

Introduction

Linda E. Mitchell, Katherine L. French, and Douglas L. Biggs

This volume is in celebration of Barbara Hanawalt's life and career as historian and dedicated educator. While learning from her prodigious and wide-ranging scholarship, all of us—colleagues, friends, and former graduate students—have also benefited enormously from her generosity, wisdom, and compassion, all the while learning from her extensive and wide-ranging scholarship. In recognition, we hope these essays will reflect both our gratitude and her intellectual impact on the field of medieval English social history.

Barbara was born on March 4, 1941 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her father, Nelson G. Hanawalt, who had been educated at Columbia, was hired as a Professor of Psychology by Rutgers University in 1936 as an experimental psychologist. Her mother had earned a teaching license and a master's degree, and had practiced the craft of teaching for many years, before she left the profession for the life of a wife and mother. With both parents professional educators, young Barbara and her siblings grew up in an intellectually challenging household. When still a very young girl, Barbara's father took temporary leave from Rutgers and served in the Navy as a line officer at a Naval Training Center, using his professional expertise to help determine which new recruits were psychologically suited for naval service. When the war was over, Nelson returned to Douglass College and Rutgers University, where he had a long and distinguished career.

Barbara chose to attend Douglass College on graduating high school. Although interested in history as a major, it was not until she took her first history course with the great Byzantinist Peter Charanis that she decided to pursue medieval studies. Charanis, whose most influential works centered on the seventh-century Empire, had a profound impact on Barbara and she subsequently took other courses in Byzantine history and Greek art. Also at Douglass, Barbara met another of the faculty's medievalists, Margaret Hastings, who would also prove to be a significant influence on her professional life. Hastings had come to Douglass College in 1946, the year before her influential book, *The Court of Common Pleas in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study of Legal Administration*, appeared. Barbara's career at Douglass was notable for her high academic achievement: she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and awarded a Woodrow Wilson Graduate Fellowship. She chose to attend the University of Michigan and to work with Sylvia Thrupp, whose work on the merchant class of medieval London was both well known and widely respected.¹ Barbara found Thrupp's approach to the past intriguing because her

¹ Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948).

work crossed disciplinary boundaries, as had the work of Thrupp's own doctoral supervisor, the great Eileen Power. At Michigan, Thrupp encouraged Barbara to apply the methods of social scientists to the field of history and this opened new avenues with which to explore the past that would influence so much of her work for the rest of her professional career.

Working with the ideas Sylvia Thrupp encouraged her to employ, Barbara embarked on her journey to discover the lives and experiences of peasants, women, and others whom historical narratives had under-represented.² First at Indiana University, then the University of Minnesota, and most recently at The Ohio State University as the George III Professor of British Studies, Barbara pioneered innovative uses of medieval records to uncover patterns of crime, the ties that bound peasant families together, the varied experiences of children growing up in medieval London, and the wealth, work, and poverty experienced by women in the medieval countryside and in London. In exploring these diverse topics, Barbara looked beyond legal and administrative records to the literature that her subjects might have listened to around the hearth, purchased in a stationer's stall in London, or which shaped the worldview of the judges, clerks, and scribes who created the records so necessary to social historians. In *Growing Up in Medieval London*, she went beyond analyzing London's medieval documents regarding medieval children to experiment with different ways to write historical narratives.³ In this book, she combined evidence from diverse sources to create vivid composite narratives that gave life to her statistics, examples, and bureaucratic evidence.

Central to Barbara's scholarship has been the role of women and the importance of family. In her first book, *Crime and Conflict in English Communities, 1300–1348*, she not only established patterns of criminal behavior and its links to social status, but also tied this behavior to specific manors and families.⁴ With the aid of Ambrose Raftis, and the so-called "Toronto School," which was working to reconstitute peasant families and manors, Barbara connected criminal activities to family life, famously declaring "the family that slays together stays together."⁵ Realizing that criminal behavior was not only influenced by economic circumstances, but also by gender roles, Barbara's work from the very beginning included women. This interest gained her inclusion in the first collection of essays on medieval

² Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford and NY, 2007), p. vi–vii.

³ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: the Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford and NY, 1993).

⁴ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict in English Communities, 1300–1348* (Cambridge, MA, 1979).

⁵ Barbara Hanawalt (Westman), "The Peasant Family and Crime in Fourteenth-Century England," *The Journal of British Studies* 13.2 (1974): p. 16. This article was also reprinted in Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York and Oxford, 1998).

women's history, *Women in Medieval Society*, edited by Susan Mosher Stuard.⁶ This collection of essays still matters to all of us who work and teach in women's history.⁷

Attention to family and her innovative use of sources come together most famously in her second book, *The Ties that Bind: Peasant Families in Medieval England*.⁸ Barbara reconstituted peasant households through a sophisticated statistical analysis of the information reported in the Coroners' Rolls: the sex, age, place, time, and season of accidental deaths. Her work revealed, among other things, that the nuclear family pre-dated the Black Death; that women worked with their husbands to support their families; and that toddlers were as clumsy and as curious in the fourteenth century as they are today. Her engaging style, eye for a good story, and attention to context has made this one of the most popular texts in medieval studies in the last 20 years. It has also expanded our understanding of pre-modern family dynamics, arguing for the importance of women's economic and familial contributions, and for valuing the strategies peasants employed in order to provide for all members of the family.

