

A Wrinkle in Medieval Time: Ironing out Issues Regarding Race, Temporality, and the Early English

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SCHOLARS ENGAGING WITH THE PAST often take the concept of periodization for granted. Looking at the past in a linear and seamless way makes it more comprehensible, but are we doing Early English studies a disservice by safeguarding and preserving dogmatic notions of periodization? Margreta de Grazia argues that schemes of periodization often determine what is deemed relevant and valuable in the academy: “Whether you work on one side or the other of the medieval/modern divide determines nothing less than relevance. Everything after that divide has relevance to the present; everything before it is irrelevant. There is no denying the exceptional force of that secular divide; indeed, it works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not.”¹ As I will argue here, this “massive value judgment” has operated in a particularly destructive way within the field of Early English studies. This essay serves as a case study in the politics of periodization, illuminating larger problems of periodization. Not only is the field tribal and prone to gatekeeping; its survival is hindered by an affinity with white supremacy that shuts out innovative work and marginalized scholars and impoverishes the discipline.²

The dates that comprise the early English period have long been contested, adding to the complicated character of the field as a whole. Scholars typically agree that the period begins in Britain with the end of Roman rule sometime in the fifth century, widely known in European history as the “Migration Period” or the “Völkerwanderung” (migration of peoples).³ Established historical narratives describe migrants coming to Britain as Germanic tribes, most notably tribes of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.⁴ One of the earliest and most contemporaneous textual records of this migration appears in the Latin chronicle of late antiquity, the *Chronica Gallica a CCCCLII*, which records for the year 441 CE: “The British provinces, which to this time had suffered many defeats and misfortunes, are reduced to Saxon rule.”⁵ The Venerable Bede’s account in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (ca. 731 CE) gives us a slightly later date of

449 CE for “those who came over were from the three most powerful nations of Germany, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes.”⁶ Determining the exact year of the tribes’ arrival has been difficult, and it has been argued that writers like Bede may have intentionally misinterpreted their own sources for the purpose of yielding an end date for the period.⁷ Another record of the migration comes from the Briton monk Gildas (500–570 CE), who describes a council of leaders in fifth-century Britain offering land to the Saxons.⁸ This treaty partitioned the southeastern part of the island to the Saxons, who, in exchange for their armed aid in defending the Britons against attacks from the Picts and Scots, would receive land and food supplies.⁹

While early medieval sources cannot corroborate a precise date for the beginning of the early English period, archaeologists have been able to adjust the Bedan date from the latter half of the fifth century to the earlier half of the century. Catherine Hills and Sam Lucy’s meticulous archaeological analysis of a cemetery at Spong Hill, England revealed that the onset of migration and settlement in Briton occurred near the beginning of the fifth century and not later as previous claims asserted.¹⁰ Additional material evidence uncovered by archaeologists Heinrich Härke, Catherine Hills, and Robert Hedges bolsters this archaeological assessment. Their studies show that varying population numbers of Germanic migrants were already established in southern and eastern Britain by 500 CE.¹¹ The precise start date of the Middle Ages is not the primary focus of this paper. However, outlining the complicated history in determining a commencement date reveals a scholarly impulse to preserve conventional and restrictive methods for understanding the world that reinforce Western periodization. Although historians generally do not have tangible objects for classification of periods, “All subdivisions of time inescapably reflect the values of the classifiers.”¹² This preoccupation with the tripart system transitioning from antiquity to the Middle Ages followed by the modern period underpins a traditional, linear narrative centered on a Christian, Eurocentric worldview.¹³ This worldview has long dominated our understanding of the early English past, and has prevented the field from understanding history and human development in more comprehensive and constructive ways.¹⁴ The energy scholars have spent on determining the beginning of the period comes precisely from a desire to locate the origins of modern England, an England that, when periodization debates were really taking off, was also being reimagined as a super empire. Time, history, and material evidence have been used as anchors to map out when the Angles and other tribes landed on the British Isles to position England, and by extension Europe, as the apex of civilization and “modernity.”¹⁵

Periodization has often been a product of white supremacy; the field's persistent efforts to establish definitive dates to define itself emphasizes how "white supremacy evolves over time."¹⁶

Determining an end date for the early English period is no less complicated. The general consensus for the period's end date until recently was either 1066 CE or the end of the eleventh century. Looking back to the transition from early English to Norman rule, the twelfth-century chronicler Orderic Vitalis (1075-c. 1142 CE), a product of an Anglo-Norman marriage, wrote: "And so the English groaned aloud for their lost liberty and plotted ceaselessly to find some way of shaking off a yoke that was so intolerable and unaccustomed."¹⁷ In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Hastings, early English lords were replaced by Norman ones; for several years, resistance, rebellions, and plots to regain lost land transpired. Early English nobility were exiled or absorbed into the ranks of the peasantry, or they fled to Scotland, Ireland, or Scandinavia. The Byzantine Empire and Varangian Guard attracted mercenary soldiers.¹⁸ Old English remained the vernacular among peasants, although some learned Norman French to communicate with their rulers. For at least a century after the Norman Conquest, England had a trilingual situation: Old English was spoken among the common people, Latin remained dominant for the church, and Norman French was the language of administrators, the nobility, and the law courts.¹⁹ So, although the Battle of Hastings used to mark the end of the early English period, some scholars cite a later end date that corresponds with the linguistic transition from manuscripts and records of Old English to Anglo-Norman and eventual early-Middle English ones.²⁰ By 1200 CE the English vernacular had shifted enough in manuscripts for modern scholars to distinguish a change to early Middle English. Thus, the early English period is generally agreed to encompass the time from roughly the early fifth century to the beginning of the twelfth century.

Framing the early English period in this way kept scholars from considering the presence of continental voices during the early English period. This serves to keep the early period culturally isolated as previous scholars retroactively reimagined an insular period in English history devoid of meaningful contact with the continent and beyond. In other words, the only migration that matters is the Saxon migration (and later the Norman one); everything happening apart from this narrative is culturally insignificant. The supposed movement from insularity to increased contact advances a teleological vision of history that promotes Eurocentrism by offering a narrative of the rise of Europe as a world-wide power as well as a Christian concept of time that heads toward an imagined triumphalist end-date. The division between the

early English and early Middle English periods is fundamentally necessary to this teleological, triumphalist understanding of history, which has tended to isolate Old English and Early English studies from the rest of premodern English studies.

