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Anglo-Latin's Scholarly Colleagues: Editing the Oxford Medieval Texts

ELAINE E. WHITAKER

The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery. Diana Greenway and Leslie Watkiss, ed. and trans. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. lxxiv + 219 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-1982-0330-6.

The *Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* contains at least two stories. The overt story is of marginalized medieval monks trying to secure their assets. This story—told in Latin with a translation on facing pages, normalized spelling, and twentieth-century punctuation—makes a lively read for anyone interested in human behavior. It concerns a twelfth-century nobleman who founds an abbey using some of his least promising land, subsequently gets himself excommunicated and then killed in a pique over injustices done to him, and is succeeded by an array of kin, including a presumed bastard (Geoffrey fitz Peter), who allegedly subtract rather than add to the prestige of the abbey. A heroic though not flawless prior appeals surreptitiously to the king, securing Walden's status as a monastery rather than an abbey and also securing the wrath of the remaining kin of the founder. All this information comes to us in the voice of someone who seems as familiar with these events as the biblical author was with David's conduct toward Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite.

The covert story is of late-twentieth-century scholars striving to transmit Anglo-Latin texts in scholarly editions and translations. The Oxford Medieval Texts series, the continuation of Nelson's Medieval Texts, specializes in the publication of documents that both students and scholars need. As Barbara Harvey wrote for Oxford University Press's web site, "a stated aim of the series [is] to publish 'Latin texts pertinent to the cultural history of medieval Europe.'" In doing so, Oxford Medieval Texts recognizes that some members of its target audience lack

facility with the languages of the Middle Ages. As a result of the hybrid audience, volumes such as *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* simultaneously contain too much and too little for an individual reader. For example, readers of Medieval Latin may find Leslie Watkiss's description of the author's style obvious. At the same time, anyone reading only the facing-page translation will benefit from this same description. For me, expanded access to the physical evidence—two late-sixteenth-century transcriptions of a document apparently composed no earlier than the last decade of the twelfth century—would have been useful. The materials Greenway and Watkiss have furnished on pages lxvii–lxxiii are tantalizing.

More important than quibbles about the desire for thorough bibliographical description is appreciation for the teamwork that has produced *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery*. I found this part of the covert story as fascinating and considerably more praiseworthy than the machinations of the medieval monks whose efforts the editors have preserved. Evidence of the activities of Oxford Medieval Texts' editors suggests that their achievements occur over time and within a context of collegial trust and probably friendship. This evidence begins in *Walden Monastery's* preface, jointly written by Greenway and Watkiss. After crediting a third scholar, now deceased, with inspiring Watkiss to begin the process of editing and translation, they describe how Watkiss brought his efforts to the general editors of Oxford Medieval Texts in 1989 and then concurred with the editors that Greenway should become his "collaborating historian" (v).

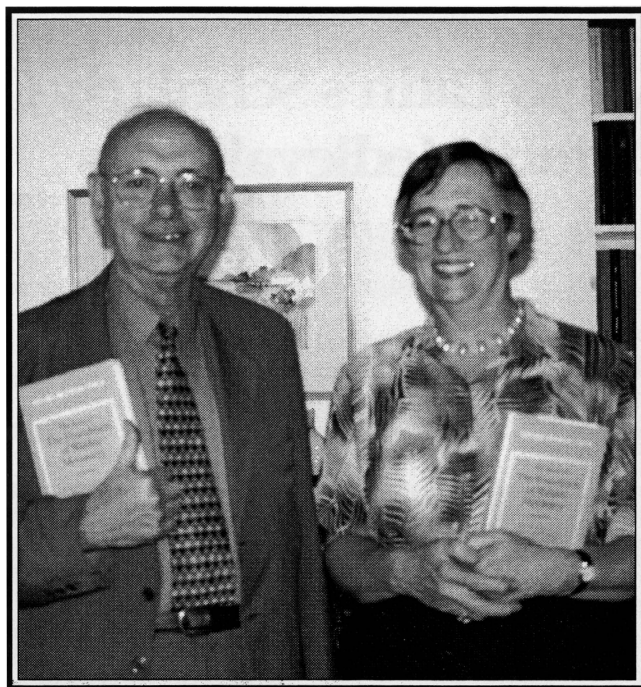
At that point, Diana Greenway would have finished co-editing Jocelin's *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds* but would not yet have completed her edition and translation of the *Historia Anglorum*, a scholarly labor that exceeds nine hundred pages. Begun in 1978, the *Historia Anglorum* reached the Oxford Medieval Texts' shelf list in 1996. It includes an extraordinarily helpful description of forty-five important manuscripts and an excellent explanation of their collation. Furthermore, Greenway takes exception to one aspect of Oxford

Robert R. Raymo and Elaine E. Whitaker's edition of Stephen Scrope's *The Mirroure of the Worlde* (with Ruth E. Sternglantz) is forthcoming from The Medieval Academy of America. Whitaker is an associate professor of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she is eew@uab.edu.

Medieval Texts' editorial practices, giving her rationale as the need to maintain the character of the copytext (clxiv). In addition to dedicating her edition of *Historia Anglorum* to Christopher Brooke, Greenway expresses appreciation for twenty-nine individuals, together with "the Fellows and students" of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and "my colleagues and students" at the Library of the Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London, in her preface. The latter receive praise for their "wisdom and good humour" (vii). Time, friendships, and a deeply scholarly respect for the past have yielded excellent results. It is a pattern already well established by Greenway in her role as one of two "correctors" of Johnson's edition and translation of Richard fitz Nigel for Oxford Medieval Texts, where she had become a general editor in 1975.

