

# Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain

Edited by William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell



Studies in the Early History of Britain

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STUDIES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF BRITAIN

General Editor: Nicholas Brooks

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*Edited by William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell*



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# Foreword

The aim of the *Studies in the Early History of Britain* series is to promote works of the highest scholarship which open up new fields of study or which bridge the barriers of traditional academic disciplines. As scholarship becomes ever more specialized, interdisciplinary studies are needed not only by students and general readers but also by professional scholars. This series therefore includes research monographs, works of synthesis and collaborative studies of important themes by several scholars from different fields. Our knowledge of the early Middle Ages will always be limited and fragmentary, but progress can be made if the work of the historian has secure foundations in philology, archaeology, geography, literature, numismatics, art history and liturgy – to name only the most obvious fields. The need to cross and to remove academic frontiers also explains the extension of the geographical range of this series to include the whole island of Britain, where its predecessor had been limited to 'Early English History'. The change would have been welcomed by the previous editor, the late Professor H.P.R. Finberg, whose pioneering work helped to inspire, and to provoke, the interest of a new generation of early medievalists in the relations of Britons and Saxons. The approach of this series is therefore deliberately wide-ranging – early medieval Britain can only be understood in the context of contemporary developments in Ireland and on the continent.

Few issues seized scholarly interest in the late 1990s so comprehensively as 'social identity'. The way in which groups, communities and individuals come to define themselves in relation to others lies at the root of all political and social organization. Our television screens and our newspapers make clear to us every day how deeply rooted are some identities and how transitory others under the pressure of events. This long-standing concern of sociologists and social anthropologists has become a dominant issue in archaeological theory, while historians (particularly early medievalists) have begun to find in these ideas new approaches to the thought-world of their sources. When two young research students from the Department of Archaeology and Prehistory of the University of Sheffield approached Leicester University Press with a well-conceived proposal for an interdisciplinary volume on this theme, we were therefore delighted to encourage them. William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell are to be



congratulated on their visionary skill in assembling a powerful team of contributors and their persistence in bringing the volume to fruition. They were determined to produce a book that would stand rigorous scrutiny from social scientists, archaeologists and historians but would also be accessible to non-specialists, both students and general readers. No single theory of how national, ethnic, class, family, monastic, corporeal and gender identities were constructed in the early Middle Ages is set out here, but these studies are brimming with new interpretations and insights. They provide a rich introduction to the social history (in its widest sense) of early medieval Britain. It is a privilege to welcome to the series a volume which pulls together in a most exciting fashion key problems in interpreting the material culture and conceptual world of that period. I am proud to introduce to the series a volume which integrates some of the approaches of social science, of archaeological science and of history into a stimulating volume full of important reassessments.

Nicholas Brooks  
University of Birmingham  
September 1999

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# Acknowledgements

This book was produced while we the editors were immersed in our doctoral research. Such difficult logistic circumstances created many unforeseen obstacles (and some which we could not have envisaged even were we not relatively new scholars). In the end the success of the volume has been due not only to our own tenacity but also to all those others who have helped and persevered along the way. The end result would have been considerably poorer without the collaboration of many of our friends and colleagues, and the editors would like to offer their thanks and appreciation to all those concerned in the conception and production of this volume. However, some deserve special thanks. First, and most importantly, to all those who contributed to the volume. As editors, we have both been extremely grateful for your erudition and patience and hope that the volume fulfils all of your expectations. We would also like to extend our warmest thanks to the series editor Professor Brooks who has always been amiable and supportive. Janet Joyce at Leicester University Press has also provided much assistance in the facilitation of the book's production for which we are also indebted.