Periodization obscures these often complex narratives, especially those of the first millennium CE before nation states as we understand them were more recognizable.²¹ The crux of periodization, though, is that it operates within the framework of white supremacy, prompting scholars to view time both episodically and linearly rather than as a complex web. As a result, the dominant narrative highlights Western civilization's "progress" and rise to superiority, while everything outside of the Western narrative diminishes by comparison. Dipesh Chakrabarty explains how an earlier time reinscribes itself in later periods: "Humans from any other period and region—are always in some sense our contemporaries: that would have to be the condition under which we can even begin to treat them as intelligible to us." He further explains "that the writing of medieval history for Europe depends on this assumed contemporaneity of the medieval, or what is the same thing, the noncontemporaneity of the present with itself."²² In other words, we bring past human narratives into our present to make sense of history and time. The difficulty of reinscribing the past into the present is that features of history most important to the ruling class often become the only identifiable characteristics emphasized. A crucial component in historiography, as Chakrabarty contends, is a dependence "on this assumed contemporaneity."²³ He suggests how medievalists, in particular, look for relatable markers with the past: "What makes the historicizing of it possible is the fact that its basic characteristics are not completely foreign to us as moderns (which is not to deny the historical changes that separate the two)."²⁴ A critical detail here is Chakrabarty's pronoun "us." Who is "us?" Stuart Hall also queried this pronoun in relation to discourse and language in the West, arguing that discourse around "us" continues to reflect "the language of the West . . . its practices and relations of power towards the Rest."²⁵ Until recently, the primary classifiers of historical periodization—those who write medieval history, especially history of the early English period—were predominantly white men grounded in classical and/or Christian learning. This poses another problem for Early English studies: the "us" that constitutes the field often means white, middle-class, cis-heterosexual people. This homogeneity has resulted in monotonous research, a stifling of innovative ideas, and the loss of voices that could fundamentally add valuable and diverse viewpoints to the discipline.

Just as scholars within Early English studies continue to grapple with questions around periodization and disciplinary belonging, they

wrestle with determining more suitable terminology. Until recently, Early English studies was more commonly known as “Anglo-Saxon” studies, supposedly named after the people central in the historical narrative. But current questions about what an “Anglo-Saxon” is and about the term’s complicated ties to British imperialism have caused contentious debates.²⁶ Other problems compounding the field include debates about how material evidence should be analyzed. Existing manuscripts may be scant, but new theoretical approaches and advanced technology can provide an abundance of new ways to analyze texts and artifacts. Still, as Eileen Fradenburg Joy has argued, traditional and conservative methods of analysis, as well as the remoteness of the language itself, are primary reasons why the field receives less attention than the later medieval period.²⁷ Kathleen Davis highlights, more broadly, how conventional approaches often “exercise exclusionary force,” creating more homogenous representation within a discipline.²⁸ Davis’s point is true for most of the history of Early English studies, a field that has preserved an ethnonationalist view of English history.²⁹

Trailblazers in the field have often been ousted or silenced for speaking out about problematic issues within the discipline, and/or for examining the past with theoretical models that challenge traditional thinking.³⁰ Though theoretical analyses are often dismissed as trendy or less rigorous, different frameworks of analyses expand understandings of the past without whitewashing its content or (re)producing a monotony of traditional-themed scholarship. Failures to recognize that the field and its content have been predominantly fashioned for and by white people has allowed white supremacists to latch onto a fictitious narrative of what they believe the “Anglo-Saxon” period is. This insularity has stifled the field’s growth and allowed ethnonationalist narratives to flourish, impressing on the public that the discipline is exactly as they think: a field for white people in representation, in research, and in content. By insisting on rigid periodization that separates Early English studies from the later Middle Ages, scholars of this earlier period have often isolated themselves, hampering their ability to attract students and scholars from marginalized communities who could assist in growing a waning discipline. Redressing whiteness and whitewashed narratives can be challenging, as Hall notes in “The Spectacle of the ‘Other.’”³¹ One strategy for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) representation, he argues, involves working within an existing field overrepresented by white people and trying to “*contest it from within.*”³² While diversity initiatives are not enough, and though the burden of shifting fields, organizations, and ideas often rests on the shoulders of BIPOC scholars, there is still value in being welcomed into a field and connecting to its narratives and content in some way. Chakrabarty speaks of medievalists

connecting in some way with the past, however, Early English studies has largely failed to bring its content and history into the present by making it relevant and relatable.³³ The field continues to enforce a narrative centered on English nationalism that depends on a whitewashed history and appeals to a populace inherently taught to view whiteness as the default authority.

Kathy Lavezzo tells the story of a young Hall who won a scholarship and left his homeland in the Caribbean to spend six years studying at Oxford University.³⁴ Reflecting on the antiquated system in which he learned, he described his education as “lodged in the past” because a full quarter of his coursework consisted of medieval literature.³⁵ Although Hall had mapped out a medieval studies graduate project on *Piers Plowman* and “tried to apply contemporary literary criticism to these texts,” his South African language professor, J. R. R. Tolkien, discouraged and dissuaded Hall “in a pained tone that this was not the point of the exercise” and from pursuing graduate work in medieval studies for fear that historical precision was at stake and at risk from anachronism.³⁶ Hall notes that he “was interested in medieval literature but I was interested in it in a critical way, not in a scholarly way.”³⁷ By “scholarly” he was describing an approach within the study of Old English focused on philology and traditional historiography. Hall was propelled away from medieval studies and has since provided the scholarly community with some of the most invaluable theoretical work on race in a historical context.³⁸ The story of Hall’s removal from the field prompts a haunting reflection: how might the field have developed differently if intellectuals like him, and perspectives like his, were not discouraged or dismissed outright?³⁹

Building on Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Hall’s essay “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” examines perhaps one of the most hallowed social constructs in the Western world, the very idea of “the West”: its characters, its boundaries, and its coherence as a subject of study.⁴⁰ As Hall argues, “The West produced many different ways of talking about itself and ‘the Others’. But what we have called the discourse of ‘the West and the Rest’ became one of the most powerful and formative of these discourses. It became the dominant way in which . . . the West represented itself and its relation to ‘the Other’.”⁴¹ Time, history and texts have been manipulated to reveal a “triumph of the West over the ‘peoples without history.’”⁴² Enzo Traverso reaffirms this “Hegelian matrix” in which philosophers like German-born Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) “drew a great historical picture of humankind in which the Western world appeared as its natural accomplishment.”⁴³ So too, the early medieval period (particularly in Britain) has often been deployed to foreground “Western civilization” as the pinnacle of suc-

cess and as part of a foundational narrative in Anglo-American society. The “Anglo-Saxon” myth itself was perpetuated by President Thomas Jefferson in the US, who saw the myth as a way to orient the future and who envisioned early settlers as the contemporary carriers of the “Anglo-Saxon” project.⁴⁴ The entire settler-colonial narrative has long enlisted moderate language by which white people “migrated” to the Americas, just as the German tribes “migrated” to the British Isle. This movement is described as “migration” instead of as “invasion,” which is reserved for people of color moving to the Global North.⁴⁵ The immigration of the former is deemed natural to and endorsed as necessary within the larger narrative of Hegelian history where Europe is at the apex of civilization.

