



FREDERIC RABY

## Frederic James Edward Raby 1888–1966

AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, on 30 October 1966, Frederic Raby had achieved an international reputation for his scholarship in the field of medieval Latin literature. This reputation was based principally on two massive works—*Christian-Latin Poetry* (1927) and *Secular Latin Poetry* (1934)—which together chart the immense field of medieval Latin poetry from its beginnings in the Christian-Latin poetry of late antiquity to the Latin hymns of the fourteenth century. Since the time of their publication these works have in effect defined the field of medieval Latin poetry for students in the English-speaking world.

Frederic Raby was born in Ely on 11 December 1888, the eldest son of Edward Raby, to a family that was comfortably well-off (Edward's father ran a successful grocery business in Ely). Frederic himself was one of five children, which included two elder sisters, Edith (b. 1886) and Winifred (b. 1887), a younger brother Frank (b. 1890), and a younger sister, Dorothy (b. 1894). In 1900 Edward and his young family moved from Ely to Hoole, on the outskirts of Chester, where Edward joined his brother-in-law in running a local bookstore known as Hukes' Library (an operation subsequently taken over by Mowbrays). As might be expected in these circumstances, the Raby family was of a very bookish orientation, as the children's surviving notebooks from the period charmingly illustrate. Frederic's father Edward had been a King's Scholar at Ely during the 1870s and was an excellent classicist. He helped young Frederic with Latin and Greek, but also introduced him to the pleasures of architecture, teaching him in particular how to

recognise various periods of medieval architecture. Among Frederic's earliest recollections were memories of Alan of Walsingham's Lady Chapel at Ely; later, when the family had moved to Hoole, he frequently walked to the nearby church at Plemstall, which he sketched and photographed in a thorough manner (throughout his life he remained a very competent draughtsman).

In due course Frederic went to the King's School, Chester, for his secondary education. He worked (as he later put it) without enthusiasm, but won a number of prizes 'in very easy competition', including the sixth-form prize in scripture in 1906 (which consisted in a copy of the two-volume work by Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883)). The King's School was not at that time strong in classics, though there was one master with whom he worked through the *Annals* of Tacitus; in lieu of doing Greek at school he opted for German. Such classical training as he had he derived from his father, with whom he read Vergil, Horace, and Juvenal, as well as Plato and Thucydides. For the most part, however, he was left on his own, and was free to pursue his own intellectual enthusiasms. He later recalled that his principal guides to classical literature were (Sir John Pentland) Mahaffy's *History of Classical Greek Literature* (1880) and (C.T.) Crutwell's *History of Roman Literature* (1877), both of which he found unsatisfactory in that they did not adequately situate the literature in a historical context: a defect which he was later to attempt to rectify in his own literary histories. Even as a schoolboy Frederic Raby's range of reading was vast, and was finely balanced between ancient, medieval, and modern authors. He attempted to translate part of the *Odyssey* in the style of William Morris; his interest in Browning led him to Aeschylus; from his reading of Matthew Arnold (of whom he was later to say: 'I cannot overestimate what I owe to him as my ideal and my guide') he was fired with enthusiasm for Heine and Goethe; and from Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* he derived his lifelong love of Dante. The unfocused nature of his literary interests apparently suggested to his teachers at the King's School that he would be unlikely to win a scholarship in classics, so he concentrated his attention on ancient and medieval history, where his guide was James Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire* (1863), which led him in turn to the twelfth century—to St Bernard, to Abelard and Heloise, and to his earliest experience of medieval Latin verse in the form of the *Hora novissima* of Bernard of Morlaix. His later intellectual orientation was thus in some sense already formed when he was a schoolboy: even at this stage he was already wondering when

Migne's *Patrologia Latina* would be accessible to him. In any event, he went to Cambridge in 1906 to sit the scholarship examinations, armed, as he later said, 'with an odd mixture of ignorance and out-of-the-way scraps of knowledge'. By chance he was able to recognise all the quotations on the general knowledge paper, and the Greek unseen turned out to be a passage of Thucydides which he knew intimately. Accordingly, he won an Open History Exhibition (then worth £60) to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he went in October 1907.

Frederic was one of a class of some 200 Trinity freshmen that year (which included *inter alios* Jawaharlal Nehru). The Master at the time was Henry Montague Butler, who created a deep impression on the young Raby through his recollection of early nineteenth-century worthies such as Lord Macaulay. This was the Trinity of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Henry Jackson, Hastings Rashdall, J. E. McTaggart, and A.W. Verrall. Raby's tutor was the mathematician, W. W. Rouse Ball, and his Director of Studies was Reginald Vere Laurence, to whom he later confessed to owing a good deal, though Laurence evidently directed Raby to a very small extent. In many ways Laurence was the spiritual opposite of Frederic Raby, especially in his pursuit of fine food and drink (so much so that he has been referred to as 'the bibulous historian R. V. Laurence'),<sup>1</sup> but Raby greatly admired the decoration of his Trinity rooms and the donnish life-style which Laurence represented. Above all, he enjoyed the 'spacious, bright Athenian air of that great college'.

