

**WOMEN'S USE OF RELIGIOUS
LITERATURE
IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND**

Anne Marie Dutton

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of York
Centre for Medieval Studies
October, 1995

ABSTRACT

Little scholarly attention has been directed to the subject of women's activities as readers, listeners, and owners of the religious literature circulating in late medieval England. This dissertation examines women's access to and use of such literature from *c.* 1350 to *c.* 1500. My main sources are wills and probate inventories (both of which sometimes mention books), and extant manuscripts and incunabula known to have been owned or used by women. I argue that the female audience of religious literature was composed primarily of women religious and laywomen from the nobility and gentry, and, in the fifteenth century, from the mercantile élite. Such women formed networks that facilitated the exchange and sharing of books. Middle English treatises of spiritual guidance addressed to women construct celibate readers, thereby ignoring married women, and thus, to a large extent, laywomen. These writings also attempt to limit women's critical responses to the text. A study of the corpus of religious literature actually in women's hands reveals not only that laywomen and female religious participated in a common literary devotional culture, but also that this culture went beyond what was written or recommended for them. I present two case studies of women book owners - a laywoman, Anne Harling (*c.* 1426-1498) and a nun, Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking from 1394 until her death in 1419. These two women, despite their different life-styles, shared religious and secular concerns, and I argue that both used the religious literature in their hands not only for spiritual benefit but also for political advantage.

"[History] tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all."

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, vol. 5 of *The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd edition revised by Mary Lascelles (London, 1969), p.108.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	List of Tables	5
	Acknowledgements	6
	Author's Declaration	7
	List of Abbreviations	8
	Introduction	11
1	The Female Audience of Religious Literature	46
2	Constructing Female Readers and Female Reading	88
3	Devout Books for Devout Ladies	135
4	Secular Reading: Anne Harling and London, British Library MS Harley 4012	187
5	Enclosed Reading: Sibilla de Felton and the Nuns of Barking Abbey	225
	Conclusion	259
	Appendix 1: Extant Manuscripts and Incunabula Known to Have Been in Women's Hands	264
	Appendix 2: Religious Texts Noted in Wills and Inventories	267
	Appendix 3: Religious Texts Found in Extant Manuscripts and Incunabula Known to Have Been in Women's Hands	274
	Appendix 4: Contents of London, BL MS Harley 4012	284
	Appendix 5: Books Surviving from Barking Abbey (Essex)	287
	Bibliography	288

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Proportion (%) of the social status of women involved in transmissions of books noted in wills and inventories	61
Table 1.2: Types of books bequeathed to and by women	66
Table 1.3: Proportion (%) of the social status of women involved in transmissions of devotional literature noted in wills and inventories	69
Table 1.4: Proportion (%) of the recipients of books bequeathed by women	75
Table 3.1: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by women religious	139
Table 3.2: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by laywomen	140
Table 3.3: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by unknown women	141
Table 3.4: Proportion (%) of known languages of devotional texts	143
Table 3.5: Proportion (%) of known languages of scriptural texts	144
Table 3.6: Languages of devotional texts noted in wills and inventories: proportions (%) among texts for which the language is known	145

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of four years' work on this thesis, I have incurred many debts. I would first like to thank Professor Felicity Riddy and Dr P. J. P. Goldberg, who supervised my research, and who were unstinting with advice, information, and encouragement.

I am particularly grateful to the librarians and staff of the libraries and archive repositories to which my research has taken me: The British Library, The Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, The National Library of Scotland, The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Lambeth Palace Library, York Minster Library, Downside Abbey, Alnwick Castle, Cardiff Public Library, Glasgow University Library, Nottingham University Library, University College Oxford, Magdalen College Oxford, All Souls College Oxford, Corpus Christi College Oxford, Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, St John's College Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, The Public Record Office, The Norfolk Record Office, The Essex Record Office, and The Borthwick Institute of Historical Research in York.

I would like to thank the many scholars and friends who have given generously of their time and knowledge, especially Professor Alistair Minnis, Professor Mark Ormrod, Dr Pat Cullum, Ms Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Dr David Smith, Mrs Ann Rycraft, Mr Bernard Barr, Mrs Deirdre Mortimer, Dr Rosalynn Voaden, Ms Katherine Lewis, and Ms Anna Cheifetz. I am very grateful to Mr Sebastian Sutcliffe, of St John's College, Oxford, for sharing some of his doctoral research with me.

My research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, who awarded me a Doctoral Fellowship, by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the United Kingdom, who provided me with an Overseas Research Studentship, and by the University of York, who gave me a University Scholarship for Overseas Students. The Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, awarded me a research grant to cover some of my travelling expenses. For all of this beneficence I am very grateful.

Writing a doctoral thesis is a lonely task. During my years at York I was fortunate to live and work in supportive communities. My family and friends in Canada and England gave love and encouragement, resigning themselves to high telephone and travel bills, and reminded me that life exists outside the world of medieval women's use of religious literature. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Dr Andrew Sedman, for asking innumerable questions about medieval women, manuscripts, and texts, as well as offering new insights, for valuable assistance with statistics, for sorting out computer hitches, and for believing in me.

This thesis is dedicated to Anne Harling, who inspired me.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Some of the research presented in Chapters 1 and 3 was presented at the Women and the Book Conference, held at St Hilda's College, Oxford, August, 1993, and was published in the conference proceedings: Anne M. Dutton, "Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England, 1350-1500," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge, 1995), 41-54.

Some of the research presented in Chapter 4 was presented at the seventh York Manuscripts Conference, held at the University of York, July, 1994, and will appear in the conference proceedings.

Throughout this thesis all dates have been given in new style and historic county boundaries (pre-1974) have been used. Forenames of medieval men and women have been modernized, while surnames have only been modernized if they are particularly common (and thus appear with a variety of spellings) or are based on place-names. In transcriptions from manuscript sources abbreviations have been expanded and are shown by italics, and modern punctuation has been imposed. In quotations from modern printed sources the text has been reproduced as it appears in the printed edition. Title of medieval texts have been modernized except where texts are known exclusively by *their* medieval titles (e.g. *Pore Caitiff*).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add.	Additional
BIHR	York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research
BL	British Library
Cavanaugh	Susan H. Cavanaugh, "A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300-1450" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980).
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CIPM	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
DNB	L. Stephen and S. Lee, eds. <i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 21 vols. (London, 1937-8).
EETS es	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS os	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS ss	Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series
Ker, MLGB	N. R. Ker, ed., <i>Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books</i> , 2nd ed. (London, 1964).
Ker, MMBL	N. R. Ker, ed., <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969-199)
Ker, Supplement	N. R. Ker, ed., <i>Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books</i> , Supplement to the Second Edition, ed. Andrew G. Watson (London, 1987).
IPMEP	R. E. Lewis, N. F. Blake, and A. S. G. Edwards, eds., <i>Index of Printed Middle English Prose</i> (New York, 1985).
IMEP	A. S. G. Edwards, gen. ed., <i>The Index of Middle English Prose</i> , (Cambridge, 1984-).

IMEV	Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, <i>The Index of Middle English Verse</i> (New York, 1943).
Jolliffe	P. S. Jolliffe, <i>A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance</i> (Toronto, 1984).
Lagorio and Sargent	Valerie M. Lagorio and Michael G. Sargent, "English Mystical Writings," in <i>A Manual of the Writings in Middle English</i> , gen. ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 9 (New Haven, 1993).
LALME	<i>Linguistic Atlas of Later Middle English</i>
NCC	Norwich Consistory Court
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
PRO	Public Record Office
Raymo	R. R. Raymo, "Works of RELigious and Philosophical Instruction," in <i>A Manual of the Writings in Middle English</i> , gen. ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 7 (New Haven, 1986).
RW	John A. Nichols, ed., <i>A Collection of All the Wills, Now Known to be Extant, of the Kings and Queens of England . . . From the Reign of William the Conqueror to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive</i> (London, 1780).
STC	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640</i> (London, 1926); 2nd ed. revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer, 2 vols. (London, 1976-86).

- TE James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia or Wills Registered at York Illustrative of the History, Manners, Language, Statistics, &c. of the Province of York, from the Year MCCC Downwards*, part 1, Surtees Society 4 (London, 1836).
- TE2 James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York*, part 2, Surtees Society 30 (Durham, London, and Edinburgh, 1855).
- TE3 James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York*, part 3, Surtees Society 45 (Durham, London, and Edinburgh, 1865).
- TE4 James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York*, part 4, Surtees Society (Durham, London, and Edinburgh, 1869).
- TV Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ed., *Testamenta Vetusta: Being Illustrations from Wills . . . From the Reign of Henry The Second to the Accession of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. 1 (London, 1826).
- VCH Victoria County History

INTRODUCTION

WOMEN, BOOKS, AND LITERACY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

"Read assiduously; learn many things. Let sleep come upon thee book in hand." Thus wrote St Jerome to the virgin Eustochium in 384.¹ It would seem that over one thousand years later, certain women (not just consecrated virgins) were following Jerome's advice. They were reading, or listening, and it is to be hoped that they were learning many things. This thesis explores women's access to and use of the religious literature circulating in England from c. 1350 to c. 1500. Throughout the Middle Ages and indeed beyond, moralists emphasized the spiritual and moral benefits that women were to obtain from reading. The view of The Knight of la Tour-Landry, whose book of advice for his daughters was twice translated into Middle English in the fifteenth century, is particularly apposite:

eueri woman it is the beter that canne rede and haue knowinge of the lawe of God, and forto haue be lerned to haue vertu and science to withstonde the perilles of the sowle, and forto use and excerse the werkys of thaire sauement, for that is thinge aproued and necessarie to alle women.²

Before proceeding, two pieces of terminology must be clarified. First, what is meant by religious literature? I have included in this term all religious writings, in prose and verse, of a devotional, didactic, legendary, mystical, scriptural, or theological nature. I have excluded liturgical books, such as missals and breviaries, and paraliturgical books, such as psalters (although

¹Translated in G. G. Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1930), p. 12.

²Thomas Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, EETS os 33 (London, 1868), p. 119. This translation was made during the reign of Henry VI (1422-61). Caxton's translation of the Knight's work was published in 1484, and the same passage in his version reads: "as for redynge I saye that good and prouffitable is to al wymen/ For a woman that can rede may better knowe the peryls of the sowle and her sauement/ that she that can nou3t of it/ for it hath be preued"; see M. Y. Offord, ed., *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, EETS ss 2 (London, 1971), p. 122. The Knight's Book was written in French c. 1372.

these are scriptural writings) and primers, or books of hours. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged first that many of the books known to have been in women's hands in late medieval England were liturgical and paraliturgical, and second that primers and psalters often contain texts that I would classify as religious literature. Second, what do I mean by the "use" of such literature? The word "use" encompasses both reading and listening without privileging one over the other. "Use" is also intended here to include the purposes of reading and listening to texts and the benefits that women may have derived from these activities.

The sources that have been most useful in this study are those that indicate women's ownership of religious literature. Of course, ownership is not necessarily the same as access; no doubt many of us have books on our shelves that we have not read. Equally, it is not necessary to own a book to have knowledge of its contents; one can borrow it or listen to its contents being read aloud. The sources that provide the most information about women's book ownership are wills (or, more accurately, testaments) and probate inventories, both of which sometimes mention books, and extant manuscripts and incunabula known, through inscriptions, heraldry, liturgical evidence, and evidence from contents (including annotations), to have been in women's hands.³ Each of these two sources has specific limitations, which are discussed in detail below in Chapter 1. A third source, religious treatises addressed to women, tells us about male expectations (for this body of literature was written, so far as can be determined) by men) regarding women's access to and use of religious literature. Together, these sources allow us to ask questions that are fundamental to the study of women's participation in the literary and devotional cultures of late medieval England: what types of women had access to religious literature? What texts did they

³Strictly speaking, wills dealt with the devise of real estate, and testaments with bequests moveable goods. In practice, however, many testators did not distinguish between the two, often leaving a "last will and testament". I follow the common convention of using the noun "will" and the adjective "testamentary" for all documents that deal with the disposal of a deceased person's estate.

use? What religious texts were written for a female audience, and to whom are they addressed? To what extent did women exercise control over their participation in literary culture? How might women have integrated their use of religious literature into the rest of their lives? And finally, what changes occurred over the course of some one-and-a-half centuries?

I have structured this thesis around these questions. Chapter 1 examines the female audience of religious literature in late medieval England, and it includes an evaluation of the two main sources for women's access to written culture, wills and extant books. I assess the evidence for the influence of social status and religious vocation first on female ownership of all types of books, including service books, and second on women's ownership of religious literature. Chapter 2 focuses on Middle English treatises of spiritual guidance written for women, paying particular attention to the female readers that these texts construct. I also examine what advice this literature offers women about reading. A study of the corpus of religious literature actually in women's hands is presented in Chapter 3. I look at the types of religious texts women owned and used, the languages in which they were written, and whether religious vocation was a determinant factor. In Chapters 4 and 5 I present two cases studies of women book owners, a laywoman and a nun. Only by turning to the details of the lives of individual women, I believe, can we begin to understand the ways in which women might have used religious literature, and how they might have integrated it into the rest of their lives. The lives of laywomen are, in general, more accessible to the scholar than those of nuns. Although, as has often been noted, laywomen appear in historical record less frequently than laymen, they tend to be found more often than individual nuns. More importantly, secular women from certain social groups, unlike their enclosed counterparts, sometimes left written wills. Although wills must be interpreted with caution, they are nevertheless one of the most personal of medieval documents, and can reveal a great deal about an individual's concerns. I have therefore chosen to present the laywoman as the subject of my first case study. She is Anne Harling (d. 1498), a gentlewoman from East Harling, Norfolk. Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking (Essex) from 1393 until

her death in 1419, is the subject of my second case study. Anne and Sibilla must have led very different lives, one outside and one inside the cloister. In what ways did they resemble or differ from each other in their ownership and use of religious treatises?

Women have long been recognized, although not universally, as members of the audience of the religious literature that circulated in England in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. H. R. Plomer, writing at the beginning of this century about books mentioned in medieval wills, lists women among those who bequeathed and received religious books, and Margaret Deansley, whose article on vernacular book ownership in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was published in 1920, likewise refers to female book owners.⁴ A. I. Doyle's 1954 doctoral thesis, which remains one of the most comprehensive studies of Middle English religious literature, cites many manuscripts owned by women, discussing some books and their female owners in detail.⁵ However, only a limited study has been made of such women and of the literature in their hands. The questions that I posed above regarding women's involvement in the religious literary culture of late medieval England have not been fully addressed - or in some cases, asked.

Susan Groag Bell was the first to turn her attention to the specific study of women book owners, and her work has been frequently cited and reprinted. Bell argues that book-owning laywomen played a significant role in the development both of lay piety and of vernacular literature in late medieval

⁴H. R. Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1902-4); Margaret Deansley, "Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Modern Language Review* 15 (1920).

⁵A. I. Doyle, "A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Early Sixteenth Centuries, with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1954).

Europe.⁶ Women, she claims, depended more heavily than men on books as they were excluded from the ecclesiastical authority structure, and the number of laywomen book owners (particularly owners of religious books) increased substantially from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. As mothers, she continues, women were responsible for the literary and moral upbringing of their children, especially daughters; by choosing the contents of their children's books, they influenced the artistic and ideological development of the next generation. Women, as readers and educators who had little knowledge of Latin, also influenced the rise in vernacular literature. Finally, as brides, women book owners acted as "cultural ambassadors", bringing their books across regional boundaries, thereby assisting in the transmission of texts, ideas, and artistic styles. Throughout her article Bell emphasises a mother-daughter literary tradition: women inherited books from their mothers, and were especially responsible for the education of their daughters.

While Bell's work raises many important issues, several of which are examined more closely in this thesis, there are problems with her methodology. First, she draws on material from across Europe over several centuries, with insufficient sensitivity to geographical and historical differences.⁷ I have particular reservations regarding her conclusion about the increasing number of women book owners from the ninth to the fifteenth

⁶Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture." This was originally published in *Signs* 7 (1982), and reprinted in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 1988) and in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M. Bennett, *et al.* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1989). References to this article are taken from *Sisters and Workers*.

⁷For example, in arguing for a "matrilineal" pattern of book transmission, Bell (p. 142 and n. 24) cites the *Sachsenspiegel*, a collection of Saxon custom laws compiled around 1215, which, as she points out, circulated outside Saxon areas and into the fourteenth century, a Dutch Book of Hours (no date is given), and three wills, one French and two English. She states (pp. 142-3) that "testamentary evidence of women's bequests of devotional books to their daughters is scarce", but I have not found this to be true for English women's wills. See Chapter 1 below.

centuries. Bell bases this conclusion on a study of 242 women, identified as book owners in rare book library catalogues, wills, inventories of household goods or libraries, and dedications to patrons. This is a very small sample spread across Europe over seven centuries. All of these sources are problematic but Bell does not acknowledge their limitations. Bell found 10 women book owners in the ninth century, 4 in the tenth, 11 in the eleventh, 16 in the twelfth, 15 in the thirteenth, 55 in the fourteenth, and 131 in the fifteenth century. By themselves, these numbers are of limited value, without knowing what proportion of the total population they represent - whether that of women in these centuries (which is probably impossible to determine) or of the total population of book owners as determined by the same sources. Furthermore, these numbers reflect the availability of the data; the apparent increase in the number of women book owners in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is actually a dramatic increase in the number of wills and extant manuscripts.⁸

While the evidence presented by Bell demonstrates women's participation in written culture, she is overly optimistic as to the extent of this participation. For example, in her discussion of women as educators, she asserts that "noblewomen were taught to read at an early age."⁹ As will become apparent later in this chapter, direct evidence for English women's literacy is scanty. England may have been unusual in the European context, but Bell does not consider this. Despite these limitations, Bell's work is still valuable, and her consideration of issues such as women's activities as educators and cultural ambassadors, and the mother-daughter nature of book transmission are particularly interesting. Nevertheless, her conclusions must be viewed with caution.

Ann M. Hutchison has demonstrated the importance placed on

⁸See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1993); M. B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," in *Literature and Western Civilization: The Medieval World*, ed. David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London, 1973).

⁹Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," p. 145.

devotional reading at Syon Abbey (Middlesex), the only Bridgettine house in England, and in the lives of three vowesses or widows.¹⁰ She points out that the Bridgettine Rule, and the Additions to the Rule for the sisters make it clear that reading was an important part of the daily life of the nuns, and she examines in detail *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, written for the nuns in the fifteenth century, which gives specific advice on how to read devoutly.¹¹ Syon emerges from this study as a particularly bookish community, and we may wonder if it occupied a singular position among medieval nunneries. However, very little study has been made of the use of books in other nunneries, and Hutchison's work is thus of particular value.¹² Such study is necessary not only to put Syon into context, but also for a fuller understanding of women's access to and use of written culture. In Chapter 5 I examine the importance of books to Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking from 1394 to 1419. Although this is a study of an individual rather than an institution, it is likely that Sibilla influenced the use of books at Barking during her time as abbess.

¹⁰Ann M. Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989).

¹¹Hutchison also discusses what *The Myroure of oure Ladye* has to say about reading in her "The Myroure of oure Ladye: a Medieval Guide for Contemplatives," in *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigettine Order*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, Spiritualität Heute und Gestern 35:19 (1993).

¹²Eileen Power, in her *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 240-4, was aware of only a few books surviving from nunneries, and she concludes that these do not "leave the impression that nunneries were rich in books." A. I Doyle discusses the books surviving from Barking Abbey in his "Books Associated with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transaction of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 25, part 2 (1958). Christopher de Hamel discusses the library of Syon Abbey in his "The Library: The Medieval Manuscripts of Syon Abbey, and their Dispersal," in *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Peregrinations After the Reformation*, the Roxburghe Club, (Otley, 1991). David N. Bell discusses the contents of nunnery libraries in his *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995). This book was published too late to be included in this discussion.

Josephine Koster Tarvers has recently questioned the "canonical assumption" that women did not participate in the literary culture of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England.¹³ She argues that "women participated in the learned community, though perhaps not to the same extent as men": that women (not just Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe) wrote religious treatises, that devotional texts were written specifically for women, that English women were active in education, particularly in Lollard communities, that women could write letters although they habitually used secretaries, that they owned a wide variety of manuscripts, and that women book owners thought of themselves as learned.

While Tarvers is right to question widespread assumptions about women's limited (or non-existent) access to written culture, and while many of her conclusions are arguably true, her article is none the less flawed.¹⁴ First, there are numerous factual errors. For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 73 contains Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, not Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, as she states, and the Pastons were not "members of the up-and-coming merchant class". Second, Tarvers does not consider the admittedly complex issues of literacy and orality; for her, book ownership is evidence of the ability to read. Tarvers moreover gives an unsupported impression of the extent to which women (as a whole) participated in the literary culture of late medieval England. In her discussion of women writers, she claims that "one can examine the catalogue of nearly any collection of late-medieval English

¹³Josephine Koster Tarvers, "'Thys ys my mystrys boke': English Women as Readers and Writers in Late Medieval England," in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 31 (Kalamazoo, 1992). The "canon" to which Tarvers frequently refers seems to consist of Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers*, *English Literature in History 1350-1400* (London, 1981), Mary Beth Rose, ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Syracuse, 1986), and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds., *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (New York, 1985).

¹⁴Some of these "canonical" assumptions are discussed below.

manuscripts and find similar examples [of texts written by women]." However, I have not found this to be the case, and, as the work of both Alexandra Barratt and Julia Boffey demonstrates, the number of English women authors who can be positively identified is painfully small - although it is larger than some scholars have recognized.¹⁵ Similarly, in arguing that English women remained active in (public or formal) education, Tarvers refers only to a Maria Mereflete, *magistra scholarum*, who appears as a member of the Corpus Christi guild of Boston, an E. Scolemaysteress, and an Elizabeth Scolemaystres, both from London. That only three women (two of whom may have been the same person) are known to have been teachers suggests rather that women played little role in formal education. In her list of extant manuscripts known to have been in women's hands, Tarvers does not consider the extent to which the female population of late medieval England might have owned books, or from which social groups they might have come. In fact, throughout her paper, Tarvers displays a lack of awareness of the differences brought about through social status; women are not, as she presents them, a homogeneous group. As will become apparent in this thesis, social status is an important variable in women's access to literature.

One year after the publication of Tarvers's article, a collection of essays appeared that stands as witness to increasing scholarly interest in the subject of women's engagement with written culture in medieval Britain.¹⁶ Two of the essays directly concern the subject of this thesis. Felicity Riddy argues for the existence of a spiritual sub-culture among women.¹⁷ This sub-culture, she claims, was vernacular and to a large extent oral, and it was one over which

¹⁵See Alexandra Barratt, ed., *Women's Writing in Middle English* (London and New York, 1992); Julia Boffey, "Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993).

¹⁶Carol M. Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹⁷Felicity Riddy, "'Women Talking About the Things of God': a Late Medieval Sub-Culture," in *Women and Literature*, ed. Meale.

women had no small degree of control, through commissioning texts, and through giving books to one another. Such gifts, she continues, suggest that women might have formed reading communities, and they reveal that the literary culture of nuns and that of devout gentlewomen were virtually indistinguishable. Riddy then argues that Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* emerges from this sub-culture, suggesting that *The Revelation* is shaped more by Julian's female experience of listening to and remembering English texts, listening to sermons, and discussing religious matters with other women than by the Latin education that Julian's editors claim for her. It is this spiritual sub-culture that gives Julian "utter confidence in her own gender . . . [which] manifests itself in her feminisation of God."¹⁸

While Riddy's notion of a spiritual literary sub-culture among women is particularly intriguing, I do not feel that its existence is necessarily supported by the evidence that she presents and further research is necessary. Riddy demonstrates, using evidence from wills and extant manuscripts, that women gave one another books. Yet this evidence does not indicate whether women were more likely to give books - or certain types of books - to women than to men. If women gave books to men (and indeed received books from men) in the same proportions as they did to women, can we argue for a particularly *feminine* sub-culture? My second reservation concerns Riddy's conclusion, based on the same list of books given to women by women, that the literary culture of nuns and that of devout gentlewomen "not only overlapped but were more or less indistinguishable." As nearly half of the books listed were given to nuns by laywomen, it is only to be expected that both groups of women owned the same texts. A study of books owned by laywomen and by nuns, not just those given from one to the other, is needed to support this conclusion. These two issues are explored in this thesis.

Working from testamentary material, surviving manuscripts, and evidence of literary patronage, Carol M. Meale demonstrates the wide range of

¹⁸Riddy, "'Women Talking,'" p. 116.

books in laywomen's hands.¹⁹ She finds that religion was the dominant reading interest of women, followed by romances, and while most of the devotional and didactic works were in English, the romances were primarily in French. These reading interests, she continues, "defy the prescriptive dictates of those who sought to control women's access to the written word" - but she says little of what those dictates are beyond the opinion that women should read what will benefit their souls rather than romances. I believe that a comparison of what women were expected to read and what they actually read would be a fruitful line of research. Like Riddy, Meale raises the question of women's reading networks and circles, and she too demonstrates that women gave books to women. Many of these networks, Meale points out, are based on family relationships. Again, I feel that it is essential to examine these woman-to-woman gifts of books within the context of women's transmissions of books in general: were women more likely to give (and receive) books - or certain types of books - to women than they were to men?

Notwithstanding my reservations about their analysis of source material, the articles by Riddy and Meale remain excellent introductions to the subject of women's activities as readers, listeners, and owners of religious literature, and Meale reminds us that much work remains to be done. "What is becoming clear, though," she notes, "is the extent to which it is desirable, even necessary, to recover the details of women's lives - both collectively and individually - in the effort to understand more fully their engagement with literature, and with books in general." This is an approach that I have adopted in this thesis.

A conference on Women and the Book in the Middle Ages, held at St Hilda's College, Oxford, August, 1993, from which one volume of proceedings has been published, with two further volumes still in press, is further testimony of academic interest in the relationships between women, literature, and books. In my article in the first volume of proceedings I

¹⁹Carol M. Meale, "' . . . alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, english, and frensch': Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England," in *Women and Literature*, ed. Meale.

examined women's ownership of religious literature as recorded in wills and probate inventories, making comparison with 67 extant manuscripts and incunables known to have been in women's hands.²⁰ This paper should be viewed as a preliminary report on some of the research presented in Chapters 1 and 3 of this thesis. As will be apparent in these chapters, I have re-analysed the data with greater sensitivity to the limitations of the sources, while adding to the data, and have identified the social status of some of the women book owners whom I had previously classified as "unknown". Some of the religious texts bequeathed to and by women have been reclassified after a more detailed examination of their contents. While I do not disagree with the conclusions that I drew in this paper, I have refined them, as will be apparent from Chapters 1 and 3.

The titles of monographs by Suzanne W. Hull and by Elizabeth Robertson suggest that they explore women's access to religious literature in later medieval England.²¹ Hull examines printed books that appear to her to have been directed at English-speaking women. She includes those books specifically directed to women, books on subjects she considers to be within women's province (e.g. on midwifery and needlework), books with separate sections on women's duties or roles, histories or biographies of famous women, and books dedicated to three or more individual women. She examines 18 religious treatises, the earliest of which, John Ryckes, *The Ymage of Love*, was published in 1525, although she makes reference to Richard Fox's *Rule of Seynt Benet* (1517). She does not mention works such as *The Orcherd of Syon*, published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1519, a printed edition of an early fifteenth-century treatise addressed to the nuns of Syon Abbey, or *The*

²⁰Anne M. Dutton, "Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge, 1995).

²¹Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, 1982); Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville, 1990).

Tree of the Holy Goost, published by Robert Coplande in 1534, and its companion treatise, *The xii Frutes of the Holy Goost*, published in the following year by Coplande in collaboration with Myghel Fawkes, both of which are addressed to a "relygyous sister".²² Her work is thus of limited value for the study of female access to religious literature in late medieval England.²³

Robertson's work is also of limited value to such a study. She focuses solely on *Ancrene Wisse* and the related Katherine group texts - *Hali Meidenhad*, *Sawles Warde*, and the Lives of the virgin martyrs Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana - all of which were written in the early thirteenth century. All six texts, states Robertson, were written for anchoresses.²⁴ The female audience, as discussed by Robertson, consists only of anchoresses, and she does not consider the circulation of this body of literature or the actual audience that it reached.

²²de Worde's *Orcherd of Syon* is STC 4815; see Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, eds., *The Orcherd of Syon*, EETS os 258 (London, 1966). *The Tree and xii Frutes of the Holy Goost* is STC 13608; see J. J. Vaissier, ed., *A Deuout treatyse called the tree and xii. frutes of the holy goost* (Gronigen, 1960), pp. xxix-xlv.

²³Two further works that examine issues raised in this thesis have appeared too recently to be included in this discussion: Lorna Rosemary Louise Stevenson, "Fifteenth-Century Chastity and Virginity: Texts, Contexts, Audiences" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1995), and Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca and London, 1995).

²⁴That *Ancrene Wisse* was written for three anchoresses has been firmly established. The audience of the Katherine Group texts is less clear. As these texts "seem to have been written originally in the same dialect as *Ancrene Wisse*, they are linked by verbal and thematic parallels, and sometimes several of them are found together in the same manuscripts," it is possible that they shared a common audience; see Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Medieval English Prose for Women from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford, 1992), pp. xii-xiii. Millett and Wogan-Browne point out (p. xiii) that the Katherine Group texts would have been appropriate reading for female recluses, but that most of them "assume, either implicitly or explicitly, a more general audience."

The study of women's use of literature, religious or otherwise, necessarily raises questions about women's literacy. Were women able to read the books that they owned? Some discussion of the meaning of literacy is relevant here. Today, the word is most often used to denote an individual's ability to read and write.²⁵ Illiteracy is commonly defined, by extension, as the inability to read and write.²⁶ However it is clear that the men and women of late medieval England possessed a complex range of literary abilities between these two opposites. While there were certainly those who were able both to read and write, there must have been many who had the ability to read, but not to write. Writing was learned as a separate skill, distinct from reading, and regarded as the more difficult. For the most part, writing was done by professionals; letters and texts were dictated to scribes much as modern executives dictate their correspondence to secretaries.²⁷ However,

²⁵Throughout the Middle Ages, *litteratus*, the word most closely corresponding to the modern "literate" indicated a knowledge of the Latin language. See James Westfall Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1939, reprinted New York, 1963), p. v; M. B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," p. 555; Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), p. 6. Until ca. 1300, according to M. T. Clanchy, *litteratus* meant learned in Latin literature, and was synonymous with *clericus*. After 1300, however, *litteratus* was reduced "from meaning a person of erudition to meaning a person with a minimal ability to read, albeit in Latin." This change resulted through the use of benefit of clergy. See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 224-234.

²⁶Reading can be defined as the action of first mentally converting letters or symbols, which are written or printed, into the intended words, and then understanding the meaning of those words. It is an essentially individual action, which is, for the most part, silent, although the words formed by the letters or symbols may be spoken aloud. Educational theorists and sociologists would hasten to point out that this is not the only definition of "reading".

²⁷See Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 88, 181, 218; R. S. Schofield, "The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge, 1968), p. 319; David Cressy, "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730," *The Historical Journal* 20:1 (1977): 2; Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973); Harvey J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradiction in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis,

even the most basic definition of literacy - the ability to read, with some measure of understanding, a written or printed text - admits variety, particularly with respect to Latin and vernacular.²⁸

Much has been written on the subject of medieval literacy and its acquisition; however most published material focuses predominantly, if not exclusively, on men, and to this day there is no comprehensive study of female literacy or female literary education in later medieval England.²⁹

Undoubtedly this is due, at least in part, to problems inherent within the

1987), pp. 96,100; Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 49-53.

²⁸It is also possible to be literate in the sense of having the ability mentally to convert written or printed letters and symbols into the intended words *without* the ability to understand the meaning of those words. For example, someone who is able to read, with understanding, in the vernacular would be able to recognize the letters of Latin words, and even be able to speak the words aloud without having any understanding of Latin grammar and syntax.

