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Women and the written word : textual culture in court and convent during the twelfth-century Renaissance

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*Socially, individually, in every way but biologically,
woman is made, not born. So, of course is man.*

*Each is a cultural artifact laboriously worked up,
pieced together, written and rewritten as a kind of palimpsest.¹*

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This work is dedicated to the angels of Primrose Avenue.

¹ Sheila Delany, *Writing Woman: Sex, Class and Literature, Medieval and Modern* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 1.

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Opening



1. INTRODUCTION

The words in the title of this dissertation each carry their own long traditions of scholarly research. The “written word” situates the following study in manuscript culture before the advent of the printing press, while the inclusion of “women” signals the discussion of gender roles in relation to the manuscript as object. In turn, “textual culture” points to the literary participation of women, as “court and convent” designates the primary socio-economic settings of their contribution.¹ Finally, the well-known phrase “Twelfth-Century Renaissance” denotes the significant period of expansion in thought and artistic development at this time in Western European history.² Placed together, they create an interdisciplinary focus which brings into account the role of women in connection to the written culture of an important historical period.

This study aims to identify women’s engagement in the manuscript tradition of the “Twelfth-Century Renaissance” (c. 1050–c. 1225), specifically to uncover the priorities or preferences of a female reader. Historically considered to be a period dominated by men, where the majority of books are attributed to a male monastic environment, this study argues that women, especially from a court or convent milieu, played an active role in the production of manuscripts throughout Western Europe during the “Twelfth-Century Renaissance,” as scribe, patron, and reader. To support this argument, I will examine a range of manuscripts that were copied by female scribes, commissioned by female patrons, or designed for the use of female readers. Therefore, the scope and limitations of this research are delineated by twelfth-century women’s social setting, literary culture, and textual participation, thus positioning it at a crossroad of Women’s Studies, Medieval History, and Manuscript Studies.

The appendix to this dissertation brings together the extant books belonging to and used by women during the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.³ The large number of manuscripts included

¹ Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, eds. *Medieval Women Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Joe Bray and Ruth Evans, “Introduction: What is Textual Culture?” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 2, no. 2 (2007): 1–8. For an overview of social-economic context, see Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450–1500* (London: Phoenix Press, 1995), 93–168.

² Term popularized by Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

³ Although I have endeavored to include all known manuscripts used by women during the twelfth century, it is possible that some have been overlooked.

in this appendix, over 150, demonstrate the breadth and depth of women's contribution to book production during the twelfth century. Additionally, a database has been created to chart the physical features of extant manuscripts belonging to women in the twelfth century, offering various opportunities for future quantitative research. The database provides an added aspect of Digital Humanities to this study, utilizing modern tools to better understand medieval book production.

A focused investigation into the known manuscripts used and produced by women in religious and noble houses in Western Europe during the twelfth century advances an avenue of research that is not yet fully explored.⁴ Before the advent of mechanical printing, the hand-written codex was the primary vehicle for the transmission of knowledge. Of course, paintings, music, architecture, and sculpture also served as means of commemorating culture, but it was ink and parchment that created a network of intellectual exchange which supported the dissemination of new ideas in the twelfth century.⁵ Scholarship on the "material culture of women's lives," especially for the High Middle Ages, has primarily taken the form of individual case studies, highlighting specific women or a single female monastic house.⁶ Thus, for the twelfth century, the literary production of the

German abbess Hildegard of Bingen, the scribal activity at the English Abbey of Barking, or the patronage of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine are well researched.⁷ However, the large majority of studies regarding ownership of books by medieval women primarily concentrates on the Late Middle Ages, a period between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, where more evidence has survived to support arguments for women's participation in literary culture.⁸ This dissertation attempts to fill some of these gaps by presenting a comprehensive examination of female book production and ownership in Western Europe over the course of the "long twelfth century" (c. 1050–1225).⁹ Each chapter of this dissertation will show noblewomen's and nuns' contribution to manuscript production, through discussing their opportunities for education and literacy (chapter one), highlighting examples of books by genre made for women (chapters two and three) and made by women

and Henrietta Leyser, eds. *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman* (London: Routledge, 2005). Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), and Monica Green, *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). For work on individual convents and their medieval booklists in Germany, see Rodney M. Thompson, "The Place of Germany," 127–140. Also, Hotchin, "Women's Reading and Monastic Reform," 139–90.