In the early years of this century, the specified syllabus of the history tripos extended from classical antiquity to the present, and embraced economic as well as political history. Raby's chosen Special Subject was 'The Reign of Augustus', for which his principal supervisor was J. C. Stobart of Trinity; but he also heard university lectures on the later Roman empire by T. R. Glover and Samuel Dill, on the barbarian invasions by J. B. Bury (who 'was not an inspiring lecturer'), on medieval history by H. M. Gwatkin, and on the history of political thought by G. Lowes Dickinson. He was grateful to all these teachers for training in the use of sources, and for inculcating the habit of reading foreign books and monographs. He later wrote that 'I made notes of everything I read, and I read and re-read my notes with care. In this way, I organised, I suppose, what success I had in examinations.'

<sup>1</sup> See T. E. B. Howarth, *Cambridge Between the Two Wars* (London, 1978), pp. 28 and 81-2.

Raby took a double First in history at Cambridge (Part I, 1909; Part II, 1910). In spite of this impressive result, and for reasons now irrecoverable, he was not offered a fellowship. He briefly entertained hopes of a position in the University Library, but these came to nothing. Instead, it was suggested that he should remain in Cambridge for a fourth year and then take examinations for the Higher Division of the Civil Service. During the academic year 1910–11 he was resident in Cambridge, studying philosophy (ancient and modern) and political economy, for which he followed the lectures of John Maynard Keynes. He took the Civil Service exams successfully in August 1911, and was appointed to HM Office of Works at an annual salary of £150.

Frederic Raby spent his working career at the Office of Works, until he retired from the Civil Service in 1948 at the age of sixty. He was employed successively in the Policy, Establishments and Finance Divisions of the Office, where one of his responsibilities, together with Statues and Brompton Cemetery, Royal Parks and Palaces, was Ancient Monuments. In particular, he was responsible for devising and establishing, in the reconstruction period of the early 1920s, an essentially simple (but in detail necessarily complicated) system of internal financial control which served the Office during the years of recession and expansion. It was the impression of those who worked with him that he ran Ancient Monuments policy almost on his own, at a time when (for example) the Roman Wall was being menaced by gravel operations, and large numbers of ancient monuments had to be taken into guardianship if they were to be kept from ruin. Late in life Raby recalled with particular pleasure his involvement in safeguarding the ruins of Furness Abbey, which the Cavendish family had placed in Office of Works guardianship in 1923, and in whose transformation into an outstandingly beautiful national monument Raby himself was actively concerned. His work brought him in contact with many eminent archaeologists, some of whom became his close friends, such as Cyril Fox, Alexander Keiller, and Mortimer Wheeler; through them, he developed an interest in prehistoric archaeology, and it was a pleasurable aspect of his job that he was obliged to visit sites such as Avebury during Keiller's excavations there. Although he was not trained as an archaeologist, he acquired some expertise in this field, and (for example) personally directed excavations beneath the high altar of the priory church at Thetford, where the Tudor chapel of Henry Fitzroy, the Duke of Richmond (Henry VIII's natural son), was identified. He wrote guidebooks not only to Thetford Priory, but also to nearby monuments

such as Castle Acre Priory and Framlingham Castle. As a result of these interests he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1923 (among those who sponsored him was the great architectural historian and Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Sir Charles Peers); Raby's ballot-paper specified that he was 'a student of mediaeval archaeology, particularly early ecclesiastical and monastic history'. After election, Raby regularly attended the Society's meetings, and subsequently became one of its Vice-Presidents (1940–6). Following his death in 1966, Raby was commemorated by the then President of the Society of Antiquaries, Francis Wormald, as having been 'the administrator who looked after the affairs of the division concerned with Ancient Monuments' and who was 'a staunch and good friend to archaeologists and to this Society'. His work on behalf of the Office of Works was recognised as early as 1927, when he was promoted to Assistant Secretary, and subsequently in 1934, when he was made Companion of the Bath. The award of the CB shows how highly his work was esteemed at that time (the CB is more characteristically awarded to Under-Secretaries). But he never rose above the grade of Assistant Secretary; and the reason must be that his intellectual interests, and ambitions, by then lay elsewhere.