**Andrew Tyrrell:** I would particularly like to thank the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) for funding the research which ultimately led to my chapter, and which also enabled me to spend time editing this volume. Furthermore I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Andrew Chamberlain for being congenial enough to accept that sometimes my other work was not always going to be as prompt as he might have liked. I would also like to thank Jenny Moore for initially helping us into the world of publishing and all those others at the University of Sheffield, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory c. 1994 who provided much of the impetus for a publication and gave up their time to allow us to discuss various ideas. Particularly valued for their contributions at that time are Kathryn Denning, Kurtis Lesick and Alex Woolf. A huge thank you to Bill for all his tireless, and often thankless, work on the volume and for having the courage to go ahead with it in the first place. Lastly the greatest thanks go to my fabulous wife Alison. Without her constant support and love this volume would not have been completed. At least, not with my involvement.

**William O. Frazer.** I would like to thank the University of Sheffield and the UK Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals for funding my research during the editing of this volume, with the Wightman Scholarship and an Overseas Research Studentship. Like my co-editor, I would like to thank Jenny Moore for her publishing advice and Alex Woolf for his many useful suggestions during early brainstorming sessions. John Moreland was an excellent sounding board for much of the theory that underpins this book. The spirit of interdisciplinary scholarship which I learned from Clark Maines, who first interested me in archaeology, is at the centre of this book, and I would particularly like to thank him for his friendship and tutelage. Without the intelligence and hard work of Andy Tyrrell, this volume would not have come to fruition; my greatest thanks to him also for his genuine commitment to intellectual cooperation, something increasingly rare in academia today. Finally a heartfelt thanks to Clodagh Tait for her insight and support during the final stages of production.

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# Abbreviations

<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>Bon. Ep.</i>	<i>S. Bonifatii et Lulli Epistolae</i> , ed. M. Tangl, <i>MGH, Epistolae selectae</i> , I (Berlin, 1916)
Bede, <i>HA</i>	Bede, <i>Historia abbatum</i> , in <i>Venerabilis Baedae, Opera Historica</i> , ed. C. Plummer (1896)
Bede, <i>HE</i>	<i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. R. Mynors and B. Colgrave (rev. edn, 1991)
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i> (Turnholt, in progress)
<i>ECMS</i>	<i>Early Christian Monuments of Scotland</i>
<i>EHD I</i>	<i>English Historical Documents, I, c. 500–1042</i> , ed. D. Whitelock (2nd edn, 1979)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Harmer, <i>SEHD</i>	<i>Select English Historical Documents of the 9th and 10th Centuries</i> , ed. F.E. Harmer (1914)
<i>HF</i>	<i>Historia Francorum</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
Robertson, <i>Charters</i>	A.J. Robertson, <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters</i> (1939)
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
Whitelock, <i>Wills</i>	D. Whitelock, <i>Anglo-Saxon Wills</i> (1930)

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# 1 Introduction: Identities in Early Medieval Britain<sup>1</sup>

*William O. Frazer*

The genesis of this book was in 1994, when several younger scholars at the University of Sheffield became interested in the concept of social identity. From intense dialogue in cramped offices (when perhaps we ought to have been working) to animated discussions in neighbouring pubs (when perhaps we ought to have been relaxing), the idea for a more careful investigation of historical ideas about 'identity' grew from a series of linked concerns in our respective research interests to plans for a conference on the topic and eventually to musings about the value of an edited volume such as this. At the centre of these concerns was the very open and friendly atmosphere that permeated much of Sheffield's Department of Archaeology and Prehistory at that time, the interesting ideas that different backgrounds fed into the discussions, and the strong interdisciplinary background of both editors. The latter, we realized, was something that many colleagues appeared to regard with alarm and something that, as junior scholars, we felt concerned to justify. More important than this, however, was our desire to reconcile apparently disparate ideas in adjacent fields of study that seemed to us to be of value beyond narrow disciplinary confines. We also wished to broaden the project beyond those fields already familiar to us and to include others that we recognized harboured fertile ideas for a better understanding of how people thought of themselves and each other in early medieval Britain.