This imperialist mindset helped shape Early English studies from its infancy, leading to more than a century’s worth of readings of texts like *Beowulf* in colonialist ways.⁴⁶ Likewise in England, late-nineteenth-century Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli noted how romanticizing and racializing the early English period could energize an atrophied nation; a cleverly manipulated version of the past, or even an entirely invented past might “explain the present, and . . . mould the remedial future.”⁴⁷ Less than a century later, Hall would analyze the success of this long-term program of rewriting the past in which imperialism allowed for reimagined histories to be seen as wholly true. In turn, whiteness has become the default, so that alternative ways of seeing the world have become increasingly difficult to take hold in established historical narratives. He asserts that “discourses . . . always operate in relation to power—they are part of the way power circulates and is contested. The question of whether a discourse is true or false is less important than whether it is effective in practice. When it is effective—organizing and regulating relations of power (say, between the West and the Rest)—it is called a “regime of truth.”⁴⁸ Similarly, around much of the globe, the early English period is viewed in absolutes: as formative, static, wholly white, and superior to something “other,” whatever “other” may be in the English historical narrative. The “regime of truth” in the case of early England has been premised on white superiority, an ethnonationalism entrenched in the modern English psyche and in the British academy, which largely refuses to interrogate a warped historical narrative built on English nationalism and colonialism.

Historically, content within the early English period has been taught in support of a white supremacist, colonial narrative; racist gatekeeping has prevented those seen as “others” from entering the field, while rampant racism has forced marginalized scholars to pivot to different fields, leave academia, or work as model-minorities.⁴⁹ Likewise, the whitewashing of early English literature and history has made it dif-

ficult for students of color to connect with medieval studies for a long time. Despite the domination of white voices, academics of color have advocated for teaching English literature without a Eurocentric slant for more than a century. 2019, for example, marked the centennial anniversary of Gordon David Houston's retirement as English professor and chair of the English department at Howard University.⁵⁰ What was unknown in medieval studies was that Houston, an African American, was not only an activist-scholar who petitioned to teach Black students a less whitewashed syllabus of English literature that would help them to connect with the texts, but also a proficient researcher in Old and Middle English who included medieval examples in his *Basic English Grammar*.⁵¹ Houston, then, is one of the earliest Black professors in the US who can be identified as teaching Old English poetry and History of the English Language (HEL) courses, and publishing professionally on both Old and Middle English languages.⁵² Given that WASP (white, "Anglo-Saxon," Protestant) culture was widespread and that so many leaders in the US actively drew on the idea of the "Anglo-Saxon" myth, Houston is an important figure in the history of Early English studies for this reason alone. For a Black man to be teaching a literary course on a subject that white men, including presidents, used to bolster themselves as superior surely brought discomfort to Houston, as evidenced in his writings on the subject.

In the very same year that Tolkien was advocating for *Beowulf* to be appreciated as poetry in his seminal work "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*," Houston published his philological analysis of the history of English from Old and Middle English onward. Tolkien argued for a different approach to *Beowulf* because "the main interest which the poem has for us is thus not a purely literary interest"; rather, analyses predominantly centered on philology and historicism.⁵³ This juxtaposition speaks volumes about who is granted the right to shift paradigms in the field at the expense of those forced into traditional work that is deemed more "worthy" of study. Notably, Tolkien was not the first scholar to argue for a less philological approach to Old English literature. In "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English," Houston argued that the "obvious leaning towards less theoretical and more practical education" hindered student progress and reduced interest:

The gravest mistake, perhaps, in teaching English is the attempt to teach literature as though it were a subject like history, or mathematics, or physics. Many instructors fail to realize that the interpretation of literature, like that of any other art, depends primarily upon the development of the critical faculty. Frequency in reading does not necessarily imply intelligence in reading. Instructors, therefore, must not conclude that because they have covered, in an artificial

fashion, a number of literary masterpieces, that they have created within their students an appreciation of literature. A far more substantial training lies in a systematic drill in analysis and synthesis.⁵⁴

Houston was advocating for close readings and appreciation of texts some twenty years before Tolkien's piece on *Beowulf* would appear. Houston argued for more engagement with texts and less focus on Eurocentric literature in lieu of texts that might appeal more directly to his students. For Houston, the study of English literature was more than memorization and recitation, and he explained that engaging with texts and developing "the critical faculty" would allow students a deeper appreciation for literature. Advocating for literature to be read and appreciated in ways that would help students connect with culturally distant materials, Houston was the frontrunner of advocating for material like *Beowulf* to be read differently. He was concerned not only about critical engagement with texts but also about accessibility, and he argued that the discipline of English literature had long been "designed for the 'favored few' rather than for the masses."⁵⁵ This lack of acknowledgement of Houston's publications and public writings suggests how BIPOC scholars have often been erased from Early English studies and how certain ideas are only given credence or validated when presented by white scholars. The field of Early English literature is still very much averse to theoretical analysis, yet Houston was advocating for pedagogical approaches that applied theory in his classroom more than a century ago.

Houston remains an important figure in the history of Early English studies and how it was shaped, yet his voice and presence have been largely erased.⁵⁶ Perhaps if *Beowulf* had been taught in translation as a work of literature, as opposed to fodder for focusing on metrical analysis and reading Old English aloud, it might have had broader appeal among both white and Black students during Houston's teaching career. Houston's struggle remains a lasting one into the twenty-first century. In "White Canon in a World of Color," Sierra Lomuto argues that the white literary canon symbolizes "epistemological oppression."⁵⁷ One of the results of the 2020 #BlackLivesMatter uprisings that reverberated around the globe was the tearing down of statues of and monuments to colonial racist oppressors. Lomuto describes how "notable" persons within the Western canon who are commonly etched into public buildings reflect a type of socioeconomic oppression whereby only the privileged and those "deemed educated" enough will recognize them.⁵⁸ The impulse to memorialize racist, colonialist leaders and other historical figures in architecture and design creates toxic confabulation and leaves BIPOC to wrestle with the enduring racist and socioeconomic legacies of these figures. As an instructor, Lomuto argues, it is her "job to show students how our reverence for whitewashed literary histories must be taken down."⁵⁹

