

Kaifan Yang

**The Concepts of Time  
in Anglo-Saxon England**



## English and Beyond

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und Monika Kirner-Ludwig

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## List of Abbreviations

For further details, see the bibliography

ASD	Bosworth and Toller, <i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</i>
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASPR	The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BNC	British National Corpus
CASD	John R. Clark Hall, <i>A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</i>
CASPR	Bessinger & Smith, <i>A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i>
CB	Bessinger & Smith, <i>A Concordance to Beowulf</i>
<i>Chronicle</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
<i>Confessions</i>	<i>The Confessions of St. Augustine</i>
<i>Consolation</i>	King Alfred's Old English Version of <i>Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae</i>
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
DOE	Cameron et al., <i>Dictionary of Old English</i>
DOEC	Antonette dePaolo Healey, <i>Dictionary of Old English Corpus</i>
<i>Dream</i>	<i>The Dream of the Rood</i>
DSSPIL	<i>A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages</i>
EETS	Early English Texts Society
HE	Bede's <i>Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i>
HTOED	Christian Kay et al., <i>Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary</i>
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
MÆ	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MED	Hans Kurath et al., <i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
N&Q	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
OCOEP	Murray McGillivray, <i>The Online Corpus of Old English Poetry</i>
ODEE	C. T. Onions, <i>The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology</i>
OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OEN	<i>Old English Newsletter</i>
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i>
<i>Pastoral</i>	King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's <i>Pastoral Care</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
SDAS	Henry Sweet, <i>The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon</i>
<i>Soliloquies</i>	King Alfred's <i>Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies</i>
<i>Speculum</i>	<i>Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies</i>
<i>Temporum</i>	Bede, <i>De Temporum Ratione</i>
TOE	Jane Roberts et al., <i>Thesaurus of Old English</i>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Time Studies in Anglo-Saxon Scholarship

This book studies how time is perceived throughout Anglo-Saxon England diachronically through a series of analyses of time words, metaphors, styles, and narrative modes in various Old English texts.<sup>1</sup> The two key terms in the title, namely “Anglo-Saxon England” and “concepts of time”, have defined the scope of the present book. Studying the concepts of time in any culture or civilization is no small task, yet for the concepts of time in Old English literature, the task is even more challenging. This challenge is partly due to the conceptual ambiguity in defining “Old English literature”. It is necessary, before proceeding to the main business, for me to specify the contexts where I use the term. First, I use the term “literature” to include all manner of poetry and prose. It is very difficult to distinguish literature from non-literature in the Anglo-Saxon context since the notion of literature is a modern convention.<sup>2</sup> The Old English texts to be discussed include *Beowulf*, Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Chronicle)*, *The Dream of the Rood (Dream)*, etc. I use “Old English literature” as a convenient category to cover different genres of Old English writings. Then, with “Old English literature”, I emphasise the conversion context in Anglo-Saxon England. According to Bede’s account in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, xiii., the Roman pope Gregory sent Augustine to England, who began to *bodian Godes word Ongolþeode* (‘preach God’s word to the Angles’).<sup>3</sup> The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons is an essential context for the production and authorship of Old English literature.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, with “concepts of time”,

<sup>1</sup> My interest in the concepts of time in Old English literature takes its origin from the Call for Papers (CFP) of the Seventh Annual ASSC Graduate Student Conference, “Crises of Categorization”, which suggests “Anglo-Saxon conceptions of time” as a potential area of investigation. See the CFP of this conference, to be accessed at the ASSC website, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/assc>.

<sup>2</sup> Instead of using the general category “literature”, Anglo-Saxonists use more specific terms such as “chronicles”, “homilies”, “hagiographies”, “epic poetry”, “elegies” to describe different types of Old English writings. Since my book includes various types of Old English writings in the discussion, I use “literature” as a convenient term. In the scholarly tradition, the term “literature” is also used as a suitable term to refer to various kinds of writings or texts. For instance, in three histories of Old English literature, Fulke, R.D & Cain, C.M (2003): *A History of Old English Literature*, Godden, M. & Lapidge M., eds. (1991): *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, Donoghue, Daniel (2004): *Old English Literature: A Short Introduction*, various genres of Old English writings are treated within the broad category of “literature.”

