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*Saints' Lives by  
Walter of Châtillon*

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**ALEXIS** | British Library,  
MS. Cotton Vespasian D. ix

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by **CARSTEN WOLLIN**



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## PREFACE

The TORONTO MEDIEVAL LATIN TEXTS series is published for the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. The series is intended primarily to provide editions suitable for university courses and curricula, at a price within the range of most students' resources. Many Medieval Latin texts are available only in expensive scholarly editions equipped with full textual apparatus but with little or no annotation for the student; even more are out of print, available only in libraries; many interesting texts still remain unedited.

Editions in this series are usually based on one manuscript only, with a minimum of textual apparatus; emendations are normally made only where the text fails to make sense, not in order to restore the author's original version. Editors are required to select their manuscript with great care, choosing one that reflects a textual tradition as little removed from the original as possible, or one that is important for some other reason (such as a local variant of a text, or a widely influential version). Manuscript orthography and syntax are carefully preserved.

The Editorial Board is not merely supervisory: it is responsible for reviewing all proposals, for examining all specimens of editors' work, and for the final reading of all editions submitted for publication; it decides on all matters of editorial policy.

All of the volumes in the series are printed by photo-offset lithography, from camera-ready copy prepared at the Centre for Medieval Studies, using its computer and printing resources.

As General Editor, I would like to thank the Centre for Medieval Studies and its Directors, past and present, for their continuing support and encouragement at all stages in the development of the series.

A.G.R.

[ SUMMARY ]

This volume presents an edition of three poetic *Vitae*, the lives of saints Brendan, Alexis, and Thomas Becket, all written anonymously but here ascribed to Walter of Châtillon (ca 1130–1200). A full critical edition is in preparation for the series *Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis*; the single-manuscript edition offered here has been prepared to make these texts quickly and easily available to the public and more accessible to students.

The ascription of the *Vita S. Brandani*, *Vita S. Alexii*, and *Vita S. Thome* to Walter of Châtillon is based primarily on a great number of common stylistic features: all three poems have parallels both with one another and with other of Walter's known works. Space does not permit, in this edition, detailed presentation of the parallels and common features, but the forthcoming critical edition will take into account all the manuscripts and different versions and will deal extensively with the issues of ascription and sources.

Dedicated to Pope Alexander III ca 1163/64, the *Vita S. Brandani* is a poetic translation of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage de Saint Brendan* (also in verse) by Benedeit, using the Latin prose *Navigatio* to fill in gaps in Benedeit's version. The *Vita S. Alexii* is based on a Latin prose translation, made at the end of the tenth century in the monastery of St Boniface in Rome, of the Greek version of the legend of St Alexis. Complete texts of the *Vita S. Brandani* and *Vita S. Alexii* are preserved only in British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian D.ix. The *Vita S. Brandani* has been published twice before, in 1872 and 1873, but not very accurately. A shorter version of the *Vita S. Alexii* appeared in 1840; the longer version is printed here for the first time.

The *Vita S. Thome* was written after the murder of Thomas Becket on 29 December 1170 but before his consecration as a saint on 21 February 1173, and makes use of oral and written accounts by Becket's friends. It is dedicated to a high ecclesiastic, perhaps the archbishop of Reims, William 'of the White Hands,' or even Pope Alexander III. The version of the poem presented here, version  $\alpha$ , has not been printed before. It is edited from *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 344*.

The Latin of all three poems, which employ the 'goliardic' line and stanza, is difficult, and the texts are supported by numerous notes to aid translation. The edition is also accompanied by a very brief introduction, textual notes, and an appendix listing selected parallels with other works of Walter of Châtillon.