For more than a century, BIPOC scholars have been discussing how whitewashed narratives have hindered understandings of history and humanity.⁶⁰ Our BIPOC scholar predecessors predecessors gained entry into academic institutions knowing that their contributions and those of future scholars of color would be necessary to produce knowledge beyond the scope of whiteness. Still, fields such as Early English studies have remained predominantly white for fear that disrupting the status quo will create less rigorous work.⁶¹ This “rigorous work” is often coded for a white, patriarchal hegemony that dominates the field’s approach to its content, which, as Frantz Fanon argues, is “locked in . . . whiteness.”⁶² This whiteness, embodied in both scholars and scholarship, has insulated the field and made it inaccessible to students and scholars of color. As Fanon puts it, “History takes place in obscurity and the sun [BIPOC] carry with [us] must lighten every corner.”⁶³ Seeking ways to ensure the longevity of Early English studies within the history of premodern will require us to examine how we teach, how we read and analyze premodern English texts or artifacts, and who our desired audience is and should be.⁶⁴

New voices and methodologies that bring history to life in medieval literature are vital for the field’s survival. Just as Chakrabarty describes how an earlier time can reinscribe itself in later periods, Geraldine Heng argues for the nonidentical character of past and present alike:

If we grant that the present can be nonidentical to itself in this way, we should also grant the corollary: that *the past* can *also* be nonidentical to itself, inhabited too by that which was out of its time—marked by modernities that estrange medieval time in ways that render medieval practices legible in modern terms. If we allow our field of vision to hatch open these moments in premodernity that seem to signal the activity of varied modernities in deep time . . . our expanded vision will yield windows on the past that allow for a reconfigured understanding of earlier time. Indeed, hatching open such moments in premodernity is what feminists and queer studies scholars have, in a sense, been doing for decades in staking out *their* European Middle Ages . . . The “contemporaneity of the medieval” with our time and the nonidentity of medieval time with itself, thus grants a pivot from which the recloning of old narratives can be resisted.⁶⁵

Complementing Fanon’s conceit about shining light on historical darkness, Heng suggests how our “field of vision [can] hatch open these moments in premodernity that seem to signal the activity of varied modernities” by examining historical texts and moments without relying on a white lens.⁶⁶ While I do not want to belabor the point about “modernities,” we might also reflect on what that term means with regards to European history, particularly because “colonialism is inscribed into the epistemic horizon of European modernity.”⁶⁷ Heng’s argument

exemplifies how marginalized scholars add richness to a field through a variety of textual readings and interpretations that ensure “recloning of old narratives can be resisted.”⁶⁸ I argue here that one such persistent narrative is an understanding of the early English period that reinforces ethnonationalism and insularity.⁶⁹

Such “moments in premodernity that seem to signal the activity of varied modernities,” in Heng’s words, emerge in the lives of two particular historical figures in early England whose careers shed light on how a certain internationalism played a key role in building a tradition that still informs English culture.⁷⁰ The late seventh/early eighth-century abbot Hadrian (born before 637-d. 710 CE) from North Africa and Archbishop of Canterbury Theodore (602–690 CE) from Tarsus (modern Turkey) brought with them traditions from abroad that enriched ecclesiastical and secular learning in the British Isles. Hadrian, described in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* as “vir natione Afir” [a man by nation of Africa], became abbot of St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s in Canterbury and brought with him a wealth of knowledge and expertise.⁷¹ Likewise, Theodore’s proficiency in ancient Greek Christian traditions of Asia Minor enriched learning. According to Bede’s account, Hadrian was a skilled scholar of Greek and Latin and is credited with introducing the early English to astronomical thought inherited from Greek philosophers, as well as to riddling and enigmas inspired by North African poets.⁷² Both men were knowledgeable in early medieval medicine, and a number of medical recipes have been attributed to them.⁷³ Theodore’s teaching attracted disciples; he founded a school, and as the first archbishop of the insular church, he established his place as a cornerstone in English ecclesiastical history.

Just how oblivious early medievalist scholars can be when it comes to the achievements of such historical figures from outside of Western Europe becomes clear in how they dismiss “foreign” expertise and reject scholarly analysis that emphasizes extra-European perspectives that helped build European “civilization.” Throughout the mid-twentieth century, some medievalists were transfixed by an architectural plan for a monastery in present day Switzerland (St. Gall), and a copy of the medieval blueprint was recreated based on existing evidence.⁷⁴ One architectural historian, Günter Noll, connected the medieval blueprint to Archbishop Theodore and argued that the general layout resembled those of sixth-century monasteries from Syria.⁷⁵ Noll’s theory makes important connections between Theodore’s association with the church in Asia Minor and his impressive breadth of secular knowledge. Scholarly rejection of Noll’s theory was swift, based in part on Western notions of superiority and rooted in a denial that complex ideas were cultivated in places outside of Europe in the Middle Ages. Old English scholars

such as Michael Lapidge dismissed the theory outright on the basis that “the evidence [was] not handled in a way which inspires confidence.”⁷⁶ Lapidge employed the usual technique in Early English studies of rejecting outsider perspectives that go against whitewashed narratives.

Noll demonstrated that many European scholars, past and present, base their rejection of global influence during the Middle Ages on colonialist, racist notions. He emphasized that the rejection of the hypothesis of “outsider” influence on the St. Gall plans was based on a lack of knowledge on the part of European scholars about cultures outside of Europe and on a perception that people in the Middle Ages were somehow less sophisticated than people today. He quotes Samuel Guyer’s racist dismissal of northern African influence on architectural plans for St. Gall’s monastery: “It can be ruled out that entire peoples, like the Germans of that time, still living in a depressed, semi-prehistoric state, could have been in a position to rearrange ancient styles and forms of building which were totally unintelligible to them into something entirely new. Whoever heard of one of today’s colonial or undeveloped peoples, such as the Negroes or Indians, being in a position to transform our European forms of culture into completely new and varying types of overwhelming scope?”⁷⁷ This pretentious, racist, colonialist summary anticipates the handling of Hadrian’s and Theodore’s biographies by Lapidge, who downplays their very beings as immigrants (which undoubtedly fostered their knowledge and understanding of the world in various ways) and treats with disdain the scholarship highlighting their achievements outside the framework of Eurocentrism.⁷⁸

Although scholars credit Hadrian and Theodore for their accomplishments in ecclesiastical and secular teaching, they fail to recognize that these men created a thriving intellectual community during their journeys from and learning in North Africa and Asia Minor. As they relocated, either by force or by choice, from their homelands, pieces of their respective homes would have remained with them. With their disciples, Theodore and Hadrian traveled throughout England teaching the Angles and Saxons wisdom based on their Christian education. Vestiges of their past can be found in what survives of their teachings and writings, such as Hadrian’s riddling and enigmas borne out of North African traditions and Theodore’s inclusion of a Persian saint in the *Old English Martyrology*.⁷⁹ Lapidge’s praise of these figures for “what was arguably the most brilliant school of studies during the entire [early English] period” is clouded by the lack of acknowledgement of the international and intercontinental knowledge they introduced into the English kingdom.⁸⁰ Instead, Lapidge undermines Hadrian’s and Theodore’s achievements through his nationalist reading, identifying the

point of origin for students' continental missionary work as "English," rather than recognizing the global influence on English learning itself. In this view, the substance of Hadrian's and Theodore's achievements most often involved "books and learning" and their recording of "facets of [early English] life," a perspective that erases their own respective histories and the influences of their experiences abroad on the cultivation of early English culture.⁸¹

