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

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Chapter One:

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The following chapter presents the historical backdrop in which women during the twelfth century contributed to the textual culture in Western Europe through actively acquiring, reading, and producing books. Each section of this chapter aims to build a fuller understanding of the education and literacy of twelfth-century women through a discussion of the spaces most literate women occupied, the "levels" of literacy demonstrated by noblewomen and nuns during this period, and how women's literacy was acquired. Further, the chapter presents a consideration of the favored genres of books women in the court and convent commissioned, copied, and read. My corpus of twelfth-century women's manuscripts stem from geographical regions throughout Western Europe; women's textual engagement is especially prevalent in England, Northern France, Germany, and the Low Countries, yet also found in Italy, Spain, and even Jerusalem.

It is important to take into account that the educational opportunities available to twelfth-century women were supported by a long heritage that women held with the written word. Throughout the early Middle Ages (5th–10th centuries), the education of aristocratic women was customary, and scriptoria or "scribal workshops" existed at some early women's religious communities.[1] It was during the Carolingian period in France that the nuns at the royal abbeys of Jouarre and Chelles were held in high esteem for their skills in book production, from copying to illumination.[2] The tenth and eleventh centuries saw participation from women in both court and convent settings in the production of manuscripts, such as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, commissioned by Queen Emma of England, or the works of the nun Hrotsvit of Gandersheim.[3] Thus, setting the historical

[1] Margaret Ives and Almut Suerbaum, "The Middle Ages" in *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland*, ed. Jo Catling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13. Judith Oliver, "Worship of the Word," in *Women and the Book*, 114. See also, Tracy Borman, *Matilda, Queen of the Conqueror* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011).

[2] Rosamond McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, Sixth to Ninth Centuries* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1994); *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and "Nuns' Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Early Middle Ages," *Francia* 19, no. 1 (1989): 1–35. Bernhard Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelles," in Bernhard Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien, ausgewahlte Aufsatze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturegeschichte*. 2 vol. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1966), 17–35.

backdrop of the literary and educational opportunities for women during the twelfth century will help to situate my research findings regarding the books owned, read, and copied by women discussed in the following chapters, where the evidence shows women were engaging in complex forms of reading and writing.

1. TWELFTH CENTURY: A RENAISSANCE

Historians have argued that Western Europe during the twelfth century experienced a "renaissance," an outpouring of thought and expression that produced new forms of artistic and intellectual works along with a revived interest in classic texts.[4] This term has been attached to other historical periods and places, most notably the Italian Renaissance, spanning the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, but also to the Carolingian (c. 780–900) and Ottonian (c. 951–1024) periods, each demonstrating a proliferation of artistic and literary achievements within a strong dynastic context.[5] In contrast, the Twelfth-Century Renaissance (c. 1050–1215) is not attached to a specific imperial influence, but to a movement of reform and intellectual renewal within both church and court that was occurring throughout Western Europe.[6]

[3] *Encomium Emmae Reginae* by monk of St Omer (or St Bertin) London, British Library, Add. 33241, (c. 1041/2).

[4] Variously dated between c. 1050 and c. 1250, also referred to as the "long twelfth-century". See Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen, eds. *European Transformations, The Long Twelfth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012). Long-established scholarly works include Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927); Richard W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1970), 158–180. Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Robert N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). Also, Jan Ziolkowski, "Cultures of Authority in the Long Twelfth Century," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (2009): 42.

[5] The term "renaissance" was first applied to medieval history in 1840 by Jean-Jacques Ampère, i.e., three distinct periods of a renaissance in the Middle Ages. See Stephen Ferruolo, "The Twelfth Century Renaissance," in *Renaissances Before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Warren T. Treadgold (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 114. Also, Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 32, n. 77. The Carolingian period, centered around the royal court of Charlemagne, is well known for its influence on a style of script used widely in Western Europe, while the Ottonian period demonstrated a new way of manuscript illustration that moved beyond Byzantine into what would be termed Romanesque style. The eleventh century also experienced a monastic revival, influenced by both Cluny and Gorze, but it was never termed to be a "renaissance." See Rosamond McKitterick, "Carolingian Book Production: Some Problems," *The Library* 12, no. 1 (1990): 1–33, and McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[6] "Government, no less than theology and law, was striving toward a logical order unknown before, an order that represented the new way of thinking that affected all

Integral to the development of book culture during this period, the twelfth century witnessed the production of new manuscripts made by and for women, including books of poetry, romance, chronicles, saints' lives, as well as liturgical and devotional works composed in both Latin and vernacular languages. Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne note that "the manuscripts compiled between c. 1100 and c. 1200 have, though, rarely been examined in their own right, as witness to the continuation of a tradition of written composition in the vernacular."[7] Women of aristocratic lineage, especially in England and northern France, began to develop a predilection for books in their native languages, which demonstrated a literacy beyond the predominance of a knowledge of Latin.[8] As Ian Short argues, this "vernacularisation of culture," supported by both noblewomen and nuns, was one of the most important results of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.[9] As a result of the contribution of women as patron to authors, along with their role in the commissioning of manuscripts, the twelfth century witnessed the origins of new genres along with new translations of existing texts, invigorated by the support of women in court settings through Western Europe.

Further, women in monastic settings also experienced the political and religious "renaissance" of the twelfth century, evidenced by the rapid establishment of new religious houses for women coupled with a renewed priority of pastoral care.[10] The concern for the guidance of women who wanted to live a monastic life was supported by the many texts during this period devoted to the *cura monialium* for women religious.[11] The prolific development of religious houses throughout the twelfth century for women necessitated the production of books, both new texts along with copies of liturgical and devotional standards.

disciplines in the early phases of the twelfth-century renaissance."; see Charles W. Hollister, ed., *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Proceedings of the Borchard Conference on Anglo-Norman History* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 14. Also, Christopher Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister: The Story of Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 2001), 126–149.

[7] Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne, *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Treharne, ed., *Writing Gender and Genre in Medieval Literature, Approaches to Old and Middle English Texts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002).

[8] Roberta Krueger, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[9] Ian Short, "Patrons and Polyglots, French Literature in Twelfth Century England," in *Anglo-Norman Studies, XIV. Proceedings from the Battle Conference 1991*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), 231.

[10] See Sarah Hamilton, "Rights of Passage and Pastoral Care," in A *Social History of England, 900–1200*, eds. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 307.

[11] Julie Hotchin, "Female Religious Life and the 'Cura monialium' in Hirsau Monasticism, 1080–1150," in *Listen Daughter: The Speculum Virginum and the Formation of Religious Women*

Nuns stepped in to aid in this endeavor by commissioning authors, building book collections, and engaging in scribal activities. Further, the aristocratic nature of many of the new religious establishments meant that these women had the financial means, education, and time, as well as access to the materials needed to produce and use these manuscripts.[12]

2. TWELFTH-CENTURY WOMEN: COURT AND CONVENT

By the High Middle Ages (c. 1050–1200), three distinct social estates were well established: nobility, clergy, and peasantry.[13] Recognizing the liminal status of medieval women, it is important to note that women were further categorized into gendered groups of virgin, wife, or widow who together made up a separate social group: a "fourth estate."[14] This category was comprised of women who already belonged to nobility, religious vocation (women could not technically become clergy), or peasantry, yet were additionally labeled according to their position in their lifecycle.[15] Carol M. Meale discusses specifically the situation of the middle-aged woman and her experience with reading and producing books.[16] Meale asks, "Does this information have any impact on the interpretation of their known book ownership and patronage?"[17]

in the Middle Ages, ed. Constant J. Mews (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59–83. Also, Fiona J. Griffiths, "The Cross and the *Cura monialium*: Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform," *Speculum* 83 (2008): 303–330.

[12] Moreover, the newly established economy of medieval markets and fairs, often supported by monastic houses, may have influenced exchange of manuscripts, as religious communities were places of hospitality for the medieval traveler, monks and nobles alike. On markets and fairs, see Elias Oksanen, "Trade and Travel in England During the Long Twelfth Century" in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXXVII Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2014*, ed. Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 194. For example, the market in Champagne, France, was well known during the Middle Ages.

[13] Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). See also Marjorie Chibnall, "Women in Orderic Vitalis," in *The Haskins Society Journal Studies in Medieval History: Vol. 3*, ed. Robert Patterson (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), 105.

[14] Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai (London: Methuen, 1983).

[15] Elisabeth van Houts, "Changes of Aristocratic Identity: Remarriage and Remembrance in Europe 900–1200" in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture*, eds. Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen, and Mary Franklin-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 223. For more on aristocratic widows, see Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200* (London: Routledge, 2013), 300. Franklin writes, "Aristocratic nuns should be grouped with aristocratic widows (who sometimes became nuns): Women with access to wealth and with an acceptable reason for lacking a husband."

[16] Carol M. Meale, "Speaking Volumes: The Middle-Aged Woman and the Book in Medieval England," in *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Sue Niebrzydowski (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 83.