Only relatively recently have historians and archaeologists studying Britain begun to approach the study of medieval society using the

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1. I would like to thank Andrew Tyrrell for his coediting of this book, his general cooperation in the project since we first conceived it in 1994, and for his comments on and criticisms of this chapter. I would also like to thank the series editor Nicholas Brooks for his patience, assistance, comments and criticisms, and the contributors to the volume for their participation in the project. I was partly maintained during the research for this book by a Wightman Scholarship from the University of Sheffield, and by an Overseas Research Studentship. In the notes that follow, I have tried to provide key references that I find particularly useful for interdisciplinary understanding.



methodology and terminology of the social sciences. Two themes permeate the book: first the integration of sophisticated theories into the often atheoretical realm of early medieval studies; secondly relating these different understandings of our past to the broader realm of contemporary culture where regionalism and national identity (and their 'origins') have become increasingly topical and heated. Over the past decade or so, both medievalists and the media have increasingly employed terms such as identity and ethnicity without always being clear about the meaning of these terms.

The contributors to this book have drawn particularly upon sociocultural anthropology, social theory and sociology to address more particular issues and debates within history, archaeology and physical anthropology. Although we were never able to host a conference on the topic, we have edited the chapters as part of a single holistic project – there are many complementary ideas which shade into one another in different chapters, in spite of the fact that authors sometimes disagree on specific issues. Each author was asked by the editors to focus upon a particular topic (what we call some of the 'structuring principles' of early medieval identity) – ethnicity, national identity, social location, subjectivity/personhood, political organization, kinship, the body, gender, age groups, proximity/regionalism, memory and ideological systems. All the contributors are innovative and critical in their approach and all have attempted to make their work accessible to people outside their specialization. Several summarize complicated ideas in a discipline or sub-field speciality so that non-specialists can understand and follow the logic of the argument. In some cases, this attempt at communication across disciplinary boundaries is the first such example of which I am aware.

### Thinking about identity

A variety of abstract theoretical ideas about identity have influenced the contributors. It is difficult to address all these ideas in a manner that is still accessible to the wide range of disciplines from which they are drawn, but, nevertheless, a number of similar understandings of identity underpin all the chapters in this volume. At the most basic level, all the chapters recognize that the term identity has been under-theorized in historical studies. Even in many anthropological and sociological texts concerned with history, while there have been diverse ideas about the formation of 'collective' or 'group' identity and the nature of collective action, there remains a tendency to see groups as a coming together of pre-formed 'selves'.<sup>2</sup> The relationships which

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2. S. Mennell, 'The function of we-images: a process theory', in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. C. Calhoun (1994), 175–97, at 175. Roger Rouse has noted the manner in which we unthinkingly tend to universally assign modern

exist between self and group identities have been neglected. It is possible, however, both to acknowledge the dynamics between individual and group identities, and to investigate the nature of those dynamics in specific situations, by employing the more general term 'social identity' to encompass both the individual and the group.

Furthermore, it is fruitful to recognize explicitly the broad concept 'social identity' as multi-layered and to understand that identities derive from the circumstances of social interaction. This re-emphasizes the vital, active role which the formation of social groups has on the formation of individual identities ('subjectivities'). It begins to reconnect the two. We might begin to think about social identity as akin to the phrase 'second nature' – made up of acquired tendencies that have become largely instinctive. This taken-for-granted understanding is useful in comprehending the formation of groups. Aspects of one's own group identity, for example, seem to be inherent, innate, 'natural', while their absence or difference seems correspondingly unnatural. Nevertheless, 'social identity' also implies a more conscious awareness by members of a group than that allowed by second nature. In other words, certain second nature aspects of social identity are brought to the fore in certain social interactions, emphasized and manipulated by individuals in ways that are much more conscious and deliberate.<sup>3</sup> We are forced to engage with these two aspects of social identity to avoid the tensions that arise from an 'either-or' theorization of the concept: *either* as always 'given', 'taken-for-granted', *or* as absolutely changeable and subject to no factors apart from each individual's will ('voluntarism').

