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

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Chapter Four

CHAPTER FOUR: BOOKS MADE BY WOMEN IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY



In this chapter, the discussion moves from the “scene of reading” to the “scene of making,” demonstrating yet another way twelfth-century women supported textual culture. Women in both court and convent not only acquired books through commission, they also used their literacy in Latin, as well as vernacular languages, to copy and compose manuscripts themselves. Further, in many instances the female scribe also acted as the illuminator of her work. Through examples of books made by women, I show their engagement in the physical production of a manuscript; fulfilling the role of a scribe or author through the copying or composing of a text. It is true that authors are not always scribes, but some scribes were, in fact, authors.¹ To situate our understanding of the role of a medieval scribe or author, I first discuss the term “authorship” as understood during the Middle Ages, and how a discernment of nuances within this definition can be applied to the written culture by twelfth-century women.² Next, I address the methods by which scholarship has identified female scribes and the books they copied during this period. Building upon these considerations, I show the range of women’s engagement in the manual production of making a medieval book. By bringing together the instances where a noblewoman or nun are found composing, copying, decorating, and possibly binding manuscripts during the Twelfth-Century Renaissance, a clearer picture can be gained of women’s contribution toward the textual culture and developing “book fluency” of this period.³

1. WOMEN AS AUTHORS AND SCRIBES

In her discussion on status and authority in the arts during the late eleventh century, Catherine Karkov remarks, “it is usually assumed, unless there is concrete evidence to the contrary, that the producers and users

¹ Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), 2.

² For a fuller understanding of “*auctoritas*,” see Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Cultures of Authority in the Long Twelfth Century,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (2009): 421–448.

³ Erik Kwakkel, “Introduction,” *VIDI Project Turning Over a New Leaf*, Leiden University. <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucas/turning-over-a-new-leaf> (accessed 11 December 2017).

of manuscripts were male, but this is not necessarily the case.”⁴ To better understand the ways in which women during the twelfth century were “producers of manuscripts,” Jennifer Summit argues for an expanded definition of authorship “that can take into account the range of medieval women’s authorial activities,” from original composition to copying.⁵ Summit places together these modes of medieval book production under a broad classification to include the range of ways manuscripts were made by women.

Long into the twelfth century, the Latin term *auctor* carried with it a connotation of authority derived from a classical past, imbued with the feeling of historical witness which strengthened its meaning to a medieval audience. The definition expanded with the development of the scholastic tradition, where a new understanding of *auctoritas* implied a high level of Latin education as found in the university setting of the late twelfth century, a milieu from which women were excluded. In contrast, the work of a scribe involved the manual tasks of copying and compiling, using sources of *auctoritas* to add validation to their work.⁶ Women’s contribution to the written culture of the twelfth century was situated between these two definitions, where women used the respect of their piety and social status to establish their role as author of an original work, and further applied the literacy acquired in convent schools to the manual copying of books. Therefore, this chapter builds upon Summit’s definition of “authorial activities,” discussing twelfth-century women’s contribution by highlighting examples of the books they composed, translated, copied, compiled, or decorated.

1.1 WOMEN AS AUTHORS

Research on the literary pursuits of women during the Middle Ages indicates that women at court held less of a presence in the physical writing of books, likely owing to the fact that employing a secretary or scribe was a sign of social status.⁷ This is not to say that noblewomen could not, or did not participate in “authorial activities.” For example, the Byzantine princess Anna Komnene (d. 1153) was known to her

contemporaries as the author of the *Alexiad* (c. 1148), a history of her father, Alexius I, and his reign as Emperor.⁸ In the prologue to the text, Anna lends *auctoritas* to her work by using her close familial connections as daughter of the Emperor, and further recognizing her role as completing the work requested by her mother, and left unfinished by her husband.⁹ Anna’s commemoration of her father’s leadership as Emperor reflects the reading, and in this case the writing, interests of twelfth-century women at court.

Perhaps the twelfth-century woman whose “authorial activities” have been recognized by scholars as written for a court context is Marie de France, active between 1160–1178. Her works of romance narratives evidence the beginnings of this genre, suggesting Marie recognized a change in reading habits at court and addressed this need through producing her work in French verse. Joan Ferrante, Matilda Bruckner, and other scholars have argued that Marie is the first woman poet identified in French literature, writing in Anglo-Norman verse.¹⁰ Her name is recorded in a (later) colophon, stating: “I will name myself in order to be remembered: my name is Marie and I am from France. Many clerics might try to take my work as their own; I don’t want anyone to claim it.”¹¹ Although there is little information about who the historical Marie was, scholars have argued convincingly that she was a noblewoman from France living in England, who dedicated her work to King Henry II.¹²

⁸ **The Alexiad (c. 1148)**. Penelope Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene: Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 37. Also see *Medieval Sourcebook*,

“Anna Comnena: The Alexiad,” <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/AnnaComnena-Alexiad.asp> (accessed 8 December 2017).

⁹ Buckley, *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene*, 25. Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I, has been suggested as composing *De mundi catastropha*. See Jane Stevenson, “Anglo-Latin Women Poets,” 124 at n. 90. Stevenson cites Thomas Tanner who makes this attribution. Thomas Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britanno-Hibernica, sive de Scriptoribus qui in Anglia, Scotia, et Hibernia as Saeculi XVII Initium Floruerunt* (London: William Bowyer, 1748), 520.

¹⁰ Marie may have been the Abbess of Shaftesbury in 1181, the daughter of Geoffrey Plantagenet, and thus sister to King Henry II, or possibly the Abbess of Reading, or Marie de Meulan or Beaumont. Joan Ferrante, “The French Courtly Poet: Marie de France,” in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 64. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “Marie de France (fl. 1160–1178)” in *French Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book*, eds. Eva Sartori and Dorothy W. Zimmerman (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 324–345.

¹¹ Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, “Introduction: The World of Marie de France,” *Marie de France: A Critical Companion*, eds. Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), 36.

¹² Bruckner, “Marie de France,” 325. “Marie was literate and clearly had access to a library”; Kinoshita and McCracken, “Introduction,” 3. For links to the works of Marie de France, see Judy Shoaf, “The Lais of Marie de France, A Verse Translation,” http://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/marie_lais/ (accessed 8 December 2017).

⁴ Catherine E. Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011), 133; Karkov discusses the gender of scribes and artists as producers. Also, Michelle Brown, “Female Book Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Roberts*, eds. Christian J. Kay and Louise M. Sylvester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 45–67.

⁵ Jennifer Summit, “Women and Authorship,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women’s Writing*, eds. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92.

⁶ Summit, “Women and Authorship,” 94.

⁷ Green, *Women Readers*, 243. Summit, “Women and Authorship,” 93.

Beyond that, it has been speculated that she was a nun of Shaftesbury, or a nun of Barking, even possibly half-sister to the King.¹³

Whether living in court or convent, Marie de France must have had access to a library or reading network which allowed her to become familiar with a variety of literary genres, both contemporary and classic, and a high level of education which enabled her to translate works from Latin to French, from Breton to French, and even from Greek to Latin.¹⁴ Marie composed and translated a number of works of poetry and folklore into Anglo-Norman French between 1160–1215, including twelve *Lais*, the *Fables of Ysopet*, the *Bisclavret*, and the *Espurgatoire saint Patriz*.¹⁵ As Marie's example shows, her "authorial activities" reveal a woman who could copy, compose, and translate texts in multiple languages.

In the scholarly debate regarding who Marie de France may have been, arguments include her with the scribal production that was occurring at Barking Abbey in England. For example, during the second half of the twelfth century, at least three female scribes were active at Barking, producing manuscripts in Anglo-Norman. Around the 1160s, the nun Clemence of Barking translated from Latin and copied into Anglo-Norman the *Vie de Sainte Catherine* (Life of Catherine of Alexandria).¹⁶ Also from Barking, an unnamed nun produced the *Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur*, an Anglo-Norman translation from Latin composed in verse.¹⁷ The "authorial activity" of the nuns was connected not just to their physical act of copying, but to their composition in Anglo-Norman which is regarded as going beyond "a word-for-word translation from Latin."¹⁸ Jane Bliss

argues that the audience for these works was not only the community of Barking, but may have also been readers at court.¹⁹ A further instance is the Anglo-Norman *Vie Sainte Audrée*, referring to an Anglo-Saxon nun from Ely, which was written by a nun of Barking named Marie. This is where the connection to Marie de France stems from.²⁰

Also from France is the monastic rule adapted for the nuns of the Paraclete, known as *Institutiones nostrae*. As Waddell suggests, this rule that addressed women's monastic life was authored by the Paraclete's abbess Heloise, in direct connection to the letter she wrote to Abelard requesting from him a monastic rule that spoke to women's daily experience as different than men's.²¹ Additionally, Heloise has been argued as the author of a number of poems found in her correspondence with Abelard.²² However, further reinforcing Summit's argument regarding the precarious nature of female "authorship" during the Middle Ages, over the centuries the authenticity behind Heloise's works was continually doubted and her writing variously attributed to men such as Abelard himself, all the way to theories of forgery by an un-named monk.²³

1.2 WOMEN AS SCRIBES

Summit argues that one of the inherent problems in trying to distinguish works of copying or composition by a woman lies in the fact that their writing was often re-assigned to men over time. She observes that indications of gendered writing were the first to be questioned, and therefore the first to be altered over the centuries, an occurrence that medieval women writers themselves recognized. During the twelfth century, women such as Marie de France wrote of the concern that her name would be forgotten and replaced by a man's.²⁴ Confirming these

¹³ R. Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁴ Bruckner, "Marie de France," 329. No extant manuscripts of Marie's work from the twelfth century exist.

¹⁵ Twelve *lais* and prologue, Marie de France, **London, BL, MS Harley 978 (1200–1300)**. Bruckner, "Marie de France," 325. Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing: Works by and For Women in England, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 39–40. See also, Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity and the Repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992): 129. Newman describes Marie de France as an erotic writer, where "in the lai Le Frense, a convent-educated girl sleeps with her lover within the abbey walls, and later elopes with him" and "in Yonec, a fairy knight transforms himself into the shape of a woman."

¹⁶ Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 72–73. Two copies of the *Vie de St. Catherine* survive in collections of Saints Lives, the earliest, in Paris, BnF, Ms nouv. acq. fr. 4503 (c. 1090) also contains the *Voyage de saint Brendan* by Bénédict and the *Vie de saint Alexis*, the second manuscript copy, London, BL, Additional MS 70513 (1275–1300), may have been commissioned by Isabella of Arundel for the nuns at Campsey Priory.