⁷ Among the extensive literature on Hildegard of Bingen, see Barbara Newman, *Voice of the Living Light; Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Peter Dronke and Charles Burnett, eds. *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art* (London: Warburg Institute, 1998); Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum*, eds. Albert Derolez and Peter Dronke (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991). For the nun-scribes of Barking Abbey, see Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell, eds. *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture; Authorship and Authority in a Female Community* (York: Medieval Press, 2012). Also, Mary Carpenter Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). For the role of queens and literary patronage, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, see Rita LeJune, "Role litteraire d'Alienor d'Aquitaine et de sa famille," *Cultura Neolatina* 14 (1954): 5–57. June Hall McCash, ed., *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996). And Margaret Schaus and Susan Mosher Stuard, "Citizens of No Mean City: Medieval Women's History," *Choice* 30 (1992): 588.

⁸ On female book ownership and reading in the Late Middle Ages, see Anne Hutchinson, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and the late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 215–228. Mary C. Erler, *Women, Reading and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Dennis H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Also, Monica Green, "Books as a Source of Medical Education for Women in the Middle Ages," *DYNAMIS* 20 (2000): 331–369. Some studies cover a period from 600–1530 or from Antiquity to the eighteenth century; for example, see Alison Moore and Elizabeth L'Estrange, *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Construction, Transformation, and Subversion 600–1530* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

⁹ Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen, eds. *European Transformations, The Long Twelfth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012). This dissertation primarily focuses on France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire during the High Middle Ages.

⁴ Julie Hotchin, "Women's Reading and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Germany: The Library of the Nuns of Lippoldsberg," in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture, Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 156, n. 54; Regarding the convent library of Lippoldsberg Abbey during the twelfth century, Hotchin writes, "The manuscripts require more detailed paleographic and codicological examination." Also, Rodney M. Thomson, "The Place of Germany in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Books, Scriptoria and Libraries," in *Turning Over a New Leaf: Change and Development in the Medieval Manuscript*, eds. Erik Kwakkel, Rosamond McKitterick, and Rodney M. Thomson (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 134; Thomson comments "the contents and paleography of Zwiefalten books have yet to be studied and Matilda's hand identified." However, a recently published study by Alison I. Beach on Zwiefalten identifies manuscripts copied by Matilda. See Beach, "Mathild de Niphin and the Female Scribes of Twelfth-Century Zwiefalten," in *Nuns' Literacies: The Hull Dialogue*, eds. V. Blanton, V. O'Mara, P. Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). Of the extensive research on the unique participation from women in Germanic regions during the twelfth century, see Susann El-Kholi, *Lektüre in Frauenkonventen des ostfränkisch-deutschen Reiches vom 8. Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Wurzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997). Also Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony, St. Pancras in Hamersleben* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004).

⁵ Therese Martin, ed. *Reassessing the Roles of Women as "Makers" of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Both sculpture and art from the twelfth century include representations of women reading. See Laura Cleaver, "Grammar and Her Children: Learning to Read in the Art of the Twelfth Century," *Marginalia* 9 (2009): <http://www.marginalia.co.uk/journal/09education/cleaver.php> (accessed 11 November 2017).

⁶ Caroline Walker Bynum, "Foreword," in *Crown and Veil, Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, eds. Jeffery F. Hamburger and Susan Marti, trans., Dietlinde Hamburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xv. Select scholarship on individual women involved in literary culture in the twelfth century, see Samuel Fanous

(chapter four), and including an analysis of the material evidence from women's extant manuscripts (chapter five), thus building a clearer understanding of the relationship between women and written culture during the "Twelfth-Century Renaissance."

