Allen J. Frantzen

Anglo-Saxon Keywords

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Anglo-Saxon Keywords

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Abbreviations

CDOE	*Dictionary of Old English Corpus*
DOE	*Dictionary of Old English*
OE	Old English
OEC	*OE Canons of Theodore* (penitential)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OEH	*Old English Handbook* (penitential)
OEI	*OE Introduction to penance* (penitential)
OEP	*Old English Penitential* (penitential)
OES	*OE Scriftboc* (penitential)
s.v.	*sub verbo* (Latin): "under the word," directs readers to an entry in the *DOE* or the *OED* (pl. s.vv.)
TOE	*Thesaurus of Old English*

Anglo-Saxon law codes are conventionally named after the king who issued them, and are numbered in sequence: hence I Æthelred, II Cnut, and so on. They are listed in Works Cited under the king's name.

An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, ed. J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller, is cited throughout and should be used in conjunction with Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Supplement,* rev. Alistair Campbell.

There are many references to the online edition of the Anglo-Saxon penitentials. *Please note that, to access all its functions, you must use Firefox to consult this database*. The penitential texts identified above (*OEC*, *OEH*, *OEI*, *OEP*, *OES*) are edited and translated at http://www.Anglo-Saxon.net/penance. At that address, choose Texts from the menu at the left, where the titles

abbreviated above will appear. Then choose Description and Index. At that link choose Table 2 (the canon finder). Using your operating system's Find command (e.g. Control + F for Windows), search for the number given in the parenthetical reference in *Keywords*.

Example: To find *OEH* 55.10.01. Go to the URL. Under Texts, choose OE Handbook (for *OEH*). Then choose Description and Index and at that link choose Table 2. Find 55.10.01. Every manuscript version will be listed; click on any one to see the OE text, which will automatically be displayed, and, when the cursor is placed on the canon number, translated. Manuscripts are identified at the head of Table 2.

All translations from Old and Middle English and Latin are those of the author unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

"Keyword" is not yet an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, so I have to make do with "key" and "word." There's nothing mysterious about the role of "word" in the title of this book, but "key" requires some commentary. Far down in the *OED* entry for "key" – at the end of the eighteenth and last subdivision – appears "key-word," which designates "(*a*) a word serving as a key to a cipher or the like; (*b*) a word or thing that is of great importance or significance; *spec.* in information-retrieval systems, any informative word in the title or text of a document, etc., chosen as indicating the main content of the document" (*OED*, s.v.).

The earliest written use of "key," which is *cæg* in Old English (hereafter OE), pronounced through Alexander Pope's time to rhyme with "day," "way," and "tea," is dated by the *OED* to *c.* 1000. The citation is taken from *Pastoral Care*, a book for priests and bishops written by Gregory the Great (d. 604) and translated into OE during the reign of King Alfred (d. 899). The text asks: "To what purpose do we expound upon and enumerate the keys, unless we also reveal, in a few words, what they preserve?" (*Hu nytt rehton we nu & rimdon ða cæga, buton we eac feawum wordum ætiewen hwæt hie healden*? Sweet 1871, vol. 1: 178–9). The image of the key was introduced into Gregory's text by the translator. The Latin source reads: "*Sed quid utilitatis est, quod cuncta haec collecta enumeratione transcurrimus, si non etiam ammonitionis modos per singula, quanta possumus breuitate, pandamus*"; Migne, 1844–56: vol. 77, col. 0050C; Gregory 1950: 92 (But what is the use of running through all these groups and cataloguing them, if we do not also explain the several methods of giving admonitions to each with what brevity we can?). Gregory then explains

his reasons for admonishing men in one way, women in another, the young in one way and old people in another, and so on, through another thirty-three distinctions, such as "those who do not even begin to do good, and those who begin but do not finish" (Gregory 1950: 90–2). Gregory's wish to "explain the several methods" that he collected seems to have suggested the operation of a key to the OE translator. Things collected as a group were keys that would lead to explanations. The keys would unlock meaning by expanding compact expressions and clarifying them. This function is not too remote from the specialized meaning of the key as that which indicates "the main content of the document" (*OED*, s.v.). We might think of Anglo-Saxon keywords as those that guide us to the "main content" of the culture of England from 600 to 1200.