²⁹Shannon McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap in the Late Middle Ages: Women and Reading in Lollard Communities," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Smith and Taylor, is the most recent and the most valuable study to date. This is discussed more thoroughly below. Alexandra Barratt includes a brief section on women's education and culture in her *Women's Writing*, pp. 2-5. Julia Boffey raises the question of the kinds of literacy possessed by women in her "Women Authors and Women's Literacy." Sara Lehrman and Joan M. Ferrante have written articles which deal specifically with women's education, but both attempt (not very successfully, it must be added) to draw conclusions from evidence unevenly distributed across the whole of western Europe over a number of centuries. See Sara Lehrman, "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages," in *The Roles and Images of Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Douglas Radcliffe-Umstead, University of Pittsburgh Publications on the Middle Ages and Renaissance 3 (Pittsburgh, 1975): 133-44; Joan M. Ferrante, "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy," in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York, 1984): 9-42. Eileen Power's *Medieval Women*, ed. M.M. Postan (Cambridge, 1975), includes a chapter on the education of women, but it more or less reiterates what she says regarding the education of nuns in her *Medieval English Nunneries*. Power's work is discussed below. M. T. Clanchy is preparing a book on the role of women in the dynamics of medieval literacy: *Women and the Book in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, forthcoming).

sources used by historians of education and literacy. These sources, discussed below, while they permit conclusions, however tentative, regarding male literacy, do not offer much information regarding the proportion and social complexion of the female population that was literate, the kinds of literacy women practised, or the standards they achieved. But the problem regarding the study of women's literacy is also one of interpretation: many scholars are simply unaware of the gender issue.³⁰

It is widely believed that the later Middle Ages witnessed an expansion of literacy in England.³¹ However, it is difficult to determine to what extent

³⁰One of the most recent studies of education in fourteenth-century England has only this to say about women: "Women were excluded [from schools] and could receive learning only through a nunnery or, more frequently, through private tutorial arranged by the family." See William J. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1987), p. 13. Similarly, John N. Miner, in his recent study of medieval English schooling devotes a single paragraph to the education of girls, concluding that "in addition to the practice of young girls being placed in convents or in private homes, they might also be enrolled in any reading or elementary school available," basing his conclusion on the Statute of Labourers (1406), which stated that girls and boys could be sent to any school of their parents' choice. See John N. Miner, *The Grammar Schools of Medieval England: A. F. Leach in Historiographical Perspective* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990), p. 219. Nicholas Orme's *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), which remains one of the standard works on the subject, treats women in three pages, adopting a patronising tone, although his *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (London and New York, 1984) treats the subject with greater depth and sensitivity.

³¹See John William Adamson, "The Extent of Literacy in England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Notes and Conjectures," *The Library*, 4th ser., 10 (1929-30); V. H. Galbraith, "The Literacy of the Medieval English Kings," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 5th ser., 21 (1935); Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*; Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity"; Charles L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1913), esp. chap. 1; H.S. Bennett, "The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century," *The Library*, 5th ser., 1 (1947); V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1971), esp. chap. 2; Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400* (New York, 1981), chap. 1; Margaret Aston "Lollardy and Literacy", *History* 62 (1977): 347-71, reprinted in her *Lollards and Reformers* (London, 1984), pp. 193-217.

women participated in this expansion. M. T. Clanchy argues for the growth of (Latin) literacy for practical purposes among the laity between 1066 and 1307. He observes that literate modes of communication were increasingly used in favour of oral modes, and as a result, laymen became more literate in order to cope with written business. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, he notes, the ability to read enough Latin to "get the gist of a royal writ or to understand a line in the Bible or in a chronicle . . . was common among the gentry and may not have been rare among peasants."³² It was not only Latin literacy (of whatever degree of competence) that became more widespread, but also a familiarity with documents; both underpinned the rise of vernacular literacy, thereby permitting the success of printing.

Clanchy bases his conclusions on the evidence provided by the increase in production and retention of records, principally those relating to royal government. Such records were intended to be used solely by men (particularly of the nobility and gentry), as women played no role in any level of government, and thus cannot tell us much about women's experience. However, if reliance upon literate modes of communication was growing ever more prevalent throughout society, it is not unlikely that women as well as men became increasingly familiar with the use of documents. After all, women were the wives, daughters, and sisters of the men whom Clanchy discusses. However, Clanchy adds a valuable note of caution in pointing out that familiarity with and use of documents does not necessitate everyone being able to read; nevertheless it was "the foundation on which any permanent extension of literacy had to stand."³³

Like Clanchy, M.B. Parkes believes that pragmatic literacy was the foundation for a further expansion of literacy.³⁴ His introduction to the subject of lay literacy, published a few years earlier than the first edition of Clanchy's work, does not differentiate between male and female literacy.

³²Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 246.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁴Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity."

Parkes argues first for the growth of pragmatic literacy, beginning in the twelfth century, among the "expanding middle class" (whoever that might be), using as evidence the increasing number of surviving documents from all aspects of medieval administration. He then goes on to conclude, on the basis of the contents of their books, of the development of the cursive script, and of the growth of a more organized book trade, that these pragmatic readers used their literacy outside of their professional activities to enjoy literary texts written in Anglo-French, beginning in the thirteenth century. Moreover, according to Parkes, there was a further increase in lay literacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This conclusion is based on the increase in the number of surviving vernacular manuscripts (i.e. increasing book-ownership among the laity), and on the increasing use of English as a literary language. However, while the increasing number of documents and manuscripts may signify an increasing number of readers, it tells us little of the social status of those readers. To what extent did the apparent increase in literacy occur across the social spectrum? Or conversely, to what extent was literacy dependent on class?

Neither Clanchy nor Parkes hazards a guess as to the extent of the population that was literate, but both suggest that it was higher than historians tend to estimate. A number of widely disparate estimates have been put forth by historians, but none is based upon sources in which women appear in sufficient numbers for any estimates to apply to them. Sylvia Thrupp suggests that 40 per cent of the adult male population of London could read Latin, and perhaps 50 per cent of them could read English between 1467 and 1476, basing her conclusions on references to the literacy of male deponents in the Consistory Court of London records for that period.³⁵ It has been pointed out, however, that such a sample of deponents is skewed towards those of higher status: "plaintiffs in cases attempted to choose witnesses of substantial

³⁵Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor, 1948; reprinted 1989), pp. 156-8.

stature, presumably because they were seen as more trustworthy."³⁶ Her sample of deponents does not include women. About the literacy of London women Thrupp says little, except that "illiteracy would have hampered a woman's efficiency in business matters."³⁷ Thrupp's point is well-taken. The work of Annie Abram at the beginning of this century and the more recent work of K. E. Lacy and Caroline M. Barron has demonstrated the considerable involvement of women in the economic life of London.³⁸ Many women who ran business enterprises, especially women from merchant families, were probably literate to some degree. Their practical need for literacy could not have been much less than that of their male counterparts of similar social background. Harvey J. Graff, working from Sylvia Thrupp's statistics and from what appears to be entirely unsubstantiated guesswork, for he cites no other sources, places the London male literacy rate at about 25 per cent, national male literacy at one-half or one-quarter of that, and female literacy at one-half of the national male literacy rate.³⁹

Moving outside the city of London, F. R. H. Du Boulay estimates that

³⁶McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap," p. 167. McSheffrey is referring here specifically to her own and L. R. Poos's study of deponents in two consistory and commissary court deposition books from the diocese of London: London, Greater London Record Office MS DL/C/205 (Consistory Court of London Deposition Book, 1467-76) and London, Guildhall Library MS 9065 (Commissary Court of London Deposition Book, 1489-97). See L. R. Poos, *A Rural society After the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991). Thrupp does not specify her source, but it would seem to be the Consistory Court Deposition Book, 1467-76.

³⁷*Ibid.*, regarding women, p. 171.

³⁸Annie Abram, "Women Traders in Medieval London," *Economic Journal* 26 (1916), and her *English Life and Manners in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1913), pp. 31-45, 291-6; K. E. Lacy, "Women and Work in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century London," in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Britain*, ed. L. Duffin and L. Charles (London, 1985); Caroline M. Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London," *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989), and her "Introduction: The Widow's World," in *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994).

³⁹Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy*, p. 106.

"perhaps 30 per cent of the population could read in the fifteenth century", but he cites only the Paston letters and the witnesses to Sir John Fastolf's will in support of this percentage.⁴⁰ In her study of literacy and education in York diocese from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran suggests an overall literacy rate of at least 15 per cent for northern England by the end of the fifteenth century, of above 23 per cent among the "middle" and upper classes in the city of York *ca* 1500, and of at least 26-30 per cent among the more well-to-do in the rural areas after 1530.⁴¹ Moran's statistics are based on two types of evidence: numbers of lay witnesses to wills (who must be prepared to authenticate the will, including interlineations, and are thus, she believes, likely to be literate), and references within wills to elementary and secondary educational establishments. Canon law expressly forbade women to act as witnesses to wills, although, as Robert A. Wood points out, "in London and to a lesser extent in other parts of England, women are to be found witnessing wills".⁴² Moreover, as discussed below, it appears that girls were seldom taught in formal schools. Moran's statistics, therefore, cannot be applied to the female half of the population.

David Cressy paints a particularly pessimistic picture of literacy in late fifteenth-century England. He projects that only 10 per cent of men and 1 per cent of women were literate by 1500, basing his estimate on his examination of the occurrence of signatures (as opposed to marks) on depositions of the Consistory Court of Norwich of the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴³ However, Cressy's definition of literacy is an individual's ability to sign his or her own name. His statistics, based on this definition, leave a large proportion of the population, who may have been able to read but not to

⁴⁰ F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition* (New York, 1970), p. 118.

⁴¹Moran, "Literacy and Education in Northern England," pp. 17, 23. See also her *Growth of English Schooling*, chap. 6.

⁴²Robert A. Wood, "Poor Widows, c. 1393-1415," in *Medieval London Widows*, ed. Barron and Sutton, p. 64 and n. 27.

⁴³Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, pp. 176-7.

write, to be classed as "illiterate". Women, because of their virtual exclusion from political and legal spheres, may have had less practical need to sign their names than men.

Shannon McSheffrey is the only scholar to have examined evidence for women's literacy.⁴⁴ She argues that literacy was much less common among women than among men. Her argument is based primarily on an examination of literacy among Lollards, who, as has been widely noted, placed unusual emphasis on reading. The prosecutors of the sect, she notes, often actively solicited information about the literacy of suspected Lollards, and "there is no reason to think that the rate of reporting would have been significantly higher for men than for women."⁴⁵ McSheffrey finds evidence for the literacy of only seven, and possibly nine, Lollard women out of a total of 271 (three per cent). In comparison, 113 men out of a total 683 were described as being able to read (17 per cent). When members of the clergy not explicitly described as literate are added, the rate climbs to 20 per cent (134 of 683). Lollard men, she concludes, were about seven times more likely to be able to read than Lollard women.

McSheffrey compares the evidence for the literacy of Lollard women with hitherto unexamined evidence for women's literacy, found in the Commissary Court of London Deposition Book, 1489-97. In both the Commissary Court and the Consistory Courts, scribes recorded the literacy of most deponents - with the exception of clerks and women. One scribe in the Commissary Court, however, for a time noted the literacy of female deponents as well as of male. Of the 21 women whose ability to read was recorded, three were literate (one in seven). In comparison, she notes, about one in three male deponents were literate. The evidence from both groups suggests that literacy rates were higher in the city than in the largely rural county of Essex: none of the eight rural women was literate, while three of the 13 urban women (23 per cent) were. Similarly, 25 per cent of the rural male deponents

⁴⁴McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap."

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 160.

were able to read, in contrast to 41 per cent of the London men. Social status, McSheffry suggests, was perhaps the most important variable in the likelihood of literacy. Two of the three literate urban women, she states, apparently came from London's merchant élite, but the status of the third was unknown. But McSheffry does not tell us about the social standing of the women who were not literate - were the rural women, for instance, from higher or lower social stations than the literate London women?

Although McSheffry's sample of orthodox women is very small, it would seem to corroborate her finding, based on evidence from Lollardy, that women were less likely than men to be literate. Women from London (particularly of the mercantile élite) seem to have had higher levels of literacy than Lollard women, who came primarily from artisan families (3 out of 13 (23 per cent), compared to 9 out of 271 (3 per cent)). However, that such a small number of orthodox women were identified as literate, as well as the fact that McSheffry tells us nothing of the social standing of the illiterate women deponents, makes it difficult to argue conclusively that women's literacy was confined, for the most part, to the upper levels of society.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, other evidence for women's literacy comes mostly from the ranks of the nobility, gentry, and the mercantile élite. Women from the nobility and gentry ran estates, and women from merchant families ran businesses; these women surely needed literacy skills as much as their male counterparts.⁴⁷ The evidence is, however, fragmentary and anecdotal, and tells us nothing about the extent to which women from these status groups

⁴⁶Claire Cross, in her work on women Lollards, similarly finds evidence for such women owning, borrowing, lending, and giving books, but finds little evidence of these women's ability to read. See her "'Great Reasoners in Scripture;: The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530," in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978).

⁴⁷For women managing estates, see Rowena E. Archer, "'How ladies . . . who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates': Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Stroud, 1992). For merchant women, see note 37 above.

were literate. Some noble- and gentlewomen are known to have signed their wills, although the separation of the skills of reading and writing in the Middle Ages means that those who did not sign their wills could still have been able to read.⁴⁸ It is generally believed that the women of the Paston family could read their letters, and several autograph letters and letters with autograph signatures were sent by the female members of the Paston family and their acquaintances.⁴⁹ Such letters sent by women from the Cely, Stonor, and Plumpton families also exist. Aristocratic women translators such as Dame Eleanor Hull and Lady Margaret Beaufort were evidently literate.⁵⁰ Caroline M. Barron points out Barbara Hanawalt's finding that in about half of widows'

⁴⁸For example, Lady Margaret Hungerford, daughter and heiress of William, lord Botreaux and wife of Robert, lord Hungerford signed all versions of her will, as well as other formal documents, adding a codicil of 30 lines to her final will in her own hand; see M. A. Hicks, "The Piety of Margaret, Lady Hungerford (d. 1478)," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987), p. 23. Anne Harling (d. 1498), widow of John, 5th lord Scrope of Bolton, signed her last will; see chapter 4 below. No study has been made of the incidence of women signing their wills.

⁴⁹Norman Davis, ed., *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1971 and 1976); Alison Hanham, ed., *The Cely Letters, 1472-1488*, EETS os 273 (London, 1975); Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed., *the Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, Camden Society 3rd series 29 (1919); Thomas Stapleton, ed., *Plumpton Correspondence*, Camden Society 4 (1839). See the comments on the women's letters by Boffey, "Women Authors and Women's Literacy," p. 165, and Tarvers, "English Women as Readers and Writers," p. 314.

⁵⁰For Dame Eleanor Hull, see Alexandra Barratt, "Dame Eleanor Hull: A Fifteenth-Century Translator," in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roger Ellis (Cambridge, 1989), and her edition of Eleanor's commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, forthcoming from the Early English Text Society. John Fisher, in his eulogy preached at Lady Margaret's month's mind, praised her for being "right studyous . . . in bokes whiche she hadde in grete nombre bothe in Englysshe & in Frensshe"; see *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. John E. B. Mayor, EETS es 27 (1976), p. 292. Margaret's literary activities are discussed in W. E. A. Axon, "The Lady Margaret as a Lover of Literature," *The Library*, 2nd series 29 (1907). For a biography of Lady Margaret, see Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992).

dower cases brought before the court of Husting, the widows themselves presented their cases rather than using an attorney, arguing that this shows that these London women were reasonably well-educated.⁵¹ She cites as examples of literate women from London's mercantile elite Elizabeth Stonor, the daughter of a London alderman, who could read and write English to her husband, and "Mistress Annes", who may have been the daughter of the London mercer and alderman John Stokton, to whom John Paston III wrote, saying "Mastress Annes, I am proud that ye can reed Inglyshe".⁵² That John was "prowde" suggests that the ability to read was not universal or even widespread among urban women, even those of the merchant elite. There are, of course, more examples of literate women from the uppermost levels of society. There are fewer references to literate women further down the social scale. Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran cites an Agnes Smyth, the concubine of a vicar choral at York Minster, who was described in 1462 as "bene literata", or literate in Latin.⁵³

So far I have been discussing the literacy of laywomen. What about the literacy of female religious? Nuns were certainly supposed to be literate, as the Benedictine Rule prescribes at least two hours of private reading per day, as well as a weekly reader during meals.⁵⁴ Eileen Power, however, takes a dim view of nuns' standards of literacy and education.⁵⁵ She argues that

⁵¹Barron, "The Widow's World," p. xxi, n. 20.

⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxxii.

⁵³Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, p. 70.

⁵⁴*The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans. Abbot Justin McCann (London, 1953), pp. 93-5, 111-3. There are six Middle English translations of the *Rule*, addressed to a female or mixed audience; I have consulted four of these, all of which contain the same instructions regarding reading. See Ernst A. Kock, ed., *Three Middle-English Versions of the Rule of St Benet and two Contemporary Rituals for the Ordination of Nuns*, EETS os 120 (London, 1902); *The Rule of Seynt Benet*, trans. Richard Fox (London, 1516), STC 1859.

⁵⁵Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 241-55

many nuns were, perhaps by the end of the thirteenth century and certainly through the fourteenth century, unable to read Latin, and by the early fifteenth century, unable also to read French. Power's conclusions are drawn primarily from her study of episcopal injunctions to nunneries. She states that nearly all fourteenth-century injunctions are in French rather than Latin, and that it is sometimes specifically mentioned that the nuns do not understand Latin. Nearly all fifteenth-century injunctions to nunneries, she continues, are in English, while injunctions to male monasteries are in Latin. However, the evidence that Power presents suggests not that nuns were wholly illiterate in Latin, but rather that the general standards of Latin among nunneries were insufficient for reading sophisticated Latin documents. Nowhere in the evidence cited by Power is there any indication that the nuns were illiterate in the sense of being unable to read.⁵⁶ If the nuns had been unable to read, injunctions would have been read to them, presumably by their chaplain, or some other cleric; the language of the injunctions would not have changed over the centuries, but remained in Latin, as the bishop would have expected the chaplain to be able to translate from the Latin. Power notes that in several instances the nuns could not write, but we have already seen that the inability to write in no way indicated the inability to read. In fact, some of her evidence can be used to demonstrate that the nuns were able to read: for example, the injunctions sent to Delapré abbey (Hertfordshire) in 1433 by Archbishop Grey of Lincoln contained the instruction that the injunctions were to be translated into the mother tongue and fastened in some conspicuous place, presumably for the nuns to read - here is likely evidence for nuns' vernacular literacy.⁵⁷

What opportunities did women have in late medieval England to learn to read? Evidence for interest in, but not necessarily the reality of, aristocratic laywomen learning to read is put forth by Nicholas Orme in his examination of

⁵⁶For a fuller critique of Power's work, see Chapter 3 below.

⁵⁷The vernacular nature of nuns' literacy is born out by the study of religious literature actually owned by female religious, discussed below in Chapter 3.

three French educational treatises circulating in England after the Conquest: Vincent of Beauvais's (d. 1264), *De Eruditione Filiorum Nobiliorum*, commissioned by Queen Margaret of France for the education of her eldest surviving son, the future Philip III; Giles of Rome's (d. 1316), *De Regimine Principum*; and *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, by Geoffroy de la Tour-Landry, written *ca* 1372 for his three daughters.⁵⁸ The works of Vincent and Giles are primarily about the upbringing of boys, although both contain short sections on the education of girls, while the Knight of la Tour-Landry focuses exclusively on girls. Vincent and the Knight specifically recommend that girls learn to read but Giles stresses it only for women of such high rank that they cannot be put to work of a textile nature. As we have seen, the Knight links women's literacy with their piety, and Vincent links it with their sexual morality: "they should be instructed in letters . . . because often they will carefully shun harmful thoughts to follow this honorable occupation, and avoid carnal lusts and vanities."⁵⁹

How far did these three treatises influence the actual upbringing and education of aristocratic girls? According to Orme, Giles's *De Regimine Principum* circulated in the original Latin among the clergy of both France and England, and he suggests that it may have had some influence on education through the medium of the clergy. It was also found, often in translation, in the royal and noble hands through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶⁰ In contrast, surviving copies of Vincent of Beauvais's *De Eruditione Filiorum Nobiliorum*, according to Orme, suggest that it had little circulation in England.⁶¹ Orme does not discuss the transmission or popularity of the *Livre*

⁵⁸Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, chap. 3, esp. pp. 107-11. *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry* is also discussed in Clara McMahon, *Education in Fifteenth-Century England* (New York, 1968), pp. 141-3.

⁵⁹Joseph M. McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphasis in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais* (Leiden and Cologne, 1976), p. 137.

⁶⁰Orme, *From childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 95-6.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 94.

du Chevalier de la Tour-Landry, which was twice translated into English, the first, anonymously, during the reign of Henry VI (1422-61), and the second by William Caxton, in 1483, who printed his translation the following year.⁶²

Caxton recommends his translation for the benefit of "ladyes & gentilwymen dou3ters to lordes & gentilmen", although its actual circulation may have been larger.

Material for the subject of women's actual education, both formal and informal, is thin. The Statute of Artificers (1406) proclaimed, among other things, that "every man or woman, of what estate or condition that he be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner of school that pleaseth them within the realm."⁶³ Although actual references to girls in lay schools, where they would have been taught to read and possibly to write, are exceedingly rare, some historians have concluded that girls, or girls from certain social backgrounds, were educated in elementary schools, but not in grammar schools where Latin was taught.⁶⁴ The apparent existence of

⁶²According to his prologue, Caxton translated the work at "the request & desyre of a noble lady which hath brou3t forth many noble & fayr dou3ters which ben vertuously nourished & lerned". N. F. Blake has suggested that the lady was Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV; see Offord, ed., *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, p. 194.

⁶³*Statutes of the Realm* II, p. 158. (London, 1816; reprint, 1963). The original, in French, is: "Purveux toutesfoitz que chacun homme ou femme de quele estate ou condicion qui soit faunc de mettre son fitz ou file dapprendre lettereure a quelconque escole que leur plect deinz le Roialme."

⁶⁴Caroline Barron, for example, cites William Rous (d. 1486), a London mercer, who instructed his executors to send his daughter to school for as long as her brothers, four years. She points out, however, that "education was not the exclusive privilege of the daughters of the merchant class, citing the guardian of the daughter of a London corn-dealer, who in 1380 listed among his expenses 13s. 4d. spent yearly on teaching, shoes, and other small necessities for his ward, and Felicia Reygate, the daughter of a London Chandler, whose school fees were 25s. See Barron, "The Widow's World," pp. xxx-xxxi; and Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 171. Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran suggests that the lack of information about female pupils may in part be due to Latin texts referring to *pueri*, which could include girls as well as boys, and in part because girls were seldom in the schools. She finds only one reference to a girl in a school. See Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 69. See also

schoolmistresses, such as the E. Scolemaysteresse to whom William Cresewyk, a London grocer, left 20s, has also been used by scholars to suggest the presence of girls in schools.⁶⁵

It is a widely-held belief among historians that girls were educated at nunneries.⁶⁶ This belief is based upon the work of Eileen Power, whose 1922 study on English nunneries remains the only examination of the education provided by female monastic houses. She summarizes her findings and conclusions as follows:

It was a fairly general custom among the English nuns, in the two and a half centuries before the Dissolution, to receive children for education. But there are four limitations, within which and only within which, this conclusion is true. *First*, that by no means all nunneries took children and those which did seldom had large schools; *secondly*, that the children who thus received a convent education were drawn exclusively from the upper and the wealthy middle classes, from people, that is to say, of birth and wealth; *thirdly*, that the practice was a purely financial expedient on the part of the nuns, at first forbidden,

Orme, *English Schools*, p. 54; and Davis, *Teaching Reading*, p. 52.

⁶⁵A Maria Mereflete, "magistra scholarum" is listed as a member of the Corpus Christi guild of Boston in 1404. In addition to the E. Scolemaysteress mentioned in 1408, there was an Elizabeth Scolemaystres who was apparently living in Cripplegate in 1441 when she contributed to a subsidy levied upon aliens. There was also an Elyn Skolemastre of Taunton in 1494. See Moran, *Growth of English Schooling*, p. 70; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 171; Orme, *English Schools*, p. 55; Tarvers, "English Women as Readers and Writers," p. 313; and Barron, "The Widow's World," p. xxx.

⁶⁶See Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling*, pp. 87, 112, 115-6; Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p. 54; *Idem*, *Education in the West of England 1066-1548* (Exeter, 1976); *Idem*, "Chaucer and Education," *The Chaucer Review* 16 (1981), p. 42; *Idem*, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 59, 63-5; Davies, *Teaching Reading in Early England*, p. 53; John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London, 1973), p. 65; John Lawson, *Medieval Education and the Reformation* (London, 1967), pp. 61-2; John N. Miner, *The Grammar Schools of Medieval England: A. F. Leach in Historiographical Perspective* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990), p. 219; McMahon, *Education in Fifteenth-Century England*, pp. 143-6; T. L. Jarman, *Landmarks in the History of Education: English Education as Part of the European Tradition* (London, 1951), pp. 123-4; Barron, "The Widow's World," p. xxx.

afterwards restricted and always frowned upon by the bishops, who regarded it as subversive of discipline; and *fourthly*, that the education which the children received from the nuns, so far as book-learning as distinct from nurture was concerned, was extremely exiguous.⁶⁷

Power finds references, dating from 1282 to 1537, to possibly 49 nunneries that at one time or another had children in residence; Orme adds one to her list, so there are references to approximately two thirds of all nunneries housing children.⁶⁸ Power stresses that all of these references are to children of aristocratic or wealthy merchant families; a study of her sources reveals that this is the case where the children are named and their social background can be determined, but that there are more numerous references simply to the presence of unspecified boys, girls, children, or adults in the nunneries. Although it is likely that the children received some sort of education in the nunneries, whether the education included learning to read is unrecorded, and it no doubt depended not only on the literacy and inclinations of the nuns, but also on how long the children remained in the house.

Infrequent references to girls being educated in formal schools, whether lay schools or nunneries, may indicate that they were more likely to receive informal schooling within the household, and it is probable that the daughters of aristocratic and wealthy merchant families were more commonly educated at home, rather than in formal educational establishments, given the rigid social structure of the period. If they were later educated in a nunnery, it is possible that they had already learned to read. Unfortunately, although not surprisingly, informal education has left even fewer traces in historical record than formal education.

There is some literary and art historical evidence to suggest that mothers, or other female care-givers, were primary teachers of literacy. In the mid-thirteenth century Walter of Bibbesworth wrote a rhyming poem for Lady Denise de Montchensy to enable her to improve her children's French. Walter

⁶⁷Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 261-2.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 568-581; Orme, *Education in the West of England*, p. 201.

assumes that Lady Denise can read, and if she was responsible for teaching French to her children, she may also have been responsible for teaching them to read. Another poem intended for the teaching of French, written before 1340, includes among a list of female occupations the statement that "f[emme] enprent enfant sur liuere/ w[oman] lernyth chylde on boke."⁶⁹

Danièle Alexandre-Bidon emphasizes the role played by mothers and nurses in the earliest teaching of the alphabet to young children, using the aid of domestic objects and children's clothing.⁷⁰ She cites as an example of such an object an early fifteenth-century English bowl decorated with the alphabet, now London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. M.I. 1914.

Reference to the iconographical tradition of St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read has been made to suggest the role of mothers in the literary education of their daughters and sons.⁷¹ Recent art-historical research has identified the earliest representations of St Anne teaching the Virgin as English and as dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁷² According to C. Norton, D. Park, and P. Binski the image was enormously popular up to

⁶⁹Skeat, "Nominale sive Verbale," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1903-6, pp. *1-*50.

⁷⁰Alexandre-Bidon, "La lettre volée: Apprendre à lire au moyen âge," in *Annales: Economies, Societes, Civilizations* 44:4 (1989).

⁷¹See Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," p. 155; Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, "La Lettre Volée," pp. 954-6; Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 158. This is the subject of Michael Clanchy's *Woman and the Book in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, forthcoming). See also Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 13. Wendy Scase suggests that the image is more problematic: see her "St Anne and the Education of the Virgin: Literary and Artistic Traditions and their Implications," in *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford, 1993), 81-96. The image is hardly mentioned in Katherine Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, eds., *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: St Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens, GA and London, 1990).

⁷²Scase, "St Anne," p. 81; C. Norton, D. Park, and P. Binski, *Dominican Painting in East Anglia: The Thornham Parva Retable and the Musée Cluny Frontal* (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 35.

the third quarter of the century, with over twenty known examples, after which it seems to have declined somewhat in frequency.⁷³ It has been pointed out that this episode in the life of the Virgin does not appear in the apocryphal gospel, and in fact, it conflicts with accounts of Mary being educated in the temple, and S. J. E. Riches thus concludes that the subject was invented for a specific purpose, "namely to promote, or perhaps merely to record, the education of children, and specifically young girls, by their mothers."⁷⁴ This is not the only interpretation of the image. It can also have a typological significance, especially where the text that Mary is learning to read is an Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Christ. Whatever the intended meaning of the image, it surely provided women with a role model for instructing their own children. It is significant that the depiction is found in books of hours, the book most likely to have been used to teach children to read.⁷⁵ A possible parallel to the image of St Anne teaching the Virgin to read is that of the Virgin with the infant Christ and a book, which suggests the education of sons by their mother. This latter image has not been examined to the same degree as the former, and art-historical research is needed to determine the differences existing between the two artistic traditions.

Evidence from collections of letters from gentry families indicates that it was common for their daughters to be placed in the households of other aristocratic families, to acquire a variety of skills.⁷⁶ It is clear from the work

⁷³Norton, Park, and Binski, *Dominican Painting*, p. 51.

⁷⁴S. J. E. Riches, "'The Pot of Oure Hope': The Image of St Anne in the Late Medieval Period" (M.A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991), p. 66.

⁷⁵Scase lists several books of hours, including one owned by women: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Auct. D.4.4. (the Bohun Hours), owned by Mary Bohun, wife of Henry of Lancaster, later Henry IV. The image is also found in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 765 (the Fitzwarin Psalter), whose original owner was Amice de Haddon, wife of Sir William Fitzwarin. Amice herself appears in the picture, kneeling before St Anne and the Virgin. See Scase, "St Anne," pp. 94-5.

⁷⁶See Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 58-60, referring to the Paston, Stonor, and Plumpton families; see also Power, *Medieval Women*, p.

of P.J.P. Goldberg that girls of more humble birth frequently spent at least part of their adolescence as servants in other households.⁷⁷ Girls may have acquired literacy skills in these households, if they had not already acquired them in their natal home.

It is clear, however, that literacy was not a prerequisite for participation in textual communities.⁷⁸ Women (and men) who were unable to read could still have access to literature through the literacy of someone else, as listeners rather than as readers.⁷⁹ Paul Saenger, in his study of the development of silent reading, argues that "the new spiritual literature that emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was consciously composed to be read alone" rather than in a group, and that the new privacy gained through silent reading and composition not only served as a conduit for heresy, but also intensified orthodox devotional and spiritual experiences.⁸⁰ However, an author's intention that a text be read alone, and silently, does not preclude an oral group reading. How common listening to (as opposed to reading) devotional texts actually was is anybody's guess, for such an activity has left little evidence in historical record.

We have most information about the oral use of texts in Lollard communities. Evidence from trials reveals that Lollard men and women commonly attended conventicles where vernacular scriptural and other texts

82.

⁷⁷P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-Cycle in a Late Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 158-202.

⁷⁸The term textual community is from Brian Stock, *The Implications of Illiteracy*. See also his "Medieval Literacy."

⁷⁹See Franz H. Bäuml, "Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Speculum* 55 (1980).

⁸⁰See Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982), pp. 401-13.

were read aloud and discussed.⁸¹ Literate Lollard men read to their wives, and the small number of women who are recorded as literate read to their children and to others.⁸² Direct evidence for orthodox women listening to texts is less easily found. It is well known that Margery Kempe listened to devotional treatises such as "Hyltons boke", "Bridis boke", "Stimulus Amoris", and "Incendium Amoris".⁸³ This and the fact that Margery dictated her book to amanuenses, encountering great difficulty and frustration in the process, has led scholars to conclude that she was illiterate.⁸⁴ The Benedictine Rule specified that one member of the community was to read aloud in the refectory during meals, and the custom was not unique to the Benedictine order.⁸⁵ Some lay households imitated this practice. The

⁸¹See Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy"; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*.

⁸²See Claire Cross, "'Great Reasoners in Scripture': The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530," in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978); McSheffrey, "Women and Lollardy: A Reassessment," *Canadian Journal of History* 26 (1991), p. 210; *eadem*, "Literacy and the Gender Gap," pp. 160-1.

⁸³Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, eds., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, EETS os 212 (Oxford, 1940), p. 39. Margery again refers to listening to these books as well as to "þe Bybyl wyth doctowrys þer-up-on" on p. 143.

⁸⁴See, for example: Sanford Brown Meech, Introduction to *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. ix; Barry Windeatt, Introduction to Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Barry Windeatt (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp. 10-11; Clarissa Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca and London, 1983); Anthony Goodman, "The Piety of John Brunham's Daughter, of Lynn," *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978), p. 347; Julia Boffey, "Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England," in *Women and Literature in Britain*, ed. Carol Meale (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 162-4. Karma Lochrie, however, has suggested that Margery was able to read; *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia, 1991).