By narrowing the focus through the lens of the so-called 'long' twelfth century, a period that shows significant production of manuscripts across cultural milieu, this research gives an assessment of women's contribution to book production as readers, patrons, and scribes, set against the intellectual and cultural backdrop of Western Europe between 1050–1225. Owning books in the Middle Ages, indeed even reading books, was a gendered experience. For women, this could include an accepted form of literary patronage, the proper book to be read by a woman, or a perceived normative way a book should be made for a woman.¹⁰ However, as we shall see, women worked within and stepped outside the boundaries of "normative," actively contributing to the book production of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance as patrons of poets and romance authors, commissioning manuscripts in vernacular languages and new genres, even making their own books to fill their libraries and address their reading needs.

The fluid, liminal space in which women participated in medieval textual culture remains a recurring feature throughout the study as a whole.¹¹ Women, especially at the aristocratic levels, experienced first-hand the many boundaries of medieval society and often crossed thresholds between social class, geographical location, language, levels of literacy, as well as physical space, thus creating a large and complex network of literary heritage. The benefits of noble privilege allowed for women of high socio-economic status to move between court and convent, consequently shaping their education and literacy.¹² Women's reading interest in both Latin and vernacular books also reflect a crossing of thresholds, as does the overlap between context and genre. As such, this thesis explores the range of books produced and used by

women in the twelfth century. Not only does it investigate and consider the active role that women played in the production of manuscripts, it also seeks to uncover greater details in terms of this process. Through the study of surviving manuscripts, as well as indications of books used but now lost, can we identify preferences and priorities of the twelfth-century female reader?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Well into the nineteenth century, (male) medievalists "systematically doubted the authenticity of female authors," such as Hrotsvit (Hrotsvitha) of Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen, or Marie de France, largely ignoring the literary culture of medieval women.¹³ Lina Eckenstein introduced scholarship on women living in religious communities in her work, *Women under Monasticism*, in 1896.¹⁴ However, it could be argued that it was Eileen Power who in 1922 opened the door to research on the roles of women in medieval history.¹⁵ In her work, *Medieval Women*, Power portrayed a fairly positive, albeit limited, image of medieval women participating along with men according to their social class. Yet, even Power believed there was no trace of a woman producing a manuscript in medieval English nunneries from the eighth until the thirteenth century, although she rightfully remarks "it is never safe to argue from silence."¹⁶ In 1930, Meta Harrsen's investigation of

¹³ Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras, "Women, Gender and Medieval Historians," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, eds. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–4. See also Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity, and the Repression of Heloise," *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies on Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 46–75. Fiona J. Griffiths points to the same situation in 1910 of doubted authorship by scholars regarding Herrad of Hohenburg and the *Hortus deliciarum*; see Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights*, 17.

¹⁴ Lina Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life Between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896).

¹⁵ Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M. M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, 1275–1535* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922); Power, "The Position of Women in the Middle Ages," in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*, eds. C. G. Crump and E. F. Jacobs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 401–35. See also, Marjorie M. Chibnall, "Eileen Edna Le Poer Power (1889–1940)," in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Jane Chance (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 311–339. And Edith Ennen, *The Medieval Woman*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) trans. of *Frauen im Mittelalter* (Münich: C. H. Beck'sche Buchverhandlung, 1984).

¹⁶ Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, 237–238. See also, Ulrike Wiethaus, "The German Historian Elisabeth Busse-Wilson (1890–1974), Academic Feminism and Medieval Hagiography, 1914–1931," in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Jane Chance (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 353–366.

¹⁰ Carole M. Meale and Julia Boffey, "Gentlewomen Readers," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1400–1557*, vol. 3., eds. L. Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 526.

¹¹ Barbara Newman, "Liminalities: Literate Women in the Long Twelfth Century," in *European Transformations, The Long Twelfth Century*, eds. Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 354–402.