There is more to the key, however. *Pastoral Care* probably does not contain the earliest use of the key figure, since *cæg* appears in the OE poem known as *Exodus*, based in part on the scriptural narrative and written, many scholars believe, a century before Alfred's time. In that narrative Moses expounds divine mysteries to the Israelites. For the poet this act of elaboration resembles the power of the mind, which the poet calls the "interpreter of life" (*lifes wealhstod*). The mind is able to unlock "ample benefits with the keys of the spirit" (*ginfæsten god gastes cægon*) when, like Moses, it explains the mystery of God's teaching and leads the people to wisdom (Krapp 1931: 105–6, ll. 523–6). The key was also understood in this sense by the abbot Ælfric (d. *c.* 1010), who wrote that "Grammar is the key that unlocks the wisdom of books" (*Stæfcræft is seo cæg, ðe ðæra boca andgit unlicð*; Zupitza 1966: 2). For him it was, first, a means of construing meaning with precision. In a second, figurative sense, the *cæg* not only clarifies but offers access to something that is valuable, worth having, crucial or fundamental. We see that, in OE, a key can be used to elaborate the significance of a topic or to unlock a mystery. All the keywords in this book serve the first purpose and more than a few the second as well (what is the "Danelaw," anyway, or a "thegn"?).

Raymond Williams never explained his choice of "keyword" for *Keywords*, the book that inspired this one, and he did not use the expression until he named the volume in his introduction (1985: 15). Williams was a writer of power and sensitivity, as anyone who has read *The Country and the City* knows (1973). He seems to have envisioned a "keyword" as part of "a vocabulary we share with others, often imperfectly, when we wish to discuss many of the central processes of our common life." He meant words like "culture," which have "general and variable usage" in what he called "general discussion"

(1985: 14). Williams sought to use his keywords to illustrate semantic shifts that, he at first thought, had occurred around the time of World War II. When he researched his keywords, however, he found that the meanings of some had begun to change in the early nineteenth century. His book ultimately traced semantic shifts across points much further apart than the pre- and post-war periods he originally sought to bridge.

The gap *Anglo-Saxon Keywords* seeks to close is greater, since the concepts included are intended to connect modern and early medieval cultures. Some keywords explicate ideas that were important centuries ago and have lost their currency but not their historical importance. These words and concepts open passageways from modern to medieval and medieval to modern. Keywords index important objects, ideas, and institutions in each culture. Sometimes the modern word – "aesthetics," for example – has no exact lexical counterpart in the Anglo-Saxon world. Sometimes the two cultures share a word such as "labor" but define it differently. Sometimes the OE word – "burh," meaning fortified enclosure – is obsolete and now has an entirely different meaning (in this case "borough," a town with a municipal corporation).

A volume of Anglo-Saxon keywords is timely because Anglo-Saxon culture itself no longer seems to be. Scholarship concerning the English Middle Ages is leaving the Anglo-Saxons behind. The *New Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* does not include Anglo-Saxon literature except as a memory of the twelfth century (Harris, S. J. 2003b: 2; Wallace 1999). Studies of medieval spirituality routinely begin with the twelfth century or later and regard mysticism and private devotion as late medieval phenomena (see **Piety**). The disassociation of early medieval culture from the later is not new, to be sure. Intellectual histories and studies of identity and individuality traditionally institutionalize the "twelfth-century renaissance" and the "discovery" of the individual as points of origin (see **Identity**, **Individuality**). Even as other self-limiting scholarly traditions – including periodization and the literary canon – have been rethought, the separation of Old from Middle and later English literatures and languages persists.

There are many causes for this gap. What matters are its consequences. Readers outside Anglo-Saxon studies need a savvy guide to the Anglo-Saxon evidence, too much of which has been cut off from later periods. Hence this volume concentrates on words and ideas that link contemporary and Anglo-Saxon cultures. As recent work has shown, new media, translations, and other forms continue to probe connections between these worlds, sometimes, in

matters of film especially, with dismaying naïveté (Clark and Perkins 2010). *Beowulf* invariably gets the most attention, since it is frequently reincarnated in new media and translations. But adventure tales are by no means the only point of contact between the early medieval and the modern. The Anglo-Saxon textual and material archives are rich in ideas that link the Middle Ages to our age. The keywords in this book are designed to unlock them.

There is another component to this project: modularity. The premise of this book is that culture needs to be studied as a collection of modules, not only as a unitary construct. Each keyword is a module; it is an independent unit but also a component of a system, and, together with others like it, forms a larger and more complex structure. Modules are self-contained but are described in relation to other modules, which are cross-referenced to those closest to them at the end of each entry (other connections are, of course, possible). Bibliographical references connect these modules to research and writing in other disciplines and periods. Williams's list was originally intended to serve as an appendix to *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*. In a sense the modularity of *Anglo-Saxon Keywords* inverts Williams's original design. Williams imagined his keywords as supplements to a sweeping cultural narrative. This volume has replaced the narrative with keywords that, in various combinations, constitute larger units but do not amount to a comprehensive view of Anglo-Saxon culture. A series of dots, seen from a distance, forms a pattern. Likewise, groups of keywords intersect: gender, sex, masculinity, femininity, and identity, for example, are modules with shared interests; so too are coinage, trade, technology, and settlement.