¹⁷ June Hall McCash and Judith Clark Barban, ed. and trans., *The Life of Saint Audrey, A Text by Marie de France*. Foreword by Emanuel J. Mickel (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2006), 4–5.

¹⁸ Jennifer Brown, "Translating Edward the Confessor: Feminism, Time, and Hagiography," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 43.1 (2007): 46–57, at 47.

¹⁹ Jane Bliss, ed. and trans., *La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur, by a Nun of Barking Abbey* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

²⁰ Green, *Women Readers*, 245. Green writes, "an otherwise unknown author (probably a nun) of the *Vie sainte Audrée* names herself in the epilogue ("Ici escrit mon nom MARIE / Pur ce ke soie remembre")."

²¹ *Rule of St Benedict, Customary*, **Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 802 (1200–1300)**. Chrysogonus Waddell, ed., *The Paraclete Statutes "Institutiones nostrae": Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 802, ff. 89r–90v*. (Kentucky: Gethsemani Abbey, 1987).

²² Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 474. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, 196.

²³ John F. Benton, *Culture, Power, and Personality in Medieval France*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 411; (Benton's argument, re: the forgery of the letters has been disproven and retracted). Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity, and the Repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22, vol. 2 (1992): 121–157. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, 197–198.

²⁴ Marcelle Thèibaux, ed. *The Writings of Medieval Women, 2nd Edition: An Anthology*, 277–278; from *Isopet*, "I will name myself in order to be remembered: my name is Marie and I am from France. Many clerics might try to take my work as their own; I don't want anyone to claim it."

medieval women's fears, Summit points out that, in later copies of a manuscript, "signatures were liable to be treated like any other part of the text, and thus, like the title, illustrations, or chapter headings, were open to manipulation."²⁵ This fact of erasure makes the signatures and colophons that survive today all the more remarkable.

How do we know a book was written by the hand of a woman? It is true that the majority of extant manuscripts from the Middle Ages do not include the name(s) of the scribe or illuminator. This decision to remain anonymous by a medieval scribe was partly owing to the desire for their work to claim an *auctoritas* beyond their own, but also to the prevailing topos of humility that characterized the period. Since the act of copying could represent a form of prayer, the scribe usually did not dare to add her or his name.²⁶ As a result of this lack of scribal identification, past scholarship has predominantly assumed that the anonymous medieval scribe was male. Whether this association was implicit or explicit, the attribution of scribal activity to a woman has remained wanting.

Another hindrance to the identification of a female scribe hinges on the fact that during the Middle Ages, especially within a monastic setting, nuns received similar scribal training as did monks, therefore producing styles in the same manner, perhaps indistinguishable, as their male counterparts. For example, Abbot Emo of Florida Hortus in Wittewierum, Frisia, sought to train both monks and nuns at his double-house to copy manuscripts, "instructing women who were clever at writing to practice the art assiduously."²⁷ Malcolm Parkes discusses the method of "vocational training," where the scribes of the community were guided by a master of the scriptorium in the formation of scripts, which, as Parkes notes, often resulted in a "house-style."²⁸ This ability to replicate a regional style of script was the mark of a trained scribe, monk or nun. As Aliza Cohen-Mushlin points out, "the Hamersleben style of script was transmitted to the Benedictine nuns of Lamspringe, probably through direct training by one or more [male] scribes."²⁹

Temptation to assign feminine qualities, or a delicate style, to nuns' scribal skills has remained a continuing obstacle to understanding the breadth of their contribution to book production. Women during the Middle Ages were in fact very capable at detail work, including embroidery and painting.³⁰ Yet, so were men. Throughout the medieval period, there were male artists who engaged in embroidery, and of course male scribes who did delicate painting and calligraphy.³¹ Recent scholarship has warned against trying to "postulate a female hand" as dainty or delicate, frivolous or weak.³² We can, however, look at a certain style in the formation of letters and conclude, as Bernhard Bischoff did, that a female scribe or scriptorium of women could develop a distinguishable script style, such as the "Chelles minuscule."³³ Whether the female scribe is named or anonymous, these examples show not only the nuns' "authorial activity" as scribes, or the books available to them to use as sources for *auctoritas*, but also their high level of education in Latin and Anglo-Norman to be able to compose "a very full vernacularization" of their works.³⁴

Accordingly, when looking for clues that point to a female scribe or artist, firm evidence can come from colophons, portraits of women as scribes, signatures (subscriptions), contemporary booklists, such as the one made at Wessobrunn during the first half of the twelfth century recording the work of the nun Diemud, and historical records such as necrologies, where a nun is indicated as *scriba* or *scriptrix*.³⁵ For

³⁰ Margaret Wade Labarge, "Stiches in Time: Medieval Embroidery in its Social Setting," *Florilegium* 16 (1999): 86–87. Also, Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "Holy Women and the Needle Arts: Piety, Devotion, and Sticking the Sacred, Ca. 500–1150" in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe*, eds. Scott Wells and Katherine Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 83–110. On nuns as illuminators/painters see *Repertorium of Manuscripts Illuminated by Women in Religious Communities of the Middle Ages*, "Introduction," <http://www.agfem-art.com/introduction.html> (accessed 11 December 2017).

³¹ By the late Middle Ages, the establishment of guilds for artisans were predominantly made for men. See Mary-Anne Kowaleski and Judith M. Bennett, "Crafts, Gilds and Women in the Middle Ages: Fifty Years After Marian K. Dale," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14.2 (1989): 474–501.

³² Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 5; Green, *Medieval Women Readers*, 180.

³³ Bernhard Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelle," *Mittelalterliche Studien: ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966), 16–34. "The name of one of the female scribes of this codex, Madalberta, is given within an initial; it was probably written in a nearby convent, perhaps Jouarre or Faremoutiers," in Bernhard Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. Michael Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 25. See also Felice Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (Fordham University Press, 2014), 31.

³⁴ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Invisible Archive*, Medieval Academy of America annual meeting at University of California, Los Angeles, April 2014.

³⁵ *Booklist*, **Münich, BSB, 22001d (1130–1150)**.

²⁵ Summit, "Women's Authorship," 94.

²⁶ Cynthia J. Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women's Convents in Late Medieval Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 201.

²⁷ Lina Eckenstein, *Women Under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 237. Also, John E. Sandys, *A History of Classic Scholarship, from the Sixth Century B.C. to the End of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 599.

²⁸ Malcom 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), 9–10.

²⁹ Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony: St. Pancras in Hamersleben* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 183.

example, in the necrology of Schäftlarn from the twelfth century, the nun Adelheit is mentioned as *scriba*.³⁶ Study of the style of script can also provide clues allowing distinction of various scribes. As Cynthia Cyrus states, “where a woman has copied one book, she can generate others.”³⁷ When a nun’s scribal hand has been identified, it is then possible to make paleographical comparisons to uncover other instances of her participation.³⁸ Additionally, it is important to consider references from external sources that mention the particular copying skills of a convent, such as the request from the abbot of Prüfening to the nuns of Niedermünster, or the copying skills of a specific nun. For example, Martha G. Newman discusses a text found in a thirteenth-century manuscript that recounts a story of Mechtild of Edelstetten (d. 1160).³⁹ While attempting to repair her quill to begin writing, Mechtild is described as engaged in diligent copying of psalters and missals, which she made for her community. Once her quill was “miraculously” cut to perfection, she continued copying books with the same quill until her death.⁴⁰ Such accounts, though likely an embellished portrayal, can lead to fruitful research regarding manuscript production from a specified monastic house, or the manuscript production of a specific nun.

Some convent scriptoria were so well respected that they were commissioned to create books for outside their convent walls. Abbot Idung of Prüfening requested the nuns of Niedermünster to make for him a “legible and carefully corrected copy” of his *Dialogus duorum monachorum* (Dialogue between Two Monks), a work he composed as an explanation of his conversion to the Cistercian order.⁴¹ A similar

request was made by Sindold, the librarian of Reinhardsbrunn, asking the “sisters of Lippoldsberg” to make him a book with the materials he has sent to them.⁴² The nuns of Lippoldsberg were given supplies of “twenty-four quaternions, some leather, paint and silk” to make a service book as he requested.⁴³ The supplies, such as leather which may have been meant for a limp binding, and silk to sew together the quires, suggest the nuns at Lippoldsberg were capable of binding manuscripts in their convent scriptorium.⁴⁴

Helmar Härtel notes that the role of *scriptrix* in the Benedictine community of Lamspringe might have indicated at least a rudimentary knowledge of parchment preparation and binding skills. In Härtel’s description of the manuscripts made at Lamspringe, he identifies at least seven manuscripts copied by the nuns which contain fragments of manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries within their “romanischer” bindings.⁴⁵ Although it is possible that the books were sent to an outside source for binding, such as Hamersleben, it is also likely that the nuns’ training as scribes might have included this knowledge. They may also have learned how to treat a piece of parchment for writing, recycling used pieces if new parchment was not available. Palimpsests, which were scraped and re-pounced, are evidenced in two of the manuscripts made at Lamspringe during the twelfth century, in which some of the initials from the earlier text still remain.⁴⁶ Due to the fact that producing a manuscript was expensive, and materials were

³⁶ Beach, “Claustration and Collaboration,” 70. She cites, “*Adelhait cv. nra. scriba*.”

³⁷ Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women’s Convents*, 47.

³⁸ Alison Beach employs a methodology of paleographical identification for determining various nun-scribes at Admont and Shäftlarn using criteria of “very likely not identical, possibly identical, probably identical, very likely identical” to indicate a scribal match. See Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 7.

³⁹ Engelhard of Langheim, *De eo quod angelus ei pennam temperavit*, **Posnan, Biblioteka Raczynskich, Rkp 156, fols. 117r–v**. Martha G. Newman, “A Medieval Nun, Writing” blogpost April 6, 2012, <https://notevenpast.org/medieval-nun-writing/> (accessed 11 December 2017).

⁴⁰ “Edelstetten,” Monastic Matrix, <https://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/monasticon/edelstetten> (accessed 11 December 2017). Mechtild of Diessen and Edelstetten, d. 1160. In the *vita Mechtildis*, written by Engelhard of Langheim sometime between 1189–1200, her work as a scribe is mentioned. Mechtild was abbess of Augustinian canonesses at Diessen, and then abbess of the Benedictine nuns at Edelstetten during the twelfth century. Engelhard also “wrote a book of exempla (edifying moral stories) and dedicated it to the abbess and nuns of the Franconian Cistercian nunnery of Wechterswinkel.” See Elizabeth Freeman, “Nuns,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order*, ed. Mette Birkedal Brunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 106.