¹² Aristocratic women in the twelfth century occupied a liminal, yet privileged space. See Amy Livingstone, "Powerful Allies and Dangerous Adversaries: Noblewomen in Medieval Society," in *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, ed. Linda E. Mitchell (New York: Routledge, 2011), 7–31, at 7. Also, Jeffrey F. Hamburger, "Art, Enclosure, and the Cura Monialium: Prolegomena in the Guise of a Postscript," *Gesta* 31, no. 2 (1992): 108–134. I do not discuss the literary abilities of peasant or townswomen.

the Gospels of Judith of Flanders shed light on the unique situation of female lay patronage of lavish liturgical books in the late eleventh century.¹⁷ Yet, through the following decades the position of medieval women that Power described was hardly challenged by scholars until the late 1970s, when Joan Kelly posed the question: Did women have a Renaissance?¹⁸

Kelly's influential work pointed to the pitfalls of historical research that fails to recognize the everyday practice of women's participation in history as being different from men's. While Joan Kelly's evocative article emphasized the need for further research on the lives of women in all historical periods, a focus on how women contributed to the development of literary culture during the Middle Ages remained a vague interest to scholars.¹⁹ Georges Duby spent much of his career working to uncover the experiences of medieval people, including his significant three-volume work on *Women of the Twelfth Century*.²⁰ However, Duby focused more on the characteristics of "courtly love," the foundations of a genre new to the twelfth century, only giving a small glimpse of the whole of women's participation in textual culture.²¹

The literary contribution of women in the Middle Ages was brought to the forefront in 1984 by Peter Dronke in his work, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study from Perpetua to Marguerite Porcete*.²² A decade later, David Bell's *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in*

Medieval English Nunneries shed light on the large quantity of books held in convent library collections.²³ Further scholarship on the textual production of medieval women was given careful attention in works such as Joan M. Ferrante's investigation into the role of medieval women "composing" various works, which uncovered more than 1200 letters of correspondence. Added to this is Marcelle Thiebaut's study on *The Writings of Medieval Women*, Carole M. Meale's anthology *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, and Patricia Stirnemann's 'Women and Books in France: 1150-1220', each with a similar focus on identifying women's engagement with medieval literary culture.²⁴

In 2007 Fiona Griffiths addressed the historical experience of nuns in the twelfth-century Alsace region, with a specific focus on their literary production in her book, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century*.²⁵ In this work, Griffiths reveals the vast intellectual and literate culture being cultivated amongst women religious throughout areas in Germanic territories during this period, and specifically the contribution of Abbess Herrad of Hohenburg. Further, Rodney M. Thomson, Jeffery F. Hamburger, and Constant J. Mews each investigate specific instances in medieval England and Germany of textual participation where women in both court and convent were active agents in manuscript production during the "long twelfth century."²⁶ For example, Thomson has discussed aspects of the St Albans Psalter and its complicated association to Christina of Markyate. Whereas the research of Mews has argued for the recognition of

¹⁷ Meta Harrsen, "The Countess Judith of Flanders and the Library of Weingarten Abbey," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 24 (1930): 1-13.

¹⁸ Joan Kelly, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Women, History, and Theory, the Essays of Joan Kelly*, ed. Joan Kelly (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 19-50 [reprinted (writing as Joan Kelly-Gadol) from *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 137-64]. Also, Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 5-14.

¹⁹ David Herlihy acknowledged Kelly's concern in 1985. See David Herlihy, "Did Women Have a Renaissance? A Reconsideration," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 13 (1985): 1-22. Almost twenty years after Kelly's article, R. N. Swanson produced the important work on the twelfth century where he states, "If there was a renaissance for women in the twelfth century, it is invisible"; Swanson, "A Renaissance for Women?" *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 188-206, at 202.