[17] Meale, "Speaking Volumes," 84.

Although Meale's focus is on women of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is an important aspect for consideration of book ownership by twelfth-century women. As we will see, women's choices for reading could change throughout their lifetime, as demonstrated by twelfth-century women like the countess of Champagne, Marie of France, or Abbess Heloise, discussed further in chapters two and three.

Dennis H. Green in his foundational work, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, further divides women's involvement in the reading and production of books into five categories: laywomen, nuns, recluses, semi-religious women, and heretics.[18] According to Green, laywomen and nuns, especially those from an aristocratic background, represented active participants in book production, primarily as patrons or scribes. Opportunities for education were provided by their connection to families of prestige and wealth. For the purpose of this research, focus will remain on these two social and economic classes of women with the most access to literary culture: noblewomen and nuns. Using these two categories can provide a useful means for comparison of genres and features of books made for and made by women during this period. Women in both court and convent were more likely to receive an education and use their literary skills to contribute to manuscript culture as readers, patrons, and scribes.

The liminality of medieval women's position in society meant that women could move from one social class to another, and even back again. Their possessions, most often only their books and small objects, moved with them.[19] Consequently, various imaginable combinations of a woman's socio-economic status could affect her interaction with books. For example, a noblewoman may have engaged in reading secular works as a young woman, followed by only religious works when she retired to a convent in her later years.[20] Aristocratic women of middle- age may have acquired a personal collection throughout their lifetime, or may have at

[18] Green, *Women Readers*, 82. Also, R. N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, 192. For a selection of primary sources, see Emilie Amt, ed., *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe, A Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), 119–276.

[19] Patricia Skinner, "Women, Literacy, and Invisibility in Southern Italy 900–1200," in *Women, the Book, and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda's Conference 1993*, vol. 2, eds. Lesley J. Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 6. Also, Mary DockRay-Miller, *The Books and Life of Judith of Flanders* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

[20] Marie of Blois, the duchess of Burgundy, and Countess Ermengarde of Anjou, both retired to Fontevraud Abbey as widows. Before they moved to Fontevraud, each was responsible for a large household and management of lands. See Theodore Evergates, *Henry the Liberal: Count of Champagne, 1127–1181* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 141. Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: By the Wrath of God, Queen of England* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 12.

least been exposed to a significant variety of books and texts, both religious and secular.[21] A widow might bring a book among her possessions into a religious community, while a young virgin leaving a convent or her family court to be married, may take her personal devotional book with her, possibly to educate her future children. In each of these instances, the physical object of the book itself may have encountered signs of use along the way, such as altering or adding prayers or further decoration to make the woman's book her own. Understanding the vagaries of medieval women's socio-economic context allows for a more complete narrative regarding the books belonging to women in the twelfth century.

Throughout the Middle Ages strong familial connections existed between the court and convent. Daughters from royal and noble families were commonly sent in their youth to convents for education, some remaining to take formal vows, while numerous women from aristocratic backgrounds, who entered convents at a later age, were often elected as abbess or prioress of religious communities.[22] The convent was the preferred place for the education of noble daughters, creating a bond between religious and royal houses.[23] This policy established what Leslie Donovan calls "spiritual affiliations," which were as valuable as political alliances.[24] The most prominent examples come from early foundations at the abbeys of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg in Germany, where daughters from the royal house were appointed as princess-abbesses, owing to their social and political status.[25] England too held a long-

[21] For example, Laurette d'Alsace received her psalter with commentary as she retired to the convent Forest-lez-Bruxelles in 1163. See Stewart Gregory, *The Twelfth-Century Psalter Commentary in French for Laurette d'Alsace: An Edition of Psalms I–L, Volume One, Psalms I–XXXV* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1990), 20. Muriel of Le Ronceray was educated at a convent but did not take formal vows. See Peter Dronke, *Women Writers in the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 85. Also, Jonathan R. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 58. Lyon discusses female siblings at Lippoldsberg in the late twelfth century and the movement of aristocratic women from one convent to another.

[22] For example, Heresende, a noblewoman who followed the teachings and was part of the early community formed by Robert d'Abrissel, was influential in the establishment of Fontevraud. Assisting her was the noblewoman Petronilla, who entered the convent of Fontevraud after she was widowed. Petronilla was then appointed prioress upon the death of Heresende.

[23] Also, betrothed daughters were often educated alongside their future husbands. For example, Empress Matilda, who lived at the court of her husband, the future Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, was educated at Trier, as was Henry. See Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering* eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (London: Routledge, 2013), 284.

[24] Leslie Donovan, *Women Saints" Lives in Old English Prose* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), 20.

[25] In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Quedlinburg and Gandersheim were the primary religious houses for daughters of the Ottonian royalty and Saxon nobles; they were appointed as princess-abbess, sometimes as young as twelve years old. There was also a comparable practice of "prince-abbot" that occurred in male monastic houses. See John W. Berhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143–160.

established tradition of sending noble daughters to religious houses; Cecilia, the daughter of Matilda and William the Conqueror, became the abbess of La Trinité at Caen, where she resided for the majority of her life. Later in the century, Fontevraud Abbey became a preferred residence for widowed noblewomen, among them were Bertrada of Montfort, Isabella of Angouleme, and the royal widow, Eleanor of Aquitaine.[26]

The courtly residences in the twelfth century that populated Western Europe were known as centers of learning alongside their political position. In Italy, the Countess Matilda (Mathilda) of Tuscany (1046–1115) is just one instance of the presence of a woman at court whose contribution toward literary production is evidenced by the books made for her through dedication and commission.[27] To the north in France and Belgium, noble courts such as Champagne and Flanders held a history of women's literary patronage back to the early ninth century.[28] Women within these courtly centers were educated in Latin, politically influential, and used their literacy and social status toward participating in various aspects of manuscript production, such as supporting authors, commissioning books, as well as influencing translations of Latin texts into vernacular languages.[29] Queens, countesses, and other noblewomen were expected to demonstrate a combination of secular piety, obedience, and initiative, depending on the occasion. This situation was reflected in the books they commissioned or were given in

[26] Bertrade of Montfort (d'Anjou) resided at Fontevraud (also spelled Fontevrault) after the death of King Philip I. Also, Petronilla of Anjou, Agnès de Craon, Heresende de Champagne, Agnès d'Ais, Agnès de Montreuil, and Mathilde d'Anjou retired to Fontevraud. The two wives of William IX of Aquitaine, Ermengarde and Philippa, lived at Fontevraud. As did his granddaughter, Eleanor of Aquitaine, her daughter Marie of Champagne, and her daughter-in-law, Isabelle of Angouleme; all women from aristocratic milieu who would have been educated to read in Latin and vernacular. See R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 180.

[27] Christine B. Verzar, "Picturing Matilda of Canossa: Medieval Strategies of Representation," in *Representing History, 900–1300: Art, Music, History*, ed. Robert Allen Maxwell (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

[28] Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 426–428.

[29] Nicola Jayne Watkinson, "Medieval Textual Production and the Politics of Women's Writing: Case Studies of Two Medieval Women Writers and Their Critical Reception" (master's thesis, University of Melbourne, 1991). https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/39453 (accessed 21 Feb 2018).

dedication, where the evidence shows women's interest in a wide range of genres both traditional and new, religious and secular. Additionally, many of these manuscripts utilized the "developing book technology" of the twelfth century, where reading aids such as headings, glosses, or marginal annotations were included in the books made for aristocratic women. This aspect is discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

Further, the foundation of new convents, along with instituted reforms of already- established religious houses of women, were vital to women's contribution to textual culture during the "renaissance" of the twelfth century by providing opportunities for their education, and a place for women to use their scribal skills. Bruce Venarde's survey of women's monastic foundations in northwestern Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries reveals a substantial growth between 1080–1170.[30] The convent primarily offered women a place for spiritual advancement, a decent level of education and literacy, as well as a refuge from unwanted marriages, childbirth, or political influences.[31] Noble families, who valued education as much as piety, supported many of the newly established foundations. Throughout the twelfth century, religious houses were founded by noblemen for their wives or daughters, widowed noblewomen became benefactors of convents, and some women's communities enjoyed royal patronage and even papal support. This aspect of financial sponsorship provided the resources needed for education, including the access to books for daily reading, as well as exemplars and tools for copying.[32]

According to Venarde, within France and England approximately three hundred new convents were established between 1101 and 1175.[33] While there was a dramatic increase in female religious institutions during this period, the rate of development was not uniform across all regions. Venarde explains how "different configurations of founders dominate in different regions. And although the number of convents grew everywhere from 1080 to 1170, a notable increase in the number of female monastic institutions was apparent earlier in some places than in others."[34] This expansion included houses which offered an ascetic

[30] Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 52–88. Based on evidence from Charters.
[31] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 179.
[32] Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 95.
[33] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 54 at no. 8. F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 54, no. 8 and 87.
[34] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 55.

