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(Re)casting the Past: The Cloisters and Medievalism

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Nestled in the hills of Fort Tyron Park in northern Manhattan lies an extension of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cloisters. The Cloisters house much of the Met's medieval collection. The structure itself is composed of elements taken from five European cloisters. The resulting building, as the Met's official website puts it, "is not a copy of any specific medieval structure but an ensemble of spaces, rooms, and gardens that suggest a variety of artistic aspects of medieval Europe."[1] While constructed of medieval materials, the Cloisters is not a medieval construction. It is a conflation, a re-appropriation of elements of a medieval past for a specific contemporary purpose. The structure is not medieval but a medievalism. In a sense, the Cloisters is a metaphor for the practice of a kind of medievalism, a practice with a conceptual mirror in the early modern period. While the modern Metropolitan Museum of Art hopes to "suggest" a medieval space through the reorganization of physical material, Tudor and Stuart medievalists (if we can apply such a term) labored to mediate their religious and political present by reorganizing a re-appropriated English past. The early modern period saw the birth of Anglo-Saxon studies and the reclamation of the Old English language. With the renewed interest in a manifestly English, pre-Norman past came the desire to transmit this history to the broader public. Immediately, the recovery of an Anglo-Saxon past was swept up in larger Reformation-era ideological conflicts.

In this essay, I focus on a variety of texts printed using Anglo-Saxon type between 1566 and 1623 in an effort to explore the use of Anglo-Saxon typeface in the early modern period as the use of the Old English language progressed from polemical truncheon to historiographical instrument.[2]

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[1] "The Cloisters Museum and Gardens," Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed March 1, 2013. http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/history-of-the-museum/the-cloisters-museum-and-gardens. Emphasis mine.

[2] I take for my focus the years between the publication of A Testimonie of Antiquitie (1566?) and the appearance of a William L'Isle's A Saxon Treatise (1623). The question mark following the date of printing for A Testimonie is in keeping with the conventions of the STC. Traditionally, scholars have relied upon Eleanor Adams' date of 1566 for publication – a date she bases on a reading from Arber's Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London. See Erick Kelemen, "A Reexamination of the Date of A Testimonie of Antiquitie, One of the First Books Printed in Anglo-Saxon Types" ANQ 10.4 (1997): 3-10. Keleman's article provides a thorough overview of the issues troubling the establishment of a precise date of publication. He suggests that "the best date of publication we can assign to A Testimonie is between October 1566 and August 1568, probably before the end of 1567" (7). For my purposes, I take the publication of A Testimonie as the start of the mass-transmission of Old English.

This period marks the first half-century of early modern Anglo-Saxon studies which, according to C.E. Wright, was dominated by four primary objectives: "royal supremacy, the rejection of transubstantiation, the right of the people to read the Scriptures in the vernacular, [and] the theory that the Church as then established represented a return to the purity of the Primitive Church."[3] To Wright's analysis, I would add that during this period an antithesis also emerged, whereby a handful of Anglo-Saxon scholars plied their trade to contain or even refute the post-Reformation ideological agenda. Regardless of polemical stance, the recovery of Old English and the availability of Anglo-Saxon typesets led to a broader reinvention of English historiography as early modern Anglo-Saxonists labored to construct a national narrative from the textual fragments that survived the dissolution of the monasteries.

In her pioneering work on early Anglo-Saxon studies, Eleanor Adams keenly notes that it is to Reformation polemic rather than literary renaissance that we owe the renewed scholarly interest in Old English.[4] John Foxe, the martyrologist, explains the motivation for translating and ultimately printing ancient Anglo-Saxon "monuments," in the preface to The Gospels of the Fower Euangelists (1571).[5] Foxe explains that these works will prove "how the religion presently taught & professed in the Church at thys present, is no new reformation of thinges lately begonne, which were not before, but rather a reduction of the Church to the Pristine state of olde conformitie."[6] What for Foxe was "no new reformation" was rather a revolution, a return to an earlier theological position, one somehow less troubled by the Roman See. Allen Frantzen describes this effect in Desire for Origins, writing:

A political crisis – the English Reformation – fostered scholarship, since, in order to justify the break with Rome, England needed a history that demonstrated the existence of an ancient, specifically English Church. Those who believed in the existence of such a Church traced enough evidence in religious Anglo-Saxon prose to substantiate belief. Their historical and textual determination stemmed from religious conviction. We may say that desire for origins was their chief qualification for scholarship and their guarantee that textual criticism would inevitably bear out the historical view that inspired it.[7]

As Frantzen argues and Foxe's preface to The Gospels illustrates, the ideological shift that accompanied the Reformation demanded reformed textual evidence. As the nation realigned itself

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[3] C.E. Wright, "The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies," in Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographic Society, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1953), 208-37 (227).

[4] Eleanor Adams, Old English Scholarship in England from 1566-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), 11.

[5] For more information on the intersection of Foxe and early printed Anglo-Saxon works, see Michael Murphy, "John Foxe, Martyrologist and 'Editor' of Old English," English Studies 49 (1968): 516-23. Given the Protestant objective to produce and transmit the Scriptures in the vernacular, the publication of Old English and modern English translations of The Gospels must have had a curious doubling effect. The texts were, in essence, printed in vernacular twice simultaneously.

[6] [John Foxe], Preface to The Gospels of the Fower Euangelists (London: John Day, 1571), sig. ¶1^{r}.

[7] Allen Frantzen, Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 24.

once again with the Protestant cause following Mary's reign, the task to produce a verifiable Anglican ecclesiastical history fell to Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker (1504-1575). Parker used his position as archbishop, eventually with the official endorsement of the Privy Council, to begin collecting Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that had been dispersed across the country following the dissolution of the monastic libraries.

Consolidating available Anglo-Saxon manuscripts was an important early stage in Parker's project. By the sixteenth century, Old English was a dead language. The Anglo-Saxonist Michael Murphy explains that, to meet Anglican theological objectives, Parker "organized his household, including his son John and his secretary John Joscelyn, into a kind of school of Anglo-Saxon" in an effort to relearn the language.[8] Mastering Old English was an essential part of Parker's project. As Frantzen described, the Reformation's ideological battleground was textual. Indeed, Parker believed that evidence of the dialectic between reformation and counter-reformation was visible at the material level in the physical text itself.

Evidence of just such a textual battle may be found in the preface to A Testimonie of Antiquitie (1566?), often considered to be the first book printed with Anglo-Saxon type.[9] A Testimonie reproduces a sermon by Ælfric of Eynsham in Saxon characters with a facing modern English translation. The sermon, which originally sought to explain the difference between transubstantiated Eucharist and corporeal flesh, was reinterpreted by the Parkerians to be evidence that the historic English church never fully accepted the doctrine. Joscelyn's preface describes a book of canons from the Worcester cathedral library, noting that, "one place [in] this booke handlth thys matter of the sacrament: but a fewe lynes, wherin dyd consiste the chiefe poynte of the co[n]trouersie, be rased out by some reader."[10] The controversy centers on the validity of the doctrine of transubstantiation – one of Wright's four fundamental objectives of early modern Anglo-Saxon studies. The manuscript described held both Anglo-Saxon and Latin versions of a sermon on the sacrament, until a loyal servant of Rome redacted the offensive Latin passages, while leaving many of the Old English lines intact.

Parker's circle was able to reclaim the lost text and, in so doing, further their polemical aim by suggesting that the early church never accepted transubstantiation as fact. Instead, Joscelyn argues, the early English church regarded the consecration of the Eucharist as a symbolic ritual. Parker's work provided textual evidence, quite literally in the hand of his ecclesiastical predecessors, that aligned with the Protestant cause. Benedict Robinson further explains, "Parker's was a textual reformation, a reformation of the book: by correcting, reforming, and printing these 'testimonies of antiquity,' the Parkerian scholars worked to produce a usable past for Protestant England. English

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[8] Michael Murphy, "Antiquary to Academic: The Progress of Anglo-Saxon Scholarship," in Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries, ed. Carl Berkhout and Milton Gatch (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 1-17 (3).