A whitewashed and racist narrative centered on Eurocentric exceptionalism has impoverished understandings of history and allowed a white supremacist narrative to feed into the Anglo-American psyche. The fact that Hadrian, "the man by nation of Africa," may have been Black further disrupts the established account of British history that early English studies maintains.⁸² At any rate, Hadrian and Theodore's imperishable legacy is hardly mentioned, if at all, in the classroom, and theirs and others whose origins were not European are often downplayed or ignored because the field is entrenched in white supremacist narratives and, until recently, unwilling to talk about race. Erik Wade argues that medievalists see continuities between modern and medieval concepts of race, yet, "Due to the whiteness of Early English studies and its colonial disciplinary beginnings, critical race theory has made few inroads into the scholarship." He further contends that the history of race undercuts the traditional narrative that race is "often tied to the emergence in the West with modernity, the Middle Passage, or the scientific method."⁸³ The field has always relied on a tacit centering of whiteness in its modes of thought and analyses that have gone largely unchallenged because authoritative figures refuse to allow critical discourses seeking to question the assumption that whiteness is the default. Medieval studies as a whole has often acted as a key player in reinforcing white supremacy. Other disciplines have chosen to reexamine their canons and the structure of their field much sooner than Early English studies; however Early English studies, in particular, has continued to anchor its narrative in whiteness to reinforce white "greatness."

We live in a contentious time in which fascists and white supremacists, particularly in predominantly English-speaking countries, seek to identify with what they view as "their" heritage, their "Anglo-Saxon" roots. In her essay "Grendel and His Mother," Toni Morrison discusses how the Old English poem *Beowulf* resonates in the present by weaving it into the hideous fabric of fascism: "I know that democracy is worth fighting for. I know that fascism is not. To win the former intelligent struggle is needed. To win the latter nothing is required. You only have to cooperate, be silent, agree, and obey until the blood of Grendel's mother annihilates her own weapon and the victor's as well."⁸⁴ Morrison's

compelling image allows an episode within *Beowulf* to reinscribe itself into our present. As with all white supremacist projects, this supremacy in Early English studies has endured silently and stealthily, shaping not only the field's content but also its professional culture for white and nonwhite scholars alike, normalizing significant imbalances in power and audibility, and erasing voices like Morrison's, who would have breathed new life into a dying field.

Early English studies continues to grapple with the issue of its name, who it champions in history, who its representatives are within the field, and how its scholarship reflects on the world. The field diminishes understanding of this time in English history with continued restrictedness and erasure. These constraints not only dissuade interdisciplinary research but impoverish our understanding of "then" and "now." The field, created and continuing to function within a white supremacist framework, requires us to consider issues of accessibility. Who are "we"? Who do "we" let in? What does this field seek to investigate and why? When Hall interrogated these questions he argued that "others," "us," and "them" are all assembled and assessed by Eurocentric perspectives: "Discourse continues to inflect the language of the West, its image of itself and 'others,' its sense of 'us' and 'them,' its practices and relations of power towards the Rest. It is especially important for the languages of racial inferiority and ethnic superiority which still operate so powerfully across the globe today. So, far from being a 'formation' of the past, and of only historical interest, the discourse of 'the West and the Rest' is alive and well in the modern world."⁸⁵ As a Black man who had aspirations to become a medievalist, Hall knew intimately how the field functioned and how discourse within the discipline might not simply *inflect* the language of the West, but be *infected* by narratives of superiority that problematize how the medieval period is interpreted. White supremacists incorporate the medieval past into their ethnonationalist myths in part because scholars have repackaged the period for them by actively and passively constructing myths of national and cultural homogeneous "Anglo-Saxon" identity that intersects with putative racial identity. This scholarship has created an "us" vs "them" not only within the field, but also for the public, thus reiterating what Hall refers to as "the West and the Rest."

Academic fields like Early English studies can only be saved through a cultural shift that requires structural, pedagogical, and generational changes. Neither academia nor Early English studies should specifically be for white people, and figures like Hall, Houston, and Morrison offer us examples of how people of color were breaking the mold in predominantly white fields. Diversity is complex. Simply having BIPOC in

the field is not enough to redress the inequalities that plague any given field, but it is an important first step to begin interrogating why and how whiteness is centered. There are often challenges to disrupt our field, disrupt medieval studies, and disrupt academia to make lasting changes. These goals are worth striving for, but in disrupting the establishment, we often see our disruptions in the abstract. Early English studies must be reenvisioned and rebuilt by scholars if they are serious about its survival. Organizations and departments will have to think beyond “inclusion” and come to recognize and understand the very real relations of power that have cultural and material effects on our fields. The academy cannot simply “diversify” only to rely disproportionately on the labor of their BIPOC members. It cannot simply invite more BIPOC colleagues into an unsustainably racist environment.⁸⁶ Early English studies is entrenched in white supremacy narratives, and if we do not continue interrogating why this is so and query where we go from here, this period of study as a specialization, whatever its dates may be, will not survive.

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NOTES

My thanks to Dr. Liza Blake and Dr. Erik Wade for your helpful input on drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank the editors, Dr. Urvashi Chakravarty, Professor Ayanna Thompson, and Professor Bruce Holsinger for guidance and support.

1 Margreta de Grazia, “The Modern Divide: From Either Side,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 453. Further reading on the problems of periodization includes Jennifer Summit and David Wallace, introduction to “Rethinking Periodization,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 447–51; Ania Loomba, “Periodization, Race, and Global Contact,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 595–620; and Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

2 By “gatekeeping,” I mean the process of controlling who advances or succeeds in a discipline in addition to whose voices matter and/or are considered authorities. Gatekeeping is carried out by the status quo, affects publishing opportunities, determines what research is considered valuable, creates barriers for academics, and affects student representation.

3 See Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2013), 7–19. Further references discussing chronology and the period’s start date include Christopher A. Snyder, *The Britons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Michael E. Jones, *The End of Roman Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998); John Morris, “Dark Age Dates,” in *Britain and Rome: Essays Presented to Eric Birley on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Michael Jarrett and Brian Dobson (Kendal: T. Wilson, 1966), 154; Michael Wood, *The Domesday Quest: A Search of the Roots of England* (London: BBC, 1986), 64; and Nick Higham, “From sub-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Debating the Insular Dark Ages,” *History Compass* 2, no.1 (2004): 1–29.