⁸⁵*The Rule of St Benedict*, trans. Abbot Justin McCann (London, 1952), pp. 93-5. This instruction is found in the Middle English translations of the Rule; see Kock, ed., *Three Middle-English Versions*, pp. 27, 95, 130-1. The Additions to the Bridgittine Rule mention reading in the frater; see Anne

household ordinances of Cecily Neville, duchess of York, composed probably between 1485 and her death in 1495, record that during dinner Cecily listened to devotional treatises, and that she repeated what she had heard to her supper companions.⁸⁶ An early fifteenth-century document found among the Throckmorton muniments at Coughton Court, Warwickshire, the *Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman*, advises the (male) reader to:

let the book be brought to the table as readily as the bread. And lest the tongue speak vain or hurtful things, let there be reading, now by one, now by another, and by your children as soon as they can read . . . Expound something in the vernacular which may edify your wife and others . . .⁸⁷

From this passage, we can see that the author evidently expects the husband to play a role in the education of his wife and children, and that children were taught to read while still in the natal home.⁸⁸

Evidence for female literacy is thus scanty and largely anecdotal, and does not allow us to determine the extent to which the women of late medieval

Hutchison, "Devotional Reading," p. 217. A collection of Anglo-Norman lives of saints from the priory of Augustinian nuns at Campsey (Suffolk), now London, BL MS Add. 70513 (formerly Welbeck Abbey, Duke of Portland MS I.C.I), contains an inscription on f. 1r that says that it was used for reading during mealtimes: "ce liure de viseie a la priorie de Kanpseie de lire a mengier".

⁸⁶See "Ordinances and Rules of the Princess Cecill," in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household Made in Divers Reigns from King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary* (London, 1790), 37-9, p. 37; C. A. J. Armstrong, "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Mediaeval Culture," in *For Hilaire Belloc: Essays in Honour of his 72nd Birthday*, ed. Douglas Woodruff (London, 1942); and W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955, reprinted Toronto, 1980), p. 254.

⁸⁷W.A. Pantin, "Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman," *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford, 1976), pp. 399-400.

⁸⁸It is evident from the text that the recipient lived in a town, and Pantin suggests that he was a wealthy merchant or lawyer, possibly of London; *ibid.*, pp. 403, 409.

England were able to read, or the standards that they attained. None the less, it is clear not only that some women, largely from the upper levels of society, were able to read, but also that the inability to read was no bar to the use of literature, religious or secular.

CHAPTER 1

THE FEMALE AUDIENCE OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The study of women's use of religious literature necessarily begins with the women themselves. What follows in this chapter is an examination of the women who read and listened to religious literature in late medieval England. There are immediate difficulties in this enterprise, for reading and listening are activities that leave few tangible traces. Accounts such as that of Margery Kempe listening to her parish priest reading devotional treatises are rare, and we must turn to more circumstantial evidence for women's access to literary culture.¹ The core of this chapter is an analysis of evidence for women's ownership of religious literature, viz. wills and probate inventories dated between 1350 and 1500, and extant manuscripts and incunables known to have been owned or used by women. Ownership, it must be admitted, is not necessarily to be equated with use. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in this and subsequent chapters, there are indications that the women who possessed religious treatises were familiar with their contents.

Probate evidence has been recognized as one of the most important sources for the study of lay book ownership, for wills sometimes record bequests of books, and inventories sometimes list books in an individual's possession.² However, wills are one of the most problematic medieval

¹It is ironic that far more is known about the reading activities of Lollards than about those of Catholics, for depositions at trials are full of evidence regarding Lollards' use of books. See Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988); see also Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984).

²Margaret Deanesly, "Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Modern Language Review* 15 (1920); Susan H. Cavanaugh, "A Study of Private Book Ownership in England 1300-1450," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980); Joel T. Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage and Book Bequests, 1350-1500," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 64 (1982); Carol M. Meale,

sources, whose limitations render their contents difficult to interpret.³ The problems with wills have been widely acknowledged, but it is worth detailing some of the limitations that affect a study of women's book ownership.⁴ Only a minority of laypeople are represented by surviving wills. In general, the men and women who made and registered written wills were persons of some substance, not only the nobility and gentry, but also mercantile and professional élites and artisans. Since wills have different survival rates from different periods and geographical regions, it is not known what proportion survives today, and thus the representativeness of the surviving wills is questionable.⁵ It is clear, however, that far fewer women than men made written wills. Joel Rosenthal, in his study of the cultural patronage of the parliamentary peers and their wives, found that while extant wills exist for 38 per cent of these men, there are wills for only 16 per cent of their wives.⁶ Likewise, P. H. Cullum, in a study of charitable donations to and by women in late medieval Yorkshire, analysed two sets of wills, the first dated between 1389 and 1398, and the second between 1440 and 1459. She found that female

". . . alle the bokes that I have of latyn, englisch, and frensch': Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993); P. J. P. Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership in Late Medieval York: The Evidence of Wills," *The Library* 6th ser. 16 (1994).

³Strictly speaking, wills dealt with the devise of real estate, and testaments with bequests of moveable goods. In practice, however, many testators did not distinguish between the two, often leaving a "last will and testament". I follow the common convention of using the noun "will" and the adjective "testamentary" for all documents that deal with the disposal of a deceased person's estate.

⁴See, for example, Clive Burgess, "Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered," in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. Michael Hicks (Gloucester, 1990); P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life-Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992); Meale, "Laywomen and their Books," p. 130.

⁵See J. S. W. Gibson, *Wills and Where to Find Them* (Chichester, 1974).

⁶Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," p. 536.

testators made up 23.1 per cent of the total in the earlier group, and 13.7 per cent in the later.⁷ Furthermore, a number of wills made by women were proved, but not registered. This seems much less true of wills written by men. Although some female testators were unmarried, the overwhelming majority of women who made wills were widows.⁸ Wills of married women survive, but by the end of the fifteenth century married women were largely excluded from the will-making population; this effected a general decrease in the number of female testators.⁹ All female testators were laywomen, since female religious, in theory, had no personal possessions, and consequently did not make written wills. Nuns and anchoresses appear in wills only as recipients of bequests, and thus wills are a very imperfect source for the study of their ownership of religious literature.

It is evident that wills under-represent book ownership. It has been observed that some testators failed to mention all or even any of their books in their wills.¹⁰ Where evidence from surviving manuscripts and probate

⁷P. H. Cullum, "'And Hir Name Was Charite': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Stroud, 1992), pp. 183-4. The decreasing proportion of women's wills is no doubt due to the exclusion of married women from will-making population as the fifteenth century progressed; see note 9 below. P. J. P. Goldberg gives the proportions of male and female testators in a sample of wills from the Exchequer Court of York; see his *Women, Work and Life-Cycle*, pp. 264-5.

⁸English common law required that a married woman have the permission of her husband to make a will, although canon law asserted that wives were fully capable of making wills. See Richard H. Helmholz, "Married Women's Wills in Later Medieval England," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor, 1993); and Caroline M. Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London," *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989), pp. 37-9, 43.

⁹See Helmholz, "Married Women's Wills"; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life-Cycle*, pp. 264-72; Cullum, "Charitable Giving," pp. 183-5.

¹⁰Cavanaugh, "A Study of Private Book Ownership," pp. 5, 9, 13; Cavanaugh's work, however, is based primarily upon printed wills, some of which are incompletely transcribed. See also Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," p. 546; McFarlane, "The Education of the Nobility in Later

inventories exists, it is clear that wills are frequently an incomplete catalogue of an individual's library. For example, the will of John de Vere, 13th earl of Oxford (d. 1513), mentions three books, while the inventory of his goods lists over 65 books.¹¹ The will of Elizabeth Montacute, Countess of Salisbury, dated 1414, while it lists a missal and a breviary, does not include her French Bible, which is now London, BL MS Royal 19.D.2.¹² Similarly, Anne Harling, widow of John fifth Lord Scrope of Bolton, bequeathed six books in 1498: a psalter, two primers, a book of prayers, a French copy of Christine de Pisan's *Epistole d'Othéa*, and an unidentified French book.¹³ She does not mention her collection of English spiritual treatises, now London, BL MS Harley 4012. It is possible, in instances such as these last two examples, that the testators no longer owned the books at the time of their deaths. But the fact still remains that wills are an imperfect guide not only to an individual's library but also to the number of people who actually owned books.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it must be remembered that wills were not intended to act as a complete catalogue of a testator's possessions. A testator might mention items of particular importance or value, or those whose transfer had not already been arranged. Goldberg, however, contends that wealthier testators were more

Medieval England," in his *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 236-7.

¹¹William H. St John Hope, "The Last Testament and Inventory of John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford," *Archaeologia* 66 (1914-15), pp. 311-2, 317, 338, 341-2. It is possible that the books specified in a will are in fact composite volumes.

¹²Cavanaugh, p. 591. Elizabeth's will is printed in Ernest Fraser Jacob and H. C. Johnson, eds., *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1439*, vol. II, Canterbury and York Society 2 (Oxford, 1937), pp. 14-18, 664.

¹³PRO, Prob. 11/11, PCC 26 Horne. Anne's will is also printed in *TE*, pp. 149-54.

¹⁴It has been suggested that certain types of books, mostly romances and other secular works, were more likely to be omitted from wills. See p. 67 below.

likely than testators of more humble rank to omit mention of books from their wills.¹⁵ Despite these limitations, I believe that probate evidence can tell us a great deal about the types of women who owned books, as well as what books they owned.

Two samples of wills have been analysed for this study. The first sample consists of wills from across England, dated between 1350 and 1449. These wills have been drawn almost entirely from the owner index of Susan H. Cavanaugh's unpublished doctoral thesis, an index of some 1000 pages listing individual books owners and their books, compiled primarily from her examination of some 8000 printed wills dated between 1300 and 1450.¹⁶ The use of wills from Cavanaugh's owner index has allowed me to utilize information from a much larger number of book-bequeathing wills than I could have read during the period of research for this thesis. (As is discussed below, books are mentioned in only a minority of wills.) By using Cavanaugh's owner index as a tool to identify wills of women who bequeath books and of men who bequeath books to women, I have had the time to examine women's use of religious literature not only through evidence from wills but also from extant manuscripts and incunables originally owned by women. However, the use of Cavanaugh's owner index brings with it particular limitations. Cavanaugh gives no information about the social background of the 8000 or so testators whose wills she examined. Because printed will collections, especially those edited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tend to be biased towards the wealthier sections of society, we can be fairly sure that most of the testators came from the ranks of the nobility, gentry, urban élites, and clergy. But without knowing more about the social status of the 8000 or so testators, it is impossible to know how representative the book owners are.

The second will sample, consisting of wills from across England dated

¹⁵Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," p. 182, n. 7.

¹⁶See note 2. Also included in this will sample are some wills from London, Guildhall Library, MS 9171/2 and York, BIHR Probate Register 2.

between 1450-1500, is proportionately much smaller than the first, and has been compiled from secondary literature and my own study of (mostly printed) wills of women whom I felt were likely to bequeath books.¹⁷ The smaller number of wills in this set means that a single will, if it contains a large number of book bequests, can distort results. The limitations inherent in these samples, and the fact that sampling is not consistent between the samples reduce the significance that can be placed on any trends observed or conclusions drawn. I have therefore not subjected the data to rigorous statistical analysis.

The two data sets, despite their limitations, provide a considerable amount of information about the sorts of women who owned religious literature and about the books in their hands, which will provide useful comparative material for further studies using less problematic samples drawn from unprinted wills. This information has been entered into a database.¹⁸ In using the database, I am concerned not with the number of female testators who bequeath books, nor with the number of books that they bequeath, but rather with the number of transmissions of books, from men to women, from women to women, and from women to men.¹⁹ Transmissions of books that

¹⁷Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984); Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, 1985); Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfboro, New Hampshire, 1988); Deanesly, "Vernacular Books"; Peter Heath, "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of Hull Wills", in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (New York, 1984); Meale, "Laywomen and their Books"; John Gough Nichols and John Bruce, eds., *Wills from Doctors Commons*, Camden Society 83 (1863).

¹⁸I have used Borland's Reflex 2.0 (1989).

¹⁹In very few instances do we know whether the specified recipient actually received the bequest. But the fact that she was intended to receive a particular book tells us as much about the types of women who were likely to have access to literature. One case where we do know the outcome is that of Mary Roos, Lady Roos and Orby, who received a "liber gallicus du duc Lancastrie" from her father Henry Percy, third Baron Percy (d. 1368). In her own will of 1394 Mary bequeathed the book to Isabella Percy. See *TE*, pp. 59 (Henry

were previously owned by women, or that were borrowed by women have also been included. Thus the number of transmissions does not directly correspond to the actual number of people and books noted in wills and inventories. For example, Eleanor Roos bequeathed six books in 1438; as a result she appears in six separate transmissions.²⁰ Transmissions of books from one woman to another woman are recorded twice, for it is equally important that a woman bequeathed a book as that another received it. That the two books are indeed one and the same is insignificant. For example, in 1451 Mercy Ormesby bequeathed "unum librum Anglie vocatum, the Chastesing of goddes children" to the prioress of Easebourne Priory (Sussex). Such a bequest provides information about two female book owners, and it is consequently recorded first for the information it gives about the donor, Mercy Ormesby, and second for the information it gives about the recipient, the prioress of Easebourne.²¹

In order to minimize some of the problems inherent in the use of probate evidence, I have also examined women's ownership of religious literature through 75 extant manuscripts and incunabula known to have belonged to or have been used by laywomen and nuns.²² Of these, I have been able to examine 64 first-hand. I have also examined a number of manuscripts containing religious literature whose ownership is less definite as well as some non-religious books owned by women. Surviving books have their own limitations and survival patterns, but as these are, for the most part, different from those of wills, books provide valuable comparative material against which wills can be evaluated as a source for examining patterns of

Percy), 201-3 (Mary Roos).

²⁰*TE* 2, p. 65-6. See Cavanaugh, p. 749.

²¹H. R. Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1904), p. 116. See Cavanaugh, pp. 629-30.

²²A list of surviving books and their owners is given in Appendix 1.

women's access to religious literature.²³ The survival of literary manuscripts is always a chancy affair, and so, as with wills, the degree to which the existing books are representative - whether in terms of number or contents - of a particular library is questionable.²⁴ Ironically, a book's popularity could contribute to its destruction; books could simply fall apart through over-use. Moreover, changing literary tastes probably meant that old-fashioned texts were more likely to be discarded; with respect to religious literature, the Reformation played an enormous role in determining survival patterns. Furthermore, the increasing predominance of English over French as a literary language may have resulted in proportionately greater losses among French vernacular manuscripts. It is likely that those manuscripts that are extant today, with some exceptions, were the more expensive ones of their day; first because they may have been produced of higher quality materials - parchment rather than paper - and bound, and therefore have been more durable than their less expensive counterparts, and second because their intrinsic value may have ensured that later generations kept them. Small, unbound books and booklets, containing little or no decoration were more perishable by nature, and less likely to have been valued solely for their monetary worth over the centuries.²⁵ It is likely that books such as these contained the most popular texts of their day. What survives today owes as much, if not more, to the tastes of later owners, both medieval and post-medieval, than to those of the original owners.

²³A discussion of the limitations of manuscript evidence is given in Kate Harris, "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade," in *Book Production and Publishing 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989).

²⁴N. R. Ker argued that surviving manuscripts were a "fallacious test" for determining the size of a medieval library; see his *MLGB*, p. xi.

²⁵On booklets see P. R. Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," *Codicologica* 3 (1980); Ralph Hanna, "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations," *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986).

Determining that a particular manuscript had a female owner can also be difficult and problematic task. Ownership marks are not always clear-cut, obvious, and easy to interpret. Inscriptions such as "Be yt remembryd þat dame mald wade *priorys* of Swyne [Swine Priory, East Riding] has gyven þis boke to dame joan hyltoft in Noncoton [Nun Coton Priory, Lincolnshire]" in London, BL MS Harley 2409, f. 78v, or "This boke longis to dame Jone Wentworth", in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 124/61, p. 258 are unambiguous. However, appearances only of a woman's name, without an accompanying statement of ownership, such as "Rose Pachit *professyd* in Syon" on the final leaf of Oxford, All Souls College MS 25, or "Elsabeth kyng *in* abcherch p. duellyng *in* a lane as yo torne to sherburn" in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 288, f. 83v are less clear-cut. Do they indicate that the woman owned the book, or simply that she used it? As this thesis is more concerned with women's access to and use of religious literature than with their actual ownership of it, I have adopted a policy of inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Armorial bearings in manuscripts can be difficult to interpret, as it is not always clear to whom they refer, especially where the arms of a married couple appear. A richly illuminated copy of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, now Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 18.1.7, contains the arms and portraits of Edmund, fourth Lord Grey of Ruthin and later Earl of Kent, and his wife Catherine Percy. Did the manuscript belong to Edmund, Catherine, or both? That it contains portraits of both of them, as well as their arms, suggests joint ownership; it may have been made to celebrate their marriage, c. 1460. Some confusion can arise where two families intermarried. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Mus. 35, containing the arms of Neville and Beaufort, could have belonged to Joan Beaufort (d. 1440) and her husband Ralph Neville, earl of Westmorland, or her sister-in-law Margaret Neville and her husband, Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter.²⁶ Questions of ownership and access are

²⁶A. I. Doyle, "Reflections on Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ," *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 14 (1983), pp. 86-7 and n. 24; SC 3615, where the shields are incorrectly

•

further complicated in cases where women give books to institutions or individuals, for the book may have been acquired with the benefaction in mind. Juliana de Leybourne, countess of Huntingdon (d. 1367) gave what is now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 20, containing an Apocalypse in Latin and French, the Vision of St Paul in French verse, and the order of the coronation of a king, to St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury. Was this book part of Juliana's personal library? Or did she acquire it simply to be able to give it to St Augustine's? The answer is not clear.

BOOK OWNERSHIP AS SEEN THROUGH WILLS

Only a small proportion of all surviving wills record bequests of books. Margaret Deanesly examined 7568 printed wills, finding book bequests in only 4.5 per cent.²⁷ Printed will collections, especially those available to Deanesly in the early decades of this century, tend to be biased towards the wealthier sections of the will-making population, but equivalent proportions derived from some collections of unprinted wills do not differ significantly. Norman Tanner found book bequests in only 4.4 per cent of the wills of the lay inhabitants of Norwich between 1370 and 1517.²⁸ P. J. P. Goldberg found a marginally larger proportion in the wills of York residents between 1321 and 1500, namely 4.7 per cent.²⁹ Peter Heath found that only 3.7 per cent of the wills of Hull residents mention books.³⁰ It is worth noting that the will samples used by Tanner, Goldberg, and Heath contain relatively few wills of gentry

identified as Neville and Beauchamp.

²⁷Deanesly, "Vernacular Books"; see also her *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), pp. 391-8.

²⁸Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 193.

²⁹Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," p. 183.

³⁰Peter Heath, "Urban Piety," pp. 211, 226. Heath's study is based on a sample of 355 wills dated between 1400-1529. The thirteen wills mentioning books all date from before 1486.

and nobility, who were generally not resident in provincial towns. The occurrence of books is considerably higher in the wills of the London merchant élite and the aristocracy. According to Sylvia Thrupp, book bequests appear in about 20 per cent of the wills of the wealthiest London merchants in the fifteenth century.³¹ M. G. A. Vale found book bequests in 16.2 percent of the wills of Yorkshire gentry written between 1376 and 1482.³² Joel Rosenthal found that 28.3 per cent of the wills of the parliamentary peers and their wives between 1350 and 1500 mentioned books.³³

The evidence from wills surveyed here suggests that only a minority of people owned books. Even so, Goldberg argues that statistics derived from wills "greatly exaggerate the proportion of book owners in society as a whole since the majority of the population were too poor to make wills."³⁴ In this respect, it is valuable to look not just at testators who bequeathed books, but also, as I have done, at those people who received them. This thesis, however, is more concerned with the types of people, particularly women, who were likely to have owned or used books, rather than with absolute numbers.

What of the social status of book owners? Tanner says little about the social status of the book owners in Norwich; likewise, Heath says little about those in Hull. Goldberg, however, concludes that book owners in York were generally found among the more well-to-do testators.³⁵ Furthermore, that a substantially higher proportion of the wills of the London merchant élite and the gentry and nobility contain bequests of books suggests that book ownership

³¹Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (1948. Reprint. Ann Arbor, 1962), pp. 161, 199.

³²M. G. A. Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy Among the Yorkshire Gentry, 1370-1480*, Borthwick Papers 50 (York, 1976), pp. 5, 29-30. Vale's statistic is based on a study of 148 wills of Yorkshire knights, esquires, and their wives and widows, written between 1376 and 1482.

³³Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," pp. 35-6.

³⁴Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," p. 183, n. 8.

³⁵Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership".

was generally more common among these classes.

WOMEN'S BOOK OWNERSHIP

Although women are not absent from the studies discussed above, less has been written specifically about women's book ownership.³⁶ Sebastian Sutcliffe found that 3.5 per cent of the wills of women from East Anglia mention books.³⁷ It is striking that of these wills, those proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury are proportionately far more likely to contain bequests of books: 15.9 per cent of East Anglian women's wills in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury contain bequests of books.³⁸ This finding suggests that women from the upper levels of society were far more likely to own books than their counterparts from lower down the social scale.

Rosenthal's study of the wills of parliamentary peers and their wives suggests that these women, in proportion to the number of extant wills, were

³⁶Carol Meale, "Laywomen and their Books," is the most thorough study to date; see also Felicity Riddy, "'Women Talking About the Things of God': A Late Medieval Subculture", in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. Meale, 104-127, pp. 107-9; S. G. Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture", in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M. Bennett *et al.* (Chicago and London, 1989), 135-161 (first published in *Signs* 7 (1982)). In their work on wills, Deanesly, Tanner, Goldberg, Vale do not differentiate between the wills of male and female testators, and Thrupp's study is composed solely of men. In Heath's study, of the 13 testators from Hull who mention books, only one was female; however, Heath does not say how many of the 355 testators in his sample were women.

³⁷Sebastian Sutcliffe is presently completing an Oxford University doctoral thesis. I am very grateful to him for sharing some of his research with me.

³⁸This number is remarkable similar to Vale's finding for the Yorkshire gentry, and is substantially higher than the percentage of East Anglian women's wills from the other courts: 3.9% in Norwich Consistory Court; 4.5% in the Archdeaconry of Norwich; 0.8 per cent in the Archdeaconry of Norfolk; 1.6 per cent in the Archdeaconry of Sudbury. No book bequests were found in women's wills proved in the peculiar court of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral. Examinations of wills from the peculiar court of Bury St Edmunds and the Archdeaconry of Suffolk had not been completed.

more likely to bequeath books than their husbands. He found book bequests in 48 per cent of women's wills, in contrast to only 18 per cent of their husbands' wills.³⁹ How far this trend extends beyond the nobility is unknown.

Nevertheless, evidence from the wills both of East Anglian women and of peeresses suggests that women's book ownership is skewed in favour of the upper classes.

How do these findings, regarding both book-ownership in general and women's book-ownership, compare with the findings in my database? Table 1.1 below shows the social status, by 25-year periods, of the women who appear in wills as donors, recipients, borrowers, owners, and previous owners of all types of books. The women have been classified into six social groups. There is, inevitably, a certain degree of arbitrariness in where I have drawn dividing lines between groups. Any classification scheme brings with it the charge of over-simplification, but is necessary for the purpose of analysis. Identifying the precise social status of testators can be a difficult task; identifying that of recipients, borrowers, and previous owners can be even more so, often because little information is given about them *aside from their names*.⁴⁰ I have, however, been able to put many women whose status is not definitely known into categories of probable social status. The first group, the nobility, comprises royal women, and women from families of the parliamentary peerage. The second group, the gentry, is composed of women from the remainder of the landowning families, whose wealth came from the exploitation of land but who did not need to work it themselves. I have not divided the gentry further into the upper and parish gentry.⁴¹ Whether the

³⁹Rosenthal suggests that women's wills mention more books because women "usually outlived their husbands, were then able to dispose of personal goods in a context of considerable personal freedom"; Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," p. 536.

⁴⁰See Clive Burgess, "Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention," p. 15.

⁴¹See, for example, Christine Carpenter, "The Fifteenth-Century Gentry and Their Estates," in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Jones (New York, 1986); N. Denholm-Young, *The County Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1969); P. W. Fleming, "Charity, Faith, and the

summons to Parliament can be used to distinguish the nobility from the gentry, especially in the fourteenth century, is a matter for some debate, but it remains a clear and unambiguous determinant.⁴² Whether there were in fact real differences between the nobility and gentry in terms of their way of life and cultural interests is, however, an important question, but one that cannot be addressed here. The third status group is that of women from merchant families, who were distinguished from the landed classes primarily by citizenship, involvement in trade and industry, interest in civic government, and urban residence.⁴³ The problem of classification is compounded by the incidence of social mobility through marriage and remarriage. In cases of mobility within the landed classes, i.e. movement between the nobility and gentry I have tried to allow individual circumstances decide the matter. Let us take, for example, the case of Anne Harling.⁴⁴ Anne was the heiress of two East Anglian gentry families, the Harlings and the Gonvilles, and she married three times: her first marriage was to Sir William Chamberlain, her second to Sir Robert Wingfield, and her third, in her old age, to John, fifth Lord Scrope of Bolton. Although it is impossible to know which stage in her life-cycle was the most definitive, Anne's will suggests that she identified most strongly with her natal family and the families of her first two husbands. For the purposes of this database, I have thus placed her within the ranks of the gentry. In cases where there is movement between the gentry and the merchant class, I have placed the women in a fourth category - that of Gentry/Merchant. An

Gentry of Kent 1422-1529", in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History* (Gloucester and New York, 1984); Christopher Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (London and New York, 1987), pp. 69-82.

⁴²See Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 35; K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973); Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*.

⁴³See Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 1-52.

⁴⁴Anne Harling is the subject of Chapter 4.

example of such a woman is Margery, daughter of Sir Robert Liston of Badingham, Suffolk, and his wife Isabel, who married William London, mercer, alderman, and twice Lord Mayor of Norwich.⁴⁵ Margery received a Life of St Margaret and what was probably an English version of *Partenopeus de Blois* from her mother in 1491.⁴⁶

The fifth group comprises female religious: nunneries, and individual nuns and anchoresses. Of course, women religious do not form a separate social group, but are drawn from the preceding groups as well as from lesser families.⁴⁷ However, as this thesis explores the divisions of status and vocation, nuns and anchoresses have been considered separately, for purposes of comparison with laywomen. The sixth group is composed of those women whose social status I have been unable to determine.

⁴⁵Carol Meale discusses Margery in "'Gode Men/Wiues Maydnes and Alle Men': Romance and Its Audiences," in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 223-4.

⁴⁶Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Wolman, f. 171v; Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112.

⁴⁷I discuss the social status of nuns in Chapter 3 below.

Table 1.1: Proportion (%) of the social status of women involved in transmissions of books noted in wills and inventories.

	1350 -74	1375 -99	1400 -24	1425 -49	1450 -74	1475- 1500	TOTAL
N+PN	87.5	54.5	23.8	21.7	6.3	62.5	43.8
G+PG	6.8	23.1	51.6	43.4	41.7	16.3	31.0
G/M	-	-	-	7	10.4	1.9	2.6
M+PM	2.3	3.3	3.3	5.4	18.8	7.8	5.6
R	2.3	12.4	5.7	4.7	8.3	9.6	7.2
U	1.1	6.6	15.6	17.8	14.6	1.9	9.8
TOTAL NUMBERS OF TRANSMISSIONS	88	121	122	129	48	104	612

N=Nobility; PN=probable nobility; G=gentry; PG=probable gentry; G/M=gentry/merchant; M=merchant; R=religious; U=unidentified.

Source: See notes 2, 16, and 17 above.

Aristocratic women and those women likely to be from aristocratic families clearly predominate in all periods. Female religious are well represented despite the fact that they appear only as recipients. Women from merchant families, and those women who, through birth and marriage belong to both gentry and merchant families, form a lesser proportion over all, and in each 25-year period. There are no women book owners whose social status can be positively determined to be below the level of the merchant class, unless they form part of the group of unidentified women. These findings are unsurprising given the reliance of the will samples primarily upon printed wills, but in light of the research discussed above, they may not be greatly distorted. Laywomen's book ownership, then, appears to be limited largely to women from the upper levels of society.

Certain trends appear in the social composition of women book owners with respect to time, as shown in Table 1.1. Until 1474, the proportion of noblewomen decreases, as the proportions of gentry- and merchant women increase. Discontinuity in these trends after 1474 can be attributed in part to the large number (49 out of 104) of transmissions listed in the will of one

woman, that of Cecily Neville, duchess of York, dated 1495, which skews the distribution towards the nobility. Removing these 49 transmissions from the data set improves the overall trend. The percentage for N+PN becomes 38.2, for G+PG 30.9, for G/M 3.6, for M+PM 14.5, for R 9.1, and for U 3.6. However, even with these adjusted values, there remains an apparent discontinuity between the two data sets (i.e. 1350-1449 and 1450-1500), probably due to inconsistent sampling between the two data sets. However, in light of the fact that I know little of the social complexion of all of Cavanaugh's testators (i.e. those who bequeath books and those who do not) from each of the 25-year periods between 1350 and 1449, these trends must be viewed with caution, as they may reflect changes in the will-making population.

Evidence from surviving manuscripts and incunabula also suggests a predominance of aristocratic laywomen and nuns among women book-owners. Although a considerable amount is known about the book-owning and commissioning activities of men from merchant families, little has been uncovered about those of the women from this social group.⁴⁸ I have found very few manuscripts associated with women whom I can identify as from the merchant class, and all are connected to wealthy London women. Joan Buckland (d. 1462) was the daughter of a London citizen and fishmonger, and the widow of another citizen and fishmonger, Richard Buckland, who was also a shipowner, merchant of the Calais staple and a royal servant. Joan gave a collection of theological works to Roger Twiford and other brothers at Syon

⁴⁸See, for example, A. I. Doyle, "More Light on John Shirley," *Medium Aevum* 30 (1961); Carol M. Meale, "The Compiler at Work: John Colyns and BL MS Harley 2252," in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983); Julia Boffey and Carol M. Meale, "Selecting the Text: Rawlinson C. 86 and Some Other Books for London Readers," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Cambridge, 1991); Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400*, English Literature in History (London, 1981).

Abbey, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 630.⁴⁹ However, how far this can be considered Joan's book is questionable. The names of two women associated with the London scribe and book-collector, John Shirley, appear in a manuscript containing works of Hoccleve and Lydgate, now San Marino, California, Huntingdon Library, MS EL 26.A.13. Shirley has written the names "Margarete & Beaurice" above his own; Margaret Lynne was Shirley's second wife, and Beatrice Cornburgh, née Lynne, was her sister. The name of Beatrice's husband Avery also appears in the manuscript.⁵⁰ Beatrice also gave a psalter, now in the Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, to Dame Grace Centurio, a minoress of London, specifying that it was to go to a minoress of Grace's choice after Grace's own death.⁵¹ A collection of Middle English devotional treatises, now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 142, was owned by William Bodley (d. 1540), a London grocer, and his two wives, Elizabeth and Beatrice (d. 1557).⁵²

⁴⁹Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 186, 308. On Joan Buckland, see Jenny Stratford, "Joan Buckland (d. 1462)," in *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994). Joan and Richard were among the most generous benefactors of Syon. The manuscript is not mentioned in Joan's will, written twelve years before her death in 1462, in which she bequeaths six service books: a missal, gradual, breviary, and processional were given to the church on Joan's and Richard's manor of Edgcote, Northamptonshire, and a psalter and missal were given to Richard Clarell, merchant of the staple and a close friend. Joan's will is printed in A. Clark, ed., *Lincoln Diocese Documents*, EETS os 149 (1941), pp. 37-45.

⁵⁰Margery and Beatrice were the daughters of William Lynne, a London woolman and grocer, and his wife Alice. See Mary C. Erler, "Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses," in *Medieval London Widows*, ed. Barron and Sutton, pp. 167, 170.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 170; Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 123, 278; Ker, *Supplement*, p. 47.

⁵²See Appendix 1. The ownership inscriptions read: "Thys is betrys beuerleys bok" (f. 126v); "Thys boke ys wylliam bodleys and Ellzabethe hys wyffe" (f. 127v); See M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 327-9. The identification of William, Elizabeth, and Beatrice is given in Anne F. Sutton, "Lady Joan Bradbury," in *Medieval London Widows*, ed. Barron and Sutton, p. 212 n. 12. Sutton suggests that the book may have

These findings regarding women's book ownership mirror what little is known about women's literacy. The ability to read was not a prerequisite for the use of books, but the two issues are none the less related. Shannon McSheffrey has argued that social status was a determinant variable in female literacy.⁵³ The evidence that she presents, although based on very small samples, suggests that orthodox women from London, particularly those of the merchant élite, were more likely to be able to read than Lollard women, who came primarily from artisan families. McSheffrey concludes that women outside the very highest social stations had little opportunity to learn to read, even in Lollard communities, which placed unusual emphasis on reading. Other direct evidence for women's literacy, as I have shown, is scanty and largely anecdotal, and comes mostly from the ranks of the nobility, gentry, mercantile élite, and the nunnery.⁵⁴

OWNERSHIP OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The small number of religious books mentioned in wills in comparison with service books has been widely noted.⁵⁵ This trend is certainly apparent in my database. The types of books bequeathed to and by women are listed below in Table 1.2. I have divided the books into eleven categories, most of which are self-explanatory. Some classifications, however, need clarification:

originally belonged to William's father Richard Bodley, a London grocer (d. 1491).