With his appointment in the Office of Works, Raby moved to London, where he lived at first in the Pasmore Edwards Settlement in Tavistock Place; here he had a spacious bed-sitting-room large enough to house his growing library. It was here that he met Albert Mansbridge, founder of the Workers' Educational Association, who became a life-long friend (he was later a neighbour when Frederic and his family were living in Welwyn Garden City, and was treated as a sort of honorary grandfather by the Raby children). In 1914 Raby moved to the University Hall of Residence in Carlyle Square, Chelsea, where he stayed until he married. With the outbreak of war he enrolled at once in the Royal Navy, but as a result of his poor eyesight he was almost immediately discharged; he subsequently did searchlight duty and volunteer work with a boys' club in London's East End (his younger brother, Frank, was killed at the Somme in 1916). It was also during the war that Frederic married his wife, Joyce, and set up home in Battersea. The story of how he met his future wife is characteristic of the man, and bears repeating. While he was still up at Cambridge he spent a period of study leave with a friend at the seaside resort of Hunstanton (Norfolk); there the two young men were spied walking on the beach by a group of schoolgirls, then also at Hunstanton on vacation. One of the girls,

Frederic's future wife Joyce Mason, wolf-whistled at the boys. Frederic was subsequently able to establish that the girls in question were from Huntingdon Grammar School; whereupon he went to the school in Huntingdon and waited at the gate until the girls were leaving; having identified the girl in question, he chased her to her home. The meeting thus having been effected, the two in due course became properly acquainted, and eventually married (at Huntingdon) in 1917. Joyce Raby was a high-spirited woman who, until family responsibilities intervened, was briefly a schoolteacher with strong interests in amateur dramatics and English literature. During the early years of their marriage, when they were living in Battersea, the young couple undertook a strenuous campaign of reading together, which took them pleasurably through the novels of Henry James and the works of a number of French writers, including Ernest Renan, Anatole France and Charles Péguy. For a number of years they lived in Battersea, where their son John was born in 1924; the following year, the family moved to Welwyn Garden City, where their daughter Jane was subsequently born in 1931. There were no further children.

As soon as he was established in London, Frederic had begun laying plans for a large-scale monograph on a medieval subject, namely a history of Frederick Barbarossa. Work on this project involved him in close and methodical reading of twelfth-century Latin sources, published for the most part in the 'Monumenta Germaniae Historica'. In this undertaking he was greatly assisted by the resources of the London Library, from which he was able to borrow books (an inestimable benefit for scholars who are denied access to a well-stocked university library) and which took the initiative of acquiring many periodicals and obscure publications in medieval Latin for Raby's own use.<sup>2</sup> How he found the time and energy for such a project is unclear: it cannot have been easy to carry out research of the highest standard while holding a full-time (and intellectually demanding) position at the Office of Works. In later life he used to say that most of his reading had been done on daily train journeys between Welwyn Garden City and his

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the remarks in his preface to *Secular Latin Poetry*: 'It is difficult to give a just estimate of the extent to which the London Library helped me during the years when this book was being written. Through the constant kindness of the Librarian and other officers of the Library my access to its resources was made easy, and many of the books were specially procured at my request. Most of the texts and many important periodicals relating to Medieval Latin literature are available there, and in this great institution the scholar who has but little leisure finds exactly what he needs' (I, viii).

office at Storey's Gate (SW1); but there is an abiding suspicion, given the enormous amount of reading he was able to achieve, that the flexible timetables of the ministry also contributed to his scholarship. In any event, the book on Barbarossa never came to fruition, because it was overtaken by (what was to become) an even larger project. While visiting the Union in Cambridge, Raby had come across a copy of Archbishop (R.C.) Trench's *Sacred Latin Poetry* (1849), and had conceived the notion of producing a similar but updated study on the whole range of Christian-Latin poetry, one which (as he later said) 'would make a contribution to the history of medieval civilization and would not be a bare literary history like Manitius'; he was adamant that he should remain a historian and not simply a medieval Latin philologist. Accordingly, he 'plunged into large-scale production with all the courage of ignorance and of inexperience'. As he had done as an undergraduate, he kept careful notes on the full extent of his vast programme of reading, and reread and reassembled these notes. Eventually the project grew and the notes coalesced: but, as he was later to record, he could not by then 'recall the stages by which what was intended to be a brief essay written for my own instruction and without thought of publication, became a volume of some 450 pages'.

When the work was complete, Raby sent his manuscript to the Clarendon Press, where it was received enthusiastically by Kenneth Sisam. However, Sisam realised that there were aspects of the work which could be improved by fuller awareness of recent scholarly publication, and he therefore asked the great patristic and liturgical scholar, Dom André Wilmart (1876–1941),<sup>3</sup> who at that point (1925) was at Farnborough, to comment on it. In due course Wilmart got in touch with Raby, and thus was initiated one of the closest friendships of Raby's life. Wilmart had been domiciled in London between 1917–19, and then at Farnborough from 1919 until he was called in 1928 to the Vatican Library; he spent every summer (August and September) between 1921 and 1934 at the British Museum. While he was still in England, he and Raby saw a good deal of each other, and Raby's children remember that Wilmart was one of the very few scholars who were ever invited to dine at the Raby home. Wilmart had an encyclopaedic knowledge of medieval Latin literature, but it was above

<sup>3</sup> See J. Bignami-Odier, L. Brou, and A. Vernet, *Bibliographie sommaire des travaux du père André Wilmart*, *Sussidi eruditi* 5 (Rome, 1953), pp. 7–10 and 14–18 (Wilmart's own account of his life and writings).



all his interest in liturgical and devotional texts, particularly hymns, which was to inform Raby's book and to determine the future direction of his scholarly interests. In order to accommodate Wilmart's suggestions, Raby spent a period of leave in Cambridge, staying at his old college and working assiduously through recent periodical literature in French, German, and Italian in the University Library.

