

An Annotated Edition  
of Helen Waddell's  
*Peter Abelard*

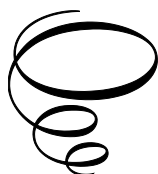


An Annotated Edition  
of Helen Waddell's  
*Peter Abelard*

Edited by

Jennifer FitzGerald  
and Constant J. Mews

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



An Annotated Edition of Helen Waddell's *Peter Abelard*

Edited by Jennifer FitzGerald and Constant J. Mews

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by the estate of Helen Waddell

Copyright © 2022 by Jennifer FitzGerald and Constant J. Mews

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8277-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8277-4

For Steve Day and Maryna Mews



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note on Cover Image.....	ix
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Abbreviations .....	xiii
Introduction .....	xv
<b>Book I: The Cloister of Notre Dame</b>	
Chapter 1 .....	4
Chapter 2 .....	9
Chapter 3 .....	14
Chapter 4 .....	20
Chapter 5 .....	29
Chapter 6 .....	53
Chapter 7 .....	65
<b>Book II: Brittany</b>	
Chapter 1 .....	72
Chapter 2 .....	82
Chapter 3 .....	88
Chapter 4 .....	96

**Book III: Paris**

Chapter 1 .....	110
Chapter 2 .....	119
Chapter 3 .....	129
Chapter 4 .....	142

**Book IV: The Paraclete**

Chapter 1 .....	148
Chapter 2 .....	162
Chapter 3 .....	176
Annotations .....	184
Helen Waddell and <i>Peter Abelard</i> : Further Texts .....	272
Postscript: Abelard and Heloise in Recent Research .....	296
Bibliography .....	316
Index .....	340
Biblical Quotations and Allusions .....	368



## NOTE ON COVER IMAGE

The book cover features Andrea Izzotti's photograph of Heloise and Abelard's tomb in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

This tomb, constructed by Alexandre Lenoir between 1801 and 1817, contains the couple's remains. Abelard died and was buried in 1142 in the priory of Saint-Marcel, Chalon-sur-Saône. At his request, his body was transferred to the Abbey of Paraclete, which he had founded and of which Heloise was Abbess. When she died in 1163/4, at her request she was buried in his grave. Later abbesses re-interred the bodies; the final tomb, constructed in 1779, was destroyed during the French Revolution. The bones of Heloise and Abelard were transferred to the church of Saint-Laurent, Nogent-sur-Seine.

Lenoir bought the publicly authenticated bones in 1800 and transported them to Paris, laying them to rest in the Jardin Elysée of the Musée des Monuments Français where he had interred the bodies of great French leaders and intellectuals. Focusing on the lovers' tragic romance (as interpreted by Charles-Pierre Colardeau's *Lettre d'Héloïse à Abailard* [1756]), he aimed to construct a memorial which would inspire visitors to sentimental and melancholic reflection. Abelard's effigy had been rescued from his original resting-place in Saint-Marcel; Heloise was represented by a decapitated fourteenth-century statue, a new head sculpted from the plaster cast of the real Heloise's skull. Medieval fragments, modelled on the couple's historical tombs, were incorporated into the sarcophagus. Two sixteenth-century medallions, rescued from a house within the cathedral close of Notre Dame, believed to belong to Heloise's uncle Fulbert, were repurposed as representations of Abelard and Heloise. The canopy's arches are *spoglia* from the Abbey church of Saint-Denis.

Lenoir's tomb does not claim historical authenticity; it is instead "a historicizing but fundamentally creative work."<sup>1</sup> The analogy with Waddell's *Peter Abelard*, incorporating quotations from original sources into a work of art which revisions the recorded past, is compelling. Both

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary B. Shepard, "A Tomb for Abelard and Heloise", *Romance Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2007):29-42, at 29. This note is based on Shepard's analysis. Thanks to Lorraine Daston for suggesting the analogy between Lenoir's medievalism and Waddell's.

are post-medieval recreations of twelfth-century events, interpreted through the sensibility of the creator's time and determined by the assumptions of that later culture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edition could not have come into being without the generosity of Louise Anson, copyright holder of Helen Waddell's literary estate, to whom we are deeply indebted. We are especially grateful for her unstinting assistance during complicated negotiations. David Burleigh first suggested this annotated edition; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, Nadia Margolis and Diana Wallace incur our gratitude for the support and practical help they provided. Many thanks too to Giulia Boitani, Bruce Holsinger, Stephen Kelly, Mícheál Ó Mainnín, Matthew Townend and Norman Vance for help along the way. It is with great sadness that we remember the encouragement of the late Michael Clanchy and the late Angus J. Kennedy.

The Benedictine community at Stanbrook Abbey, now at Wass, Yorkshire, performed great service in archiving Helen Waddell's papers. Over the years the kind co-operation of Sister Philippa Edwards has been crucial to many a publication. Louise Anson returned these papers to her home and the home of Waddell's heart, Kilmacrew House, Banbridge, County Down, where she welcomes researchers. We thank Deirdre Wildy of the Queen's University Belfast Library for permission to quote from the Helen Waddell Papers, and her colleagues Susan Kirkpatrick and Bronagh McCrudden for their contribution. The Inter-Library Loan staff at San Diego State University Library and the staff at the Cardiff-by-the-Sea branch of the San Diego County Library have been generous with time and expertise. We acknowledge the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, the Special Collections and Western Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, the Houghton Library and the University Archives of Harvard University, the Henry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland and Louise Anson at Kilmacrew House, County Down for permission to quote from unpublished papers in their custody. We also wish to thank Adam Rummens, our editor at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, for his tireless patience and kindness through protracted negotiations.

We extend particular thanks to Brenda Cook, Frédéric Lefebvre-Naré, Gillian Russell and John Thompson. Lorraine Daston, Maureen McNeil and Gianna Pomata, Laura Emery, Dorothea Kehler, Jeanie Moore and Jeanette Shumaker, Felicity, Joan and Ruth FitzGerald cheered on this project over a protracted gestation.

Without Steve Day this book would not have seen the light of day, for which endless gratitude: not only for coming to the rescue with invaluable software skills but for loving encouragement from beginning to end.