⁵³Shannon McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge, 1995). See my discussion of McSheffrey's arguments in the Introduction above.

⁵⁴See my discussion of the evidence for female literacy and education above in the Introduction.

⁵⁵See Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," pp. 183-5; Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," p. 542; Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 111, 193-7; Heath, "Urban Piety," p. 226; Friedman, "Books, Owners and Makers," p. 114; Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy*, p. 29.

liturgical books are those used by clerics and members of religious orders in the prescribed services of the church; they include antiphonaries, breviaries, diurnals, graduals, missals, ordinals, processional, and a "book of divine offices and commendations". Paraliturgical books are service books intended for private devotion rather than for use during the liturgy; they include primers or books of hours, psalters, matins books, a virginal, and a "placebo et dirige".⁵⁶ The unspecified service books are generally those described only as chapel books. It is well known that wills do not always provide sufficient information about a particular text in order for it to be fully identified. Bequests such as "Gower" (but which of his works?) or "liber de fabulis et narrationibus" are evidently not service books, but precise identification is impossible, and they have been placed in the category of unknown non-service books. Bequests such as "þe boke with þe knotts" are entirely unidentifiable, and have been classified as such.

⁵⁶Matins books generally referred to primers. See *Horae Eboracensis: The Prymer or Hours of the BVM*, Surtees Society 132 (Durham and London, 1920), p. xxx. A Virginal is likewise a book containing the Office of the Virgin. The Placebo et Dirige is a miniaturized Office of the Dead, as found in primers. See F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1974).

Table 1.2: Types of books bequeathed to and by women

Type of Book	Actual Number	Percentage of Total
Service Books		
Liturgical books	149	24.3%
Paraliturgical books	199	32.5%
Unspecified service books	16	2.6%
Non-service books		
Devotional	105	17.2%
Legal	3	0.5%
Theological	1	0.2%
Scriptural	25	4.1%
Romance	27	4.4%
Other Secular	16	2.6%
Unknown (but evidently not service books)	21	3.4%
Unidentifiable books	50	8.2%

Source: see notes 2, 16, and 17 above.

As can be seen from Table 1.2, nearly 60 per cent of all transmissions involve service books of one sort or another.⁵⁷ Of the remaining transmissions, over two-thirds (21.9 per cent of the whole) involve religious literature, including devotional treatises, legal and theological writings, and scriptural works and commentaries. Romances and other secular works are involved in less than eight per cent of all transmissions. A broadly similar proportion of religious literature is found among the transmissions of books to and by women in East Anglia studied by Sebastian Sutcliffe.⁵⁸ However, in transmissions involving only women living in Norwich, the proportion is considerably higher: 41.4 per cent. In fact, the number of transmissions of religious literature to and by women in Norwich is the same as the transmissions of service books.

⁵⁷Of the service books, paraliturgical books are the most numerous, both individually and collectively: primers (including matins books and a virginal) are the most frequently mentioned books, with 120 transmissions, followed by psalters, with 77 transmissions. Missals are the most frequently mentioned liturgical books, with 58 transmissions.

⁵⁸19.2%. His study does not include bequests of books to women by men.

We may wonder why secular works are less likely to be mentioned in wills than service books and spiritual literature. Testators may have felt that the secular nature of some of their books rendered them inappropriate for mention in a will, which was a formal - and above all, a religious - document. However, as testators showed little hesitation over mentioning equally secular objects such as jewellery and clothing, it is more likely that they valued their service books and works of religious literature more than their romances and histories, either for their intrinsic worth or for their contents.⁵⁹ The striking predominance of religious books among the non-service books is suggestive not only of the relative importance of these books to the testators during their lifetimes, but also of their potential value after the testators' deaths: bequests of prayer books and pious literature were probably felt to be more effective at generating prayers for the souls of the deceased than were bequests of secular literature. The omission of secular books may also have something to do with the fact that wills also offered individuals the final chance to exercise choice and influence matters, and to construct their identity. The will could act as a voice from beyond the grave. The pious nature of many bequests, of which religious books are just one aspect, may represent how the testator wanted to be remembered by his or her surviving family, friends, and associates, and the wider communities in which he or she moved. An examination of the wills of those women who bequeath religious books, to see what other pious concerns they exhibit, and whether any patterns emerge, would be a particularly interesting and informative line of research, but one that has largely impossible for this thesis.⁶⁰

The evidence from York wills suggests that ownership of religious literature was more restricted than ownership of literature in general. Among the wills of the York laity, bequests of service books are found in the wills of

⁵⁹See Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," p. 184; Cavanaugh, pp. 10-11; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 161-2; Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage," p. 535.

⁶⁰In Chapter 4, I examine the pious concerns in the will of Anne Harling (d. 1498), of East Harling, Norfolk.

gentry, lay clerks, merchants, and artisans. In contrast, half of the bequests of religious literature are found in the wills of the gentry (50 per cent), and the other half is distributed between lay clerks (42.9 per cent), and merchants (7.1 per cent). None is found in the wills of artisans.⁶¹

I turn now to an examination of the social status of the women involved in transmissions of religious literature in my database. Virtually all the women involved in transmissions of legal and theological works, as well as scriptural works and commentaries are noble laywomen or nuns. As shown in Table 1.2 above, there are only three transmissions of legal works; two of the women involved in these transmissions are noble laywomen; the third is a nun.⁶² Similarly, the one transmission of a theological text involves a noble laywoman.⁶³ Of the 25 transmissions of scriptural works, 15 (60 per cent) involved noble women; 7 (28 per cent) involved gentle women or women most likely to be from gentry families; 1 (4 per cent) involved a nun; and 2 involved women whose social status I have been unable to determine. As can be seen from Table 1.3, ownership of devotional literature is socially more widespread than that of legal, theological, and scriptural texts, but is more restricted than book ownership in general.

⁶¹Goldberg, "Lay Book Ownership," p. 183. Unfortunately, Goldberg does not say what proportion of the testators are female.

⁶²In 1355, Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady Clare, bequeathed "j poire de decretals" to Clare Hall, Cambridge, of which she foundress; see Cavanaugh, pp. 151-2 and London, Lambeth Palace, Reg. Islep, ff. 164v-166v. In 1399, Eleanor Bohun, duchess of Gloucester, bequeathed "un liure de decretals en frauncois" to her daughter Isabel, a minoress of London; see Cavanaugh, pp. 110-11. Eleanor's will is printed in N. H. Nicolas, ed., *Testamenta Vetusta*, vol. 1 (London, 1826), pp. 146-9; and in John A. Nichols, *A Collection of All the Wills Now Known to be Extant of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Book Royal from the Reign of William the Conqueror to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive* (London, 1780), pp. 177-86.

⁶³Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady Clare, bequeathed 32 quires of Bradwardine's *De Causa Dei Contra Pelagianios* to Clare Hall, Cambridge; see preceding footnote.

Table 1.3: Proportion (%) of the social status of women involved in transmissions of devotional literature noted in wills and inventories

STATUS	1350-74	1375-99	1400-24	1425-49	1450-74	1475-1500	TOTAL
N+PN	75.0	66.7	23.5	3.0	9.1	35.7	25.7
G+PG	-	16.7	52.9	45.5	72.7	3.6	33.3
G/M	-	-	-	9.1	-	3.6	3.8
M+PM	-	-	-	9.1	-	17.9	7.6
R	25	16.7	11.8	12.1	18.2	35.7	20.0
U	-	-	11.8	21.2	-	3.6	9.5
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS	4	12	17	33	11	28	105

N=Nobility; PN=probable nobility; G=gentry; PG=probable gentry; G/M=gentry/merchant; M=merchant; PM=probable merchant; R=religious; U=unidentified.

Source: See notes 2, 16, and 17 above.

The evidence from my will sample suggests that female owners of devotional literature were predominantly aristocratic laywomen and enclosed religious. It is striking that a high proportion of these nuns are from aristocratic families: within the bequests made to women religious there are twelve bequests made to individual nuns (rather than to nunneries). Of these, nine are to nuns from noble families, and two are to nuns from gentry families. I have not been able to determine the social status of the remaining nun. As in Table 1.1, certain general trends appear in the social composition of women book owners with respect to time. There appear to be certain trends in the social composition. The proportion of noble women decreases, as the proportions of the other lay social groups increase. As in Table 1.1, there are discontinuities in these trends. The proportions of female religious, however, remain comparatively uniform.

When Table 1.3 is compared with Table 1.1, some interesting trends emerge. As can be seen in Table 1.3, women connected with merchant families begin to appear in transmissions of devotional literature in the second

quarter of the fifteenth century. Table 1.1, however, shows women from the merchant class involved in transmissions of other types of books in the three periods preceding their appearance as owners of devotional literature. It is tempting to conclude that this is a general trend, and research using unprinted wills has yielded a similar picture.⁶⁴ Sutcliffe's work on the wills of women from East Anglia displays similar patterns: women from merchant families, or who are most likely to be from merchant families, do not own devotional literature until the second half of the fifteenth century, although they own other types of books, namely liturgical and paraliturgical books, earlier. Norman Tanner found only six bequests of devotional literature among the wills of Norwich residents; five of these are from women's wills, all of which date from after 1480.⁶⁵ Because of the problems inherent in my will sample, a degree of caution is necessary, however, and more work is needed on unprinted wills, especially those of London women.

Evidence from wills thus suggests that female lay ownership of religious literature was part of a culture that was predominantly aristocratic, and that it was an activity particularly appropriate for women of this social status. The use of devotional literature may thus have functioned as a mark of noble or gentle status. However, as it does not appear to have been universal among the aristocracy, it may also have been a mark of spiritual status. Those people who owned religious texts may have formed a sort of spiritual élite.⁶⁶ M. B. Parkes has suggested that by 1400 the principal difference between

⁶⁴See my "Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Jane H. M. Taylor and Lesley Smith (Cambridge, 1995).

⁶⁵Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 111-2, 193-7. One of these women, Isabel Lyston, was of gentle status.

⁶⁶For the notion of a "spiritual aristocracy", albeit a more restricted one, see Roger Lovatt, "The *Imitation of Christ* in Late Medieval England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1968), p. 100. See also Chapter 4 below.

courtly readers and bourgeois readers was "one of taste, not of literacy."⁶⁷ Surely this taste was informed by education, social expectation, and culture as well as by personal piety.

Like other marks of gentle status, such as heraldry, women's use of religious literature may have been appropriated by the wealthy members of the merchant class as part of a larger programme of status confirmation and upward mobility. It is striking that the ownership of religious literature by women from outside the landed classes comes in the first half of the fifteenth century, when women and men from merchant families were marrying into landed families more frequently than in the previous century.⁶⁸ S. J. Payling has argued that the demographic crisis of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, brought about through repeated outbreaks of plague, and the associated rise in the number of heiresses, encouraged upward social mobility both within and into the landed classes. The newly wealthy, "for whom social rather than economic motives were paramount", were thus able to purchase land and marry their children into more established landed families.⁶⁹ Sylvia Thrupp found that in the fourteenth century one third of aldermen's daughters and two-thirds of their widows married gentlemen; in the fifteenth century over half of their daughters and half of their widows married into aristocratic families. Men from the merchant class married into the gentry less frequently than their sisters. According to Thrupp, a quarter of the wives of fourteenth-century aldermen whose parentage is known were the daughters of country landowners; this proportion increased to a third in the fifteenth century. Outside the aldermanic families the proportion of gentry wives was

⁶⁷M. B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," p. 567. See also Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers*, p. 43.

⁶⁸Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 28, 266-9, and her Appendix A, 321-77.

⁶⁹S. J. Payling, "Social Mobility, Demographic Change, and Landed Society in Late Medieval England," *The Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 45 (1992), p. 69.

much lower.⁷⁰ Although the substantial dowry that a girl from a wealthy merchant family could bring would make her an attractive marriage prospect, her possession of the appropriate skills and accomplishments would render her more attractive. Those merchant families with social aspirations may have educated their daughters so as to make them suitable wives for gentlemen. Furthermore, a gentle woman who married into a merchant family probably educated her children in the same fashion that her mother had educated her. The use of religious literature, moreover, implies piety, and with it, respectability. A pious woman was necessarily a chaste woman; a pious woman was a respectable woman. Such a reputation would surely have been beneficial to a woman seeking a good marriage.

The picture of women's ownership of religious literature as seen through surviving manuscripts and early printed books is somewhat more static. Difficulties in dating periods of ownership and in identifying owners mean that potential changes across time are less apparent. Of the 75 books for whom female ownership can be determined, 43 were owned by female religious. Another 18 were owned by laywomen, and a further 11 were owned by women whose religious vocation has not been established. The remaining three manuscripts had multiple owners of different religious vocations. Of the 18 manuscripts in lay hands, only one was owned by women from the merchant class: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 142 belonged to William Bodley (d. 1540), a London grocer, and his two wives, Elizabeth Bodley, and Beatrice Beverly (d. 1557).⁷¹ The other 15 books in laywomen's hands were owned by women from the nobility and gentry. Although surviving books tell us less about the types of women who had access to religious literature than do wills, they are a more fruitful source of information

⁷⁰Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 265-6 and her Appendix A. Thrupp suggests a widow's choice of new husband may have been determined by her own social background.

⁷¹See note 52 above.

about what texts were used by women.⁷²

Further evidence of women's use of religious literature comes from records of literary patronage. This material, however, can tell us little about the social complexion of the female audience of spiritual literature, for it is skewed towards the wealthiest sections of the population.⁷³ Simon Wynter, a Carthusian of Shene, translated *The Life of St Jerome* for Margaret Holand, the widowed duchess of Clarence (d. 1440).⁷⁴ John Lydgate wrote several of his minor religious poems for noblewomen. His *Invocation to St Anne* was written at the request of Anne, countess of Stafford (d. 1438); his *Legend of St Margaret* at the request of Anne's daughter Anne (d. 1432), wife of Edmund Mortimer; his *Fifteen Joys of Our Lady* at the request of Isabella Despenser, countess of Worcester (d. 1439); and his *Virtues of the Mass* at the instance of a countess of Suffolk, probably Alice Chaucer (d. 1475).⁷⁵ A poem formerly attributed to Lydgate, *The Nightingale*, was dedicated by its author to Anne Neville, duchess of Buckingham (d. 1480).⁷⁶ Lydgate's younger contemporary, Osbern Bokenham, dedicated six of his thirteen lives of women

⁷²See Chapter 3 below.

⁷³Carol M. Meale discusses women's literary patronage in her "Laywomen and their Books".

⁷⁴See George R Keiser, "Patronage and Piety in Fifteenth-Century England: Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, Wymon Wynter and Beinecke MS 317," *Yale University Library Gazette* (October, 1985). The text is printed in C. Horstmann, "Prosalegenden", *Anglia* 3 (1880).

⁷⁵For Lydgate's *Invocation to St Anne* see Henry Noble McCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, part 1, EETS es 107 (London, 1911), pp. 130-3; and Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 168, 264. For *The Legend of St Margaret* see McCracken, pp. 173-92; and Pearsall, pp. 168, 278. For *The Fifteen Joys of Our Lady* see McCracken, pp. 260-7 and Pearsall, pp. 71, 168, 274. For *The Virtues of the Mass* see McCracken, pp. 87-115; Pearsall, pp. 162, 258; Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk c. 1450, I", *PMLA* 27 (1912), pp. 203-4.

⁷⁶See Otto Glauning, ed., *Lydgate's Minor Poems: The Two Nightingale Poems*, EETS es 80 (London, 1900), pp. 1-15; Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 267-8.

saints to women, but he describes only two of these as having been written at the dedicatees' request.⁷⁷ His *Life of St Anne* was written for Katherine Denston, who shared the dedication of his *Life of St Katherine* with another Katherine - Katherine Howard.⁷⁸ Bokenham wrote his *Life of St Agatha* for Agatha Flegge, and his *Life of St Dorothy* for a John and Isabel Hunt.⁷⁹ Isabella Bouchier, countess of Eu, requested Bokenham's *Life of Mary Magdalen*, and Elizabeth de Vere, countess of Oxford, requested the *Life of St Elizabeth of Hungary*.⁸⁰ John Capgrave translated the *Life of St Augustine* for an unidentified gentlewoman, and Thomas Hoccleve composed his *Compleynt of the Virgin Before the Cross* at the request of Joan Bohun (d. 1419), wife of Humphry Bohun, earl of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton.⁸¹

As well as telling us about the types of women who owned devotional literature, the wills database also tells us about patterns of transmissions of literature, viz. from whom women received books and to who they gave them. Table 1.4 shows the gender patterns in the testamentary transmissions of books.

⁷⁷Mary S. Serjeantson, ed., *Legendys of Hooly Wummen by Osbern Bokenham*, EETS os 206 (London, 1938). For biographical information about the dedicatees, see Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk c. 1450, II," *PMLA* ns 28 (1931), 79-105.

⁷⁸For the dedication of the *Life of St Anne*, see *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, pp. 40, 57-8; for the *Life of St Katherine*, see pp. 174, 200.

⁷⁹*Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, pp. 227 (St Agatha), 136 (St Dorothy).

⁸⁰*Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, pp. 137-9, 147 (Mary Madgalen); 138-9, 259, 238 (St Elizabeth).

⁸¹J. Munro, ed., *John Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine and St. Gilbert of Sempringham, and a Sermon*, EETS os 140 (London, 1910), pp. 1, 60; Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, revised by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, EETS es 61 (1892. Reprint. Oxford, 1970), p. 8.

Table 1.4: Proportion (%) of the recipients of books bequeathed by women.

Type of Book	Men	Women	Churches	Actual number of bequests
I. Service Books				
Liturgical	70.2	8.7	21.2	104
Paraliturgical	41.0	55.0	4.0	100
Miscellaneous Service Books	28.6	28.6	42.9	7
II. Non-Service Books				
Devotional	20.0	80.0	-	45
Legal	50.0	50.0	-	2
Theological	100.0	-	-	1
Scriptural	53.8	46.2	-	13
Romance	50.0	50.0	-	16
Other Secular	85.7	14.3	-	7
Unknown	41.7	58.3	-	12
III. Unidentified Books	48.0	52.0	-	25
Overall	49.5	41.7	8.8	331

Source: see notes 1, 15, and 16 above.

Although overall women bequeath books to men more frequently than they do to women, when the types of books bequeathed are examined certain patterns emerge. Women bequeath nearly all of their liturgical books to men - predominantly clerics and university colleges - and to churches. This preference is hardly surprising, as these were the people most able to use the books for their intended purposes. Many of the bequests of liturgical books to laymen and laywomen are made in conjunction with chapel furnishings, and thus these books may have been intended for the use of the recipients' chaplains rather than the recipients themselves. Women are more likely, however, to give their paraliturgical books, i.e. their primers and psalters, which were not intended to be used solely by clerics, to women than they are

to men.⁸² The most striking trend, however, is that women bequeath nearly all of their devotional literature to women.

In 1394 Mary Roos, widow of John sixth lord Roos of Helmsley and Belvoir, bequeathed a roll of the Passion to Lady Isabella Fauconberge, and what was probably Henry of Lancaster's *Livre des Seyntz Medicines* to Isabella Percy.⁸³ In 1399 Eleanor Bohun, Duchess of Gloucester, widow of Thomas of Woodstock, left a French *Legenda Aurea* to her daughter Anne, countess of Stafford, as well as copies of *Vitae Patrum* and *Pastorelx Seint Gregoire* to her daughter Isabella, a minoress of London.⁸⁴ Gilamotta Carrek of York, in her will of 1408, left her English version of *The Spirit of Guy* and her French *Barlam et Josaphat* to Alice Bows.⁸⁵ In 1411 Elizabeth de Juliers, widow of John, fifth earl of Kent, bequeathed a *legend* to Joan Holand, widow of Thomas de Holand, eighth earl of Kent.⁸⁶ Peryne Clanvowe, widow of the Lollard knight Sir Thomas Clanvowe, gave a copy of the *Pore Caitiff* to

⁸²The preponderance of female owners of psalters and books of hours, particularly in the thirteenth century, has been noted by M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963), p. 242; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993), pp. 111, 189.

⁸³*TE*, 201-3. Mary also bequeathed a primer to Isabella Percy. When this Isabella died in 1401, she left a *liber de sancto spiritu* to Katherine Howme, a primer to Lady Latimer, and a French psalter to Joan Chetwyn, as well as a psalter to William Flaxton, chaplain, and an English psalter to Henry, chaplain at All Saints North Street, York. *TE*, 270-2. See Cavanaugh, pp. 746, 648.

⁸⁴Cavanaugh, pp. 110-11. Eleanor's will is in Lambeth Palace, Reg. Arundel I, f. 163, and is printed in *RW*, 177-86, and *TV*, 146-9. Eleanor also bequeathed a *cronike de Fraunce*, Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum*, *Vices et vertues*, *Rimeie del histoire de chivaler a cigne*, and a psalter to her son Humphrey; a book containing a psalter, primer and other devotions to her daughter Joan, and a Bible, Decretals in French, a book of "Meistre histories", a psalter and a psalter glossed with a primer to her daughter Isabella.

⁸⁵*TE* 1, p. 352; York, BIHR, Probate Register 2, f. 585v (Carrek)

⁸⁶Cavanaugh, p. 477. Eleanor's will is printed in *RV*, 212-6, and *TV*, 179-80. Elizabeth also bequeathed a missal to Joan, as well as breviary to Alice, the niece of her first husband John earl of Kent and widow of Thomas de Holand, earl of Kent.

Elizabeth Joye in her will dated 1422.⁸⁷ Eleven years later, Eleanor Purdelay of London bequeathed *St Patrick's Purgatory* and *The Sermon of Altquyne* (The *Speculum Guy of Warwick*) to her servant Joan Gardyner.⁸⁸ Eleanor Roos, daughter of Sir Robert Roos of Ingmanthorp, in her will of 1438, gave what was probably Book One of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* to the wife of her nephew Robert Roos, a work on the Creed to the wife of her great-nephew, another Robert Roos, and what was probably Mechtild of Hackeborn's *The Book of Ghostly Grace* to Dame Joan Courtenay.⁸⁹ In 1448 Agnes Stapilton, widow of Sir Brian Stapilton, gave a book called Bonaventure (probably Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*) to the Cistercian nuns of Sinningthwaite (West Riding), *The Prick of Conscience* to the Cluniac nuns of Arthington (West Riding), *The Chastising of God's Children* to the Cistercian nuns of Esholt (West Riding), a book of Vices and Virtues to the Benedictine nuns of Nunmonkton (West Riding), and a French *Vitae Sanctorum* to her grand-daughter, Ellen Ingleby.⁹⁰ In the same year, Beatrice Milreth, widow of Reginald Cokayne of Cokayne Hatley and of William Milreth, citizen and mercer of London, bequeathed to her sister, Agnes Burgh, *Merce*

⁸⁷Cavanaugh, p. 192. For Peryne's will see Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the court of Probate, London, A.D. 1387-1439, with a Priest's of 1454*, EETS os 78 (London, 1882), pp. 49-51. Elizabeth was one of Peryne's executors. Peryne also bequeathed a missal to her brother Robert of Whitney, and "iiij quayers of doctours on Mathewe" to her priest.

⁸⁸Cavanaugh, p. 673. The will is found in London, Guildhall Library, MS 9171/3, ff. 365v-366r. Eleanor also left Joan a *Storie off Josep'*.

⁸⁹Cavanaugh, p. 749; Eleanor's will is printed in *TE* 2, 65-6. Eleanor also bequeathed a psalter to her nephew, Robert Roos, and a primer of the Holy Spirit to Isabella Roos.

⁹⁰Cavanaugh, pp. 815-6. Agnes's will is in PRO Prob. 11/3, f. 279v, printed in John William Clay, ed., *North Country Wills*, Surtees Society 116 (Durham, London, and Berlin, 1908), pp. 48-9. Agnes also gave a French book to the Abbess of Denny (Cambridgeshire), a book of prayers to her son-in-law William Plumpton, a psalter to her grandson William Plumpton, a French book to her grand-daughter Agnes Plumpton, and a primer to her grand-daughter Agnes Ingleby.

and *Gramarce* (probably Henry of Lancaster's *Livre des Seyntz Medicines*), a roll of the passion of Jesus Christ, and a roll of the fifteen Joys of the Virgin.⁹¹ Three years later, Mercy Ormesby, of Ormesby, Lincolnshire, left *The Chastising of God's Children* to the prioress of the Benedictine priory of Easebourne (Sussex).⁹² The probate inventory of Elizabeth Sewerby, drawn up in 1468, records that her English copy of the Revelations of St Bridget was bequeathed to her kinswoman Agnes Vavasour.⁹³ In 1480 Anne Neville, Duchess of Buckingham, left her daughter-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort, an English *Legenda Sanctorum*.⁹⁴ The following year Margaret Purdans of Norwich left *The Doctrine of the Heart* to the Franciscan nuns of Bruisyard (Suffolk), an English book of St Bridget to the Benedictine nuns of Thetford

⁹¹Cavanaugh, pp. 585-6. Beatrice's will is in London, Lambeth Palace, reg. Stafford, ff. 165-6, and printed in Hilary Jenkinson and G. Herbert Fowler, "Some Bedfordshire Wills at Lambeth and Lincoln," *Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* 14 (1931), pp. 123-5. Beatrice's will also lists a missal and breviary, both given to her son Reginald Cokayne, the Letters of Nichodemus in French (possibly the gospel of Nichodemus), a French and Latin book, and a primer, all given to her sister Agnes Burgh, and a primer bound with a psalter, given to Henry Bardolf.

⁹²Cavanaugh, pp. 629-30; H. R. Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1904), p. 116. The prioress also received a primer. Mercy bequeathed another primer to Mary Tregose, and a missal to her chantry.

⁹³The inventory also lists a missal, a psalter, an English Life of Christ, a book containing the Mystery of the Our Lord's Passion in English and a quire of the Visitation of the Virgin, Richard Rolle's Meditation on the Passion, a book of divine offices and commemorations, and a Latin Life of Christ. The inventory is printed in *TE* 2, pp. 161-8. According to Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, p. 293, the inventory also lists an English Life of St Katherine, but I have not found this.

⁹⁴Margaret also received a French book called "Lucum" (presumably the classical poet Lucan), a book of epistles and gospels in French, and a primer. Anne's will is printed in Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (London, 1826), pp. 356-7.

(Norfolk), and a book of Hilton to an Alice Barly.⁹⁵ Another Norwich resident, Isabel Lyston, widow of Robert Lyston, esquire, left an English Life of St Margaret to her daughter Margery London in 1491.⁹⁶ Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, in her will of 1495, left to her grand-daughter Anne de la Pole, prioress of Syon Abbey, a book containing Bonaventure (probably the Pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes Vitae Christi*) and Hilton in English, and the Revelations of St Bridget; and a *Legenda Aurea*, a Life of St Katherine of Siena, and a book of St Matilda (probably Mechtild of Hackeborn's *Book of Ghostly Grace*) to her grand-daughter Bridget, a nun at the Dominican priory of Dartford (Kent).⁹⁷ In 1497 Katherine Kerre of Norwich left a book of St Katherine to Dame Joan Blakeney.⁹⁸

The evidence from wills demonstrates not only that women were more likely to give devotional literature to other women, but that they were also more likely to receive it from women. The data from 1350 to 1450 (i.e. the data from Cavanaugh) included bequests of books to women from the wills of both men and women. Of the 35 bequests of devotional books to women, 22 (63 per cent) were from women.

How much emphasis should be placed on death-bed bequests such as

⁹⁵Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112. The will is found in Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Caston, ff. 163v-164v. Margaret also left an English psalter to a priest and her small psalter to her son.

⁹⁶See Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112; Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Wolman, ff. 171r-172r (Liston). Isabel also gave Margery an English copy of Partonope of Blois.

⁹⁷Cecily's will is printed in John Gough Nichols and John Bruce, eds., *Wills from Doctors' Commons*, Camden Society 83 (1863), pp. 1-8. Other bequests of books to women include two breviaries, given to Lady Margaret Beaufort and Cecily's grand-daughter, Cecily Welles, respectively. The Duchess of York also bequeathed three missals, three graduals, and seven processional books to Fotheringay College; four antiphonaries, four graduals, and six processional books to Stoke Clare College; a legend book and what was probably a book of collects to Sir John More; a missal, a primer, and a psalter to Sir William Grave; and copies of the Gospels and Epistles to Sir John Blotte.

⁹⁸Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112; Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Moulton, f. 89v-90v.

the ones that I have listed above? Testators were frequently not sound of mind and body as they so claimed, but were rather on the point of death, and it can thus be argued that little thought or intention lies behind any particular bequest. Nevertheless, as Table 1.4 indicates, female testators demonstrate remarkable consistency in their book bequests, which argues that they took care over the choice of legatees. Furthermore, inscriptions found in surviving manuscripts and incunabula demonstrate that women gave devotional books to one another during their lifetimes as well as on their deathbeds. London, BL Cotton Vitellius F. vii, containing a French copy of the *Ancrene Riwle* and *Le livre de tribulacion*, was given to Eleanor Cobham, second wife of Humphrey duke of Gloucester, by Joan, widow of Thomas de Holand, earl of Kent, sometime between 1433 and 1441.⁹⁹ Joan also gave a copy of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* to Alice Belacyse.¹⁰⁰ Dame Margaret Hasley of the London Minoreesses (d. 1462) specified that her copy of the *Pore Caitiff* was to go to Dame Anne Bassynburne, of the same house, after whose death it was to remain in the house.¹⁰¹ The prioress of the Cistercian nunnery of Swine (East Riding), Maud Wade (who resigned in 1482), gave a manuscript containing the *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*, an account of St Katherine of Siena's visions, and a list of virtuous actions to Joan Hiltoft, nun of the Cistercian priory of Nun Coton (Lincolnshire).¹⁰² Downside Abbey

⁹⁹See J. A. Herbert, *The French Text of the Ancrene Riwle* EETS os 219 (London, 1944), pp. xii-xiii; Alexandra Barratt, *The Book of Tribulation, ed. from MS Bodley 423*, Middle English Texts 15 (Heidelberg, 1983), p. 22.

¹⁰⁰Tokyo, Professor Takamiya 8, *olim* Saumarez. See Elizabeth Salter, *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ"*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 10 (Salzburg, 1974), p. 7, n. 32 and p. 13, n. 48.

¹⁰¹Meade Falkner sale, Sotheby's, 12 December, 1932, lot 387. See Sotheby & co., *Catalogue of the Well-Known collection of Fine Illuminated and Other Manuscripts, Rare Early Service Books, Incunables and other Valuable Printed Books, formed by the late John Meade Falkner, Esq.*, 3rd day of sale, 14 December, lot 387, p. 63; Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 123, 279.

¹⁰²London, BL Harley 2409, f. 78v

MS 26542, containing *The Pricking of Love*, the *Pore Caitiff*, and other English and Latin devotional treatises, belonged to Beatrice Chaumbir, nun of Dartford Priory (Kent), who left it to two of her sister nuns, Emma Wynter and Denyse Caston. A printed copy of *The Chastising of God's Children*, now lost, was owned by Elizabeth Wylby, nun of Campsey (Suffolk), who gave it to another nun, Catherine Symond, specifying that it was to pass to a third sister of the house.¹⁰³ Another copy of the same work, now in Göttingen University Library, was given to Awdry Dely, nun of Syon, by Mary Newell, another nun there. Queen Elizabeth of York and her mother-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort, presented a printed copy of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* to Mary Roos, one of Elizabeth's ladies.¹⁰⁴ In 1500, Agnes Radcliffe, widow of Sir Richard Radcliffe, gave a copy of *The Pilgrimage of the Soul* to the Benedictine nunnery of Marrick (North Riding).¹⁰⁵

Gifts such as these were not made lightly. Testators mentioned those books that had particular value to them, and it is likely that they would have chosen recipients who would also value the books, possibly for the same reasons. Certainly such gifts, especially testamentary ones, were gifts made with the expectation of prayers for the donor, but they were also made to confirm relationships based on kinship, spiritual kinship, and friendship, relationships that were important to the donors. It can be argued that the gift of a book was simply another facet of aristocratic gift-exchange, no different from the giving of other precious objects such as jewels. However, although books of religious literature were expensive items, they are generally not as

¹⁰³Untraced printed book listed in *Catal. Bibliothecae Harleianae* (1744), iii, no. 1560; see Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 28, 238.

¹⁰⁴See P. J. Croft, *Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond: Description of Two Unique Volumes Associated With One of the First Patrons of Printing in England* (London, 1958). The book is now in New Haven, Mellon Centre for British Art.