<sup>3</sup> *HE*, Book 1, Chapter 13. The translation of Old English texts is mine unless indicated otherwise. My translation of Old English texts owes greatly to various dictionaries and editions of Old English, i.e. *DOE*, *ASD*, *OED* and *OCOEP*.

<sup>4</sup> The issues of date, authorship, and genre are very complex in Old English literature. Anglo-Saxonists, so far, have not reached an agreement, and they have adopted different frameworks to narrate the history of Old English literature. See Fulke and Cain (2003), Godden and Lapidge (1991), Though Fulke and Cain (2003) observe that “nearly all verse in Old English is anonymous...authorship is a concept foreign...the expression is not one of authorship but of performative primacy”, the word “author” is still used throughout this book, and is defined as an Anglo-Saxon, a group of Anglo-Saxons, or even several generations of the Anglo-Saxons who were mainly responsible for or contributed to the composition of particular Old English texts. I prefer “author” to “scop”, “poet” or “writer” because “author” is far more neutral in its meaning. This way

I stress the complexity of time in the Anglo-Saxon context. Time is a complex concept with many layers of meanings. In this book, I only attempt to cover some aspects rather than all aspects of the complex meanings associated with time.

The issue of time has received only limited treatment from studies that usually focus on other topics. In the three major bibliographical tools of Anglo-Saxon studies Greenfield & Robinson (1980), the *ASE Bibliography*, and the *OEN Bibliography*, time is only a sporadic topic.<sup>5</sup> In the section “Special Vocabulary and Semantic Field Studies” of Greenfield & Robinson (1980), only one entry is related to time.<sup>6</sup> The *OEN Bibliography* records 59 relevant entries from 1973 to 2006.<sup>7</sup> The 83 entries ranging from 1971 to 2009 recorded in the *ASE Bibliography* overlap with those in the *OEN Bibliography*.<sup>8</sup> Considering the total number of literature available, the number of entries relevant to time only occupies a small percentage in Anglo-Saxon scholarship.

Though it has not received critical attention in much previous Anglo-Saxon scholarship, the issue of time has a long critical tradition which can be dated back to 1895 when Frederick Tupper published his study “Anglo-Saxon Dæg-mæl.”<sup>9</sup> He discusses “the Anglo-Saxon day and the method of determining its divisions”, and examines “the Canonical Hours the basis of a detailed study of the Anglo-Saxon divisions of time...to show what these divisions meant to clerk and layman.”<sup>10</sup> While acknowledging what he had achieved, he recognized his own limitations: “I had in mind to discuss the Year, Seasons and Day in Anglo-Saxon poetry; but I reserve this treatment on account of the length of my paper.”<sup>11</sup> His study concerns primarily “the measurement sense” of time and his supporting evidence comes from Bede’s *Temporum*. His contribution to the studies of time lies in his reconsideration of Bede’s notion of the measurement of time in the Anglo-Saxon context. In his study, the concepts of day in Anglo-Saxon England are formulated in comparison with those in the Jewish, Greek and Roman civilizations. What he failed to notice is perhaps the two traditions - Germanic and Christian traditions - that come into play in Anglo-Saxon England. Moreover, Tupper was not inclined to use any fuller theory of how

the awkward situation is avoided when we use “scop” but we cannot say King Alfred is a scop.

<sup>5</sup> The first, Greenfield & Robinson (1980): *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the End of 1972.*, covers the studies before 1972; the second is an annually published bibliography by *ASE* from 1971 onwards; the third contains annual bibliographies published by the *OEN* from 1973 onwards and is accessible online. Greenfield & Robinson (1980) cite almost every relevant source from the invention of printing to the end of 1972, and thus, it is the most comprehensive bibliographical tool of Anglo-Saxon studies for its records of materials before 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Greenfield and Robison (1980): *Publications on Old English Literature*, 62-66. The only entry recorded is “Anglo-Saxon dæg-mæl” by Frederick Tupper (1895) on p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> The *OEN Bibliography* is accessible online at <http://www.oenewsletter.org/OENDB/index.php>. The database currently contains the annual bibliographies from 1973 to 2006 - over 21,000 entries - with new items added annually. The entries can be searched by the title keywords. Results are found by searching the Bibliography with “time” as the keyword in the title.