### **Bibliographical Note**

An effort has been made to refer both to the most recent critical editions of primary texts, as well as to those accessible to Helen Waddell. In the case of the letters of Abelard and Heloise, the *Historia calamitatum* is identified as *Ep.* 1, with the remaining letters as *Ep.* 2-8, as distinct from Abelard's *Rule* or *Institutio* for the Paraclete. This follows the practice of David Luscombe in his edition, *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise* (2013), which incorporates a translation based on that of Betty Radice (first published in 1974). This translation is used, unless otherwise indicated. Other translations throughout the volume, unless otherwise indicated, are our own. FitzGerald and Mews are jointly responsible for the Introduction and Annotations to the novel, with FitzGerald responsible for the Further Texts, and Mews for the Postscript.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<i>Comm. Rom.</i>	Peter Abelard, <i>Commentaria in Epistolam S. Pauli ad Romanos</i> , ed. Eligius M. Buytaert, <i>Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica</i> 1, CCCM 11. Turnhout: Brepols, 1969.
Cousin	<i>Petri Abaelardi Opera</i> , ed. Victor Cousin, with C. Jourdain and E. Despois, 2 vols. Paris: A. Durand, 1849, 1859.
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latina
Luscombe	<i>The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise</i> , ed. David E. Luscombe, trans. Betty Radice, rev. David E. Luscombe. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013.
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica.
<i>MLL</i>	Helen Waddell, <i>Mediaeval Latin Lyrics</i> , 1929, 5 <sup>th</sup> edn. London: Constable, 1948.
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris: Garnier, 1857–66.
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris: Garnier, 1841–55.
<i>Recueil</i>	<i>Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France</i> , ed. Martin Bouquet et al., rev. ed. Léopold Delisle, 24 vols. Paris: various publishers, 1738–1904.
<i>SN</i>	<i>Peter Abailard. Sic et Non</i> , ed. B. Boyer and R. McKeon. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976–7.

- TChr* *Theologia Christiana*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert. Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica 2, CCCM 12. Turnhout: Brepols, 1969.
- TSch* *Theologia “Scholarium”*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert and Constant J. Mews. Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica 2, CCCM 13. Turnhout: Brepols, 1987.
- TSum* *Theologia “Summi boni”*, ed. Eligius d M. Buytaert and Constant J. Mews. Petri Abaelardi Opera theologica 2, CCCM 13. Turnhout: Brepols, 1987.
- WP Helen Waddell Papers held at Kilmacrew House, Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland.
- WS Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, 2nd edn. London: Constable, August 1927.

## INTRODUCTION

The seeds of *Peter Abelard*, published on 18 May 1933, were sown about twenty-five years earlier when Helen Waddell first read the letters of Abelard and Heloise as an undergraduate at Queen's University Belfast.<sup>1</sup> Written in Latin in the twelfth century, they begin with the *Historia calamitatum*,<sup>2</sup> the autobiography of Abelard, celebrated master of the schools in Paris, chronicling his career, his rivalry with other prominent teachers and his love affair with his pupil, Heloise, niece of canon Fulbert in whose house he lodged. After the birth of their baby, Heloise reluctantly agreed to a secret marriage to appease her uncle, but denied it in public for fear of damaging Abelard's career. Suspecting the marriage to be a sham, Fulbert had Abelard castrated, after which Heloise entered a convent and Abelard a monastery. The *Historia calamitatum* continues with Abelard's subsequent tribulations, including his first trial for heresy in 1121, but interprets his castration as divine intervention, disrupting the sinful lust of his relationship to Heloise and returning him to godly ways. On reading this account Heloise wrote to Abelard, challenging his version of their love affair and reminding him that she became a nun out of love of him, not love of God. Abelard replied urging her to accept God's will. After this impasse, the correspondence continued on a professional footing, Heloise as abbess requesting Abelard's directions for the convent he had founded.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Helen Waddell to William Rothenstein, 22 October [1933], Rothenstein Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, b MS Eng 1148 (1558) (14), pp. 277–8 below. Several other letters also ascribe this reading to her undergraduate days (BA, 1911 and MA, 1912) but in 1933 she dated it to spring 1913 (Waddell, "Medieval Sojourn," *Wings* 7, no. 10 (October 1933), pp. 7–9, 25; reprinted in Monica Blackett, *The Mark of the Maker: A Portrait of Helen Waddell* (London: Constable, 1973), pp. 219–22, and on pp. 272–5 below.

<sup>2</sup> Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* is sometimes published as a separate text, sometimes identified as the first letter in the exchange between Heloise and Abelard. In this edition, as in Luscombe's *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, the *Historia calamitatum* is referred to as *Epistola* 1 (*Ep.* 1), with page numbers referencing Luscombe's edition.

<sup>3</sup> Waddell could have first read the letters of Abelard and Heloise in a French translation held by the Queen's University Library, *Lettres d'Abélard et d'Héloïse, traduction littérale par le bibliophile Jacob; précédée d'une notice littéraire*,

At this first reading, around 1911, Waddell thought Abelard “a prig and a cad”, but on being introduced to his theology in 1917, she focused on “not so much the lover, oddly enough, but the heretic, truth’s martyr, rather than Love’s Martyr”.<sup>4</sup> In 1918, she “vaguely” thought of collaborating with her friend, medieval historian Maude Clarke, on a translation of Abelard and Heloise’s letters, with a preface.<sup>5</sup> But any work on Abelard had to be postponed until she completed her current research into “Woman in the Drama before Shakespeare”. This project grew over many years while Waddell was held captive in Belfast as the sole carer of a demanding stepmother, shifting focus until it settled on the Latin lyric of the medieval goliards, the subject of her *Wandering Scholars* published in 1927.<sup>6</sup> She was still researching the topic in Paris when, in 1924, she was hospitalized with a severe throat infection. After four sleepless nights, she experienced a strange identification with Abelard’s lover, Heloise:

---

*historique et bibliographique par M. Villenave* (Paris: C. Gosselin, 1840). She also had access to the Latin edition of the letters within vol. 178 of Migne’s *Patrologia Latina* (hereafter PL), acquired by the University Library in 1910. It is not certain if she saw the rare copy of the original Latin text edited by F. d’Amboise and A. Duchesne, *Petri Abaelardi, filosofi et theologi. Abbatis Ruyensis, et primae Paracletensis Abbatissae, Opera* (Paris: Nicolas Buon, 1616), reprinted in vol. 178. It was bequeathed to the Queen’s library in 1929 by R. M. Henry, Professor of Latin at Queen’s from 1907 to 1938; Waddell was his student from 1908–9. (Thanks to Susan Kirkpatrick, Bronagh McCrudden and Deirdre Wildy, Queen’s University Library, for assistance in establishing these facts.) Waddell’s eventual degree was in English Language and Literature but her undergraduate competence in French and Latin is confirmed by the fact that in the First Arts examinations she won first place (first class honours) in French and joint first place (second class honours) in Latin (*Queen’s University Calendar 1910*, p. 501).