The revised work—a monograph of nearly 500 pages in length—was entitled *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, and was published by the Clarendon Press in 1927. The title fairly indicates the scope of the work: in it Raby attempted to define the emergence and development of a distinctively Christian idiom in Latin poetry, both popular and learned, from the earliest Christian hymns (fourth century) to the Franciscan verse of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Within this scope, he was concerned to illustrate new and characteristically medieval forms, and to show why these forms cannot be judged adequately by the canons of Classical Latin taste. Accordingly, although the book follows a chronological structure, the reader's attention is drawn to innovations in form, rhythm, and rhyme, especially in typical medieval Latin genres such as hymns, sequences and rhymed offices. Within this framework, Raby is able to highlight the most important individual voices: Ambrose and Prudentius in the earliest period, the Victorines in the twelfth century, then John Pecham, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Jacopone da Todi in the thirteenth. The breadth of reference and detailed comparison is underpinned throughout by an awareness of the work of continental scholars, principally Max Manitius, Wilhelm Meyer, and Karl Strecker, and is illustrated by copious quotation. In short, the book provides a compendium—and in some sense an anthology—of what may be regarded as the most distinctive aspects of medieval Latin poetry, together with bibliographical orientation in the most pertinent European scholarship on the subject.

The book was warmly received by reviewers, particularly by Max Manitius and Karl Strecker in Germany. Through its publication, Raby was instantly established as an authority on medieval Latin literature, and thereby came into contact with the international community of medievalists, many of whom were to become close friends, notably Sir Stephen Gaselee, Claude Jenkins, A. G. Little, Rose Graham, Charles Johnson, Helen Waddell, G. G. Coulton, Karl Young, and A. Hamilton Thompson. His contacts with this wider world of medieval

scholarship were inevitably to deflect his interest away from his duties at the Office of Works.

In his (very positive) review of *Christian-Latin Poetry*, Karl Strecker had pointed out that the emphasis of Raby's book on *Christian* poetry was in some sense misrepresentative, in that it ignored the vast body of medieval Latin secular verse. In light of the warm reception of *Christian-Latin Poetry*, the Clarendon Press invited Raby to undertake a complementary volume devoted specifically to secular Latin verse. Seven years later Raby published his *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, an even longer study which consisted of some 800 pages, printed in two volumes by the Clarendon Press in 1934. In this work Raby attempted to trace the influence of classical rhetoric in verse composition, and to identify those features of medieval Latin poetry which were unprecedented in classical antiquity, particularly those which can be regarded as reflexes of vernacular verse. Once again the scope is vast: he begins by tracing the effects of rhetorical training as reflected in Roman literature, especially the flamboyant style known as 'Asiatic', and then following this tradition in the Latin poets of late antiquity (including Ausonius, Claudian, Sidonius Apollinaris, Dracontius, and many others). The core of the book is devoted to analysis of how medieval Latin poets, from the Carolingian period onwards, and culminating in the epic poets of the twelfth century such as Alan of Lille and John of Hauville, applied the rhetorical devices of classical literature in their verse. In the course of his exposition, Raby treats various innovative medieval genres which grew out of this rhetorical tradition, including the characteristic form taken by satirical verse of the twelfth century, and by the so-called Latin *comoediae*; but his principal focus is on the new forms of lyric verse which originated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, perhaps as reflexes of vernacular verse, and were best typified in collections such as the 'Cambridge Songs' and the poetry of Walter of Châtillon. In *Secular Latin Poetry*, as in its predecessor, Raby illustrated his discussion with copious quotation, and provided valuable bibliographical orientation from his own extensive knowledge of secondary scholarship in European languages other than English. The two works—*Christian-Latin Poetry* and *Secular Latin Poetry*—are complementary (though inevitably there is some amount of overlap); together they provide an elegant introduction to what is best and most original in medieval Latin poetry, both in Christian poetry and in poetry derived from classical and vernacular traditions.