<sup>8</sup> The *ASE Bibliography* is accessible online by subscription. The figure is calculated with the search in a PDF file.

<sup>9</sup> See Tupper (1895), “Anglo-Saxon Dæg-Mæl”, *PMLA* 10.2: 111-241.

<sup>10</sup> Tupper (1895), “Anglo-Saxon Dæg-Mæl”, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Tupper (1895), “Anglo-Saxon Dæg-Mæl”, 2.

ideas of time are related to the full range of cognition in a culture - as indeed he could hardly be expected to, since such theories are more the focus of our period than his. However, his limitations cannot weaken the position of his study as the most substantial one at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There is an academic discontinuity between Tupper and later Anglo-Saxonists, since only in 1980s the issue of time came into the critical focus again.<sup>12</sup> However, the reappraisal of time is not due to its position as an important domain in human culture and cognition, but due to the academic context of recompiling an Old English dictionary (the DOE).<sup>13</sup> In this context, it was found necessary to carry out etymological and lexicographical investigations of Old English time words. For instance, in 1983, Angus Cameron et al. published *Old English Word Studies: A Preliminary Author and Word Index*.<sup>14</sup> As the title suggests, the book is a list of bibliographical entries on Old English words, and bibliographical information is given only concerning the words that had been investigated before 1983. The book is an essential reference for the compilation of the ambitious DOE, and “to provide bibliographies, semantic studies, and other tools useful for the Dictionary.”<sup>15</sup> In 1984, Janet Bately wrote her seminal article “Time and the Passing of Time in ‘The Wanderer’ and Related OE Texts”, in which she looks into the concepts of time in *The Wanderer* and other Old English elegies, and discusses the different concepts of time of the Anglo-Saxon poets.<sup>16</sup> She noticed time as an important structuring principle in Old English poem, yet she did not look at that principle further. One year later, she published another article, “On Some Words for Time in Old English Literature”, in which she examined time words such as *first*, *tid*, and *tima*, and their occurrences within the whole corpus of Old English.<sup>17</sup> The notion of studying Old English vocabulary with the aid of the entire corpus of OE texts was advocated by Stanley in 1971:

“Anyone now embarking on the study of any aspect of the Old English vocabulary must be aware of what is required...The whole corpus of Old English writings has to be gone through...for each lexical item considered.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The exception is Grimm, whose *Teutonic Mythology* in four volumes published in German in 1844 includes several chapters dealing with the issue of time and world in Germanic mythology. This book would be mentioned later together with Bauschatz’s (1982), *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture*.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron envisions the possibility of recompiling a dictionary of Old English to replace ASD in 1969 and the project of DOE in the same year. See Bammesberger (1985), *Problems of Old English Lexicography: Studies in Memory of Angus Cameron*, 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> See Cameron et al. (1983), *Old English Word Studies: A Preliminary Author and Word Index*.

<sup>15</sup> Cameron et al. (1983), *Old English Word Studies*, vii.

<sup>16</sup> See Bately (1984), “Time and the Passing of Time in ‘The Wanderer’ and Related OE Texts”. *Essays & Studies* n.s. 37.

<sup>17</sup> See Bately (1985) “On Some Words for Time in Old English Literature.” *Problems of Old English Lexicography: Studies in Memory of Angus Cameron*. Eds. Angus Cameron and Alfred Bammesberger.

<sup>18</sup> See Stanley, “Studies in the Prosaic Vocabulary of Old English Verse,” 385. Quoted in Bately (1985), 47.