<sup>4</sup> Waddell to Arundell Esdaile, 2 September 1936, Cambridge University Library MS Add 10026 (6), p. 282 below; draft letter to R. O. P. Taylor, 17 October 1935, WP, box 2, p. 292 below; to Rothenstein, 22 October [1933], p. 277 below.

<sup>5</sup> Waddell to George Saintsbury, 13 March 1918, Queen’s University Belfast Library, uncatalogued (hereafter QUL).

<sup>6</sup> For the metamorphosis of her study of women characters in pre-Shakespearean English drama into a history of the Latin songs of medieval goliards see Jennifer FitzGerald, “Women, Love and Mime: The Evolution of *The Wandering Scholars*” in *Helen Waddell Reassessed: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer FitzGerald (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 81–103 (hereafter *HWR*). The surviving two chapters of “Woman in the Drama before Shakespeare” are published as Appendix 1 in Jennifer FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke: Irishwomen, Friends and Scholars* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 187–230.



I passed, fully awake and not I think delirious, into some strange state of being. For suddenly I was Heloise, not as I had ever imagined her, but an old woman, abbess of the Paraclete, with Abelard twenty years dead: and I was sitting in a great chair lecturing to my nuns on his *Introductio ad Theologiam*. It was near the end of the lecture, and I pronounced the benediction, and sat watching them go out, two by two. And one of them, the youngest and prettiest of my nuns for whom I felt some indulgence, glanced at me sideways as she went out, and I heard her whisper to the older sister beside her, "*Elle parle toujours Abélard.*"<sup>7</sup>

This experience was the catalyst of the novel: Waddell began "brooding and seeing things in [her] head, [but] only two or three chapters got down on paper at the first" as she wrote and published *The Wandering Scholars*.<sup>8</sup> Years of interruptions, as she applied for and gave up on academic posts and found employment in publishing, postponed focused composition; it took her seven years to finish *Peter Abelard*.<sup>9</sup>

The impersonation with Heloise accentuated Waddell's affinity with the twelfth-century couple. Like her medieval predecessors, she struggled to reconcile the otherworldly demands of her own religious upbringing with her sensitivity to mortal beauty.<sup>10</sup> She could understand Abelard's irritability and arrogance; she had suffered years of frustration, having to shelve her intellectual ambitions to years of domestic captivity, as the academic career for which she had prepared receded into the distance.<sup>11</sup> And like Abelard, she eventually learnt to trust divine providence to convert the severest disappointment into a greater good: "The things I've raged over ... are the things I thank God for now".<sup>12</sup>

The parallels between her own circumstances and Heloise's are even more striking. They shared a common experience as highly learned women

---

<sup>7</sup> Waddell, "Medieval Sojourn," pp. 273–4 below. Abelard's *Introductio ad Theologiam* is now known as *Theologia "Scholarium"*.

<sup>8</sup> Waddell to Rothenstein, 22 October [1933], p. 278 below.

<sup>9</sup> FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*, pp. 144–5; Waddell, "Medieval Sojourn," p. 275 below.

<sup>10</sup> Waddell to G. P. Taylor, 24 March 1915, WP, box 16. Waddell's father, a Presbyterian missionary in China and Japan, had an ecumenical outlook, transferring from a posting in Spain because he saw no point in converting people as Christian as himself. He died when she was twelve; her stepmother, and other clerical relatives, however, had much more puritan attitudes. Felicitas Corrigan, *Helen Waddell: A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1986), pp. 13, 56–8, 86–7.

<sup>11</sup> FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*, pp. 38–40, 88–90, 100.

<sup>12</sup> Waddell to Meg Martin (hereafter MM), [July–Sept. 1925], WP, box 11 (dates in square brackets have been established by internal evidence); FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*, p. 178.

whose abilities were undervalued in male-dominated institutions; they both suffered ultimately frustrated love for older men.<sup>13</sup> At the age of thirty-six, after refusing several pressing suitors, Waddell fell in love with Otto Kyllmann, twenty years her senior. He was chairman of Constable's in London, which published her work and employed her part-time—and twice divorced. Waddell's principles made a sexual relationship impossible. She told her niece that the joy of this love, mixed with the frustration of self-denial, made her understand what Heloise and Abelard had experienced.<sup>14</sup> When, with the proceeds of *Peter Abelard*, she bought a thirty-year lease on a large house, Kyllmann moved in, taking a flat on the first floor. He made little accommodation for Waddell in his habits and routines; she knew that the depth of her love was not requited. In the midst of composing *Peter Abelard*, she wrote to a friend:

To be able to give all one's self away—and to some one who can use it all, and wants you all—it is the richest thing. The other doesn't really matter—not in comparison. Think for a moment what it would be like if you weren't sure you were loved. That is the real torture. And that is what happens to Heloise at the last.

Indeed, she knew that when she came to writing that part of Heloise's story "it will hurt so damnably".<sup>15</sup>

Waddell projected herself into Heloise, a merging so empathetic that, visiting Heloise's abbey in 1928, she felt the abbess's agony, eight hundred years earlier, as she waited for Abelard's dead body coming down the road for burial in the Paraclete.<sup>16</sup> And in 1924, when during the night she became the elderly Heloise, she entered so completely into the concerns of the twelfth-century abbess that she agonized about the fate of Abelard's soul—even though in her waking moments she herself had never doubted it, "from God's point of view anyhow".<sup>17</sup>

It may seem strange, therefore, that despite Waddell's intense identification with Heloise, *Peter Abelard* hinges not on the love between the couple but on divine compassion and the love it generates in humans,

---

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive account of these parallels, see Constant J. Mews, "Helen Waddell and Heloise: The Continuity of a Learned Tradition", *HWR*, pp. 11–37.

<sup>14</sup> Corrigan, *Helen Waddell*, p. 263.

<sup>15</sup> Waddell to Basil Blackett, [1931–3], WP, box 2. "The other" probably refers to sexual relations.