¹⁰⁵New York, Public Library, MS 19.

elaborate as Books of Hours.¹⁰⁶ As I discuss in more detail below, the books of religious literature known to have belonged to women are plain, with little or no decoration.¹⁰⁷ Illuminated books are rare. These are books to be read rather than to be looked at and admired for their appearance. It is therefore likely that the women linked together through these gifts of books shared spiritual and literary interests, forming cultural networks that facilitated the sharing of books and the discussion of their contents, not unlike the networks that existed among Lollards.¹⁰⁸ As wills and extant books reveal, women's cultural networks extended both horizontally and vertically across generations and across the boundaries of religious vocation.

It is worth pursuing the similarity with Lollards. As I mentioned above, Lollards commonly attended meetings where vernacular scriptural and other texts were read aloud and discussed, thus allowing both the literate and the illiterate access to texts.¹⁰⁹ Anne Hudson has demonstrated that group ownership of books among Lollards was common:

the records indicate the circulation of books; later investigations make it plainer that members of a group might contribute money towards a book or books, and that lending of books was so commonplace that it implies that the ownership was probably communal.¹¹⁰

There is evidence to suggest that orthodox women also shared books and texts. A late thirteenth-century manuscript, now Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, containing Grosseteste's *Le Chateau d'Amour* and other religious texts, belonged to Margaret Sylemon, the prioress (1367-86) of

¹⁰⁶See H. E. Bell, "The Price of Books in Medieval England," *The Library* 4th series, 17 (1937).

¹⁰⁷See Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁸Carol Meale discusses women's cultural networks in her "Laywomen and their Books".

¹⁰⁹See the Introduction above.

¹¹⁰Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 205-6. See also her "Lollard Book Production," pp. 131-2.

Nuneaton Priory in Warwickshire, "*et discipulas suas*"; Felicity Riddy suggests that these disciples were younger nuns or novices who were Margaret's pupils and with whom she may have used the manuscript as a reader.¹¹¹ The nuns linked together through the several books listed above, the Meade Falkner manuscript¹¹², Downside Abbey MS 26542, the lost copy of *The Chastising of God's Children*, and the copy of the same in Göttingen University Library, may also have shared those particular books. The small groups of nuns whose names appear in these manuscripts and incunabula may in fact have been examples of the *familiae* into which nunnery populations tended to divide. Episcopal visitation records reveal that nunneries gradually abandoned the practice of eating communally in the frater, in favour of eating in several smaller groups. These groups developed into distinct households, or *familiae*, through the growing custom of allocating private rooms to certain nuns, usually obedientiaries, who headed households, wherein they ate, received visitors, and even slept.¹¹³ The women who formed a household may have come together through ties of kinship and friendship. The five books listed above suggest that these *familiae* may have formed reading groups, sharing books, and discussing their contents.¹¹⁴ Roberta Gilchrist cites archaeological evidence to suggest that changes were sometimes made to nunnery architecture to accommodate these households. In some nunneries, she determines, small buildings were constructed in addition to - in the case of Godstow Abbey (Oxfordshire) to replace - communal claustral buildings.¹¹⁵ It is likely that laywomen also formed networks that facilitated the sharing of

¹¹¹Felicity Riddy, "Women Talking About the Things of God: A Late Medieval Subculture," in *Women and Literature in Britain c. 1050-1500*, ed. Carol Meale (Cambridge, 1993), p. 109.

¹¹²See note 101.

¹¹³Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 317-22.

¹¹⁴See Riddy, "Women Talking About the Things of God," pp. 109-110.

¹¹⁵Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 123-4, 127, 185.

books. One such group appears to have existed around the Joan Clopton, wife of Sir William Clopton. A manuscript belonging to the Clopton family, containing Robert Manning's *Handlyng Synne*, *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*, Mandeville's *Travels*, *Piers Plowman* (C-text), *La Estorie del Euangelie*, and the *Assumption of Our Lady* contains the arms of three families at the foot of the first folio.¹¹⁶ The central shield bears the impaled arms of the Cloptons and Besfords, Joan's birth family; this armorial bearing represents a married woman and here must refer to Joan. The shield on the right is most likely that of the Crewe family, into which William Clopton's mother Juliana married upon her second marriage. The shield on the left is most likely that of the Throckmorton family, into which Joan's sister Agnes married.¹¹⁷ Thus we have a group of three women, joined by ties of marriage and kinship: Joan, her mother-in-law Juliana, and her sister (Agnes). The presence of their family shields on the Clopton Manuscript suggests that it may have been compiled for the three women, two of whom, Joan and Agnes, later became vowesses, and possibly other members of their families, who shared their taste for devotional reading.

I have already mentioned the reading - or listening - group that existed around Cecily Neville, Duchess of York. During dinner Cecily listened to readings from Hilton's *Epistle on Mixed Life*, Bonaventure (probably the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes Vitae Christi*), the apocryphal *Infancy of the Saviour*, the *Golden Legend*, and the writings of the female visionaries Mechtild of Hackeborn, Catherine of Siena, and St Bridget of Sweden. At

¹¹⁶The Clopton MS is now divided into three manuscripts: Washington, Folger Library MS V.b.236; R.H. Taylor's manuscript at Princeton University Library; and London University Library MS V 17.

¹¹⁷For a description of the manuscript and its shields, see Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The Relationship of the Vernon and Clopton Manuscripts," *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1990). Turville-Petre, however, states that the manuscript belonged to Sir William Clopton, and does not note that the central shield, with its impaled arms, is that of a married woman, i.e. Joan Clopton.

supper she recited what she had heard earlier to her companions.¹¹⁸

Cecily's grand-daughter, Queen Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's mother-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort, presented a printed copy of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* to Mary Roos, one of Elizabeth's ladies. The donors' autograph inscriptions suggest a circle of reciprocal prayers as well as shared literary interests: "I pray you pray for me Elysabeth ye quene" and "Mastres rosse y truste yn your prayeres the whyche y pray yow y may be partener of . Margaret R the kynges modyr".¹¹⁹ But not all lay reading groups centred around spiritual texts: London, BL MS Royal 14.E.III, a collection of French Arthurian romances, bears the names of Elizabeth Woodville, her daughters Elizabeth (later queen of Henry VII) and Cecily, and Jane Grey; and Princeton University Library MS Garrett 168, containing an account of the funeral of the Turkish emperor Mohammed II, bears those of Elizabeth and Cecily of York and Jane Grey.¹²⁰ It is groups such as these, whether composed of aristocratic laywomen or nuns, who, as both Felicity Riddy and I have suggested, may have commissioned the Vernon and Simeon Manuscripts.¹²¹

¹¹⁸See "Ordinances and Rules of the Princess Cecill," in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household Made in Divers Reigns from King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary* (London, 1790), p. 37; C. A. J. Armstrong, "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Mediaeval Culture," in *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. C. A. J. Armstrong (London, 1983); and W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955, reprinted Toronto, 1980), p. 254.

¹¹⁹Croft, *Lady Margaret Beaufort*. Felicity Riddy also discusses the book and its circle of women in her "Women Talking About the Things of God," p. 109.

¹²⁰London, BL MS Royal 14.E.III has two further ownership inscriptions: "Cest liure est a moy Richard Roos chiualer" on f. 2v and "Thys boke is myne dame Alyanor Haute" on f. 162r. George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *British Museum Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, II (London, 1921), p. 140. See also Meale, "Laywomen and their Books," pp. 144 and n. 90.

¹²¹Riddy, "Women Talking," p. 110; Anne M. Dutton, "Pious Books for Pious Women: The Vernon Manuscript and Women's Devotional Reading in Late Medieval England" (M. A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991).

The Lollard practice of meeting to read aloud and discuss vernacular translations of the Bible and other texts, and the mealtime readings of Cecily Neville, duchess of York, remind us of the strongly oral nature of society, and that illiteracy did not necessarily prevent an individual from participating in textual communities.¹²² Women (and men) who were unable to read could still have access to devotional literature through the literacy of someone else, as listeners rather than as readers.¹²³ It seems likely from the evidence in wills and extant books that women's use of religious literature was to some extent a social activity.

As most noble and gentry households seem to have had a chapel and at least one chaplain, as did many of the wealthier merchants, we need to consider women's use of religious literature under the supervision of their chaplain or other spiritual advisor. Chaplains or other spiritual advisors would have been ideally placed to read to those women who were illiterate and to devise a suitable programme of religious education. We do not know who read texts that Cecily Neville, duchess of York, heard at dinner; it might have been her chaplain. Margery Kempe, however, did not have a domestic chaplain. It was the new priest of Lynn who "red to hir many a good boke of hy contemplacyon & oper bokys, as þe Bybyl wyth doctowrys þer-up-on, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Bone-ventur, Stimulus Amoris, Incendium Amoris, & swech oper" - a list largely echoed in Cecily Neville's household ordinances.¹²⁴

In my study of the evidence for women's access to religious literature,

¹²²For textual communities, see Brian Stock, "Medieval Literacy, Linguistic Theory, and Social Organization," *New Literary History* 16 (1984-5): 13-29.

¹²³See Introduction above.

¹²⁴*Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS os 212 (Oxford, 1940), pp. 142-3. Margery also refers to listening to texts earlier in her *Book*, but does not say who read to her; see p. 39.

two main themes have emerged. The first concerns the women themselves. It appears that the female audience of religious literature consisted primarily of female religious and aristocratic laywomen, although women from the merchant élite were increasingly represented in the fifteenth century. The second concerns the context in which women may have used this literature. There are suggestions to indicate that women formed cultural networks that facilitated the exchange and sharing of devotional books, and the discussion of their contents. Such networks, based on existing ties of kinship and friendship, no doubt offered women opportunities not only for spiritual advancement, but also for social interaction with like-minded women - an aspect of textual communities that should not be underestimated.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING FEMALE READERS AND FEMALE READING

The Winchester Anthology (London, BL MS Additional 60577) contains a unique preface to *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*. The preface is addressed to a "[R]eligious & goostly belouyde syster in our lorde Ihesu cryste" who has been called to God's service, and it was written by her "pore brother & seruaunt in god". She had previously sent him a box via the hermit of Shamwell in Sittingbourne, Kent, asking him for an "vnement". If she had expected to receive the medieval equivalent of cold cream, she would be disappointed: he interpreted the request metaphorically, and sent her a "goostly vnement be the whiche ye myghte ennoynte youre sowle and able hit to the loue of god". This spiritual ointment was a copy of *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, a Middle English tract on humility, here addressed to a woman.¹ This example of a text and its preface usefully serves to introduce the concept of the constructed female reader. In the previous chapter, I examined what may be called the real or historical women readers - those women who actually read or heard (or who were likely to have read or heard) religious literature. As *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* and this unique preface demonstrate, female readers also exist within, and are constructed by, texts: there is the "sister" to whom *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* is addressed, as well as the "religious sister" addressed in the preface, who receives a copy of the text as her spiritual ointment. Texts also construct women's reading, telling the addressee what the purpose of reading is (to "ennoynte youre sowle and able

¹London, BL MS Additional 60577, f. 184r-v (preface), ff. 184v-189v (text). See also the facsimile of the manuscript: E. Wilson and I. Fenlon, eds., *The Winchester Anthology with an Introduction* (Cambridge, 1981). *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* is a "translation of the *capitula* appended to Saint Bernard's *De duodecim gradibus humilitatis* with the addition of exempla from the *Vitas Patrum* and Gregory's *Dialogues* and *Commentary on the Penitential Psalms*"; see Raymo 77, pp. 2296-7, 2521-2; Jolliffe G.19. The text is variously addressed to a "sister" or a "brother"; this copy is addressed to a "sister".

hit to the loue of god"), as well what to read, and how to read.² In this chapter I examine both women readers and women's reading as constructed within devotional treatises addressed to women.

The Twelve Degrees is one of a considerable number of Middle English texts of spiritual guidance addressed to women that survive from fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and early sixteenth-century England.³ They form part of a long tradition of Latin and earlier Middle English treatises written by men for women to direct their spiritual lives. In this chapter I examine 33 such texts.⁴ Whereas a few of these treatises are addressed to named women, such as Richard Rolle's *Form of Living*, addressed to his disciple Margaret Kirkby, the majority are simply addressed to an unspecified "sister". It is possible that some of these general addressees were particular individuals, known to the authors, who may have felt it unnecessary to be more precise about the women's identities. Such a specific addressee, whether named or nameless, is

²My use of the term "addressee" is similar to Gerald Prince's "narratee" (the fictional character whom the narrator addresses) and Peter J. Rabinowitz's "narrative audience" (the "role which the text forces the reader to take on"); see Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee", in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980); Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca NY, 1987), p. 95.

³Although all religious literature offers some degree of spiritual guidance, I have not included those texts addressed to women readers and listeners that are primarily narrative, such as Symon Wynter's translation of *The Life of St Jerome*, addressed to a "Right nobill and worthy lady and my full reuerent and dere goestly doughter in oure lord Jhesu", who is Margaret Holand, the widowed duchess of Clarence; *The Life of St Katherine of Siena*, twice printed by Wynkyn de Worde, which was addressed to a "sister"; *The Speculum Devotorum* written by a Carthusian of Sheen; the meditations on the life of Christ found in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Holkham 41; more purely didactic treatises such as *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*; and translations of biblical texts such as the New Testament Epistles with Acts and part of Matthew, rearranged and translated for a woman religious (see A. C. Paues, *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version* (1902, rev. ed. 1904))

⁴The texts were located primarily through the standard bibliographic guides to Middle English literature, including: *IMEV*; Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, *A Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1965); *IMEP*; *IPMEP*; Jolliffe; Raymo; Lagorio and Sargent.

nevertheless constructed by the author; she appears only through the words of the text. No doubt the author's portrait of her has been retouched to suit his particular purposes in writing the text. Some of the unnamed woman addressees may, however, have been complete literary fictions.⁵ This is particularly likely in texts that are translations of earlier works addressed to women - such as the Middle English versions of Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, *The Doctrine of the Heart*, and St Jerome's letters to Demetriades and Eustochium. The translators/authors of such texts say little about the audience for whom the texts are translated, while choosing to retain the fiction of the original addressee, although she is, of course, long dead. It is possible, though, that such translations were made for women.

If some or all of the female addressees of both translated and newly-composed texts are indeed literary fictions, we must wonder why authors chose to use this particular literary fiction. By deliberately addressing a text to a woman, the author marks it as suitable for use by a female audience; it thus may be an attempt to attract a particular audience. But by this form of address, the author also marks the text - or more accurately, the piety that it espouses - as inherently feminine. Thus not only is the audience gendered, but also the text itself.

The presence of women as addressees, and the fact that several of the treatises were apparently written at the addressee's request, does not necessarily mean that the texts promoted women's concerns. This body of literature, precisely because it is addressed to women, defines and promotes certain ideals of piety as feminine. The ideals are not necessarily those of the women, but of the authors, who, as far as can be determined, were clerics or male religious. The texts can thus be seen as an effort to direct female piety, or to constrain it within certain bounds. It is likely that they were intended not

⁵See Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (Oxford, 1957), p. 41; Vincent Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of Religion," in *Book Production and Publishing*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), p. 322.

only for the instruction of women, but also for the instruction of men who were in charge of directing women's religious lives: confessors, chaplains ministering to anchoresses, nuns, and in private households, and other spiritual directors. In some cases these texts may have been designed to reach women through such men. They are thus one of the most important sources for the study of ideals of female piety, a source that has remained relatively untapped. An examination of the ideals promoted by these texts is, however, outside the scope of this thesis. This body of literature is also a valuable source for expectations regarding women's devotional reading; the addressees are not simply women desiring to lead devout lives, they are women readers. In this chapter I examine first the women to whom the texts are addressed, and second what advice the texts offer these women about reading.

THE FEMALE READER

Some of the 33 treatises addressed to women are fairly short and simple, offering rudimentary information on how to lead a good spiritual life, with a few focusing solely on specific virtues (usually chastity), while others are lengthy, relatively sophisticated treatises designed for readers well advanced in their spiritual progress. Few of the texts have received much scholarly attention, and only a handful have been edited critically, although a larger number were printed in the late nineteenth century.⁶ Because many of the texts are likely to be unfamiliar to my reader, I give a brief description of them in my discussion below of the women to whom they are addressed.

Some two thirds of the 33 treatises address an audience of female

⁶Michael G. Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings", in A. S. G. Edwards, ed., *Middle English Prose: A Critical guide to Major Authors and Genres* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984); and Alexandra Barratt, "Works of Religious Instruction", in the same volume, 413-32, provide a great deal of information regarding scholarly discussion and editions of several of these texts. See also A. I. Doyle, "A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th and Early 16th Centuries, with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein," 2 vols., (Ph. D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1954).

religious. Four of these, including some of the best-known, are addressed to anchoresses. Of the late medieval texts examined here, the earliest is Richard Rolle's *Form of Living*, dedicated, according to manuscript tradition, to his disciple, Margaret Kirkby, on her enclosure at Layton (North Riding) in 1348, less than a year before his own death, and there is little indication of a wider intended audience.⁷ In 1435, nearly a century after Rolle's death, his *Incendium Amoris* was translated into Middle English at the instance of Margaret Heslyngton, a recluse at St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, in York, by the Carmelite Richard Misyn, prior of Lincoln.⁸ However, Misyn envisages a wider audience than just Margaret Heslyngton: "þerfore all redars here-of I pray, if 3our discrecyon o3t fynde þankeworthy, to god þerof gyf loueynge, & to þis holy man [i.e. Rolle]."⁹

Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, written to his sister probably between 1160 and 1162, was twice translated into Middle English, both translations maintaining the female recluse as the addressee, although the original recipient was of course long dead.¹⁰ Although the earlier translation,

⁷See S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, EETS os 293 (Oxford, 1988). Rolle's translation of the psalter into English is also associated with Margaret: the copy in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 286 tells us that it was written "at a worthy recluse prayer, cald dame Merget kyrkby" and a few lines later that Rolle wrote the psalter "with his hondes, to dame Merget kyrkby"; see Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle and Materials for His Biography*, M. L. A. Monograph ser. 3 (New York and London, 1927), p. 174. Longleat House, Marquis of Bath, MS 29 includes Rolle's other two English epistles, *The Commandment* and *Ego Dormio* in a collection of texts all dedicated to Margaret Kirkby; if these two were indeed written for Margaret, they were written before her enclosure as an anchoress.

⁸Richard Misyn, trans., *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, ed. Ralph Harvey, EETS os 106 (London, 1896), pp. 1, 104. On Margaret Heslyngton, see Angelo Raine, *Mediaeval York* (London, 1955), p. 108; and York, BIHR, Probate Register 2, f. 564 (Salvage). I am grateful to P. J. P. Goldberg for the last reference.

⁹Harvey, ed., *The Fire of Love*, p. 1.

¹⁰John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, eds., *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*, EETS os 287 (London, 1984).

made in the late fourteenth century and found only in the Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a.1), is addressed to an enclosed "suster", it has been altered to make it more suitable for devout laywomen. The first 14 sections of Aelred's Latin original, which deal with the external observances of an anchoress, have been omitted, leaving only his instructions regarding inner spiritual life: personal morality, virtues (especially chastity), private prayer, and meditation. The later translation, undertaken in the mid-fifteenth century, and found only in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 423, includes all of the original. The translator follows Aelred's text in addressing his sister who has requested the text, while indicating a wider audience of recluses: "I write not this forme of lyuyng of etyng and drynkyng only to the, that has euir holde thiself lowe thourgh scarsete of liflode, but to other whiche konnen not rule hem".¹¹

The first book of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, written in the late fourteenth century, is also addressed to an anchoress, although Hilton states that he is writing also for "any other man or woman who has taken the state of contemplative life".¹² Although Hilton at times writes *about* secular men and women, he specifies that he is not writing *to* them:

But now see . . . how much more it [covetousness] hinders and encumbers men and women in the world, who with all their senses and their practical efforts set themselves to toil night and day to get riches and an abundance of worldly goods. . . . I say no more of them at this time, for in this writing I am not speaking to them.¹³

Book 1 concludes with similar words: "not all these words that I write to you

¹¹*De Institutione Inclusarum*, ed. Ayto and Barratt, p. 8.

¹²*The Scale of Perfection*, 1.92; Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, trans. John P. H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward (New York, 1991), p. 160. Book 1 is translated from London, BL MS Harley 6579. No critical edition of *The Scale* has yet been published. Book 1 has been edited by the late A. J. Bliss, and is being prepared for the Early English Text Society by Michael G. Sargent. S. S. Hussey is editing Book 2 for the Society. Subsequent references to *The Scale* will consist of Book and Chapter numbers, and page references to the Clark and Dorward translation.

¹³*Scale* 1.71; Clark and Dorward, p. 144.

concern a person in active life, but they are for you or someone else who has the state of contemplative life."¹⁴ Book 2 of *The Scale* is addressed to a more general "ghostly friend", and is written in response to a request for more information about the human soul being the image of God. It is not clear whether this friend is the same as the sister of Book 1.¹⁵

A further 18 of the 33 Middle English treatises of spiritual guidance examined here are addressed to nuns. At least six of these seem to be aimed at newly professed nuns. It is striking that most of these newly professed nuns seem to be from wealthy backgrounds. While this may suggest that most nuns came from substantial families, it is perhaps more likely that such nuns were perceived to be in greater need of instruction to help them overcome cultural values regarding status, lineage, and wealth instilled into them through their upbringing, values that might lead them into the sin of pride. The earliest of the six texts is Richard Rolle's *Commandment*, which, according to Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd.v.64, was written for a nun of Hampole (West Riding). However, Longleat House, Marquis of Bath, MS 29 includes it in a collection of treatises all dedicated to Rolle's disciple, Margaret Kirkby. As S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson points out, the two ascriptions are not mutually exclusive, for Margaret was a nun of Hampole before she became an anchoress.¹⁶ The addressee seems to be relatively new to the religious life, for she is instructed to:

Change thy thought from þe world and cast hit holy on hym,
and he shal nurisshe þe. Change þi mouth from vnnayte and
wordys speche and spek of hym. . . Change þi hand from

¹⁴*Scale* 1.92; Clark and Dorward, p. 160.

¹⁵A. I. Doyle points out that Book 2 "requires more of the reader than book 1"; see Doyle, "Survey," 1, p. 246. Nevertheless there is the sense of a wider audience than in Book 1, for Book 2 stresses that contemplation is not the preserve of those vowed to a religious life but something to which every Christian should aspire. See Clark and Dorward, trans., *The Scale of Perfection*, pp. 19-20, and J. P. H. Clark, "Action and Contemplation in Walter Hilton," *The Downside Review* 97 (1979), pp. 269-74.

¹⁶*Richard Rolle*, ed. Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 37.

workes of vanytees and lift ham in his name.¹⁷

Rolle does not name his addressee, whom he addresses only as "pou", but there is every indication that he has a particular individual in mind, and there is little suggestion that he envisages a wider audience beyond that particular individual. London, BL MS Harley 2406 contains the unique copy of a commentary on a letter written by Walter Hilton, now lost. Both the letter and the commentary seem to be addressed to a particular Gilbertine nun, although there is some suggestion that she has not yet taken her final vows.¹⁸ The addressee is instructed to defend herself against the devil, the flesh, and the world using obedience, chastity, and poverty; to willingly endure adversity; to pray to God and the saints; to confess frequently; not to be judgemental; and to embrace the communal aspect of monastic life. The basic nature of the teaching suggests that she was newly professed.

An Exhortation to Nuns is addressed to "My dear susterys Mary and Anne with all the other devo3th dyscyples of the scole of cryste in your monastery of Amysbury".¹⁹ The text is intended to provide the two nuns, who are evidently only recently professed, with examples to guide them in their religious lives; it focusses on the renunciation of worldly desires and expands on their vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, and is peppered with quotations and examples drawn from the Bible and the writings of the Church fathers. The text dates from the early sixteenth century.²⁰

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁸Jolliffe H.21. The commentary is printed in John P. H. Clark and Cheryl Taylor, eds., *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 124 (Salzburg, 1987), pp. 327-333.

¹⁹Jolliffe O.35. The treatise is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. 42 (S.C. 30149), ff. 1r-30r. The text is imperfect, with perhaps one quire missing between f. 10v and f. 11r. The text is discussed in Yvonne Parrey, "'Devoted Disciples of Christ': Early Sixteenth-Century Religious Life in the Nunnery at Amesbury," *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 67, no. 164 (October, 1994).

²⁰Extracts from the vow of profession on f. 27v show that the then prioress was named Christine. A Christine Fauntleroy is named as prioress of

A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Into Religion, which purports to be an extract from St Jerome's letter to Eustochium, seems likewise to be addressed to a recently professed nun, and one from a wealthy background.²¹ Unlike Rolle's *Commandment*, the commentary on Hilton's lost letter, and *An Exhortation to Nuns*, here there is less sense that the addressee is a specific individual. The treatise stresses the importance of poverty, meekness, obedience, and instructs the reader to eschew idleness, gluttony, and the company of men. Another text addressed to a newly professed nun, or perhaps a novice, is that beginning "Þe prophete seys þus vnto a mayden þat shuld leve vnder þe rewle of holy religyone".²² The addressee is exhorted to renounce earthly pleasures and to devote herself to the service of Christ:

Change þi speche fro wordly veyne wordes & ydell & sette it one Ihesu criste & on his lawe. Chaunge þi handes from werke of vanyte & lifte þem vp in cristes name & wirke onely for his lofe . . .²³

However, there is little sense that the "mayden" is a particular individual.

A pair of treatises of spiritual direction, known as *Tree of the Holy Ghost* and *The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost* were addressed to a nun at different stages of her religious life.²⁴ The first and shorter of these, *The*

Amesbury in documents dating from 1510 and 1519; other prioresses are mentioned in documents dating from 1507 and 1530; see VCH Wiltshire, vol. 3, p. 258.

²¹It is known to exist in only one manuscript: Oxford, St John's College MS 173, ff. 133v-138v; see Jolliffe H.18.

²²Jolliffe H.26, O.38. The text is found only in Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.7.47, ff. 78r-83r.

²³Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.7.47, f. 81v.

²⁴Jolliffe H.7, O.13 (*The Tree of the Holy Ghost*) and H.27, O.39 (*The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost*); IPMEP 562; see also Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," pp. 161-2. Both treatises are printed in J. J. Vaissier, ed., *A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & xii Frutes of the Holy Goost* (Gronigen, 1960). The works are known to survive in three manuscripts, and were printed by Robert Copland in 1534, and by Robert Copland and Myghel

Tree of the Holy Ghost seems to have been written when she was new to the religious life, and the second a number of years later. Both are allegorical, comparing the nun to tree that will bear spiritual fruit. The first is more of a practical guide, instructing the addressee how to be a good nun, and the second is a description, often forced and repetitive, of the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, goodness, kindness of heart, mildness, faith, good living, continence, and chastity.

Three works of spiritual guidance were composed or translated specifically for the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* is a translation of and an extensive commentary on the services used by the Syon nuns.²⁵ Much of the commentary offers instruction regarding prayer, contemplation, and reading. Written by a brother of the order, probably soon after the community's formal enclosure in 1420, it was printed nearly a century later by Richard Fawkes, at the request of the Abbess and Confessor General, evidently for use outside the abbey as well as within: Fawkes says that the *Myroure* is "very necessary for all relygyous persones and other good deuoute people."²⁶ St Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue* was also translated for the nuns of Syon as *The Orchard of Syon*, addressing the "Religyous modir & deuoute sustren clepid & chosen bisily to laboure at the hous of Syon".²⁷ Because two of the three manuscripts in which it is found

Fawkes in 1535 (STC 13608).

²⁵J. H. Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, EETS es 19 (London, 1873). Ann M. Hutchison is currently preparing an edition of the *Myroure* for the society, based on both manuscript and printed versions. See also her "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989); and "The *Myroure of oure Ladye*: A Medieval Guide for Contemplatives," in *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, 2 vols, Analecta Cartusiana 35:19; *Spiritualität Heute und Gestern* 19 (Salzburg, 1993).

²⁶Hutchison, "A Medieval Guide for Contemplatives," p. 226.

²⁷Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, eds., *The Orchard of Syon*, EETS os 258 (London, 1966); Lagorio and Sargent 74. The quotation is from Hodgson and Liegey, p. 1.

date from the early fifteenth century, the text's editors, Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, suggest that it was made for the first generation of nuns at Syon.²⁸ It was later printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1519. Also addressed to the Syon nuns is one of the two complete Middle English translations of David of Augsburg's (d. 1272) *De Exterioribus et Interioribus Hominis Compositione*, a long, highly technical work for male religious in three books addressed respectively to spiritual beginners, proficient, and perfects. Both translations call themselves *Formula Noviciorum*. One of these was written in the early sixteenth century by Thomas Prestins, a Syon brother, and is found in Cambridge, University Library MS Dd.2.33; this version is addressed specifically to sisters, and the text is adapted to make it appropriate for an audience of female religious.²⁹ The second translation addresses itself to a wider audience consisting of those devout persons unable to read Latin - religious and lay, male and female:

And for as moche as the langage of latyn is vnknowen to many religiose and namely to wommen, Therefore I have purposed by the grace of god our lorde to translate the syed book in to englysche to the edificacion of the symple people in religion and of all other that desiret to be seruantes of god . . . And thought yt so be that thys booke . . . towche principally the religious persons neuer the later eury seculer man or womman that desyreth to be the seruand of god may fynde here in sufficient instruccion and direccions³⁰

Another text that recommends itself to both religious and lay is *The*

²⁸Hodgson and Liegey, eds., *The Orchard of Syon*, p. vii; Phyllis Hodgson, "The Orchard of Syon and the English Mystical Tradition," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 50 (1964), pp. 234-5.

²⁹Lagorio and Sargent 67. See P. S. Jolliffe, "Middle English Translations of *De Exterioribus et Interioribus Hominis Compositione*," *Medieval Studies* 36 (1974); and Michael G. Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), p. 150. Jolliffe points out (p. 273) that *Formula Noviciorum* is one of the longest treatises of its kind extant in Middle English. Neither translation has been printed. Unfortunately, the constraint of time has prevented me from examining the treatise in any detail.

³⁰Printed in Jolliffe, "Middle English Translations," p. 274.

Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades, which claims to be a translation of St Jerome's letter to Demetriades, although Clare Kirchberger has identified it as a translation of a portion of Pelagius's letter to Demetriades.³¹ The translator declares that although the original letter was written to a maiden who had vowed chastity, it is useful to any person, "be he religius or seculer wedded man or woman or sengul or wat degree he stondit in".³² Notwithstanding this dedication, and the occasional reference to a readership of men and women, the text follows the Latin original in addressing a woman religious, offering guidance in leading a good spiritual life, and emphasizing the virtues of chastity and abstinence.

The Chastising of God's Children, a late fourteenth-century treatise dealing with the withdrawal of devotion and the temptations that follow it, is addressed to a woman religious by her spiritual advisor.³³ The text's editors, Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge, argue that the author was indeed a practised confessor, and that he "had in mind the needs of a certain house when he wrote", but the text gives little indication of what house that might have been.³⁴ Another treatise that focuses on temptation, William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*, was translated into Middle English three times in the later Middle Ages.³⁵ The third and final translation is addressed to a

³¹Clare Kirchberger (published anonymously), "From the Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades," *Life of the Spirit* 5 (1951), p. 400. Jolliffe H.5.

³²Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 127r.

³³Lagorio and Sargent 83. See Joyce Bazire and Eric College, eds. *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (Oxford, 1957). See also Doyle, "Survey," vol. 1, pp. 235-42; Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," p. 157.

³⁴Bazire and Colledge, eds., *Chastising*, p. 41.

³⁵Lagorio and Sargent 75. See M. B. Hackett, "William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynne*, ed. J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall, and F. X. Martin (Dublin, 1961). See also Doyle, "Survey," vol. 1, pp. 183-7; Jolliffe, K.8; and Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," pp. 151-2. An epistle to a "sister", found in London, BL Royal 18.A.x, contains lengthy extracts from the *De Remediis*. Whether

nun, although the teaching about the value of temptations and ways of overcoming it are appropriate for laywomen as well. Hackett notes that this version is "a far cry from William Flete's [Latin] text", and that it is a greatly expanded recension of the second Middle English translation, with many additions.

Two of the treatises addressed to nuns focus on their clothing. *A Mirror for Maidens*, which is intended for priests as well as nuns, urges nuns to eschew rich clothing in favour following Christ's example of humble dress.³⁶ *A Moralization on Articles of Clothing*, part of a sermon on the Assumption, allegorizes each article of clothing worn by a nun: "3owre surplis," for example, "schal be very knowynge of god & contynual consideracion of his benefetis & also besy mend of his commaunmentes, so þat 3e truly knowe quat 3e owe to god, quat to 3owre sustres & quat to þe werd."³⁷

A Little Treatise against fleshly affections and all unthrifty lusts is intended to stir the audience to spiritual, rather than physical, love. Although it is addressed to female religious, the author notes that "yet every man havynge discrecioun þat redis þerin may also take well hys lernyng and spirituall avail þerby as it had ben written to hem also specially as it is written to women."³⁸

the addressee was a woman religious or a laywomen is not clear; see p. # below. The third Middle English version is printed in Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick, eds., "'Remedies Against Temptation': The Third English Version of William Flete," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 5 (1968).