²⁰ Georges Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century. Volume one: Eleanor of Aquitaine and Six Others* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1997), first published in French as *Vol. I, Dames du XIIe siècle: Heloise, Alienor, Iseut et quelques autres* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1995). *Vol. II, Le souvenir des aieules* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1996). *Vol. III, Eve et les pretres* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1996).

²¹ Theodore Evergates, "Coda. The Feudal Imaginary of Georges Duby," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 3 (1997): 641-660.

²² Peter Dronke, *Women Writers in the Middle Ages: A Critical Study from Perpetua to Marguerite Porcete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

²³ David Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995).

²⁴ Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex, Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Marcelle Thiebaut, *The Writings of Medieval Women: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., trans. and intro. Marcelle Thiebaut (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994). Carol M. Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Patricia Stirnemann, "Women and Books in France: 1150-1220," in Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Representations of the Feminine in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 247-252.

²⁵ Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

²⁶ Rodney M. Thomson, *England and the 12th Century Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1983); Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey, 1066-1235, 1: Text, 2: Plates* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982). Jeffery F. Hamburger, "Women and the Written Word in Medieval Switzerland/Frauen und Schriftlichkeit in der Schweiz im Mittelalter," in *Bibliotheken Bauen: Tradition und Vision/Building for Books: Traditions and Visions*, eds. Susanne Bieri and Walther Fuchs (Bern: Swiss National Library, 2001), 71-164. Constant J. Mews, *La Voix d'Heloise: Un Dialogue de Deux Amants* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Academic Press, 2005). Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, eds. *Women, the Book, and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference, 1993*, vol. 2 (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995).

women's education that goes beyond a rote ability to recite the Psalms, pointing to the intellectual level of Heloise in France, or the scribal skill of Matilda at Zwiefalten, to name a few. These scholarly works have revealed the range of ways women contributed to textual culture through acts of patronage, commission, copying, or collection of books.

Adding to the discussion, Monica Green evaluates women's contribution and use of medieval manuscripts regarding medical practices, specifically the enigmatic work attributed to a twelfth-century woman known as Trotula.²⁷ Felice Lifshitz, Elisabeth van Houts, and Kimberly LoPrete have further directed scholarly attention toward shaping a new perspective on the book culture of less well-known early medieval noblewomen.²⁸ Taking a different line of research, focus has been given to geographical regions and the assessment of women's book production by scholars such as June Hall McCash, Julie Hotchin, and Alison I. Beach. It is Beach's study on manuscripts made by nuns in twelfth-century Bavaria which inspired this dissertation.²⁹ Thus, over thirty years of scholarship has illustrated the many ways women in the Middle Ages were involved in textual activities, specifically as readers, patrons, and scribes of manuscripts.

So, can we answer Joan Kelly's question as it pertains to women in the twelfth century: Did women have a Renaissance? As the following chapters will show, women in court and convent settings during the twelfth century did indeed share in the revitalization of written culture emerging from the period, actively participating in new reading practices. The books women read, copied, and commissioned demonstrate their interest in new genres, works written in a vernacular language, as well as the use of various reading aids which facilitated an access to text in a selective manner. Together representing a "renaissance" for women

in regard to textual production.³⁰ As Kelly made poignantly clear over forty years ago, including women's experience in historical analysis as significant, yet separate from that of men's, can bring about new understandings. This is especially true when applied to an analysis of women's engagement with the production of medieval manuscripts, which can reveal their intellectual exchange, textual preferences, and the multi-faceted role of women's participation in written culture.³¹

3. METHODOLOGY

Taking up Kelly's challenge, this research follows an interdisciplinary approach, combining the academic fields of Women's Studies, Medieval History, and Codicology of the Book to bring a fuller understanding of women's role in the developments of written culture during the "Twelfth-Century Renaissance."³² Addressing the whole of women's engagement in the textual culture of this period would require levels of investigation beyond the parameters of this study. Here, I have concentrated on two socio-economic classes of medieval women with the most access to education, and therefore an interest in written culture as patrons, scribes, and readers of books: noblewomen and nuns. It should be discussed here my understanding and usage of the terms convent, court, noblewoman, and nun. These words can create confusion since firm categorization is untenable. To simplify discussion, I use the term "nun" as a broad designation for women living a monastic life connected to a religious order.³³ Under this definition, I include women religious such as nun, canoness, anchorite, and recluse.³⁴ I use the word "convent" to denote the physical space women inhabited, such as abbey, priory,

³⁰ See Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 108–113.