In compiling the seventy-five terms that form this list, I have excluded many that others might consider no less key than the words I discuss. But there would be a consensus that the list should include "art," "gender," "labor," "settlements," "trade," and others. Collected in one book, these keywords are intended to assist three audiences. Students working with OE texts in the original or in translation look for contemporary approaches to Anglo-Saxon culture; many are suggested here. These keywords will also help generalists and others who work with later periods but do comparative work that requires them to know how "gender" or "drama" might be approached in the early period. Some specialists will know more about certain keywords than I do, but I hope to have pointed out some new paths to specialists as well. In compiling this list, I have sometimes found myself, after many years in the field, in new-to-me territory, always a good place for scholars to be.

A volume of keywords seems to answer to contemporary needs, more so perhaps than an encyclopedia, with its studied neutrality, or a handbook for OE literature that can only gesture to non-literary evidence. Williams's *Keywords* was first published in 1976 and revised in 1983. In 2005 Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris edited *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, which not only enlarged Williams's list but accommodated the ways in which politics, culture, and scholarship had altered the understanding of many of the entries. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, nods to Williams's example in its effort to cover the ground of American studies even as it acknowledges that the ground is always shifting. Like Williams, Burgett and Hendler emphasize "historical semantics," Williams's term for the ways in which a word's meaning might change in response to its use by a particular group. "Historical semantics," like genealogy, suggests that terms are not fixed in meaning. In illuminating keywords in early English culture, it is important not only to consider changes in meaning but also to be clear about what words mean in the first – in the Anglo-Saxon – place.

It is important to know when "environment" came to mean what we think it means, but it has been my task to explain what the word meant to the Anglo-Saxons, how they would have referred to it, and what their concept of environment might have to do with modern ways of seeing the subject. In a decade there will be new keywords for American cultural studies and perhaps a revision of *New Keywords*. Those new keywords might also become entries in a revised version of *Anglo-Saxon Keywords*. Perhaps there will be new keywords from the corpus of Anglo-Saxon, especially since the archaeological evidence is growing so rapidly and has the potential to reveal unanticipated contexts and hence suggest newly specific definitions for familiar words and objects. We expect keywords for American or British culture to change, for each is an expanding corpus. The corpus of OE preserves a dead language, but discoveries in the modern world will reanimate Anglo-Saxon culture so long as OE can be read.

The Anglo-Saxons' vocabulary for their culture is not always recognizable in Modern English. Some words are very similar, e.g., OE *þegn* for thegn (i.e., servant or retainer); others are not, e.g., *eþel* for homeland; all entries are given under the Modern English term. The keywords come from three different groups. First are keywords in OE, including *burh*, *Danelaw*, and *thegn*, words that point to dominant motifs in the intellectual life of the

period and its cultural and social institutions, keywords for the Anglo-Saxons themselves. Second are keywords in scholarship analyzing the Anglo-Saxons, including "Christianity," "Easter," "liturgy," and others commonly found in the corpus of writing about early English culture. Third are keywords found on other lists, the "Williams words," we might call them. They include "individuality," "labor," "reform," and others of interest to students of culture in any period. The list seeks some balance among broad categories of personhood and private life, political history, social life, and fine arts. The entries are of uniform length, a decision that benefited the more obscure terms on the list arguably at the expense of such broad categories as "exile" or "aesthetics." In compiling such lists, however, no one can be entirely happy, including the author.

Anglo-Saxon England, an entity greater than the parts assembled here, has often been synthesized in narratives of just the kind that *Anglo-Saxon Keywords* does not supply. Many books have surveyed the Anglo-Saxon world both comprehensively and microscopically: Sir Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*, Henry Mayr-Harting's *The Coming of Christianity*, D. J. V. Fisher's *The Anglo-Saxon Age*, and many others. Closer in spirit to *Anglo-Saxon Keywords* is Dorothy Whitelock's *The Beginnings of English Society*, with its succinct chapters on trade, agriculture, and diet, among others, slices of culture loosely bound together by chronology. To study the OE period without the benefit of those surveys would be rash, even impossible.