Once he had completed *Secular Latin Poetry*, Raby was free to turn his hand to other enterprises. Through his contact with Rose Graham he was invited to contribute the article on Bede to the *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, and he also contributed an important survey of Anglo-Latin literature to the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. But through his friendship with Dom Wilmart, as well as from his reading of poets such as Charles Péguy, he began to reflect deeply on the role of the Church in the modern world. He had been brought up as a Methodist, but during his time at Cambridge had become an atheist, and so remained for many years (his son John, for example, born in 1924, was on principle not baptised). However, during the 1930s he came under the influence of the Christian philosopher Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925), who was a spiritual mentor of Dom Wilmart, and was the chief spokesman of the ‘Modernist’ movement in the Roman church. ‘The Baron’, as he was known, had lived in Kensington, and exerted considerable influence in cultured circles in England. He was widely read in medieval theology, and it was his aim to make the ‘old church’ intellectually inhabitable for modern-day Christians—to interpret the pristine faith in terms of the philosophy and science of later, and the latest, times. Raby never met ‘The Baron’ (he thought he had once seen him sitting in the reading room of the London Library), but he immersed himself in his writings, and contributed a chapter on ‘Baron von Hügel’ to a work entitled *Great Christians*, edited by R. S. Forman (1933). He also edited, in 1933, a collection of essays under the title *The New Learning, a Contribution to a General View of the World* (the preface of which was written by his old friend Albert Mansbridge). His own essay for the volume, on ‘History’, is deeply indebted to von Hügel, and reflects his own abiding interest in the relevance of medieval culture and literature to the modern Christian life. At the same time he was examining the principles of his own faith (his reflections are set out at length in an unpublished book, composed in 1932–3, on *The Christian Life in the Modern World*). The result of these reflections, prompted by his reading of von Hügel, was that he turned at this time to the Church of England, and remained a devout Christian for the rest of his life.

Another of Raby’s scholarly enterprises came to fruition during the 1930s. One of the most valuable and enduring aspects of his *Christian-Latin Poetry* is its treatment of English devotional lyrics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Inspired once again by André Wilmart, who was a pioneer in the study of devotional literature of this period,

Raby started to work on the poetry of John of Howden (d. c.1275), sometime chaplain to Queen Eleanor, the mother of Edward I. John was the author of a sizeable corpus of Latin verse, including lengthy poems such as the *Philomena*, *Canticum amoris*, *Cythara*, and *Viola*, which at the time of *Christian-Latin Poetry* (1927) had not been published. In his first two books, Raby had relied entirely on published materials, and had seldom referred to unprinted sources; but he had an abiding interest in manuscript sources, as is clear from a comment he made in *The New Learning* concerning the study of the Middle Ages: 'it offers a field of research for those who love the finer pleasures of scholarship, and delight in the use of unprinted sources'. He therefore undertook to edit the poems of John of Howden (excepting the *Philomena*, which had been printed in Germany in 1930) from their manuscript sources. The resulting edition, *Poems of John of Hoveden*, was published by the Surtees Society in 1939. The work clearly reveals Raby's gift for editing medieval Latin verse, and it is a pity that he did not devote further scholarly effort to this end.

It is nevertheless astonishing that Raby was able to accomplish as much as he did—two works of literary history totalling some 1,300 pages and a major edition of a hitherto unknown medieval Latin poet—while in the full-time employment of the Office of Works. Only occasionally could the two facets of his intellectual activity have come together, but on one memorable occasion in the late 1930s they did so, in circumstances that deserve to be recorded. In the winter of 1937–8, the Director of the Warburg Institute, Dr Fritz Saxl, was attempting to negotiate the removal of the Warburg Library from its premises in Thames House on the Embankment, to more spacious accommodation in the Imperial Institute building of the University of London. However, the proposed removal involved structural alteration, which in turn required the permission of HM Office of Works. Saxl wrote a number of letters concerning the urgency of the move to Frederic Raby at the Office of Works, who was responsible for approving the expenditure in question. Negotiations of this sort inevitably involved delay. Since the learned members of the Warburg Institute were well aware of Raby's reputation as a medieval Latinist, however, they asked the young Ernst Gombrich (now Sir Ernst) to express the urgency of the case to Raby in medieval Latin verse, in the hope of expediting matters. Gombrich composed the following verses and sent them, under Saxl's name and on the Institute's behalf, to Raby:

Stella desperantium, miserorum lumen  
 Rerum primum mobile, nobis quasi numen  
 Audias propitiae supplicentem sonum  
 De profundis clamitat studii patronum  
 Otium molestum est, et periculosum  
 Menses sine linea vexant studiosum.  
 Statum hunc chaoticum noli prolongare  
 Animam et domum nos fac aedificare  
 Libros nostros libera turri de seclusa  
 Quibus mus nunc fruitur gaudeat et Musa,  
 O, duc nos ad gratiae sempiternum fontem  
 Unde tibi lauri frons coronabit frontem.  
 qui in Bibliotheca Warburgiana  
 studiis se dedere ardent.

Raby replied immediately to Saxl, in the same verse-form:

Doctor disertissime, rector venerande,  
 Omnibus amabilis semper et amande,  
 Congemiscens audio verba deprecantium  
 Imo corde vocibus tactus eiulantum.  
 Set nunc tibi nuncio gaudium suave,  
 Te et tuos liberans studiosos a ve.  
 EANT LIBRI LIBERE. Deus sit tutamen  
 Libris et legentibus in eternum. Amen.