life to both men and women, such as the newly established Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré (Premonstratensians) in Laon, France, in 1121, which spread to areas in both Germany and the Low Countries, the Gilbertine Order (Order of Sempringham) in England founded in 1131, and the monastic order of Fontevraud in the Loire region of France.[35] The community at Fontevraud Abbey was established by Robert d'Abrissel in 1101 as a double-house for both women and men, yet with an abbess as head of the community, and held three hundred nuns and only sixty or seventy monks in an early record.[36] Robert chose the nuns Petronilla of Chemillé and Hersende of Champagne to manage his new foundation; both noblewomen who entered the convent late in life and were respected for their managerial skills.[37] By Petronilla's death in 1149, the abbey had established fifteen other female-centered houses in France.[38] Also, the Cistercian Order drew a following of women, resulting in the foundation of the convents La Tart and Jully-les-Nonnaines between 1110 and 1120 in northern France, along with Cistercian daughter communities of women in England and Germany throughout the rest of the century.[39]

[35] Also known as Norbertines, diocese of Laon (est. 1121). See Joseph A. Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 3. Also, Francois Petit, *Spirituality of the Premonstratensians: The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, trans. Victor Szczurek, ed. Carol Neel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011). Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe 1200–1500* (New York: Routledge, 2014). The Premonstratensian order originally established by Norbert of Xanten (1080–1134), followed an adaptation of the Augustinian Rule for cohabitated monasteries of women and men, however not under the supervision of an abbess as at Fontevraud.
[36] Logan, *A History of the Church*, 133. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 179 and n.40.
[37] Bruce L. Venarde, "Making History at Fontevraud: Abbess Petronilla de Chemillé and Practical Literacy" in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, eds. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). Also, Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 60; *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life Venarde*, trans., (Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 127. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 180.
[38] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 62–63, n. 31. Places include Poitou, Limousin, Perigourd, Haute-Bruyere, Maine, Berny, Orleans, Toulouse, and Brittany. The order spread to Spain, for a total of nearly seventy daughter houses of Fontevraud. See also Rose Walker, "Leonor of England, Plantagenet Queen of King Alfonso VIII of Castile, and Her Foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of Las Huelgas. In Imitation of Fontevraud?" *Journal of Medieval History* 31, no. 4 (2005): 346–368.
[39] Jully-les-Nonnains was founded 1113–1115 and La Tart between 1120–1125. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 73 and 130. For a fuller discussion regarding Cistercian nuns, see Anne E. Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns: The Women's Religious Movement and Its Reform in Thirteenth Century Champagne* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). Constance Berman, "Were There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?" *Church History* 68 (1999): 824–64. Elizabeth Freeman, "Cistercian Nuns in Medieval England: The Gendering of Geographic Marginalization," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 43.2 (2008): 26–39, at 28. Freeman states, "The traditional view of Cistercian women in medieval England is that there were only two official Cistercian nunneries, namely Tarrant in Dorset and Marnham in Norfolk."

In fact, the surge of women intending to follow a monastic life grew so quickly during the twelfth century that it resulted in various attempts at limiting the number of members in certain religious houses. For example, the archbishop of Sens restricted the amount of nuns at the community of Crisenon to one hundred members.[40] This growth in women's religious communities was supported by a renewed monastic emphasis on the pastoral care of female religious who desired to live in a spiritual manner.[41] The expansion of women entering monastic life and the number of newly created communities for them throughout Western Europe necessitated that books be available for nuns and canonesses to read and perform the daily rituals common to both male and female religious following a monastic rule.[42] According to the Rule of Benedict, each member of the monastic community was required to read one book during the period of Lent.[43] If we take into account convents such as Crisenon or Fontevraud, which had a large membership, added to the liturgical books the community would have needed, it is possible they had quite an extensive convent book collection.

While living under a religious order, women followed monastic rules like their male counterparts. In his survey of various medieval monastic rules, J. Frank Henderson notes that at least since the fifth century, regulations for women living in monastic communities were created as a way of organizing the growing number who desired to follow a spiritual life.[44] The Rule of Augustine (c. 400) and Rule of Caesarius (c. 512) both had versions for male and female followers.[45] By the early Middle Ages, a growing number of monastic rules were developed specifically for women, including the *Institutio sanctimonalium*, a rule for canonesses established in the Carolingian period at the Synod of Aachen in c. 816.[46] These regulations for women were meant to address the way a female community should live a monastic life, such as daily prayer, the role of the abbess, ownership of possessions, participation in manual labor, as well as their reading activities and access to books.

By the twelfth century, most women's religious houses were "reformed" into recognizing an established monastic observance; most commonly instituted were the Rule of St Augustine or the Rule of St Benedict.[47] Religious houses of women following the Augustinian rule, known as canonesses, adopted a more flexible monastic life where interaction with the secular world was not uncommon.[48] They did not take permanent vows of chastity or poverty and were not required to remain in the convent. Canonesses followed similar daily routines as monks and nuns, including the daily prayers, manual labor, and periods of reading, yet continued living in dialogue with the lay community.[49] In contrast, nuns who followed the Benedictine Rule were expected to maintain strict

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[40] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 54 and 87. Jacques Dalarun, *Robert of Arbrissel, Sex, Sin and Salvation in the Middle Ages*, trans. and intro. Bruce L. Venarde (Washington DC.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006). The women's community at Andernach was also limited to 100 members, under the *magistra* Tenxwind. See Theodore Evergates, "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 104.

[41] "German nunneries housed somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 nuns by c. 1250, whereas English nunneries in the same era were home to only 2,500 to 5,000 nuns." See Sandy Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages; Women and Religion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 39. For more on *cura monialium*, see Jeffery F. Hamburger, "Art, Enclosure and the *Cura Monialium: Prolegomena* in the Guise of a Postscript," *Gesta* 31, no. 2, (1992): 108–134.

[42] Jan Gerchow, et al., "Early Monasteries and Foundations (500–1200): An Introduction," in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, eds. Jeffrey Hamburger and Susan Marti, trans. Dietlinde Hamburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 23 and 26–27. On the establishment of new houses, see also Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 46; on the numbers of female religious houses in Germany, 65; and on the numbers of new monks, nuns, and canons, 90.

[43] "Chapter 48," *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. and trans. Bruce Venarde, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), xiv and 161.

[44] J. Frank Henderson, OSB, *The Order of Saint Benedict, An Index to texts on-line and gateway to Bibliographic Index*, "Feminine Versions of the Rule of St. Benedict (Jan. 2002)," www.osb.org/aba/rb/feminine/ (accessed 11 November 2017); and Henderson, *Page on Liturgy and Medieval Women*, "Medieval Religious Rules for Women," www.jfrankhenderson.com/religiousrulesforwomen.htm (accessed 11 Noveber 2017).

[45] Henderson, "Feminine Versions of the Rule of St Benedict". Additional monastic rules written for women include the Rule of Aurelian (c. 550), Rule of Leander (c. 580–600), Rule of Waldebert (c. 629–670), Rule of Donatus (c. 650), as well as the Rule of Fructuosus (c. 660), which was especially written for women, men, and families living in a religious setting. For more on monastic rules, see Marilyn Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 174.

[46] Julie Ann Smith, *Ordering Women's Lives: Penitentials and Nunnery Rules in the Early Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 140. Communities of canonesses existed before the Rule of Augustine. See Jesse D. Billett, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England, 597–c. 1000* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 156. Also, Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 30.

[47] Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2011), 146. Eleventh-century monastic reform led to the trend in "regularizing" women's religious communities to one of the standard monastic rules.

[48] Constance H. Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Reform* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2002). Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Myra M. Bom, *Women in the Military Orders of the Crusades* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17. Carolyn Muessig, "Hildegard of Bingen and Herrad of Landsberg," in *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 93.

[49] For a discussion of *Frauenstifte*, communities of canonesses in German areas during the

enclosure, with limited exposure to any outside influences.[50] This varying aspect of contact with external contemporary culture would presumably affect the reading preferences and opportunities between canoness and nun, perhaps restricting the latter's reading opportunities. However, as examples from my research show, women living in religious enclosure had similar access to contemporary texts, and demonstrate reading interests in a common variety of genres as their canoness counterparts. The fact of enclosure did not necessarily mean being cut- off from the developing book production of the period.

It becomes evident that both the court and convent provided opportunities for women to engage in literary endeavors and further represent the socio-economic contexts under which women in the twelfth century owned, read, and copied books. In the convent, the monastic rule a women's religious house followed partially dictated the amount of time spent reading, and making books. While at the courts of Western Europe, noblewomen had the currency, social and financial, as well as leisure time available to read and request books, both in Latin and vernacular. Although women from all classes were excluded from the universities which were developing during this period, many still acquired a high level of education. For example, as a noblewoman, Heloise, abbess of the Paraclete (d. 1164), was initially educated at the Abbey of Argenteuil, followed by a time spent with her uncle at the cathedral school of Notre Dame before her individual instruction began under the cathedral-school master, Peter Abelard.[51] Heloise, as a noblewoman who became a nun, was not unique in her educational path of receiving education from both nuns and monks.[52]

early and high Middle Ages, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Robert Suckale, "In Between this World and the Next: The Art of Religious Women in the Middle Ages," in *Crown and Veil, Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, eds. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 76–108.