But they are the old way of doing things. New contributions to early medieval scholarship from both Anglo-Saxon and Continental perspectives are wary of unitary constructions. They achieve a modularity of their own. *A Social History of England 900–1200*, for example, assembles accounts by over twenty experts and bridges the period divisions such histories usually reinforce: 1066 is no longer the dividing point (Crick and van Houts 2011). *The Carolingian World* was written by three authors, divides its periods traditionally, and uses thematic categories that have long been familiar (belief and culture, exchange and trade, etc.). But the authors also steadily undermine the unifying, generalizing force of such concepts such as "Carolingian world" and even of "religion" and "Christianity" (Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean 2011). The monumental *Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* enlists numerous contributors and uses distinctly contemporary thematic headings, with "the body and life course" and "signals of power" joining more conventional headings, including trade and religion (Hamerow, Hinton, and Crawford 2011). In these works we

can see the tendency to synthesize resisted by a newly energized sense of difference and particularity.

No one can study early medieval culture without both broad narratives and the pieces they connect – the matter of history seen, as it were, as waves and as particles. Neither approach is satisfactory, either for specialists who delight in exceptions or for generalists who set the exceptions aside. Some of the most important ideas, objects, and institutions of the Anglo-Saxon age are gathered in *Anglo-Saxon Keywords*. Its entries – its keys – are intended for hands working on either side of the doors that separate medieval and modern.

Aesthetics

In an age of ideological criticism, aesthetics has become a code word for appreciation, for analysis that strives to be apolitical. Aesthetics, art, and ideology are among the "whole body of activities" that Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature*, described as "alienated" from "ordinary cultural practices." In the modern world, this alienation has meant that "none of these things can then be grasped for what they are: as real practice, elements of a whole material social process" (1977: 94). In some respects, Anglo-Saxon studies has also isolated the aesthetic from other cultural practices. Until recently, few scholars sought to situate the aesthetic in the history of Anglo-Saxon culture or in the culture itself.

We know that the Anglo-Saxons produced and prized beautiful things, but our knowledge of their aesthetic standards is incomplete. We assume that the ideas and objects that the culture valued most highly, including books, their illustrations and gold covers, were also those thought of as beautiful (see **Book**). Things declared to be beautiful in OE sources are often assessed spiritually rather than visually or in terms of another sense, such as sound or touch. The noun *ansyn*, for example, can refer to physical beauty but can also

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simply mean outward appearance. *Fægernes* means physical, moral, or spiritual beauty (*DOE*). Beautiful things in OE are often shining and bright. Thus *torht*, meaning "bright," is often translated as "beautiful." The most common noun for beauty is *wlite*; the adjective, *wlitig*, beautiful, is also common. Both refer to form or appearance but can also mean beautiful in appearance (Bosworth–Toller).

More difficult to trace, given the elite sources of so much of the evidence, is the aesthetic in the sense of a shared standard that could be known as "cultural common sense" or Kantian *sensus communis* or standard of general taste (Kant 1987: 160–6). In this latter category we might think of simple objects such as drinking-cups that are not ordinarily included in the world of the beautiful, beautiful though such things might be. We value artistic qualities in Anglo-Saxon high-status objects and texts, but we have few means of determining how the aesthetic might reveal communal rather than individual preferences. Communal in an Anglo-Saxon context usually refers to a small group of the literate. However, palaeography, codicology, and vocabulary show that among the educated elite standards were by no means uniform. The aesthetic of a particular center might be well known. In the visual arts, for example, that of the "Winchester School," with its explicit connections to monastic reform in the late tenth century, is well known (Gameson 1999). But how widely those aesthetics are shared is not clear.

Aesthetics has had a largely negative role in Anglo-Saxon studies up to the present, a condition only now beginning to be reversed. The collection of work *On the Aesthetics of* Beowulf *and Other Old English Poems* interrogates the processes by which quality and beauty have been and are determined in the assessment of OE poetry (Hill 2010). John M. Hill explores the larger philosophical context for aesthetics in the twentieth century, using aesthetics to pose "the question of *quality* in art." Hill notes that "quality always entails a standard of beauty, that standard related to a standard of truth as well" (2010: 5). But aesthetics, he adds, has seldom been confined to what he calls the "truth–beauty" relation. The philosophers whose work Hill emphasizes include Stephen C. Pepper and Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce's work is central to Gillian Overing's reading of swords in *Beowulf* in "the domain of the artistic," which she extends to artifacts (1990: 37–43, 57–9). But, in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, Peirce and Pepper have yet to acquire the importance of Hans Robert Jauss, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and others who focus on the phenomenology of art, reception, and the co-creation of art by its audience

(see **Orality**, **Drama**). The essays in Hill's collection explore OE poetry, but this is not to say that aesthetics does not matter for prose and its repertory of literary effects and devices. In Hill's collection, Peggy Knapp offers a Kantian discussion of beauty, Michael D. C. Drout discusses a "meme-based approach" to aesthetic selection (see **Tradition**), and Yvette Kisor explores reader-response and indeterminacy, making use of Jauss's and Wolfgang Iser's work.