<sup>16</sup> Waddell to MM, [11 February 1933], WP, box 13, pp. 279–80 below.

<sup>17</sup> Waddell to Kathleen White, [1952 or later], Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI) T 2032 (17).

the message of Abelard's atonement theology. She had pondered the subject before she associated it with Abelard. In 1915, she responded to her brother George, about to be ordained a Presbyterian minister, deeply troubled by the countless deaths and human sorrow that World War I had already inflicted:

Christ's Passion, if we believe it at all, was simply the Passion of God. The Atonement is a fact of eternity as well as of time, and Calvary was the eternal suffering of God made manifest for a few hours in mortal flesh—the suffering that the sin of the world has always inflicted, and will inflict to the end.<sup>18</sup> And to realise it ever so little, remember the people who are taking the war hardest ... make that knowledge and that sympathy infinite, and you begin to understand Gethsemane.

But that suffering has no redemptive effect unless we choose. It's like letting the men die for us in the war, and never taking it to heart.... Their suffering is "vicarious": but it rests with the people they die for whether or not it shall be "redemptive".<sup>19</sup>

It is no wonder that she was drawn to Abelard's theology when she encountered it in 1917 in a work she read several times, R. C. Moberly's *Atonement and Personality*.<sup>20</sup> *Peter Abelard* was being printed when she felt its echoes in her own experience. Her brother, Martin Waddell, failed businessman and alcoholic, periodically dunned her for money with threats and reproaches, to which Waddell responded as she could. Listening to the Good Friday music from Wagner's *Parsifal* after one of Martin's most aggressive missives, she "suddenly saw us all comfortable at our firesides, and all respectable, and outside that lone wolf, with its health and reputation gone, and the pain in its eye, and me ready to stone it from the door." She understood, as Abelard did, "the Love of God, that does not even wait for us to be sorry—that tried to *make* us sorry by its own

---

<sup>18</sup> Compare with the crucial exchange of *Peter Abelard* between Abelard and Thibault: "“You think all this ... all the pain of the world, was Christ's cross?” “God's cross, ... And it goes on.”” (p. 174).

<sup>19</sup> Waddell to George Waddell, [1915], quoted in Corrigan, *Helen Waddell*, p. 117, and on p. 293 below.

<sup>20</sup> R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, 1901, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: John Murray, 1917); Waddell to G. P. Taylor, 17 April 1917; 10 June 1917; 18 May 1918, WP, box 16; Waddell to R. O. P. Taylor, 17 October 1935, p. 292 below. Moberly is only one of several late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century theologians offering a reconsideration of the atonement: see Norman Vance, "Writing beyond Rome and Geneva," *HWR*, pp. 215–28, at 219–22.

absolute sacrifice and agony.”<sup>21</sup> She immediately wrote Martin a loving letter, encouraging him to return to God’s love, and promising to support him with a modest weekly income.<sup>22</sup> Although this was “the kind of thing I’ve written in *Abelard*”, the episode was a revelation: “I have felt the absoluteness of God before, the ‘light that no man can approach unto’, but never [as on this occasion] his compassion.”<sup>23</sup>

It was this sensitivity that diverted Waddell’s interest from the drama of Heloise and Abelard’s love affair. On first encountering their correspondence she was “bewildered ... by the contrast in the two natures, the absolute passion of hers, the chill restraint of his.”<sup>24</sup> But the more she read of Abelard’s other writings, the more she read into the *Historia calamitatum*. Those who judged Abelard only by the letters “written at a singularly *cruel* moment in his life” failed to realise that in his cold and pedantic letters to Heloise, Abelard was “trying to save her soul, and there was as much love in his reticence as in her outpouring.”<sup>25</sup> Abelard’s tragedy was “the breaking and transfiguring of a great egotism into something like sainthood: as though Lucifer should die a St. John.”<sup>26</sup> This was the story that Waddell would try to tell.

## The debate about the letters of Abelard and Heloise

By 1933 the story of Heloise and Abelard had been re-invented so often, the protagonists—especially Heloise—mythologized to such an extent that its roots in textual sources had been almost lost to sight.<sup>27</sup> This was true of Irish novelist George Moore’s *Héloïse and Abélard*, based on secondary sources and first published privately in 1921, which invented a scenario in which Heloise, ignorant of Abelard’s castration, chose to join the convent, viewing it as convenient location for their clandestine encounters.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Waddell to MM, [15 April 1933], WP, box 13, p. 293–4 below.

<sup>22</sup> She was already paying for the education of Martin Waddell’s daughter (FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*, p. 113).

<sup>23</sup> Waddell to MM, [15 April 1933], p. 294 below.

<sup>24</sup> Waddell, “Medieval Sojourn,” p. 273 below.

<sup>25</sup> Waddell to Esdaile, 6 January 1936, p. 281 below; Waddell, quoting AE, “Medieval Sojourn,” p. 272 below.

<sup>26</sup> Waddell, “Medieval Sojourn,” p. 273 below.

<sup>27</sup> Constant J. Mews, “Imagining Heloise as Abbess of the Paraclete”, *Journal of Religious History* 44, no. 4 (2020):422–42, at 424–9.

<sup>28</sup> George Moore, *Héloïse and Abélard*, published privately for subscribers (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921 and London, privately printed, 1921); commercially published (London: Heinemann, 1925, reprinted 1930). Published in 1932 as vol.

Waddell's version is instead characterized by an extraordinarily profound return to history and by respect for the religious milieu in which Abelard and Heloise lived. In contrast to the almost exclusively secular focus of modern retellings, her lovers are embedded in the spiritual ethos of the twelfth century; religion imbues their values, assumptions, emotions.