⁴¹ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 129.

⁴² Beach has uncovered a letter by a nun from Lippoldsberg who requested “two little books on the *ars dictaminis* from the abbot of Reinhardsbrunn.” See Beach, “Voices from a Distant Land: Fragments of a Twelfth Century Nuns’ Letter Collection,” *Speculum* 77 (2002): 36 n. 13; also, Barbara Newman, *Making Love in the Twelfth Century: “Letters of Two Lovers” in Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 16.

⁴³ Julie Hotchin, “Women’s Reading and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Germany: The Library of the Nuns of Lippoldsberg,” in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture, Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 156.

⁴⁴ Hotchin, “Women’s Reading and Monastic Reform,” 157.

⁴⁵ Härtel, “*Geschrieben*,” 19 and 67–100. **Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 204 Helmst. (1178–1191); Cod. Guelf. 443 Helmst. (1175–1200); Cod. Guelf. 475 Helmst. (1175–1200); Cod. Guelf. 510 Helmst. (1175–1200); Cod. Guelf. 511 Helmst. (1175–1200); Cod. Guelf. 718 Helmst. (1175–1200); Cod. Guelf. 903 Helmst. (1175–1200).**

⁴⁶ **Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 943 Helmst. (1175–1200) and Cod. Guelf. 723 Helmst. (1175–1200).** David Ganz, “Book production in the Carolingian empire and the spread of Caroline Minuscule,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. II, c. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 792. Ganz writes, “A St Gall colophon suggests that some scribes prepared their own parchment for writing (MGH poet. iv, p. 314).” Although this is a reference to manuscripts in the Carolingian period, it supports the idea that scribes may have been responsible for acquiring the materials needed to produce their book. De Hamel notes that parchment was left unprepared for writing, and it was the scribe’s job to “buff it up and rub with chalk.” Christopher De Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (London: British Museum, 1992), 12.

valuable, the re-use of parchment was a common practice. To serve as a brief example of the high cost of a manuscript book, Susan Bell writes, “in the eleventh century the Countess of Anjou paid two hundred sheep; one bushel each of rye, wheat, and millet; and a quantity of marten pelts for one volume of the sermons of Haimo of Halberstadt.”⁴⁷

Thus, as the above instances demonstrate, nuns working within a convent scriptorium during the twelfth century were often responsible for the complete production of a manuscript, from acquiring the supplies, to copying, decorating, and possibly binding of the book. An interesting example, as Delia Gaze notes, is found in an illuminated missal from the twelfth century which “bears an enigmatic colophon usually believed to identify Diemud [of Salzburg] as the scribe but in fact stating that ‘pious Diemud made the material of the book’ (*Materiam libri fecit Diemuod pia scribi / Seo Rudberto celi pro munere certo / Celestis vite scibuntur in ordine scribe*).”⁴⁸ In the next section I will introduce the extant examples of colophons and signatures which provide firm evidence of women’s contributions to the making of books during the twelfth century.

COLOPHONS

Perhaps the most important indicator for attributing a manuscript made by a woman is the presence of a colophon.⁴⁹ As Erik Kwakkel points out, “the last page of the text was a podium where the scribe could state information about himself and the circumstances of the book’s production. While few scribes seized this opportunity (about one in seven do say something), such added information, collected in what we call a ‘colophon’, can enrich our knowledge of a manuscript considerably.”⁵⁰ Since placing a form of identification was not a common practice in the Middle Ages for scribes either lay or religious, monk or nun, the *Colophons des manuscrits occidentaux* lists only two manuscript instances of

a colophon by a female scribe from the twelfth century.⁵¹ One of which is from Lamspringe, found in a *florilegium* manuscript (c. 1150s), where an unnamed nun records her scribal efforts: *Istic finit[ur] iam scriptrix laude potitur*.⁵² Yet, the *Colophons des manuscrits occidentaux* does not list two further colophons from Lamspringe, deriving from the last quarter of the twelfth century. The nuns Ermengarde and Odelgarde are each identified by colophons in two separate manuscripts.⁵³ The first instance, a colophon naming Odelgarde and Ermengarde together, was in a copy of the *Ratio divinatorum officiorum*, last recorded as sold in 1810.⁵⁴ The second colophon inscription naming Ermengarde, found in a copy of sermons, states: *Liber sancti Adriani in Lamespringe, scriptus a domina / Ermengarde in diebus Iudtte priorisse et / Gerhardi prepositi sermones sancti Augustini episcopi*.⁵⁵

Utilizing twenty-first century research, a query to the online database *Women and Written Culture in the Middle Ages*, searched by colophons dating between 1050–1225, reveals fourteen names, eight of which are the nuns of Munsterbilzen Abbey near Maastricht, who worked together on at least two manuscripts.⁵⁶ Discussed in chapter two of this study in regard to the books held in Munsterbilzen’s convent library, the manuscript containing Isidore’s *Etymologia* and *De natura rerum* (c. 1134) lists the names of eight nuns responsible for the book’s production.⁵⁷ The colophon on fol. 166r states: *Hec sunt nomina illarum quae scripserunt librum istum. / Gerdrut. Sibilia. Dierwic. Walderat. Hadewic. / Lugart. Derta (or Ota). Cunigunt. Ipse namque scripserunt mo / nasteriensibus dominis quatinus deum pro eis rogent ut a pe / nis eas liberet & in paradyso collocet. Quisquis eis ab / stulerit anatematizatus sit*.⁵⁸ (Fig. 22) An additional colophon naming five

⁵¹ Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle*, 6 vols. (Fribourg, 1965–82).

⁵² **Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 943 Helmst. (1178–1191)**, fol. 164v. cf. Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle, Volume 6* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Editions Universitaires, 1965–1982), 360. The entry notes, “Wolfenbüttel 1045, f. 164v” as the manuscript. Also, see Härtel, *Geschrieben*, 21; Full transcription: “*Hautus librorum pelago liber modorum. Istic finitur. Iam scriptrix laude potitur*”, 90.

⁵³ The term “scriptrix and group” is used by Härtel and Cohen-Mushlin in their catalog descriptions of the manuscripts of Lamspringe.

⁵⁴ Härtel, *Geschrieben*, 19. Also Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Saxony*, 155.

⁵⁵ **Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 204 Helmst (1178–1191)**, fol. 1r. Ermengarde copied and illustrated this manuscript. She also acted as rubricator and illustrator in at least three other manuscripts; **HAB, Cod. Guelf. 480 Helmst.**, **HAB, Cod. Gulef. 475 Helmst.**, **HAB, Cod. Guelf. 903 Helmst.**

⁵⁶ “Women and Written Culture in the Middle Ages,” The Women Copyists Database, <http://edu.let.unicas.it/womediev/framinten.html> (accessed 22 June 2016).

⁵⁷ *Etymologies*, **London, British Library, Harley 3099 (1134)**.

⁵⁸ British Library online catalog description, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_3099 (accessed 11 December 2017). Image from BL Digitized Manuscripts: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_3099_f166r (accessed 11 December 2017).

⁴⁷ Susan G. Bell, *Medieval Book Owners*, 747. De Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators*, 13. De Hamel also discusses the high cost of parchment.

⁴⁸ Missal with colophon, **Münich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 11004 (1100–1200)**. Quoted from Delia Gaze, “Women as Artists in the Middle Ages,” in *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze (New York: Routledge, 2001), 10. Gaze introduces other scholarly debates which propose that the Diemud in this instance is the Abbess of Nonnberg in Salzburg (d. 1136). Gaze points out that Diemud (Demut), meaning Humility, was a common monastic name for nuns.

⁴⁹ Cynthia J. Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women’s Convents in Late Medieval Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). See also the online database, *Index of Manuscripts Illuminated by Women in Religious Communities of the Middle Ages* <http://www.agfem-art> (accessed 11 December 2017).

⁵⁰ Erik Kwakkel, “The Last Page of the Medieval Book,” (August 21, 2014) <https://medievalbooks.nl/tag/colophons/> (accessed 11 December 2017).

of these same nuns can be found within a Gospel book copied in 1130.⁵⁹ Further, four of these nuns are also named in the abbey's necrology from the mid-twelfth century, establishing a connection that suggests an active scriptorium at Munsterbilzen during this period.

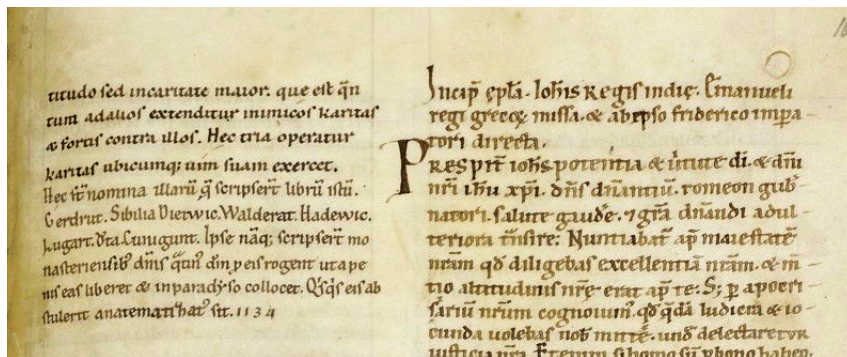


Figure 22: Colophon in left column, beginning at line 3. *Etymologies*, London, British Library, Harley ms. 3099 (1134), fol. 166r.