"Aesthetics" usually refers not to the standards of taste of the Anglo-Saxons but to the standards of the modern figures who write about them. By limiting aesthetics to inquiries into the beautiful, however useful those inquiries are, critics alienate aesthetic practices – which Williams shows to be cultural practices – from their material dimensions. Aesthetics in the sense of "appreciation of the beautiful" has been criticized in cultural analysis for decades. It might be true that "A poem should not mean / But be," to quote Archibald MacLeish (1972: 141–2). But to isolate poems or artefacts from context more easily renders them as objects of appreciation than of analysis.

Although few scholars of Anglo-Saxon poetry have hewed to this modernist dictum, many have felt compelled to apologize for the perceived aesthetic defects of OE verse. Indeed, a remarkable feature of Anglo-Saxon studies in the twentieth century was the degree to which certain kinds of poetry were elevated above other texts on the basis of "literary merit," one of the profession's many code words for aesthetic judgments. It was always the case that the heroic and the elegiac outranked the didactic or the historical on the basis of such merit. *Beowulf*, "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," and "The Dream of the Rood" would always be placed above the riddles, the poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, "Soul and Body," "An Exhortation to Christian Living," and some others with roots in contemporary events (e.g., the coronation of Edgar; see **Charters**) or ideology (religious reform; see **Reform**). The poem known as *Juliana*, the tale of a virgin who prefers martyrdom to the pagan future proposed by her father and a rich suitor, is a case in point. Kenneth Sisam commented that, "To a modern taste the subject is a poor one" (1953: 7–8). Rosemary Woolf criticized a "uniformity" in the poem "verging on monotony" (1966: 17). Two decades later Joseph Wittig wrote that *Juliana* was no longer seen as "the worst of a bad lot" but added, "acknowledging that *Juliana* is consistently shaped by a figural and rhetorical design will not promote the poem to the ranks of the greatest Old English poetry" (1974: 39).

Such assessments diminish the cultural work of *Juliana* and other religious or historical texts by replacing assumed standards of the Anglo-Saxons with

the undefined standards of the modern age. Such criticism also ignores its own cultural work and begs the question of what the Anglo-Saxons thought of as beautiful. Things that were well ordered were chief among them. The OE word describing that kind of order, *endebrydnes*, also suggests the ideological implications of aesthetic principles, since what is well or properly ordered is a hierarchy that establishes power relationships and rank within an organized body. Perhaps the most important conflation of aesthetics and ideology in OE poetry occurs in the account of the poet Cædmon in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Cædmon was able to turn sacred history into verse. Bede recounts the short poem that resulted from the poet's first inspiration in Latin prose, not OE verse. Cædmon's gift allowed him to versify narratives that had already been translated into the vernacular. The OE version of the hymn gives the *endebyrdnes* or "word order" of the hymn, while the Latin offers only the sense, and not the order of the words: *sensus, non autem ordo ipse uerborum* (Bede 1969: 416, book 4, ch. 24; see **Translation**). However, by turning poetry into prose, Bede reverses the process that made Cædmon famous and seems to turn against his own creation. It would seem that Bede admired the meaning of the hymn, not its form. Indeed, the latter might have struck Bede as anything but beautiful if it represented an unlearned (however highly wrought) compositional process associated with secular rather than sacred meaning.

A century and a half later, an OE translator of Bede's *History* omitted the statement about the aesthetics of translation and gave the hymn in the form of vernacular verse (Bede 1890–8: 344, book 4, ch. 24). We are tempted to read this reversal of Bede's reversal as a pragmatic or functional rather than as an aesthetic choice. However, it is impossible to know if the OE translator made such a separation, or even if such a separation could be made. The translator might have disagreed with the statement in the source or found it irrelevant. Not every statement with aesthetic consequences is intended as a statement about aesthetics, and in the OE period it is safe to say that most such statements were not.

ART, CHARTERS, BOOK, DRAMA, ORALITY, REFORM, TRADITION, TRANSLATION

Agriculture

"Agriculture" and "animal husbandry" are two of the most important keywords linking modern to medieval cultures, and also two of the least likely to appear in scholarship outside of the disciplines of archaeology and environmental science.