- 4 Nicholas Howe's *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1989) offers a synopsis of the impact of migration on the early English imagination and explores early migratory historiographies in England.
- 5 Michael E. Jones and John Casey, "The Gallic Chronicle Restored: a Chronology for the Anglo-Saxon Invasions and the End of Roman Britain," *Britannia* XIX (November 1988): 393. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. The Gallic Chronicle of 452 is one of two anonymous records named after the years of their final entries (*Chronica Gallia a CCCCLII* and *Chronica Gallia a DXI*). Each record survives in several later-dated manuscripts that are copies of the fifth- and sixth-century originals. The texts have not gone without controversy over their authenticity; see Molly Miller, "The Last British Entry in the 'Gallic Chronicles,'" *Britannia* 9 (1978): 315–18; and R. W. Burgess, "The Gallic Chronicle," *Britannia* 25 (1994): 240–43.
- 6 B. Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors, eds., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I. xv. 30–31.
- 7 See J. Kemble, *The Saxons in England: A History of the English Commonwealth Till the Period of the Norman Conquest* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 2:1, 16. See also Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983): 1.
- 8 Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae* (Concerning the Ruin of Britain), chapter 23, ed. and trans. J. A. Giles in *Six Old English Chronicles* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 311. Gildas dates the *adventus Saxonum* to 441 CE and states, "Then all the councillors, together with that proud tyrant Gurthrigern [Vortigern], the British king, were so blinded, that, as a protection to their country, they sealed its doom by inviting in among them (like wolves into the sheep-fold), the fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful both to God and men, to repel the invasions of the northern nations" (trans. Giles, p. 310).
- 9 Another date for the period is 428 CE, first proposed in Nennius's *History of the Britons* (*Historia Brittonum*), trans. Giles (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Publishing, 2018). Susan Oosthuizen has recently queried whether there was much migration at all and argued that artificial start dates prevent scholars from seeing the larger continuities with the British/Roman past; see Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019).
- 10 See Catherine Hills and Sam Lucy, *Spong Hill IX: Chronology and Synthesis* (Cambridge, the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2013). This evidence is by no means settled, though. Contradictory DNA evidence, as well as scholars such as Oosthuizen, disagree with these independent archaeological analyses. See Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English*.
- 11 See Heinrich Härke, "Population replacement or acculturation? An archaeological perspective on population and migration in post-Roman Britain," in H. L. C. Tristram, ed., *The Celtic-Englishes* III (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2003): 13–28; Hills and Lucy, *Spong Hill IX*; Robert Hedges, "Anglo-Saxon Migration and the Molecular Evidence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton, and Sally Crawford. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 81–3.
- 12 William A. Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 14.
- 13 It is important to note that this tripart system is not a universal system for defining history. For those like myself who are from the African/Asian diasporas and also from the West, this positionality around "us" and belonging is discussed in Stuart Hall's memoir; see Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2017).
- 14 The use of "our" and "us" here refers to those whose education and learning was framed by Western thought and imperialism and who were/are subjected to a whitewashed

education. See Margo Hendricks, "Coloring the Past, Re-Writing Our Future: RB4R," Keynote Address, Race and Periodization Symposium. Washington, DC. September 5, 2019, <https://www.folger.edu/institute/scholarly-programs/race-periodization/margo-hendricks>. In her plenary talk, Hendricks discusses how "white settler colonialist" thinking is integral to premodern race studies" and how whiteness is the central narrative within what and how we (particularly in the West and in countries affected by imperialism) study premodern material.

15 See Green, "Periodization," 15–16.

16 Charles W. Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy," in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998), 101.

17 Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Medieval Texts, 1969–1973), 202–3.

18 Ian Heath, *Byzantine Armies AD 1118–1461* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1995), 23.

19 See John Scahill, "Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature," *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 18–32.

20 Charters, law-codes, and coins supply detailed material evidence of this transition.

21 Davis's *Periodization and Sovereignty* offers commentary on how the early English period was constructed and engages periodization at the level of export. Like hers, my aim is not to revise definitions related to periodization "but to address the occlusions and reifications instantiated by the periodizing operation itself, and to show why this matters today"; see Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 4.

22 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 109.

23 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 109.

24 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 109.

25 Hall, "The West and the Rest Discourse and Power," in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. Hall and Bram Gieben (Trowbridge, UK: Redwood Books, 1992), 318.

26 The term "Anglo-Saxon studies" is still used in some universities, particularly in the UK, such as Cambridge University, which still uses the acronym ASNC (Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic) for its early medieval center of learning. It is becoming increasingly clear not only that the term "Anglo-Saxon" inadequately describes the people and period in early medieval England, but that its misuse by today's white supremacists corresponds with its historically racist use. See David Wilton, "What Do We Mean By *Anglo-Saxon*? Pre-Conquest to the Present," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119, no. 4 (2020): 425–54; Mary Rambaran-Olm, "Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting 'Anglo-Saxon' Studies," *History Workshop Online*, November 4, 2019, https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/misnaming-the-medieval-rejecting-anglo-saxon-studies/?fbclid=IwAR1EndSzaJOhf8mTirqWBx434G_Ehu9OYOok3eKBuHjOILBqKCDNifD8p44; Matthew X. Vernon, *The Black Middle Ages: Race and the Construction of the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2018), 1–15; Donna Beth Ellard, "OED. 'Anglo-Saxonist, noun': Professional Scholar or Anonymous Person," *Anglo-Saxon(ist) Past, postSaxon Futures* (Punctum Books, 2019), 19–60; Mary Dockray-Miller, "Old English Has a Serious Image Problem," *JSTOR Daily*, May 3, 2017, <https://daily.jstor.org/old-english-serious-image-problem/>; and Adam Miyashiro, "Decolonizing Anglo-Saxon Studies: A Response to ISAS in Honolulu," *In the Middle*, July 29, 2017, <https://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2017/07/decolonizing-anglo-saxon-studies.html>.

27 Eileen Fradenburg Joy, "Goodbye to All That: The State of My Own Personal Field of Schizoid Anglo-Saxon Studies," *Heroic Age* 11 (May 2008), <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/11/foruma.php>

28 Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, 3.

29 For discussion of the rise of ethnonationalism, see Helen Young, "Race, Medievalism and the Eighteenth-Century Gothic Turn," *Postmedieval* 11, no. 3 (2020): 468–75; Miyashiro,

"Our Deeper Past: Race, Settler Colonialism, and Medieval Heritage Politics," *Literature Compass* 16, nos. 9–10 (2019): 1–11; and Wilton, "What Do We Mean by Anglo-Saxon?" See also Erik Wade and Rambaran-Olm, "What's in a Name? The Past and Present Racism in 'Anglo-Saxon' Studies," in *Old English to 1200*, ed. Clare Lees and Joshua Davies (special issue, *Yearbook of English Studies*, forthcoming 2022).