[50] Although strict enclosure was often circumvented. See Jeffrey F. Hamburger, "Art, Enclosure, and the Pastoral Care of Nuns," in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 44–57.

[51] Anne Collins Smith, "The *Problemata* of Heloise," in *Women Writing Latin: Medieval Women Writing Latin*, eds. Laurie Churchill, Phyllis Rugg Brown, and J. Elisabeth Jeffrey (New York: Routledge, 2002), 173. Smith suggests that Heloise may have received part of her education at the cathedral school of Notre Dame.

[52] Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79–80. See also, Joan Ferrante, ed. and trans., *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, "Heloise, abbess of the Paraclete," https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/woman/28.html (accessed 11 November 2017).

3. THE WRITTEN WORD: EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Until the twentieth century, it was held that medieval women were unable to read or write, essentially illiterate and uneducated, and those women who were literate represented "anomalies."[53] This misconception has remained an obstacle to understanding the extent to which women were involved in the production and use of books throughout the Middle Ages.[54] Recent scholarship on medieval women and literacy has shown the difficulty in defining this term, where reading ability did not necessarily correspond to writing ability, and where levels of knowledge of Latin, or a vernacular language, hinders a strict dichotomy between literate and illiterate. The recent multi-volume work generated by the scholarly project, *Nuns' Literacies*, has delved deeper into the literate activities of reading and writing occurring in convents during the Middle Ages, such as the abbeys of Quedlinburg or Zwiefalten in Germany, and Fontevraud in France.[55] Scholars such as Patricia Stirnemann and Jane Stevenson have revealed ample evidence from courtly and religious literature that points to the literate proficiency of twelfth-century women in Latin as well as in vernacular languages, such as Anglo-Norman French or Middle High German.[56] For the present study, I follow the definition of women's literacy as set down by Green in his work, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, where he argues that equating literacy solely with a command of reading

[53] Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing, Works By and For Women in England, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 5. James Sheppard, *Christendom at the Crossroads: The Medieval Era* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 34. A commonly discussed argument for the decline in women's education is the establishment of universities during the twelfth century which excluded the participation of women. Scholars such as Marilyn Oliva and Alexandra Barrett have argued for the "literate, yet not Latinate" definition of women's education and literacy. See Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in The Diocese of Norwich*, 1350–1540 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 1998), 64.

[54] See Franz H. Bäuml, "Transformations of the Heroine: From Epic Heard to Epic Read," in *The Role of Woman in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rosmarie Thee Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 26. Also, Jacqueline Jenkins, "Reading and the Book of Margery Kempe," in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 115; and Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 125.

[55] V. Blanton, V. O'Mara, and P. Stoop, eds. *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015); *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Antwerp Dialogue*, forthcoming.

[56] Green, *Women Readers*; Patricia Stirnemann, "Women and Books in France: 1170–1220," in *Representations of the Feminine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (Dallas: Academia Press, 1993), 247–252. Jane Stevenson, "Anglo-Latin Women Poets," in *Latin Learning and English Lore; Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge, Vol. II*., eds. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). Will Hasty, ed., *The Camden House History of German Literature, Vol. 3, German Literature of the High Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006).

and writing in Latin excludes the nuances of women's engagement with the written word.[57] As Green points out, during the Middle Ages a wide range of activities could be considered acts of literacy, such as being read to, reading in vernacular languages, commissioning or copying a book, as well as composing or even dictating a text.[58]

While it would be unwise to assume that medieval women had full or easy access to education in a similar manner as men, recent studies have demonstrated that literacy may have been limited, but not unattainable.[59] Monica Green, for example, argues that many medieval women could acquire a basic literacy, which Green defines as the "ability to make out words, to read over and over again the same devotions or prayers, even the ability to teach rudimentary letters to children."[60] Further, as Marjorie Woods points out, it was the Psalter, a book comprised of the Psalms, a calendar, and various prayers, which became the educational book for women in both court and convent. Woods argues that the "shared format of the book most widely owned by laywomen and of the book most widely available to women in orders was particularly conducive to passing on literacy in the modern sense of a shared minimal level of textual recognition."[61]

[57] Green, *Women Readers*, 30–36, 84, and 96–98; Green, "Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 267–280, at 276.
[58] Green, *Women Readers*, 82; and Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066 – 1307*, 3rd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 195. Also, David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 60; Bell suggests four levels of Latin literacy. According to Bella Millet, "Full *litteratura*, however, was usually seen as demanding rather more – the command of grammar and vocabulary necessary to read and understand other, less familiar, Latin texts and express oneself correctly in Latin." Bella Millett, "Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. Carole M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 86–103, at 89. Alcuin introduced in his "Grammatica" the terms *litterata* (that which can be written) and *illiterata* (that which cannot be written) to deal with the question of written transcription. See William Layher, *Queenship and Voice in Medieval Northern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45.
[59] Hamburger, "Introduction: Histories of Female Monasticism," in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, eds. Jeffrey Hamburger and Susan Marti, trans. Dietlinde Hamburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 7.
[60] Monica H. Green, "Books as a Source of Medical Education for Women in the Middle Ages," *Dynamis: Acta Hispanica ad Medicinae Scientiarumque Historiam Illustrandam* 20 (2000): 331–370, at 356. Michael T. Clanchy, "Images of Ladies with Prayer Books: What do they Signify?" *Studies in Church History* 38 (2004):106–22, at 110, n. 19. Clanchy writes, Abelard "commended to Heloise and her nuns St Jerome's advice that 'one reaches the sense of the words from their sound, and someone who learns to pronounce them will already want to understand them'."
[61] Marjorie Curry Woods, "Shared Books; Primers, Psalters, and the Adult Acquisition of Literacy Among Devout Laywomen and Women in Orders in Late Medieval England," in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liege and Their Impact*, eds. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 187. Physical features of psalter books will be explored in chapter four.

Access to education was the most important factor that shaped the literary culture of women during the twelfth century and ostensibly throughout the Middle Ages. Opportunities for women to develop literacy in either Latin, a vernacular language, or both was most often available to those living within a noble court or a convent. Women who grew up within a court setting gained literacy often guided by a member of the clergy or a well-known magister, as Abelard was when he was selected to direct Heloise's education.[62] The knowledge of Latin was considered essential to a well-educated court lady. For example, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) and her sister Petronilla (1125–1193), both raised at the noble court of their father, Duke William X, were educated in Latin and well acquainted with new literary genres such as troubadour poetry from an early age.[63] Further, an advanced level of literary interests in both Latin and vernacular texts was shared by the noble courts of Eleanor's daughters; Marie of France, countess of Champagne (1145–1198); Alix of France, countess of Blois (1150–1197); Matilda of England, duchess of Saxony (1156–1189); and Eleanor of England, queen of Castile (1162–1214), demonstrating a familial network of noblewomen's reading culture which supported a continued interest throughout the twelfth century in new literary works.[64]

A convent typically included an internal school where women were taught Latin, often attaining a level of literacy that went beyond the ability to perform the Office and Liturgy. In the early Middle Ages women's monastic communities such as Essen, Quedlinburg, Gandersheim, and Herford in Germany were closely connected to aristocratic families offering a respected, and often well-funded, place for the education of daughters.[65] In England, the convents of Barking, Wilton, and Shaftesbury, surviving from before the Conquest, were well known for

[62] Elisabeth van Houts, "Latin and French as Languages of the Past in Normandy during the Reign of Henry II: Robert of Torigni, Stephen of Rouen, and Wace," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, eds. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53–78, at 67. For example, the education of Matilda, the future empress of the Holy Roman Empire, was conducted at Trier under the guidance of Archbishop Bruno.
[63] Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: By the Wrath of God, Queen of England* (London: Random House, 2011), 17. Eleanor's influence and patronage of authors is contested by various scholars. Michael R. Evans, *Inventing Eleanor: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 15–16.
[64] Theodore Evergates, "Religious Women," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1999), 104.
[65] Essen Abbey is part of a tradition of education for noblewomen of Saxony since the Ottonian period. Herford Abbey, the oldest religious house in Saxony, was by c. 1147 a wealthy house where the abbesses became Imperial princesses. Niedermunster and Quedlinburg were royal abbeys which had active scriptoria producing manuscripts

providing a high level of Latin education to nuns and noblewomen who resided within their community, a distinction which continued into the twelfth century.[66] As an example, the education of Matilda (1080–1118), daughter of Queen Margaret of Scotland, was initially acquired at Wilton Abbey, followed by time Matilda spent at Romsey Abbey. These "convent schools" provided Matilda with an education in "literatoriam artem" before she became queen of England.[67]

During the twelfth century, at the Benedictine monastery of Admont in Styria, "new female recruits, like their male counterparts, were taught to read and write, and more mature students advanced their skills in the liberal arts in an internal school directed by the nuns themselves."[68] Similarly, in Spain, Queen Sancha of Aragon (1154–1208) founded the priory of Hospitaller sisters, St Maria la Real de Sigena (est. 1188), as a wealthy religious house meant for the education of daughters of royal and noble families in Aragon and Catalonia.[69] Further, the convents of Fontevraud, Argenteuil, and the Paraclete in twelfth-century France were known for providing high levels of education to royal and noble women.[70] Acquiring a level of literacy, whether in Latin or vernacular, offered a real incentive for most women to join a convent. However, as Constant Mews points out, "the dowry required to maintain girls at old established abbeys such as Argenteuil was generally so large that it excluded those of more modest means from being educated there."[71]

during the Ottonian period. Gandersheim also maintained a high level of education for both the nuns and canonesses, who resided together.