³¹ Susan Lee Johnson, "Nail This to Your Door: A Disputation on the Power, Efficacy, and Indulgent Delusion of Western Scholarship that Neglects the Challenge of Gender and Women's History," *Pacific Historical Review* 79 (2010): 605–617. See also Nigel F. Palmer, "Introduction," in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 1–18.

³² I have centered my argument, and thus my examples, based on Kelly's statement that women's contribution to the cultural development of a historical period should be discussed as a separate experience from that of men. To this end, throughout this study I have chosen to present women's participation in the "making" of manuscripts, from patron to scribe, without much direct reference or comparison to men's work as a foil. However, I acknowledge the importance of future research utilizing a comparative argument.

³³ For a discussion of female monastic communities, see J. E. Burton and K. Stöber, eds. *Women in the Medieval Monastic World* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

³⁴ I do not include Beguines in this study. For more information on this order, see Carol Neel, "The Origins of the Beguines," in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, eds. Judith

²⁷ Monica H. Green, *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, and ed. trans. Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

²⁸ Felice Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999). Kimberly A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c. 1067–1137)* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007); LoPrete, "The Anglo-Norman Card of Adela of Blois," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 22, no. 4 (1990): 569–589.

²⁹ June Hall McCash, ed. *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996). Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, eds. *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Julie Hotchin, "Female religious life and the *cura monialium* in Hirsau Monasticism, c. 1080–1150" in *Listen Daughter, The Speculum Virginitatis and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Constant J. Mews (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 68–97. Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

cloister, or religious community. I also use the term “noblewomen” as encompassing queen, princess, countess, and lady; those women who lived a life within a royal or noble court. Although these definitions can obscure the lived experience of women in various social and economic classes during the twelfth century, they are sufficient terminology for this study, which focuses on the books women in these contexts used. As the following chapters will show, women within both court and convent during the twelfth century demonstrate an engagement in the basic tenets of a textual “renaissance”: support of new genres, influence in the shift from books written in Latin to a vernacular language, and a familiarity with using reading aids.³⁵

To help organize the codicological clues that point to reading habits, preferences, choices, needs, and wants of the female reader, a database has been created to chart the physical features of manuscripts belonging to women in court and convent contexts. The database makes it possible to search for similarities and differences in the women’s manuscripts, expanding our knowledge of the scribal skills, literary genres, and support of textual culture demonstrated by women during this period. Each extant manuscript in the corpus has been given the same descriptive fields of physical analysis, and data has been entered where available. Much of the codicological information has been collected from library catalogs and other secondary sources, such as online repositories with digital facsimiles of manuscripts. Adding to this, I have examined *in situ* a number of manuscripts used by women originating from the twelfth-century convents of Admont, Lamspringe, and Schäftlarn. The database is particularly relevant for the queries made regarding reading aids in chapter five of this study, as well as the appendix of manuscripts.

4. MANUSCRIPT CORPUS OF WOMEN’S BOOKS IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Perhaps the most basic question confronting this research is: How do you know a manuscript was owned, read, commissioned, or made by a woman from the twelfth century? In some cases, we are fortunate to have a colophon to help identify the book as made by a female scribe. Other instances are determined by a number of factors such as script

M. Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O’Barr, B. Anne Vilen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 240–260.

