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Beowulf, Bryher, and the Blitz: a queer history[1]

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The novel *Beowulf*, an account of a London tearoom during the Blitz, occupies a curious and somewhat embarrassing place in early medieval literary studies. The first notice that early medievalists took of it is a brief entry in Donald Fry's bibliography of the Old English poem: 'Bryher, Winifred. *Beowulf*: A Novel. NY, 1956. No relation to the poem.'[2] This entry poses several interesting questions about the nature of bibliographic inquiry because it explicitly distances itself from the subject of the bibliography in which it is included. Much like a Wikipedia disambiguation page or Alec Guinness on a desert planet, this entry exists solely to let serious scholars of Old English literature know: this is not the *Beowulf* you're looking for. Fry's encyclopaedic zeal led him to include an entry for Bryher's novel in spite of its apparent irrelevance to the topic, although I am left wondering how often bibliographies of major literary works include similar entries – presumably Skelton scholars don't feel a need to carefully distinguish the sixteenth-century author from the twentieth-century comedian. Fry includes the entry due to the singularity of the name and its clear association with a certain type of literature, an association that is apparent even outside of scholarly study. The two reviews available for Bryher's *Beowulf* on Amazon make this clear. The earliest review, from a disgruntled reader expecting something different, aside from making a hash of the book, notes, 'This is not about the Beowulf [*sic*] you might think it is', while the later reviewer offers a much more accurate and sympathetic review, highly recommending the book 'as long as you're not in the market for Viking swords and gore'.[3] These statements, both scholarly and not, exist to temper expectations and prevent readers from being misled. Fry's 'no relation', a phrase more commonly seen as a journalistic parenthetical, lets scholars of the period, who may have incidentally heard mention of the novel, know that there is nothing to see, nothing to look into, and nothing

of interest, at least as it relates to the study of the poem. It's a different sort of blood running through the veins of the two works.

But relations are tricky, as are bibliographies. Rather than distancing study of the novel from study of the poem, Fry's entry calls attention to itself by its very distinctiveness. A close investigation of the novel suggests much more consanguinity than expected and in fact challenges our conception of what it means to relate to the past, a past in Bryher's novel that very explicitly includes the Old English poem. Rather than bearing an incidental titular similarity, the two works share several related concerns: courage in the face of violent attack; the creation of community through the sharing of food and drink; the role of women in public life; the mediation of past, present, and future amid upheaval. All this is to say nothing of similarities between the Beowulf of poetic tradition and the ugly plaster bulldog bearing his name in Bryher's novel, nor of some explicit discussion of the poem within the novel. This speaks to a certain scholarly hubris about the kinds of interpretations that the poem affords and our ability to parse works that adapt without being adaptations. Bryher's *Beowulf* is a queer, feminist masterpiece of documentary realism and modernist whimsy in which the Old English *Beowulf* plays a pivotal and underappreciated role, and whose marginalization within the field of early medieval studies is a consequence of a masculinizing ethos that often goes unchallenged, even in feminist scholarship on the poem.

Throughout this chapter, I will argue that Bryher's *Beowulf*, while overtly a historical novel about the London Blitz during the Second World War, also practises a unique kind of queer historiography, layering multiple times and perspectives to demonstrate the fundamental instability and idiosyncrasy of interpretation. First, I will provide a brief account of Bryher's life – given her relative obscurity outside of historical studies of modernism – in which I will pay special attention to her relationship with H.D., the modernist poet and 'since 1919 [Bryher's] companion, sometime lover, and always friend',[4] and the French bookseller Adrienne Monnier, to whom the novel is dedicated. H.D. and Monnier represent the nodes of queer community around which Bryher's life revolved, and understanding their relationships is critical to understanding Bryher's under-studied role as both patron and producer of art. Further, H.D. is the source of my own queer critical attachment to Bryher and her projects, as it was through my passion for H.D.'s work that I became aware of Bryher and her use of early medieval themes.

Next, in analysing the nature of Bryher's queer historiography, I will draw on Carolyn Dinshaw's queer touch across time and Elizabeth Freeman's argument for a queer writing of embodied intimacy. I will also draw on H.D., whose poems inspired by the London Blitz use the concept of the palimpsest as a metaphor for a queer, feminist historiography of ancient mythologies. These different modes of queer historiography all shape my understanding of Bryher's distinctive mode of intimacy and community in the novel to shape engagement with tradition and the place of women in a world that can be hostile to them. Bryher's *Beowulf* shows readers the Blitz through the eyes of the owners and patrons of the Warming Pan, a tearoom run by Selina Tippett and Angelina Hawkins, who seek to empower women and create community. Both women embody the contradictions of an awareness of the past with a desire for new futures that meet in a tumultuous present, and these contradictions come to a head in the figure of Beowulf, a plaster bulldog that Angelina Hawkins buys with the grocery money, intending it as a symbol of English resilience and resistance in the face of attack. The bulldog's very garishness draws the eye and provokes thought about the interpretation of the past in ways that are as multiple as the people who look upon it.

Finally, my analysis will focus on developing the queer relation between poem and novel, situating Bryher's work within subsequent feminist scholarship in early medieval studies. The women of the London tearoom and their relationship to the past as represented by the plaster bulldog will lead into an analysis of the women in *Beowulf*, particularly Wealhtheow. I will posit a certain resonance between tearoom and mead-hall, in which communities are created and strengthened by the words and deeds of women. I will argue that scholars of Old English literature have too often taken the history of women's reception of the literature for granted and that we need to value the creative work of adaptation performed by Bryher's novel, which can and should shake up orthodoxies of interpretation that have a corrosive effect in our field. That *Beowulf* is a story by, about, and for men is too often taken for granted, and Bryher offers an opportunity for scholars to reconsider Wealhtheow's speeches in the mead-hall in a new light, one that both critiques the limits of the community that women created in early medieval life but that also adapts it to new purposes.