However, Bately was the first Anglo-Saxonist who applied that notion to the investigation of time words. She endeavoured to contextualize each word in its every possible occurrence with the help of *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*.<sup>19</sup> In Bately's investigation, the issue of time is primarily a semantic one rather than a cultural or cognitive one. In the 1980s, Victor L. Strite was an equally pivotal Anglo-Saxonist in the field of word studies, and his seminal book *Old English Semantic-Field Studies* came into print in 1989. In this book, he advocated the semantic-field approach to word studies and devoted a large portion of his book to survey the history of this approach.<sup>20</sup> The semantic-field approach is fascinating, yet his book is more of a bibliographical description of semantic-field studies of various Old English terms rather than a detailed study of the respective semantic fields. In this sense, his book is a follow-up to Cameron's *Old English Word Studies: A Preliminary Author and Word Index*. For instance, in his description of "time terms", he surveys the preceding studies concerning the semantic fields of time terms ranging from Tupper's study to Bately's recent investigations.<sup>21</sup> His contribution lies in his efforts to advance the semantic-field approach, to outline its general methodology, and to survey its historical development. By comparing Strite's book with that of Cameron, we find that these two books have the same purpose of providing a bibliographical tool for further investigation of Old English words, but they differ in the scope they cover: the former includes the more recent studies, and focuses on the semantic fields of a few key Old English words, while the latter covers almost every Old English word ever considered. The corpus-based approach advocated by Bately and the semantic-field approach by Cameron and Strite aim to provide precise interpretations and definitions of Old English vocabularies, and this is a preliminary step in compiling a dictionary. Thus, to some degree, the Anglo-Saxonists' studies mentioned above work for the purpose to compile an Old English dictionary, and their approaches could be termed collectively as a "dictionary-oriented approach".

The dictionary-oriented approach to the issue of time reached its climax in 1995 when *TOE* came into print.<sup>22</sup> By incorporating the previous lexicographical studies and Old English dictionaries, *TOE* has so far been the most ambitious work in the field of Old English word studies.<sup>23</sup> Rather than arranging Old English words alphabetically, *TOE* organizes Old English words conceptually intending to "provide its users with at least some new insights into the vocabulary of Old English and the

<sup>19</sup> The predecessors of *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* are *CB* and *CASPR*. The former lists "all occurrences of every word in Old English except about 200 common words." See Venezky and Healey (1980), *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English. A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* is later digitalised as *DOEC*.

<sup>20</sup> See Strite (1983), "Semantic-Field Analysis for Old English Poetry: Using Computers and Semantic Features to Find Meaning" and (1989) *Old English Semantic-Field Studies*.

<sup>21</sup> See Strite (1989, *Old English Semantic-Field Studies*, 149-150.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*. *TOE* has both print and online editions. For the online edition, see the *TOE*'s webpage which is accessible for free at <http://libra.englant.arts.gla.ac.uk/oethesaurus/>.

<sup>23</sup> The exceptions are Bosworth & Toller, which represent the highest achievement in the 19th century and *DOE*, which is now still in progress. *TOE* is now incorporated into *HTE*, but still useful for OE studies.

lives of its speakers, as well as fulfilling its primary function of supplying data for further research.”<sup>24</sup> With regard to the time words in Old English, *TOE* groups them into eleven categories according to their semantic features: “length/duration in time”, “a time, particular time, occasion”, “period of time, era, epoch”, “day and night”, “a dial, horloge”, “course/cycle of time”, “relative time”, “a suitable time, opportunity”, “frequency”, “timescale”, and “continuity”.<sup>25</sup> The definitions of Old English words, according to the editors, are primarily based on *ASD* and *CASD*, while the division of meanings foreshadows that of *HTE*, “proceeding from the most general terms to the most specific.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, *TOE* does not offer new definitions, but provides a new conceptual framework for grouping them. In this regard, *TOE* could be viewed as the most detailed study of the semantic fields of Old English words. Contrasting the eleven categories of time words in *TOE* with Vyvyan Evans’s “eight senses of time”<sup>27</sup>, it leads to the conclusion that the two ways of perceiving time overlap. For instance, “The Duration Sense” in the latter corresponds roughly to “length/duration in time” in the former, and “The Measurement-system Sense” to “period of time, era, epoch” and “day and night”, etc. In grouping Old English words in this way, the editors were aware of the limitations: “[s]chemes of classification have no inherent truth, but represent the best attempts of the compilers to present their materials within a coherent and illuminating framework.”<sup>28</sup> The contribution of *TOE* to the study of time is twofold: *TOE* can “[fulfil] its primary function of supplying data for further research”<sup>29</sup>, and I use the raw data in *TOE* for the further analysis of time words;<sup>30</sup> it thus provides another possible framework for us to examine the issue of time.