One will not find farming, animals, or agriculture in the index to Sir Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* (1971). References in even excellent sources for general readers, of which there is no finer example still than Dorothy Whitelock's *The Beginnings of English Society*, are sporadic. We might attribute this seeming neglect to the invisibility of the mundane material world, a well-known phenomenon in medieval studies (Olsen 2003; Frantzen 2007a). But agriculture means land, and land is no ordinary object. Peter J. Fowler has argued that by Bede's lifetime land had not only material or financial value but also had what he calls "worth" or "iconographic" value as something owned. As a component of identity, land was "currency as well as capital" (1997: 247). Agriculture, therefore, must be seen not only as the economic basis for the entire culture but also as cultural capital subject to manipulation by the powerful. The former sense draws attention to the land and its uses, the latter to those who inhabited it. We can think of land as the point at which "agriculture" meets "rural life."

Textual sources viewing agriculture in both senses are abundant. Documents and texts referring both to landscape and to life in the countryside include laws, charters, place names, and some hagiographic texts, as John Hines (2004), Grenville Astill (1997), Della Hooke (1997b, 2009), James Rackham (1994b), and others have shown. The archaeological evidence is itself incomparably rich and, as a result, difficult to synthesize, yielding different impressions of farming techniques such as plowing in different parts of the country. But as Astill shows, texts and archaeological evidence are not readily integrated. Archaeological evidence focuses on "long-term and major changes," including changes in the sizes of animals, crop types, and field systems. Textual evidence is generally later and tends to focus on smaller-scale changes (1997: 194–5). Laws and charters, for example, are specific to time and place, a given reign, shire, and so on (see **Charters**).

Historians once believed that farming had come to Britain with the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. But it is now recognized not only that the Romans established extensive field systems but that those systems were preserved when the immigrants settled. The systems were not altered until the early eighth century, when the Church began to organize agriculture for its own ends. The Church's control of extensive lands marks a key point in Fowler's distinction between land as currency and as cultural capital. When land could be donated to the Church as a means of ensuring prayer for one's soul, for example, the kind of currency that land constituted was no longer purely commercial. The Church's land came to be seen as an extension of the Church itself and those grounds became holy.

This effect was not exclusive to Christianity, since sacred places are common in other religions. What was newly important was the monastery as the center of agricultural production.

Ecclesiastical and aristocratic management is usually credited with changes in agricultural methods, tools, and technology. What Astill calls "peasant innovation" is discussed less often, an emphasis, he thinks, that is due in part to the archaeological data that survive the kinds of intensive capital investment that wealthy landowners and the Church were able to sustain (1997: 215–17). Historians have discussed the reorganization of the countryside in the middle Saxon period (i.e., 600–900), finding "nucleated" villages already in the eighth century, in contrast to "dispersed" settlements of the earlier period (Hooke 1997a: 80; see **Settlements**). The "nucleated" settlements are usually associated with aristocratic leadership. Prominent examples include Goltho and Cheddar, the former equipped with large weaving sheds, the latter with ironworks (Astill 1997: 203). Smaller settlements, such as Raunds, have also been connected to centralized models of agriculture. These kinds of settlement change were spurred by small numbers of aristocratic personages whose social and economic conditions were improving. Robin Fleming describes these people as "rural elites," thegns (See **Thegn**) "who dominated the hinterlands" and who were connected by trading to centers where manufacturing took place (Fleming 1993: 19). Ann Williams notes that "On such estates [as Woolstone (Berkshire)] the king's thegns built their residences, sometimes encouraging or compelling their dependent peasants to settle around the manor-house, and re-organizing the layout of their tenements in the surrounding fields," showing that management of agriculture inevitably included management of the peasants who worked the fields (1992: 233).

Georges Duby has written that "in the history of the world no civilization appeared to be more completely rural than that of the Middle Ages." Although peasants were the largest element of the population, Duby notes, "the medieval peasant had no history" (1968: ix). Historians of the later Middle Ages, including Christopher Dyer and R. H. Hilton, have drawn sustained attention to the peasantry and country life in the later Middle Ages (Dyer 1989, 2002; Hilton, R. 1985). In reference to the early medieval period, Chris Wickham has observed that peasant life and the countryside were generally written about by outsiders, clerics especially, who extrapolated social aspects of life from law codes that were never intended as descriptions of life at any social level, urban or rural (2005: 383–7). Absent accounts from sympathetic sources, it might

seem that we are must assemble images of country life from fragmentary textual sources, even though they are not the best (or only) way to learn about agriculture.