[66] Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg notes that, during the Anglo-Saxon period, "the office of abbess was frequently kept within the family and passed from one sister to another," in *Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca 500–1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 278.

[67] Green, *Women Readers*, 95. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, 46–48 and 125–144. Also, Alison I. Beach et al., *Monastic Matrix: A Scholarly Resource for the Study of Women's Religious Communities from 400 to 1600 C.E.*, "Wilton," http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/monasticon/wilton (accessed 11 November 2017). An early example, Matilda of Ringelheim, Queen of Germany (895–968) was sent to the convent of Herford to be educated for courtly life. See James Westfall Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), 82. Marie of Champagne was educated at the Abbey of Avenay, while Queen Matilda of England was educated at Wilton Abbey.

[68] Alison I. Beach, "Voices from a Distant Land: Fragments of a Twelfth-Century Nuns' Letter Collection," *Speculum* 77, no. 1 (2002): 34–54, at 35.

[69] Katherine Jane Gill, and Lisa M. Bitel, (2000), *Monastic Matrix*, "S. Maria la Real de Sijena," http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/monasticon/s-mar%C3%AD-la-real-de-sijena (accessed 11 November 2017). Also, Myra M. Bom, *Women in the Military Orders of the Crusades* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 116.

[70] Susan Dreyer, OSB, "The Education of Heloise in Twelfth-Century France" (Seminary Graduate Papers/Theses, School of Theology, 2006).

[71] Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 59.

In addition to the known educational affiliations between court and convent, many women in the twelfth century demonstrated what D. H. Green calls "concealed education."[72] Although never explicitly acknowledged how or where a woman was educated, contemporary sources may praise a woman's knowledge of Latin, or mention a woman's literacy in a prologue or letter, often which accompanied a manuscript she requested. For instance, Adela, countess of Blois, received a poem in the form of a verse-letter from the monk Baudri de Bourgueil, which he sent to her in the late eleventh century.[73] In the prologue Baudri mentions his admiration for Adela's interest in books, intimating her competency in reading Latin. Further, Adela is noted for her "literacy, generosity, and intelligence" by Hugh of Fleury in his dedication of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which she commissioned.[74] Adela also received a book of prayers from Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, who composed for her a "florilegium" of the Psalms at her request.[75] Each of these instances suggest Adela was highly literate, requesting manuscripts from respected monks and spiritual advisors.[76] Although no direct reference remains as to where she was educated, we may imagine that Adela's upbringing as the daughter of William the Conqueror, and sister to Henry I in the royal court of England, provided her the opportunity to advance her literacy.

Moreover, information regarding the education of perhaps three of the most well-known abbesses during the twelfth century, Heloise of Argenteuil, Hildegard of Bingen, and Herrad of Hohenburg, lacks any direct evidence of what books they read to attain their high level of literacy.[77] There are no records of the library at Hohenburg during the period Herrad put together her encyclopedic work of poetry, songs, chronicles, and liturgy, the *Hortus deliciarium*, to be read by the nuns of her community.[78] Herrad utilized a large variety of texts, both traditional and contemporary, which she presumably read and

[72] Green, *Women Readers*, 95.

[73] Vincent Debiais, "The Poem of Baudri for Countess Adele: A Starting Point for Reading of Medieval Ekphrasis," *Viator*, 44 no. 1 (2013): 95–106.

[74] Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 32.

[75] The identity of the recipient of the *florilegium* is debated. It is possible that the dedication was made to Adelaide/Adela, a younger sister to Adela of Blois. See Kimberly LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c. 1067–1137)*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

[76] Green, *Women Readers*, 96. Thompson, Literacy of the Laity, 91 and 109, n. 88.

[77] Barbara Newman, ed., *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 7 and n. 34.

[78] Now Sainte-Odile near Strasbourg. See Albrecht Classen, "Herrad von Hohenburg," in *Medieval Germany: An Encyclopedia*, ed. John M. Jeep (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 355.

selected.[79] Hildegard of Bingen received her education under the guidance of the anchoress Jutta von Sponheim at Disibodenberg. It is unknown what books Hildegard may have had access to and read during her time at St Disibod, which according to Barbara Newman, had acquired a substantial library during the Middle Ages.[80] Although Jutta was respected as a *magistra* and the "women's hermitage as a *schola*, or school," the *vita* of Jutta simply explains that Hildegard's education consisted solely of teachings from the Psalter.[81] The twelfth-century correspondence between Heloise and Abelard, a renowned teacher of theology from Paris, alludes to the high- level of education Heloise had accomplished. Her education as a young noblewoman was spent at the priory of Notre-Dame at Argenteuil, just north of Paris. Years later when Heloise became a nun and then abbess, she guided the education of her community at both Argenteuil and the Paraclete, yet little is known about the books belonging to either of these two convents during the twelfth century.[82] Despite the difficult nature of defining medieval women's literacy, and pinpointing the ways they acquired education, descriptive instances such as letters and *vitae* point to the levels of literacy women acquired through "concealed education."

As briefly discussed above, an understanding of the monastic observance that was followed by a convent gives us a better sense of how a women's community engaged in literary activities.[83] The number of new monastic orders founded for women during the twelfth century required that each community had its own copy of a monastic rule. Although most adopted either the Benedictine or Augustinian rule, some communities provided a specific monastic rule for their order.[84] Most notable are the Institutes of the Gilbertine Order from England in 1131, established by Gilbert of Sempringham for the community of women which developed around his preaching.[85] Also important is the monastic rule developed by Robert d'Abrissel for the women, and men, living at the Abbey of Fontevraud in France.[86] Each monastic community of women would have had a copy of their respective rule (observance), possibly stored in the chapter or perhaps within the *armarium* or the sacristy, available for them to read, consult, and follow.[87]

Both the rule of St Augustine and St Benedict were required to be read weekly, if not daily, with sections to be read aloud to the community.[88] These monastic rules defined the daily structure of life within the order.[89] Nuns as well as canonesses would gather several times during the day and night to recite the Psalms, listen to religious texts read aloud while they ate, and spent time daily in private reading.[90] Caesarius of Arles emphasized in his Rule the necessity for each individual in the community to read for at least two hours a day, silently for spiritual growth.[91] The Rule of St Benedict requires a monastic community to provide books "for liturgy, for devotional reading, and for study," with enough books to give one book to each (confessed) member at Lent to be read "straight through."[92]

Although the Rule of St Benedict was initially written for a male audience, it had been variously adapted for use by nuns over the

[79] Griffiths, *Garden of Delights*, 75. Griffiths points to the surrounding monasteries, such as Marbach, as locations where Herrad may have borrowed books, 77.
[80] Newman, Voice of the Living Light, 6–7. The library at St Disibod was destroyed during the wars of the Reformation era. Newman, *Voice of the Living Light*, 7.
[81] John Van Engen, "Abbess; Mother and Teacher," in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 34–35.
[82] Elizabeth M. McNamer, *The Education of Heloise: Methods, Content, and Purpose of Learning in the Twelfth Century* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1991). Anne Collins Smith, "The *Problemata* of Heloise," in *Women Writing Latin: Medieval Women Writing Latin, vol. 2*, eds. Laurie J. Churchill, Phyllis R. Brown, and Jane E. Jeffrey (New York: Routledge, 2002), 173–174. The books from Argenteuil may have been "confiscated" when the convent was closed by Abbot Suger in 1129. The nuns then moved to the Paraclete and may have only had the essential books needed to perform the liturgy.
[83] Rebecca A. Sigmon, " 'Reading Like a Nun': The Composition of Convent Libraries in Renaissance Europe," *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 10, no. 3–4, (2011): 81–102, at 83.
[84] Logan, *A History of the Church*, 133.
[85] Katherine Sykes, *Inventing Sempringham, Gilbert of Sempringham and the Origins of the Role of the Master* (Zurich: LIT Verlag GmbH & Co. KG Wien, 2011), 78 and 162.
[86] Julie Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality: The Benedictines in England, c. 1070–c. 1250* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 13.
[87] Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[88] Teresa Webber, "Textual Communities (Latin)," in *A Social history of England, 900–1200*, eds. Julia Crick and Elisabeth van Houts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 340.
[89] St Benedict, *The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans., Bruce L. Venarde (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). Also, Sigmon, "Reading Like a Nun," 82. George P. Lawless, OSA, "Three Historical Questions About the Rule of Saint Augustine," in *Word & Spirit: A Monastic Review 9 St. Augustine (387–1987)* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1987), 53.
[90] Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages*, 34. The RB mentions reading by yourself after the meal at the sixth hour, see D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading, The Primary Reception of German Literature 800–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1994), 136 and 243.
[91] Sigmon, "Reading Like a Nun," 83. Sigmon also notes that in the monastic rules established by Benedict and Caesarius, "nuns were to remain silent during mealtimes in order to hear and meditate upon the reading of Scripture."
[92] Lesley Smith, "*Scriba, Femina:* Medieval Depictions of Women Writing," in *Women and the Book, Assessing the Visual Evidence*, eds. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997), 23. Also, Teresa Webber, "The Homiliary of Paul the Deacon: Cambridge, Pembroke College, MSS 23–24," in *Bury St Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, ed. Tom Licence (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 177.