The dictionary-oriented studies discussed above seem to blur the distinction between concepts of time in Anglo-Saxon England and words of time in the Old English language. In the history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, Hans Sauer is the first researcher to make this distinction.<sup>31</sup> In 2003, he published his article “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose: *Theodulfi Capitula*.” As the title suggests, he made a distinction between “time words” and “time concepts”<sup>32</sup>. In the article, he

<sup>24</sup> See Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, xv, xxxvi.

<sup>25</sup> See Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 301-314.

<sup>26</sup> See Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, xxxii-xxxiii. *HTE* is the companion of and addition to *OED*. The former arranges English words conceptually, while the latter arranges them alphabetically. Roberts’ *TOE* is modelled on *HTE*. In the recent online edition of *HTE*, the materials in *TOE* have been incorporated.

<sup>27</sup> In Evans (2003), *The Structure of Time: Language, Meaning and Temporal Cognition*, Evans distinguishes between eight senses of time: “The Duration Sense”, “The Moment Sense”, “The Instance Sense”, “The Event Sense”, “The Matrix Sense”, “The Agentive Sense”, “The Measurement-system Sense”, “Commodity Sense”. See pp. 107-198 of the book.

<sup>28</sup> See Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>29</sup> See Roberts et al. (2000), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, xv.

<sup>30</sup> In Section 1.3 of this dissertation dealing the “approaches and methodologies”, we have a detailed discussion of this point.

<sup>31</sup> See Sauer (2003), “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose: *Theodulfi Capitula*”. *Prospero: Rivista di Culture Anglo-Germaniche* 10.

<sup>32</sup> In a very strict sense, we should distinguish “time concepts” from “concepts of time”, or “time words” from “words of time”. To avoid the possible confusion that might be caused by that minor difference, we prefer to use “concepts of time” or “concept of time” instead of “time concepts” or “time concept” throughout the dissertation.

called attention to the complexity of “time concepts”:

Time is a complex and richly structured concept with overlapping possibilities of classification and subdivision...We have years, seasons, months, weeks, days, hours, etc. There is also a linear and a cyclical aspect to time.<sup>33</sup>

He discerningly pointed out that we could approach that complexity by studying “time words.”<sup>34</sup> By comparing the Latin *Theodulfi Capitula* with its two Old English translations, he observed “a threefold structure”: the prototypical or pure concept, the religious concept and the meal concept in Old English *Theodulfi Capitula*.<sup>35</sup> His contribution lies in his distinction between words and concepts and his interpretation of the multi-level meanings of time, and his investigation of time may serve as an example for further discussions of time in individual Old English texts. His interpretation of “time concepts” is primarily based upon the semantic studies of “time words” that occur in the Old English prose *Theodulfi Capitula*.

The studies of time in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, ranging from Tupper to Sauer, focus on the language aspects of time in the Old English language. Those studies above all attempt to investigate the issue of time within the language itself. However, we cannot disregard the historical and social dimensions of time. In fact, in previous Anglo-Saxon scholarship, another succession of studies considers the issue of time in the wide-ranging contexts of the early Germanic world or early medieval Europe. The most notable study of this kind is Grimm’s *Teutonic Mythology* in four volumes, published in German in 1844.<sup>36</sup> In the preface to the English translation, the translator Stallybrass praises Grimm for his panoramic perspective in dealing with early Germanic issues:

Jacob Grimm was perhaps the first man who commanded a wide enough view of the whole field of Teutonic languages and literature to be able to bring into a focus the scattered facts which show the prevalence of one system of thought among all the Teutonic nations from Iceland to the Danube.<sup>37</sup>

Such a broad perspective surely gives Grimm the advantage of observing the early Germanic world. According to Grimm, in the early Germanic world, the concept of time is often transferred to that of space, and related to the concept of the world

<sup>33</sup> Sauer (2003), “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose”, 247.

<sup>34</sup> Sauer (2003), “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose”, 247.

<sup>35</sup> Sauer (2003), “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose”, 250.

<sup>36</sup> See Grimm (1888), *Teutonic Mythology*. In Grimm’s book, the word “Teutonic” is synonymous with “early Germanic”, and both terms have the connotation of referring to the pre-conversion or pagan Germanic world.