Much to the chagrin of bibliographers such as Fry and the creators of library catalogues who are generally uncomfortable with mononyms, Bryher is the entirety of the author's chosen name. She was

born in September 1894[5] as Annie Winifred Ellerman, the daughter of the shipping magnate John Ellerman, one of the richest men in England.[6] As a young woman, she was deeply influenced by the poet Hilda Doolittle, whose first publication launched the imagist movement and gave her the abbreviated name H.D. by which she would become known. H.D. had given Ezra Pound one of her poems to read, upon which he wrote 'H. D. Imagiste' before sending it straight to Harriet Monroe's then new and avant-garde magazine *Poetry*.[7] H.D.'s book *Sea Garden* captured the imagination of the young Bryher, well before she knew the identity of its author:

> There will always be one book among all others that makes us aware of ourselves; for me, it is *Sea Garden* by H. D. I learned it by heart from cover to cover … I began the morning and ended the day repeating the poems. It was not until some months later that I discovered … that H. D. was a woman and American.[8]

In 1918, at the age of 24, Bryher was given H.D.'s London address. H.D. invited Bryher in, and while Bryher 'was waiting for a question to prove my integrity and the extent of my knowledge', H.D. asked the kind of question that guarantees lifelong love and companionship: 'I wonder if you could tell me something … have you ever seen a puffin and what is it like?' Bryher responded, 'They call them sea parrots and there are dozens of them in the Scillies. I go there almost every summer, you must join me next year.'[9] In fact, Bryher's chosen name was taken from the name of one of the Scilly Isles, located off the south-western coast of Cornwall.[10]

The start of the following year, 1919, was a time of great turmoil. Both H.D. and her then husband, the writer Richard Aldington, had been pursuing other romantic entanglements, and H.D.'s led to a pregnancy; during her convalescence, she contracted Spanish influenza.[11] When Bryher visited, she was shocked to find H.D. on the brink of death. Her landlady bluntly asked Bryher, 'Do you know the woman? She is going to die. Can you pay the funeral expenses?'[12] Bryher dedicated herself and her money to H.D.'s care, and in spite of the grim predictions of H.D.'s landlady and doctor, both she and her child, Frances Perdita, survived. This marked the beginning of their lifelong companionship. The trio travelled frequently, including trips to Greece and Egypt that would prove significant in H.D.'s later writing. H.D. felt immense gratitude to and concern for Bryher, due to suicidal tendencies that stemmed from Bryher's discomfort with a rigid gender binary, identifying at some points more as a man than a woman.[13] Although the two

were lovers only 'comparatively briefly', they were close for the rest of their lives, writing letters while apart.[14]

In adulthood, Bryher became increasingly assertive in using her fortune to act as patron to a growing circle of modernist writers and artists, but by no means including H.D.'s former fiancé Ezra Pound, whom Bryher both disliked and was disliked by, as strong a point in favour of her personal character as any that could be imagined. In 1927 Bryher married H.D.'s lover, Kenneth MacPherson, funding a magazine on cinematography, *Close Up*, as well as appearing together with H.D. in MacPherson's 1930 silent film, *Borderline*, which starred Paul Robeson and employed experimental methods to mine the sexual drama of an interracial love triangle.[15] MacPherson and Bryher became adoptive parents to Perdita and made their home with H.D. in Switzerland, though travelling frequently to London, Paris, and Berlin.

In Paris, Bryher became a strong supporter of the expatriate community of writers and artists on the Left Bank, particularly those swirling around the milieu of Sylvia Beach, the American founder of the English-language bookshop *Shakespeare and Company*, and her romantic partner Adrienne Monnier, owner of the French bookstore and lending library *La Maison des Amis des Livres*. Bryher's introduction to Beach and Monnier came from her first husband, Robert McAlmon, whom she met while travelling in America with H.D.[16] Concerning her introduction to Bryher, Beach wrote,

> Then, one day, a great day for Shakespeare and Company, Robert McAlmon brought her in – a shy young English girl in a tailor-made suit and a hat with a couple of streamers that reminded me of a sailor's … Bryher, as far as I can remember, never said a word … So McAlmon and I did the talking, and Bryher did the looking. She was quietly observing everything in her Bryhery way, just as she observed everything when she visited 'The Warming Pan' teashop in the London blitz days – and, as *Beowulf* proves, nothing escaped her.[17]

Bryher's quiet shyness belied her deep engagement with the avant-garde community, and she would offer crucial financial support to Beach in lean times, providing her with enough financial stability to write her memoirs.[18] As a result of her personal shyness and her multifaceted role behind the scenes in promoting art and literature, Emily Wojcik notes that

> Bryher can be hard to locate within primary accounts of her time, in part because she appears to have been so willing to recede into the background, silencing herself in ways that are themselves culturally

> significant … This personal and professional reticence has also, unfortunately, resulted in a critical invisibility that is only now being undone.[19]

However, it was Monnier with whom Bryher would develop the closest friendship. Of their first meeting, Bryher notes, 'I was shy with Adrienne Monnier at first, my British accent got in my way and I also knew directly I looked at her round forehead and deceptively placid blue eyes that she was a thought reader.'[20] Monnier used her clairvoyant talents to recommend exactly the books Bryher most needed to read, and Monnier and Beach's home became a place of fine food and conversation with 'some of the finest minds in France', although Bryher's silent observation continued, such that she would later write, 'I never spoke unless I was spoken to and so they forgot sometimes that I was a foreigner. Sylvia, of course, had been adopted by them all.'[21] Through Beach and Monnier, Bryher would become acquainted with writers, artists, and thinkers including Gertrude Stein, Tristan Tzara, Man Ray, and Walter Benjamin, whose escape from Nazi Germany to Paris Bryher aided.[22]

Bryher's social circle established intimacy through meals eaten together, books shared, and writings dedicated to one another. The English edition of Bryher's *Beowulf* is dedicated 'To *Sylvia Beach* and the memory of *Adrienne Monnier*'. In Beach and Monnier, we glimpse a model for women as both owners of businesses and as creators of fellowship through food and drink, like the women who own the Warming Pan in *Beowulf*. But the dedication also speaks to the importance of Beach and Monnier to the publication of the work. Initially published in a French translation, Bryher's novel found its first serious critic in Monnier, who wrote an introduction to it. Monnier's introduction helps situate the novel, revealing the journalistic eye that Bryher brought to the work of building her characters, among whose number we should include the setting of the novel, the Warming Pan itself. Bryher relied on observations of actual people and places during the Blitz and adapted them to the shifting narrative of her novel. For Monnier, Bryher's work deserves comparison to 'the admirable documentary films that were shown to us a bit after the Liberation', but is also elevated by 'the art of the novel, that is to say, a transposition into a domain that is more plastic and more rich in spiritual values'.[23] It is also from Monnier that we gain a glimpse of the relationship of the novel to the poem from which it derives its name: 'Bryher has given to her

book, in a manner that is half humorous, half serious, the name of the hero of the Anglo-Saxon epic.'[24]

If scholars of early medieval England are interested in studying the reception of pre-Conquest English literature, then we must begin by not dismissing works as irrelevant to our study if they approach their adaptation and use with an ironic and humorous intent. We must begin by recognizing that adaptation often puts old things to new uses, transforming the hero of an Old English poem set in Scandinavia into a tacky plaster statue symbolizing English resistance, and that this kind of adaptation is not strange or impermissible but is a natural result of living together with the past and approaching it not merely with reverence but with the full range of emotion.