³⁵ Focus could be placed on a chronological, geographical, or biographical perspective. My research is organized by genres of books, used as an over-arching view of the books owned, read, or produced by women, discussed by date and location, while identifying, where known, the woman or women connected to the manuscript.

comparison, dedication to a woman mentioned in a prologue, a donor image, surviving booklists from convent libraries, and even scribal portraits. The present research concentrates on books made for and made by women, produced in a range of instances from patronage to scribal interaction, attributed to an individual woman or women’s community, datable to the period of the long twelfth century. Through the consultation of library and exhibition catalogs, and use of online databases such as Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Letters, Monastic Matrix, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Europeana Collections, the British Library Online Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, and other portals to digital repositories, such as SexyCodicology,³⁶ I have compiled into an appendix the extant manuscripts, as well as listed those books which are now lost, made for or made by women, datable to the period between 1075 and 1225, creating a new corpus of women’s manuscripts from the twelfth century that can be further studied.³⁷ The corpus includes over 150 extant manuscripts with an attribution to female use or production. In addition to these, approximately 28 manuscripts, while no longer surviving from this period, are included in this investigation as they reveal patterns of women’s reading that emerged during this “Renaissance.”³⁸

5. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one sets the historical backdrop and context where both religious and secular female readers and book-producers operated, spurred by the situation of reform and renewal occurring throughout Western Europe.³⁹ The establishment of new religious houses and orders for women during this period invigorated book production, as it did the levels of literacy for women in both court and convent. For example,

³⁶ “Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Letters,” epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu; “Monastic Matrix: A Collection of Resources for the Study of Women’s Religious Communities 500–1500,” monasticmatrix.org; “Europeana Collections,” europeana.eu; “Hill Museum & Manuscript Library,” vhmml.org; “British Library Digitised Manuscripts,” bl.uk; “Sexy Codicology Project,” sexycodicology.net. Also, “Repertorium of Manuscripts Illuminated by Women in Religious Communities of the Middle Ages,” agfem-art.com.

³⁷ Felice Lifshitz uses this term “women’s manuscripts” in her study of manuscripts of religious women in the eighth century. See Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia*, 28. I have excluded documents such as charters. For more on medieval women and charters, see Jonathan R. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 57. Lyon writes about a charter from c. 1198 at Lippoldsberg, which presumably was read by the nuns who witnessed the charter.

³⁸ See Appendix.

³⁹ Bruce L. Venarde, *Women’s Monasticism and Medieval Society, Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

the influence of religious reform permeating the German landscape, inspired by William of Hirsau, in turn led to a demand for the essential books for monastic reading and, thus, toward library expansion in religious houses, both male and female. Noblewomen and nuns filled this vacuum through patronage and scribal activity.⁴⁰ This chapter will argue that there were many contexts in this period where women had the opportunity to be readers, patrons, and producers of books. The chapter further establishes the various levels of literacy which made up the experience of twelfth-century women, thus revealing a richness in diversity of genres, in addition to vernacular influences, shedding light on education as well as women's networks of literary exchange.⁴¹

Chapters two and three introduce the books *made for* women; specifically, those books that were dedicated to, or commissioned by, women in both court and convent. Here, I present a broad understanding of book ownership as defined by scholars, such as D. H. Green in *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, to include a wide range of instances of women's textual participation.⁴² The examples I provide demonstrate that noblewomen and nuns used their financial and social currency to support the genres of texts they deemed entertaining, memorial, or spiritually valuable. We learn that books made for women did reflect their reading interests, revealing women's agency in manuscript production. My research contributes to the academic discussion by providing a focused view of the books made for noblewomen and nuns in the twelfth century that expands our knowledge of what books women read, and how they read them.

Chapter four discusses the manuscripts *made by* women, and will address women's contribution to the twelfth-century book culture as author or scribe. I highlight the participation of noblewomen and nuns through examples of manuscripts known to have been made by individual women at court or within convent scriptoria. An understanding of women's scribal production in the twelfth century has often been overshadowed by an interest in their artistic production, coupled with an emphasis on women's oral and visual culture.⁴³

⁴⁰ Rodney Thomson writes, "In this movement an important contribution was made by literate, aristocratic women, both as members of self-standing nunneries and of the female community in double houses."; Thomson, "The Place of Germany," 128. Also, J. S. Beddie, "The Ancient Classics in the Medieval Libraries," *Speculum* 5 (1930): 3–20.