course of centuries. Indications of rulebooks addressed to a female audience include 'feminine versions' of monastic rules, reflected by a use of gendered language to adapt the content to the needs of a female community. This could be done by altering Latin word endings, or adding vernacular translations resulting in a bilingual format. For instance, in a version of the Rule of St Benedict belonging to the community at Notre-Dame des Saintes during the first half of the twelfth century, the Latin endings were changed to the feminine *(Ausculta O Filia)* and glosses were added by a nun.[93] (Fig. 1)

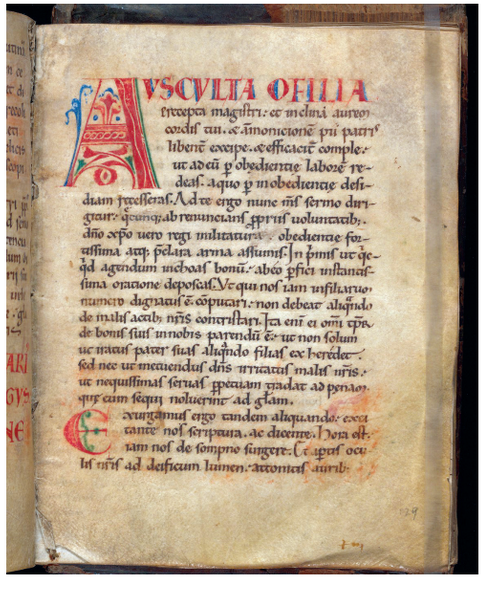
AVSCVLTA OFILIA

Figure 1: *Rule of St Benedict*, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Marston MS 25 (1100–1200), fol. 129r.

[93] *Calendar, Martyrology, Benedictine Rule*, Yale University, **Beinecke Library, Marston MS 25 (12th–15th c.)**; Part II fols. 47–168 version of the Usuard Martyrology. For more on the Saintes copy of the Rule of St Benedict, see Hugh Feiss, "Care for the Text: Glossed Rule of Benedict for Notre Dame des Saintes," *American Benedictine Review* 43, no. 1 (1992): 47–56. Also, Ann E. Matter, "The Canon Religious Life: Maria Domitilla Galluzi and the Rule of St. Clare of Assisi," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 79–80. Matter describes the copy of the Rule as a "House Book" used for Chapter meetings. Agnes of Barbezieux, noble relative of Eleanor of Aquitaine, was abbess of Notre-Dame des Saintes in 1134. Beach et al., "Saintes Version of the Rule of St Benedict, Marston MS 25," *Monastic Matrix*, http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/bibliographia/saintes-version-rule-st-benedict (accessed 11 November 2017). The University of Iowa Libraries, "record 16312," *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index*, https://inpress.lib.uiowa.edu/feminae/DetailsPage.aspx?Feminae_ID=16312 (accessed 11 November 2017).

This "gendered–differentiation" of a text is also found in the bilingual Middle English copy of the Rule of St Benedict from the Cistercian convent at Wintney (Winteney), dated to the end of the twelfth century or early thirteenth century. St Benedict's rule was translated into Old English by Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester (904–984) "in two recensions, one for monks and one for nuns, which were still being copied in the twelfth century."[94] The Wintney manuscript holds a prose version in Middle English of Æthelwold's translation, copied in the twelfth century, which was likely altered by a nun of the abbey to reflect the reading preferences of their community. The manuscript has parallel chapters of Latin and English, with feminine Latin endings, along with calendar entries indicating the use of the manuscript by the nuns of Wintney in Hampshire.[95] Also from the twelfth century, Heloise, as abbess of the Paraclete, requested from Abelard a re-working of the Rule of St Benedict into a version for women which might better reflect their daily experience in a monastic setting.[96] Abelard wrote a Rule for the Paraclete around 1140 for the nuns to consult (letter 7), yet Heloise also provided "a short text (the *Institutiones nostrae*) appended to Abelard's idealized and prolix Rule" which reflected the concerns and needs of a women's community.[97] These two texts, used for guiding the observance of a Benedictine rule in the daily life of the nuns, would have been kept as part of the Paraclete's book collection.[98]

In addition to work and prayer, the Rule of Benedict recommended that the members of the community "spend from three to five hours

[94] "The Life of St Benedict: Introduction," in *Saints Lives in Middle English Collections*, eds. E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson, and Robert K. Upchurch (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/whatley-saints-lives-in-middle-english-collections-life-of-st-benedict-introduction (accessed 11 November 2017).

[95] *Winteney Rule Book*, London, British Library, MS. Cotton Claudius D. iii (1200–1225), fols. 52r–140v. Composite manuscript containing seven parts. See David N. Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, A.D. 950–1030* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 11. Orietta da Rold et al., *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220*, (London, British Library, Cotton Claudius D. iii) www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.BL.Clau.D.iii.htm (accessed 12 December 2018).

[96] A similar request was made to Hildegard of Bingen, yet made at the behest of the male congregation of Hunniensis, asking for her commentary on the Rule of St Benedict. Hessische Landesbibliothek, Wiesbaden, Ms. 17 (1175–1190). Hildegard of Bingen, *Regulae S. Benedicti Explanatio* "Explanation of the Rule of Benedict," intro. and trans. Hugh Feiss, OSB., with Jo Ann McNamara (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000).

[97] Troyes, Bibliotheque Municipale, ms. 802 (1200–1300) fols. 89r–94v. See Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163. Also, Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 34.

[98] Heloise also requested a hymnal and a book of sermons from Abelard. See Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 164–165.

each day in lectio divina."[99] Benedictine nuns across Western Europe during the Middle Ages would have read in this manner daily from a psalter, or other texts such as sermons or saints' lives.[100] This was a specific style of reading which

> required a constant effort of recollection…assisted by material supports…such as colours of the rubrics, the small initials dividing the page, the marginal images of the 'borders', which, without necessarily having a literal relationship with the content of the text, could be associated mentally with the passages to be remembered.[101]

Baudri de Bourgueil, a monk from the Loire region and active poet from the beginnings of the "long twelfth century," writes to a young nun at the convent of Le Ronceray in Angers regarding this manner of reading. Baudri states

> Meanwhile let the lectio divina soothe your cares;
> Pray write, read, and study poems.
> Let the page of the divine word be your subject,
> So that, frivolities being fled, the Lord be spoken of.[102]

Noblewomen were also encouraged to read in this meditative manner, as suggested in the letter accompanying the book of prayers (*Orationes sive Meditationes*) sent to Matilda of Tuscany by Anselm of Bec, in the beginning of the twelfth century (1104).[103] In his letter, Anselm advises Matilda of the proper way to read and mediate on these prayers.[104] Anselm writes

[99] M. Dorothy Neuhofer, OSB, *In the Benedictine Tradition: The Origins and Early Development of Two College Libraries* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 8.
[100] Sigmon, "Reading Like a Nun," 83.
[101] Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Images and the Work of Memory, with Special Reference to the Sixth-Century Mosaics of Ravenna, Italy," trans. Marie-Pierre Gelin, in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture*, eds. Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen, and Mary Franklin-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 19. See also, Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[102] Anselm of Canterbury, *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. with an introduction by Sister Benedictica Ward, S.L.G., foreword by R. W. Southern (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 89. Also, Belle S. Tuten, "Who was Lady Constance of Angers? Nuns as Poets and Correspondents at the Monastery of Ronceray d'Angers in the Early Twelfth Century," *Medieval Perspectives* 19 (2004): 255–268.
[103] Ferrante, "A Letter from Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury to Matilda of Tuscany, countess of Tuscany, duchess of Lorraine," *Epistolae*, https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/236.html (accessed 11 November 2017).
[104] Some of the prayers written for Matilda by Anselm were new, some were adaptations of older prayers, originally written for monks.