In addition to dedicating her books to members of her social circle, Bryher was also a dedicatee, and of a book also spawned by the experiences of the Blitz, the first volume of H.D.'s *Trilogy*, *The Walls Do Not Fall*, whose dedication reads like a poem of time and place:

> To Bryher
> *for Karnak* 1923
> *from London* 1942[25]

H.D.'s dedication signals her preoccupation with the past, connecting her own experience of the Blitz to her travels undertaken with Bryher nearly twenty years before to the archaeological site of Karnak in Egypt, whose connection to the past informs H.D.'s approach to the present. Nor is this the only dedication to Bryher, who is also featured in the dedications of a translation of Euripides' *Ion* and H.D.'s novel *Palimpsest*.[26] In *The H.D. Book*, Robert Duncan argues that in these dedications Bryher emerges as a patroness modelled after late medieval art patrons, at once steadfast and unidealized.[27] This dedication came after a lifetime spent together, and in Duncan's words:

> The dedication of *The Walls Do Not Fall* in 1942 is not a propitiation. In a lifetime, the poetess and her patroness had come to the understanding of old companions, living in some recognition of their differences. But it is perhaps a payment of a kind, 'for Karnak', a gift in return for the gift of 1923. A return.
>
> And the poem itself begins as a letter from H. D. in London to Bryher, who was still in Switzerland in 1942.[28]

The dedicatory communities created by H.D., Bryher, and Monnier create a rich historical context for the reception and transmission of the works, which have taken a long time to receive widespread recognition.[29]

H.D.'s *Trilogy* figures queer, feminist history in terms of a metaphor derived from manuscript culture, the palimpsest. Palimpsests are manuscripts where one layer of text has been scraped away so that the parchment may be used for a new purpose. Palimpsests are of immense historical significance, as the first layer of text may preserve an important witness to texts that may be poorly represented in extant manuscripts from the time. For H.D., the palimpsest becomes an important metaphor for both the recovery of old truths and the writing of the new. Early in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, H.D. imagines a chorus of derisive mockery for her attempts to poetically investigate representations of divine women, too often characterized as 'old flesh-pots' and the difficulty of 'scratch[ing] out // indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure'.[30] This reveals the dual nature of H.D.'s palimpsest, her attempt both to read under words that have been passed down to 'recover old values',[31] and also to scratch out received tradition to make room for her own writing.

For H.D., the materiality of writing and its connection to violence is revealed all too readily in war. The instruments of writing, 'the stylus, / the palette, the pen, the quill endure' through their association with the masculine figures of Thoth and Hermes, even while 'our books are a floor / of smouldering ash under our feet'.[32] But not only are the books wantonly destroyed in this senseless way. There is also still demand for books: 'yet give us, they still cry, / give us books, // folio, manuscript, old parchment'. However, this demand is driven not by a desire for the word but to undo these materials, to rend and cut them into containers for something other than words, as they 'will do for cartridge cases'; and the poem ends with the wry observation that 'Hatshepsut's name is still circled / with what they call the *cartouche*', punning on cartouche's double meaning as both a paper cartridge containing ammunition as well as the oval figure in Egyptian hieroglyphics that encloses the name of a powerful pharaoh and woman.

H.D.'s poetic ruminations on the materiality of writing serve as the launching point for her consideration of the past, impelled by the horrors and destruction of the Blitz, rooted in the observation that something yet remains – 'Still the walls do not fall'[33] – prompting H.D.'s 'search for historical parallels, research into

psychic affinities', according to the 'peculiar intricate map' of her own 'way of thought'.[34] *Trilogy* delves in its three volumes into historical parallels in Egyptian, Greek, Persian, and Judaeo-Christian mythology, culminating in an extended reflection on the figures of Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus as seen through the eyes of Kaspar, who is ascribed the gift of myrrh. H.D.'s historical method is, by her own poetic admission, idiosyncratic, drawing on puns, anagrams, and historical resonances to limn the outlines of a recovered place for women in the hierarchies of the divine, with consideration for the fragility of life and the life of words in her historical present.

It was through my love of H.D. that I first encountered Bryher, first as H.D.'s lover and companion, and then as an author in her own right. The *Trilogy* stands with the Old English *Beowulf* as my two favourite poetic works, and so, inevitably, I find myself reading Bryher's *Beowulf* through the queer historical method of H.D., driven by the search for psychic affinities, for reading the sedimentation of historical experience through the metaphor of the palimpsest. As I introduce the characters of Bryher's novel and explore its connection to the Old English poem, it will be with an eye to the interpenetration of different historical epochs and the rich layering of literary history with the experiences of Londoners in the Blitz.

Bryher's *Beowulf* explores the comings and goings of characters around the Warming Pan tearoom, focusing especially on its two proprietors, Selina Tippett and Angelina Hawkins. The point of view of the narrative shifts throughout the novel, and as a result characters (including both the plaster bulldog Beowulf and the Warming Pan itself) are composite images refracted through individual perspectives. The initial perspective is that of Horatio Rashleigh, an elderly artist whose craft never developed beyond Victorian paintings of sailboats for calendars.

Rashleigh's gentlemanly misogyny serves as an introduction to the gender politics of the novel as well as the tension exhibited throughout between desire for the past and change in the present. Disturbed by the sound of one of the other boarders early in the morning, Rashleigh reflects to himself,

> In a well-ordered world, girls would not tear down the stairs to business, clattering like a fledgling man-at-arms in a leather coat without even the pretence of a cap on short, smooth hair. … Forty years ago Eve would have been taught to creep past his door had a necessary errand called her forth early in the morning.[35]

It is hard as a reader not to delight in Eve's exuberant morning clatter and her refusal to pay heed to feminine fashion norms loosened and undone in the disorderliness of the Blitz. Rashleigh's desire to enforce gender norms and the impotency of his private grumblings to effect their restoration within the world of the Warming Pan render him a figure at once sad and comic, yet affectionately drawn. In one of her memoirs, Bryher noted, 'People complained that [Rashleigh] was a conventional figure when they read *Beowulf*. He was, but I did not invent him. If we had met, I should have shocked him profoundly.'[36] Rashleigh's venial grousing sets the stage for a novel that is often concerned with capturing how people complain about one another, and yet Bryher writes in a whimsical tone that accepts gossip and complaint as an inescapable part of humanity.