⁴¹ See Emilie Amt, ed. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe; A Source Book*. 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1993). This work looks at a variety of documents that pertained to the lives of women at all social levels, such as noblewomen, peasant women, townswomen, and religious women. Also, James Westfall Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939).

⁴² Green, *Women Readers*, 115–116.

This chapter shows that the books women made during this period demonstrate their scribal skills as well as their reading interests.⁴⁴

Drawing on the material uncovered in the previous sections, chapter five will consider a selection of physical features from a cross-section of the extant manuscripts from both milieu with a specific focus on the use of reading aids in an attempt to assess the female reader's engagement with text.⁴⁵ The chapter focuses on two types of books that stand out as made for, or made by, women during this period: psalters and sermons. Analysis of this data tells us more about the "planning, production, and reception" of books when made by or for women.⁴⁶ Cynthia Cyrus notes the usefulness to "seek among the other manuscripts copied by women scribes for other habits of convention in presentation, layout, and representation."⁴⁷ Building upon this statement, chapter five will consider the physical object and the use of various reading aids with the goal of discerning the ways in which the reading preferences and needs of twelfth-century women were reflected in their books. By examining the book as object, we can better understand how twelfth-century women contributed to a "book fluency that was custom tailored for the age."⁴⁸

As a conclusion, the epilogue will provide a synthesized evaluation, bringing together the breadth and depth of textual participation highlighted in the previous chapters. Through a consideration of context, genre, and use, as well as physical features of the book, such as size and reading aids, this study assesses the types and styles of books women

⁴³ See Delia Gaze, ed., "Women as Artists in the Middle Ages, The Dark is Light Enough," *Dictionary of Women Artists, vol. 1, Introductory Surveys, Artists, A–I* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997). Also, Dorothy Eugenia Miner, *Anastaise and her Sisters: Women Artists of the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1974).

⁴⁴ Diane Watt includes "women-authored" and "women-oriented" in her examination of women's writing in England; Diane Watt, *Medieval Women Writing, Works By and For Women in England, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), ix.

⁴⁵ For foundational studies on medieval codicology, see Leon Gilissen, *L'expertise des écritures médiévales. Recherche d'une méthode avec application à un manuscrit du XIe siècle: le Lectionnaire de Lobbes, codex Bruxellensis 18018* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia, 1973). Also, Jacques Lemaire, *Introduction à la Codicologie* (Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1989); J. Peter Gumbert, "Fifty Years of Codicology," *Archiv für Diplomatik*, 50 (2004): 505–526.

⁴⁶ Keith Busby, "Fables and the New Codicology," in *The Word and Its Rival: Essays on the Literary Imagination in Honor of Per Nykrog*, eds. Kathryn Karczewska and Tom Conley (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 139–140.

⁴⁷ Cynthia J. Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women's Convents in late Medieval Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 45. Cyrus writes, "...for ideas that circulated within women's orders rather than through male intermediaries."

⁴⁸ Erik Kwakkel, VIDI Project description, "Turning Over a New Leaf: Manuscript Innovation in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance." <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucas/turning-over-a-new-leaf/project-description/turning-over-a-new-leaf.html> (accessed 11 November 2017).

interacted with during the twelfth century.⁴⁹ As a result, this dissertation adds to our knowledge of medieval manuscripts and women's literary culture by looking to specific examples of reading practice by a nun or noblewoman, tracing her contribution to manuscript production connected to her role as reader, patron, or scribe.

⁴⁹Erik Kwakkel, "Decoding the Material Book: Cultural Residue in Medieval Manuscripts," in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, eds. Michael Johnston and Michael van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–19.