The advantage of considering both group and individual identities in such a way – as created through social action and contingent upon social relations – is that it confronts notions both of identity as naturally given and as produced exclusively by the unfettered exercise of individual will. It also acknowledges the connection between group and individual identity, and begins to theorize how that connection works. Such considerations, called 'social constructionism', also 'challenge "essentialist" notions that individual persons can have singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identities'.<sup>4</sup> These approaches can call into question understandings of group identities as based upon some common 'essence'.<sup>5</sup> This latter issue is of particular significance when considering material culture,

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*contd.*

characteristics of bourgeois liberal democracy to contemporary group identities, in 'Questions of identity: personhood and collectivity in transnational migration to the United States', *Critique of Anthropology* 15(4) (1995), 351–80. This is also a problem with many studies of past group dynamics.

3. Mennell, 'We-Images', 177.

4. C. Calhoun, 'Social theory and the politics of identity', in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. C. Calhoun (1994), 9–36, at 13.

5. *Ibid.*, 13.

since there is still an inclination among archaeologists to view artefact 'kits' as signifiers of straightforward, unchanging group identities, rather than as the expressions of identities in particular social interactions, in which the acts of expressing are also the acts of identity formation.<sup>6</sup>

It might clarify these abstractions about social identity and about its place within social life, if we think of the latter as 'storied'.<sup>7</sup> Several implications follow from such a model. First, that such stories of social life, to some extent, steer action. People form multiple, changing, biographical identities by placing themselves or being placed within a series of emplotted stories. Second, the model implies that experience itself is created through these stories. That is, that people make sense of what has happened and what is happening to them by trying to gather or integrate these happenings within one or more stories. And finally, that people are guided to act in particular ways on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories derived from a number of different but ultimately limited series of available stories. Identities are important influences on human activity. Examining them in a theoretically sophisticated way, one could argue, holds the potential to help us understand both the people and the events of the past in new and useful ways. The idea of social life as a bundle of interconnected

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6. Dell Upton has recently warned against the 'kit' understanding of material culture in relation to ethnicity; D. Upton, 'Ethnicity, authenticity and invented traditions', *Historical Archaeology* 30(2) (1996), 1-7. See also: R.H. McGuire, 'The study of ethnicity in historical archaeology', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 1 (1982), 159-78; B.R. Penner, 'Old World traditions, New World landscapes: ethnicity and archaeology of Swiss-Appenzellers in the colonial South Carolina backcountry', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1(4) (1997), 257-321; and S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (1997). For other perspectives on archaeology and social identity, see: S. Shennan (ed.), *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity* (1989); P.L. Kohl and C. Fawcett (eds), *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology* (1995); and J.A. Atkinson, I. Banks and J. O'Sullivan (eds), *Nationalism and Archaeology* (1996). Accounts of the dangers of mapping ethnicity or race directly onto archaeology can be found in: B. Arnold, 'The past as propaganda: totalitarian archaeology in Nazi Germany', *Antiquity* 64 (1990), 464-78; and B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (1989).
  7. Much of this paragraph paraphrases and simplifies arguments in M.R. Somers and G.D. Gibson, 'Reclaiming the epistemological "Other": narrative and the social construction of identity', in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. C. Calhoun (1994), 37-99, at 38-9. Hayden White has previously argued that narrative modes of representing knowledge (telling historical stories) were representational forms imposed by historians on the 'chaos' of lived experience; see *ibid.*, 38; and H. White, 'The question of narrative in contemporary historical theory', *History and Theory* 23, 1-33. For additional perspectives on the narrative (storied) nature of social life, see: P. Ricoeur, 'Narrative time', in *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1981), 165-86; *idem*, *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (2 vols, 1984, 1986); V.W. Turner and E.M. Bruner (eds), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana, 1986); J. Bruner, 'Life as narrative', *Social Research* 54(1), 11-32; T.R. Sarbin (ed.), *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York, 1986).