> Since they were produced to excite the mind of the reader
> to the love or fear of God or to discussion of him,
> they should not be read swiftly or skimmed,
> but a little at a time with intense lingering meditation.
> Nor should the reader attempt to read the whole of any of them,
> but only as much as he feels suffices to excite the desire to pray,
> which is what they were made for.[105]

However, Anselm introduced a new aspect to the physical features of the text he sends to Matilda, where her copy of the prayers includes illustrations, and thus promoted a new reading practice with selective elements.[106] In the prologue to the prayers Anselm goes further, explaining his choice to break his text into sections, so "that one does not have to begin always at the beginning but wherever one wants, hence the division into parts and paragraphs, so he is not put off by frequent repetition."[107] Anselm's choice to provide his female reader with defined sections of text which could be read in a non-sequential order shows that women shared in the beginnings of the developing "book fluency" which was an essential part of the "Twelfth Century Renaissance."[108]

Although the evidence suggests that women in the twelfth century were engaging with books on some level, it is still not entirely clear what books the female reader in this period was using and how she used them. Barbara Newman has argued that the ideal female reader in the twelfth century is imagined in the nun-recluse: a woman living away from the world with the sole purpose of spiritual advancement, alone in her cell with her books.[109] In contrast, Duncan Robertson sees the ideal reader as a royal or noble woman, such as Empress Agnes, Princess Adelaide, or Countess Matilda of Tuscany.[110] Both these scholars draw from Anselm's vision of a reader as "a literary individual with a book in hand in a private setting in which he or she may browse at leisure and at will," a situation

[105] English translation taken from Epistolae, "A Letter from Anselm."
[106] Otto Pächt, "The Illustrations of St. Anselm's Prayers and Meditations," 81.
[107] Epistolae, "A Letter from Anselm."
[108] Malcolm B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes, The Lyell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford 1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). Erik Kwakkel, VIDI Project: Introduction, *Turning Over a New Leaf: Manuscript Innovation in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucas/research/news/manuscript-innovation.html (accessed 11 November 2017).
[109] 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, 2012), 356–358.
[110] Robertson, *Lectio Divina*, 146. The countess Matilda of Tuscany (d. 1115) was evidently well educated as it is attested in her *vita* that she could speak German, French, and could read and write in Latin. Ferrante, "Matilda of Tuscany, countess of Tuscany, duchess of

which would have been possible in both court and convent milieus.[111] The late eleventh-century monk Goscelin of St Bertin imagined the anchoress Eve of Angers as an "ideal" reader in her cell, with a book "propped open on her window sill."[112] Goscelin wrote the *Liber confortatorius* for Eve when she committed herself to the anchorite cell. In his work Goscelin proposes an "ambitious" reading list for Eve, including the Bible, works by Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, the Life of St Anthony, and other works of ecclesiastical history.[113] This reading list presumes that as an anchorite, she had access to books which include these texts.[114]

Thus, as demonstrated by the above examples, women, albeit of mostly an aristocratic background, had opportunities for education acquiring the skills to read and write. Noblewomen show a high level of education that included an interest in vernacular reading, revealing a shift in the normative definition of medieval literacy as a knowledge of Latin. Nuns utilized their education toward the production of books, requesting or copying needed manuscripts for their communities. In short, scholarly attention to the locations of learning, instances of "concealed education," and varying levels of literacy have successfully challenged previous notions of medieval women's illiteracy as commonplace.

4. TEXTUAL CULTURE – BOOK GENRES

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's work on medieval women's literary culture emphasizes how women were involved in numerous textual endeavors in the role of reader, patron, or scribe. Throughout the Middle Ages women's engagement with the written word included a variety of reading interests such as "letters, lyrics, miracle collections, medical collections, lapidaries, bestiaries, encyclopedias, apocalypses, biblical paraphrase, biblical commentary, historiography, estates and other handbooks."[115]

Lorraine," *Epistolae*, https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/woman/29.html (accessed 11 November 2017). Also, Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity*, 71.

[111] Robertson, *Lectio Divina*, 146.

[112] Goscelin of St Bertin, *Liber confortatorius: The Book of Encouragement and Consolation*, ed. Monika Otter (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 12 no. 30 and 95–96.

[113] Augustine's *Confessiones and De Civitate Dei*, as well as Eusebius, Orosius, and Boethius. See Otter, *Liber confortatorius*, 96.

[114] Peter Damian (1007–1072), a monk who wrote to women in both court and convent, recommends in a letter to his sister that she should read Augustine's *City of God*, Jerome on *Daniel* and the *Apocalypse*. His letter assumes the Latin literacy of his sister, and that she would have the available texts to read. See Joan M. Ferrante, "Women's Role in Latin Letters from the Fourth to the Early Twelfth Century," in *The Cultural Patronage of Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 79; Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex: Women's Role in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1997), 56.

[115] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture, 1150–1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1. See also Roberta L. Krueger, "Female Voices in Convents, Courts and Households: the French Middle Ages," in *A History of Women's Writing in France*, ed. Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10–40.

The question arises regarding what genres were requested, read, owned, and copied by twelfth-century women. Common genres among royal and noble women include religious works, historical narratives, and secular texts such as poetry and romances. These works were commissioned by, or dedicated to, women for reasons ranging from political to personal. Epics and courtly romances were desired for entertainment, chronicles for dynastic support and memorial qualities, while religious texts might be requested for education or spiritual guidance.[116] During the "Twelfth-Century Renaissance," these genres were increasingly produced in the vernacular as noted by McCash, Borland, Short, and other scholars.[117] In direct connection, works in vernacular languages, both translations and new compositions in French, English, and German, emerged as a popular literary practice. Moreover, women living in monastic communities needed books for the daily rituals of convent life: liturgical texts in Latin such as Gospel books, psalters, graduales, and homilaries. Nuns in many monastic houses also had access to patristic works by authors such as Augustine and Jerome, and to the classical canon of texts by Horace, Ovid, Terence, and Virgil.[118] The following will introduce those genres that stand out as commonly read by women during this period.[119]

HISTORY AND HAGIOGRAPHY

The two genres of history and hagiography have recently come to the forefront of studies on the reading habits of medieval women.[120]

[116] June H. McCash, "The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women: An Overview," in *The Cultural Patronage of Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 21.

[117] Jennifer Borland "Violence on Vellum; St Margaret's Transgressive Body and its Audience" in *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation and Subversion, 600–1530*, eds. Alison Moore and Elizabeth L'Estrange (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 67–88, at 80. Ian Short, "Patrons and Polyglots, French Literature in Twelfth Century England," in *Anglo-Norman Studies, XIV. Proceedings from the Battle Conference 1991*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991).

[118] Cynthia J. Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women's Convents in Late Medieval Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Cyrus has paid special attention to the genres that nun-scribes in Late Medieval Germany preferred.

[119] For example, the anchorites/recluses Christina of Markyate and Eve of Wilton owned books given to them in dedication, not commission. Gabriela Signori, "Anchorites in German Speaking Lands," in *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 58. Signori writes, "After her death, the monastery kept the memory of the female anchorite alive in written 'biography,' liturgical practice, and other forms of veneration."

[120] See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Powers of Record, Powers of Example; Hagiography and

During the twelfth century, aristocratic society, including women, were interested in the past and sought to read books that recounted history in a manner that they could read and understand.[121] Chronicles were a common way of writing "history" during the Middle Ages, which told the stories of the foundations of kingdoms, the battles, conquests and defeats, the marriages, births, and deaths of medieval dynasties.[122] They were narratives of memory, supported by women through their interest in reading, commissioning, and copying this genre of book.[123] For instance, the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* by William of Malemsbury was originally commissioned by Matilda, queen of England, but was still unfinished at the time of her death in 1118. The manuscript was then re-dedicated to her daughter, the Empress Matilda (Maud), when it was completed years later (c. 1125), demonstrating women's continued interest and support of this literary genre which went beyond the reading of basic religious texts necessary for daily worship.[124] Scholars involved in the research of medieval history have long debated the categories as to what constitutes a historical text.[125] Most scholarly discussion focuses on around the validity of these works as accurate historic evidence. However, for the present study, the accuracy behind the historical accounts contained in the text is not as important as the fact that they represent a genre and reading interest that women valued.

Another genre that touches on history, religious devotion, and was often translated into vernacular languages is evidenced in the *passio* or

Women's History," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Carpenter Erler and Maryanne Kowalski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 71–93. Also, Robin Waugh, *The Genre of Medieval Patience Literature: Development, Duplication and Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012). Certain works, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, written in the ninth century, inspired other versions of recounting the past, such as the well-known work by William of Malemsbury. Orderic Vitalis was also a prolific writer of "history," composing both chronicles and vitae that told of the past activities of the kings of England.

[121] Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999). He looks at the corpus of vernacular literature.

[122] *Encomium Emmae Reginae* by monk of St Omer (or St Bertin) British Library, Add. 33241, (c. 1041/2). Alistair Campbell, ed., *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Alice Sheppard, *Families of the King: Writing Identity in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 118.