<sup>37</sup> Grimm (1888), *Teutonic Mythology*, v.

symbolised by the world-tree called *Yggdrasil* in Old Norse mythology.<sup>38</sup> Since the world is perceived as the rotation between “the world’s destruction and its renewal” in *Yggdrasil*, the notion of time is also characterised by a spatial relationship.<sup>39</sup> On the basis of his observations of the Germanic languages and mythologies, Grimm tried to contextualise the issue of time in Anglo-Saxon England in the tradition of the early Germanic world. His approach stands in contrast to the philological one since the former focuses on the social and historical aspects of time while the latter treats time as a semantic question. It is worthwhile mentioning Bauschatz who examined the issue of time in his *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture*, published in 1982. In this book, he reconsidered the issue of the world and the time, and argued, “Germanic culture was dominated by its conceptions of its own past.”<sup>40</sup> Both Grimm’s and Bauschatz’s investigations are concerned with how time was generally perceived in the early Germanic world. Thus, they provide us with the historical dimension of time. Apart from Grimm’s and Bauschatz’s studies, Godden’s investigation of the relation between time and millennium is worth mentioning here. In his “The Millennium, Time and History for the Anglo-Saxons” (2003), Godden explored the Anglo-Saxon authors’ perception of the end of the world around the year 1000, with a focus on Ælfric’s and Wulfstan’s homilies, and came to the conclusion that “millennialist expectations gave a peculiar pointedness to their moment in history”<sup>41</sup>, but “the very texts that they were using in support of those expectations, and the process of adapting and copying earlier texts, fostered in them simultaneously a different and more cyclical sense of history, as a series of repeated crises.”<sup>42</sup> Godden’s study provides a perfect example of how the perception of time may impact the perception of history. Since Godden primarily supported his claim with examples from Old English homilies, it is worthwhile to ask whether we should extend the analysis to other Old English texts.

A survey of previous Anglo-Saxon scholarship on time reveals the following problems: Firstly, previous studies of time lack a diachronic perspective. The diachronic perspective considers how perception of time changes throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Most scholars agree that two major cultural traditions meet in Anglo-Saxon England, but they disagree on how these two traditions conflict or interact with each other. Accordingly, investigating how two perceptions of time interact or conflict requires a diachronic perspective. Furthermore, diachronic investigation does not regard time as stable or unchangeable; rather, it gives emphasis to the dynamic change of time, which has been neglected in previous Anglo-Saxon scholarship on time.

Secondly, preceding studies of time may have underestimated the complexity

<sup>38</sup> Grimm (1888), *Teutonic Mythology*, 790.

<sup>39</sup> Grimm (1888), *Teutonic Mythology*, 825.

<sup>40</sup> See Bauschatz (1982), *The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture*, ix. The term “early Germanic”

<sup>41</sup> Godden (2003), “The Millennium, Time and History for the Anglo-Saxons”. *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change*. Eds. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow and David C. Van Meter.

<sup>42</sup> Godden (2003), “The Millennium, Time and History for the Anglo-Saxons”.

of time. As has been demonstrated by cognitive linguists and literary critics, time exhibits extremely complex stratum of meanings, involving measurement sense, duration, spatial conceptualisation of time, etc.<sup>43</sup> In the studies of time reviewed above, some aspects, such as “the measurement of time”, have been examined in detail, while other aspects, such as “the linear and cyclical dimension of time”, remain to be explored.<sup>44</sup> We need to observe the complexity of time in Anglo-Saxon England, to survey which aspects have been explored in detail and which aspects have not, and to unearth the prominent aspects of time by which we can differentiate the Anglo-Saxon concepts of time from others. In his article, Sauer reminds us that some words were central and others peripheral in expressing the concepts of time.<sup>45</sup> In a similar way, instead of discussing the issue of time in a general sense, we shall evaluate which aspects are central and which are peripheral. The previous, dictionary-oriented studies have offered raw data for further investigation and provided an obvious opportunity to reflect on the complexity of time in the Anglo-Saxon context.