Barbara's wide-ranging scholarship has also addressed a number of important historiographical debates, especially concerning the nature and population of the medieval family, the existence of childhood as a life stage, and the role of women in London's economic development. In *The Ties That Bind*, she argued that the nuclear family and family affection pre-dated the plague, thus challenging the popular and influential position of Philippe Ariès that pre-modern families did not think about their children in the same way as modern families. Barbara's analysis supersedes that of Ariès by demonstrating that both the biological and cognitive development of humans, as well as the structure of pre-modern families, more or less required not only a concept of childhood, but also made it inconceivable that families would not cherish and protect their children, as well as mourn their deaths.⁹ This later issue then became the focus of her third monograph, *Growing Up in Medieval London*. In her most recent work *The Wealth of Wives*, Barbara looks at the economic role of London women, arguing that the generous (for the time) inheritance rules of medieval London circulated a great deal of wealth that contributed to London's growth as an international economic capital.¹⁰

⁶ Barbara A. Hanawalt, "The Female Felon in Fourteenth-Century England," in Susan Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1976), originally "The Female Felon" appeared in *Viator* 5 (1974), pp. 253–68.

⁷ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Roundtable-Medieval History: Old and New Classics III*, American Historical Association, New York, 2009.

⁸ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bind: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford and NY, 1886).

⁹ Hanawalt, *Ties That Bind*, pp. 4–12. See also Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, tr. Robert Baldick (New York, 1962).

¹⁰ Hanawalt, *Wealth of Wives*, p. 4

Numerous articles, collections of essays, and book chapters have also allowed Barbara to explore in different ways issues of conflict resolution and the relationship between medieval literature and legal records.¹¹ Aware that the concerns addressed in bureaucratic and legal records were also fodder for literary exploration by known and anonymous medieval authors, Hanawalt repeatedly pulled together leading medieval scholars of many disciplines to explore the ways that different fields dealt with similar issues.¹² In these collections, Barbara's interest in crime led her to explore the tales of Robin Hood, and her interest in childhood and adolescence to a little known ballad "The Childe of Bristowe."¹³

Given Barbara's eclectic and wide-ranging scholarly interests, it is not surprising that she was equally welcoming of students whose own scholarly choices did not fit into a narrow mold, as well as developing friendships with medievalists whose own work spanned yet other interests and methodologies. This abundance of options makes it possible to present a volume in her honor that is eclectic but yet reflects Barbara's own excitement over the varieties of historical experience we all as medievalists share. Many of the 12 contributors learned their craft as her graduate students. Her lessons on the importance of historical context, careful use of primary sources, and recognition of the humanity of our subjects are reflected in their choice of topics and methods of approach. Others are long-time colleagues and friends who have shared similar interests, and whose own scholarship has influenced Barbara and vice versa.

When seeking contributors to this volume, we did not dictate the topics of their essays, but a nice serendipity has resulted in us being able to organize the volume into two general halves. The first six pieces develop their studies through sophisticated mining of sources that invoke social historical methodologies, statistical analysis, and prosopography. These different approaches reflect several different threads in Barbara's own work, from her use of statistics in *Crime and Conflict*, to her recent work on London wives and widows. In this section, Jonathan Good, Susan Duxbury, and Benjamin McRee investigate aspects of urban economic and socio-political culture: "alien" clothworkers in London and their conflicts with "native" clothworkers, the inland trade in wine dominated by Southampton and Winchester, and the role of the mayor in the managing of conflict and political controversy in medieval Norwich. Janet Loengard, Joel Rosenthal, and Susan Steuer all use administrative and legal sources to extract information and develop challenging

¹¹ See, for example, "Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence," in Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowalesk, (eds), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1988), pp. 188–212; some of Hanawalt's journal articles have been reprinted *Of Good and Ill Repute*.

¹² Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 1994).

¹³ Barbara A. Hanawalt (ed.), *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context* (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 154–75; Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (eds), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 155–78.

perspectives on women and litigation in the King's court of law, on the mobility of bishops from one diocese to another, and on the identification of "chaste widows" as a specific population of single women in medieval English culture.

The six essays in the second half of the volume focus on single subjects or develop composite portraits through both creative and inventive treatments of sources and the re-evaluation of commonly used texts, as Barbara did in numerous articles and, most significantly, in *Growing Up in Medieval London*. Laura Michele Diener investigates and seeks to identify the unnamed sister of Aelred of Rievaulx through reading his treatise, *De Institutione Inclusarum*. Linda Mitchell and Douglas Biggs mine public documents to reconstruct the lives of aristocratic women: Countesses of Norfolk Maud Marshal and Margaret Marshal, and Lady Margaret Sarnesfield. Katherine French seeks to tease out the historical and parochial context of Margery Kempe through a re-reading of her *Book*. Anne DeWindt and Madonna Hettinger each creatively re-imagine peasants' lives through the careful mining of sources that are not often used to discuss the history of non-elites in medieval culture.

All the essays reflect Barbara's interests in the unconventional and challenging use of sources and the need to recover hidden, lost, displaced, or ignored subjects. And they are all encomiums to her collegiality, mentorship, and enduring curiosity for her field and ours.

Barbara Hanawalt has enriched medieval English history with her individual and collaborative scholarship and her commitment to graduate teaching. Her model of professionalism, feminism, and *bon vivant* has not only taught us better scholarship, but also gardening and cooking skills, and an appreciation for the riches one reaps when combining scholarship and friendship.

L.E.M.

K.L.F.

D.L.B.