HELEN WADDELL REASSESSED

New Readings

JENNIFER FITZGERALD (ED.)

Peter Lang

The Irish writer and critic Helen Waddell burst onto the publishing scene of the 1920s and 1930s as a phenomenon, a scholar whose books became instant bestsellers. Cross-fertilizing academic research with a vivid imagination, her literary history *The Wandering Scholars* explores the secular joys of the *scholares vagantes*, an emotional undercurrent traceable throughout the ascetic centuries. Waddell's translations of *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* read as poems in their own right; her novel, *Peter Abelard*, grounds the tragedy of the famous lovers Heloise and Abelard in the woof and warp of medieval humanism.

At the time, the academy acknowledged her learning but deemed her methods insufficiently objective. Modern scholarship has finally caught up with Waddell, and the essays in this volume reassess her achievement from the perspectives of medieval, English, cultural and Irish studies. They investigate this romantic's modernist insights and demonstrate how her Irish roots were re-inscribed in her cross-cultural, transnational humanism. They examine her scepticism regarding conventional historiography and her cutting-edge engagement with medieval theology. They explore the range of her writings, from adaptations of ancient Chinese lyrics through translations from medieval Latin, interacting allusively with cultural ideologies and literary texts. These new readings show how Waddell's accessible, imaginative, scholarly works continually challenge academic and literary orthodoxies.

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To Louise Anson and to the memory of Mollie Martin,
in gratitude.

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JENNIFER FITZGERALD

Introduction

'There has never been anyone quite like Helen Waddell', said Norman Vance in a lecture reprinted in this volume. Scholarship and imagination are integrated in, and integral to, all of her work, blurring the conventional boundaries separating the academic and the creative, from the occasional essays of her youth to her acclaimed Latin translations. Her oeuvre is grounded in solid learning but her empathetic engagement with her material generates an appealing immediacy. Living in bitterly sectarian Belfast, she refused the 'blighting binary', to use Vance's words once more, of Protestant and Catholic. Indeed, she became a medievalist when she discovered that twelfth-century humanism resolved the antithesis of body and soul, desire and love, human and divine that so troubled her. All of her writing follows this rationale, cross-fertilizing categories that are generally kept segregated.

As the following chapters demonstrate, it is not possible to work on Helen Waddell without leaving the comfort zone of one's own academic specialty. The Latin scholar has to become familiar with twentieth-century English literature and vice versa; medievalists find themselves investigating turn-of-the-twentieth-century Orientalism and the history of English as a university discipline. The challenge of such crossover is rewarding, as indicated by this volume, the result of an international conference held at Waddell's alma mater, the Queen's University of Belfast, in May 2012.

Engaging with this diversity is all the more worthwhile because Helen Waddell is making a comeback, following on her prodigious reputation in the 1920s and 30s as the best known medieval scholar in the English-speaking world.[1] This was succeeded by diminishing but never extinguished interest: her works have been reprinted many times (*Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*,

1 M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 328.

for example, was reissued in 2008). *The Wandering Scholars*, her literary history of medieval goliards and their songs, was published in 1927 as an academic text, surprising everyone by becoming a bestseller within three days. *The Times* described it as the product of 'the mind of a scholar and the graceful pen of a wit'; the historian Eileen Power concurred, noting that 'scholars with poets' minds are rare enough in this wicked world'.[2] But the academy in general did not know what to make of it. As the contributors to this volume indicate, its imaginative engagement and evocative vitality went counter to the positivist objectivity and critical distance which the still-young disciplines of historical and literary studies were striving to promulgate. The most egregious attack (by a rival) reminded the author that 'the very genius of her writing negates its appeal to a crowd of specialists' and accused her of 'jazz[ing] the Middle Ages'.[3] In her day intellectual qualities were routinely gendered, as evidenced by the supposed compliment on 'a piece of work which while completely satisfying the highest masculine standards in the way of severity of technique and solidity of intellectual substance, is at the same time pervaded and informed by the distinctive and original genius of womanhood'.[4] No doubt university dons, virtually all male, resented her encroachment on their domain; even worse, they felt upstaged since, as Constant J. Mews's essay published here points out, the medieval Latin texts she studied were at that time the preserve of a privileged and mostly German scholarly élite. It was easier to assume that her popularity merely indicated her readers' lack of discrimination. Hard-bitten pedants, such as G. G. Coulton, enumerated errors of transcription; as she lamented, 'the printer mistakes the *re* of the subjunctive for a plural *n*, and I fail to detect it time after time'.[5] The academic career she had sought was denied her: she sacrificed her twenties to daughterly duty, captive in Belfast to a demanding, eventually alcoholic, stepmother. The prejudice of

2 Review of *The Wandering Scholars* (hereafter *WS*), *The Times*, 29 Apr. 1927; Eileen Power, review of *WS*, *The Nation and The Athenaeum* 41/19 (13 Aug. 1927), 639.