Additional colophon evidence is found in southern Germany at the Abbey of Schäftlarn, a Premonstratensian “double-house,” where at least three women known by name worked as scribes during the twelfth century. The nun Adelheit is mentioned as *scriptrix* in their necrology, yet her manuscripts remain unidentified, whereas Sophia, a *conversa* (active 1160–1180), left her signature in two volumes of Augustine’s *Ennarationes in Psalmos*.⁶⁰ In the first, her name is recorded at the bottom of the last folio of the book, as “scripsit Sophya,” without any added information.⁶¹ In the second manuscript, her name is found twice, the first of which she left in ink at the bottom of a folio toward the middle of the book, and the second is “scratched” into the parchment near the end of the last quire.⁶²

In contrast, Irmingart (active 1164–1200) was a professed sister (*sororea*), and therefore living under rules of enclosure.⁶³ She is witnessed as a scribe of Schäftlarn in their necrology and two colophons. In one,

Irmingart chose to leave her colophon identification in a cruciform shape found in a book of homilies: *Iste liber pertinet ad sanctum dyonysium sceflaren quem scripsit soror Irmengart obtentu domni. Hainrici prepositi*. [This book, which sister Irmingart wrote with the permission of Prior Henry, belongs to the monastery of Saint Dionysius, Schäftlarn].⁶⁴ (Fig. 23) This same wording is used in the second colophon, but without the pictorial addition, and not written in her hand.⁶⁵

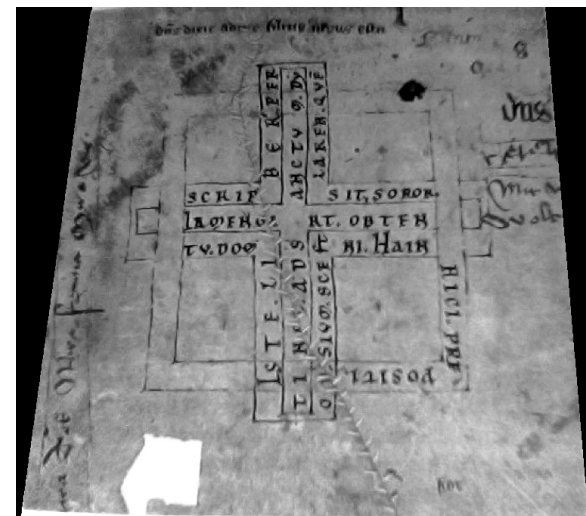


Figure 23: Colophon of Irmingart. Munich, BSB, Clm 17087 (1164–1200), fol. 223v

As a final example, a colophon in a twelfth-century manuscript from the Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary, located at Nunnaminster in England, states: *Salva et incolomis maneat per secula scriptrix* [May this female scribe stay safe and sound forever].⁶⁶ This manuscript, which

⁶⁴ Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis*, Munich, BSB, Clm 17087, fol. 223v. Latin transcription and translation quoted from Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 1 and 125.

⁶⁵ Munich, BSB, Clm 17116 (1164–1200), fol. 129v. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 125. “The Women Copyists Database,” <http://edu.let.unicas.it/womediev/framinten.html> (accessed 22 June 2016), notes a rubricated monogram placed in the bottom margin of Clm 17116, fol. 121v, written “MGA,” argued as indicating the scribe Irmingart.

⁶⁶ *Moral Treatises*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 451 (1100–1130). Or “May the female scribe remain saved and safe for all time.” The manuscript contains “a copy of the *Diadema monachorum* by Smaragdus of Saint Mihiel, an anonymous moral treatise and fourteen miscellaneous sermons, attributed to St Augustine but being chiefly by Caesarius of Arles.” Pamela R. Robinson, “A Twelfth-Century Scriptrix from Nunnaminster,” in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, eds. Pamela R. Robinson and Rivkah Zim (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), 73–93.

⁵⁹ *Gospel Book*, Brussels, Bollandist Library ms. 299 (1130).

⁶⁰ Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Munich, BSB, Clm 17052 and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Munich, BSB, Clm 17053. Beach, “Claustration and Collaboration,” 70–71. For image, see Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 121.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Munich, BSB, Clm 17052, fol. 214v. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 121–122.

⁶² Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Munich, BSB, Clm 17053, fol. 108v and fol. 269v.

⁶³ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 111.

contains a number of texts including the *Diadem monacharum*, is argued by Pamela Robinson “as the first identification (though without a name) of a female scribe in an English manuscript.”⁶⁷ These colophons tell us that female scribes show an awareness of participation in manuscript culture, while also demonstrating that women produced books for their reading needs.

SCRIBAL-PORTRAITS

An element of manuscript decoration known as a scribal-portrait, presenting a type of visual colophon, can indicate the identity of the scribe. Most common during the Middle Ages were the depictions of the four evangelists busy at work writing the Gospels. A few scribal-portraits of women in the twelfth century survive, found in manuscripts that originated from convents in Germany. In the first instance, known as the Guta-Sintram Codex (c. 1154), a colorful portrait is included of the female scribe, canoness Guta of Schwartzenthann Abbey, and the male illustrator, canon Sintram from Marbach Abbey, neighboring houses located in the region of Alsace.⁶⁸ This manuscript was made for the nuns of Schwartzenthann, and includes a homiliary, the Rule of St Augustine with commentary, a martyrology, a medical treatise, and a necrology of both Marbach and Schwartzenthann.⁶⁹ The scribal-portrait is accompanied by a text placed in a banderole; *Scriptis figuris (picturis) ope sumptibus arte figuris / Hoc exornastis opus ambo mihi que dicastis / Ambos ergo pari faciam requie sociari* [Together, you have adorned this work, which you have dedicated to me, with letters and figures achieved with skill].⁷⁰ (Fig. 24) The work was made in close collaboration with both Guta and Sintram acting as scribes, and the text further mentions two other canonesses, Trutwib and Gisela, perhaps also with scribal skills.⁷¹ The colophon and reference to other women who assisted in the making of this manuscript indicates an active scriptorium of women at the community of Schwartzenthann.



Figure 24: Scribal-portrait. Strasbourg, Bibliothèque du Grande Séminaire, MS 37, (c. 1154), fol. 4r.

The next example is found in a collection of homilies copied and illustrated by a nun, also named Guda, from an unidentified convent in the middle-Rhine region. In an initial “[ominus],” she placed an image of herself in the manuscript, and inscribed on the banderole she holds firmly in her hand, “Guda peccatrix mulier scripsit q[ue] pinxit h[un]c librum” [Guda, a sinful woman, wrote and painted this book], leaving her name and her role as both scribe and the illuminator of this book.⁷² (Fig. 25)

⁶⁷ Robinson, “Twelfth-Century Scriptrix,” 73–79.

⁶⁸ *Customary, homiliary, necrology*, Strasbourg, Bibliothèque du Grande Séminaire, MS 37 (1154), fol. 4.

⁶⁹ Susan Marti, “Double Monasteries in Images? Observations on Book Illumination from the Communities in the South-Western Empire,” in *Partners in Spirit: Women, Men, and Religious Life in Germany 1100–1500*, eds. Fiona Griffiths and Julie Hotchin (Turnhout: Brepols), 81, at n. 10.

⁷⁰ Latin transcription and translation quoted from, *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index*, “Guta and Sintram with the Virgin Mary,” https://inpress.lib.uiowa.edu/feminae/DetailsPage.aspx?Feminae_ID=35124 (accessed 11 December 2017).

⁷¹ Griffiths, *Garden of Delights*, 126.

⁷² *Homiliary*, Frankfurt am Main, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Barth. 42 (1151–1200). 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. Also, Green, *Women and Reading in the Middle Ages*, 180.

⁷³ *Psalter*, The Walters Art Museum, W. 26 (1175–1225), fol. 64r. Initial Q. Latin text is opening of Psalm 51.



Figure 25: Scribal-portrait of Guda. *Homiliary*, Frankfurt am Main, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Barth. 42 (1151–1200), fol. 110v.

These two examples leave little doubt as to the role of the female scribe in the making of these manuscripts, and their use of the images as a visual representation of their piety and skill. However, in the final example I present, this role is not as clear. In the twelfth-century psalter from the Abbey of St Ulrich and St Afra in Augsburg, an image of a woman drawn into the swinging tail of the initial “Q,” with a name written as “Claricia,” has been identified by various scholars as the female scribe or illuminator of this psalter.⁷³ Since the clothing depicted in the image is not a nun’s habit, scholars have argued that the woman represents a lay-sister working as an artist within the scriptorium of the convent.⁷⁴

In addition, this manuscript also includes an image of a woman in nun’s attire, portrayed in the act of prayer, found in an historiated initial on fol. 115v.⁷⁵ (Fig. 26) The image of the nun may represent the role of the pious reader of this devotional book, or she may have been the patron, or even a scribe. A number of scribal hands have been

identified in the manuscript, so a collaboration scenario is likely, but as to the make-up of that collaboration, we can only speculate.⁷⁶ It is therefore possible to imagine that both these women, nun and lay-sister, desired to have their role in the making of the book commemorated. This combination of female images may represent the collaboration between the women living together in the community at Augsburg.⁷⁷



Figure 26: Portraits. *Psalter*, Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery W. 26 (1175–1225), Left: fol. 64r and Right: 115v.

The examples of colophons I have introduced here demonstrate how female scribes in the twelfth century used the manuscript as a way to document and preserve their contribution to written culture. The examples further highlight the varied ways women left their mark. The scribal-portrait of Guda clearly tells the reader her role in the production of the manuscript. It would seem the same case for the portrait found

⁷⁶ This seems to be a common occurrence, for example, the lay-sister Sophia and the enclosed nun Irmingart at Schäftlarn. A consideration of the instances of collaboration between lay-sisters and nuns at convent scriptoria such as Augsburg could be further explored.

⁷⁷ Pierre Alain Mariaux, “Women in the Making: Early Medieval Signatures,” in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Theresé Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 400–402. Mariaux argues that the woman is not meant to represent a real person active in the production of the manuscript, but a personification for the Latin word *clairicare*. The catalog description from the Walters Art Gallery suggests that Augsburg had a scriptorium.

⁷⁴ The Walters Art Museum, online description: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/26205> (accessed 11 December 2017). Images from Walters Art Museum Digital Images.

⁷⁵ *Psalter*, The Walters Art Museum, W. 26, fol. 115v. Historiated initial D. The Latin text is Psalm 101 (one of the seven penitential psalms), *Domine exaudi orationem meam*. “O Lord Hear my prayer...”

in the Guta-Sintram Codex, and since decoration was added after the copying of text, Guta may have worked together with Sintram to create the elaborate visual colophon indicating both their roles in making the manuscript. Moreover, the colophon left by Irmingart of Schäftlarn is unique in regard to the shape, but not to the wording, where in both of her colophons she qualifies her role as scribe as “authorized” by the prior. Beach suggests that the signature left by Sophia of Schäftlarn was placed at the bottom of the manuscript to be later trimmed away, indicating that it was only to act as a marker for the sections she was responsible copying. The fact that Sophia’s signatures remain adds to our knowledge of how women left their mark on the written word.