Like Greenway, Leslie Watkiss has edited multiple Latin texts. In the introduction to one of these (Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum*, an edition prepared for students in the sixth form through those at university), Watkiss acknowledges helpful published scholarship dating from 1881 through 1964 but appears to be working in isolation. He is a former Head of Classics at the Royal Liberty School, Romford, and was resident at Waltham Abbey when he completed the preface for Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum*. In his subsequent connection with Oxford Medieval Texts, Watkiss has worked in various partnerships. At present, he is one of three collaborators preparing Thomas Walsingham's *Chronica Maiora* (Harvey, www.oup). With Marjorie Chibnall, he previously edited *The Waltham Chronicle*. The preface of *The Waltham Chronicle* tells a story similar to that behind the edition and translation of *Walden Monastery*, with Watkiss beginning alone, having the project recommended to Oxford Medieval Texts, then receiving a partner. Again, the general editors—at that time, Diana Greenway, Barbara Harvey, and Michael Lapidge—and other professional friends made generous scholarly contributions that demonstrate the respect of all concerned for the proper transmission of Anglo-Latin documents.

The year 2000 may be crucial for Oxford Medieval Texts, as Barbara Harvey has passed her general editorship on to one of her students, John Blair (Gelling, e-mail forwarded by Mastromarino). His understanding of his inheritance seems clear, however, from the introduction to Harvey's festschrift, which Blair and Brian Golding edited. To this festschrift, the late Jennifer Loach contributed a sketch of Barbara Harvey that concluded with praise for her "conscientiousness," "industry," "great modesty," "integrity," and "sense of fun" (3). I reprint this lavish and specific praise for Barbara Harvey because I



Leslie Watkiss and Diana Greenway, editors of *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery*.

suspect it can be applied in whole or in part to the editors of *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* and to their other colleagues. Perusing the pages of *Walden Monastery*, one feels as if a colleague has just called attention to something unexpected yet crucial to an understanding of the Middle Ages. As Mildred Leake Day, an independent scholar and friend whose assessment of *Walden Monastery* I sought, put it, "One quick note: on page 67, the king's justiciar is called upon to settle rival claims between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. He calls for twelve knights to hear the case—one of the very earliest examples of Henry II's innovation of calling a jury to make a just decision. That single paragraph was worth reading the entire manuscript."

Returning to a consideration of the editorial practices of *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* and of Oxford Medieval Texts generally, one might ask, "What's a fellow to do when only a handful of folks understand and/or value his work?" In his preface to Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum*, Leslie Watkiss writes of "the decline in the regard for Latin in the school curriculum over the last few decades" (v). Rumor has it, furthermore, that those attracted to Medieval Latin are more marginalized than classical scholars are. As Winnie the Pooh might have put it, Latin is not as "thingish" as it once was. Nevertheless, I consider my own lack of decent Latin reprehensible and, therefore, greet these normalized texts and modern trans-

lations with respect and gratitude. I defer here to Mildred Leake Day, who specializes in Anglo-Latin Arthurian materials. Commenting on the quality of the translation, she writes: "I have only the highest compliments to give this edition/translation. The English prose is phrase by phrase, and yet avoids the stiffness that careful Latin reading will produce. The rhetoric and sentence structure are much like that of the Latin of the Gawain story that I worked with (not surprising since the period of the two works is similar)." In other words, the editors have fulfilled their own objective "to produce a translation which, though strictly faithful to the Latin text, is at the same time true to modern idiom, and therefore, it is hoped, will be read with ease" (lxxiii).

The editors of Oxford Medieval Texts have probably rightly concluded that the preponderance of their readers are not too concerned with statements about abbreviations, word division, capitalization, or punctuation in the copy text. Almost all these interesting matters are subsumed in *Walden Monastery* to the statement that the guidelines for the series have been followed. Like milk for the sixth-form student, the edition is homogenized for easy digestion. It is an understandably pragmatic decision but one that leaves documentary editors wishing to ask questions over tea. Though taking tea with the Press was impractical, Mark Mastromarino, review editor for *Documentary Editing*, kindly made inquiries on my behalf.

A clause from Loach's tribute to Barbara Harvey may apply to Oxford Medieval Texts' editorial practices as well: "it will surely be the financial accounts that reveal most" (3). Typographically indicating textual detail rather than normalizing a text has financial consequences either for the scholar or the press, apart from whatever effect it may have on casual readers. In addition, for the editors of *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* to have included a plate of a manuscript page—a practice that provides some of the information that interests textual scholars—would have added to production costs. Although some Oxford Medieval Texts' editions do include such plates, in the case of *Walden Monastery*, the lateness of the surviving documents is sufficient reason to exclude them. In fact, the editors are to be commended for their ability to read sixteenth-century hands and also to grasp twelfth-century manorial history; they need not be faulted for excluding illustration of their copy text (London, British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian E. vi, folios 25r-71v). Documentary editors might, however, give thought to the ways in which information about acts of documentary editing can be exchanged among those who believe it is important to know such things.

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Diana Hadley Honored

Diana W. Hadley, of the Documentary Relations of the Southwest, has been given the Alene Dunlap Smith Award by the Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission. The award was given to honor Hadley's years of leadership in historic preservation in Arizona.

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