Raby's poem, dated 26 January 1938, was accompanied by a more prosaic note in English, authorising the works: 'Dear Dr Saxl, The attached reply, unworthy to be compared with your own composition, which has been much admired here, needs a gloss to the effect that the Office of Works are writing at once to London University, authorising the alterations, subject to a few precautions being taken in the carrying out of the work. I wish you all success in your new quarters.'<sup>4</sup>

During the Second World War, the Office of Works was temporarily removed to Rhyl in North Wales, from where its much-reduced operations were directed by Raby himself. By now the family had moved from Welwyn Garden City to Harpenden, and Raby was unavoidably separated from them. Tragically, in 1942, his wife Joyce died unexpectedly under anaesthetic during a minor operation on a nerve in her arm. Although the Raby children were now eighteen and eleven years old,

<sup>4</sup> The correspondence between Raby and Gombrich was privately printed by Gombrich at the Friends' Press (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) in 1984, under the title, *The Warburg Institute and H.M. Office of Works. E.H. Gombrich in memory of Frederic Raby*. As Gombrich commented, 'The whole stands as a nostalgic tribute to a vanishing tradition of the Civil Service, and as a memorial to a most humane and lovable scholar.'

respectively, the death of his wife undoubtedly put him under great personal strain, one result of which was that a year or so later he was given sabbatical leave from the Office of Works on medical grounds (defined at the time as a 'tired heart'). He took this leave at St Deiniol's Library (founded by Gladstone) in Hawarden, not far from Rhyl and very near to Chester where he had been raised as a boy. The Librarian (and later Warden, 1948–56) of St Deiniol's Library at that time was Dr A. R. (Alec) Vidler, who was a close friend of Raby's, and shared with him an enthusiasm for the Spanish mystics, an enthusiasm which they were both able to pursue when Vidler returned to Cambridge as Dean of King's College in 1956. Vidler was also the editor of the journal *Theology*, and at his invitation Raby contributed articles on Frédéric Ozanam and John Neville Figgis. During the war Hawarden was home to a number of refugees from Nazi Germany, including Hans Ehrenberg (Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg) and Georg Misch (Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen), author of the massive *Geschichte der Autobiographie*. Raby was able to draw Misch's attention to several examples of medieval Latin autobiography, including Guigo the Elder (d. 1137), prior of the Grande Chartreuse, whose works had been edited by André Wilmart (though Misch does not acknowledge the debt). One gets the impression that Hawarden at this time was functioning as a sort of institute of advanced studies.

Shortly after the end of the war Raby retired from the Civil Service (on 11 December 1948, at the age of sixty); but he continued his involvement in the activities for which his Civil Service career had prepared him: he was a Trustee and Governor of Dr Johnson's House (Gough Square), and served from 1949 to 1956 on the Cathedrals Advisory Committee (now the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England), where he was involved *inter alia* in post-war restoration work at Exeter Cathedral and in plans for the redecoration of Audley Chantry at Salisbury Cathedral. By the time of his retirement from the Civil Service, however, his interests lay in resuming the scholarly career at Cambridge which thirty-six years' employment at the Office of Works could be seen as having interrupted.

By the time war broke out in 1939, Raby had achieved an international reputation in the field of medieval Latin literature, and a number of honours consequent upon that reputation followed. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1941, and an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, in the same year. In 1942 he was elected Corresponding Fellow of the Mediaeval Academy of America, the same

year in which he received the degree Litt.D. from the University of Cambridge. (He was subsequently to be awarded an honorary D.Litt. from the University of Oxford in 1959.) Of all these honours, the one which was to determine the course of his remaining life was the election to Jesus College, Cambridge. Within Jesus College the principal architect of Raby's election was Frederick—or Freddy, as he was invariably known—Brittain (1893–1969) who was, like Raby, a keen student of medieval Latin literature.<sup>5</sup> Like Raby, Brittain was interested in the forms of medieval Latin lyrics and their reflexes in vernacular literatures, an interest which was articulated in *The Medieval Latin and Romance Lyric to AD 1300* (1937). Since 1930 Medieval Latin had been recognised in Cambridge as a specified subject under the aegis of the Faculty of Modern Languages, and Brittain had been largely involved in teaching it; accordingly, when in 1946 the first university lectureship in the subject was established at Cambridge, Brittain was appointed to the post. Brittain had met Raby through a mutual friend (Edward Wynn, Bishop of Ely 1941–56), and had realised at once both what an asset Raby would be to the incipient programme of medieval Latin studies in Cambridge, and how much Raby himself aspired to return to academic life. Accordingly, when Raby retired from the Civil Service in 1948, given that his wife had died six years earlier, he was able to move to Cambridge and into residence at Jesus. He was given a house at the end of Park Terrace, overlooking Parker's Piece—'in just such surroundings', he wrote in his diary, 'as I had imagined for myself in my dreams of the future when I was an undergraduate'. Since he was at that time sixty years old, and since the normal age of retirement in Cambridge was then sixty-seven, it was possible for his Honorary Fellowship to be held in abeyance, in order to enable him to take up an ordinary Fellowship for seven years (1948–55). During those seven years Raby supervised Jesus undergraduates in history (who included, curiously enough, his own son John), though he never had occasion to deliver a lecture to the University. He was a kindly supervisor whose manner rose to nothing more than mild sarcasm even when treating cases of flagrant plagiarism in his undergraduates' supervision essays. In general he pitched himself fully into the college life from which he