stories allows us, on the one hand, to acknowledge the influence of our social surroundings on our identities, but, on the other, to explain great differences in identities between people who are ostensibly from similar cultural and social situations, from similar historical contexts. Within this model, we might observe that identities are formed through reflexive processes, which means that people's perception of how others see them plays a paramount part in how they think of themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Analyses which allow people in certain early periods of history this reflexive savvy, this ability to participate in social life as active, thinking people, are not common.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true for the first millennium AD, a period of European history in which contact between different groups was becoming more frequent, and a period that is portrayed in most European national historiographies as the font of today's national identities. With the exception of several widely cited texts analysing nationalisms as sociocultural phenomena,<sup>10</sup> important theoretical texts examining identity have tended to neglect the historical specifics of medieval Europe in favour of in-depth analyses of more recent and contemporary social and cultural circumstances. In particular, viewing 'pre-modern State' social identities only as opposites against which we then contrast modern identities and nationalisms is problematic. In popular culture, these 'pre-modern State' identities are often romanticized as being radically different, 'kin-based', universal and unchanging until some poorly understood but crucial historical break such as 'the Enlightenment', 'modernity' and 'industrial capitalism'.<sup>11</sup> Defining portions of the past, without close historical scrutiny, as opposites to the present does little to help us genuinely understand that past. It has led to a situation in which critical analyses of the construction of social identity that are both historical and focused upon an era pre-dating the formation of modern

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8. Mennell, 'We-Images', 179.

9. For an exception, see S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980). On the wider relevance of Greenblatt's historically-specific idea of 'self-fashioning' identities, also see J. Clifford, 'On ethnographic self-fashioning: Conrad and Malinowski', in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (1988), 92–113.

10. For example: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983); L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (1996); L. Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992); E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990); R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (3 vols, 1989). Three notable anthropological takes on nationalism and ethnicity are: F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences* (Boston, 1969); T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (1993); and R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (1996).

11. See Mennell, 'We-Images', 179–80 for a discussion of the 'prevalence of egocentric models of the "individual" and "society" [in which] "society" beyond the face-to-face group or community has remained undifferentiated'.

State apparatuses, that explore the manner in which social identity is constituted, are very much needed.

Based upon ethnographic, sociological and historical research, several 'structuring principles' within which societies organize their social identities suggest themselves. These structuring principles relate to the understanding of social identity and social life outlined above – that the formulation of social identity, as an action undertaken by knowing, active people, is enabled and constrained by such principles. Although by no means comprehensive, or perhaps even applicable in every social circumstance, these structuring principles serve as useful abstractions upon which we can begin to build our historical interpretations. Such generalities are of little applicability without a more thorough grounding in historical detail: the ways in which these principles actually structure identity and the significance these identities have with regard to power and access to knowledge, are most usefully considered through a focus on the particular.

Structuring principles such as ethnicity, nationalism, social location,<sup>12</sup> subjectivity/personhood, political organization (e.g. legal definitions), kinship, the human body, gender, age groups, proximity/regionalism, memory and ideological systems (e.g. spirituality and religious belief) all help to constitute both the way modern scholars think about early medieval Britain, and how they construct early medieval people's perceptions of themselves and others. Ethnicity, because of its importance in national historiographies and in contemporary scholarly debate, figures prominently in several of the chapters.

The structure of this book mirrors the structuring principles of early medieval identity. The principles interpenetrate, as will become clear from the contributions to this book; the usefulness of considering them discretely aids scholarly understanding but we should be careful not to separate them into distinct, bounded categories.

Chapters 2 to 6 comprise studies of how we have come to understand social identity in early medieval Britain – the theories underpinning our scholarship. Several authors consider how these differ from earlier understandings of social identity by reconstructing early medieval perspectives on 'the self' and 'the other'. Chapters 7 to 12 undertake more specific empirical studies which address the dynamics of one or more structuring principles of early medieval

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12. I use the phrase 'social location' as a shorthand to encompass terms from different disciplines that overlap but are not exactly the same – social 'role' (analogous to 'enactment') and social 'status' (analogous to 'subject-position') – while simultaneously avoiding some of the pitfalls of sociology's role theory (such as the tendency to see an individual as separate from, and pre-existing, her/his 'roles' rather than as constructed through them; or the manner in which role theory obscures the fact that individuals have multiple identities). For a fuller discussion, see Calhoun, 'Social theory', especially 12–14.

identity, and the manner in which those articulated with other aspects of social life. These later chapters, especially, provide detailed microanalyses which challenge some of the received general wisdoms about social identity. Moreover, in combination with earlier chapters, they mark out a route between historical specifics and theory, suggesting guidelines and possibilities for future scholarship in other eras.