3 P. S. Allen, review of *WS*, *Speculum* 3/1 (Jan. 1928), 109–10.

4 C. H. Herford, review of *WS*, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 July 1927.

5 Helen Waddell to G. G. Coulton, 24 Mar. 1934, Cambridge University Library MS Add. 10026/1.

the Queen's Professor of English against employing women ensured that after Mrs Waddell's death she had no teaching experience to offer as she competed with ex-servicemen for university posts. She eventually gave up hitting her head against a brick wall, embracing the role of independent scholar as she worked part-time for the publisher, Constable and Co.

'Effervescing enthusiasm' and 'scholarship without solemnity' could be damning indictments;[6] the fact that Waddell's brilliant analysis of the twelfth-century humanist, *Peter Abelard*, was cast as fiction, that so much of her success derived from translation made her less of a threat. Women had been allowed a place at the writing table as translators since the Middle Ages, as poets and novelists from the eighteenth century; neither role permitted them to make claims to serious learning. But the educational establishment could not dismiss her undoubted scholarship; several dons were genuinely impressed. F. M. Powicke, who had known her as an undergraduate and was soon to be installed as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, called *The Wandering Scholars* 'a remarkable, exciting, poignant, exasperating and unbalanced book', emphasizing that the terms he was using were deliberate and precise. Recognizing that she was an informed, if impetuous, scholar, he prophesized 'that she will have many readers, and that, though some of them may often want to shake her, all of them will wish to thank her.'[7]

The Wandering Scholars was followed by *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, highly acclaimed verse translations, in 1929; her novel, *Peter Abelard*, judged a masterpiece, followed in 1933. Prose translations from Latin, *Beasts and Saints* (1934) and *The Desert Fathers* (1936), were well received: 'Miss Waddell has scored again.'[8] But her success, and the invitations it generated to lecture here, there and everywhere, distracted her, as did her work for Constable's. Her obligations were multiplied during the Second World War, after which her memory began to fail, so that the second volume of Latin lyric translations was only published posthumously. Her career ended

6 'Theophilus', review of *WS*, *Irish Times* (28 June 1927); Winifred Holtby, review of *WS*, *Time and Tide* (5 Aug. 1927).

7 F. M. Powicke, review of *WS, Scottish Historical Review* 24/96 (July 1927), 298.

8 Grant Loomis, review of Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers*, *Speculum* 12/2 (Apr. 1937), 277.

with a public lecture, *Poetry in the Dark Ages* (1947). She received honorary DLitt degrees from the universities of Durham, St Andrews, Queen's, Belfast and Columbia; she was made an Associate of the Irish Academy of Letters and a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America.

Although in the ensuing decades her reputation was no longer what it had been in its heyday, her work continued to receive serious scrutiny. Étienne Gilson found *Peter Abelard* 'penetrating and [...] faithful to reality'; Helen Cam deemed it to convey 'the atmosphere of the Twelfth Century Renaissance better than most history books.'[9] As Charles Lock notes in this volume, E. R. Curtius, whose *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* continues to exert considerable influence, followed her lead if not her footsteps and recorded his admiration for what her works achieve.[10] When Waddell's *More Latin Lyrics* was published posthumously by Felicitas Corrigan in 1976, Peter Dronke maintained that her writing 'was able to convey much of the excitement, the profanities and the mystical heights' of the medieval Latin world 'with a vividness that purely scholarly works seldom attain.' However, he balanced his praise for the genius of her poetic insight and the authentic gold of her translations with a disapproving nod at what he deemed 'a certain lack of intellectual rigour'.[11]

The time is ripe for the reassessment of Helen Waddell's achievement, especially now that contemporary scholarship is catching up with her practice. Much translation criticism, for example, now eschews debating the merits of fidelity to the original versus the liberties taken by the translation. Dronke's standards required that the translator be 'so deeply attuned to a bygone work that he resolves to serve it to the utmost, making his language transparent to it, stripping away all mannerism and achieving a hard-won

9 Étienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, 1948, tr. L. K. Shook (London: Hollis and Carter, 1953), xii; Helen Maud Cam, *Historical Novels* (London: Historical Assocation), 1961), 12.

10 E. R. Curtius, 'The Medieval Bases of Western Thought', *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 1948, tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 597.

11 Peter Dronke, 'The Medieval Voice', review of *More Latin Lyrics, from Virgil to Milton*, ed. Felicitas Corrigan, *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 June 1977, 727.

directness.'[12] Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, claimed that 'the task of the translator [is] to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his recreation of that work.'[13] Modern translation studies avoids adjudicating between these two camps, focusing instead on the purpose of the translation, to whom it is addressed and how well it achieves its aim.[14] This approach would lead to a major reconsideration of Waddell's verse and prose translations. At the same time, feminist criticism understands her uneasy relationship with the academy as a product both of the masculine establishment's unacknowledged misogyny and her own ambivalence in the face of its demands. Failure to achieve a university post deprived her of intellectual status but also left her free to pursue idiosyncratic methodologies, as did other women scholars. As FitzGerald's 'Women, Love and Mime' published here shows, her experience of exclusion on the basis of gender predisposed her to embrace a humanism that was as inclusive as it was humane.

