

Acknowledgements

As specialists in Old English who have enjoyed the peculiar intimacy of co-editing, we may relish the idea that the editorial first-person plural pronoun of this book could have been rendered in Old English as the first-person dual pronoun 'wit' (we two). But it is just as well that the Present-Day English 'we' admits the ambiguity of collectives indeterminate in number, as this volume is the result of the labour, thought, friendship, and intellectual and political commitments of a much wider and, at times, difficult to define cadre of people. After all, the study of literature involves a wide variety of intimacies in addition to those we claim with particular texts – sometimes with persons one knows well; sometimes with persons one only corresponds with briefly, but crucially, at a propitious moment; and sometimes with larger collectives as such.

The contributors to this volume, all scholars already intimate with *Beowulf*, form one such collective. They have taken the risk of investing their time, energy, and ideas in the project of a serious book whose title announces a joke, writing with intensity, care, and a sense of adventure. We have developed a particular kind of writerly intimacy even as many of us have never met off-page. Around this immediate group, we are also especially grateful to all who have led or provoked urgent conversations and initiatives to make spaces where *Beowulf* is studied more inclusively, both within longstanding scholarly organizations and in some new groups that have formed during the gestation of this volume. We include among our contributors one of the co-founders of the organization currently known as the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS), Roberta Frank, as well as the recent Executive Director, Robin Norris. We are grateful to both of them for their work in building community. As we go to press, we are delighted that the ISAS membership has voted to change its name to acknowledge the racist legacy embedded in the terms 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxonist', and we hope that

this will prove a turning point in building a more just and open field. We recognize and thank the Medievalists of Color as an organization that has been leading the way and especially Adam Miyashiro and Mary Rambaran-Olm for their forceful critiques not only of our professional and historical monikers but also of rampant racism, misogyny, and abuse. Indeed, this volume is a direct response to related efforts to police who – and what kind of work – is welcome in the field, and we hope that it will likewise knock down doors. That said, we also openly acknowledge our own complicity in structural racism in early medieval studies. No scholars of colour appear among our contributors, and for that we are sorry.

As we think about ways to pitch in and expand the field, we also want to recognize Donna Beth Ellard's brainchild, the Islands of the North Atlantic (IONA) conferences – the first of which was held in Denver in 2017 and which Dan considers himself lucky to have been able to help plan, which are now likewise building new spaces for the kind of alternative discourses in Old English studies that this book calls for and tries to provoke. We are also both grateful to the Colloquium for Early Medieval Studies (formerly the ASSC) for providing an early intellectual home and an ongoing model of a feminist, theoretical Old English studies. The New Chaucer Society has similarly provided this early medieval work with two memorable moments: a chance for us to visit the *Beowulf* manuscript together, as it is exhibited to the public in the Treasures Room of the British Library, during the 2016 biennial congress in London and, at the 2018 congress in Toronto, an opportunity to make a pilgrimage – together with some other intrepid scholars of Old English also in attendance – to the offices of the Dictionary of Old English. These last efforts may have been more convivially than editorially focused, but they were no less important to the intimacy of the editorial process.

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