[9] The preface is anonymous, but most scholars attribute it to Joscelyn.

[10] [John Joscelyn], Preface to A Testimonie of Antiquitie, (London: John Day, 1566) fol. 5^{r}.

history would be reformed by reforming its texts."[11]

To produce and transmit these reformations, Parker turned to the Protestant printer John Day (1522-1584). Day owned one of the largest print houses in London and he collaborated closely with Foxe, Parker, and other polemicists to advance the Protestant cause.[12] His distributive capability and printing capacity, when added to his religious fervor, made Day an excellent fit for the task of printing. Before he could begin, however, he had to acquire a completely new typeset. According to Adams, the first Anglo-Saxon typeset ever produced was made from brass and cast for Day at the expense of Parker. Of the typeset she writes, "They exhibit what is called a full Anglo-Saxon letter. The body of the type was English, a little less than Great Primer; of the capitals, eight, including two diphthongs, were 'Saxon', the rest being ordinary Roman; in the lower case there were twelve 'Saxon' letters. Eventually, Day would cut a smaller size of 'Saxon' on a Pica body."[13] Adams reasonably maintains that the font itself was likely adapted from the Roman minuscule hand used by Irish monks in the last century before the Norman Conquest, furthering the conceit of the Anglo-Saxon "monument" as an object to be viewed rather than a text to be interpreted.[14] The construction of the typeset became a physical manifestation of the ongoing linguistic recovery, while the transmission of texts via these types furthered an explicit theological aim.

The reclamation of lost texts was not limited to the service of religious polemic. While Parker and Joscelyn labored through sermons to support Anglican ecclesiastical positions, William Lambarde set to work uncovering an Anglo-Saxon juridical past and crafting the first topographic history of an English county – Kent. According to Wilbur Dunkel, Lambarde's biographer, Lambarde's interest in law grew from his support of the Protestant cause during the final years of Mary's reign.[15] Lambarde earned a reputation at Lincoln's Inn as a Latin scholar and his skill attracted the attention of Laurence Nowell. Nowell sought refuge in Lincoln's Inn from Mary's ideological purges and his association with Lambarde likely precipitated their joint linguistic endeavors. The pair's collaboration culminated with the translation of a collection of Anglo-Saxon

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[11] Benedict Robinson, "'Darke Speech': Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History," The Sixteenth Century Journal 29 (1998): 1061-83 (1064).

[12] My comment on the relative size of Day's workshop relies on Christopher Oastler's gloss of a 1583 survey of London printing-houses that put the number of presses in Day's employ at four. See Christopher Oastler, John Day, the Elizabethan Printer (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographic Society, 1975), 34. In A New Introduction of Bibliography, Philip Gaskell, likely using the same survey, writes, "in London in 1583, 87 per cent of 23 businesses had 1, 2, or 3 presses, the largest 7 presses" (175). These statistics suggest that Day possessed one of the largest facilities in the country and one with a capacity robust enough to meet Parker's broad polemical objectives. The pair had previously worked together with Foxe to publish the Book of Martyrs.

[13] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 157-58. For more general information on the production and employment of typesets during the hand-press period, see Philip Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1972), esp. 9-39.

[14] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 158.

[15] Wilbur Dunkel, William Lambarde, Elizabethan Jurist: 1536-1601 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), 27.

laws into Latin. Interestingly, Nowell had a habit of completing sections he found lacking (a habit shared by several sixteenth-century Saxonists). According to Frantzen:

When transcribing laws . . . he compared the Old English texts to Latin translations of them made in the twelfth century; where the Latin contained material missing in the Anglo-Saxon, he translated it into his own Old English, which was not very good, but which was good enough to fool Felix Libermann, the formidable twentieth-century editor of the laws.[16]

The result of this translation (and expansion) project was Archaionomia, printed in 1568 by John Day, using the same typeset employed for A Testimonie.[17]

Archaionomia won Lambarde high praise from the Anglo-Saxonists in Parker's circle. Foxe, sent a copy to William Bradbridge (then Dean of Salisbury, later Bishop of Exeter) with an inscription lauding Lambarde's talents.[18] The archbishop himself endorsed the Archaionomia in his preface to Asser, suggesting that the work had the potential to be more than a legal reference and might assist those interested in studying the Old English language. Adams suggests that Lambarde's project was so successful that there was no serious re-visitation of Anglo-Saxon laws until Abraham Wheloc in 1643.[19] The success of Archaionomia secured Lambarde's reputation as a scholar and served as a forerunner for his most ambitious historiographic project.