Thus, by using a broad definition of the “authorial activities” that twelfth-century women participated in, supported by instances of their participation evidenced in primary sources, an understanding of women’s contribution to written culture begins to emerge. Consequently, as Anne Winston-Allen remarks, “one can begin to construct a paradigm of what kinds of books were made in women’s scriptoria and how to identify them.”⁷⁸ As a result of these codicological and paleographical efforts, scholarly assumptions about the gender of a medieval scribe, or an illuminator, are now being questioned. Alison Beach argues,

[I]f we stop...in the monks’ scriptorium, our image is incomplete, and our understanding of the monastic renaissance flawed. Religious women also worked as copyists in a variety of institutional settings – in the seclusion of the recluse’s cell, at monasteries for women only, and in monasteries for both women and men. Female scribes worked alone, in teams of women, and in collaboration with their male counterparts.⁷⁹

Varieties of collaboration remain a constant feature when discussing the books women made during the twelfth century. The act of copying could be shared between the women within a religious community or as in the case of Schäftlarn, between nuns and monks witnessed by the multiple exchange of hands within one manuscript. Another common type is the collaboration between a female author and male scribe, as evidenced by Hildegard and Volmar at Rupertsburg. Although

collaboration between multiple people to produce a manuscript was common during the Middle Ages, enacted between both women and men, as Summit points out gender was the first thing to be questioned over the course of time, often erasing women’s contribution to written culture. Instances where a male secretary transcribed the dictation of a female author are often thought to be altered, due to the influence of a male scribe acting as editor, thus taking away the woman’s identification as authority of her own work. For example, the works of collaboration between Hildegard and her secretary, Volmar, have been debated by scholars in regard to his role in altering Hildegard’s words. Jennifer Summit states, “Volmar dared make no changes – even on the level of syntax or vocabulary – to Hildegard’s accounts of her visions because they were divinely issued.”⁸⁰ Yet, other scholars have noted that Volmar’s role was to do just that, to correct Hildegard’s Latin, which possibly altered her account.⁸¹

In a similar case, the twelfth-century abbess and mystic Elisabeth of Schönau is known to have used a male secretary, her brother Ekkbert, who was responsible for writing down her visions. What ties these examples together, beyond the fact they were familiar contemporaries, is the use of a male secretary to act as a witness to the mystical visions he was transcribing. Ekkbert and Volmar’s role was as the “writer,” where the “author” was Hildegard or Elisabeth, and the nuns’ *auctoritas* was derived from the spiritual visions they received. Looking beyond the mystical writings of these women, it becomes clear that they were involved in many literary endeavors where a male scribe is not found. Hildegard is well known for her correspondence, her poetry and musical composition, instances of preaching, and providing commentary on scripture, as well as medical texts, and even a “secret language” used between the nuns of Rupertsburg.⁸² Throughout all of Hildegard’s literary endeavors, she worked primarily with the nuns of her convent, especially Richardis von Stade.⁸³

A scene often depicted in medieval manuscript art is a male scribe copying onto wax tablets. However, female scribes also took down transcriptions on wax or scraps of available parchment. In addition to her collaboration with Volmar, Hildegard also worked with the nun Richardis, who is noted by Kimberley Benedict as transcribing

⁸⁰ Summit, “Authorship,” 98.

⁸¹ Green, *Women Readers*, 229.

⁸² Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 301–302.

⁸³ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 6.

⁷⁸ Anne Winston-Allen, “Introduction,” *Index of Manuscripts Illuminated by Women in Religious Communities of the Middle Ages*, <http://www.agfem-art> (accessed 11 November 2017).

⁷⁹ Beach, “Clastration and Collaboration,” 59.

Hildegard's words and compiling her works together, in collaboration with other nuns of the abbey.⁸⁴ Further, Anne L. Clark suggests that nuns at Schönau assisted Ekkbert and shared "the task of recording Elisabeth's descriptions of those visions."⁸⁵ In a similar pursuit, a number of nuns from Admont during the middle of the twelfth century decided to transcribe the sermons of their abbot Irimbert, as he preached, taking down his words through dictation onto wax tablets.⁸⁶ This endeavor resulted in a two-volume manuscript of Irimbert's sermons, expertly made by the nuns in their scriptorium.⁸⁷

In yet another instance of women's "authorial activities," I turn to examples of twelfth-century nuns' written contribution to the genre of poetry and verse-epistles. As Jane Stevenson writes, "almost all the identifiable Latin women poets of the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries appear to have been in religious orders of one kind or another."⁸⁸ Toward the beginning of the twelfth century, a group of nuns at Ronceray Abbey in the Loire region of France spent time in correspondence with monks from nearby monasteries. Their exchange included monks from the "Loire School," a term used by scholars to designate the writings of monks such as Marbode of Rennes (1035–1123), Hildebert of Lavardin (le Mans) (1056–1133), Baudri de Bourgueil (1045/6–1130), and others.⁸⁹ Belle Tuten comments that in the early twelfth century, the combination of the Abbess Tiburga of Ronceray, the nun Emma who was most likely the grammar teacher, along with a well-educated canon by the name of Hilary from the cathedral school of Angers, led to the strong literary and scribal abilities demonstrated by the nuns of Ronceray.⁹⁰ Baudri of Bourgueil maintained a correspondence with the nun Constance (Constantia), who replied to his letters in Latin verse, composing her response in elegiac couplets.⁹¹ Baudri also sent a poem to Emma of Ronceray, for "her and her educated sisters to read, praise

and correct."⁹² Emma was noted by Baudri as able to draw women to her convent through her reputation of learning. Baudri infers it is Emma's wisdom that attracts students like bees to honey.⁹³ Thus, from Ronceray during the twelfth century, the nuns Emma, Agnes, Constance, and two further unnamed nuns sent and received eloquent Latin verse-epistles, a form of poetry in the tradition of *Ars dictaminis*, demonstrating these nuns were as skilled in Latin verse as the monks.⁹⁴ As Elizabeth Tyler suggests, the definition of "Loire School" should be revised to include the many women who read and responded to these verse-epistles.⁹⁵

Expertise in Latin verse written by nuns in twelfth-century England also held a direct connection to the monks from the Loire region. Muriel, a lay-sister at Ronceray before she moved to Wilton Abbey, was highly regarded as a poet writing in Latin, praised by Marbod of Rennes and Serlo of Wilton.⁹⁶ Although none of Muriel's poems survive, knowledge of her exchange of poetry in the form of lengthy verse-epistles in Latin is retained in the responses sent to her by Hildebert of Lavardin and Baudri de Bourgueil.⁹⁷ Further, Muriel may not have been the only poet at Wilton Abbey. The mortuary roll (*rotulus*) of Bishop Vitalis of Savigny (c. 1123) contains a poem in Latin written by a nun from Wilton.⁹⁸ The entry mentions the abbess Wiltrudis of Wilton, suggested by Stevenson as the author of a separate poem written in Latin on Susanna.⁹⁹

The tradition of religious houses adding a prayer or poem to a mortuary roll which circulated to neighboring communities was popular in the twelfth century, and nuns, especially those from

⁹² Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 123. "Emma grammatica" appears in the cartulary of Ronceray during this time period. Also, Thomas Moser, *A Cosmos of Desire: The Medieval Latin Erotic Lyric in English Manuscripts* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 47–48.

⁹³ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 123.

⁹⁴ Peter Dronke, "Personal Poetry by Women: The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 84–106.

⁹⁵ Elizabeth M. Tyler, "From Old English to Old French," in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain, The French of England c. 1100–c. 1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), 173.

⁹⁶ On Muriel of Wilton, see Elizabeth M. Tyler, "From Old English to Old French," in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100–c. 1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), 174. Stevenson, *Women Latin poets*, 123.

⁹⁷ Joan M. Ferrante, "Women's Role in Latin Letters from the Fourth to the Early Twelfth Century," in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 83–84. Baudri sent a poem to Adela, countess of Blois. A manuscript from the second half of the twelfth century, Martianus Capella, *De astronomia and Baudri de Bourgueil, De tribus mundi partibus et de distributione totius orbis*, **British Library, Harley 2650 (1150–1200)**, contains a fragment of Baudri de Bourgueil's Carmen 134 *Adelae Comitissae*, v. 749–945, ff. 33v–37r, a historical verse poem.

⁹⁸ *Mortuary Roll, Paris, Archives nationales, AE/II/138* (c. 1123).

⁹⁹ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 123.

⁸⁴ Kimberley M. Benedict, *Empowering Collaborations, Writing Partnerships Between Religious Women and Scribes in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 55.

⁸⁵ Anne L. Clark, trans. and intro., *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 4.

⁸⁶ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 85. In this case, would we imagine the nuns' role as secretary or editor as taking away Irimbert's standing as author?

⁸⁷ **Admont, MS 16** and **Admont, MS 17**.

⁸⁸ Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets, Language, Gender, and Authority, From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 109.

⁸⁹ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 123. Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 16, n. 3. Loire school: c. 1095–1106.

⁹⁰ 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.

⁹¹ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 122.

prominent houses, would have added their own entries, in their own hand.¹⁰⁰ Constant Mews suggests that Heloise was the author of a poem included in the *rotulus* of Bishop Vitalis of Savigny that representing the entry from the Abbey at Argenteuil.¹⁰¹ The mortuary roll of Abbess Matilda of La Trinité, Abbaye-aux-Dames of Caen (d. 1113) was filled with Latin verse by nuns from surrounding religious houses.¹⁰² Two later examples, the mortuary roll of Lucy de Vere (c. 1230), and the mortuary roll of Amphelisa of Lillechurch (c. 1220) were also sent to neighboring religious communities of men and women for them to add a verse entry.¹⁰³ These examples demonstrate nuns' ability to write in Latin verse and show the fluidity of their roles as author and scribe.¹⁰⁴

2. CONVENT SCRIPTORIA

A tradition of women working as scribes within a monastic setting dates back at least to the time of Boniface, and Anglo-Saxon nuns such as the abbess Eadburga, who supplied him with books to help spread the Christian scripture.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, when Charlemagne sought to normalize a universal script, the convents of Jouarres and Chelles in northern France developed in-house scriptoria with well-trained female scribes to achieve this goal.¹⁰⁶ Bernard Bischoff and Rosamond McKitterick have discussed

the quality and skill of manuscript production by the nuns at Chelles Abbey, where during the period Gisela, Charlemagne's sister, was abbess, at least thirteen codices are known to have been copied by the nuns.¹⁰⁷

In contrast to the manuscript production by nuns during the Carolingian period, there is little information regarding convent scriptoria active in France during the twelfth century. We might speculate that the prominent women's houses of the time, which were populated with educated, wealthy women, such as Fontevraud or the Paraclete, likely had the skills, means, and opportunity to produce manuscripts. For instance, the letters between Abelard and Heloise, *Epistolae Duorum Amantium*, written during her time as prioress of the Paraclete, or the request from the abbess Petronilla of Fontevraud to Baudri de Bourgueil, would suggest at least the materials for writing were available to the nuns. There is a similar paucity of information regarding convent scriptoria in twelfth-century England, yet there are a number of clues that point to a female scribal culture. I discussed above the scribal activities of nuns at the long-established Abbey of Barking, where nuns worked as scribes from the early eighth century until at least the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁸ There are further glimpses of twelfth-century women in England actively working as scribes, for instance the copy of moral treatises made by the *scriptrix* of Nunnaminster (St Mary's Abbey, Winchester) at the beginning of the century. The manuscript she copied is a collection of writings on monastic life, including the *Diadema monachorum* by Smaragdus, discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁰⁹ (Fig. 27)

¹⁰⁰ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 120.