In the Anglo-Saxon world it is probable that no workers were more oppressed or less free than agricultural workers. The representation of agriculture and country life most often cited is the tenth-century OE work called *The Colloquy*, which consists of short dialogues between a master and workers, who are impersonated by schoolboys (Garmonsway 1966; Ælfric 1993: 169–77). The plowboy decries the harshness of his labor and his master. "*Quid dicis tu, arator?*" the Master asks. "*Quomodo exerces opus tuum?*" (What say you, plowman? How do you perform your work?) The student playing the plowboy replies, "*O, mi domine, nimium laboro*" (O, my lord, I work very hard) (Garmonsway 1966: 20, l. 22–3). He is perhaps the lowest level of labor we find in an OE text. Yet, at the end of the dialogue, when a councilor is asked to decide "which trade among these seems to you to be superior," he answers that "the service of God" holds first place and that, among secular crafts, the honor belongs to agriculture, "because the plowman feeds us all." His claim sets off a competition among workers that illuminates the plowman's dependence on others' labor. The smith insists that without his iron the plowman could not do his work. The carpenter adds that his work is equally indispensable, only to be reminded that, like the plowman, his labor depends on iron as well. The councilor ends the dispute by reserving the first place for the plowman, through whom everyone finds "food for ourselves and fodder for our horses" (Ælfric 1993: 174–5).

Various discourses explain the choice of the plowman, among them the place of the plow in scriptural symbolism. Also at work, however, is what Derek Pearsall has described as the "idealization" of poverty in the Middle Ages (1988: 168). It might be true, as Duby asserts, that the peasant did not have a history in the way his lord did – that is, individual rather than collective – but such a history can be constructed by imagining, as *The Colloquy* helps us to do, plowmen, oxherds, bakers, and ironworkers in villages scattered across estates or perhaps recently relocated in newly centralized communities. The history of the lord cannot be separated from that of his peasants, for without their labor his fields and animals would not have supported his household.

Rural workers and the clerical elites who wrote about them sometimes met and spoke to each other in monasteries, which were surrounded by agricultural communities. Few monks would have been engaged in animal husbandry or

field work, but Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* often reminds us that monks were never far from gardens, forests, fens, and fields, and hence never far from workers. Bede's descriptions include the lay cowherd Cædmon and, among skilled laborers, the monk Owine, who is never separated from his axe and his adze (Frantzen 2007a: 132–5). Both men interact with their superiors, the abbess Hild and the bishop Chad, respectively. Cædmon drank with his friends and Hild with hers. Around one table the men and women ate from simple vessels and drank beer. Those around Hild's table enjoyed food and drink removed by many stages from the land on which they were cultivated, and their table wares, some of which no doubt were imported, were distanced from their place of manufacture. The plainest marker of their remove from agriculture, however, was that, unlike their workers, they did not reek of animals.

ANIMALS, CHARTERS, LABOR, LAW, SETTLEMENTS, THEGN

Alcohol

Alcoholic drinks formed a regular part of the diet in Anglo-Saxon England, and not only for adults. In *The Colloquy*, a dialogue for classroom use in teaching schoolboys Latin, a boy, asked about what he drinks, replies: "Ale, if I have it, or water if I don't have ale." Asked if he also drinks wine, the boy says that he cannot afford it and that wine is a drink "for the old and wise," not for children or the foolish (Ælfric 1993: 176). Commenting on this exchange, Debby Banham notes that wine was appropriate to great feasts such as one seen in *Beowulf*: "That was the best of feasts; the men drank wine" (Banham 2004: 71). Later, when the men bed down for the night, they are described not as wine-drinkers but as *beor-scealc*, literally "beer-soldiers" or "beer-men," a word translated as "one who imbibes (alcoholic) drink, feaster, reveler" (*DOE*; Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 43, ll. 1232–3, 1240).

The names of alcoholic drinks in OE sometimes matter less than the circumstances in which drinking takes place. Beer and ale do not correspond to the drinks we know by those names. Wine is different, since most wine comes from grapes. Wine in the earlier Middle Ages, like wines the Romans preferred, was much sweeter than most wines drunk now. Other fermented drinks in Anglo-Saxon England are more difficult to differentiate. Banham regards alcoholic beverages, beer (*beor*) especially, as a major element of the diet, safer than water and less expensive than wine or mead (2004: 25). But wine and mead also depended on crops. Wine was an expensive import. Mead was made domestically

but it too was a feasting drink, costly because it was sweetened with honey. Beer was also sweetened, and different from ale. Ann Hagen suggests that the Anglo-Saxons categorized several kinds of beverage as "mead" in ceremonial or celebratory contexts (1995: 206).