The central focus of the novel is Selina Tippett, often referred to simply as the Tippett. Our first introduction to Selina is through the eyes of Rashleigh: 'Poor woman, she was one of nature's less successful drawings, a little sketch scribbled on a telephone pad, and he chuckled, of superimposed O's from rump to chin.'[37] However, the denigration of Rashleigh's observation is contrasted with Selina's first appearance: 'Selina Tippett, who ought to have been called Madge, trotted down the stairs.'[38] What a world of characterization can be packed into a name, even one that doesn't properly belong to a character! Selina is a figure of uncommon good sense, the name Madge conjuring a figure who is solid and respectable but also quick about her business, rather unlike Rashleigh's sketch. She started the Warming Pan with Angelina out of frustration with other tearooms, in which 'she had never found "the toast, the temperature, and the tea" … all together',[39] and because 'Tearooms had had a special meaning for Selina. She associated them with freedom. Only those people, she thought, who lived obedience for six and a half days of the week knew what liberty was.'[40] Selina is acutely aware of her position as a woman living under societal constraints, and tearooms in her world become a space in which women especially have something to themselves: a moment of their own. While Selina's role as proprietor of a tearoom aligns her with a certain brand of English traditionalism, she revels in the new opportunities available to women, especially young women, and conceives of herself as a facilitator of that freedom. Prompted by a consideration of her own childhood full of motherly disapproval, Selina reflects, 'Dear me … how the world has changed since I was ten. Changed for the better, too, in spite of the raids. Nobody

questioned a girl like Evelyn about her friends.'[41] If Rashleigh grumbles about Evelyn (and Selina) in private, who's to know, except for the readers.

Selina is a portrait of contrasts to Angelina, the other proprietor of the Warming Pan. While Selina runs the tearoom itself, 'Angelina looked after the staff and the purchases, but her heart was really with the courses that she was always taking to improve, as she said, "the future of us women"'.[42] Angelina is impatient for further change, although her approach to taking courses is scattershot, moving from Eastern philosophy, which at least had the benefit in Selina's eyes of encouraging her 'to control her temper', to politics, which has led Angelina to cultivate a scornful attitude towards the customers, whom she has begun referring to as the 'stupid bourgeoisie'.[43] Angelina's mercurial intellectual energy and ability to deal with people outside the tearoom sets her apart from Selina, but also leads her into passionate undertakings that Selina doesn't always understand, and it is this aspect of her character that is the catalyst for the introduction of the titular character of the novel, the plaster bulldog named Beowulf.

The scene of Beowulf's introduction is a comedy of interpretation, with characters vying with each other to determine the symbolism of the plaster bulldog and where to place it.

> Angelina set her burden carefully on the floor and stood up, smiling at her audience. Beside her sat a plaster bulldog, almost life size, with a piratical scowl painted on his black muzzle.
>
> 'Don't scold me', she appealed to the room, 'wouldn't he be lovely as a stand for bulletins? And I do think these days symbols are important.' …
>
> 'What about standing him in the fireplace?' Mrs. Spenser suggested, watching the Tippett's embarrassment with delight. 'Where did you find him?'
>
> … 'In a salvage sale, opposite the Food Office. I can't keep a dog, I know, in the raids, but it's so cheerless without one. I was afraid at first that you might be tempted to call him Winnie, but then I thought, no, here is an emblem of the whole of us, so gentle, so determined …'
>
> '… and so stubborn.'
>
> Angelina glanced up suspiciously, but Mrs. Spenser appeared to be perfectly serious. 'Stubborn! Oh, I see what you mean, we don't leave go, whatever happens. I should have thought that a better word was resolution. He must have a name, though. I shall call him Beowulf.'
>
> 'How gallant, Miss Hawkins, but I'm sure he is a gallant dog.' Angelina glared at Horatio, whom she loathed. Plaster is such bad

> taste, his mind was saying. 'I bought him', she retorted, 'not as a symbol of gallantry but of common sense.'
>
> An ugly woman, Horatio thought, and how she bullied her conscientious little partner, but at his age it was essential to keep upon friendly terms with everyone. 'Ah, but you must not grudge us poor artists the luxury of dreaming about happier, courtlier days.'
>
> 'I am sure Beowulf's monster wasn't courtly', she sniffed, bending down to lug the plaster object into the fireplace. An old fool like that would not know his history nor that Beowulf, unlike Drake, could be accepted by the proletariat. Had he not fought the dragon (merely a symbol no doubt for Viking dictatorship) to save the whole people? 'You are right, Mrs. Spenser, the fireplace is just as good as a kennel.' They all giggled at her little joke. 'You know, I envy, I positively envy, that ribbon in your hat to make a collar for him.'
>
> … The preposterous bulldog that should have been simply vulgar really gave the bleak, dingy room an air of gaiety.[44]

This passage is astonishing in many ways, not least to an early medievalist for what is one of the earliest Marxist interpretations of Beowulf, in which he is transformed into a hero ready for acceptance by a proletariat oppressed by the dragons of both English government and German bombardment. Angelina's enthusiasm for the plaster bulldog and the early medieval hero suggests the mercurial affections inspired by her educational courses and, in someone obsessed by the creation of new orders, an interesting attachment to traditions of the past. Adrienne Monnier sees in the politics of the present's relationship with the past something powerful that is often taken up by new movements: 'I admire that Bryher has noted in Angelina's character that the social and literary avant-garde always rediscovers the totems of primitive clans, while conservatives are content with a much more recent past, the past of which they are the direct heirs.'[45] Angelina's attempt at literary interpretation is amateur, a term that often attracts derision, but one that Carolyn Dinshaw has argued is in need of reconceptualization, linking *amateur* with *queer*:

> amateurs – these fans and lovers labouring in the off-hours – take their own sweet time, and operating outside of regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality, these uses of time are queer. In this sense, the act of taking one's own sweet time asserts a queer force. *Queer*, *amateur*: these are mutually reinforcing terms.[46]

Dinshaw argues for a queer understanding of temporality focusing on asynchrony: 'different time frames or temporal systems colliding

in a single moment of *now*'.[47] Dinshaw's concept of asynchrony and the amateur reader creating new kinds of attachment to medieval texts provides a useful way of thinking through how Bryher's *Beowulf* comments upon the Old English poem. It is vital that studies of reception focus not only on the work of adaptation but also on the work of folk commentary by which the polysemous nature of medieval texts comes into focus.

