

Acknowledgements

It is to Richard Barber that I am most indebted, for suggesting that I undertake this project. Looking back, it was the late Ruth Harvey of St Anne's College, Oxford, incomparable lecturer, tutor and supervisor, who first drew me to Wolfram.

I owe much to my readers: Kate Douglas, Katy Hodgins, Jim Bradbury, Christine Hall, Michael Shields, Sabine Flint-Gupta and Andrew Potts, and to Boydell & Brewer's reader for his meticulous scrutiny of the text. All my readers have found time to criticise, in the word's best sense. Fellow medievalists have listened to my ravings, among them Jeff Ashcroft, Tony Hunt, Harry Jackson, Peter Johnson, Peter Christian, Nigel Palmer, Susan Reynolds, John Gillingham and John Freed. David Yeandle and Carol Magner kindly granted me access to their on-line Wolfram bibliography. Fully aware of the task's difficulties, I have consulted colleagues in many other disciplines who have been generous with their help, among them the Orientalists Sebastian Brock and Stephanie Dalley, and the ornithologist John Quinn.

The Taylorian Institute and the Modern Languages Faculty Library in Oxford have been most kind, particularly in their tolerance of books overdue, or all too often renewed.

This book is published with the aid of a generous subvention from the Vinaver Trust, for which I and the publishers are grateful.

Ruth Harvey issued sage warning of how obsessive engaging with such a warm, witty, subtle author as Wolfram can become. Among the scholars who have fallen under Wolfram's spell was Margaret Richey, who attempted translations in verse and prose, and was in daily converse with Wolfram. Ruth was once invited to visit her in cold Edinburgh. Notoriously nesh, even in high summer Ruth would have a gas fire burning in her St. Anne's study. Margaret Richey, steeped in medieval etiquette, offered her the only hot-water bottle in the house. Ruth, aware she ought to prove heroic, resolutely declined, but in the end gave way. As she ascended the stairs, she heard Margaret say to Wolfram: 'She shouldn't have taken it!'