem vero eius Chunibertus, filius eius, tulit uxorem nomine Ermelindam, de genere Anglisaxonum."
MGM SS 6:149	Ekkehardi Chronicon Universale	"His diebus rex Anglisaxonum nomine Cedoaldus, qui multas pugnas in sua patria commisit, ad Christum conversus est."
MGH SS rer. Germ. 72:415		"Phocas annis VIII. Angli-Saxones in Britannia fidem percipiunt."
MGH SS rer. Germ. 8:8	Arnulfi Gesta	"Focas ann. 8. Anglisaxones in Britannia christiani effecti sunt."
MGH SS 5:83	Herriman Augiensis	"Hoc tempore Angli-Saxones a Britannis contra Pictos et Scottos auxilio asciti, insulam petunt, et hostibus fugatis, in socios arma convertunt, et post multa bella magna ex parte insula subacta potiti sunt."
MGH SS 3:29	Lambert of Hersfeld	"Focas annis 8. Angli-Saxones fidem Christi susceperunt."
MGM SS 5:173	Lambert of Hersfeld	"in quo rex Anglisaxonum tres reges cum infinito eorum in exercitu usque ad internitionem delevit."
MGH SS 26:17	Ex Orderici Vitalis Hist. Eccles.	"Angli-Saxones, ducibus Hengist et Horsa, Britonibus, qui nunc Guali vocantur, imperium dolis et fortitudine iam fere 600 annis abstulerunt."
MGM SS 13:124	Florence of Worcester	"Marinus centesimus septimus papa. Hic scholam Saxonum in Roma morantium pro amore et deprecatione Aelfredi Anglosaxonum regis ab omni tributo et telone benigne liberavit."
MGM SS 13:125	Florence of Worcester	"Aelfredus Anglosaxonum rex . . . primitus Iohannem presbyterum et monachum , genere Eald – Saxonum , abba tem constituit"

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⁴⁵ The change in Æthelstan’s title may also have been patterned on that of Charlemagne, whose title changed after the capture of Lombardy in 774 from “*gratia Dei rex Francorum vir illuster*” (by the grace of God king of the Franks, illustrious man) to “*gratia Dei rex Francorum et Langobardorum atque patricius Romanorum*” (by the grace of God king of the Franks and the Lombards and patrician of the Romans). Ildar H. Garipzanov, The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c.751–877), Brill’s Series on the Early Middle Ages 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 123.

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⁷⁰ And while I have not combed through the individual citations in the NOW Corpus to determine an exact count, the increase in citations in the historical sense between 2012–13 and 2017–18 is probably due in large part to news coverage the British Museum’s 2018–19 exhibit on Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms.

⁷¹ I also examined data for Kenya, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Jamaica, and Tanzania, but the absolute numbers were too low to produce useful insights.

⁷² Harris, Race, p. 35.

⁷³ Frantzen, Desire, p. 75; Dockray-Miller, Public Medievalists, p. 9.

⁷⁴ As in: Sara M. Pons-Sanz, The Language of Early English Literature: From Cædmon to Milton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Or: “Early English Literature and Culture Forum. The English department at Indiana University has a long tradition of strength in early English literature and culture. It offers students with interests in the period from 800 – 1800 a rich array of courses covering a wide spectrum of historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives on early English literature,” “Early English Literature and Culture Forum,” Indiana University Bloomington, Department of English, (n.d.), <https://english.indiana.edu/research/research-collectives/english-literature-culture-forum/index.html>.