Critical theory has also shifted the goalposts, abjuring the unattainable disinterestedness of objectivity. Waddell was ahead of her time when in 1932 she acknowledged her own positionality as a researcher, describing *The Wandering Scholars* as the record of one reader's perceptions.[15] Today's academy no longer judges the imaginative intensity of her engagement with the medieval world as unprofessional. In this volume's 'Women Scholars and Early Twentieth-Century Medievalism', Louise Wasson surveys the perils of both 'presentism' and 'pastism', indicating some of the means employed by contemporary medievalists to negotiate between them and relating them to Waddell's practices. Waddell's empathy with her medieval

12 Ibid. Dronke's use of the masculine pronoun presumably does not preclude female translators, nor does Benjamin's (see next quotation).

13 Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', 1923, tr. Harry Zohn, in Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 82.

14 Peter France, 'Translation Studies and Translation Criticism', in Peter France, ed., *Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10.

15 Note to 6th edn, *WS* (London: Constable, 1958), vi.

subjects creates an intimate immediacy with the past; at the same time the literariness of her style keeps her grounded in the present time of writing. Amanda Tucker explores Waddell's 'transnational imaginary', while Norman Vance lays out the 'Christian humanism and cross-cultural, transhistorical romanticism' without which Waddell would hardly have donned the mantle of translator. This confidence is closely allied to the critical assumption, current in the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth, that literature expresses essential, universal experiences. Yet her writing invites postmodern readings, as evidenced by chapters by Stephen Kelly and Jennifer FitzGerald. The exuberant expressiveness of *The Wandering Scholars*, the scholarly sources integrated into *Peter Abelard*'s dialogue, the 'felicity' of *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*' 'audacities', all draw attention to the textuality of the text.[16] This is particularly true of *The Wandering Scholars*, an academic work which would be expected to offer transparent reasoning in order to convince readers of the validity of its thesis. Instead, FitzGerald's 'Reading (into) *The Wandering Scholars*' shows that Waddell's incongruous allusions impede the seamless absorption of ostensible content and suggest a postmodern destabilization of meaning, subverting the work's function as scholarship. Similarly, although Waddell's focus on the continuity of humanist individualism appears to coincide with the progressive historicism espoused by her contemporaries, Kelly's 'The Ghost of a Voice: Waddell's *Peter Abelard* between Benjamin and Collingwood' identifies her historiography as radically avant-garde. Postmodern historians have recognized the failure of history to bring the dead to life; indeed, the very writing of history destroys the experience it is meant to communicate. It was the perception of this failure that led Waddell, more than capable of producing an intellectual biography of Peter Abelard, to choose fiction as an alternative form of historical engagement. Her identification with the twelfth-century scholar generates a novel which does not reconstruct, but rather performatively re-experiences, the past.

The 2012 conference brought together international specialists who explored Waddell's oeuvre from a variety of perspectives: medievalist,

16 Review of *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics, Christian Science Monitor* (15 Feb. 1930).

literary, theological, historical, cultural and theoretical. Yet these differences were matched by a surprising thematic overlap: in a characteristically Waddellian manner, individual speakers found their own interpretations cross-fertilized by insights emanating from fellow-contributors in different fields. As a result of the dynamic nature of our joint enterprise, many of the chapters in this volume touch upon similar concerns from rewardingly different angles. For example, Waddell's humanism counters the 'inhumanity' imposed by the critical faculty of the inflexible scholar as well as the austerity of ascetic denial.[17] Charles Lock's 'Scholar of the Dark: Helen Waddell and the Middle Ages' explores Waddell's resistance to Germanic philology and the ideological positions it was put to serve as a 'false light' which replaces the true civilization of Latin – even pagan – learning. Amanda Tucker's 'Reviving Helen Waddell's Lost Decade: Ireland and the Transnational Imaginary' and Helen Carr's 'Wandering Poets and the Spirit of Romance in Helen Waddell and Ezra Pound' discuss Waddell's resistance to Irish cultural nationalism, based on the either/or dialectic of Gaelic or British, Catholic or Protestant. It was, of course, medieval humanism that became Waddell's special subject. Unpacking the tortuous evolution of *The Wandering Scholars*, FitzGerald's 'Women, Love and Mime' demonstrates the distinct steps that led from the irreconcilable antitheses of sin and salvation, flesh and spirit to Waddell's delight in the Neo-Platonic strain underpinning the twelfth-century Renaissance. According to Nini Rodgers's 'Helen Waddell and the Victorian Family', this fraught dichotomy was part of her inheritance; her books showed her readers, the children of Victorians, 'how to adapt, to renew the spiritual excitements and highs of evangelical certainty with a softer, enriched intellectual pleasure in a less certain age.'

