

A Note on Terminology

The term “Anglo-Saxon” has been shown by Mary Rambaran-Olm, Erik Wade, and Adam Miyashiro, among others, to serve not as an accurate descriptor of the groups who colonized Britain in the early English period, but rather as a nod (conscious or otherwise) to white supremacy. These scholars show that use of this term has, from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholarship onward, functioned both to reinforce a false belief in a monolithically white, medieval past and to embolden white nationalists to act as self-proclaimed gate-keepers to and for the study and appreciation of the “Middle” Ages. As a result, the continued use of this term has, as Wade and Rambaran-Olm have shown, served to both exclude and to endanger BIPOC students and scholars of Old English and the Middle Ages, as well as to excuse and rationalize their mistreatment.¹ This issue has long been clear to and repeatedly voiced by scholars of color—voices that must not only be heard but also amplified.

A terminological change remains the very least that can be done to move this field we love toward equity and justice—but it is a start. To this end, we have encouraged the authors to remove the use of “Anglo-Saxon” from their prose—opting instead for “early English” or “early medieval England.” We hope the readers of the volume will join us in promoting a field that is more open, respectful, supportive, and safe for all persons (white supremacists very much excepted). An excellent starting place for doing so is Kimberly Anne Coles’s, Kim F. Hall’s, and Ayanna Thompson’s: “BlacKKKShakespearean: A Call to Action for Medieval and Early Modern Studies,” which appears in the MLA’s *Profession* (see below for full citation). In addition, if you are not already doing so, we encourage you to join us in: (1) following the hashtags #RaceB4Race, #ShakeRace, #commit2change, & #globalmiddleages—as well as the numerous phenomenal BIPOC pre-modernist writers, learners, and thinkers—online; (2) citing the works of BIPOC, MOC, and WOC in your work; (3) teaching the scholarship of BIPOC, MOC, and WOC in your classes and sending the scholars your syllabi for use in their performance reviews; (4) supporting and citing early-career researchers, graduate students, and other academics who are experiencing precarity; (5) (if you can) funding resources like the Medieval Academy of America’s Belle Da Costa Greene Fund, which supports the career development of MOCs; (6) promoting editing opportunities to and for scholars of color; and (7) telling better, richer, more powerful stories about the past.

¹ It should be noted that this is not a problem exclusive to the study of the early medieval English and their culture. Racism needs to be recognized and addressed in and around pre-modern studies broadly defined.

Finally, I am not, primarily, a scholar of Old English literature—although Dr. Hughes’s enthusiastic and compassionate teaching has fueled my love of and appreciation for many of these works—nor am I an expert in Critical Race Studies. My ability to learn more, to do better, and to write, to any degree, on this topic is wholly due to the public efforts and powerful work being done by numerous, dedicated pre-modern scholars, including Mary Rambaran-Olm, Adam Miyashiro, Dorothy Kim, Geraldine Heng, Sierra Lomuto, Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, Seeta Chaganti, Monica H. Green, Cord Whitaker, Jonathan Hsy, Jenny Tan, Erik Wade, Julie Orelmanski, Michelle Warren, Matthew X. Vernon, Margo Hendricks, Ayanna Thompson, Kim F. Hall, Ambereen Dadabhoy, Helen Young, and so many more (we cannot stress enough that this is by no means an exhaustive or ranked list). Thank you all and thank you Dr. Hughes for teaching all your students that we are never done learning.

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