Throughout the passage, the plaster bulldog is described in a multitude of ways by different speakers. He possesses 'a piratical scowl'; he is 'an emblem of the whole of us, so gentle, so determined', but also 'so stubborn'. He is full of 'resolution' and is also 'gallant'. He is a symbol of 'common sense'. He is courtly, according to Horatio, and definitely not courtly according to Angelina. He is 'preposterous' and 'vulgar' and yet brings 'an air of gaiety'. The entire passage is a tussle over the meaning of symbols, and particularly over the intervention of the past in the present. Speakers develop different affective relationships with the bulldog that reveal attitudes towards and various ways of cultivating or resisting intimacy with the past. One of the greatest contributions of queer studies to the analysis of literature is in the development of what Dinshaw has termed the queer historical touch across time, as when writers and historians use 'the body in unusual, nonnormative ways, in order to make loving relations across time'.[48] This deployment of touch and affect as an important part of queer historiography has been further developed by Elizabeth Freeman, whose work, rather than seeking 'a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times', focuses instead on an 'erotohistoriography' that 'does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself as hybrid. And it uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter.'[49]

In both Dinshaw's and Freeman's work, the queer historical impulse is figured through the metaphor of non-normative sexual desire, but that is one thing that is notably lacking in Bryher's *Beowulf*. It is tempting to read Selina and Angelina as lesbians, but this reading depends on interpolating Bryher's actual community of queer and lesbian women and shop owners into the text as well as reading between the lines of the relationship of the owners of the Warming Pan. Throughout the book, Selina and Angelina are frequently referred to as partners and occasionally as colleagues (although Angelina has to regretfully admit that whatever else she may be, '"comrade" simply didn't suit Selina').[50] And yet the intimate nature of their relationship is revealed at several points throughout

the text. Prior to owning the Warming Pan, the two women were companions to a Miss Humphries, who is put into a bad temper by the idea of Selina spending time with Angelina, 'of whom she was so jealous', to the extent that they sit 'in [Angelina's] bedroom with the door open, in case Miss Humphries should call'.[51] While the question of whether or not the two women had a sexual relationship is left open by the text, the intimacy that they share deserves its own queer historiography, worked out not in bodily relations but in the sharing of food and gossip, achieving 'the temperature, the toast, and the tea' all together in a place that admits multiple temporalities swirling together in the constitutive chaos of the Blitz.

Food acts throughout the novel not only as a catalyst for affective relationships between people, but also as something that affects people themselves, a truth that is recognized in many ways. Early in the novel, Horatio Rashleigh thinks, 'He would feel better, he always did, after he had had a cup of tea.'[52] Selina takes pride in the capacity of the Warming Pan to influence not only customers, but many more, 'For if clients came in to lunch and went off cheerfully afterwards, they, in turn, would affect their relatives and their maids. It was inspiring really, especially on such a cold, dreary morning, to think how much one solitary woman could do in defence of her native land.'[53] Selina and Angelina even reflect on the capacity of food to change each other's personalities. Selina believes, 'If Angelina would only eat more, she would be less restless and talk less strangely',[54] while Angelina feels that Selina 'was dominated by her appetite'.[55] The power of food to affect people, both in ways that they can predict and that they are wholly unaware of, argues for what Jane Bennett refers to as the agency of edible matter, which 'includes the negative power to resist or obstruct human projects, but … also includes the more active power to affect and create effects'.[56] Bennett's theory of materiality explores matter's capacity to act with and upon the human, and the importance of food in the context of the tearoom suggests how the desiring bodies of the Warming Pan create their own thick temporalities. The queer historiography of *Beowulf* is not located in a desire to touch other bodies but derives instead from the intimacy created by bodies desiring and sharing food together. The capacity to affect and be affected by one another comes first from the capacity of the body to be acted upon by food. Rashleigh, in desiring a cup of tea, also desires the effect that it produces in his body. When Selina imagines her ability to radiate influence throughout London, it is premised upon the good feelings created when customers lunch at the Warming

Pan, and this capacity to act in concert with edible matter is gendered in the context of the tearoom. Using food to influence others without their even being aware of it becomes a powerful tool for cultivating affective relationships, one that is applicable as much to the early medieval mead-hall as the London tearoom whose fireplace is guarded by a plaster bulldog with an Old English name.

In proposing this connection, I don't mean to suggest a direct correspondence between mead-hall and tearoom, nor that Bryher was engaged in a straightforward adaptation of one historical context into another. Instead, I want to return to the metaphor of the historical palimpsest introduced by H.D. as a way of understanding the temporal hybridity of the two *Beowulf*s. I am proposing that we read the text of the poem as if it had been written over by the text of the novel, the words still legible, even though the story is different. Like Selina Tippett, Wealhtheow, the wife of Hrothgar, is a woman who understands the importance of edible (or drinkable) matter. In her first appearance in the poem, she distributes drinks to the men in the hall after Beowulf has sworn to kill Grendel:

> Eode Wealþeo forð,
> cwen Hroðgares cynna gemyndig,
> grette goldhroden guman on healle,
> ond þa freolic wif ful gesealde
> ærest East-Dena eþelwearde,
> bæd hine bliðne æt þære beorþege,
> leodum leofne; he on lust geþeah
> symbel ond seleful, sigerof kyning. (612b–619)[57]
>
> (Wealhtheow went forth,
> Hrothgar's queen, mindful of customs;
> adorned with gold, she greeted the men in the hall,
> then that courteous wife offered the full cup
> first to the guardian of the East-Danes' kingdom,
> bid him be merry at his beer-drinking,
> beloved by his people; with pleasure he received
> the feast and cup, victorious king.)[58]

After sharing the cup with the hall,

> hio Beowulfe, beaghroden cwen
> mode geþungen medoful ætbær;
> grette Geata leod, Gode þancode
> wisfæst wordum þæs ðe hire se willa gelamp
> þæt heo on ænigne eorl gelyfde
> fyrena frofre. (623–8a)

(the ring-adorned queen, of excellent heart,
bore the mead-cup to Beowulf;
she greeted the Geatish prince, thanked God
with wise words that her wish had come to pass,
that she could rely on any earl for relief
from those crimes.)

Scholarly interest in scenes of communal drinking and women's role in passing mead-cups has been central to the analysis of women in early medieval culture, and in *Beowulf* in particular, in the role of peace-weavers.[59] One of the central debates concerns whether the role of peace-weaving is passive or active, whether Wealhtheow and other women need to 'surmount the passive peace-weaver role in order to influence political and dynastic decisions', as Shari Horner argues, or whether peace-weaving itself requires that we 'redefine the place traditionally allotted to the domestic world within a heroic ethos … and recognize women as central forces, rather than marginal supports, in the production of social order', in the words of Stacy Klein.[60] In this passage the tension between these two conceptions of women's place in society comes out clearly. While Wealhtheow speaks, it is in indirect discourse, and as she shares mead from her cup with each person present, she does so *cynna gemyndig*, a phrase which the *Dictionary of Old English* translates as 'mindful of what is fitting, proper behaviour' or possibly even 'mindful of social distinction'.[61]

The bracketing of Wealhtheow's speech in indirect discourse on her first appearance in the poem stands in marked contrast to a pair of speeches that she delivers in close succession to Hrothgar and Beowulf after the slaying of Grendel. Like Selina Tippett in her tearoom, Wealhtheow knows the value of a beverage. She begins her speech to Hrothgar, 'Onfoh þissum fulle, freodrihten min, / sinces brytta' (Take this cup, my noble, courteous lord, / giver of treasure!) (1169–70a), before exhorting her husband, who is on the verge of adopting Beowulf as his own, to be mindful of the futures of their two sons. Her speech to Beowulf follows a similar tack, buttering him up with gifts and kind words, urging him to think well of her sons, before showing steel at the very end:

Her is æghwylc eorl oþrum getrywe,
modes milde, mandrihtne hold;
þegnas syndon geþwære, þeod eal gearo;
druncne dryhtguman doð swa ic bidde. (1228–31)

(Here each earl is true to the other,
mild in his heart, loyal to his liege-lord,
the thanes united, the nation alert,
the troop, having drunk at my table, will do as I bid.)