Chapters by Louise Wasson, Constant J. Mews and Stephen Kelly bring divergent perspectives to Waddell's tendency to identify herself with her medieval subjects (and with women in ancient China, as David Burleigh shows). Wasson's 'Women Scholars and Early Twentieth-Century

17 Helen Waddell to George Pritchard Taylor, 15 Sept. 1915, Helen Waddell Papers held at Kilmacrew House, Banbridge, Co. Down, (hereafter WP), box 16.

Medievalism' contextualizes Waddell with other women medievalists of her time who also practise self-identification, comparing her in particular with Hope Emily Allen, whose biographical approach was criticized within the academy and who also combined scholarship with creative writing. Mews's 'Helen Waddell and Heloise: The Continuity of a Learned Tradition' demonstrates the personal experiences Waddell shared with the twelfth-century Heloise d'Argenteuil, scholar, abbess and lover of Peter Abelard, so that she continued to live out within herself 'the ceaseless questioning that burned within Heloise.' Other commonalities, however, led Waddell to empathize with Abelard himself and in particular with his concept of the Atonement (a matter also addressed in Vance's 'Writing Beyond Rome and Geneva'). The two identifications fuse productively as her novel penetrates, as few medievalists do, this theology of suffering and redemption, applying it to Heloise's anguish after her eventual rejection as a lover by the newly converted Abelard. Thus Waddell's affinities with Heloise and Abelard, as intellectual as they are emotional, inform her representations of medieval life and thought. Taking a different theoretical tack, for Kelly, as we have seen, Waddell's intense identification with Abelard impels her towards 'a peculiarly and powerfully philosophical form' of fiction which challenges the limitations of conventional historiography in which, to use Virginia Woolf's words cited by Helen Carr, 'life escapes'.

Waddell's signature subject of the medieval goliards and their songs seems especially fitting for an Irish scholar. Vagabondage was, as a ninth-century monk noted, 'a second nature to the Irish race'.[18] Ann Buckley's 'Wandering Scholars and Saintly Cults: The Liturgical Legacy' contextualizes *The Wandering Scholars*' reflections on the impact of the Irish *peregrini* with new findings on the medieval cult of Irish saints in continental Europe. Waddell's academic work confirmed her strong identification as Irish; although she resided in England from the age of thirty-one, she returned to Ireland several times a year. Home was her sister's farm, Kilmacrew House near Banbridge in Co. Down, but her roots there went much deeper than would at first appear. Her brother-in-law, Reverend

18 *WS*, 32.

J. D. Martin, was also her mother's first cousin; her mother had grown up on a farm just five miles away. Her maternal great-grandparents had lived only three miles from Kilmacrew. Her father's family also originated in the locality: as Nini Rodgers explains, the Waddell homeplace was the townland of Ouley, twelve miles south, a property Helen part-inherited in 1917. Her stepmother, her father's Waddell cousin, had lived in Ballygowan House near Banbridge, leaving it at the age of forty-eight, when she married and became the only mother the three-year-old Helen would remember. Ballygowan was also Helen's home: 'what is bred in the bone comes out in the prose,' she commented in 1934, 'and mine was bred in an old house in Down.'[19] Vance's 'Writing Beyond Rome and Geneva' details her family's religious heritage, including conservative seceding Presbyterians and politically liberal supporters of the United Irishmen. Nini Rodgers's chapter affords hitherto-unavailable insights into the Waddell family's experiences in Ireland, connecting the rural kitchen-comedies of Helen's brother Sam (the playwright Rutherford Mayne) with her early essays on Ballygowan House and allowing us to recognize in the high-spirited exploits of her elder brothers prototypes of those of her wandering scholars.

Yet despite the immediacy of these roots Waddell, as we have seen, resisted the call of Irish cultural nationalism. This was, in part, a question of generation: the movement Sam Waddell, ten years her senior, had joined was for the most part non-political and non-sectarian; everything changed with the Home Rule crisis of 1912, the violence of 1916, the War of Independence and the equally murderous conflict of post-Treaty Ulster. But if it was important to identify with Ireland, it was even more important to identify with a wider world which included Ireland. In one sense, suggests Carr, *The Wandering Scholars* could be read as an account of the cultural heritage which the Irish transmitted to the rest of Europe. Buckley's chapter on the liturgical legacy confirms this insight, drawing attention to the huge chant repertory in honour of Irish saints which Waddell would have relished. Lock's investigation of the role Ireland plays in Waddell's

19 Address at a Memorial Festival for Elgar and Holst, hosted by the Greg-y-nog Press, June 1934, WP, box 2.

symbolic imagination goes further: never part of the Roman Empire and therefore never heirs to the classics, the Irish did not need, as did the rest of Europe, to abjure paganism in order to adhere to Christianity. Encountering the Latin tradition as literary virgins, 'they [were] as it were converted by Virgil as much as by the Gospels.' Their fearless, sensitive handling of pagan literature gave back to the rest of Europe the feeling for classical culture which culminated in twelfth-century humanism. Irish references recur as essential markers throughout Waddell's works. Mews cites her assiduous investigations, locating an Irish prayer about Good Friday (published by Douglas Hyde in 1906) that encoded Abelard's paradox of how redemption can ensue from suffering; even more up-to-date is her quotation from the Bobbio missal with which *Peter Abelard* ends, published only in 1924. Robin Flower's now-famous translation of 'Pangur Bán' first entered the public domain in the pages of *The Wandering Scholars*.[20] Lock suggests that the latter's epigraph from the *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (in Irish, followed by Kuno Meyer's translation) would have intimated to the reader in the know that *The Wandering Scholars* could be regarded as a parody of scholarship, an interpretation which FitzGerald's 'Reading (into) *The Wandering Scholars*' would support.