Furthermore, the vital role of time in understanding Anglo-Saxon culture and thought has not been fully established. The preceding studies of time, whether philological or historical, simply view time as a language phenomenon, and the issue of time is regarded equal to words of time.<sup>46</sup> However, time as such is far more complex than the vocabularies to express the notion of it in a certain language. Although Sauer endeavoured to distinguish between “time words” and “time concepts”, and to consider the former as the embodiment of the latter, his investigation is still philological, not taking the cultural values of time into consideration. Dictionary-oriented studies seem to simplify the role of time for understanding human culture. Although Anglo-Saxonists such as Godden and Bauschatz noticed the importance of time in interpreting Anglo-Saxon culture, they did not go to the extent of showing how time was fundamental and influenced the perceptions of many other concepts. We should highlight the role of time as a basic category in Anglo-Saxon culture, and regard time as one of the basic concepts in understanding the culture. We shall focus on how time in Anglo-Saxon England is different from that in other cultures, and what that difference tells us about the Anglo-Saxon world. The medieval historian Backman used “alloy” and “amalgamation” to describe an important feature of the Middle Ages:

<sup>43</sup> See Evans (2003), *The Structure of Time: Language, Meaning and Temporal Cognition*, 107-198.

<sup>44</sup> Tupper’s article “Anglo-Saxon Dæg-mæl” is a typical example of the investigation focusing on the “measurement of time”.

<sup>45</sup> See Sauer (2003), “Time Words and Time Concepts in Anglo-Saxon Prose”.

<sup>46</sup> As regards the limitation of traditional English philology, Gneuss observed, “English philology has unfortunately only too often relied on its own resources and possibilities. That the historical background and cultural background and the findings of palaeographers, art historians and many others have to be borne in mind, seems so obvious an axiom that one is almost embarrassed to mention it; yet it is easy to show how, time and again, this principle has been violated.” See Gneuss (1972), “The Origin of Standard Old English”, *ASE I*, 66. Though Gneuss’s critique of traditional philology is not due to its inadequacy in dealing with the issue of time, his observation that we should break the boundary of traditional philology is insightful. I have no intention to belittle the contribution of traditional philology, but it should reconsider its role in an age where various approaches have been proposed to deal with the same issue.

Medieval civilization was an alloy, the product of the amalgamation of three distinct cultures: classical Rome, Latin Christianity, and early Germanic society. It was a civilization that, for all its ethnic, social, and political plurality, regarded itself as an organic whole.<sup>47</sup>

The quotation above indicates two important aspects: first, medieval civilisation is an alloy of different traditions, and second, medieval civilization is an organic whole. Anglo-Saxon culture is a constituent part of medieval civilisation, and thus, time could work as an ideal barometer to explain how the different traditions amalgamated to form an organic Anglo-Saxon culture.

Finally, the complexity of time requires an interdisciplinary perspective. The philological approach to time studies has its advantages, since it involves the etymological investigation of time words in Old English. However, the issue of time is far more complex than the words associated with time. Each culture has various measures to denote the concepts of time. The philological approach emphasises the system of the Old English language *per se* and excludes the historical dimension in its consideration, while the historical approach examines the issue of time within the broad contexts of the early Germanic world or the early Middle Ages. The discussion of time should be placed in both philological and historical contexts. An integration of these two approaches would help to unearth the complexity concerning the issue of time. We need both the detailed examination of time words in the philological approach and the broad vision in the historical approach. In dealing with the issue of time in Anglo-Saxon England, we need to construct our arguments primarily based on the evidence from the Old English language and literature, and to deal with the minutiae of time in a broad and general perspective. The philological studies of time should be placed in the historical context of Anglo-Saxon England in which the pagan Germanic culture confronts the predominant Christian ideas and teachings.

## 1.2. Research Questions

The theory and practice of the history of ideas provides a general guideline for diachronic investigation of time. Reinhart Koselleck lays out some fundamental principles for the approach termed *Begriffsgeschichte*, practiced in German scholarship. First, *Begriffsgeschichte* emphasises “the autonomous power of words” in experiencing the world, without which nothing can be experienced or communicated. In a similar fashion, the diachronic study of time should also emphasise the importance of time words. Second, *Begriffsgeschichte* emphasises the importance of concepts in understanding society by saying that society cannot be understood without concepts. Third, *Begriffsgeschichte* integrates diachronic and synchronic analyses.<sup>48</sup> Those principles are of great help in conducting a diachronic analysis of time in Anglo-Saxon England. The American counterpart approach,

<sup>47</sup> See Backman (2009), *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Reinhart Koselleck (2004), *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 75-92.

# English and Beyond

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