¹⁰¹ Constant Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Neville Chiavaroli and Constant J. Mews (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 161–162. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, 117, n. 53. Gerald A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 116–169.

¹⁰² Daniel Sheerin, "Sisters in the Literary Agon," in *Women Writing in Latin from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe, 3 vols.*, eds. Laurie Churchill, Phyllis R. Brown, and Jane E. Jeffrey (New York: Routledge, 2002), 93–131.

¹⁰³ *Mortuary Roll*, London, British Library, Egerton 2849 (c. 1225–1230); *Mortuary Roll*, Cambridge, St. John's College, MRJ 271/College classmark N. 31 (c. 1208–1221); David Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995).

¹⁰⁴ The nuns of Regensburg were also involved in composing poetry in the form of letters. *Regensburg verses/songs*, Munich, BSB, Clm. 17142 (1106). Miscellany manuscript of "grammatical notes, scholia, proverbs, political poems, and other teaching materials copied from a schoolmaster's working papers... love letters and playful verses... exchanged between one or more teachers and a class of convent pupils in Regensburg." See Barbara Newman, *Making Love in the Twelfth Century: "Letters of Two Lovers" in Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 257.

¹⁰⁵ Deborah Harmeling, O.S.B., "Tetta, 'Noble in Conduct' and Thecla 'Shining Like a Light in a Dark Place,'" in *Medieval Women Monastics: Wisdom's Wellsprings*, eds. Miriam Schmitt and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 106.

¹⁰⁶ Rosamond McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th–9th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994). Delia Gaze, ed., *Dictionary of Women Artists: Volume I, Introductory Surveys, Artists, A–I* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 7. Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90.

¹⁰⁷ Rosamond McKitterick, "Nuns' Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century," *Francia* 19, no. 1 (1992): 1–35. Bernhard Bischoff, trans. Michael Gorman, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ Stephanie Hollis, "Barking's Monastic School, Late Seventh to Twelfth Century: History, Saint-Making and Literary Culture," in *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture, Authorship and Authority in a Female Community*, eds. Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell (York: York Medieval Press, 2012), 33–55.

¹⁰⁹ *Moral Treatise*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 451 (c. 1100). Michelle P. Brown, "Female Book Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Robertson*, eds. Christian J. Kay and Louise M. Sylvester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 59.

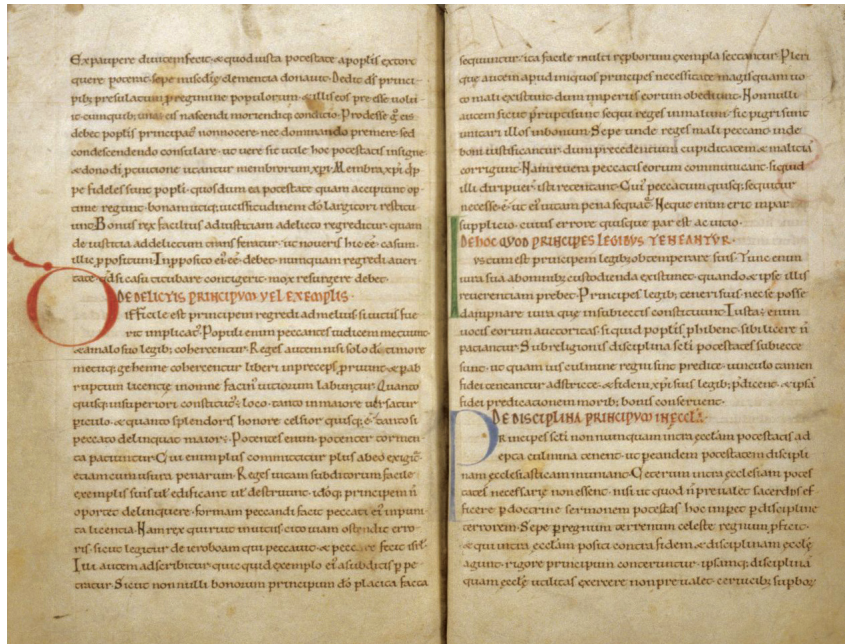


Figure 27: Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel's *Diadema monachorum*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl., MS 451 (c. 1100), fols. 88v–89r.

A further indication of female scribes at Nunnaminster is found in the mortuary roll of Matilda of Caen (d. 1112). Stephanie Hollis points out the convent added “three substantial poems... (one written by a niece of Abbess Matilda).”¹¹⁰ Adding to these examples, changes were made to an eleventh-century prayerbook by a twelfth-century nun at Nunnaminster. The alterations to the manuscript, such as changing the gender of the Latin case endings and adding a personal prayer, reflect a female reader who knew how to write in Latin.¹¹¹ The prayerbook originally belonged to the monk Ælfwine of New Minster in the early eleventh century, and

¹¹⁰ Stephanie Hollis, “Barking’s Monastic School, Late Seventh to Twelfth Century: History, Saint-Making and Literary Culture,” in *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture*, 53.

¹¹¹ *Prayerbook*, London, British Library, Cotton MSS Titus D. xxvi and xxvii; two volumes (c. 1025 with 12th c. additions). This prayerbook was separated when it came into the collection of Robert Cotton Library, see Ælfwine, *Ælfwine’s Prayerbook*, ed. Beate Günzel (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993). There is also a possible connection to the Vitellius Psalter which may have been produced by the nuns at Nunnaminster c. 1062. See Helen Foxhall Forbes, “Gender and Monastic Life in Late Anglo-Saxon Winchester,” in *Gender and the City Before Modernity*, eds. Helen Foxhall Forbes and Gabriele Neher (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 173.

included a coded language used between Ælfwine, the monk Ælfsige, and other monks of Winchester. The manuscript is made up of “seventy-eight separate or distinguishable texts” and reflects a strong interest in prediction or prognostics. The continued use of this book by a nun from the twelfth century suggests a network of exchange between the monks and nuns of New Minster and Nunnaminster, as well as the literacy and scribal ability of the nun who, as a later reader, made her own additions to the book. These examples indicate a continued tradition of women working as scribes within convents in twelfth-century France and England, even though their production of manuscripts is not attributed to a convent scriptorium. Each instance demonstrates how women put pen to parchment, using their scribal skills in a variety of ways.

In contrast to the apparent lack of indication of convent scriptoria in England and France, scribal activity of twelfth-century nuns is pronounced within women’s religious houses located in the regions of Germany, especially toward the end of the century. This occurrence presents a number of considerations. First, as previously discussed in chapter one, women’s monastic houses in Germany held long-established ties to noble heritage and financial support, therefore providing a status to their library collections which likely aided in the preservation of their manuscripts. Next, the focus on monastic reform and the spread of women’s religious houses throughout Western Europe was particularly fervent in Germany. This movement sparked a need for books, and women stepped in to provide the needed manual labor of copying manuscripts. Last, the character of manuscript production in German areas, which was slow to adapting change, may have kept the scribal activity within the monastic community, rather than the burgeoning trade of professional scribes found in England and France.¹¹²

Early research into the role of women in monastic manuscript culture recognized the unique contribution by nuns in twelfth-century German convents. In her foundational book published in 1896, *Women Under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500*, Lina Eckenstein brought to light the scribal work of a number of nuns, especially in the German regions, such as Diemut of Wessobrunn, and the nuns of Admont. Eckenstein also briefly mentions the scribe Leukardis of Mallersdorf, simply stating she was a Bavarian nun of Irish origin.¹¹³ Alison

¹¹² The “lag” in script change is discussed by Erik Kwakkel, “Biting, Kissing and the Treatment of Feet: The Transitional Script of the Long Twelfth Century,” in *Turning Over a New Leaf: Change and Development in the Medieval Book* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 79–125, at 103.

¹¹³ Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism*, 237.

Beach adds to this noting that although Leukardis' manuscript do not survive, her work is mentioned in the convent documents of Mallersdorf.¹¹⁴

The name of the female lay scribe Mahtilt of Nifen (Niphen) is found in a twelfth-century necrology from her community at Zwiefalten, a Benedictine double-house which produced a large number of manuscripts during the twelfth century. Constant Mews discusses this entry in the necrology, which states: *Mahtilt de Nifen conversa congregationis, Ista multos libros sancte Marie conscripsit*.¹¹⁵ Mews suggests the designation of "many" books copied by Mahtilt indicates her skill and level of output. Beach supports Mews' theory through paleographic comparison identifying at least three manuscripts copied by Mahtilt, all of them liturgical books.¹¹⁶ Beach further argues that Mahtilt was likely one of many lay women who worked as scribes at Zwiefalten.¹¹⁷ Adding to these instances, I turn the attention to convent scriptoria which had a number of female scribes working together, supported by examples of extant manuscripts compiled, copied, and sometimes decorated at women's monastic communities in twelfth-century Germany: Lamspringe, Schäfilarn, Admont, and Wessobrunn.

LAMSPRINGE

In the Saxon region of northern Germany, in the diocese of Hildesheim, the Benedictine nuns at the abbey of St Adrian at Lamspringe added manuscripts to their convent library through efforts of copying and exchange, as attested by the twenty books dated to the twelfth century.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 129.

¹¹⁵ *Necrology, Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Cod. Hist. 2° 420 (1100–1200)*. Constant J. Mews, "Monastic Educational Culture Revisited: The Witness of Zwiefalten and the Hirsau Reform," in *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 186.