³⁶Jolliffe I.34, N.14, O.14; Raymo 152, pp. 2321, 2535. The text is extant only in London, BL Harley 2388, ff. 4r-7v.

³⁷Cambridge, University Library MS Hh.1.11, ff. 130v-132v, f. 131r. This is the only known copy of *A Moralization*. See Raymo 179, pp. 2335-6, 2542; Colledge and Chadwick, eds., "Remedies Against Temptation," pp. 206-7; Doyle, "Survey", vol. 2, pp. 96-7.

³⁸Jolliffe K.1. The treatise is found in two manuscripts: London, BL Royal 17.C.xviii, ff. 121r-132r and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C 894, ff. 97v-106r; copies are also found in *Disce Mori* and its derivative *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*. The quoted passage is from Rawlinson C 894, f. 98v. See Gillespie, "Vernacular Books," p. 321.

The Doctrine of the Heart, a translation of the thirteenth-century *De Doctrina Cordis* attributed to Gerard of Liège, is a lengthy guide to the spiritual life.³⁹ Like the Latin original, the Middle English version is addressed to women religious, although there are no indications that it was directed at any particular individual or community. Another lengthy treatise on leading a spiritual life, *The Manner of Good Living*, found only in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, ff. 1r-175r, is a translation of the *De modo bene vivendi ad sororem* ascribed to St Bernard, but now attributed to Thomas de Froidmont.⁴⁰ It is one of the longest treatises of spiritual guidance in Middle English, and it claims to contain "the summe of euery vertue necessary vn to cristis religion and holy conuersacion".⁴¹

Four treatises of spiritual guidance are addressed to laywomen. At least three of these are directed to widows. The *Book to a Mother* is a long prose treatise giving a brief exposition of the elements of the faith, including the Pater Noster, Ave, and Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Beatitudes, and the Seven Sacraments, before it launches into instructions on leading a devout life imitating the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary. It is heavily scriptural; the audience is instructed to meditate on events in the lives of Christ and his mother, and the work ends with selections, occasionally glossed, from the New Testament. The author, a priest, addresses the work to his mother, who seems to have been a widow, although he envisages a wider lay audience as well: "To knowe þe bettere my purpos in þis boke," begins the text, "wite þe wel þat I desire euerych man and womman and child to be my moder, for Crist

³⁹Lagorio and Sargent 66; Jolliffe H.1, O.3. See Mary Patrick Candon, "The Doctrine of the Heart: Edited from the Manuscripts with Introduction and Notes" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1963).

⁴⁰Jolliffe H.23, O.36. It is a translation of the Latin text in PL 184, pp. 1199-1306. See also A. I. Doyle, "A Text Attributed to Ruusbroec Circulating in England," in *Dr. L. Reypens-Album*, ed. A. Ampe (Antwerp, 1964), p. 2.

⁴¹Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 517, f. 1r.

seyþ: he þat doþ his Fader wille is his broþer, suster and moder."⁴²

St Austin's Book of Christian Life is also addressed to a widow. A translation of St Augustine's *De Vita Christiana*, it details how a true Christian should behave, emphasising the necessity of virtues and good works as well as that of faith. While most of the treatise is applicable to any Christian, the final section deals specifically with widows.⁴³ *Of Widowhood*, a short text surviving in only one manuscript, draws heavily on the end section of *St Austin's Book of Christian Life*, admonishing widows to live soberly and chastely, and to occupy themselves with prayer.⁴⁴ Although the author addresses the audience directly, using "you", there is little indication that any particular women are intended.

Richard Rolle's *Ego Dormio* seems also to have been written for a laywoman, and one considering entering a nunnery. Although Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd.5.64 records that the epistle was written to a nun of Yedingham Priory (East Riding), S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson points out that Rolle "appears to be addressing one ignorant of any form of conventual life, and his object in writing is persuasion."⁴⁵ In comparison with his other two English epistles, *The Commandment* and *The Form of Living*, the spiritual instruction in *Ego Dormio* is basic, and thus more suitable for a laywoman. Rolle recognises that the text may pass beyond the hands of the addressee: "For I say nat þat þou, or another þat redeth þis, shal do hit al."⁴⁶

The remaining seven treatises of spiritual guidance give no clear

⁴²Adrian James McCarthy, ed., *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92; Studies in the English Mystics 1 (Salzburg, 1981), p. 1. See also Raymo, no. 16, pp. 2267, 2485; Jolliffe A.5; IPMEP 767; Doyle, "Survey", vol. 1, p. 56, n. 11b.

⁴³Jolliffe H.30. The Latin original is in *PL* 40, pp. 1031-1046.

⁴⁴Raymo 151. *Of Widowhood* is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 938.

⁴⁵Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, p. lxvi. Lagorio and Sargent 9.

⁴⁶Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, p. 31.

indication of whether the female addressee was lay or religious. A short prose tract beginning "siþin charite alle þing leeuþ" discusses self-knowledge, the soul's likeness to God, and on loving one's neighbours.⁴⁷ *Disce Mori*, which focusses more on the best way to live, is an exceptionally long compendium of religious doctrine, beginning with the *Ars Moriendi* and covering the programme of religious instruction as outlined in the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281.⁴⁸ The text concludes with a long exhortation focussing on contemplation and the love of God. It was written sometime between 1385 and 1455 for "my best beloued sustre Dame Alice", who was probably, but not necessarily, a nun or recluse.⁴⁹ *A Good Remedy Against Temptation* is a letter containing passages of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*.⁵⁰ Unlike the third Middle English version of Flete's work, discussed above, which is addressed to a nun, this version is addressed to a "sister" who may be lay or secular, and the letter was written to answer one from her:

Dere sister I haue in partie vnderstonde by thyn writyng of diuerse temtacions & taryinges that thu hast suffered . . . I write the here some remedies the wheche I haue fownde in the writynges of holy doctours.⁵¹

⁴⁷Jolliffe D.4; Raymo 160. The treatise is found only in London, BL Add. 24202, ff. 25r-26r. Although Raymo says that *Charite Alle Thing Leeveth* is addressed to a nun, there is in fact no indication whether the "sister in crist" is enclosed or lay.

⁴⁸Jolliffe A.6; Raymo 11; Doyle, "Survey", vol. 1, pp. 74-5. Part of *Disce Mori* is printed in Noel Allan Chadwick, "An Edition of *Disce Mori* (pp. 1-177): Introduction and Seven Deadly Sins", (M. A. Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1966). Much of the contents of the work were abridged and rearranged for the use of parish priests in a compilation known as *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*.

⁴⁹Chadwick, "An Edition of *Disce Mori*," pp. vii-ix.

⁵⁰Jolliffe K.3. See also Hackett, "William Flete," p. 348, and Doyle, "Survey", vol. 1, pp. 185-6. The letter is contained in London, BL MS Royal 18.A.x, ff. 10v-15r.

⁵¹London, BL MS Royal 18.A.x, f. 10v.

The Middle English translation of Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapiencie*, known as *The Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom* is addressed to "My most worschiful lady . . . & derrest-loued goostly dou3hter" although the author-translator, a chaplain, envisages a wider audience of "oper deuowte persones þat desyrene þis drawynge owt in englische".⁵² There is no indication whether the woman was religious or secular; single, married or widowed. The author-translator explains in his prologue that his text is intended to "stirre deuowte sowles to þe trewe love of owre lorde Jhesu", and that he has extracted from the *Horologium Sapiencie* only what he thinks is suitable for his audience.⁵³

Two treatises addressed to devout women of one sort or another focus solely on virginity. Both *A Noble Treatise of Maidenhood* and the shorter *Treatise of Maidenhood* praise virginity and exhort the addressees, who may have been women religious or girls considering entering a nunnery, to lead a chaste life.⁵⁴ Finally, *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, the treatise on humility with which I began this discussion of the female addressee, is addressed variously to a sister or a brother, and it is not clear whether the addressee is religious or secular.

The female addressees of these 33 treatises of spiritual guidance are all female religious, or, to a lesser extent, *widows and other women who are like female religious* in that they are leading (or supposed to be leading) a celibate life. Although seven of the texts give no clear indication of whether the

⁵²IPMEP 465; Lagorio and Sargent 80. See also Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," p. 161, and Doyle, "Survey", vol. 1, pp. 212-8. The text is printed in K. Horstmann, "Orologium Sapientiae or The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom aus MS. Douce 114," *Angia* 10 (1888). The quotation is from Horstmann, "The Seven Poyntes," p. 325.

⁵³Horstmann, "Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom," p. 325. See also Roger Lovatt, "Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter, 1982).

⁵⁴Jolliffe G.16, O.31, and Raymo 153 (*A Noble Treatise of Maidenhood*); Jolliffe H.29, O.43, and Raymo 156 (*A Treatise of Maidenhood*).

addressee was enclosed or lay, none is specifically addressed to a married laywoman. The devout woman reader, actively seeking spiritual advancement, is thus constructed as a celibate woman. While these writings do not actually denigrate marriage, as does the early thirteenth-century *Hali Meidenhad*, they ignore it, stressing the virtues of virginity and continence.⁵⁵ This body of religious literature thus delimits a female spirituality that is accessible only to anchoresses, nuns, vowesses, and chaste widows. Wives, if not specifically excluded, are not included.

If works of spiritual guidance were not composed specifically for married women, what religious works were written for them? Lydgate, Bokenham, Capgrave, and Hoccleve all dedicated religious texts to specific laywomen, although it can sometimes be difficult to determine if the dedicatee was married or widowed at the time of the text's composition.⁵⁶ Nearly all of these texts are saints' lives or other narrative works, and the authors - or incipits - frequently state that the text was written at the request of the dedicatee. Although these works are dedicated to particular women, none addresses the dedicatee directly as "you" or "sister" as do the 33 treatises of spiritual guidance detailed above. They construct devout married patronesses rather than devout, married women readers; in fact they do not construct any reader as they are not addressed to anyone in particular. This difference lends credence to the suggestion that some of the unnamed addressees of the guidance texts may have been literary fictions. We are left with no constructed married woman reader.

Although texts such as these do not provide specific advice on how to

⁵⁵For *Hali Meidenhad*, see Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Medieval English Prose For Women* (Oxford, 1992), 2-43.

⁵⁶These texts and their dedicatees are listed above in Chapter 1, pp. 73-4. In contrast, Symon Wynter's translation of the *Life of St Jerome*, for Margaret Holand, duchess of Clarence, was definitely made for her during her widowhood. See George R Keiser, "Patronage and Piety in Fifteenth-Century England: Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, Wymon Wynter and Beinecke MS 317," *Yale University Library Gazette* (October, 1985); C. Horstmann, "Prosalegenden," *Anglia* 3 (1880).

lead a devout life, they could provide women not only with entertaining stories but also with models of holy living to be imitated.⁵⁷ However, like the 33 treatises of spiritual guidance addressed to celibate women, the predominant model is that of virginity. Nearly all of these poems written by Lydgate, Bokenham, Capgrave, and Hoccleve focus on virgins - virgin martyrs and the Virgin Mary - whose lives were consequently far removed from the lives of the dedicatees who lived in a world where concerns about lineage and heirs were paramount. St Margaret may have been called upon by women in childbirth, but did her *Life* necessarily offer guidance to women trying to combine married life with devotion? Similarly, although the Virgin Mary was a mother, she was nevertheless a virgin, a paradox that no ordinary woman could achieve. Lydgate's *Invocation to St Anne*, and Bokenham's *Lives of St Anne and St Elizabeth of Hungary* are particularly noteworthy in this context, for they demonstrate that marriage and sanctity are not necessarily incompatible.

There is a striking mismatch between the constructed devout woman reader and the actual devout women readers, who are discussed above in Chapter 1. Women religious and widows were not the only women to own and use religious literature. Although our view of laywomen's book ownership

⁵⁷Eamon Duffy, however, argues that virgin martyrs did not act as exemplars and that their "heroically maintained virginity" was simply "the source of the special intercessory relationship with Christ" and his mother. See Eamon Duffy, "Holy Maydes, Holy Wyfes: the Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England", in *Women in the Church*, Studies in Church History 27 (Oxford, 1990), p. 190. I believe that Duffy's interpretation of the roles played by saints in late medieval England is too limited. While it is unlikely that actual women were expected to go to such lengths to defend their virginity and avoid marriage, the *Lives* of these female saints nevertheless serve to highlight the cultural importance placed on women's sexual purity. Katherine Lewis, in her "Paradigmatic Young Women? The Upbringing and Education of Virgin Martyrs in some Late-Medieval English Narratives," presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July, 1995, has suggested that the lives of virgin martyrs may have been used to provide various models of ideal female behaviour, especially for young women, in fifteenth-century England.

is skewed towards widows because so many female testators were widows, it is inconceivable that women turned to the use of religious literature only after the deaths of their husbands. It is far more likely that those widows who owned and used books were continuing the interests and practices of a lifetime. As we have seen, married women certainly commissioned religious texts, and they also received bequests of books from both men and women. Many of the extant manuscripts and incunabula examined in this thesis were probably owned by women during their husbands' lifetimes.

The discrepancy between the constructed woman reader and the real women readers is particularly striking in the case of Richard Rolle. Of Rolle's three English epistles, two are addressed to women religious and the third probably to a woman who was thinking about entering a nunnery. Yet Rolle enjoyed the patronage of married women such as Lady Dalton, wife of John Dalton, who provided Rolle with a cell in their house during his early years as a hermit. According to the biographical office of Rolle, Lady Dalton and her friends frequently interrupted Rolle's contemplation by seeking his counsel. Rolle himself refers to a series of another four aristocratic patronesses and elsewhere describes himself conversing with noblemen and noblewomen.⁵⁸ However, although Rolle evidently provided these women with advice, he did not, as far as we know, write treatises of spiritual guidance for them. Undoubtedly they would have valued such treatises.

Within the vast corpus of religious literature intended for use by the laity - both men and women - there are no texts that focus specifically on the piety of married women. This is not to say that wives are completely ignored. A number of treatises of spiritual direction are aimed at a mixed audience that specifically included women. I have already mentioned *Formula Noviciorum*, of which there are two Middle English translations, one written for the nuns of Syon Abbey, and the other recommended not only for enclosed religious but also for "euery seculer man or womman that desyreth to be the seruand of

⁵⁸Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 85-6.

god".⁵⁹ Similarly, the author/translator of *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades*, which is addressed to a "sister", recommends it for both religious and secular men and women, married and single.⁶⁰ Other texts of spiritual guidance are specifically addressed to devout men and women; some of these are intended for lay use, while others seem to be directed at both a lay and a religious audience.⁶¹ *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* is addressed to laymen and laywomen who for various reasons are unable to enter a religious community.⁶² The longer version of Walter Hilton's *Epistle on Mixed Life*, which, like *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, offers a model of lay piety that combines both active and contemplative life, is variously addressed to "Broþer and suster" or "Breþerne and systeme".⁶³ A late fourteenth-century work on penance, *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, generally believed to have been written for an East Midland nunnery, is nonetheless addressed to "bretheren and sustren".⁶⁴ *The Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, also called *Fervor Amoris*, written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, is

⁵⁹See p. 98 above.

⁶⁰See pp. 98-9 above.

⁶¹The corpus of religious literature addressed to laypeople is vast, and I have confined my discussion to works that offer guidance in leading a devout life, omitting those works that are more purely didactic or narrative.

⁶²George G. Perry, *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26 (London, 1867), pp. 49-59; Raymo 186; Jolliffe H.16.

⁶³Lagorio and Sargent 30. See S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Walter Hilton's Mixed Life Edited From Lambeth Palace MS 472* Salzburg Studies in English Literature; Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92:15 (Salzburg, 1986), pp. x-xi. Despite this form of address, the text is written for a secular lord, a wealthy married man whom Hilton knew personally.

⁶⁴Raymo 84; Jolliffe C.2, C.5, E.14. See, for example, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 923, ff. 4v, 10r. See also Charles L. Regan, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul: Edited from MS Bodl. 923 with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary," (Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1963). Raymo 84

addressed to "boþe men and women" and to "goode broþer or suster".⁶⁵ It describes four degrees of love: ordained, clean, steadfast, and perfect. *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle*, an allegorical work that compares leading a spiritual life with preparation for battle, is also addressed to a "brother and sister".⁶⁶ There are other such texts, of course. While texts such as these instruct laywomen - unmarried, married, and widowed - in leading a devout life, the fact that all are addressed to both men and women suggests that laywomen were not perceived as needing particular spiritual guidance, and that their devotional needs were virtually identical to those of their male counterparts.⁶⁷

We may well wonder why there are no religious treatises addressed specifically to wives as there are to female religious and other celibate women. Surely devout wives and mothers needed spiritual direction just as much, if not more, than their enclosed sisters who were leading a formalized and regulated religious life. Devout widows, after all, were once devout wives. Furthermore, as I have shown, mothers seem to have been responsible for the primary religious education of their children, but there is no literature addressed to them to help them with this important task.⁶⁸ Wives were caught between conflicting attitudes towards female sexuality. On the one hand they partook of a culture in which lineage and the production of heirs

⁶⁵Margaret Connolly, ed., *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, EETS os 303 (Oxford, 1993); Jolliffe H.15; IPMEP 362; Lagorio and Sargent 41; Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," p. 160.

⁶⁶Valerie Murray, "An Edition of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle and Milicia Christi*" (D. Phil Thesis, Oxford University, 1970); Raymo 173; Jolliffe H.3; Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," p. 159.

⁶⁷Although this literature can be seen as part of the Church's efforts to engage with a spiritually motivated laity, they in fact hold up the enclosed, contemplative spiritual life as the ideal. Rather than offering laymen and laywomen an alternative model of piety, they make a measure of monastic spirituality available to the devout laity. This is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

⁶⁸See Introduction above.

were of primary importance. On the other hand, virginity was the spiritual ideal for women.⁶⁹ Surely they needed some guidance on how to reconcile these conflicting attitudes.

It is possible that the clerics and other male religious who were the authors of these treatises assumed that devout married laywomen had access to sufficient spiritual instruction through treatises addressed to both men and women such as *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* or *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, as well as through sermons and their confessors and any other spiritual advisors, and thus had no need for their own written guides to leading a devout life. But if that is the case, we then must wonder why nuns, recluses, widows and other women leading chaste lives were seen to be in particular need of written direction, for they too listened to sermons and went to confession.

The construction of the devout woman reader as virginal or celibate was no doubt strongly influenced by the long tradition of treatises, beginning in the second century, written by men for nuns, recluses, and consecrated virgins. The canon includes Tertullian's *De Cultu Feminarum*, Cyprian's *De Habitu Virginum*, St Jerome's letters to Paula, Eustochium, and Demetriades, Ambrose's *De Virginibus ad Marcellinam*, Augustine's letter to the nuns of Hippo, Goscelin's *Liber Confortatorius*, written to Eve, Abelard's correspondence with Heloise, St Bernard's letters to the virgin Sophia and to three nuns (Hildegard of Bingen, a nun of St Mary's Abbey, Troyes, and an unidentified nun), Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, written at the request of his older sister, and the *Ancrene Wisse*, composed for three anchoresses. There is no corresponding tradition of such texts written for

⁶⁹The importance that the aristocracy placed on the production of heirs is discussed in Joel T. Rosenthal, *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege in Fifteenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, 1991). Virginity is discussed by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "The Virgin's Tale," in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London and New York, 1994), and her notes provide a bibliography for the subject.

wives.⁷⁰

Late medieval depictions of the Virgin Mary reading must surely have been equally influential in the literary construction of the devout woman reader. Although Mary is not the only female saint to be depicted with books, she is, as far as I know, the most frequently depicted woman reader.⁷¹ There are pictures of Mary learning to read at her mother's knee, reading while giving birth, reading on the Flight into Egypt, reading with the Christ Child, but the most frequently depicted scene where Mary is reading is the Annunciation.⁷² M. T. Clanchy has pointed out that before the twelfth century the Virgin Annunciate is normally depicted spinning; in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, she is almost invariably shown with an open book in front of her.⁷³ The reasons behind this iconographical shift remain

⁷⁰There are 23 surviving letters written by St Bernard of Clairvaux to various women, some of whom were married. These letters were for the most part to do with business and personal matters rather than with spiritual counsel. See Jean Leclercq, *Women and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, Cistercian Studies 104 (Kalamazoo, 1989). A fourteenth-century French treatise entitled *Abbaye du Saint Esprit* is addressed to laywomen who, for various reasons, including marriage, are unable to enter a religious order. The Middle English translation, *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, which is discussed in greater depth below, is addressed to laymen as well as laywomen.

⁷¹I have also found images of Saints Barbara, Katherine, and Mary Magdalen reading or holding books. St Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, is frequently depicted teaching her daughter to read. In this iconographical tradition St Anne is a teacher rather than a reader. See pp. 40-41 above.

⁷²See Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith Bennett *et al.* (Chicago and London, 1989), p. 155 and plates 1, 2, 5, 7-11.

⁷³See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford, 1993), pp. 191-2. Clanchy expanded on some of his earlier observations in his paper "Why is the Virgin Mary Depicted as a Pious Reader From the Twelfth Century Onwards?" given at the Women and the Book Symposium at St Hilda's College, Oxford, 27-30 August, 1993.

unclear.⁷⁴ Mary's association with books may symbolize her literal embodiment of the Word, i.e. Christ. Or it may reflect the social reality of aristocratic and bourgeois women who used books for prayer, meditation, and instruction. But whatever the reasons behind these iconographical changes, the Virgin Mary was inextricably linked with devotional reading. Mary was thus the archetype of the devout woman reader. Through this iconography, women's devotional reading is associated not only with virginity or celibacy, but also with meekness. This is a theme to which I return later in this chapter.

The fact that the 33 treatises of spiritual guidance construct a celibate reader does not necessarily mean that sexually active women (and men) were not intended to use them. Several authors envisage a wider audience than just the addressee, although the wider audience generally comprises people leading much the same lifestyle as the addressee, and only one text, *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades*, explicitly recommends itself to *married* men and women, while still addressing itself specifically to a nun.⁷⁵ We must wonder, however, whether writers such as Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton were aware that their works would achieve such a wide circulation, reaching far beyond their original intended audiences. Nevertheless, much of the teaching contained in this literature would be appropriate for any devout person. Nuns, anchoresses, and widows did not have a monopoly on virtuous living, meditation, or contemplation; nor, surely, were they the only women to suffer spiritual temptation or tribulation.⁷⁶

A few of the 33 texts addressed to women are known to have been owned by laywomen, although in cases where such texts are bequeathed by a widow, we do not know if she owned it during her husband's lifetime or only

⁷⁴See Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," p. 155; Clanchy stressed this point in his paper "Why is the Virgin Mary Depicted as a Pious Reader From the Twelfth Century Onwards?"

⁷⁵See, for example, Book I of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*.

⁷⁶On contemplation as an activity available to all Christians, see Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (1967), pp. 219-223.

after his death.⁷⁷ Agnes Stapilton, widow of Sir Brian Stapilton, bequeathed a copy of *The Chastising of God's Children* to the nuns of Esholt Priory (West Riding) in 1448; three years later Mercy Ormesby, widow of Arthur Ormesby, gave her copy of the same to the prioress of Easebourne Priory (Sussex).⁷⁸ In 1481, Margaret Purdans, a widow of Norwich, left a copy of *The Doctrine of the Heart* to the Franciscan nuns of Bruisyard Abbey (Suffolk).⁷⁹ *The Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom* was among the books owned by Cecily, daughter of Edward IV and wife of John lord Welles.⁸⁰ *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* was owned by Anne Harling (d.1498) and by an Elizabeth.⁸¹ One of Anne Harling's kinswomen by her third marriage, Elizabeth de Vere, wife of John thirteenth Earl of Oxford, owned a copy of the third Middle English translation of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*.⁸² Book One of *The Scale of Perfection* was bequeathed in

⁷⁷A French copy of the *Ancrene Riwe* was given to Eleanor Cobham, second wife of Humphrey duke of Gloucester, by Joan, widow of Thomas Holand, between 1433 and 1441: London, BL MS Cotton Vitellius F.vii. The heavily damaged gift inscription is on f. 164v. See J. A. Herbert, *The French Text of the Ancrene Riwe* EETS os 219 (London, 1944), pp. xii-xiii.

⁷⁸For Agnes Stapilton see PRO Prob. 11/3, f. 279v; *North Country Wills*, pp. 48-9. For Mercy Ormesby see PRO, Kempe 299; H. R. Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills", *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1902-4), 99-121, p. 116.

⁷⁹Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. A. Caston, ff. 163v-164r (Purdans); Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), p. 112.

⁸⁰A list of fourteen books apparently belonging to Cecily and John is found in London, BL MS Royal 15.D.ii, f. 211r. John died in 1499, and in 1502 Cecily married Thomas Kymbe of Fryskney. She died in 1507.

⁸¹Anne Wingfield, née Harling, owned London, BL MS Harley 4012; an inscription on f. 153r reads "Thys ys the boke of dame anne wyngefeld of har[l]yng". London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597, formerly Coughton Court, Throckmorton collection, has the name "Elyzbeth" on f. 95r. These manuscripts are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

⁸²London, BL MS Harley 1706, ff. 114v-139v; see A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 25, part 2 (1958).

1438 by Eleanor Roos to the wife of her nephew, and books called "Hilton" are mentioned in the wills of Margaret Purdans, widow of Norwich, and Cecily Neville, duchess of York, in 1481 and 1495 respectively.⁸³ It is likely that these were copies of *The Scale*. Cecily's grand-daughter, Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, and Elizabeth's mother-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort, gave a printed copy of *The Scale*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1494 at Margaret's request, to Mary Roos, one of Elizabeth's ladies.⁸⁴

We may wonder how these women read the texts, and whether they read them differently during different stages of their life-cycles. If they read them while they were sexually active as wives, were they concerned that the addressee was celibate? Did the emphasis that such texts place on virginity, or continence, serve to alienate the married reader? One method for married women to read this literature and to integrate its teachings into their lives is indirectly offered by *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, a late fourteenth-century translation and expansion of a mid-fourteenth-century French prose tract addressed to women, *L'Abbaye du Saint Esprit*. The English *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, addressed to "brethir and systers", was evidently popular: it is known to survive in 24 manuscripts, and it was printed three times by Wynkyn de Worde.⁸⁵ The text addresses those men and women who "walde be in religyon, bot þat may noght, owthir for pouerte, or for drede of thaire kyn, or for band of Maryage", and offers them a "religeon of þe herte . . . þat all tho

⁸³For Eleanor Roos, see York, BIHR, Prob. Reg. 3, f. 529r (Roos); *TE2*, pp. 65-6. For Margaret Purdans, see n. # above; Margaret bequeathed her copy to an Alice Barly. For Cecily Neville, see *Wills From Doctors Commons*, pp. 1-8; Cecily left her copy to her granddaughter Anne de la Pole, prioress of Syon Abbey (Middlesex).

⁸⁴New Haven, Mellon Center for British Art; see P. J. Croft, *Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond: Descriptions of Two Unique Volumes Associated With One of the First Patrons of Printing in England* (London, 1958). A copy of Hilton's *Epistle on Mixed Life* follows the text of *The Scale of Perfection*.

⁸⁵Raymo 184.

pat ne may be bodyly in religyon, þat þay may be gostely".⁸⁶ The reader is instructed to build the allegorical Abbey of the Holy Ghost within her or his conscience. The fact that the abbey is a nunnery, whose obedientaries are the various Christian virtues allegorized as female figures, ruled by the Abbess Charity, makes it particularly relevant to women.

The Abbey of the Holy Ghost encourages those devout laypeople who are unable to enter a religious order to construct themselves as nuns, enclosing themselves within the cloister of their hearts. In this very private and interiorized form of religious life, an individual's behaviour and inner state are more important than external observances and vows. In this context, virginity (and celibacy) is more a spiritual state than physical intactness. In this way, married women could read texts addressed to women religious as women religious.

The laywomen who owned texts such as *The Chastising of God's Children* and *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, however, have left behind no record of how they read their books. Only one English laywoman has left us any record both of her reading and of her inner spiritual life: Margery Kempe. It must be acknowledged that Margery's *Book* is a highly biased account of her life, portraying Margery as she and her amanuenses wanted her to be seen. It is clear that Margery does not build an Abbey of the Holy Ghost within her heart. She evidently has difficulty constructing herself as anything but what she is: a married woman and the mother of an ever-increasing number of children. For Margery, celibacy is not a spiritual state, dependent on an individual's will and desire, but very much a physical state. She frequently voices her concerns that her sexual relations with her husband are incompatible with her life of intense devotion, her visionary experiences, and her special relationship with God. After her first taste of mystical experience, she loses all desire for sexual intercourse:

⁸⁶G. G. Perry, *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26 (London, 1867), 51-62, p. 51.

And aftyr þis tyme sche had neuyr desyr to komown fleschly wyth hyre husbonde, for þe dette of matrimony was so abhominabyll to hir þat sche had leuar, hir thowt, etyn or drynkyn þe wose, þe mukke in þe chanel, þan to consentyn to any fleschly comownyng saf only for obedyens.⁸⁷

When Christ tells her that she is pregnant again, she declares: "Lord, I am not worthy to heryn þe spekyn & þus comown wyth myn husbond . . . þis maner of leuyng longyth to thy holy maydens."⁸⁸ The earlier chapters of Margery's *Book* are filled with Margery's long and eventually successful struggle to convince her husband to agree to a celibate marriage, and her grief that she had to submit to his sexual demands. It is not surprising that Margery and her amanuenses emphasize her struggle to attain continence, for her book is written in the interest of self-promotion.

Christ offers Margery consolation, telling her:

"3a, dowtyr, trow þow rygth wel þat I lofe wyfes also, and specyal þo wyfys wech woldy levyn chast 3yf þei myghtyn haue her wyl, & don her besynes to plesyn me as þow dost, for, þow þe state of maydenhode be mor parfyte & mor holy þan þe state of wedehode, & þe state of wedehode more parfyte þan þe state of wedlake, 3et dowtyr I lofe þe as wel as any mayden in þe world."⁸⁹

For Christ, Margery's desire to lead a celibate life in the face of her husband's refusal is what is important. Her enforced rendering of the marital debt, like all the suffering that she endures for Christ, is, moreover, meritorious. It is Christ who rewrites Margery as a celibate woman:

for-as-mech as þu art a mayden in þi sowle, I xal take þe be þe on hand in Hevyn & my Moder be þe oþer hand, & so xalt þu dawnsyn in Hevyn with oþer holy maydens & virgynes.⁹⁰

Christ in fact highlights the difference between "virginite" and "maydenhede": in Middle English, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has pointed out, "virginite" is a

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 11-2.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p, 49.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 52.

spiritual state while "maydenhede" is bodily intactness.⁹¹ So too does the author of *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* instruct its audience to construct themselves as nuns in their souls.

It is clear that other people were unable to reconcile Margery's married state with her visions and religious fervour. Part of Margery's difficulties in attempting to lead her unusual life - and of other people's difficulties with Margery - may have been that there were very few models of women who combined holiness with marriage and motherhood. St Bridget of Sweden, on whom Margery modelled herself to some degree, and the Blessed Angela of Foligno, of whom Margery might have heard when she visited Assisi, did not experience their visions until after the deaths of their husbands. Similarly, St Elizabeth of Hungary, whose life was read by the priest who served as Margery's amanuensis, was widowed before she became a Franciscan tertiary. Marie of Oignies, whose life was read by Margery's amanuensis, had a celibate marriage. The Blessed Dorothea of Montau may have been sexually active when she began to receive her visions (her husband was physically abusive), but she and her husband later took a mutual vow of chastity.⁹² St Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary and of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, was a far more imitable model of saintly motherhood than was her eldest daughter.

Certainly Margery was unusual in that she experienced visions, but we must wonder how typical she was of married women in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England in her inability to reconcile her sexual activity with her pursuit of spiritual advancement. No other laywoman has left us such a record of her inner spiritual life.

⁹¹Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "The Virgin's Tale," in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London and New York, 1994), pp. 186-7, n. 15.

⁹²B. A. Windeatt discusses these women in the introduction to his translation of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp. 17-22, and 323, n. 5.

The 33 treatises of spiritual guidance construct a female reader that is not only celibate but also meek. Humility was and is considered to be the chief of all Christian virtues and the counter to pride, chief among vices. It was through pride that humanity fell, and through humility that humanity was redeemed. While humility was a virtue to be cultivated by all Christians, it was a particularly feminine attribute: women occupied a subordinate position in society, they were subject to fathers and husbands, and it was only as widows or heads of religious houses that they could wield any amount of power. The religious literature addressed to women stresses the importance of meekness. "Blessid is þat maiden of þe wich þe grounde of her gostli bilding is true beleue & mekenesse," writes the author of *A Treatise of Maidenhood*.⁹³ "If þou wilt be a good tree and bringe forth vertues frute," instructs the author of *The Tree of the Holy Ghost*, "first þou must be verily and deply rotid and groundid in mekenes. wiche is þe keper and þe trew fundament of alle vertues."⁹⁴ *The Prophet Says Thus Unto a Maiden* declares that meekness "liftes vp a soule vnto heven. it knyttes god & a soule to gider It greues most þe fende & best ouercome hym & strenghtes vs in temptaciones & aduersitees. It is keper of maydenhede & of all other gode vertues . . ." ⁹⁵ *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, as is suggested by its title, offers the most thorough discussion of humility, affirming that it is necessary for the forgiveness of sins and for the cultivation of all other virtues, before outlining the twelve degrees of humility.

