



Literature, Identity & Culture

RESEARCH GROUP

SEMINAR SERIES 2010

Australian Mummies and the Medieval Past in 19th Century Australian Popular Verse

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Nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist poets such as Hopkins and Barnes were deeply concerned with verse's role in excavating England's early linguistic past. Australian poets of the same period were also preoccupied by archaeological and excavational metaphors in their verse, and by the idea of a deep poetic tradition in Australia. But the Australians, unlike their English peers, had a historical dilemma: given the newness of colonial culture, and the increasing public understanding of the great antiquity of indigenous culture, how were they to imagine themselves into a deep local poetic tradition? They resolved this dilemma, I suggest, by developing an ingenious proleptic vision in which they themselves featured as the Anglo-Saxons of Australia's future. Focussing mostly on Victor Daley's bizarre 1897 poem "An Australian Mummy", this paper will examine 19thC Australian poets' idiosyncratic use of medievalist and, in particular, Anglo-Saxonist discourses to address the question of poetry's role in their emerging national culture.

Tuesday August 3, 12:30pm – 1:30pm
Room 19.1080 Faculty of Arts University of Wollongong
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