<sup>5</sup> On Raby's career at Jesus, see Frederick Brittain, *It's a Don's Life* (London, 1972), pp. 216–18, as well as the obituary of Raby (also by Brittain) in the *Jesus College Report 1967*, pp. 51–3 (which reproduces an excellent drawing of Raby done in 1965 by William E. Narraway; the same drawing is reproduced, less well, in *It's a Don's Life*, pl. VI).

had long felt himself an exile. During the years in which he was a teaching fellow, he occupied rooms on the same staircase as Freddy Brittain. The two became inseparable companions (Frederic acted as best man when, late in life, Freddy married Muriel Cunnington in 1959); they lunched and dined together every day during term-time, both meals being preceded by a single glass of sherry in Freddy's rooms. Frederic took snuff once a day in the Combination Room following dinner. On occasions when he presided at high table, his conversation was memorable for its intellectual range and for the nature of his quotation, embracing St Augustine, Dante, George Herbert, Dr Johnson, and P. G. Wodehouse, and many more. He was active in college societies, including the Roosters (an informal Jesus dining club, of which Freddy Brittain was a lifelong champion) as well as university societies, including the John Mason Neale Society, which he attended unfailingly, but to which he was never persuaded to deliver a paper, in spite of his incomparable knowledge of medieval Latin hymns.

Whereas during his time with the Civil Service, the pursuit of two careers had demanded rigorous self-discipline, with the result that Raby had managed to publish an enormous amount, the period of his fellowship at Jesus College saw less scholarly publication, perhaps because self-discipline was no longer such an urgent necessity. He revised his *Christian-Latin Poetry*, taking the opportunity to incorporate discussion of John of Howden and to update the bibliography, for a second edition which was printed in 1953; a similarly updated second edition of *Secular Latin Poetry* appeared in 1957. During these years he also produced *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, which was published in 1959; but although this is a convenient anthology (including some amount of annotation) which goes far beyond the scope of its predecessor (edited by Sir Stephen Gaselee in 1925), it cannot be said to break new ground, and many of the pieces included in *The Oxford Book* had already been 'anthologised' (in some sense) by their treatment, with extensive quotation, in *Christian-Latin Poetry* and *Secular Latin Poetry*. With the exception of a brief article published posthumously in 1968, *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse* was Raby's last publication. He died peacefully in his sleep on 30 October 1966.

Frederic Raby was a modest and kindly man, a gentleman in the older sense of the word, a model of courtesy who radiated friendship, and was an enchanting companion, both for the genial warmth of his personality as well as for the astonishing breadth of his learning. (It was



said among the Fellows of Jesus that, in his time, there was no more learned scholar in either Oxford or Cambridge, and the present-day Fellows of Jesus who knew Raby still express wonderment at his knowledge of arcane aspects of their own disciplines.) He never said an ill-word of another scholar's work. His pleasures in life were modest: he derived great pleasure and enlightenment from a number of trips to France and Italy; he enjoyed playing cricket and walking in the countryside, and (during his time at Jesus) the companionship of other scholars and a daily pinch of snuff (he was a non-smoker). He attended college chapel regularly and took Communion every Sunday during term. His abiding interest in the church is reflected in his membership of the Central Council for the Care of Churches, the Ely Diocesan Advisory Committee, the Additional Curates Society and the Alcuin Club. He is said to have had a wonderful way with children, whom he treated as his equals and contemporaries, even in his late seventies.