Almost as important as was Ireland to her imagination was her Japanese childhood, only four years long but tingeing her memory with enchantment. 'The richest thing in my life has been Japan', she wrote, with the significant qualifier 'outside books'.[21] Japan was, in fact, also books, as David Burleigh has shown in his searching presentation of *Helen Waddell's Writings from Japan* (2005). The poet Walter de la Mare told her 'that he wished he could talk to a Chinese or a Japanese, because he might have a sudden revelation of another way of living.'[22] It was this insight, profound and sustained, emanating from Waddell's sense of belonging in two such different cultural environments that encouraged the transnational imagination which

20 *WS*, 31 and n.3; also v.

21 Waddell to Taylor [1917?], WP, box 17 (square brackets indicate dates derived from internal evidence).

22 Helen Waddell to Harold Rubinstein, 24 Feb. 1941, WP, box 2.

Amanda Tucker explores, exemplified in her fairy tales but characteristic of her whole oeuvre. Burleigh's 'Chinese Originals' in this volume provides the long-awaited analysis of her first publication, *Lyrics from the Chinese* (1913), contextualizing her poems with their immediate source, James Legge's translations from Chinese, as well as with her own manuscript drafts. Burleigh examines how she selects, compresses, modifies, conflates and creates her own independent compositions. Paralleling her practice with that of her exact contemporary, Arthur Waley, who was simultaneously translating poetry from the Chinese and Japanese (whose work she reviewed and quoted enthusiastically), highlights revealing correspondences and divergences. Vance's 'Presbyterian Medievalist' also draws attention to how Waddell's Chinese lyrics respond to the visual images and situations she encountered in Legge, leading seamlessly to the poems of another translator/adaptor, Ezra Pound. The lyrical congruence uncovered by 'Wandering Poets and the Spirit of Romance in Helen Waddell and Ezra Pound' leads Helen Carr to propose Waddell as an Irish Imagist, along with her brother's brother-in-law, Joseph Campbell. Waddell's and Pound's shared medieval interests and practices are even more striking, throwing new light on the achievement of each. These chapters prove Waddell's unusual ability to identify imaginatively across centuries and continents, a 'double life' that allowed her, for example, to feel Irish even as she made the most of the English literary heritage.[23]

Despite the immediacy of her connection with place, in the preface to *The Wandering Scholars* Waddell identified herself as a *vagans* [wanderer]. Lately a 'travelling fellow' in Paris, practising 'the eternal beggary of scholarship' (on publication, she was still without stable employment), she felt an affinity with her medieval counterparts.[24] Having spent her youth 'beat[ing] against the bars' of her captivity in Belfast,[25] she looked outwards. Tucker and Carr discern in the appeal of 'the romance of wandering' Waddell's

23 Ibid.

24 *WS*, v; Helen Waddell, 'Scholares Vagantes', *The Heritage: published on behalf of the four Women's Colleges in Oxford* 14 (Jan. 1925), 2.

25 Helen Waddell to George Saintsbury, 3 Apr. 1921, Helen Waddell Papers, Queen's University Belfast Library, uncatalogued.

reaction to the stifling stagnancy of her Belfast years. Carr emphasizes Waddell's openness to life, so palpably communicated by foregrounding the domestic intimacies and personal emotions of her medieval characters. It was also an intellectual quest, priming her to disregard the limitations of the erudition she nevertheless valued and respected. She set her sights instead on 'the incommunicable gift, incommunicable in mere scholarship', bypassing conventional reasoning by doing rather than telling.[26] This explains her decision to compose creatively, her lyric translations and her choice of fiction, but Lock's chapter shows how even the learned thesis of *The Wandering Scholars* works by indirection rather than by ostensible argument, its rationale lying implicit under the surface of her narrative. No wonder it disconcerted its academic audience who did not expect to apply reading strategies appropriate for literature to a scholarly text. The natural imagery which appears in the poems she is discussing fertilizes her commentary, to the point that she portrays the Roman empire not as monument but as river, not as politics but as poetry.