### Past and present views on early medieval people

John Moreland, in Chapter 2, points out the problems which have developed in medieval studies often because of the lack of theorization of ethnicity and material culture, and of the relationships between the two. Like other aspects of social identity, ethnic groupings of past societies have become fundamental to the constitution of modern identities, and national identities in particular. Moreland develops a familiar critique of the 'culture history' approach, which is still widespread in medieval archaeology and in the interdisciplinary literature which draws upon it, observing that archaeological 'cultures' do not equal so-called ethnic cultures. There is a broader problem here which Moreland touches upon tangentially – a misunderstood conception of culture in which societies are conceived as 'small, self-contained, and culturally homogeneous'.<sup>13</sup> In much medieval archaeology, variation in the patterning of material culture is still liable to be explained in terms of 'ethnicities' or 'group identities', in which these categories are thought of as discrete, miniature cultures, rather than as a complex web of inter-woven, heterogeneous, fluid social relationships. One of the problems such a conception of group identity engenders is a profound difficulty in addressing the actions of interest groups *within* that larger collectivity.<sup>14</sup> When culture and group identity are considered to be conscriptive and monolithic, variety of belief and

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13. J.H. Steward, 'Introduction', in *The People of Puerto Rico: A Study in Social Anthropology*, eds J.H. Steward, R.A. Manners, E.R. Wolf, E. Padilla Seda, S.W. Mintz and R.L. Scheele (1956), 1–27, at 5; and W. Roseberry, 'The cultural history of peasantries', in *Articulating Hidden Histories: Exploring the Influence of Eric R. Wolf*, eds J. Schneider and R. Rapp (1995), 51–66, at 52–4.

14. This problem is explored in more depth in B. Frazer, 'Reconceptualizing resistance in the historical archaeology of the British Isles', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology: Archaeologies of Resistance in Britain and Ireland, Part I* 3(1), ed. B. Frazer (1999), 1–10, where I draw upon the critique of cultural 'authenticity' outlined in Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 222 and *passim*. For comment on the attacks upon anthropological 'relativism' – that discipline's tendency to focus on the 'exotic' and to stress cultural difference – see C. Geertz, 'Anti-Anti-Relativism', *American Anthropologist* 86(2) (1984), 63–78. I do not believe, however, that the concept of 'culture' itself is always suspect, always fetishizing the 'other', always assessing difference hierarchically (*contra* L. Abu-Lughod, 'Writing against culture', in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. R.G. Fox (1991), 137–62). A strong case for a

practice within a group is considered unimportant and aberrant.<sup>15</sup> This raises problems because it presumes a top-down social model for the group in which most members behave like sheep. In addition to being politically abhorrent, the model is extremely difficult to sustain on evidence from either history or sociocultural anthropology.

With his notion of 'restricted ethnicity' (present, he argues, by the end of the seventh century) Moreland begins to get at the specifics of this denial of agency and power to marginalized people ('subalterns') in early medieval Britain. He also develops a potent critique of modern ideas about the homogeneity and German-ness of 'the English'. Moreland notes that ethnic adjectives, notably those used in association with the term *gens*, were rarely used for individuals. Typically, they apply to 'a dominant and restricted social elite, a minority'. For those lower on the social scale, he suggests that social location as well as geographical location would perhaps have been more important than any putative 'ethnic' identity. 'Given the lack of archaeological evidence for a massive rupture in the countryside of late Roman Britain,' Moreland argues, 'we must assume that the vast majority of the population were not of Germanic origin/descent'. Further, 'a more continuous process of assimilation into the decentralized and personalized power structures of sub-Roman Britain means that we cannot even assume that the elites were primarily Germanic'. Although Moreland does not situate such notions within broader post-colonial discourse, the trope of an uninhabited landscape waiting to be 'taken' by European colonists is a recurrent theme in colonial descriptions from the early modern period right up until the present day.<sup>16</sup> In a similar manner, Moreland introduces many of the issues which are developed further in later chapters.