¹¹⁶ Mews gives a list of the twelfth-century books from Zwiefalten in "Monastic Educational Culture Revisited," 186–188. See also Rodney Thomson, "The Place of Germany in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Books, Scriptoria and Libraries," in *Turning Over a New Leaf: Change and Development in the Medieval Book*, eds. Erik Kwakkel, Rosamond McKitterick, and Rodney Thomson (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 133. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 129. For more on the role of laywomen as *conversae*, see Constance H. Berman, "Conversae and Conversi," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schauss (New York: Routledge, 2006), 169–170.

¹¹⁷ Alison I. Beach, "Mathild de Niphin' and the Female Scribes of Twelfth-Century Zwiefalten" in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe; The Hull Dialogue*, eds. V. O'Mara, V. Blanton, and P. Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). Also written as Mathilde von Neuffen. Rodney Thomson notes that from Niphin "at least a hundred of its twelfth-century books are known to survive." Thomson, "The Place of Germany," 133.

¹¹⁸ Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony: St. Pancras in Hamersleben* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 155. Also, Thomson, "The Place of Germany," 131. Alison Beach does not include these manuscripts.

At least twelve manuscripts made by nuns at Lamspringe were produced during the second half of the century when the convent community developed an active scriptorium.¹¹⁹ When Gerhard became Provost of Lamspringe in c. 1178, there already existed at the abbey a tradition of nuns working as scribes: for example, the above-mentioned colophon placed in a *florilegium* is dated to c. 1150.¹²⁰ Thus, activity of the convent scriptorium at Lamspringe can be divided into two periods. First, the time between when the abbey began to follow the Rule of Benedict in c. 1130 until c. 1178 when Gerhard became provost, at least five books were produced by the nuns, variously labeled by scholars such as Härtel, Cohen-Mushlin, and Winston-Allen as "scriptrix," "scriptrix-group," or workshop.¹²¹ These include the exegetical treatise of Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis* (Fig. 28), and Honorius of Autun's commentary on the Song of Songs, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*.¹²² Patristic works are represented by a copy of the Dialogues by Gregory the Great, a miscellany manuscript of works by Bede and Paschasius Radbertus, and finally, a *florilegium*.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Helmar Härtel, *Geschrieben und Gemalt: Gelehrt Bücher aus Frauenhand. Eine Klosterbibliothek sächsischer Benediktinerinnen des 12. Jahrhunderts*. Exhibition catalogue, 19 Nov–28 Jan 2007 (Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Herzog-August-Bibliothek, 2006), 19–22. Also, Thomson, "The Place of Germany," 131. Thomson presents similar arguments in "The Place of Germany in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture, Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). Manuscripts from the time period before Benedictine reform; c. 1130, **Wolfenbüttel, HAB Cod. Guelf. 426 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 427 Helmst., and HAB Cod. Guelf. 553 Helmst.**; c. 1130–1178, **HAB Cod. Guelf. 510 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 519 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 943 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 1030 Helmst.**; c. 1178–1210, **HAB Cod. Guelf. 204 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 475 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 480 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 903 Helmst.**

¹²⁰ Gerhard was a canon from Hamersleben.

¹²¹ Lamspringe was initially influenced by the reform of the Bishop Berthold of Hildesheim (1119–1130), who imposed the Benedictine rule upon the community as part of the general reform movement of the period. This was followed by a new connection to nearby monastery at Hamersleben, the first house of reformed regular canons in Germany, with whom they most likely developed a network of book exchange. For more on Lamspringe's connection to the canons and scriptoria of Hamersleben, see Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony: St. Pancras in Hamersleben* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 155–160.

¹²² Honorius Augustoduensis, *Cantica canticorum*, **Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf 511 Helmst. (1130–1178)** Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis*, **HAB Cod. Guelf. 510 Helmst.**

¹²³ **Wolfenbüttel, HAB Cod. Guelf. 519 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 943 Helmst., HAB Cod. Guelf. 1030 Helmst.** Härtel, *Geschrieben und Gemalt*, 65–96.

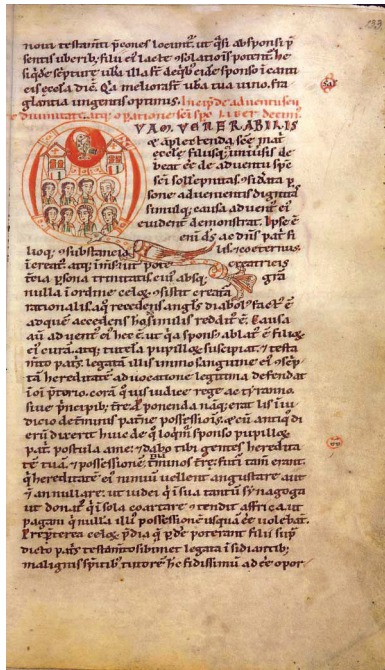


Figure 28: Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis*, Wolfenbüttel HAB Cod. Guelf. 510 Helmst. (1130–1178), fol. 133r.

During the period of 1178–1205, while Gerhard was provost, four manuscripts can be attributed to the copying and artistic skills of a specific nun, Ermengarde.¹²⁴ Her name is found in a copy of sermons of Augustine, and it has been posited by scholars that she was responsible for the decoration as well.¹²⁵ A good representation of the “vocational training” of scribes mentioned by Parkes, the text begins with the exemplum hand of the monk (from Hamersleben) who was training the nuns, and the rest of the text follows in the hand of Ermengarde.¹²⁶ (Fig. 29) Ermengarde is also credited with the decorated initials found in three other manuscripts, demonstrating that her skills were used in various aspects of book production.¹²⁷ Lamspringe added both

¹²⁴ Hotchin, “Women’s Reading,” 168.

¹²⁵ Aurelius Augustinus, *Sermons*, HAB Cod. Guelf. 204 Helmst. (1178–1191).

¹²⁶ Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes*, 9.

¹²⁷ Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 475 Helmst., HAB, Cod. Guelf. 480 Helmst., and HAB, Cod. Guelf. 903 Helmst. (1178–1191). Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony: St. Pancras in Hamersleben* (Otto Harrassowitz KG: Wiesbaden, 2004), 160–166.

traditional and modern texts to their library collection up until the end of the century.¹²⁸

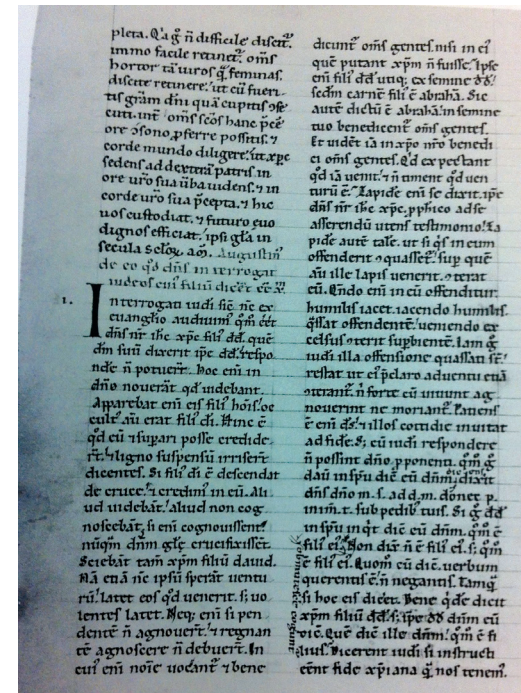


Figure 29: Sermons of Augustine, HAB, Cod. Guelf. 204 Helmst. (1178–1191) fol. 4v; Hand of scribe Ermengarde begins at line 15.

As a result of the convent’s reform to Benedictine Rule in the first half of the century, there may have been a need for more books to fulfill the requirement for *lectio divina*, instigating the extensive in-house copying of books by women at Lamspringe during the following years. Moreover, in the last decades of the century, the convent’s close connection to the canons of Hamersleben may have provided further training of nuns, specifically in a regional style.¹²⁹ Thus, the surviving manuscripts produced by the generations of nun-scribes at Lamspringe represent a variety of scribal skills from copying to decorating.

¹²⁸ Hotchin, “Women’s Reading,” 173. And Rodney Thomson, “The Place of Germany” (2012), 131. Thomson writes, “... the Lamspringe scriptorium was sufficiently active and skilled to take in commissions from other houses.” The Lamspringe booklist records work by Gregory the Great, Augustine, and Hugh of St Victor added during the late twelfth century.

¹²⁹ Cohen-Mushlin, *Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony*, 161.

SCHÄFTLARN

Moving south, near Munich in the Bavarian region of Germany, the Premonstratensian double-house at Schäftlarn built a library on an ambitious copying program specifically during the last half of the century (1164–1200).¹³⁰ Owing to the monastic reform of the period, the “community immediately set up a scriptorium, the first ever at Schäftlarn,” which employed the skills of certain nuns as scribes.¹³¹ During the last half of the century, manuscript production and scribal abilities of both the men and women at Schäftlarn is evidenced by the significant number of books copied: sixty-six volumes as documented by scholarship.¹³² At least six manuscripts have been linked to the scribal hands of both professed and lay-sisters at Schäftlarn, including sermons and gospel commentaries.¹³³ However, Beach argues that the nuns at Schäftlarn experienced limited access to the library at best, since “female reading was merely tolerated, with special concessions sometimes made for those who arrived at the monastery better educated.”¹³⁴

With the support of the prior, Henry (1164–1200), and Adalbertus the master scribe of Schäftlarn, the nuns Adelheit, Irmingart, and Sophia (Sofia) copied needed manuscripts for the monastery.¹³⁵ Since this monastic community was made up of both men and women, a so-called double-house, it is unclear where the scriptorium was located, and how it was shared. Further, owing to the fact that Irmingart was a nun bound to the rules of enclosure, whereas Sophia was a lay-sister of the community, we are left to imagine the ways they collaborated with each other, and with the monk Adalbertus, who worked as corrector and rubricator.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ For an alternate view that sees Premonstratensians as “teachers and learners, with the aim to educate *verbo et exemplo*, and enjoyed considerable freedom,” see Reghina Dascal, “Constructing a Vantage Point from Which to Regard Women and History: Christine de Pizan and the *Querelle De Femmes*,” *Didactica* 2 (2009): 18.

¹³¹ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 105.

¹³² Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 108.