Yet it would be foolish to underestimate Waddell's contribution to learning. Mews argues that her work opened up the tension between secular and religious elements in the Latin literary culture of the Middle Ages. Lock shows how, by sidestepping (rather than openly challenging) Germanist philology and the worldview which followed in its wake, she tacitly championed Roman law and 'civilization', part of a movement which would bring about 'a revision and a revisioning of all European history'; her fellow-travellers would be scholars of the ilk of Marc Bloch and E. R. Curtius. Kelly points to her deliberate decision to avoid 'the shortcomings of contemporary practices of historical representation'. The company she kept suggests that, in these ways at least, she belongs at the vanguard of scholarship.

The essays in this collection prove the equal relevance of Peter Abelard's theology and of Ezra Pound's Modernist poetic to the work of Helen Waddell, testifying as much to her proficiency in medieval Latin as they do to her reconfiguration (at a remove) of Chinese lyrics thousands of

26 *WS*, 36.

years old. It took an international conference to assemble the array of expertise that could attempt to reassess this range of accomplishments. This volume is an impressive homage to that achievement but it is only the beginning. John Scattergood has initiated the long-overdue appraisal of her verse translations in his introduction to the re-issue of *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* but a comprehensive analysis, including the sparer and graver corpus of posthumously published poems, *More Latin Lyrics*, is required.[27] The proposed annotated edition of *Peter Abelard* would reveal how thoroughly steeped it is in twelfth-century philosophy, theology, history and learning, an indispensable aid to critics attempting to evaluate it as an early example of historical fiction founded on serious scholarship, which, it seems, particularly attracted women novelists. Another area ripe for research is Waddell's relation to music: she was intensely aware that 'lyrics in the Middle Ages were made to be sung, not to be read' and hoped to edit the Benedictbeuern manuscript with facsimiles of the musical score.[28] Her focus was on the secular but her interest in liturgy and sacred music is well attested. She would have responded with alacrity to contemporary studies in medieval musicology which suggest that the melodies as well as the themes of the *Carmina Burana* and the *Cambridge Songs* cross all perceived boundaries.[29] We await the critic who would assess the impact of her poetry, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* and *Lyrics from the Chinese*, on the fifty or so twentieth-century composers who set them to music. Among these, as Vance points out, are Gustav Holst's comic opera, *The Wandering Scholar* (Op. 50, 1929–30), based on an incident in her book and Herbert Howells's rendition of her translation of Prudentius, 'Take him, earth, for cherishing', commissioned for the memorial service for John F. Kennedy in Washington, DC. Work has yet to be done on Waddell's impact on the medievalists of later generations, those such as Ann Buckley whom she has inspired to pursue hitherto under-researched topics. Finally, her abilities as

27 John Scattergood, introduction to *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), v–xxxviii.

28 Preface to *WS*, 1932, vii; Waddell to Lynda Grier, 26 Feb. 1924, Waddell Papers held at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

29 Thanks to Ann Buckley for this information.

a scholar will not be properly weighed until her critical, as distinguished from historical, practice is scrutinized in the context of the development of English studies as a discipline. FitzGerald's intellectual biography, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke: Irishwomen, Friends and Scholars*, suggests that her careful attention to the function of language in literature puts her at the forefront of an emerging generation of literary critics but more detailed comparisons are required.[30] A study of pre-Woolfian feminist literary criticism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would contextualize her unfinished 'Woman in the Drama before Shakespeare' (included as an appendix in *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*), allowing us to evaluate its nuanced subtleties in the light of the critical practice of the feminist academics who were her contemporaries.[31]

This volume's appendix publishes a work-in-progress, a bibliography of Waddell's known publications, reviews of her work and also of contemporary criticism to aid and inspire further research. The compiler thanks Norman Vance and Helen Carr and Edward Di Bella of the Inter-Library Loan department of the Malcolm A. Love Library at San Diego State University for assistance. It is to be hoped that material still in manuscript, especially 'Discipline', the marriage-problem novel she co-authored with Maude Clarke in 1916, will soon be published. Anyone who has read excerpts from Waddell's letters is anxious for a select edition from the vast corpus that survives; she may one day join Heloise in the ranks of women celebrated for the epistolary art.

This book owes significant debts to its progenitors. The conference which generated most of the chapters was the brain-child of John Scattergood of Trinity College Dublin in conversation with Karen Hodder

30 Jennifer FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke: Irishwomen, Friends and Scholars* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), 58–9.

31 This has begun: see Ina Schabert, 'A Double-voiced Discourse: Shakespeare Studies by Women in the Early 20th century', in Miriam Kauko, Sylvia Mieszkowski and Alexandra Tischel eds, *Gendered Academia: Wissenschaft und Geschlechterdifferenz 1890–1945* (Munich: Wallstein, 2005), 255–77. Schabert could not, of course, analyse Waddell's 'Woman in the Drama before Shakespeare', which in 2005 was still unpublished.

of the University of York. They were convinced that the host should be Helen Waddell's alma mater, Queen's University Belfast. It was midwifed by Mary O'Dowd, Professor of Gender History at Queen's, who undertook the entire burden of bringing the conference about. Without her selfless generosity this volume would never have come into existence. The editor is grateful to the Department of Women's Studies at San Diego State University for providing an intellectual home and to Laura Emery, Dorothea Kehler, Sherry Little, Jeanie Moore and Jeanette Shumaker for fruitful feedback; likewise to Christabel Sciafe of Peter Lang for her kind support.