In becoming interested in Abelard and Heloise as historical identities, Waddell also had to confront scholarly suspicion about the authenticity of their correspondence. Henry Adams illustrates the ahistorical way in which Heloise was popularly understood in his classic study of medieval civilization, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, first published in Boston in 1904:

The twelfth century, with all its sparkle, would be dull without Abelard and Heloise. With infinite regret, Heloise must be left out of the story, because she was not a philosopher or a poet or an artist, but only a Frenchwoman to the last millimetre of her shadow. Even though one may suspect that her famous letters to Abelard are, for the most part, by no means above scepticism, she was, by French standards, worth at least a dozen Abelards, if only because she called Saint Bernard a false apostle. Unfortunately, French standards, by which she must be judged in our ignorance, take for granted that she philosophized only for the sake of Abelard, while Abelard taught philosophy to her not so much because he believed in philosophy or in her as because he believed in himself. As the west portal of Chartres is the door through which one must of necessity enter the Gothic architecture of the thirteenth century, so Abelard is the portal of approach to the Gothic thought and philosophy within. Neither art nor thought has a modern equivalent; only Heloise, like Isolde, unites the ages.<sup>29</sup>

The skepticism—about the authenticity of the letters of Abelard and Heloise—to which Adams alludes goes back to a few scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who criticized the extravagant romanticism surrounding their memory.<sup>30</sup> While there had been a series of

---

14 in *The Complete Works of George Moore*, 20 vols (London: Heinemann, 1924–52). See Andrew Louth, “The Image of Heloise in English Literature,” *Downside Review* 111 (1993):45–64.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 221, referring to Heloise, *Ep.* 2.2, ed. Luscombe, p. 124, and Abelard, *Ep.* 1.58, ed. Luscombe, p. 90.

<sup>30</sup> The classic study of the history of suspicion about the letters (above all of those attributed to Heloise) is Peter von Moos, *Mittelalterforschung und Ideologiekritik: Der Gelehrtenstreit um Héloïse* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1974). There is also much of value in Charlotte Charrier, *Héloïse dans l'histoire et dans la légende* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1933), in which Charrier gives exhaustive documentation about

translations into French of the correspondence, there had been no widely accessible translation of them into English since the highly embellished and quasi-fictional translation by John Hughes in 1713 of a paraphrase of the letters that had been published in Amsterdam in the late seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> In 1901, the Temple Classics reprinted the Hughes translation under the title *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, a publication that only reinforced scholarly doubts about their genuineness.<sup>32</sup> In that same year, Joseph McCabe published the first major English-language study of Abelard, defending the authenticity of the letters against their critics, in a study oriented more to theology than to the role of Heloise.<sup>33</sup> McCabe's arguments did not prevent George Moore, in 1921, from having his Abelard and Heloise talk about their correspondence as a fiction which they would invent.<sup>34</sup> In 1926, Moore's novel prompted C. K. Scott Moncrieff to produce the first fresh and scholarly translation of the correspondence into English since the eighteenth century. Yet it carried a prefatory letter from Moore, warning readers to question their authenticity.<sup>35</sup>

One view that had some currency in scholarly circles was that of a German scholar, Bernhard Schmeidler, who argued that Abelard had compiled the entire dossier of letters, including those of Heloise, in order

---

the cult of Heloise across the centuries and argues that Heloise herself had edited the correspondence. It is not known if Waddell encountered Charrier in Paris while they were researching their books. Scholarly debate about the authenticity issue which has continued to surface in the English-speaking world is discussed on pp. 300–1 below.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters of Abelard and Heloise to which is prefix'd a particular account of their lives, amours, and misfortunes, extracted chiefly from Monsieur Bayle* (London: J. Watts, 1713), frequently reprinted. The one exception was J. Berington, *The History of the Lives of Abeillard and Heloisa; comprising a period of eighty-four years, from 1079 to 1163. With their genuine letters, from the collection of Amboise* (Birmingham: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1787), reprinted in 1788 and 1793, and in Philadelphia in 1819.

<sup>32</sup> *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (London: J. M. Dent, 1901), re-issued in 1922.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph McCabe, *Peter Abélard* (London: Duckworth, 1901), pp. 229–31.

<sup>34</sup> Moore, *Abélard and Heloise, Complete Works* 14:474–5.

<sup>35</sup> *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (London: Guy Chapman, 1925), pp. xiii–xviii. See Deborah Fraioli, “George Moore and Scott Moncrieff: An Unknown Chapter in the Authenticity Debate of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 54, no. 2 (2017):176–189. Waddell opined that “Scott Moncrieff hated Abelard ... his dislike made him astonishingly inaccurate, not deliberately so. Simply it blinded him to the Latin before his eyes” (Waddell to Esdaile, 2 September 1936, p. 283 below).

to promote the spiritual ideals of his Rule for the Paraclete which concluded the exchange. He did not observe that the Rule is followed by a short text, *Institutiones nostre* or "Our Observances", which in fact offers a much more practical set of instructions than those devised by Abelard.<sup>36</sup> Within the academy, there were many who disliked Abelard, and criticized romantic enthusiasm for the letters of Heloise. Such attitudes are illustrated by comments made by L. J. Paetow, a senior medievalist, published in 1927 within a review of a volume of essays that included a chapter by Eileen Power on medieval women:

The sketch on the position of women is delightful. It was fortunate that the editors were able to find for the inarticulate women of the Middle Ages a modern spokeswoman who can write with grace as well as with skill and erudition. We fear that Miss Power will be obliged to admit that even the love-letters of Heloise were not written by a mediaeval woman but were the vain imaginings of a very vain man.<sup>37</sup>

Two books with a more favourable attitude to Abelard, but focusing more on his theology than on his relationship to Heloise, came out in 1932, on the eve of publication of Waddell's novel, by Roger B. Lloyd and J. G. Sikes.<sup>38</sup> Waddell refers to a review of Lloyd's biography in a letter written to her sister: "The *Sunday Times* was reviewing a new life of Abelard, and began a little oddly by saying one of its merits was that it sent the reader back to the *Wandering Scholars*."<sup>39</sup> Lloyd had taken his title, *The Stricken Lute*, from Waddell's translation of Abelard's planctus, "Vel confossus pariter".<sup>40</sup> His Preface, dated May 1932, acknowledges his debt to George Moore and above all to Waddell; he cites or quotes her six times in the text. Waddell was aware of Moore's novel but reported that she avoided

---

<sup>36</sup> Bernhard Schmeidler, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abälard und Heloise eine Fälschung?" *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 11 (1914):1–30; PL 178:313E-317B; ed. Cousin, 1:213-24. On the *Institutiones nostre*, see Luscombe, Introduction, *The Letter Collection*, pp. xxxiv–xxxviii and pp. 301–5 below.

<sup>37</sup> L. J. Paetow, review of C. G. Crump and E. F. Jacobs (eds), *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) in *Speculum* 2, no. 2 (April 1927): 225–7, at 227.