The best indication of the role of alcoholic beverages in the social and cultural life of Anglo-Saxon England is the presence of drinks in compounds, some of them widely distributed. *Ealu*, either "ale" or "some other kind of intoxicating drink, apparently brewed" (*DOE*), is found often. Compounds include: *ealu-benc*, ale-bench (found only in *Beowulf*); *ealu-drincende*, ale-drinker (again, only in *Beowulf*); *ealu-gafol*, a tribute paid in ale; *ealu-gal*, a lecher; *ealu-galnes*, a word for drunkenness; *ealu-hus*, an alehouse, a term found in the laws; *ealu-scop*, a reciter of poetry in the presence of drinkers, a term found in the *Northumbrian Priests' Law*; *ealu-sele*, ale-hall, used by Wulfstan; *ealu-wæge* (only in *Beowulf*), meaning ale-cup; and *ealu-wosa*, a drunkard. Terms associated with the process of producing ale include: *æfter-ealu*, thought to be reduced ale, or perhaps second run; *bryd-ealu*, bride-ale; *ealu-cleofa*, a store-room for ale; *ealu-fæt*, a vessel for drinking ale; *ealu-mealt*, brewing malt (also *mealt-ealu*); and *ealu-geweorc*, ale-brewing (*DOE*). Ale figures into one notoriously obscure compound, *ealu-scerwen*, found only in *Beowulf* and thought to mean "distress, terror" (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 368).

Beor is an even more common compound. *Beor-byden* is a vessel for holding drink, found just once, in a list of similar containers in the quasi-legal text known as *Gerefa*; *beor-dræste* refers to dregs of alcoholic drink in medicinal texts, and *beor-hyrde* refers to the keeper of the beer-cup in "The Gifts of Men." *Beor-scealc*, as we have seen, means one who imbibes drink, feaster. *Beor-scipe* and *gebeorscipe* refer to feasts at which beer is served, and *beor-sele* to the hall where (alcoholic) drink is served. *Beor-þegu* means carousal or beer-drinking, and *beor-setl* a beer-seat or bench where (alcoholic) drink is served. *Gebeorscipe* is the most common of these compounds; it often means feast but, in a few cases, refers to the Last Supper and even Heaven and the feast of holy teaching (see *DOE* for all beer- and ale-compounds).

The compounds associated with alcoholic beverages and used to designate buildings, implements, ceremonies, and ceremonial roles show that drinking was deeply woven into the culture. What the Anglo-Saxons drank was less important than how they drank it. The epitome of drinking culture, seen in *Beowulf* and referred to even in religious works such as "The Dream of the Rood," was the *symbel*, often unhelpfully translated as "feast," although food

is never mentioned. The *symbel* involved ritual drinking, speeches, and gift-giving (Pollington 2003: 19–65; see **Hall**). The early Kentish laws of Hlothhere and Eadric fine the man who disturbed the ritual by taking the drinking-cup away from another (he had to pay the householder, the man he offended, and the king). Further underscoring the importance of such ceremonies was the prohibition against drinking while armed; the same code fines the one who draws a sword during a drinking ceremony, even if he does no harm, and fines him heavily if blood is shed (Hlothhere and Eadric 1963: 21, c. 12–13).

From a modern perspective, alcohol is of interest in a much more limited realm, chiefly as a substance that confers status and alters behavior, and so is subject to regulation. The Anglo-Saxons were far less interested in the effects of alcohol consumption than modern people are, although they too observed the effects of intoxication. In *Beowulf*, for example, the integrity of the Geatish hero is challenged by a Danish warrior named Unferth, whose taunt Beowulf quickly dismisses by describing the warrior as *beore druncen*, "drunk with beer" (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 20, l. 531). Unferth lends his sword, Hrunting, to Beowulf, and again the poet uses the opportunity to comment on Unferth's intoxication and his damning reluctance to use the sword himself (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 50, ll. 1463–72). In the riddles, drunkenness is always associated with carelessness and comedy, as in the riddle about Lot, whose daughters made him drunk in order to seduce him (Riddle 46, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 205), and the mead riddle (Riddle 27), in which the drink claims to force to the ground those who grapple with it – i.e., drink too much (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 194). The satirical poem called "The Seasons for Fasting" mocks a priest who cannot resist the wine shop (Dobbie 1942: 104, ll. 208–20). The OE translation of the *Capitula of Theodulf* (d. 821; the translation is tenth-century) warns priests from the *ceap-ealeðel* or ale-stall, translating the Latin *taberna* (Theodulf of Orleans 1978: 319). Many poems, including the Hebrew Testament narrative known as *Judith*, demonstrate the dangers of being drunk (Dobbie 1953: 99–109).

Yet inebriation itself was not a social ill that concerned the Church as much as we might expect. The penitentials describe a variety of sins resulting from drunkenness. One who killed a man because of drunkenness did penance for three years (*OEC* S76.03.04; see **Penance**). Most references to alcohol are found in the *OE Penitential*, in material translated from a Latin penitential written in the early ninth century on the Continent. There drunkenness appears in a list of sins along with anger, theft, and fornication (*OEP* Y41.08.02).