¹³³ Augustine, vol. 1 **Münich, BSB, Clm. 17052**, and vol. 2 **Münich, BSB, Clm. 17053**, Augustine commentaries, **Münich, BSB, Clm. 17054**. Alison I. Beach, “Clastration and Collaboration Between the Sexes,” in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society: Essays in Honor of Lester K. Little*, eds. Lester K. Little, Sharon A. Farmer, and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 70, n. 61.

¹³⁴ Beach, “Clastration,” 68. Beach notes the lack of evidence such as *ex libris* entries, lending lists, or other records of an in-house library.

¹³⁵ Elisabeth Klemm, *Die romanische Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, 3 vols.* (Weisbaden, Germany: Reichart, 1988). http://bilder.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/hs/katalogseiten/HSK0469a_a097_jpg.htm (accessed 11 December 2017). Also, Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 108, and 122–123.

¹³⁶ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 122.

Sophia, a *conversae* (active 1160–1180), likely received the majority of her training as a scribe by Adalbertus. Sophia helped to copy a three-volume set of Augustine’s sermons, where only volumes 1 and 2 remain extant. She is also credited with producing a manuscript copy of Augustine’s commentary on the Gospel of John.¹³⁷ In all of these manuscripts, Sophia worked in close collaboration with Adalbertus, exchanging hands in numerous instances throughout the text.¹³⁸ In contrast, Beach suggests that Irmingart was already skilled in writing, and so received her tasks to complete in her cell.¹³⁹ The books attributed to the hand of Irmingart include four extant works. First, in collaboration with Adalbertus acting as an exemplum hand, Irmingart was the main scribe of the manuscript containing homilies on the Epistles and the Gospels.¹⁴⁰ Irmingart further copied three manuscripts on her own: *De diviniis officiis* by Rupert of Deutz, an alphabetical glossary, and a copy of Palladius’ treatise *On Agriculture*.¹⁴¹ This last book might have been a useful text for nuns and monks living under the Premonstratensian order who were assigned more manual tasks to support both the male and female community, as well as indicating a reading interest in works of science.¹⁴²

ADMONT

In the southeast of the German region, in present day Austria, the Benedictine Abbey at Admont presents a further example of an active convent scriptorium during the twelfth century, evidenced by a number of surviving manuscripts made by nuns. Indications of nuns as *scriptrix* occurs in two instances of the community’s necrology, naming Mathilt and Diemut.¹⁴³ The entry of Diemut states: *Diemudis conversa nostrae congregationis et scriptrix* [Diemud, member of our congregation and scribe].¹⁴⁴ Further, Beach has identified through paleographical study the nuns Gertrude, Irmingart, Regilind, Nun-Scribe A, and Nun-

¹³⁷ Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos, vol. 1 and vol. 2, Münich, BSB, Clm. 17052 and Münich, BSB, Clm. 17053*; Augustine’s *Commentaries on the Gospel of John, Münich, BSB, Clm. 17054*. Beach, “Clastration and Collaboration,” 71. These texts were also copied by the nun-scribes at Lamspringe.

¹³⁸ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 120–123.

¹³⁹ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 125.

¹⁴⁰ Homilies, **Münich, BSB Clm. 17087**.

¹⁴¹ Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis, Münich, BSB Clm. 17116*; *Alphabetical Glossary, Münich, BSB Clm. 17151*; Palladius, *de Agricultura, Münich, BSB Clm. 23478*.

¹⁴² Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 25 and “Clastration and Collaboration,” 74.

¹⁴³ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 85.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted from *Women as Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze. Gaze asks, “How many other unsigned medieval initials are the work of women, since women obviously were scribes...,” 11. See also Beach, *Women Scribes*, 85.

Scribe B as makers of manuscripts.¹⁴⁵ The contribution of these nuns to manuscript production includes six copies of sermons or homilies, a *vita* of an unnamed *magistra*, and a “model-book” for writing letters in the proper style.¹⁴⁶

A three-volume copy of the sermons of Irimbert began as an effort by the nuns of Admont to copy down his words while he preached. In the prologue to his sermon on Kings, Irimbert writes: “In the very great difficulty of this work, I was refreshed thoroughly by the liberality of the aforementioned sisters, since they appointed me two sisters free from every occupation, who continually and diligently transcribed my spoken words onto tablets.”¹⁴⁷ The resulting collection shows the scribal ability and collaboration between at least four nuns of Admont: Regilind, Irimbert, and the two unnamed nuns designated by Beach as Nun-Scribe A and Nun-Scribe B.¹⁴⁸ According to Beach’s analysis, the various instances of hand change within the manuscripts shows the collaboration between nuns working in a scriptorium at Admont.¹⁴⁹ Further, Stefanie Seeberg argues that the nuns at Admont were involved in illumination of manuscripts.¹⁵⁰ Seeberg notes that between 1165 and 1180, at least four manuscripts were decorated by a nun, or nuns, of the abbey, ranging from decorated initials to miniatures. Seeberg states, “the historiated initials, the usual form of illustration in the Admont manuscripts, first served to organize the text, to offer orientation by marking out texts or feasts days and as decoration in praise of God.”¹⁵¹ Three of the manuscripts Seeberg discusses are volumes of sermons, and are part of the “anonymous works in the ‘Admonter Predigtsammlung’ (Admont sermon corpus).”¹⁵² Moreover, two volumes include an image of a nun above the chapter tables, in a posture that could represent her role as delivering sermons to the nuns in the Admont community.¹⁵³ (Fig. 30)



Figure 30: *Homilies for Feast Days* (detail); left, Admont, Stiftsbibliothek, Ms. 58 (1165–1180), fol. 1v; right, Admont, Stiftsbibliothek, Ms. 62 (1165–1180), fol. 2r.

The fourth book, a breviary, was made specifically for the nuns by the monks Johannes and Udalricus of Admont in 1180.¹⁵⁴ This book would have been used by the nuns during the daily Divine Office and, as Seeberg argues, the large size of the book, which measures 390mm x 275mm, likely laid open on a stand, where the “*magistra* leading the Divine Office and the nuns supporting her as readers and singers would read the required texts from the breviary.”¹⁵⁵

WESSOBRUNN

The previous chapter discussed the books once held by the library at Wessobrunn, where over forty manuscripts were made by the nun Diemut, who is described on her grave marker as copying “an entire library with her own hands.”¹⁵⁶ In her role as scribe, Diemut copied books which reflected the reading needs of her community, including a two-volume Bible, a number of copies of homilies, a book of saints’ lives, a collection of theological works, as well as an alphabetical glossary.¹⁵⁷ In addition to the scribal work of Diemut, Beach has established that there were at least two other nun-scribes who copied manuscripts at Wessobrunn, indicating a scriptorium where nuns worked in collaboration even though Diemut is described as an *inclusa*. Beach suggests that Nun-Scribe 2 was responsible for illustrations and rubrication in some of the manuscripts where Diemut copied the main text, such as the copy of the Gospels where she added initials in “gold lettering.”¹⁵⁸ Further, she is the same nun who produced the booklist of Wessobrunn, listing the manuscripts made by

¹⁵⁴ *Liber matutinalis*, **Admont MS 18 (1180)**.

¹⁵⁵ Seeberg, “Manuscripts of Admont Nuns,” 105.

¹⁵⁶ Green, *Women and Reading*, 180.

¹⁵⁷ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 32–64, at 43.

¹⁵⁸ *Gospels*, **Münich, BSB, Clm. 22044 (1100–1125)**. Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 50.

¹⁴⁵ Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Sermons, Vorau, Stiftsbibliothek MS 193; Sermons, Admont Stiftsbibliothek, MS 650; Sermons, Admont Stiftsbibliothek MS 651; Letters, Admont MS II/1*.

¹⁴⁷ Beach, “Claustration and Collaboration,” 63.

¹⁴⁸ **Admont MS 650, 651, and Vorau, Stiftsbibliothek MS 193**. Beach, *Women as Scribes*. I follow Beach’s distinction among the hands and names.

¹⁴⁹ For full description of the paleography of this manuscript, see Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 93–95.

¹⁵⁰ Stephanie Seeberg, “Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Admont Nuns from the Second Half of the Twelfth Century: Reflections on Their Function,” in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 100.

¹⁵¹ Seeberg, “Manuscripts of Admont Nuns,” 104.

¹⁵² Seeberg, “Manuscripts of Admont Nuns,” 100.

¹⁵³ *Anonymous sermons, Admont MS 58; Admont MS 62*. Also, **Admont Mss, 16, 17, and 18**.

her contemporary, Diemut. Thus, these skilled nuns worked together in a convent scribal setting at Wessobrunn, suggesting that through collaboration, they could produce the various elements indicative of a medieval book, such as the layout and copying of texts, rubrication, and illustrations, all within their own version of a scriptorium.

3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed women's contribution to twelfth-century written culture by highlighting examples of the books *made by* noblewomen and nuns. By situating the "authorial activities" of twelfth-century women to include various acts of composition, each example adds to our understanding of women's participation in the making of the physical book as an object. The evidence tells us that the majority of manuscripts copied by women come from a convent setting; their role as scribes can be found in colophons, portraits, and convent documents such as necrologies. The instances of convent scriptoria, especially in the German regions, demonstrate the abilities of nuns to collaborate and produce manuscripts working as scribes, illustrators, and rubricators.¹⁵⁹ The books they copied were predominately written in Latin, aside from the texts translated and copied into Anglo-Norman from long-standing women's religious houses in England. Moreover, it becomes clear that were regional reading preferences, such as the contemporary works of theological exegesis by Rupert of Deutz, with copies of his texts made in convents within Germany during the later decades of the century. Although it is a common assumption that during the medieval period libraries belonged to male monasteries, lavish manuscripts to male noble courts, and "anonymous texts are assumed to be written by males," this chapter shows women's participation in book production was significant to the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.¹⁶⁰ Through the examples I have provided where women were involved in the physical making a manuscript, we further build our understanding of women's contribution to the written culture of the twelfth century. By bringing together the instances where a noblewoman or nun is found composing, copying, decorating, and possibly binding manuscripts during this period, a clearer picture can be gained of women's contribution toward the reading culture and the developing book fluency of this period.

¹⁵⁹ It is also important to consider nuns' work as conservationists/restorationists of manuscripts, which can be supported by the numerous examples of stitching around holes in parchment and other various repairs made to the page.

¹⁶⁰ Alexandra Barratt, as quoted by Bella Millett, "English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150–1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 98. See also, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150–1300; Virginity and its Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.