Wealhtheow yet again recognizes the capacity of the mead she serves in the hall to produce an effect, binding the thanes to one another, to Hrothgar, and also to her. It is a moment of bared steel in defence of her (male) children that foreshadows the impending ravages of Grendel's vengeful mother and exacerbates the problem of interpretation: is Wealhtheow going off-script in claiming the loyalty of the thanes or is she acting within a well-defined role for women in Germanic legend?

This question is complicated by Wealhtheow's singularity as a speaking woman in the poem. The Bechdel test, introduced by Alison Bechdel in the 1980s in her comic *Dykes To Watch Out For* and then popularized in feminist film criticism in the 2000s, helps clarify the problems of the representation of women in media. The test has three parts: 'One, it has to have at least two women in it who, two, talk to each other about, three, something besides a man.'[62] *Beowulf* passes the first test, with six women – Wealhtheow, Hygd, Hildeburh, Freawaru, Thryth/Modthryth/Fremu, and Grendel's mother – but it falters at the second. Whether restricted to a legendary past recounted by scops or to the social confines of the mead-hall or to a monstrous exile, in spite of scholarly desire to bring the women into dialogue with another, they actually have little to say. Wealhtheow's two speeches are addressed to Hrothgar and Beowulf and concern her sons, Hrethric and Hrothmund. The women in the poem are defined by their relationships with men, something that even scholars arguing for the centrality of women to the production and maintenance of social order admit, as Dorothy Carr Porter does at the end of her anthropological study of women in *Beowulf*: 'Though they are all defined by the men that they are close to, either sons, fathers, or brothers, none of the women in *Beowulf* are marginal or excluded.'[63] Given the first half of Porter's sentence, if they are not marginal or excluded, the women in the poem are still subordinated to men.

The subordination of the women in the poem to men is a problem for scholars to deal with, even feminist scholars seeking to challenge how we understand gender in the poem. Thus, Gillian Overing notes, 'We certainly do not need feminist theory to tell us that *Beowulf* is a profoundly masculine poem',[64] and Clare Lees begins

her interrogation of masculinity with the statement, '*Beowulf* is an Anglo-Saxon poem about men – male heroes, warriors, kings.'[65] Even when scholars suggest the opposite, it can come in the form of a joke; when Paull F. Baum joked that *Beowulf* was written by a woman, he was motivated by what Shari Horner has described as 'twentieth-century essentialist views of femininity, his suppositions that women are typically unconcerned with gore and battles, sympathetic to other women's plights, and given to talking too much – simply because they are women'.[66] Although Baum's dated views on gender at least served as a prompt to Horner to think seriously about women in the poem, she does so as a means of thinking about how 'we can better understand how *Beowulf* normalizes and regulates femininity',[67] rather than considering what it would mean to make space for women as authors of *Beowulf*.

The space for women as readers is further problematized in James Earl's moving account of a dream he had concerning the poem:

> I dreamt about a little girl who had a fascinating, unusual doll, every part of which – arms, legs, head, torso – seemed to be made from other dolls, all of different colors and proportions. I knew where it had come from: the little girl's brother had collected all the old, broken dolls he could find … then he had made a single doll out of all their parts, and had given it to his little sister. Far from thinking it was junk, she thought it was beautiful and loved it … The doll, of course, is *Beowulf*; I am the little girl, and the poet is her brother.[68]

Earl's dream about the creation and transmission of the poem sticks with me, in part, because the first time I read it I thought it laughable as scholarship; but as I returned to the essay, it grew on me more and more because it points to the absence of serious studies of subjective response to early medieval literature. In this dream, Earl discovers himself not as a scholar of the poem and its era but as a child enraptured by its beauty, as a reader who cherishes the work, both in spite of and because of its seemingly incongruous parts. However, Earl's identification with the subject of the dream, the little girl receiving the poem from her brother, once again points to the problem of the subordination of women, now as readers. In his dream, Earl genders the reader of the poem as a girl in an 'attempt at compensation, though necessarily condescending … since the poem so strongly marginalizes the female reader already'. However, this female reader is an abstraction, and one of the pleasures of Bryher's *Beowulf* is that, almost unlooked for in the field of Old English studies[69] but already hiding in plain sight, we have a record

not only of a female reader of *Beowulf* adapting it to an entirely unexpected use, but also a fictionalized female reader in the character of Angelina, whose progressive spirit nonetheless encompasses an ability to respond sympathetically to the poem along class lines.

In fact, Bryher's novel anticipates debates about the role of women within our field decades before they occurred. In Selina, we find an affirmation of women's capacity to influence others through her role as hostess, securing the future for new generations, as Wealhtheow seeks to do for her sons, though Selina's efforts are focused more on the future of the young women who come to her tearoom, maintaining and producing social order in a time of uncertainty. However, in Angelina, we find a progressive impatience with patriarchal tradition and the tendency of traditional gender roles to restrain and regulate women's place in society; and yet Angelina is also the one who cultivates a nostalgia for the deep past and sees in *Beowulf* something deeply appealing. The polyphonic nature of Bryher's work allows for multiple perspectives to develop in dialogue with and against each other and questions the very notion that there is something uniquely feminine about women's voices while reaffirming their necessity.

Nor should we accept the fiction that Bryher's relationship to the early medieval past was purely incidental. In addition to her memoir and the novel *Beowulf*, Bryher was best known for her historical novels, including *The Fourteenth of October*, which concerns the life of a boy in the time of upheaval of the Norman Conquest. In a brief essay included on the back of the dust jacket, Bryher reflects on her own understanding of the past, rooted both in her deep reading of history (including reading Edward A. Freeman's multi-volume *History of the Norman Conquest* at the age of 15), and in a less academic knowledge gained from her travels in the English countryside, connecting the early medieval past to her war-torn present:

> I stood on the battlements and looked across the deep green meadows towards the place where perhaps the destiny of Saxon England was really decided. Dunkirk was fresh in our minds, but who remembers the Great March when the housecarles tramped three hundred miles in thirty days, along the rough track of a road, without transport and with little organized supply in the way of food? … How long ago it seems, the fight on the hill; yet I drove through Battle once again this past April, and it was as if it had been yesterday. History did not repeat itself in 1940, but by how narrow a margin! Will it repeat itself?[70]

Bryher's engagement with the past was deep, and if amateur rather than scholarly, she brought to it all the love that *amateur* etymologically implies, and she was just as invested in exploring the psychic affinities of the past in the present as H.D.