The cultivation of humility not only brings spiritual benefits, but also serves practical purposes. The treatises addressed to nuns are particularly concerned that they are humble and obedient to their sisters and to their superior. "And in ony wyse shew mekenes in *your* langage. countenance. & in al other behayour," counsels the author of *A Little Instruction for Them*

⁹³Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.39, f. 74v.

⁹⁴J. J. Vaissier, ed., *A Deuoute Treatyse called the Tree and xii Frutes of the Holy Goost* (Gronigen, 1960), p. 1.

⁹⁵Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.7.47, f. 78v.

That Shall Enter Into Religion, "& in especial to *your* hede & souerayne. the whiche representeth cryste *your* spouse. & that in al obedience. drede. loue. & reuerence neuer dysputyng of theyr wylle or of other that be *your* souerayne. but thynke þat al is ryghtful that they doo."⁹⁶ The author of the commentary on Hilton's lost letter tells the addressee to "be redy to serue al þi sesteres, for Crist come no3t to be serued, for forto serue."⁹⁷ We can see in this stress on humility and obedience an attempt to socialize nuns into becoming members of enclosed communities. Humility and obedience were (and are) essential for domestic harmony and the smooth running of any community where people live in close proximity. We can see from visitation records the disorder that could result from insubordination and quarrels between the nuns.⁹⁸

The construction of a meek woman reader can also be seen as a counter to the potentially subversive aspect of reading. Paul Saenger, in his study of the development of silent reading, argues that "private visual reading and composition . . . encouraged individual critical thinking and contributed ultimately to the development of scepticism and intellectual heresy."⁹⁹ Saenger is writing specifically about university men, whose heretical intellectual speculations, if spoken aloud, would be "subject to peer correction and control in the very act of their formulation and publication."¹⁰⁰ Outside learned communities, all use of religious literature, whether through silent reading, reading to others, or listening, was potentially subversive: readers and listeners could misinterpret texts, either wilfully or unwittingly. The meek reader or listener, however, would be unlikely to question the authority of the

⁹⁶Oxford, St John's College MS 173, f. 134r-v.

⁹⁷Clark and Taylor, eds., *Hilton's Latin Writings*, p. 333. See p. 95 above.

⁹⁸See Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 298-302.

⁹⁹Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982), p. 399.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 399.

text. He or she would also be less likely to trust his or her interpretation, and would submit it to the judgement of those in authority. Julian of Norwich makes this point clearly at the end of the long text of her *Revelation of Divine Love*: "I pray almyty god that this booke com not but to the hands of them . . . that will submitt them to the feith of holy church and obey the holesom nnderstondyng and teching of the men that be of vertuous life, sadde age and profound lernyng."¹⁰¹

It is likely that there was some concern about women's potential misinterpretation of the religious literature that they read or heard. Women did not receive specialized theological training, and, moreover, they were believed to be more credulous and more easily corrupted than men.¹⁰² Furthermore, if, as I have suggested, women's use of religious texts was to some extent a group activity and if women, such as Cecily Neville, duchess of York, habitually listened to spiritual writings and repeated them, there was a greater possibility for the sharing of unorthodox ideas and practices. The promotion of the ideal of the meek reader could help to counter this possibility.

WOMEN'S READING

In my examination of the constructed woman reader, I have discussed strategies of reading that the texts may have imposed on actual women readers who were different from the constructed reader. But what do the texts themselves say about women's (or, more specifically, celibate women's) reading?¹⁰³ Several of the texts acknowledge that women's access to

¹⁰¹Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter, 1986), p. 103.

¹⁰²See 1 Timothy 2: 12-14.

¹⁰³Some of the following points were raised by Alexandra Barratt, in her paper "'Dear Sister': Advice to Women on Reading in Middle English Devotional Treatises," delivered at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July 1994.

literature was to some extent oral. *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades*, for example, speaks both of reading and listening: "Whan þat þu heriste or redeste haly writte or any soothfast & gracios techinge."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, *The Doctrine of the Heart* tells the nun to whom it is addressed that "þou art wele araied what þou occupiest þe in hiryng of þe blessid wordis of Our Lord wheþir it be in redyng oþer in hiryng of deuout tretises".¹⁰⁵ *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Into Religion* emphasises the importance of remembering what one has read or heard, instructing the addressee to "reherce your lectures or some notabilytees of sermons or other holy thynges þat ye haue herde or seen afore" after meals, and after Compline to "kepe your tounge and take you to prayer and contemplacyon and cal to your mynde suche heuenly thynges that ye haue herde or redde afore".¹⁰⁶ *The Tree of the Holy Ghost* instructs its addressee, a nun, to "commune þer.of sum maner of edificacioun.or hieere sum good þinge wiche may edifie þe soule", when she is taking exercise in the garden with the other nuns, indicating that women were accustomed, as Felicity Riddy has suggested, to "talking about the things of God."¹⁰⁷

In general, however, religious treatises addressed to women have little to say about the use of books. Many treatises fail to mention books, and only *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* and *The Manner of Good Living*, admittedly two of the longest works, devote considerable space to the subject. Part Two of

¹⁰⁴Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 136v.

¹⁰⁵Candon, ed., "The Doctrine of the Heart," p. 76. Even the nuns of Syon Abbey also seem to have listened to books as well as reading them, for the author of *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* writes: "Whan ye begynne to rede, or to here suche bokes of gostly fruyte as accordeth for you to rede. or to here; that then ye dyspose you therto with meke reuerence and deuocyon"; Blunt, ed. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁶Oxford, St John's College MS 173, ff. 138r, 138v.

¹⁰⁷Vaissier, ed., *Tree & xii. Frutes*, p. 15. Felicity Riddy, "'Women Talking About the Things of God': A Late Medieval Subculture," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), p. 113.

The Myroure of Oure Ladye begins with a lengthy section on the "deuoute redyng of holy Bokes", and *The Manner of Good Living* devotes Chapters 50 and 51 to the subject of reading.¹⁰⁸ That *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* has so much to say about reading when relatively few of the religious texts written for nuns say anything about reading suggests that an unusual emphasis was placed on the use of books at Syon. Nevertheless, although these two works provide the most comprehensive discussion of women's reading, most of what they say is found in other treatises addressed to women.

The paucity of information about reading is surprising. Clearly the authors of the treatises expect their addressees to read and listen to books, for their texts are ostensibly written for women's use. Furthermore, the majority of addressees are female religious, for whom reading was a requirement. The Benedictine Rule demonstrates that one of the principal occupations of an enclosed religious is reading. The Rule considers reading, along with manual labour, as a means to prevent idleness, and it thus enjoins several hours of private reading per day, as well as public reading during meals and after Compline.¹⁰⁹ The Rule offers a few recommendations for reading matter: The Conferences (or Collationes) and Institutes of Cassian, the Lives of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture, and the Rule of St Basil.¹¹⁰ Reading was also the first stage of the monastic practice of contemplation, to be followed by meditation and prayer. One of the best teaching manuals of this contemplative technique is the *Scala Claustralium* of Guigo II, ninth prior of the Grande

¹⁰⁸Ann Hutchison discusses the instructions on reading in *The Myroure of Our Lady* in her "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella In Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989). The information on reading in both *The Myroure of Oure Lady* and *The Manner of Good Living* is discussed below.

¹⁰⁹Justin McCann, ed. and trans., *The Rule of St Benedict* (London, 1952), pp. 92-5 (Chapter 38), 100-101 (Chapter 42), 110-13 (Chapter 48).

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 101 (Chapter 42), 161 (Chapter 73).

Chartreuse.¹¹¹ Guigo adds a fourth stage, that of infused contemplation, and carefully describes each stage:

Reading is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrating all one's powers on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness.¹¹²

Reading is thus one of the foundation stones of contemplative life.

Nearly all of those texts that do discuss reading - with notable exceptions - view it as an integral part of the addressee's life, as essential as eating, praying, and in the case of nuns, the divine service. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* states that reading is one of the parts of countemplation, and goes on to explain how one profits from reading. *The Manner of Good Living*, echoing the Benedictine Rule, advises the addressee to spend her days praying, reading, and working: "my loued sustere dyuyde *your* tyme of the daye in thre partes. In the fyrst part praye. in the seconde rede. in the thyrd labour".¹¹³ Similarly, the addressee of *De Institutione Inclusarum* is instructed to read every day before Compline between the first of November and the beginning of Lent, and during Lent to spend less time sleeping in order that she may have more time for prayer, meditation, and reading.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, reading is part of the "maner of lyuyng" of those who love God:

To the loue of God longeth too thinges, desire of the soule and worching of the body . . . vertuous worching of the body stondith in a maner of lyuyng, the whiche is in fastinge, in wakyng, in laboure, in prayenge, in redyng, in silence, in

¹¹¹Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (London and Oxford, 1978).

¹¹²*The Ladder of Monks*, p. 82.

¹¹³Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, f. 121v.

¹¹⁴Ayto and Barratt, eds., *De Institutione Inclusarum*, pp. 6, 8.

pouert and suche other.¹¹⁵

The Tree of the Holy Ghost places books among the necessities of life: "if þou haue mete.drinke and cloping and a boke to loke vpon: it is I now to þe. and if þou haue more þan þees . . . þenke þat þou art right ferre from oure lordis pouerte, and his holy modir."¹¹⁶ *A Little Treatise Against Fleshly Affection* links reading with such essential activities as eating, drinking, and singing services: "In þe chirche & oþer place syngyng redyng etyng drynkyng many oþer þinges doþing god þat shuld haue all þaire herte [sic]".¹¹⁷ *The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost* warns the addressee, a newly-professed nun, not to overeat, which would render her unable to pray or read after meals.¹¹⁸

Reading is to be, moreover, a highly visible activity. *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter into Religion*, addressed to a nun, instructs the reader to "lete none see you from the seruyse of god. or vnoccupied. In redyng . . . hauynge euer bokes in *your* handes. studyeng or wrytynge. þat peple seenge you may saye Beholde here the seruaunte of god. and the launterne of the worlde".¹¹⁹ *St Austin's Book of Christian Life*, addressed to a widow, exhorts: "þat if it be possible. no man fynde þee any tyme. no but eiper redyng or praiyng."¹²⁰ *Of Widowhood*, also addressed to a widow, which is based on the last section of *St Austin's Book of Christian Life*, repeats this instruction: "þat if it be possible noman fynde þee any tyme: nobut redyng or praiyng".¹²¹

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁶Vaissier, ed., *Tree & xii frutes*, p. 18. However, books are not included in a similar list in *De Institutione Inclusarum*: "If thou haue moor than mete and drinke and vesture, thou art neither good mynchen ne recluse"; see Ayto and Barratt, eds., *De Institutione Inclusarum*, p. 3.

¹¹⁷Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.894, f. 102v.

¹¹⁸Vaissier, ed., *Tree and xii Frutes*, p. 134.

¹¹⁹f. 137v. In the margin a finger points to this instruction.

¹²⁰Oxford, All Souls College MS 24, f. 35r.

¹²¹Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 938, f. 267v.

The final chapter of Richard Rolle's *Form of Living* considers the active and contemplative lives, and Rolle accordingly places greater emphasis on the latter. He explains that there are two parts to contemplative life: the lower consists of "meditacioun of holy writynge, þat is Goddis word, and in other good thoghtes and swete þat men hath of þe grace of God about þe loue of Ihesu Crist, and also in praysynge of God in psalmes and ympnys, or in praiers", and the higher consists of beholding and desire of the things of Heaven, and joy in the Holy Ghost.¹²² However, Rolle tells his addressee, Margaret Kyrkby: "The dar not gretly couait many bokes; hold loue in hert and in werke, and þou hast done þat we may say or write. For fulnes of þe lawe is charite; in þat hongeth al."¹²³ For Rolle, love is more effective than reading.¹²⁴ Walter Hilton, in *The Scale of Perfection*, outlines the more traditional monastic contemplative practice of reading, meditation, and prayer, but tells his addressee that "reding of Holi Writ mai þou nou3t wel vsen", and instructs her to occupy herself all the more with meditation and prayer.¹²⁵ Exactly what Hilton means by this is not clear. Is he forbidding his addressee to read Scripture, or merely acknowledging that she is unable to read Latin?

Despite the fact that reading is generally seen to be an essential part of the lives of the addressees, only a few of the treatises offer any recommendations as to what the addressee should read. *The Mirror of Our Ladye* instructs the Syon nuns to read what is appropriate to their position.

¹²²Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, p. 24.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹²⁴Rolle does not mention reading in his *Ego Dormio* and *Commandment*. We might compare what little Rolle says to women about reading with his chapter on reading in his *De Emendacione Vitae*; see Ralph Harvey, ed., *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, EETS os 106 (London, 1896), p. 121 (Chapter 9).

¹²⁵*Scale* 1.15, cited from Barbara E. Wykes, ed, "An Edition of Book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection* by Walter Hilton" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957), p. 107. The translation of *The Scale* by Clark and Dorward has lost this ambiguity: "The reading of holy scripture is not practicable for you"; p. 88.

Secular books, those that speak of vanities or trifles, and books "of yuel or occasyon to yuel" are unsuitable for them.¹²⁶ The author furthermore advises the nuns to read what is appropriate to their current state of mind: when, for example, they are suffering temptation and tribulation they should read books that will give them comfort and hope.¹²⁷ But the author does not mention any such books by name. *The Tree of the Holy Ghost*, however, does recommend a particular book: "Also I wold þou were occupied. namly on haly dayes with redyng of deuoute bokes. as is. Stimulus amoris, or such oper."¹²⁸ *The Doctrine of the Heart* recommends that the addressee, a nun, read "holy lyues and holy tretises".¹²⁹ We can only wonder which holy treatises the author had in mind. The translation of Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum* enjoins the anchoress to occupy herself with "redyng of holy faders".¹³⁰ *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades* recommends the reading of "holy writte, and of haly doctores lawes or of haly men or

¹²⁶Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, p. 66. A marginal note in Oxford, Jesus College MS 39 suggests that the nuns read, or were at least familiar with, the story of Troilus and Criseyde. The manuscript contains one of the two known copies of *Disce Mori* and was owned by Dorothy Slyght, a nun at Syon in the sixteenth century. The note is on p. 623, where the text treats "impediments in the love of God and contemplation" and compares guilty lovers to "a þeef and dronken of þis sweet poisons", and reads "of which poison, if ye lust more to rede/ seep þe storie of Troilus, Creseide and Diomedes."

¹²⁷Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, pp. 66, 69.

¹²⁸Vaissier, ed., *Tree and xii. frutes*, p. 32. The *Stimulus Amoris*, which was frequently attributed to Bonaventure, although it is now known to have been written by the thirteenth century Franciscan, James of Milan, enjoyed a wide popularity in late medieval England. It was translated into Middle English as *The Pricking of Love*, possibly by Walter Hilton. The text discusses the contemplative life, and contains affective meditations on Christ's Passion as well as meditations on the contemplative's mortified flesh, the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, and on the state of the blessed souls in heaven; see Lagorio and Sargent 35.

¹²⁹Candon, "The Doctrine of the Heart," p. 76.

¹³⁰Ayto and Barratt, eds, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, p. 6.

wymmenes liifes", and *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Into Religion* recommends a similar reading list - the "redyng of prophets, epistles, gospels, sayntes lyues & other dedes of vertue doynge".¹³¹ The Bible, "holy faders", "holy doctores", and saints' lives: this is appropriate reading matter for female religious.¹³² It is striking that the treatises do not recommend literature such as themselves.

Some of the treatises give practical advice on how to read. *The Manner of Good Living* instructs its addressee to "rede ouer this boke and rede it thorgh a gayne and agayne".¹³³ The author of the *Exhortation to Nuns* likewise advises repeated reading of his text, which he declares to be "sum what profytibyll to you wych shall take the payne to rede hit oftime".¹³⁴ Walter Hilton, in *The Scale of Perfection*, recognizes that reading can turn into an interminable chore if the reader is not in right frame of mind. He explains that if his text "happens not to comfort you, or else you do not readily take it in," the addressee should:

¹³¹Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 136v; Oxford, St John's College MS 173, f. 137v

¹³²The inclusion of Scripture here contrasts with Hilton, who tells the anchoress in *The Scale of Perfection* that "reding of Hili Writ mai þou nou3t wel vsen." This raises the question of whether the authors/translators of *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades* and *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Religion* expected their readers to possess a certain degree of Latin literacy, or whether they were simply following a convention that associated religious life with the reading of Latin literature. The Knight of La Tour-Landry, whose book of instruction for his daughters was twice translated into Middle English in the fifteenth century, also recommends that women read Holy Scripture: "eueri woman it is the beter that canne rede and haue knowinge of the lawe of God, and forto haue be lerned to haue vertu and science to withstonde the perilles of the sowle, and forto use and excerse the werkys of thaire sauement, for that is thing aproued and necessarie to alle women"; see Thomas Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, EETS os 33 (1868), pp. 118-9. See also Caxton's translation of the Chevalier's book (1484), in M. Y. Offord, ed., *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, EETS ss 2 (London, 1971), p. 122.

¹³³Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, ff. 1v-2r.

¹³⁴Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Add.A.42, f. 4v

not ponder it too much, but lay it aside for another time and give yourself to your prayer or to another occupation. Take it as it will come, and not all at once.¹³⁵

Hilton's advice is apposite and sensitive, and the modern scholar would do well to heed it. Somewhat surprisingly, Hilton goes on to invite the anchoress to amend the text where she feels that he speaks "too shortly - either for lack of English or for want of reason - I beg you to amend it, only where it is necessary".¹³⁶ This licence to edit the text may, however, be merely a humility topos. The author-translator of *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades*, like Hilton, instructs the addressee to "breke þi redinge often with praier", not so as to prevent frustration, but "so þat changeablete of diuerse hale werkes may qwekun þi saule & make it ay fresch to serue god." Moreover, it wisely instructs her to "mesure þi redinge so þat reson make an ende & not irkyng." ¹³⁷ It is *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* that provides the most information about how to read. The Bridgettine nuns are enjoined to read with humility, for humility renders the soul more receptive to instruction. They must also endeavour to understand what they read, not reading too much at a time, and reading some passages over and over. If, after repeated readings they are still unable to understand, they are to ask someone for guidance.¹³⁸

Several of the texts follow the Benedictine Rule in treating reading as a means to prevent idleness. *The Manner of Good Living* instructs the anchoress to spend her day praying, reading, and working; by dividing her day in this fashion, she will avoid idleness.¹³⁹ *The Prophet Says Thus Unto a Maiden That Should Live Under the Rule of Holy Religion* also lists reading as one activity among many to prevent idleness: "loke þou be not ydell but outhere

¹³⁵*Scale* 1.92; Clark and Dorward, p. 160.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 137r.

¹³⁸Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, pp. 66-7.

¹³⁹Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, f. 121v.

þou be preyende synggende or redende or herande godes wordes or wirkande profitable werke with þine handes þat þe enemye fynde þe not ydell."¹⁴⁰ *The Doctrine of the Heart* offers similar advice: "Ther for, Gode Sistir, be occupied ouper in redyng oþer in prayer or in holy meditacions or ellis in somme honest actif besynes þat in no wise þe fende fynde þe idel."¹⁴¹ *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Into Religion* says much the same thing: "Beware of ydel nesse. the whyche is moder of al synne & vnclennesse. so þat by your offyce that ye be called to. or by prayer. redyng. wrytyng. sewyng or oder hande werkes dooyng ye maye make your bodyes wery . . . in confusyon of your enmye."¹⁴² *De Institutione Inklusarum* instructs the anchoress: "And whan thou begynnest to waxe heuy of hem [prayers and psalms] or wery, than take a boke and rede, or do som labour with thyn hondes, soo that thorough suche diuersity of besinesse thou might putte away slouthe and ydelnesse."¹⁴³ Richard Rolle's *Ego Dormio* is conspicuous in that it does not include reading in his short list of activities to avoid idleness: "I wil þat þou neuer be ydel; for be euer other spekyng of God; or wirchyng some notable werke, or thynkyng in hym."¹⁴⁴

Reading is also, according to some writers, a remedy against temptation. The author-translator of the *De Institutione Inklusarum* enjoins the addressee to:

beholde in the ryuers of holy wryt how besy thyn enemy is to ouercome the and fle hym, for ther is no thinge that ouercometh so sone the fende as doth redyng of deuoute thinge and prayer and meditacyon of Cristys passyon. A mayde shuld so be occupied vpon oon of these thre, prayer, meditacion, or redyng, that though she were stured to do vnlaful things, she shuld not be suffred for remors of conscience. Vse wel this

¹⁴⁰Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.7.47 (1375), f. 80v.

¹⁴¹Candon, "The Doctrine of the Heart," pp. 86-7.

¹⁴²Oxford, St John's College MS 173, f. 134v.

¹⁴³Ayto and Barratt, eds., *De Institutione Inklusarum*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁴Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, p. 30.

remedye, that whether thou slepe or wake, thy mynde be euere vpon som sentence of holy writ or ypon som seyntes lyf, for it is a souerayne remedy ayenst temptacyon.¹⁴⁵

William Flete, in his *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*, advises that when people suffer temptation they "must 3eve hem to some good li3t occupacion, and somtyme to redyng and syngyng the seruyse of god, and to other good dedes."¹⁴⁶ But Flete also recognizes that what one reads can add to one's anxiety about salvation. He counsels his addressee to say the Creed and to believe that God is able to forgive all manner of sins, "if þe fele 3et ony dredis be ymagynacion or temptacion, or for wordes þat 3e haue herde or haue rede in bokes, be þe whiche 3e dowte of sauacion".¹⁴⁷

Several of the treatises emphasise that God speaks to us through books. *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades* advises the addressee "to þenke whan þat þu heriste. or redeste haly writte. or any soothfast & *gracius* techinge. be it to þe ri3the as if god himself spake alle þe wordes."¹⁴⁸ *The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost* asks, "Whan spekith our lord to vs"? to which it answers, "trewly whan we rede such þinges þat ben holsom to þe soule. or here oper sey to vs by preching or exhortacioun".¹⁴⁹ *The Manner of Good Living* explains further: "ffor when we praye; we speke to god. When we rede; god spekyth to vs."¹⁵⁰ *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* says the same: "For lyke as in prayer. man spekyth to god; so in redyng god spekyth to man". The Bridgettine nuns are therefore instructed to read with "meke reuerence".¹⁵¹

Reading, however, is not simply a remedy against idleness and

¹⁴⁵Ayto and Barratt, eds., *De Institutione Inclusarum*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶Colledge and Chadwick, eds., "Remedies Against Temptations," p. 230.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 227. See also p. 225.

¹⁴⁸Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 136v.

¹⁴⁹Vaissier, ed., *Tree & xii. frutes*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁰Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, f. 120r.

¹⁵¹Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Lady*, p. 66.

temptation, but a means for education and self-improvement. According to *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, the chief purpose of reading is to "enforme your selfe. & to set yt a warke in your owne lyuyng", and the author goes on to explain that treatises of religious instruction and spiritual direction are to be used for self-examination: "when ye rede eny such bokes; ye oughte to beholde in yourselfe sadly whether ye lyue & do as ye rede".¹⁵² *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades* similarly instructs the addressee to use reading to identify her faults and her virtues, describing reading as a mirror in which "may pou seen þi consciens. how foule it is in vices & how faire it is in uirtues."¹⁵³ *The Doctrine of the Heart* declares that reading increases virtuous and stable living, and that it teaches one to avoid vices.¹⁵⁴ *The Manner of Good Living* give the most information about the educative purpose of reading:

By redyng we lern what we ou3t to doo. What to flye. whyther to goo. . . By redyng knowlege and ynderstandyng be incresed. Redyng techyth vs to praye and to werke . . . Redyng & prayer be wepyng that the devyl ys ouercom with. Thes be instrumentes that heuen ys com by. By redyng & prayer vyce & syn are distroyed. and virtues norysched in the soule . . . Redyng puttyth a weye errors of lyfe. hyt plucketh away man or woman from the vanytes of the worlde.

Despite all of these benefits of reading, the author-translator of *The Manner of Good Living* declares that "it ys better to praye than to rede."¹⁵⁵

The Myroure of Oure Ladye explains that while some books are intended to educate the reader, others are intended to stir up the emotions, leading to greater love for God and desire for Heaven, as well as greater dread and sorrow of sin, and this view of reading is widespread among those

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. 67, 68.

¹⁵³Oxford, St John's College MS 94, f. 137r.

¹⁵⁴Candon, "The Doctrine of the Heart," pp. 2, 76.

¹⁵⁵Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 517, f. 120r.

treatises that discuss reading at all.¹⁵⁶ The preface to *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, with which this chapter began, states that the treatise is intended to increase the addressee's love for God. *The Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom* similarly declares that its purpose is "to stirre deuowte sowles to þe trewe love of owre lorde Jhesu".¹⁵⁷ Walter Hilton hopes that his *Scale of Perfection* will bring the anchoress for whom it was written "the more to the love of God."¹⁵⁸ *The Doctrine of the Heart* explains that reading is "a gracyous mene to gostly feeling. In þis wyse þerfor, schuld þis trectyce be rad & herd & þan wil Oure Lord worche be His grace".¹⁵⁹ *A little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter into Religion* exhorts the addressee to "knock pryuely your brestes and that yf ye maye with fallynge of teeres" during meal-time and other readings.¹⁶⁰ The author-translator of the *De Institutione Inclusarum* explains that the reading of "holy faders" before Compline, should give the anchoress "som compuncyon of teres and feruour of deuocion in saienge of thy complyn."¹⁶¹

Devotional reading, therefore, serves several purposes for women: it is a means to avoid idleness and a remedy for temptation, it educates the reader, and it stirs up her affections to the love of God and desire for heaven, and to the dread and avoidance of sin. Women's reading, unlike that of male religious and clerics, is not for intellectual achievement. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* makes this clear: "dresse so your entente. that your redyng & study. be not only for to be connyng. or for to can speke yt fourthe to other".¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, pp. 68-9.

¹⁵⁷Horstmann, ed., "Seven Points", p. 325. This is the only mention of reading.

¹⁵⁸Scale 1: 92; Clark and Dorward, p. 160.

¹⁵⁹Candon, ed., "The Doctrine of the Heart," p. 2.

¹⁶⁰Oxford, St John's College MS 173, f. 138r.

¹⁶¹Ayto and Barratt, eds., *De Institutione Inclusarum*, p. 6.

¹⁶²Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, p. 67.

Walter Hilton tells his addressee in *The Scale of Perfection* that the "knowledge of God and the things of the spirit, acquired by reason, by the teaching of man and by the study of holy scripture . . . belongs especially to some learned men and great scholars."¹⁶³ The most striking admonition on this subject is given in *A Little Instruction for Them That Shall Enter Into Religion*. After exhorting the addressee, a nun, to occupy herself with reading and other activities to avoid idleness, the author warns her: "beware to be inquysytyf or to muse on hyghte maters and subtyld and leue theym to worldely peple & to clerkes. for ofte tymes þe letter may hurte you."¹⁶⁴ This restricted notion of reading was evidently transmitted to laywomen. At the end of London, BL MS Harley 1706, a lengthy collection of Middle English that belonged to Elizabeth Scrope (d. 1537), wife first of William Beaumont and after his death of John de Vere, thirteenth earl of Oxford, there is a short rubric on reading. It reads:

We shulde rede and vse bokes in to þis ende and entente: for formys of preysynge and preyynge to god, to oure lady seynte marye, and to alle þe seyntes; þat we my3te haue by þe forseyd vse of redyng vnderstondyng of god, of hys benyfetyng, of hys lawe, of hys seruyce, or summe oþer goodly and gostely trowþis; or ellys þat we my3te haue good affeccyon to ward god and hys seyntes and hys seruyce to be gendryd and geten.¹⁶⁵

These 33 Middle English treatises of spiritual guidance addressed to women can be seen as part of the Church's attempt to cater for the spiritual needs of women in fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and early sixteenth-century England. To some extent this literature may have been produced at women's instance: several of the texts were ostensibly written at the addressee's request, and

¹⁶³*Scale* 1.4; Clark and Dorward, p. 79.

¹⁶⁴Oxford, St John's College MS 173, f. 135r.

¹⁶⁵London, BL MS Harley 1706, f. 212v. This is printed in A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 25, part 2 (1958), p. 231, and in Ann M. Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989), p. 224.

women's activities as patronesses, purchasers, and donors of religious literature give us no reason to believe that women were merely passive participants in the literary culture of late medieval England. Nevertheless, this attempt to address women's piety was limited. Spiritual writers wrote specifically for female religious, and those laywomen who resembled them through celibacy. Married women, and thus, to a large extent, laywomen, were virtually ignored.

These texts also attempt to control women's use of literature. The purposes of women's reading and listening, as defined in these writings, are strictly limited: these activities are means to avoid idleness and temptation, they educate, and they increase devotion. The use of literature for intellectual endeavour is proscribed. Furthermore, the texts discourage a critical approach to reading. By stressing that God speaks to humanity through reading, the writers imbue their works with tremendous authority that is not to be questioned by the reader. And by emphasizing the value of meekness, these writers limit women's response to the text. Reading, as suggested by this corpus of religious writings addressed to a female audience, was not necessarily an empowering experience.

CHAPTER 3

DEVOUT BOOKS FOR DEVOUT LADIES

Having discussed what religious literature was addressed to women, I turn now to an examination of what texts women, both lay and enclosed, actually used. Examining the corpus of religious literature known to have been in women's hands returns us to the sources used in Chapter 1: wills and probate inventories, and extant manuscripts and incunabula originally owned or used by women. In the sample of wills used for this study, there are 134 transmissions of religious literature to and by women. Of these, 105 are transmissions of devotional texts, 25 transmissions of scriptural texts, three transmissions of canon legal texts, and one transmission of a theological text.¹ In the 74 surviving manuscripts and incunabula examined for this study there are some 294 religious texts.² This number is approximate, for there is a degree of arbitrariness in determining where one text ends and another begins. In calculating the number of texts, individual saints' lives, where they appear singly or in small groups, have been counted individually, whereas collections of saints' lives, such as the *Vitae Patrum* or the *Gilte Legend*, have been counted as one text. The same procedure has been followed with prayers, meditations, and devotions: single texts, or small collections of texts have been counted separately while larger collections have been counted as one text. Short paragraphs, as are found in London, BL MS Harley 1706 and MS Harley 2406, outlining and explaining elements of Christian faith such as the seven deadly sins, the seven works of corporal mercy, etc., have been counted individually, but collections of paragraphs that merely list the material, without providing any explanation, have been grouped together as one text.³

For ease of discussion and for the purposes of analysis and comparison, I have divided the 134 religious texts mentioned in wills and inventories, and

¹See Table 1.2. A list of the 134 texts is contained in Appendix 2.

²The books are listed in Appendix 1.

³A list of the texts contained in women's books is contained in Appendix 3.

the 294 contained in the surviving manuscripts and printed books into 13 categories. Of course, any classification scheme involves no small amount of arbitrariness. Testators seldom give much information about the books they bequeath, and, consequently, it can be difficult to determine exactly what any particular text is. So while the *Pore Caitiff* poses no identification problems, texts such as "liber de Credo in Deum" and "the Passion of Our Lord" are more difficult.⁴ In these particular cases, the "liber de Credo in Deum" is probably an exposition of the Creed, of which there were many, and "The Passion of Our Lord" is likely to be an account of the Passion, perhaps an English version of the *Meditationes de Passione Domini*, ascribed to Bonaventure, and I have classified these two texts accordingly.⁵ For some texts mentioned in wills, however, there is simply not enough information for even a tentative classification. For example, the "book called Hylton" bequeathed by Margaret Purdans in 1481 could have been any of Hilton's works.⁶ But even where texts are identifiable, classification is necessarily arbitrary, for few texts are simple enough to fall into only one category. The 13 categories, with examples, are as follows:

1. Narrative: These texts are essentially narrative in nature. They include lives of saints, such as the *Life of St Katherine* and *The Gilte Legende*, lives of Christ, such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and historical works such as the *Cursor Mundi*.

⁴Peryne Clanvowe, widow of Sir Thomas Clanvowe, bequeathed a copy of the *Pore Caitiff* in 1422. Her will is printed in Frederick J. Furnival, ed., *The Fifty Earliest Wills in the Court of Probate, London, A. D. 1387-1439, with a Priest's of 1454*, EETS os 78 (London, 1882), pp. 49-51; see Cavanaugh, p. 192. A "liber de Credo in Deum" and "unum librum de Passioni Domini" was bequeathed by Eleanor Roos in 1438; see Cavanaugh p. 749, and *TE* 2, pp. 65-6.