A Perambulation of Kent: Containing the Description, Hystorie and Customs of that Shyre, printed in 1576, is the first history of an English county. It also marks the first use of an Anglo-Saxon typeset other than the Day types used for A Testimonie and Archaionomia and represents an important development in the progression of early modern English historiography. Although the quantity of Old English appearing in A Perambulation is limited, the printer seemed unable to meet the sparse requirements and, as Adams notes, Roman characters are occasionally substituted for Saxon.[20] It is unclear why Lambarde would have elected to take his work to Newberry instead of Day, especially given their mutual association with Archbishop Parker, but it is reasonable to speculate that increasing demand for the type played a role in the decision to select a printer with an inferior set. The year A Perambulation appeared was the same as the third edition of Foxe's Actes and Monuments. Following the second edition, Each subsequent edition of the martyrology contained large portions of Anglo-Saxon material, and it is possible that the Day types and presses were simply unavailable for Lambarde's project.

Lambarde's interest in recovering (or recreating) an English legal past, informed his historiography. Indeed, Lambarde seems to suggest that A Perambulation is as much a social history as self-styled "Topographical Dictionarie."[21] "[E]uen as corne hath his chaffe," Lambarde muses,

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[16] Frantzen, Desire for Origins, 42.
[17] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 158.
[18] Dunkel, William Lambarde, 34-35.
[19] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 35-36.
[20] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 160.
[21] William Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent: Containing the Description, Hystorie and Customs of that Shyre (London: [Henry Middleton] for Ralph Newberry, 1576), 6.

"so can there hardly any wryter of the auncient hystorie of any nation be founde out that hath not his propre vanities mixed with sincere veritie."[22] These "propre vanities," by Lambarde's own admission the ideological motivations of the historiographer, are an inescapable consequence of production.

As he escorts his reader through the county, Lambarde weaves detailed historical accounts into each physical description. Though his primary project, he asserts, "is to write a Topographie, or description of places, and no Chronographie, or storie of times," Lambarde acknowledges that he "must now and then vse bothe, since one cannot be fully performed without enterlacing the other."[23] Past and place are inseparable components of Lambarde's methodology. Thus, his description of the county of Kent is intimately related to his recovery (or construction) of a specifically English past. His use of Old English etymologies to lend historical authority to his descriptions, links the recovery of the language with an early modern sense of the present. For example, Lambarde describes Alfred's process of dividing "the whole Realme into certein parts, or Sections...which of the Saxon woorde Scyran, signifying to cut, he [Alfred] termed shires."[24] For Lambarde, local boundaries are more than lines on a map, they are the linguistic vestiges of a uniquely English past. He begins many of his entries in A Perambulation with an etymological tie to an Anglo-Saxon past, creating what might be termed as a semiotics of chorography.

Thomas Wotton, in the introductory epistle, writes of Lambarde that he "set out [his work] truely: with good words wel placed."[25] Wotton's characterization is accurate and illuminating, especially for a self-described "Topographical Dictionary."[26] This particular study, though narrowed by geography, contains only a general map of England and indeed relies heavily on Lambarde's "good words." As many of those words are based in Lambarde's recovery of Old English, A Perambulation has the effect of uniting the local topography of Kent to a national linguistic tradition.