<sup>38</sup> Roger B. Lloyd, *The Stricken Lute: An Account of the Life of Peter Abelard* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1932) and J. G. Sikes, *Peter Abailard* (Cambridge University Press, 1932).

<sup>39</sup> Waddell to MM, [24 October 1932], WP, box 11; review of Lloyd, *The Stricken Lute*, *Sunday Times*, 23 October 1932.

<sup>40</sup> Waddell, *MLL*, p. 169.

reading it so that her own work would not be influenced by it.<sup>41</sup> She had been forming her own angle on both Abelard and Heloise quite independently of these other perspectives.

She was cautious in expressing an opinion of the letters' authenticity:

The difficulties of the *Letters* are so overwhelming that I—this sounds paradoxical—am almost driven to believe in their genuineness. It was the clumsiest of all forgers who forged these—if they are forged—and it was at the same time a genius like Shakespeare's.<sup>42</sup>

Also persuading her of the authenticity of the correspondence was the psychological strangeness of Abelard's letters, "so credible, if one goes deep enough, so preposterous if one is superficial."

But I determined some time ago to suspend, even to myself, all explanation, until I had submitted the whole text to the most intimate test of all—and that is word for word translation, with the background firmly in my mind.<sup>43</sup>

Even before committing herself to this whole-scale translation, Waddell deepened her understanding of the Abelard-Heloise correspondence by translating at least some of the letters concurrently with composing the novel, "to keep me in the same room, even when I'm not up to the creative stuff".<sup>44</sup> The full translation was to follow, an edition of "the letters and

---

<sup>41</sup> Waddell to Rothenstein, 22 October [1933], pp. 277–8 below. However, an extract of Moore's *Abelard and Heloise* appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, new ser. 108, no. 645 (September 1920):516–28, preceded by Waddell's essay "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu" at 503–14. It is very unlikely that Waddell would not have read Moore's extract in 1920. For a comparison of Waddell's novel with Moore's see Virginia Ogden Birdsall, "A discussion of *Héloïse and Abélard* by George Moore and Helen Waddell as twentieth-century historical novels," BA thesis, Radcliffe College, 1950 (Harvard University, Schlesinger Library).

<sup>42</sup> Waddell to Esdaile, 6 January 1936, Cambridge University Library MS Add 10026 (5), p. 280 below. She is recalling the proof most often cited that the letters were not genuine: the discrepancy between Heloise accusing Abelard of neglect and the references in the *Historia calamitatum* that Abelard had made several visits to the Paraclete. Newman points out that Heloise could have been referring to the early years of their separation, when she was a nun in Argenteuil (Barbara Newman, "Authority authenticity, and the repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22, no. 2 [Spring 1992]:121–57, at 140, n. 75).

<sup>43</sup> Waddell to Esdaile, 6 January 1936, pp. 281; 280 below.

<sup>44</sup> Waddell to MM, 6 November 1931, WP, box 11. Waddell's translation of the first three chapters of the *Historia calamitatum* (of PL 178:115B–126D; ed. Cousin



documents and pieces of [Abelard's] best prose, with a long introduction, so I shan't be lonesome". This proposal was shelved when she enthusiastically accepted the Greg y Nog Press's invitation in 1933 to prepare a parallel-text translation of *Letters* in a luxury limited edition.<sup>45</sup> While she never found time for this project, it nonetheless demonstrates her commitment to the letters. She was equally at home with the scholarly intimacy of word-for-word translation and with the "demon possession" with which she had written *Peter Abelard*.<sup>46</sup>

### Helen Waddell and her sources

Unlike the vast majority of the previous representations of Heloise and Abelard's tragedy—over six hundred by the time Waddell published her novel<sup>47</sup>—her version is characterized by a meticulous grounding in the historical, literary and theological context, the result of the research she undertook in Belfast, Oxford, London and Paris for *The Wandering Scholars*, published in 1927. The poems of the *clerici vagantes*, above all those of the *Carmina burana*, had been popularized in English by John Addington Symonds in a provocatively titled volume, *Wine, Women and Song*, first published in 1884 and reprinted many times.<sup>48</sup> His title reflects the bacchanalian interpretation he gave of these songs, which started to become available in a more critical edition only after the publication of *The Wandering Scholars*. These songs appealed to Waddell who liked "a sense of humour and humanity" in "medieval stuff".<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, she was determined to provide a much more sophisticated context for these

---

1:4–8)) is archived at QUL MS 18/9. Although there is no indication as to when this translation was drafted, it could well be the one she refers to in 1931.

<sup>45</sup> Waddell to Esdaile, 6 January 1936, p. 281 below. She was undecided whether, for the Latin text, she would use Victor's Cousin's text, which she deemed still the best, "or whether I shall reproduce: 1. the ms. in Troyes which is the oldest, or 2. the beautiful ms. that belonged to Petrarch".

<sup>46</sup> Waddell to Rothenstein, 22 October [1933], p. 278 below.

<sup>47</sup> These included iconographic as well as textual representations (Charrier, *Héloïse dans l'histoire et dans la légende*, pp. 601–55).

<sup>48</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Wine, Women and Song: Mediaeval Latin Students' Songs* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1884), frequently reprinted.

<sup>49</sup> Waddell to E. K. Rand, 18 November 1934, Papers of Edward Kennard Rand, Harvard University Archives, box 6, Correspondence E-Z, Folder W. HUG.4730.5 For Waddell's sense of the fun of scholarship, see *Discipline*, the novel she co-authored with Maude Clarke in 1915: *Discipline, with "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu"*, ed. Jennifer FitzGerald (Amazon: CreateSpace, 2018) and FitzGerald, Introduction, *Discipline*, pp. 8–9.

poems than Symonds had done. She reveals something of the depth of her reading into the primary sources of the early medieval period within a draft letter to G. G. Coulton, written in spring 1931, speaking about the research she undertook for the *Scholars*. She refers to her familiarity with three major collections of medieval texts, Migne's *Patrologia Latina* in 221 volumes (Paris: Garnier, 1841–95), part of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* known as the *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini* in 5 volumes (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881–1939), and the 54 volumes of Mansi's *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Paris: H. Welter, 1901–1927) which contain primary sources about the history of the Councils of the Church:

At the very outset I realized that I could not judge this poetry that seemed, to quote myself, “as rare a miracle as the first crocus”, without knowing something of the verse that went before it, and if possible something of the literary furniture of their [the *clerici vagantes*] minds. So—it has its ludicrous side—I sat down with Migne beginning with Juvenecus and Prudentius and Avitus, and progressed like a caterpillar through volume after volume of the *Patrologia*. By the time I had reached my own period (and had added the *Poetae Latini Carolini*), I had some kind of rough acquaintance with medieval verse, and had been seduced into reading en route a good deal of medieval prose. This explains the odd formation of the *Scholars*, in which some complain that the *Vagantes* are an afterthought ... [I made] the same caterpillar progress through Mansi's *Concilia*.<sup>50</sup>

As she immersed herself in these primary sources—educational texts, ecclesiastical correspondence, philosophical treatises, doctrines, sermons, commentaries and poems—she glimpsed interactions, phrases, details which humanized the sacred and the impersonal. These intimate anecdotes and quotations are foretastes of the humanism which flowered in the songs of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century goliards. From the same sources she drew many of the novel's characters and conversations which contextualize Abelard and Heloise's tragic love. The priest who married and forfeited his benefices, mentioned in Ivo of Chartres's letter to Galo of Paris, becomes a minor figure glimpsed at second hand, canon law made flesh as his weeping wife faces destitution.<sup>51</sup> Waddell's fictional canon of Notre Dame, Gilles de Vannes, finds the priest employment in a country school, thereby applying the mercy and justice which Ivo advocated.<sup>52</sup> Waddell

---

<sup>50</sup> Waddell, draft letter to G. G. Coulton, [spring 1931], WP, box 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ivo of Chartres, *Ep.* 218, PL 162:221C–222C.

<sup>52</sup> Waddell would have found references to justice and mercy in many of Ivo's letters: *Epistolae*, PL 162:14D–504D.

interweaves into her dramatization of Ivo's epistle a quotation from a letter of a wandering scholar, protégé of Ebracher, Saxon Bishop of Liège; another eleventh-century source provides a likely location for the school where Gilles will install the married priest.<sup>53</sup> A later conversation illustrates the inflexibility of Bernard of Clairvaux who will become Abelard's nemesis: Gilles pleads empathy and kindness for a young monk who can no longer bear the austerity of Bernard's rule. The matter is all the more painful since the deserter is Bernard's own nephew, but the former's intransigence is rooted in an irreconcilable conviction: in abandoning Clairvaux, Robert has abandoned God.<sup>54</sup> The novel fleshes out Bernard's arguments, as found in his actual letter to his nephew Robert, in tone of voice, impatience of manner, and conflicting emotions. The physical details of his appearance are based on a seventeenth-century description of Bernard's cell at Clairvaux, so restricted in space that it was impossible for the occupant to stand up or stretch himself out on his bed.<sup>55</sup>

During her research for *The Wandering Scholars* Waddell had read "with a mind emptied" to familiarize herself with "the kind of furniture [the medieval student's] imagination lived among."<sup>56</sup> Thoroughly at home in the twelfth-century clerical ethos, in *Peter Abelard* she weaves prayer and liturgy into the intimate texture of her characters' daily lives and emotions. Their conversations are peppered with Biblical verses and canonical debates. They overhear love lyrics—the historical Abelard composed songs of their romance which, Heloise said, made her the envy of women—drawn from the *Carmina burana*, or by the troubadour Audefroï le Bâtard, or by the anonymous troper from the St Martial music school at Limoges.<sup>57</sup> They quote classical poets on whom Abelard was

---

<sup>53</sup> *Reliquiae Dunstanianae: Letters and other Documents connected with Dunstan, his Age and his Biographers*, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 63 (London: HMSO, 1874), p. 387; *Vita Gildae auctore monacho Ruiensi*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, *MGH Auctores Antiquissimi* 13 (Berlin: Hahn, 1898), p. 99; *Bulletin de la société polymathique de Morbihan*, Année 1883 (Vannes: Imprimerie Gallès, 1883), p. 172.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.* 1, ed. Jean Leclercq et al., *Opera Omnia*, 8 vols (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses 1957–77), 7:1–11 (PL 182:67A–79C).

<sup>55</sup> F. Joseph Meglinger, *Descriptio itineris Cisterciensis* (PL 185:1608D).

<sup>56</sup> Helen Waddell, Preface, *The Desert Fathers: Translations from the Latin* (London: Constable, 1936), p. viii.

<sup>57</sup> *Ep.* 2.13, ed. Luscombe, p. 137 (PL 178:185D, 186A; ed. Cousin, 1:76); *Carmina burana* nos. 74, 116, 160, 167, ed. Alfons Hilka and Otto Schumann, 2 vols (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1930, 1941), 2:47; 190; 269; 282; Audefroï le Bâtard, "Bele Ysabiau, pucele bien apprise," *Chrestomathie de l'ancien français*, ed. Karl

accused of lecturing: the satires of Juvenal and Persius, well known in the Middle Ages, as well as an ode by Horace (found in a tenth-century manuscript from Montpellier) and lines from Lucretius (cited by Mico, a ninth-century monk of St Riquier).<sup>58</sup> This silent interweaving of different kinds of primary sources, achieved without documenting the research undertaken, recurs in each of the chapters of the novel.

Waddell devotes the first of the four sections or books that make up her novel to introducing Abelard in Paris over an imagined twelve-month period between June 1116–May 1117 (dates that are not implausible in reconstructing his career, as we know from Abelard’s account that he first established himself at the cathedral school of Notre-Dame in late 1113). The primary source on which she draws is Abelard’s *Historia calamitatum* to which she had access before completing her English degree in Belfast.<sup>59</sup> Abelard’s account, written in the early 1130s, inevitably filters the memory of his past. From the opening chapter, Waddell conveys a sense of contemporary dynamism by weaving together the verse of an imagined jongleur with a known medieval parody of a Latin hymn that Charles Homer Haskins had introduced in *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, published in the same year as *Wandering Scholars*.<sup>60</sup> Certain characters in her text are completely invented such as that of Gilles de Vannes, who serves as a friend of Abelard, familiar with his Breton background.<sup>61</sup> Yet

Bartsch, rev. Leo Wiese, 12<sup>th</sup> edn (Leipzig: Vogel, 1920), p. 157; troper of St Martial: *Poésies populaires latines du moyen âge*, ed. Edélestand du Ménil (Paris: F. Didot, 1847), pp. 235–6.