Part of the secret of Bryher's queer, feminist embrace of the medieval past lies in her refusal to take it simply as it is. Much like Earl's dream-doll constructed from the broken-down remnants of other dolls, the titular character of her novel is an entirely unexpected and, in his own way, quite marginal figure, a plaster bulldog so ugly that an assistant at Harrods would, after the war, assure Bryher 'that they had never stocked anything so vulgar'.[71] Furthermore, the appearance of Beowulf excites comparisons not to heroic men, but to women, with the plaster bulldog compared to Selina both as a measure of similarity and difference. Angelina views it as similar to Selina: 'Of course, a plump face like Selina's was never meant for leadership. Oddly enough, it reminded her of Beowulf, the Tippett so resembled a ladylike and gentle bulldog.'[72] However, Eve draws the opposite conclusion, noting that Beowulf's 'wrinkled jaw precisely matched the chin of a woman sipping tea at the adjoining table', causing her to exclaim, '"It's so unlike Tippett." The black muzzle was too smug and restful; for Selina acted, if she did not look, a lady with a past.'[73] What a contrast to other depictions of Beowulf, in which he invariably appears as a humourless hulk, inexplicably fighting Grendel in his birthday suit.[74] Bryher's Beowulf is of an unfixable nature, by turns ladylike and gentle, but unsuited to leadership, or like a woman sipping tea, smug and restful and without a past. The indeterminacy of Bryher's *Beowulf* is a useful corrective to an understandable scholarly failing: the desire to fix a text's meaning.

Although the little plaster bulldog is a marginal figure, exiled to the fireplace, it still never fails to draw the eye and attract contradictory comment. Moreover, Beowulf's arrival coincides with the puncturing of the thick temporality of the British tearoom, past, present, and future all colliding in a rupture that was all too common in the Blitz. As the characters retreat to a nearby air-raid shelter, Selina returning to drag Rashleigh from his garret with moments to spare, the Warming Pan is destroyed:

> A bomb had hit the corner next to the restaurant, and as a result the Warming Pan was simply not there. The staircase that Eve had run up and down so many times had disappeared except for the bottom flight of steps. Her room was air. All that remained was a table, upright, with two plates on it and Beowulf standing quietly under the mantelpiece.[75]

This image cannot help but recall the barrow gazing out upon the wreck of history at the end of the Old English poem.

In the closing pages of the novel, the characters reflect on what has been lost: Eve's desire for 'the anonymous liberty of thought that her room and old Selina's cheerfulness had given her'; Angelina's delight in discovering Beowulf unharmed and her unabashed rush 'into the future'.[76] Selina sits among the wreckage, still feeling concussed from the bombs, and yet upon hearing that Beowulf has been dressed up in a Union Jack, wryly reflecting, 'You can't imagine the Germans taking a nasty dog seriously, can you? It would shock them.' The whimsical nature of Bryher's queer historical palimpsest surfaces even in the depths of tragedy, and while the Blitz has revealed the fleeting temporality of the space afforded by the Warming Pan, the voices of its women striving to achieve freedom according to their own desires creates a community that brings the women of the legendary past and the fictionalized present into dialogue with Bryher's circle of writers and readers. While the legendary *Beowulf* ended with a desire for praise, Bryher's *Beowulf* fittingly ends with a bashful acknowledgement of a universal truth by Selina: 'Oh dear … I do think it is very embarrassing to be bombed.'[77]

Notes

1 This essay would not have been possible without the encouragement, support, and suggestions of many people: Kenneth Irby, Daniel Remein, Erica Weaver, Tyler Caroline Mills, Jennifer Lorden, Claire Battershill, and especially Renée Buchanan.

2 Donald K. Fry, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburh: a bibliography* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1969), p. 26. Fry's bibliography also gives the mistaken impression that Bryher is her last name. The only other references to Bryher's novel are also bibliographical: Hans Sauer, with Julia Hartmann, Michael Riedl, Tatsiana Saniuk, and Elisabeth Kubaschewski, *205 years of Beowulf translations and adaptations (1805–2010): a bibliography* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier), p. 82; and John William Sutton, 'Beowulfiana: modern adaptations of Beowulf', University of Rochester, The Robbins Library, https://www.library.rochester.edu/robbins/beowulfiana (accessed 5 June 2019). Sauer has 'only distantly related to *Beowulf*' and Sutton, 'a fairly obscure Modernist novel'.

3 vladimir998, 'This is not the Beowulf you might think it is', review of *Beowulf: A Novel*, by Bryher, Amazon.com, 9 May 2007, www.amazon.com/Beowulf-Novel-Winifred-Bryher/dp/0394416678 (accessed 5 June 2019).

4 Helen Carr, *The verse revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, H.D., and the Imagists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), p. 37.

5 Bryher, *The heart to Artemis: a writer's memoirs* (Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2006), p. 1.
6 Carr, *The verse revolutionaries*, p. 873.
7 Ibid., p. 1.
8 Bryher, *The heart to Artemis*, p. 216.
9 Ibid., p. 217.
10 Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (1959) (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), p. 100.
11 Carr, *The verse revolutionaries*, pp. 872–4.
12 Bryher, *The heart to Artemis*, p. 223.
13 Carr, *The verse revolutionaries*, p. 875.
14 Ibid.
15 Bryher, *The heart to Artemis*, p. 289. *Borderline*, directed by K. MacPherson, in *Paul Robeson: portraits of the artist* (1930: Criterion Collection, 2007), DVD. H.D., credited as Helga Doorn, plays Astrid, with whom Robeson's character has an extra-marital affair, while Bryher is the hotel manageress.
16 Bryher's marriage to McAlmon in 1922 was platonic: 'We were divorced in 1927 but could have got an annulment just as easily except that this was a longer and more expensive procedure.' Bryher, *The heart to Artemis*, p. 239. See also Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, p. 101.
17 Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, pp. 100–1.
18 Noël Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: a history of literary Paris in the twenties and thirties* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), p. 374.
19 Emily Wojcik, '"Their own privately subsidized firm": Bryher, H.D., and "curating" Modernism', *Jacket2*, 28 September 2011, http://jacket2.org/article/their-own-privately-subsidized-firm (accessed 5 June 2019). See also Jayne E. Marek, 'Toward international cooperation: the literary editing of H.D. and Bryher', in her *Women editing Modernism: 'little' magazines and literary history* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 101–37.
20 Bryher, *The heart to Artemis*, p. 247.
21 Ibid., p. 248.
22 Bryher in fact dedicated a third of her money to aiding her extended circle of friends. See Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, p. 397.
23 Adrienne Monnier, *The very rich hours of Adrienne Monnier*, trans. Richard McDougall (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 174.
24 Monnier, *The very rich hours of Adrienne Monnier*, p. 174.
25 H.D., *Trilogy* (New York: New Directions, 1998). The original volumes in H.D.'s *Trilogy* are *The walls do not fall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), *Tribute to the angels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), and *The flowering of the rod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946). All quotations in this chapter are taken from the collected New

Directions edition, and citations of poems are to volume and poem number.