If Lambarde's Perambulation is topographic history and Parker's project ecclesiastical, then Richard Verstegan's (c.1548-1640) A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence (1605) represents an early linguistic history.[27] The book contains a history of Anglo-Saxon England and "the first printed collection of meanings and etymologies of Old English words arranged in alphabetical order" so that it "may be considered as a forerunner of Somner's dictionary."[28] A Restitution is critical to the development of Old English studies for several reasons: Verstegan was a notorious Catholic polemicist, a fact which suggests that his efforts depended on a source of learning independent of

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[22] Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 61.
[23] Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 18.
[24] Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 20-21.
[25] Thomas Wotton, introductory epistle to A Perambulation of Kent, sig. ¶iii^{r}.
[26] Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 6.
[27] Richard Verstegan, A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence (Antwerp: Robert Bruney, 1605).
[28] Adams, Old English Scholarship, 43, 45. William Somner published the first printed dictionary of Anglo-Saxon words in 1659. Before this publication, antiquarians relied almost entirely on MS glossaries.

the Anglican reformers; he assembled and published the work in Antwerp, indicating that a parallel effort to study and publish early Anglo-Saxon writing existed on the continent; and finally, the detailed etymologies – far more expansive than the few provided by Lambarde – that accompanied this text recast English historiography along linguistic lines. In this work traditional historical narratives were re-imagined based upon the evidence produced from linguistic historical study. The presence of both the intellectual and mechanical capacity to translate and print Anglo-Saxon texts outside of England demonstrates that Old English studies entered a period of expansion in the early seventeenth century. This diffusion represented a direct challenge to the textual authority of the Anglican reformers and may have begun to weaken the earlier Protestant ideological associations that accompanied printed Anglo-Saxon material.

Though his course of Old English study is unknown, Richard Clement argues that Verstegan's contact with the language must have come through Abraham Ortels, the Dutch cartographer. Ortels travelled throughout England, associating with such notable antiquarians as William Camden, and returned to Antwerp with at least one Anglo-Saxon manuscript – one that contained over 5,000 glosses of Saxon words.[29] Ortels is also known to have possessed a copy of Lambarde's Archaionomia, making his library a likely starting place for any recusant Englishman keen to learn the language.[30]

Denied access to Old English scholars and resources in England, Verstegan's work is all the more striking. The first six chapters of A Restitution trace the origins of the British people, historicize some cultural practices, and examine some geographic peculiarities.[31] To these accounts he appends a lengthy list of some 685 etymologies. His work is startlingly accurate for a scholar with such limited resources. In 1949, Philip Goepp analyzed this list, determining 615 to be correct.[32] This glossary provided Verstegan evidence of an ancient Anglo-Saxon past. Clement argues that Verstegan's "major achievement [in A Restitution] was in demonstrating the nobility of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors."[33] Verstegan's labors, dedicated to the newly crowned King James,

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[29] According to Clement, "We know that Laurence Nowell examined the codex at some point, taking from it at least one unique entry for his manuscript glossary" (27). This connection illustrates how narrow the field of Anglo-Saxon scholarship was during the period. The consolidation of MS material in the hands of so few individuals must have complicated Verstegan's project. Verstegan wrote to Robert Cotton in June 1609, in an effort to access Cotton's MS collection; however, according to a second letter to Cotton in October 1617, he never received a response. See Anthony Petti, ed., The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan (London: Catholic Record Society, 1959) (esp. 266-69).

[30] Richard Clement, "Richard Verstegan's Reinvention of Anglo-Saxon England: A Contribution from the Continent," in Reinventing the Middle Ages and The Renaissance: Constructions of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods, ed. William F. Gentrup (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 19-36 (26-28). Ortel's copy of Archaionomia is now Folger Shakespeare Library, copy 1. Interestingly, copy 5 contains a signature purported to be that of William Shakespeare.

[31] The third chapter mentions the practice of gavelkind, perhaps suggesting that Verstegan may have had some familiarity with Lambarde's Perambulation; the chapter also contains the first printed version of the Pied Piper legend in English (Restitution 57, 85-86).

[32] Clement, "Richard Verstegan's Reinvention of Anglo-Saxon England," 32.