<sup>58</sup> Juvenal and Persius: *Ep.* 1.34, ed. Luscombe, p. 52 (PL 178:138A; ed. Cousin, 1:18); Horace: Edmond de Coussemaker, *Histoire de l’harmonie au moyen âge* (Paris: Victor Didrin, 1841), pp. 102, 103 n. 1; Lucretius: *Miconis Opus Prosodiacum*, ed. Traube, MGH Poetae 3, *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, ed. Ludwig Traube (Berlin: Weidmann, 1896), pp. 271–94 and Robinson Ellis, “The Prosody of Mico the Levite,” *Journal of Philology* 22, no. 43 (1894):9–21, at 14–15.

<sup>59</sup> The *Historia calamitatum* is printed as *Ep.* 1 in PL 178:113–182, and ed. Luscombe, pp. 3–121.

<sup>60</sup> Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 185.

<sup>61</sup> Gilles’s personal characteristics are nevertheless inspired by a range of historical details: “Henry of Winchester’s passion for buying antique sculptures; John of Salisbury’s humanism; Peter Damian’s denouncing of luxurious ecclesiastics; the same John’s love of a good wine” (Waddell to Esdaile, 2 September 1936, p. 283 below). Gilles was also based on Waddell’s academic mentors, George Saintsbury and G. Gregory Smith, the latter Professor of English at Queen’s University, Belfast (Waddell to Henry Smith, 31 January 1951, WP, box 2). For Waddell’s

Waddell also brings in recollection of authentic figures from Abelard's early career, such as the young Goswin, who dared to challenge Abelard when he was teaching on the Mont Sainte-Geneviève, probably in 1112. She found the Latin text of the *Vita Goswini*, recalling this episode, in one of the massive volumes of historical sources to twelfth-century France to which she had access in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.<sup>62</sup>

Another brilliant interweaving of an authentic literary source in this first chapter comes in a passage taken from a little studied Life of an Irish saint (Mochuille), probably written in Regensburg in the mid twelfth century, but describing the saint's early travels in France for the sake of study.<sup>63</sup> Waddell took this (still) little known text from one of the many volumes of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. This is the first of a series of allusions to Irish scholars throughout the novel, by means of which Waddell underlines the Celtic contribution to Latin medieval culture, in which she felt she too participated.<sup>64</sup> The comment about the wide range of nationalities among Abelard's students, from Italy, Spain, England and Germany, "and a couple of Malachy's men from Armagh" comes from a letter to Abelard by Fulk of Deuil, included within the Latin editions of the correspondence. The allusion to Malachy (1094–1148), appointed archbishop of Armagh in 1132, is only a slight embellishment of historical possibility as the printed Latin text speaks of *Hiberi* (Iberians) rather than *Hiberni* (Irish).<sup>65</sup>

This Irish connection is sustained throughout the novel, but expanded into a theological dimension. A key moment comes when Abelard recalls an Irishman, "one of Malachy's men from Armagh" [Book I, chapter 6] deliriously recalling an Irish prayer about the cross, to be recited on Good Friday. The English version Waddell gives of this Irish prayer is in fact taken from "O King of the Friday", a poem included in an anthology of Irish texts collected by Douglas Hyde while travelling around Ireland, and published in both Irish and English in 1906, reprinted in an Irish hymnal of 1928:

---

relationship with Saintsbury, see FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>62</sup> *Recueil*, 14:442–3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ex vita Sancti Mochullei Hiberniensis Episcopi*, ed. Karolus Pertz, MGH SS 20, p. 512.

<sup>64</sup> See Charles Lock, "Scholar of the Dark: Helen Waddell and the Middle Ages," *HWR*, pp. 39–61.

<sup>65</sup> *Ep.* 16 (PL 178:371D; Cousin 1:703-4).

O King of the Friday  
 Whose limbs were stretched on the cross,  
 O Lord who did suffer  
 The bruises, the wounds, the loss,  
 We stretch ourselves  
 Beneath the shield of thy might  
 Some fruit from the tree of thy passion  
 Fall on us this night.<sup>66</sup>

Abelard recalls this line of the poem with a blasphemous twist, because he cannot stop thinking of Heloise, even though he is aware of its sacred character. The poem provides an opportunity for Waddell to connect Abelard's understanding of the suffering of Jesus to the anguish he would endure in his own life, that through suffering we may be healed.

This theme surfaces again in the novel's conclusion, when Gilles quotes a prayer which does in fact occur in a missal from Bobbio, established by Columbanus in the late sixth century, of which a critical edition had appeared in 1920: *Cuius dolore plaga nostra curata est; et lapsus nostros aliena ruina suscepit. ... By whose grief our wound was healed: by whose ruin our fall was stayed.*<sup>67</sup> Waddell's gift was to bring to life a prayer printed in a learned volume that otherwise would be little read outside a very small specialist community.

Inevitably Waddell takes a few historical liberties in her text. Thus she has Abelard and Heloise attend a lecture by Bernard Sylvestris, whose great poetic masterpiece, *De Mundi Universitate* or *Cosmographia*, a major Platonic allegory of creation based on Plato's *Timaeus*, was not completed until about 1147–8. She justified the anachronism by making her Sylvestris “a stripling”, a poet who is not yet widely known: “Very young, but as wise as a troll, they say: one of the small dark men that were left over from the first race”. Sylvestris lectures not from the text of his already-written book but from a gradually evolving poem, incipient ideas

---

<sup>66</sup> Douglas Hyde [An Craoibhín Aoibinn], “O King of the Friday” in *Abhráin Diadha Chúige Connacht. The Religious Songs of Connacht*, Introduction by Dominic Daly (Shannon, 1972; first published in London: Fisher & Unwin and Dublin: Gill, 1906), 2 (being chapter VII of *The Songs of Connacht*), pp. 7–8: “Here is another little prayer of the same sort, but I do not remember from whom I got it”. It was reprinted in Úna Ní Ógáin and Robert O’Dwyer, eds, *Hymns to God—Ancient and Modern* (Dublin: Folens, 1928), no. 13. For further discussion, see Mews, “Helen Waddell and Heloise”, *HWR*, pp. 21–37.

<sup>67</sup> *The Bobbio Missal. A Gallican Mass-book (MS Paris lat. 13246)*, ed. E. A. Lowe, Henry Bradshaw Society 63 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1920), p. 62, no. 200.