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The Waddell community has for many years been beholden to the Benedictine community at Stanbrook Abbey, custodians of a large corpus of Waddell manuscripts. The late Dame Felicitas Corrigan and latterly, over many years, Sister Philippa Edwards always made scholars welcome, facilitating their work both on-site and at a distance. In 2002 Susan Rankin and David Ganz prepared a Handlist of the Waddell Papers held at Stanbrook which has greatly facilitated research. We are most deeply obliged to the late Mollie Martin, Helen Waddell's niece, and Louise Anson, Helen Waddell's great-great-niece, inheritors of Kilmacrew House, whose unstinting assistance to every Waddell scholar has encouraged his or her investigations. When Stanbrook Abbey moved from Worcester to York in 2009, Louise Anson repatriated the Waddell Papers to Kilmacrew, and now welcomes researchers to what Helen Waddell called 'the kindest house I know, and the most human, a kind of hearth of the world', offering them the generous

hospitality so typical of Waddell.[32] For this reason we dedicate this book to Louise Anson and to the memory of Mollie Martin, in gratitude.

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32 Helen Waddell to Margaret Martin, [5 Jan. 1931], WP, box 11.

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Medieval Contexts

CONSTANT J. MEWS

1 Helen Waddell and Heloise: The Continuity of a Learned Tradition

Helen Waddell (1889–1965) and Heloise (*c.* 1095–1164) shared much in common.[1] They were both educated women, gifted with an acute literary sensibility. Neither could easily find their way in a world in which academic opportunities were largely controlled by men. They both channelled their love of words into the writing of letters. They were also both fascinated by the experience of love, in particular, it has to be said, for older men. Perhaps this was a consequence of their both being deprived at an early age of parental love. Before I explore shared themes in their writing, it might be helpful to consider the rather unusual childhoods shared by both women. Neither Heloise nor Helen Waddell benefited from the nurturing support of parents. Both women had to find sustenance elsewhere, through the solace of literature and complex relationships with older men. Through Waddell's writings, above all *The Wandering Scholars*, first published in 1927, and her novel *Peter Abelard*, first published in 1933 and reprinted many times subsequently (most recently in 1987), she demonstrated that not only was she an accomplished medievalist, but could make figures from the past express ideas that she felt were of continuing relevance. While she

1 These themes have already been raised by Jennifer FitzGerald, 'Helen Waddell (1889–1964): The Scholar Poet', in Jane Chance, ed., *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 323–38, esp. 326–8. See also FitzGerald, '"Jazzing the Middle Ages": The Feminist Genesis of Helen Waddell's *The Wandering Scholars*', *Irish Studies Review* 8/1 (April 2000), 5–22 and '"Truth's Martyr or Love's Martyr": Helen Waddell's *Peter Abelard*', *Colby Quarterly* 36/2 (June 2000), 176–87. I am indebted to FitzGerald for discussion of a number of themes in this paper.

identified with many of the intellectual concerns of Abelard, the power of that novel takes its strength from the sense of identity she felt between herself and an unusually articulate woman of the twelfth century. Waddell never completed the two companion volumes she once envisaged (*Heloise* and *Death of a Heretic*), or the monograph she hoped to write on John of Salisbury, the great Christian humanist of the twelfth century. Yet *Peter Abelard* is a remarkable imaginative effort – attesting not just to her great capacity to understand a wide range of historical and theological texts, but to her sense that she was still living out the ceaseless questioning that burned within Heloise.[2]

We know more about Helen Waddell's background than we do about that of Heloise. She was born in Japan in 1889, as the youngest of ten children of a rather unusual missionary family. She lost her mother, Jenny Waddell (née Martin), in 1892, when she was just three, leading to her being brought up by a stepmother, Martha (her father's cousin), with whom Helen was never fully at ease. Helen's father, the amazingly erudite and otherworldly Reverend Hugh Waddell, a missionary to Japan, died in 1901 when she was just twelve years old. This deprived Helen of a deep well of emotional support that she had to find elsewhere, both in books and older men. Like Heloise, she found that love did not come easily.