Frederic Raby's scholarly reputation needs to be understood in the context of medieval Latin studies in Britain in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> At that time the study of medieval Latin verse was the province of amateurs and dilettantes, epitomised by works such as John Addington Symonds's *Wine, Women and Song: Medieval Latin Students' Songs*, Helen Waddell's *The Wandering Scholars*, and Gaselee's aforementioned *Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*. Raby's two great works transformed the perception of the field in the English-speaking world, and put the study of medieval Latin poetry on a professional level by revealing both the extent and nature of the poetry itself, as well as the world of modern European scholarship which is necessary for its elucidation. It could be said that Raby's work makes accessible to English-speaking scholars the riches of Max Manitius's immense *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur* (published in three massive volumes in Munich between 1911 and 1931), a work to which Raby was happy to acknowledge his indebtedness. Raby's work is of more limited scope than that of Manitius, since it treats only poetry, and it lacks the abundant reference to manuscript sources which makes Manitius's work indispensable even today. Raby's work has other limitations as well: his opinions were sometimes based on acquaintance with no more than the first few pages of a work, and in such cases his

<sup>6</sup> See M. Lapidge, 'Medieval Latin Philology in the British Isles', in *La filologia medievale e umanistica greca e latina nel secolo XX*, Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici 7 (Rome, 1993), pp. 153–88, with discussion of Raby's work at p. 172.

judgement is often wrong. No scholar, however, not even Raby, could manage to read every line of medieval Latin verse. What is remarkable is how very often his control is precise and his judgement sound. It is likely that today, some sixty years after their first publication, his two great works have a smaller audience than they once had: there are fewer and fewer students who can read a long quotation in Latin (to say nothing of Greek) without the aid of a translation, and his literary judgements, though the expression of an urbane and cultured scholar, will inevitably seem somewhat old-fashioned. However, the immense range of his learning and the modesty of its presentation can still serve as a model for younger scholars, and there can be no doubt that the present healthy state of medieval Latin studies in Britain and North America owes a great deal to the work of Frederic Raby.

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*Note.* Frederic Raby died three years before I took up permanent residence in this country, and I unfortunately never had the opportunity of meeting him. I have therefore been obliged to rely on the memories of others. My greatest debt is to John Raby, who generously made available to me his father's papers, and helped me with many aspects of his earlier career. The papers include two volumes of Frederic's unpublished memoirs, which he entitled 'APOMNHMONEYMATA', the first (written in 1944–5) pertaining to his early schooling in Chester and Cambridge, as well as to his years with the Office of Works, and the second (written 1957, updated in 1964–5) concerning his time at Jesus College, Cambridge, but consisting largely of anecdotes pertaining to distinguished persons whom he had known. His unpublished writings also include the manuscript of a book entitled 'The Christian Life in the Modern World', written in 1932–3. Without access to these unpublished works it would have been impossible to compile the present memoir. I am also extremely grateful to John Raby, and to his sister, Mrs Jane Caven (née Raby) for commenting on an earlier draft of this memoir. I had the honour of being invited to dine in Jesus College with those Fellows of the college who knew Raby personally, and I am most grateful to them all for sharing their memories with me: Dr Ilya Gershevitch, Dr M. J. Waring, Mr E. F. Mills (Archivist of Jesus College), Dr L. E. R. Picken, and Mrs Muriel Brittain (widow of Freddy Brittain). I have drawn on a memoir of Frederic Raby's career in the Office of Works written in 1967 by Sir Edward Muir, now in the possession of the Academy, and supplemented by a letter (dated 20 January 1981) by Dr A. J. Taylor, formerly Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who at an early stage of his career worked under Raby's supervision at the Office of Works. Dr Taylor was also kind enough to comment on an earlier draft of this present memoir, and I am much indebted to him for help in clarifying the account of Raby's Civil Service

career. Professor Christopher Brooke shared with me his unrivalled knowledge of the University of Cambridge, and helped me to eliminate many inaccuracies and infelicities from an earlier draft of this memoir. I am also very grateful to A. R. D Wickson, Headmaster of the King's School, Chester, for answering my queries about Raby's school career; to Jonathan Smith, Archivist of Trinity College, Cambridge, for help with Raby's career at Trinity; and to Adrian James (Assistant Librarian, Society of Antiquaries of London) for supplying useful information on Raby's membership of the Society of Antiquaries. Dr Richard Gem (Secretary, Cathedrals Fabric Commission) and Miss Judith Scott kindly supplied me with information on Raby's work for the Cathedrals Advisory Committee. Dr Rosalind Love helped by looking through the minutes of the John Mason Neale Society for me. Professor Geoffrey Martin, formerly Keeper of Public Records, made enquiries on my behalf concerning Raby's time with the Office of Works, and provided helpful exegesis on the hierarchies of Civil Service employment. Two friends, Peter Dronke and J. B. Trapp, helped with information of various kinds. I am obliged to say, finally, that in many conversations with people who knew Frederic Raby personally, I have encountered only warmth and affection, and have not heard a harsh or critical word spoken about him.

Frederic Raby's unpublished papers are to be deposited in the archives of Jesus College, Cambridge, where they will be accessible to scholars in the future. His two volumes of memoirs are to be published as: F. J. E. Raby, *APOMNHMON-NEYMATA: Recollections of a Medieval Latinist*, ed. M. Lapidge (Biblioteca di 'Medioevo Latino', Florence).

*Editorial note.* The Academy is grateful to Professor Lapidge for volunteering in 1996 to prepare this obituary, after it had lain dormant for many years.