[123] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Medieval Memory in Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[124] Rodney M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987), 36–37.

[125] See David Dumville, "What is a Chronicle?" in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, The Medieval Chronicle Society, 1996), 16–17. Dumville does not consider Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* a chronicle. Dumville is concerned about a "looseness of meaning" for designations such as chronicles, annales, historia or gesta.

vitae.[126] Roger Ray comments, "when the typical medieval historicus or historigraphus went to work, he was likely to write not chronicles but saints' lives, the most numerous and beloved form of the newly written historia."[127] These texts were essentially a "biography" of a historical person, often a saint or martyr, meant to be read as both a history and as an example of moralizing role models. They conveyed an idea of aspirational spirituality, highly desired as a model of emulation for both pious noblewomen and nuns.[128] As an example of women's interest in this genre, at the beginning of the "long twelfth century," Abbess Ælfgyva of Barking (r. 1066–1086) commissioned the monk Goscelin of St Bertin to produce a number of *vitae* in Latin recounting the deeds and lives of the convent's early abbesses Ethelburga, Hildelith, and Wulfhild, with the intention that these manuscripts were for her nuns to read.[129] The reading of hagiographies was a primary interest of women in both court and convent, evidenced by more than twenty manuscripts commissioned, dedicated, or copied through women's support during the twelfth century.[130] The attention to this genre tells us that women held a specific interest in hagiography for devotional reading, as well as utilizing the written word to document their own histories.

LITURGICAL AND DEVOTIONAL

Perhaps representing the major genre of books belonging to women in the twelfth century were the liturgical and devotional books used daily.[131] Convent libraries held the liturgical books required for Mass, often owning a gradual, or antiphonary, a homiliary, breviary, or missal, some even copied within convent scriptoria. Gospel books were used in some cases by noblewomen for private, devotional reading, and represented a common book commissioned by women to donate as a gift to a church or monastery. However, within this genre the psalter stands out as the

[126] Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne, eds. *Rewritting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *Sacred Fictions of Medieval France: Narrative Theology in the Lives of Christ and the Virgin, 1150–1500* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), 16.

[127] Roger Ray, "Historiography," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, eds. Frank Anthony, Carl Mantello, and A.G. Rigg (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 639–658, at 639.

[128] Emma Campbell, *Medieval Saints' Lives: The Gift, Kinship and Community in Old French Hagiography* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), 5.

[129] Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano, eds. *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community* (York, England: York Medieval Press, 2012). David Bell, *The Catholic Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (2013): 774–775.

[130] For a list of these manuscripts, see Appendix.

[131] Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000–1125* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.

predominant book owned and used by women in both the court and convent, as it could be read both in a devotional or liturgical manner. The Psalter was essential to the daily monastic ritual of performing the Divine Office, as well as the book most often used among noblewomen for their religious devotions.[132] My corpus shows over thirty Psalters belonging to women in a court or convent context during the twelfth century.[133] Second to the preference for Psalters, evidence suggests that collections of sermons, such as the ones copied by twelfth-century nuns of Admont, made up a considerable portion of the books that nuns owned and read.[134] During their time spent in chapter or the refectory, nuns were reading from manuscripts of homiliaries, sermons, and Biblical commentaries.[135]

POETRY AND VERSE-EPISTLES

Poetry in the form of verse-epistles in the style of *ars dictaminus* was yet another literary genre both read and composed by women during this century. Correspondence in Latin between men and women held a tradition back to the letters of Church Fathers, such as Paul and Jerome. Further, the production of letters in Latin verse was thought to be a highly skilled, literate pursuit for men and women alike.[136] To consider a letter as a form of literary production may seem foreign to our contemporary understanding of correspondence. However, during the Middle Ages, and especially in the twelfth century, the act of composing a letter carried with it the literary value similar to a carefully crafted

[132] Chrysogonus Waddell, "Reform of the Liturgy," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert Louis Benson, Giles Constable, Carol Dana Lanham, and Charles Homer Haskins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 98. For a discussion on the differentiation between biblical psalters and liturgical psalters, see Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Madeline Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 130.
[133] See Appendix.
[134] Stephan Borgehammar, "Who Wrote the Admont Sermon Corpus – Gottfried the Abbot, His Brother Irimbert, or the Nuns?" in *De l'homilie au sermon: Histoire de la predication medievale: Actes Du Colloque International de Louvain-la-Nueve (9–11 Juillet 1992)*, eds. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain: Instiut d'études mediévales de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), 47–51, at 49. Also, Beverly M. Kienzle, "Defending the Lord's Vineyard: Hildegard of Bingen's Preaching Against the Cathars," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 1998). Hildegard of Bingen composed at least seventy-seven songs for her community to sing, in addition to her sermons written against the Cathars.
[135] Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Sermons and Preaching," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 736–740. Also, Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Medieval Monastic Preaching* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
[136] William Doremus Paden, *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 4. Kevin Sean Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 11. Andrew Galloway, *Medieval Literature and Culture: A Student Guide* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).

treatise.[137] Nuns in France and England during the twelfth century were proficient in this genre as attested by the verse-epistles produced by women like Muriel of Wilton, who resided at the Abbey of Ronceray in France followed by her time at Wilton Abbey in England, as well as other nuns from the Abbey of Ronceray who were in correspondence with monks from the Loire region during the "long twelfth century."[138] In fact, a tradition developed of collecting those letters that best represented this genre into model texts for one to study and imitate. In essence, these collections became books for consultation. An example of this practice can be found in the fragment collection of letters produced by the nuns of Admont.[139] The literacy required to read and write within this genre of poetry reminds us yet again of the varied reading interests and levels of literacy women engaged in during this period.

ROMANCE

The twelfth century also witnessed a developing interest in literary works presented in a style termed as *romanz*. This genre took as part of its make-up the poetry from the classical period joined with the new trend for narratives in languages other than Latin. Initially, these works were predominately written in French and composed in an octo-syllabic verse style.[140] Compositions ranged in topic from historical epics such as the Chanson de Roland, to more "fictional" topics which dealt with characters involved in court romance.[141] Kevin Whetter notes the difficulty with "identification and characterization of romance as a specific genre of medieval literature" owing to the fact that works of this nature were an amalgamation of reading preferences toward genres of history and poetry already present in the textual culture of the early Middle Ages.[142] Perhaps because of this, romance narratives became a popular genre with members of court, men and women alike, because they introduced an element of entertainment to historical literary works.

[137] Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex, Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 31–34.
[138] Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 20. Also, Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010) 15–38.
[139] Alison I. Beach, "Voices from a Distant Land: Fragments of a Twelfth-Century Nuns' Letter Collection" *Speculum* 77, no. 1 (2002): 34–54. I previously mentioned the poetry of Baudri of Bourgueil, who wrote verse-epistles in Latin to Adela of Blois.
[140] Books other than chivalric tales written in French were also described as "romances" due to the fact they were written in French and not Latin. See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066–1307* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), chap. 3.
[141] Chretien de Troyes, fl. 1170–1190. Popular romance stories include Erec and Enide, Yvain and Laudine, and Guinevere and Lancelot.
[142] Whetter, *Understanding Genre*, 1.

Further, other narratives such as folklore and fables were considered to be *romanz* due to the language and style in which they were composed. Here, the work of Marie de France precedes that of Chrétien de Troyes and other (male) romance authors.[143] The verse format of Marie's *lais*, combined with their narrative of chivalry and romance, illustrates the difficulties in categorically defining genres. However, what is notable in spite of this fluidity of definition is the predominance of books which explore new genres, and were composed in vernacular languages, witnessed by the support of aristocratic female readers.

5. CONCLUSION

As a result of the intellectual development occurring during the Twelfth–Century Renaissance, books provided both cultural and symbolic capital, lending the owner a status of authority, or piety, and affirmed membership in a common textual culture.[144] Although medieval women moved within a liminal space of this textual culture, a threshold between orality and writing, between literate and non-literate, the twelfth century witnessed the production of new manuscripts by and for women.[145] Within the convent context, new texts and copies of liturgical and devotional standards were needed as a result of the expansion of religious communities for women during the twelfth century. At court, noblewomen's reading preferences were focused on texts which supported their aristocratic heritage in the form of histories and romances intended to educate and entertain the readers. Both of these milieus demonstrated various levels of interest in reading works translated into vernacular languages such as poetry and romance, as well as chronicles and saints' lives. The evidence suggests women were actively contributing to the intellectual renaissance of the period by supporting the production of literary works ranging from long-established texts in Latin to new genres and translations composed in vernacular languages. The following chapter will delve further into the books *made* for twelfth-century women, presenting examples represented by these reading trends of women's contribution to textual production whether through patronage, commission, dedication, or collection.

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[143] Marie de France, fl. 1160–1180.
[144] Mary Erler, "Devotional Literature," *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 495. Also, Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, 125.
[145] Newman, "Liminalities: Literate Women," 401.