30 See Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1998). It would be futile to name the countless number of marginalized people specializing in Old English who have pivoted out of the field or left academia altogether, in part or wholly because of discrimination. One only needs to look at the representation of the field and its whiteness to see how evident this is. See also Rambaran-Olm, "Anglo-Saxon Studies [Early English Studies], Academia and White Supremacy," *Medium*, June 27, 2018, <https://medium.com/@mrambaranolm/anglo-saxon-studies-academia-and-white-supremacy-17c87b360bf3>.

31 Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 223–90.

32 Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" 274.

33 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 109.

34 Kathy Lavezzo, "'New Ethnicities' and Medieval 'Race,'" *Addressing the Crisis: The Stuart Hall Project* (2019), 1:1–5, *Iowa Research Online*, <https://ir.uiowa.edu/stuarthall/vol1/iss1/6>.

35 Hall and Les Back, "At Home and Not at Home: Stuart Hall in Conversation with Les Back," in "Stuart Hall and 'Race,'" ed. Claire Alexander, special issue, *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 665.

36 Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 156; Lavezzo, "'New Ethnicities,'" 1.

37 Hall and Back, "At Home and Not at Home," 665.

38 Select readings of Hall include: *Essential Essays*, ed. David Morley, 2 vols. (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press Books, 2019); Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press Books, 2016); and Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2017).

39 To clarify, I do not believe that diversity on its own can fix all of the issues that plague Early English studies, but in highlighting how a number of Black and Brown scholars have been persuaded to pivot or leave the field underscores an entrenched belief on the part of scholars in and out of the field that the discipline is for white people. See Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, esp. 20ff. Further discussion of diversity in early England includes P. E. Montgomery Ramírez, "Colonial Representations of Race in Alternative Museums: The 'African' of St Benet's, the 'Arab' of Jorvik, and the 'Black Viking,'" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 9 (2021): 937–52; and Rambaran-Olm and Wade, *Race in Early Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, forthcoming 2022).

40 Hall, "The West and the Rest." See also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 31–73, 201–25.

41 Hall, "The West and the Rest," 318.

42 Enzo Traverso, "Marxism and the West," in *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2016), 154.

43 Traverso, "Marxism and the West," 154. Traverso argues that Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* uses nature metaphors to exemplify European superiority, as though it was a natural progression of time, space, and geography. Hegel's Eurocentrism points to prehistoric and immutable activities in the East all culminating and merging in the West into a "universal history" (154). Traverso and others interpret "Hegelian dialectic as a mimesis of colonialism" (155), which I argue is also connected to how early English literature and history have been taught.

44 For a more complete account of Thomas Jefferson's interest in the early English period and with "Anglo-Saxons" see Vernon, *The Black Middle Ages*, 3–4; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981); and Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Manifest Destiny and Anglo-Saxon Racism—1815–1875," in *America, Amerikkka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence* (Acumen Publishing, 2007), 70–99.

45 Coral Lumbley connects medieval tribal migration to current migration into the US and across Europe. Lumbley points directly to vilifying and othering of refugees and migrants through language and acts of violence today, while demonstrating how white supremacy has shaped views of past migration of Germanic people. See Lumbley, "Velut in sentinam congescit": Refugees and Racism, Modern and Medieval," *Postmedieval* 11, no. 4 (2020): 407–15.

46 For instance, almost two centuries worth of Beowulfian scholarship reveals how most scholars focus on Grendel's "otherness" and monstrosity rather than highlighting his indigeneity to his land among Danish invaders. Reexaminations of Grendelkin's indigeneity has been highlighted in recent years by Miyashiro, "Homeland Insecurity: Biopolitics and Sovereign Violence in *Beowulf*," *Postmedieval* 11, no. 4 (2020): 384–95; Christopher Abram, "At Home in the Fens with the Grendelkin," in *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy*, ed. Daniel C. Remein and Erica Weaver (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2020), 120–44; and Catalin Taranu, "Men into Monsters: Troubling Race, Ethnicity, and Masculinity in *Beowulf*," in *Dating Beowulf*, 189–209.

47 Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; or the Two Nations* (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), 1:324.

48 Hall, "The West and the Rest," 295.

49 See Rambaran-Olm, "Academia and White Supremacy." Hall's "Spectacle" discusses how Black actors used an integrationist strategy to gain entry into mainstream US filmmaking. This strategy came at a cost because Black actors had to adapt to an image of themselves through a white gaze and assimilate what were acknowledged as "white norms of style, looks and behavior" (270). This "integrationist" strategy is what I mean by "model minorities" where BIPOC often fit into a stereotype in Early English studies in order to gain entry into the field, but this entry most often comes at a personal cost.

50 For details on Gordon David Houston's career see Jimisha I. Relerford, "The New Negro Teaches Writing: G. David Houston's Activist Rhetoric at Howard University," MA Thesis, Georgia State Univ., 2014. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/180.

51 Houston, *Basic English Grammar* (New York: Globe Book Company, 1936).

52 Houston, *Basic English Grammar*, 144–47.

53 J. R. R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 6.

54 Houston, "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English," *The Howard University Record* 14, no. 1 (1919): 29, 31.

55 Houston, "Reconstruction," 31.

56 I wrote briefly about Houston in 2020 after discovering his teaching syllabus simultaneously with Mary Dockray-Miller; see Rambaran-Olm, "'Houston, we have a problem': Erasing Black Scholars in Old English Literature," *Medium*, March 3, 2020, <https://medium.com/@mrambaranolm/houston-we-have-a-problem-erasing-black-scholars-in-old-english-1461e9d1f125>.

57 Sierra Lomuto, "A White Canon in a World of Color," *Medievalists of Color: Public Discourse*, March 26, 2019, <https://medievalistsofcolor.com/race-in-the-profession/a-white-canon-in-a-world-of-color/>.

58 Lomuto, "A White Canon in a World of Color."

59 Lomuto, "A White Canon in a World of Color."

60 Even before scholars like Houston were speaking on these issues of race, racism, and whitewashed narratives, forerunners such as W. E. B. Du Bois were underscoring critical race discussions. See Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in *W. E. B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses, 1890–1919*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 83–95; and Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903).

61 Theoretical approaches that would allow for engagement with texts in a more critical way, (such as critical race theory and postcolonial studies) have largely been ignored or rejected on the grounds that they lack rigor. What seems to be the case is that the conventional modes of analysis are easier and more accessible to a largely white scholarly community, and such thinking that forces white scholars to use analytic methods outside of what comes naturally is more easily brushed off as inferior or less rigorous.