26 In *Ion*, the dedication reads: 'For B. Athens 1920/ P. Delphi 1932', where B. stands for Bryher and P. Perdita, H.D.'s daughter. H.D., *Euripides' 'Ion'* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937). See also H.D., *Palimpsest* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1926).

27 Robert Duncan, *The H.D. book*, ed. Michael Boughn and Victor Coleman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 219–20.

28 Ibid., p. 248.

29 Duncan's *H.D. book* circulated in bits and pieces for decades before receiving full publication in 2011. I was fortunate to be loaned Kenneth Irby's self-assembled copy as an undergraduate in 2005.

30 H.D., *The walls do not fall*, p. 2.

31 Ibid., p. 2.

32 Ibid., p. 9.

33 Ibid., p. 43.

34 Ibid., p. 38.

35 Bryher, *Beowulf*, pp. 10–11.

36 Bryher recorded her affection for Rashleigh: 'I loved my characters, especially Rashleigh, Ruby, and Selina'; Bryher, *The days of Mars: a memoir, 1940–46* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 15.

37 Bryher, *Beowulf*, p. 11.

38 Ibid., p. 21.

39 Ibid., p. 25.

40 Ibid., p. 24.

41 Ibid., pp. 21–2.

42 Ibid., p. 26.

43 Ibid., p. 29.

44 Ibid., pp. 65–7.

45 Monnier, *The very rich hours of Adrienne Monnier*, p. 177. In spite of Monnier's assessment, reactionary conservative movements are all too ready to selectively embrace the medieval. See Dorothy Kim, 'Teaching medieval studies in a time of white supremacy', *In the middle*, 28 August 2017, http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2017/08/teaching-medieval-studies-in-time-of.html (accessed 5 June 2019).

46 Carolyn Dinshaw, *How soon is now? Medieval texts, amateur readers, and the queerness of time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 5.

47 Ibid.

48 Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting medieval: sexualities and communities, pre- and postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 46.

49 Elizabeth Freeman, *Time binds: queer temporalities, queer histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 95.

50 The use of the term partner occurs on the following pages: 22, 28, 55, 65 (2x), 66, 68, 93, 98, 101, 163, and 199; colleague: 31 and 94; and comrade: 94.

51 Bryher, *Beowulf*, pp. 67, 25.
52 Ibid., p. 18.
53 Ibid., p. 23.
54 Ibid., p. 30.
55 Ibid., p. 101.
56 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 49.
57 All quotations from *Beowulf* are from R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (eds), *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
58 All extended translations refer to Roy M. Liuzza (ed. and trans.), *Beowulf*, 2nd edn (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2013).
59 L. John Sklute, '*Freoðuwebbe* in Old English poetry', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71 (1970), 534–41; repr. in Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (eds), *New readings on women in Old English literature* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1990), p. 208. See also Michael J. Enright, *Lady with a mead cup: ritual, prophecy, and lordship in the European warband from La Tene to the Viking Age* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1996); Stacy S. Klein, *Ruling women: queenship and gender in Anglo-Saxon literature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). On mead-sharing as peace-weaving, see Jane Chance, *Woman as hero in Old English literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 5, although Megan Cavell sounds a cautionary note in 'Formulaic *friþuwebban*: reexamining peace-weaving in the light of Old English poetics', *JEGP*, 114.3 (2015), 360–1.
60 Shari Horner, *The discourse of enclosure: representing women in Old English literature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 77; Klein, *Ruling women*, p. 104.
61 Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, and Antonette diPaolo Healey (eds), *Dictionary of Old English: A to H* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016), s.v. *cynn*, adj.
62 Alison Bechdel, 'The rule', in *Dykes to watch out for* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1986), p. 22; also available on Bechdel's website, http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/the-rule (accessed 11 September 2019).
63 Dorothy Carr Porter, 'The social centrality of women in *Beowulf*: a new context', *The heroic age*, 5 (2001), www.heroicage.org/issues/5/porter1.html (accessed 5 June 2019).
64 Gillian R. Overing, *Language, sign, and gender in Beowulf* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. xxiii.
65 Clare A. Lees, 'Men and *Beowulf*', in Clare A. Lees (ed.), *Medieval masculinities: regarding men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 129–48; repr. in Eileen A. Joy and Mary K. Ramsey (eds), *The postmodern Beowulf: a critical casebook* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), p. 417.

66 Shari Horner, 'Voices from the margins: women and textual enclosure in *Beowulf*', in Horner, *Discourse of enclosure*, pp. 65–100; repr. in Joy and Ramsey (eds), *The postmodern Beowulf*, pp. 467–500, at 467. See also Paull F. Baum, 'The *Beowulf* poet', *PQ*, 39 (1960), 389–99; repr. in Lewis E. Nicholson (ed.), *An anthology of Beowulf criticism* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1963), pp. 353–65.
67 Horner, 'Voices from the margins', p. 493.
68 James W. Earl, '*Beowulf* and the origins of civilization', in his *Thinking about Beowulf* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 161–88; repr. in Joy and Ramsey (eds), *The postmodern Beowulf*, pp. 268–9.
69 However, recent scholarship has done a better job of examining female readers of Old English. See Clare A. Lees, 'Women write the past: medieval scholarship, Old English, and new literature', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 93.2 (2017), 3–22; and Mary Dockray-Miller, 'Mary Bateson (1865–1906): scholar and suffragist', in Jane Chance (ed.), *Women medievalists and the academy* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 67–78.
70 Bryher, 'How I came to write *The fourteenth of October*', in *The fourteenth of October* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952). This brief essay appears in its entirety on the back of the dust jacket.
71 Bryher, *The days of Mars*, p. 13.
72 Bryher, *Beowulf*, p. 101.
73 Ibid., p. 133.
74 This is unfortunately the case both in Robert Zemeckis's animated film adaptation and in Santiago García and David Rubín's graphic novel adaptation. Santiago García and David Rubín, *Beowulf*, trans. Joseph Keatinge (Berkeley, CA: Image Comics, 2016).
75 Bryher, *Beowulf*, p. 189.
76 Ibid., pp. 190, 199.
77 Ibid., p. 201.