The early medieval person's individual notion of self is the subject of Nerys Patterson's critical historical sociology in Chapter 3.

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'borderland' understanding of culture 'without otherness', in which differences come from different histories as much as different cultures, and in which anthropological associations of culture with authenticity and bounded distinction are reconsidered, is made in S.B. Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston, 1996). These issues are also touched on succinctly, from a sociological perspective, in Calhoun, 'Social theory', especially 14.

15. B. Barnes, *The Elements of Social Theory* (1995), 10–36 summarizes the strongest criticisms, and delivers his own damning critique of the excesses of individualism. For the historical situatedness of contemporary Western ideas about 'the individual', see M. Mauss, 'Une catégorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de la personne, celle de "moi"', in *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), 333–61. An overemphasis in history on dominant power is famously critiqued in M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York, 1977) and *idem*, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. C. Gordon (1980).
16. For elaboration upon this and other lexical and tropic inventions characteristic of a European colonial gaze, see: P. Hulme, 'Polytropic man: tropes of sexuality and mobility in early colonial discourse', and J. Rabasa, 'Allegories of the atlas', both in F. Barker *et al.* (eds), *Europe and Its Others* vol. 2, 1–16 and 17–32,

Patterson argues that modern cultures tend to explore the events of the body, and the mind's emotions about those events, exclusively 'evading and obfuscating the question of what is happening to the broader field of social relationships'. This is problematic when considering early medieval subjectivities, especially through a 'phenomenological' focus on the day-to-day lived experiences of 'self' which concern Patterson. Modern understandings of self, she argues, are 'in contrast to early medieval cultures – which deal with marriage and death as packages of related changes'. Anxiety about such transformative junctures in human life cycles was expressed in early medieval societies as 'loss'. This loss, in turn, was solved or soothed by 'filling the void with monetary or material compensations'. This is an avenue yet to be explored by archaeologists of the early medieval period, yet what Patterson argues from traditional historical sources could have dramatic repercussions for our understanding of material culture, particularly in the context of funerary ritual. 'Medieval people,' she asserts, 'approached not only the changes accompanying marriage and death but the entire relationship of the self and others, in all its complexity, as transactions where loss of one kind (personal, physical and emotional) was compensated by gain of another kind (in personal, material and instrumental).' She tells us that 'this way of handling subjective experience and its representation as a "self" is closely tied to aspects of early European social structure, particularly the mode of agrarian production'. Patterson uses Ireland (and *Crith Gablach*) as a model for England, transcending the influence of national historiography in the process of her analysis, and presenting a

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respectively; L. Montrose, 'The work of gender in the discourse of discovery', *Representations* 33, 1–41; and E. Shohat, 'Imaging terra incognita: the disciplinary gaze of empire', *Public Culture* 3: 41–70 (1993). E. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) are important watersheds in the development of critical analyses of colonial discourse, following on from A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. J. Pinkham (New York, 1972); F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington (1965); *idem*, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. H. Chevalier (New York, 1967). Also significant in the corpus of postcolonial discourse are other articles in F. Barker *et al.*, *Europe and Its Other* (2 vols, 1984) and P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (1986). It would be interesting to further explore the link between nineteenth-century notions of empire and the discourse of early Anglo-Saxon studies, as, for example, has been done for antiquarian ideas in Britain concerning prehistory and the Romans – see S. Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (1994), especially 113–28; and A.B. Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity: Perceptions of Prehistory in the Renaissance* (1993). See also, for the issue of Anglo-Saxon scholarship and notions of 'race': H.A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons* (1982); R. Horseman, 'Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37(3) (1976), 387–410; and J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (1981).



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