[33] Clement, "Richard Verstegan's Reinvention of Anglo-Saxon England," 33.

marshaled linguistic evidence to produce an English history that so predated the period of Parker and Lambarde's focus as to broaden its appeal. Here was a history before the chaos of the Reformation – a history that Verstegan and other recusants likely hoped might form a bridge back to England from their exile. Clement and others have argued that Verstegan's work was simply overshadowed by Camden's Remains of a Greater Worke (1605). While it is possible that Camden simply monopolized the market that year, it seems just as likely that readers in England were reluctant to purchase the writings of a known Catholic agent in a year whose sectarian tensions closed with the Gunpowder Plot.

The Protestant Anglo-Saxonists' close collaboration only serves to cement Verstegan's status as an outsider in sixteenth-century Old English studies. While Camden's Remaines of a Greater Worke attempted several Old English etymologies, it is far away in both scope and accuracy from Verstegan's Restitution. Indeed, it would take nearly two decades before another Anglo-Saxon scholar would unite Verstegan's work with Lambarde and Parker's. William L'Isle's A Saxon Treatise Concerning the Old and New Testament is often considered to be a point of transition between polemic and scholarship.[34]

The method of study L'Isle used to master Old English is almost humorously circuitous. According to his preface to A Saxon Treatise, L'Isle began first by learning Dutch, "both high and low," then tackling "Virgil Scotished," noting that the dialect appeared to him to be close to Old English.[35] With the help of a Latin edition of Virgil, L'Isle was able to master the dialect and move forward to Old English. He began reading "certaine Sermons, and the foure Euangelists set out and Englished by Mr. Fox," which so improved his knowledge of the language that he found himself able "as it were to swimme without bladders."[36]

L'Isle's sources mark a significant shift in the study of Old English. Though he is vague about the "certaine Sermons" he consulted, it is reasonable to assume that he is referring to Parker's A Testimonie. L'Isle specifically mentions Foxe's Gospels, the works of Camden and Lambarde, and even credits the efforts of the much maligned Verstegan, when he argues that learning Old English is important because "the memory and knowledge thereof serues well to finde out . . . the Etymologies and roots of our words now used."[37] The impact of Verstegan's writing (and the

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[34] William L'Isle, A Saxon Treatise Concerning the Old and New Testament (London: John Haviland, 1623). A Saxon Treatise also marks the first use of John Haviland's Anglo-Saxon typeset. The Haviland types are a vast improvement over the set Newberry and Middleton had used for A Perambulation and their appearance suggests that by the early seventeenth century, English type-founders had reached a level of sophistication rivaling the Dutch craftsmen who had so long dominated the field. The continued need for new types may suggest an increase in demand for works printed in Old English.

[35] William L'Isle, A Saxon Treatise, sig. c4^{v}.

[36] William L'Isle, A Saxon Treatise, sig. d1^{r}. For a more complete discussion of L'Isle's efforts to master Old English, see Phillip Pulsiano, "William L'Isle and the Editing of Old English," in The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, ed. Timothy Graham (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute, 2000), 173-206.

[37] William L'Isle, A Saxon Treatise, sig. f1^{v}.

accreditation of the recusant by name in the preface) suggests that by this time Old English studies were beginning to advance beyond polemic and enter into a less ideological antiquarianism. Indeed, L'Isle insists that his own objectives are guided by preservation rather than polemic. He writes, "Lo here in this field of learning, this orchard of the old English Church, haue I set my selfe on worke, where though I plant not a new, I may saue at least a good old tree or two, that were like to be lost."[38] Although A Saxon Treatise stands as L'Isle's only printed foray into Old English historiography, his achievement suggests an attempt at separation between antiquarianism and polemic and marks a new phase in Anglo-Saxon scholarship. William L'Isle's course of study, with its emphasis on the work of earlier Anglo-Saxonists, has much in common, metaphorically, with the architecture of the Metropolitan Museum's Cloisters. His work, though certainly earnest and well-intentioned, suggests an Anglo-Saxon past, one that remains, for L'Isle and those who followed him, inextricably linked to the early modern, ideological recovery of Old English.

[38] William L'Isle, A Saxon Treatise, sig. b4^{r}.