62 Frantz Fanon, "Introduction" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (1952; New York: Grove, 2008), xiii. It should be noted that Fanon was not speaking specifically about Early English studies, but his point about whiteness is applicable to the field.

63 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 13. My parenthesis in Fanon's quote extends his first-person pronouns as a Black man to represent BIPOC historians shedding light on history.

64 For pedagogical approaches to counter whitewashed narratives, see Kimberly Anne Coles, Kim F. Hall, and Ayanna Thompson, "BlacKKKShakespearean: A Call to Action for Medieval and Early Modern Studies," *MLA Profession*, November 2019, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://profession.mla.org/blackkkshakespearean-a-call-to-action-for-medieval-and-early-modern-studies/>. See also Rebecca Futo Kennedy, "Why I Teach About Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World," *Eidolon*, September 11, 2017, <https://eidolon.pub/why-i-teach-about-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-classical-world-ade379722170>.

65 Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018), 22–23.

66 Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 22.

67 Traverso, "Marxism and the West," 155. What I mean is that even if we look at the "Global Middle Ages" and seek to find glimpses of relatable material, this is still problematized if we look for "modernities" within a European framework and lens.

68 Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 23.

69 See Rambaran-Olm, "Misnaming the Medieval"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "What's in a Name?"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "The Many Myths of the Term 'Anglo-Saxon.'" *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 14, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/many-myths-term-anglo-saxon-180978169/>.

70 See Rambaran-Olm, "Misnaming the Medieval"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "What's in a Name?"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "The Many Myths of the Term 'Anglo-Saxon.'"

71 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.i. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors translate "natione Afir" as "African race" although they give no explanation as to why they use "race." See Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 329. I prefer the translation "African nation" although both "race" and "nation" are used to invoke difference. Classical and insular medieval Latin translations of "Afir" mean "North African." According to the *Monumenta Database*, St. Augustine too used "Afir" in *Epistolae* 138, 4, 19, 1 to refer to a North African, probably of Amazigh descent: http://www.monumenta.ch/latein/advkonkordanz.php?s_uchbegriff2=afir&binary&modif&domain&lang=0&tabelle=Latein&id&kkwlaus=kk_alle&von=advsuchen&suchbegriff=afir&target, accessed July 30, 2020. Bede uses "Afir" again to describe Tertullian (*De Temporum Ratione*, 66, 193) who scholars have established was from Carthage and also of Amazigh descent. The main signifier in Bede's use of "Afir" to describe Hadrian is meant to signal some amount of alterity.

72 Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* IV.ii.204–5. Existing records of one of Hadrian's most famous students, Aldhelm (c. 639–25 May 709) mentions a North African late-antiquity riddler named Symposius. It is highly likely that Aldhelm was introduced to the works of Symposius by his teacher, Hadrian.

73 Michael Lapidge, "The school of Theodore and Hadrian," *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986): 45–72.

74 Raffaello Biordi, "The Library of St. Gall," *East and West* 5, no. 2 (1954): 135–39; and Walter Horn and Ernest Born, *The Plan of St. Gall: A Study of the Architecture and Economy of and Life in a Paradigmatic Carolingian Monastery*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979).

75 Günter Noll, "The Origin of the So-Called Plan of St. Gall," *Journal of Medieval History* 8, no. 3 (1982): 191–240. For further reading, see Lawrence Nees, "The Plan of St. Gall and the Theory of the Program of Carolingian Art," *Gesta* 25, no. 1 (1986): 1–8. The eighth-century Leiden Glossary prepared in modern-day Switzerland contains a record of Theodore and Hadrian's teaching, thus exemplifying the far-reaching effect the two had beyond the borders of early England. Given that there is recorded evidence of Theodore's and Hadrian's reach in what is modern-day Switzerland, returning to Noll's plans concerning the Syrian model of the monastery is overdue.

76 Lapidge, "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," 52. See also François Bucher, review of *Die Herkunft des St. Galler Klosterplanes: Der Entwurf des geplanten Kathedraalklosters Canterbury Christ Church durch den Hl. Theodor von Tarsus (668–690)* by Noll, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41, no. 2 (1982): 156.

77 The original German quote can be found in Samuel Guyer, *Grundlagen mittelalterlicher abendländischer Baukunst* (Einsiedeln: BenzigerVerlag, 1950), 11–12. Translation by Noll, "Origin," 196.

78 This rejection of ideas based on Eurocentric superiority reflects the "Hegelian matrix" that Traverso explores in detail. He explains how history according to Hegel "was the process through which Spirit became conscious of itself, and this self-realization had a double dimension concerning both space and time. Its rational character was embodied by the Western world, that is, Europe, the place where Spirit revealed itself. The cleavage separating prehistory from history was not only chronologically but also geographically recognizable, because it divided Europe (civilization) from the extra-European world (barbarism). This dichotomy was the motor of universal history that, finally, coincides with the triumph of the West over the 'peoples without history'" (Traverso, "Marxism and the West," 154).

79 Theodore's and Hadrian's travels throughout the British Isle are described in *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.II.204–6. Lapidge briefly mentions the presence of the Persian saint, Miles, in the Old English Martyrology. See Lapidge, "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," 49, fn. 28. See also Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013).

80 Lapidge, "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," 67.

81 Lapidge, "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," 59, 61. It should be noted that Bernhard Bischoff and Lapidge's *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), does reflect slightly on Theodore and Hadrian's backgrounds, but mostly in sweeping terms about "eastern" influence while still dismissing the suggestion that Hadrian was from North Africa and at the same time honing in on his Greek education. See Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, 5–7, 84, 155, 173. See also Wade, "Pater Don't Preach: Byzantine Theology, Female Sexuality, and Histories of Global Encounter in the 'English' *Paenitentiale Theodori*," *The Medieval Globe* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1–28.

82 There is no way to determine what people in North Africa looked like in the seventh century, so although Hadrian's skin color may never be determined, we cannot pigeonhole him as "non-Black" because he was North African. According to the *New World Encyclopaedia*, "The genetically predominant ancestors of the Berbers appear to have come from East Africa, the Middle East, or both—but the details of this remain unclear." *New World*

Encyclopedia, s. v. "Berber," <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Berber>, accessed July 30, 2020. To discount Hadrian being Black because he was from North Africa is to ignore the potential ethnic mix and variety of the peoples. For discussion on skin color in the early English period see Wade's "Skin Color in Early Medieval England" (forthcoming).

83 Wade, "Skin Color in Early Medieval England" (forthcoming).

84 Toni Morrison, "Grendel and His Mother," in *Mouth Full of Blood: Essays, Speeches, Meditations* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2019), 262.

85 Hall, *West and the Rest*, 318.

86 See Coles, Hall and Thompson, "BlacKKKShakespearean."