There was also a profound intellectual connection between the two women in that both were obliged to carve out a career outside an overwhelmingly male academy. As a daughter of the manse, Helen Waddell was steeped in knowledge of the Bible and a sense of the demands of eternity, yet she always had a poetic fascination with the natural world and the insights of non-Christian culture, whether Chinese or Japanese, traditional Irish or simply the legacy of Greco-Roman pagan antiquity within the medieval world. Like Heloise, Helen Waddell took many years to work out her own way of drawing together the different voices of wisdom she encountered,

2 References are to *Peter Abelard* (1933; London: Reprint Society, 1950). Excerpts from Helen Waddell's unpublished monograph, *John of Salisbury*, were included in Felicitas Corrigan, ed., *Between Two Eternities: A Helen Waddell Anthology* (London: SPCK, 1993), 149–51.

whether from the East, the Bible, or simply the power of reason, inherited from the Greeks. She moved from her initial training in English literature to discover the rich subsoil of Latin lyric, developing (as Norman Vance has rightly observed) a vision of European literature 'from Boethius to Baudelaire, from Virgil to Yeats'.[3] While she avoided direct engagement in issues of Irish national identity, so important in her early years as a student at Queen's University Belfast, she saw herself, I suggest, in a very Irish tradition of wandering scholars, learned in Latin, who helped shape the European imagination. Abelard, born to a Breton speaking mother, had a Celtic element to his identity that appealed to her. She was fascinated by the drama of Abelard and Heloise, not just because it was a powerful love story, but because it involved an intellectual conflict that she struggled to resolve within herself, between awareness of the demands of a strict, biblically based religion, and the freedom of a poetic imagination. Many readers of Abelard's autobiography, the *Historia calamitatum*, perceive him to be rather bumptious and self-centred in the detached way he speaks about his relationship with Heloise, as a lustful episode from which he was freed by the hand of fate, in his eyes the working of providence. Helen Waddell sought to go beyond that caricature, to find the questing spirit that had so fascinated Heloise.

Helen Waddell became an undergraduate at the newly reconstituted Queen's University at Belfast in 1908, just as the literary canon of the English establishment was being challenged in Dublin by the efforts of Irish language enthusiasts like Douglas Hyde (1860–1949), subsequently President of Ireland. Her educational trajectory took a different route, initially being more Anglophile in her decision to study English literature. She sought out as mentors a series of older men, Gregory Smith (1865–1932), the Balliol-educated Professor of English at Queen's, and Smith's own friend and mentor, George Saintsbury (1845–1933), Professor at Edinburgh until

3 Norman Vance, 'Helen Waddell: Presbyterian Medievalist', reprinted in this volume, 147–71; see also Norman Vance, '*Helen Waddell and Literary Europe*', in Alvin Jackson and David N. Livingstone, eds, *Queen's Thinkers: Essays on the Intellectual Heritage of a University* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2008), 69–82.

1915. Yet the figure who really took the place of her father was Dr George Taylor, a missionary in India, who effectively adopted her as a de facto daughter on a visit to Belfast in 1914, to whom she wrote every week (even through the vagaries of a world war) until his death in India in 1920. From the excerpts quoted by Corrigan in her biography, it is evident that these letters, as well as those to her many other friends, constitute a rich literary treasure, deserving to be published in their own right.[4]

Helen Waddell recalled that she first conceived of writing about Abelard and Heloise as an undergraduate, in 1913, perhaps as early as 1908–11.[5] Their letters, which she had discovered as a student, prompted her to learn more about Abelard's theology from the writing of Robert Moberly in around 1917.[6] In 1918 she and Maude Clarke were 'thinking vaguely of a collaboration in the letters of Héloise and Abelard – translation and preface: perhaps this summer.'[7] At the same time, she started to move beyond these letters to explore the rich subsoil of medieval Latin literature, then still relatively little known. In 1921, the celebrated Irish novelist George Moore (1852–1933) published a novel, *Héloise and Abélard* that attracted wide notice, prompting Scott Moncrieff to produce a new translation of

4 Felicitas Corrigan, *Helen Waddell: A Biography* (London: Gollancz, 1986).

5 In 1933 Waddell recalled that it was in 1913 that she first decided to write a book on Abelard ('Medieval Sojourn', *Wings* 7/10 [Oct. 1933], 7–9, 25); yet she says that it started when she was an undergraduate, according to a letter of 1936 to Arundell Esdaile (quoted in Corrigan, *Helen Waddell*, 273). See also references in letters recorded by William Rothenstein, *Since Fifty: Men and Memories, 1922–1939* (London: Faber, 1939), 117–23.

6 In a letter to R. O. P. Taylor, responding to his article, 'Was Abelard an Exemplarist?', *Theology* 31 (1935), 207–13, dated 17 Oct. 1935, Waddell records that: 'It was the generous yet critical account of Abelard's theory in Moberly's *Atonement and Personality* that first sent me, twenty years ago, to Abelard's Theology' (Helen Waddell Papers held at Kilmacrew House, Banbridge, Co. Down, box 2). A third edition of Robert Campbell Moberly, *Atonement and Personality* (1901; London: J. Murray, 1917) may be the edition to which she is referring. I am grateful to Jennifer FitzGerald for alerting me to this letter, which discusses the superiority of the Victor Cousin edition of Abelard's text over that reprinted by Migne in the *Patrologia Latina*.

7 Waddell to George Saintsbury, 13 Mar. 1918, Queen's University Library, uncatalogued (reference kindly supplied by Jennifer FitzGerald).