⁵For various expositions of the Creed, see Raymo, nos. 38-41; for English versions of the *Meditationes de Passione Domini*, see Lagorio and Sargent nos. 61-63.

⁶Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Caston, f. 163v-164v; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), p. 112.

2. Didactic: To some extent, all religious treatises are didactic, for they all impart some measure of spiritual instruction. Those texts that I have classified as Didactic are those in which the didactic purpose is paramount, and which cover, fully or partly, the official teaching curriculum for the laity as outlined in the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281. This category includes simple tracts explaining the elements of Christian doctrine such as the seven deadly sins, the seven virtues, or the ten commandments, as well as longer, more sophisticated expositions such as *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*, the *Manuel de Péchés*, the *Pore Caitiff* and *Disce Mori*.

3. Guides to leading a spiritual life, whether active, contemplative, or mixed: This group includes simple texts on good living such as *Nine Points on Perfection*, as well as longer works such as Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, the *Ancrene Riwe*, and *The Pricking of Love*. As discussed later in this chapter, nearly all of these texts focus on the interior spiritual life.

4. Texts that encourage moral self-scrutiny: To some degree this category is a sub-set of the guides to leading a spiritual life, but they can nonetheless be considered separately. They deal with sin, temptation, tribulation, penance, and judgement, and some offer advice on coping with moral and spiritual dilemmas such as the withdrawal of devotion. This category includes such works as *The Chastising of God's Children*, *The Prick of Conscience*, and *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*.

5. Accounts of visionary or mystical experience: I have not included those writings of mystics that are intended to act as guides to the contemplative life, such as Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, or Rolle's *Commandment*, which are listed among the guides to leading a spiritual life. This category includes such texts as the *Revelations of St Bridget*, Mechtild of Hackeborn's *Book of Ghostly Grace*, and an extract from St Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*.

6. Prayers, meditations, and devotions: These include such texts as Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion*, a *Contemplation on the Joys of Our Lady*, as well as various hymns and prayers.

7. *Ars Moriendi*: These treatises instruct the audience about death and dying, and they include works such as *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, translated from *Somme le roi*, and *Kunne to Di3e*, a translation of chapter five of Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*. (Not found in wills and inventories)

8. Cult: This category comprises treatises focusing on a particular devotional cult, and includes works such as Nicholas Love's *Treatise on Corpus Christi*, which follows his *Meditations on the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and Rolle's *Oleum Effusum*, an encomium on the Holy Name of Jesus. Also included in this category are texts focusing on the Eucharist, such as *The Saying of St Albert on the Eucharist*. (Not found in wills and inventories)

9. Scriptural works: This group includes the Bible or portions of the Bible (the Apocalypse is particularly popular), and scriptural commentaries such as "Doctors on Matthew".
10. Legal Works: There are only three transmissions of canon legal works, and all are Decretals. (Not found in extant books)
11. Theological Works and Sermons: This category comprises texts such as Bradwardine's *De Causa Dei Contra Pelagianos*, Hugh of St Victor's *Speculum Ecclesiae*, and a homiliary.
12. Unclassified: These texts, though identifiable, fall without my other categories. This category includes works such as the *Speculum Guy of Warwick*, a short treatise on how to pray, and *The Pardon of Syon*.
13. Unidentified: This final category includes those texts mentioned in wills that are unidentifiable, such as a book of Bonaventure, which may have been a version of the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes vitae Christi* or the *Stimulus Amoris*, which was also attributed to Bonaventure in the Middle Ages, and a book of Hilton, which might have been any of his writings.

Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 show the types of texts owned by women religious, laywomen, and unknown women respectively.

Table 3.1: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by women religious

TYPE OF TEXT	TRANSMISSIONS IN WILLS	TEXTS IN EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA
NARRATIVE	26%	18%
DIDACTIC	13%	17%
GUIDES	4%	18%
MORAL	17%	14%
VISIONARY/MYSTICAL	9%	1%
PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS, AND DEVOTIONS	4%	4%
ARS MORIENDI	-	4%
CULT	-	4%
SCRIPTURAL	4%	7%
LEGAL	4%	-
THEOLOGICAL	-	5%
UNCLASSIFIED	-	9%
UNIDENTIFIED	17%	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS/TEXTS	23	137

Source: see Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17, and Appendix 1.

Table 3.2: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by laywomen

TYPE OF TEXT	TRANSMISSIONS IN WILLS AND INVENTORIES	NUMBER IN EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA
NARRATIVE	33%	16%
DIDACTIC	10%	19%
GUIDES	3%	13%
MORAL	8%	18%
VISIONARY/MYSTICAL	6%	2%
PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS, AND DEVOTIONS	4%	5%
ARS MORIENDI	-	5%
CULT	-	6%
SCRIPTURAL	22%	3%
LEGAL	2%	-
THEOLOGICAL	1%	-
UNCLASSIFIED	3%	13%
UNIDENTIFIED	7%	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS/TEXTS	99	112

Source: Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17, and Appendix 1.

Table 3.3: Proportion (%) of different types of religious literature owned by unknown women

TYPE OF TEXT	TRANSMISSIONS IN WILLS AND INVENTORIES	TEXTS IN EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA
NARRATIVE	17%	-
DIDACTIC	8%	42%
GUIDES	-	18%
MORAL	17%	18%
VISIONARY/MYSTICAL	-	4%
PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS, AND DEVOTIONS	8%	9%
ARS MORIENDI	-	-
CULT	-	4%
SCRIPTURAL	17%	-
LEGAL	-	-
THEOLOGICAL	-	-
UNCLASSIFIED	8%	4%
UNIDENTIFIED	25%	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS/TEXTS	12	45

Source: Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17, and Appendix 1.

As Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 show, the number of texts in surviving books is much higher than that in wills and inventories. Many of the books noted in wills and inventories are likely to have been composite volumes, and testators probably identified a particular book by the longest, or first, text contained within it. Certainly texts bequeathed to and by women tend to be lengthy, such as *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, the *Pore Caitiff*, *The Prick of Conscience*, and the *Legenda Aurea*. The tables also show differences in textual distribution between the two sources. In all three tables, the number of narrative texts is proportionately greater in wills and inventories, while the number of guides to leading a spiritual life is proportionately greater in extant books. Other differences vary from table to table. In Table 3.1, showing the types of religious literature owned by

women religious, the writings of visionaries and mystics are more represented within the sample taken from surviving books. In Table 3.2, which shows the types of religious literature in laywomen's hands, moral works form a greater proportion of the texts found in extant manuscripts and incunabula, while scriptural works are more commonly found in probate evidence. In Table 3.3, showing the religious texts owned by unknown women, the number of didactic treatises is proportionately greater in surviving books, while the number of scriptural works is again proportionately greater in wills. These differences in textual distribution are in part due to the fact that the sample drawn from wills and inventories is much smaller than that taken from surviving manuscripts and incunabula, which means that one text can have a greater effect on the distribution. In the case of scriptural texts, which are proportionately greater in probate evidence, it is likely that language plays a role in explaining their absence from extant books. Nearly all scriptural works are in French or Latin, and they would have suffered disproportionate destruction with the advent of the authorised English Bible in the sixteenth century.

Despite these differences in textual distribution, Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 demonstrate that the same types of religious literature are present in both wills and extant books, with the exception of *ars moriendi* and cult treatises, which appear only in extant books, and legal texts, which appear only in wills. Each of these categories, however, contains such a small proportion of the total number of texts that their absence from either source is negligible. Furthermore, Appendices 2 and 3 show that not only are the same types of literature found in both sources, but also many of the same texts as well. Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, and Appendices 2 and 3 reveal first that women's reading is predominantly in the vernacular, second that the literary devotional culture of women religious and that of laywomen are virtually indistinguishable, and third that the corpus of religious literature in women's hands is broader than and different from the narrow range of texts written and recommended for them. I turn now to a discussion of each of these three observations

WOMEN'S USE OF THE VERNACULAR

It is commonly remarked that women - both lay and enclosed - possessed little or no Latin literacy in late medieval England and that their reading was consequently

in the vernacular.⁷ While the evidence from religious literature in women's hands does little to contradict this, it nonetheless suggests that certain languages were more commonly used for certain types of religious literature. All of the theological treatises are in Latin. Of the three transmissions of legal works (all of which are decretals), two are in French, while the language of the third is unspecified. The languages of devotional and scriptural works are more variable. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 below show the proportion of, respectively, devotional and scriptural texts in wills, inventories, and extant books, in English, French, and Latin. In both tables, only the number of testamentary transmissions where the language is specified or determinable have been counted.

Table 3.4: Proportion (%) of Known Languages of Devotional Texts

LANGUAGE	WILLS AND INVENTORIES	EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA
ENGLISH	79%	84%
FRENCH	19%	11%
LATIN	2%	5%
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS/TEXTS	52	275
NUMBER OF TEXTS WHOSE LANGUAGE IS UNKNOWN	53	-

Source: See Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17, and Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

⁷See Eileen Power, *English Medieval Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 237-55; Diana K. Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), p. 70; Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries After the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 13-4; Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (London and New York, 1984), pp. 156-63. Eileen Power's work has been immensely influential: see, for example, T. L. Jarman, *Landmarks in the History of Education: English Education as Part of the European Tradition* (London, 1951); Clara P. McMahon, *Education in Fifteenth-Century England* (New York, 1968), pp. 143-5; and Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), p. 53.

Table 3.5: Proportion (%) of Known Languages of Scriptural Texts

LANGUAGE	WILLS AND INVENTORIES	EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA
ENGLISH	-	25%
FRENCH	86%	33%
LATIN	7%	42%
FRENCH AND LATIN*	7%	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS/TEXTS	14	12
NUMBER OF TEXTS WHOSE LANGUAGE IS UNKNOWN	11	-

*In 1415 Henry lord Scrope of Masham bequeathed an Apocalypse in French and Latin to a Lady Dryeu, whom he described as "matri meae"; she may have been the mother-in-law of his first wife, Philippa, widow of John Devereux, or Philippa's own mother, the wife of Sir Guy de Briene or Bryan. See Thomas Rymer, *Foedera: Conventiones Literae, et Cujuscunq[ue] Generis Acta Publica, inter Reges Angliae & Alios*, 3rd ed. (The Hague, 1740), vol. IV, part ii, pp. 131-4; and N. Harris Nicolas, *The Controversy Between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry*, vol. II, p. 142.

Source: See Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17, and Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

While devotional literature is predominantly in English, scriptural works are mainly in French and Latin. The low number of scriptural works in English is a consequence of the Lambeth Constitutions of 1409, under Archbishop Thomas Arundel, which forbade the translation of holy scripture into English or any other language, and the use of any such translation since the time of John Wycliffe, without the translation having been approved by the local diocesan or by the provincial council.⁸ The three scriptural texts in English were owned by nuns: a late fifteenth-century copy of the four Gospels in English, now Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland MS 449, belonged to Katherine Methwold, nun of Thetford Priory (Norfolk), and a late fifteenth-century manuscript containing two extracts from the later version of the

⁸The Latin text of the Constitutions can be found in D. Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol. 3 (London, 1737), pp. 314-9.

Wycliffite Bible, now London, BL MS Add. 10596, belonged at different times to Matilda Hayle and Maria Hastyns, nuns of Barking Abbey (Essex).

While there is little change over the 150-year period from 1350 to 1500 in the languages of scriptural works, evidence both from wills and from extant books indicates a change in the languages of devotional literature: there is a decline in the use of French and a corresponding rise in the use of English devotional treatises by women during the fifteenth century. This is seen most clearly in wills, where the proportion of French texts decreases among those whose language is specified or determinable over each 25-year period until no French texts appear after 1449, although this observation is based on very small samples. Table 3.6 shows the distribution of languages in devotional treatises bequeathed to and by women.

Table 3.6: Languages of Devotional texts noted in wills and inventories: Proportions (%) among texts for which the language is known

LANGUAGE	1350-74	1375-99	1400-24	1425-49	1450-74	1475-1500
ENGLISH	-	-	67%	81%	89%	100%
FRENCH	100%	100%	33%	19%	-	-
LATIN	-	-	-	-	11%	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMISSIONS	1	3	9	16	9	14

Sources: See Chapter 1, notes 2, 16, and 17.

The evidence from surviving manuscripts in general supports the evidence from wills about the declining use of French for devotional literature, although it is likely that manuscripts containing works in French may have suffered disproportionate destruction. Of the 75 manuscripts and incunabula examined for this thesis, only six contain French (whether Anglo-French or continental French) devotional texts. Of these, four have ownership marks from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 123, containing Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*, belonged to Margaret Sylemon, prioress of Nuneaton Priory (Warwickshire)

from 1367-86 "*et discipulas suas*". Margaret specified that the book was to remain in the nunnery after her death, and a fifteenth-century inscription suggests that it did so: "Iste liber constat Alicia Scheynton et post eam conventu". It is likely that Alice was a nun of Nuneaton.⁹ London, BL MS Add. 70513, (formerly Welbeck Abbey, Duke of Portland MS 1C1), a collection of saints' lives, belonged to Campsey Ash priory (Suffolk) in the fourteenth century, but there is no indication of how long it remained in the house. Philippa de Coucy owned what is now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 1038, containing the *Vitae Patrum* and other texts. After her death in 1411, it was purchased from her executors by Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking (Essex). The manuscript found its way into the library of Charles d'Orléans, probably after Sibilla's death in 1419. London, BL MS Cotton Vitellium F.vii, containing a French version of the *Ancrene Riwe* and *Le livre de tribulacion*, seems to have been given to Eleanor Cobham, second wife of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, by Joan, widow of Thomas de Holand, eighth earl of Kent, between 1433 and 1441. Nevertheless, evidence from surviving manuscripts indicated that English texts did not supplant their French counterparts altogether. At the very end of the fifteenth century Cecily Welles, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, owned a copy of Peter of Peckham's *La lumere as lais*, and a collection of French scriptural and devotional treatises belonged to the Benedictine nuns of Derby.¹⁰

The decline in the use of French for devotional literature and its replacement by English is concurrent with the increasing access to this literature by women from wealthy merchant families, and it is likely that the language shift in part facilitated this access. Evidence from both probate material and extant books suggests that French religious literature - devotional, scriptural, and legal - was owned by aristocratic laywomen and women

⁹The nuns' portion of the manuscript may only be ff. 1r-9r; see Appendix 1, n. 1.

¹⁰Cecily Welles owned London, BL MS Royal 15.D.ii, also containing an illuminated French Apocalypse; the nuns of Derby owned London, BL MS Egerton 2710.

religious. Of the 25 testamentary transmissions of French religious treatises, 13 involved women from noble families, nine involved women from gentry families or who were likely to have been from gentry families, and three involved women religious. Of the 33 French texts in surviving manuscripts, eleven are found in manuscripts belonging to noblewomen, and 22 are found in manuscripts belonging to nuns.

Most of the Latin texts - devotional, scriptural, and theological - were owned by nuns, which may suggest that standards of Latin literacy were higher inside the nunnery than outside it. Certainly nuns had greater need of Latin than did laywomen, as their daily lives revolved around the Latin liturgy. Nevertheless, the small number of Latin works in relation to material in English and French suggests that Latin was not widely read by either women religious or laywomen. Eileen Power - whose opinions on the subject of nuns' education have remained unchallenged - concluded that the majority of nuns in late medieval England "knew no Latin; they must have sung the offices by rote and though they may have understood, it is to be feared that the majority of them could not construe even a *Pater Noster*, an *Ave* or a *Credo*."¹¹ Power based her conclusions largely on an examination of episcopal visitation records. According to Power, while those few surviving injunctions from the thirteenth century are written in either Latin or French, nearly all fourteenth-century ones are in French, and they occasionally contain specific references to nuns not understanding Latin. But of the eleven sets of fourteenth-century injunctions cited by Power, six are actually in Latin. Two of these make mention of vernacular translations: Henry Woodlock, bishop of Winchester, announced in his injunctions to Romsey Abbey (Hampshire) in 1311 that he has had the injunctions translated into French in order for the nuns to more easily understand them, and Robert de Stretton, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, writing to Fairwell Priory (Staffordshire) in 1367, orders his (Latin) decrees to be read and explained in the vulgar tongue by some literate ecclesiastical

¹¹Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 246.

person.¹² By the fifteenth century, continues Power, neither Latin nor French seem to have been understood in nunneries, for nearly all fifteenth-century injunctions are in English, and there are frequent examples, at least in the register of Bishop Alnwick of Lincoln, of houses where standards of Latin literacy were very poor indeed. However, all of the five sets of injunctions cited by Power are in Latin, although they make provision for translation into the vernacular. At Redlingfield Priory (Suffolk) in 1427 the deputy visitor read his commission first in Latin and then in the vernacular. Bishop Flemyng of Lincoln sent Latin injunctions to Elstow (Bedfordshire) and Delapré (Northamptonshire) Abbeys in 1422, ordering that the contents be read openly in the mother tongue eight times annually. His successor, Gray, instructed that his own injunctions to the two houses were to be translated into the mother tongue and fastened in some conspicuous place.¹³ Furthermore, many of the extracts from Alnwick's register used by Power as examples of nuns' ignorance of Latin, actually demonstrate their inability to write. As I have shown, writing was a skill distinct from that of reading, and was generally not taught to women.¹⁴

Power's conclusion that "the majority of nuns during this period knew no Latin" is unduly harsh. The evidence that she presents suggests not that nuns were unable to understand Latin, but rather that the general standards of Latin among nunneries were frequently insufficient for reading lengthy and complex documents. It is likely, moreover, that records of episcopal visitations reflect more of what the bishops thought about nuns' linguistic abilities than of the actual state of affairs.

Insufficient levels of Latin comprehension are also suggested by the translation of key Latin texts into English for the use of women religious. Between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the Benedictine Rule was

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 248-9.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 249-51.

¹⁴See Introduction.

translated into English six times for nuns.¹⁵ In the northern metrical version of the *Rule* the translator explains:

Monkes & als all leryd men
In latyn may it [i.e. the *Rule*] lyghtly ken,
And wytt þarby how þay sall wyrk
To sarue god and haly kyrk.
Bott tyll women to mak it couth,
þat leris no latyn in þar 3outh
In ingles is it ordand here,
So þat þay may it lyghtly lere.¹⁶

Similarly, William Caxton, in his version, states that it is written for monks and nuns "whiche vnderstonde lytyll laten or none", and Richard Foxe, in his translation made for the nuns of Winchester diocese, explains that it was undertaken because the Latin original was insufficiently understood by the nuns.¹⁷ The services of the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey (Middlesex) were translated into English in the fifteenth century by one of the brothers of the order, in *The Myroure of oure Ladye*. The author explains the reasons for

¹⁵The earliest of these was made for the nuns of Wintney priory (Hampshire) in the thirteenth century. The Northern Prose Version and the Northern Metrical Version were written in the early fifteenth century. The Prose Version uses masculine pronouns at the beginning, and then switches to feminine forms, while the Metrical Version uses feminine forms throughout. A fourth early fifteenth-century version was written in midland prose. It was translated from a French version, which followed the Latin closely, by a woman. A translation from the Latin was made by Caxton at the end of the fifteenth century, for "men and wymmen"; STC 3305, part 3 (Westminster, 1490?). Another translation for the nuns of Wintney was made Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, and published by Pynson in 1517; STC 1859. See Ernst A. Kock, ed., *Three Middle-English Versions of the Rule of St Benet and Two Contemporary Rituals for the Ordination of Nuns*, EETS os 120 (London, 1902), pp. x-xi; and Ruth J. Dean and M. Dominica Legge, ed., *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Norman Prose Version*, Medium Aevum Monographs 7 (Oxford, 1964), pp. xi, 105.

¹⁶Kock, ed., *Three Middle-English Versions*, p. 48.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 119; STC 3305. Fox's translation was published by Richard Pynson in 1517 under the title *Here begynneth the Rule of seynt Benet* (STC 1859). See Barry Collett, "The Civil Servant and Monastic Reform: Richard Fox's Translation of the Benedictine Rule for Women, 1517," in *Monastic Studies: The Continuity of Tradition*, ed. Judith Loades (Bangor, 1990).

which the translation was undertaken:

But for as moche as many of you, though ye can synge and rede, yet ye can not se what the meanyng therof ys: therefore to the onely worshyp and praysyng of oure lorde Iesu christe and of hys moste mercyfull mother oure lady and to the hostly comferte and profyete of youre soules I haue drawn youre legende and all youre seruyce in to Engliyshe, that ye shulde se by the vnderstondyng therof, how worthy and holy praysyng of oure glorious Lady is contente therin, & the more deuoutely and knowyngly synge yt & rede yt and say yt to her worshyp.¹⁸

The Cartulary of Godstow Abbey (Oxfordshire) was translated into English around 1460 at the request of the abbess, Alice Henley. In his prologue, the translator explains that "women of relygyone in redyng bokys of latyn byn excusyd of grete undurstondyng where it is not her moder tonge". His translation was undertaken in order to provide the nuns, who were "in englyssh bokys well y lernyd" but evidently unable sufficiently to understand their Latin cartulary, have "bettyr knowlyge of her munymentys and more clerely yeue informacyon to her seruauntys. rent gedurarys and receyuowrs".¹⁹ The nuns, rather than lacking Latin literacy altogether, were unable to read with full understanding.

Standards of Latin literacy surely varied between houses and between individuals. In contrast with the nuns cited by Power, Katherine Sutton, abbess of Barking (Essex) from 1358 to 1377, revised the Latin Easter dramatic offices, demonstrating some considerable ability in Latin

¹⁸John Henry Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, EETS es 19 (London, 1873), pp. 2-3. See Ann M. Hutchison's comments in her "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum*, ed., Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989), and "The Myroure of oure Ladye: a Medieval Guide for Contemplatives," in *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, vol. 2, ed. James Hogg, Analecta Cartusiana, Spiritualität Heute und Gestern 35:19 (Salzburg, 1993).

¹⁹Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B.408, f. 13r; Andrew Clark, ed., *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford*, EETS os 142 (London, 1911), p. 1.

composition.²⁰ Some of the few Latin texts found in manuscripts known to have belonged to nuns suggest a high level of Latinity. For example, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 199, which belonged to Heynings Priory (Lincolnshire) in the fifteenth century, contains a collection of *sententiae*, the *Gemma Animae* of Honorius Augustodunensis, the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of pseudo-Hugh of St Victor, a homiliary, and other Latin works.²¹ But such Latin treatises are rare in nuns' hands.

In their ownership of vernacular rather than Latin religious literature, women religious departed from male monastic culture. Male religious received formal training in Latin grammar, often before they entered the order, and opportunities for some sort of specialized higher education were available to them through the universities and within the monastery. An examination of N. R. Ker's *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* reveals that the majority of non-liturgical books in the libraries of male monastic houses were in Latin.²² But we must wonder how far nuns were expected to follow the male monastic model. Nuns were surely expected to understand the words of the liturgy, but this is unsophisticated Latin, and in any case, nuns could be taught the meaning of the Latin without learning the grammar. In her examination of episcopal visitation records, Eileen Power does not examine the attitudes of the bishops towards the apparently low standards of Latin literacy in women's houses. Did the bishops consider the inability of nuns to sufficiently understand sophisticated Latin documents a problem to be rectified? Injunctions and texts such as the Benedictine Rule, the Cartulary of Godstow Abbey, and the Bridgettine services were made available to nuns in the

²⁰Nancy Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton: The First Woman Playwright," *Educational Theatre Journal* 30 (1978). Katherine's work was copied into the abbey's ordinal; see J. B. L. Tolhurst, *The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*, vol. 1, Henry Bradshaw Society 65 (London, 1927), pp. 92-112.

²¹It also contains Philippe de Thaon's *Li cumpoz*; see K. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfboro, New Hampshire, 1989), pp. 159-61.

²²Ker, *MLGB* and *Supplement*.

vernacular, but did the bishops and other writers suggest, however subtly, that the better solution would be for the nuns to find themselves a Latin tutor and practise their conjugations, declensions, and ablative absolutes? A study of what nuns were expected and encouraged to know would surely be as informative as a study of what they did know. Nuns may themselves have rejected male Latinate culture, identifying more with the vernacular religious culture of aristocratic women. As we shall see, women religious, unlike male religious, came predominantly from the ranks of the nobility and gentry, and increasingly from the urban elite.²³ There is, therefore, a class cultural dimension to nuns' use of French and English literature, as well as a gender dimension.

A COMMON LITERARY DEVOTIONAL CULTURE

Not only did laywomen and nuns read in the same languages, but they also read the same types of texts, and indeed, many of the same texts, as shown in Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, and Appendices 2 and 3. This is far less true of men, not least because many more male religious received some measure of higher education than did laymen.²⁴ The libraries of Sir Simon Burley (1336-88), tutor to Richard II, and William de Walcote (*fl.* 1348-70), cleric in the household of Queen Isabella, show clearly the differences between the religious literature owned by a well-connected aristocratic layman and that owned by a well-connected cleric. Much of Burley's collection consisted of romances and other secular works, and his religious books included a Bible (possibly a version of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*), two works on the Ten Commandments, a book of saints' lives, and a book beginning "Miserere mei Dei". In contrast, de Walcot's library was almost entirely religious. Like Burley, he owned a book of saints' lives and two Bibles, but

²³See pp. 153-5 below.

²⁴The same point is made by Felicity Riddy in her "Women Talking About the Love of God," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), p. 110 and n. 46.

the rest of his collection consisted of Latin theological and canon legal treatises, including several books of decretals, a book of sentences, and works by Bernard, Chobham, Raymond of Penaforte, William of Pagula, and Peter of Blois.²⁵

To some degree it is not surprising that laywomen and nuns read the same texts. As I have shown, women gave devotional literature to other women.²⁶ Many of the texts owned by nuns - particularly those texts bequeathed to nuns - were given to them by laywomen. Nevertheless, I find it hard to imagine that all books in nuns' possession were given to them by laywomen. Although very little is known about the ways in which nuns obtained their books, it is likely that many were commissioned and paid for by nunneries or by individual nuns or their families, and they thus reflect the nuns' literary and devotional tastes and interests.²⁷ Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking from 1393 to 1419 purchased a collection of French devotional treatises, mostly narrative, from the executors of Philippa de Coucy, duchess of Ireland and countess of Oxford (d. 1411).²⁸ Elizabeth Horwode, abbess of the Minories of London, bought a manuscript containing Book 2 of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, his *Mixed Life*, and the *Commentary on Bonum Est* ascribed to Hilton - exactly the sorts of texts owned by secular women.²⁹

There are other factors underlying the observation that laywomen and nuns read the same books. Not only did they share the same educational background but they also shared much the same social and cultural

²⁵The inventories of the libraries of these two men are listed and discussed in V. J. Scattergood, "Two Medieval Book Lists," *The Library*, 5th series, 23 (1969), pp. 236-9.

²⁶See Chapter 1 above.

²⁷See my "Pious Books for Pious Women: The Vernon Manuscript and Women's Devotional Reading in Late Medieval England" (M. A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991).

²⁸Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 1038.

²⁹London, BL MS Harley 2397.

background. In this respect nuns resembled secular women to a far greater degree than they resembled monks, and to a greater degree than male religious resembled laymen. To a large extent, nuns, and particularly those nuns at the larger, wealthier nunneries from which considerably more books survive than do from smaller and poorer houses, came from the same social background as their lay, book-owning counterparts, that is, from the ranks of the nobility, the gentry, and, to a lesser extent, the merchant élite. Until recently, Eileen Power's view that nunneries were essentially aristocratic institutions, drawing women from the ranks of the nobility, gentry, and the wealthy bourgeoisie, prevailed.³⁰ Marilyn Oliva, however, argues that nunneries, at least those in the diocese of Norwich from 1350 to 1540, recruited from a much wider social spectrum.³¹ Nonetheless, of the 542 nuns whose social status Oliva was able to determine, 80 per cent were from noble or gentle families.³² Catherine Paxton, in her examination of five nunneries in and around London (Clerkenwell, Haliwell, Kilburn, the Minories, St Helen's, and Stratford), found that half of the nuns whose social background was determined came from aristocratic families. The other half were the daughters of urban dwellers, nearly all of whom were citizens of London.³³ Both Oliva and Paxton point out that the wealthier houses tended to attract women from higher up the social scale: the greatest numbers of noble and gentle nuns in the diocese of Norwich were found at Campsey Ash priory, by far the richest

³⁰Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 4-14.

³¹Marilyn Oliva, "Aristocracy or Meritocracy?: Office Holding Patterns in Late Medieval English Nunneries", in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 27 (Oxford, 1990).

³²*Ibid.*, p. 200 (Table 1).

³³Catherine Paxton, "The Nunneries of London and its Environs in the Later Middle Ages" (D. Phil. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992), pp. 16-32.

nunnery in the diocese, and in London at the Minorities.³⁴ Winifred Sturman, in her doctoral dissertation on Barking Abbey, one of the oldest women's houses in England, and, at the Dissolution, the third richest, concludes that the abbey was an essentially aristocratic institution, although the social composition was augmented in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by daughters of London merchants, and in the fifteenth century by daughters of small landholders in Essex and Barking itself.³⁵

In general, the social status of monks seems to have been lower than that of nuns. According to R. B. Dobson, the monks of Durham Priory in the first half of the fifteenth century came primarily "from the middle ranks of urban and rural society".³⁶ In her recent study of Westminster Abbey, England's wealthiest male house, Barbara Harvey suggests that the novices came mainly from families living on the abbey's country estates and from the families of tradesmen and craftsmen living in the town of Westminster, rather than from aristocratic families.³⁷

It is from the wealthier nunneries (i.e. those houses with the largest numbers of aristocratic women) that the majority of books, and particularly those books containing religious literature, survive, although it must be borne in mind that numbers of surviving books do not necessarily reflect the numbers of books originally in the nunneries. Women's use of religious literature, as I argued in Chapter 1, was largely an aristocratic activity. This aspect of female aristocratic culture appears to transcend religious profession.

³⁴In 1535 the net income of Campsey Ash priory was £182, far higher than that of any other nunnery in the diocese, and that of the Minorities of London was £318. See David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales* (London, 1953), pp. 227, 232.

³⁵Winifred M. Sturman, "Barking Abbey: A Study in its External and Internal Administration from the Conquest to the Dissolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1961), pp. 400-410.

³⁶R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 58.

³⁷Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 5-6, 75-6.

The recent work of Roberta Gilchrist demonstrates that elements of nunnery architecture often resembled that of gentry houses. Smaller, poorer nunneries often departed from traditional (male) monastic planning, being built of timber or cob rather than stone, and incorporating features more commonly associated with secular domestic contexts, such as moats, discontinuous ranges grouped around courtyards, garderobes, and possibly upper-storey kitchens. At wealthy nunneries such as Godstow Abbey (Oxfordshire) and Elstow (Bedfordshire), architectural changes may have been carried out to accommodate the *familiae* into which nunnery populations tended to be divided in the later Middle Ages, an identification, perhaps, with the lifestyles of noblewomen, who often lived segregated lives in the inner household.³⁸

Gilchrist suggests that some of these features resulted from the frequent contact between nunneries and secular society, brought about by the tendency of nunneries to share their churches with parochial congregations, and the tendency of laywomen and children to visit and board within nunneries.³⁹ It seems to have been relatively common for aristocratic women to receive papal permission to visit nunneries, and to entertain nuns in their own homes, and the volumes of the *Calendar of Papal Letters* record many examples of such women.⁴⁰ In some cases the relationship between an individual laywoman and a nunnery seems to have been particularly close. Marie de St Pol, countess of Pembroke, refounded Denny Abbey (Cambridgeshire) as a Franciscan nunnery in 1339 and, after having the conventual church extended, built her private apartments in part of the original nave. Marie chose to be

³⁸Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 92-127. For women living in the inner household, see Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 50.

³⁹For laywomen visiting and boarding in nunneries, see Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 394-419.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 418-9. Men also received papal indulgences to enter monastic houses.

buried at Denny in a sister's habit.⁴¹ In 1352 Elizabeth de Burgh, lady Clare, built a house in the outer precinct of the Minories without Aldgate, where she spent part of each year, and she often entertained minoresses there. Earlier she had been given licence to enter houses of the Minoresses and in 1355 she was permitted to spend the night in a house of the Minoresses accompanied by two honest women. In her will of 1355, Elizabeth requested burial in the church of the Minories, rather than in other monastic houses associated with her family.⁴² This sort of contact between nuns and aristocratic women, who shared social and educational backgrounds, may have helped to foster a common literary devotional culture.

An equally significant factor underlying the finding that laywomen and women religious own the same religious literature is that the model of piety offered to the more devout laity is one that imitates monasticism. As I have already shown, there is a distinct lack of religious literature addressed to married laywomen.⁴³ The constructed devout woman reader is either a religious, or like a woman religious in that she is celibate. Furthermore, the only model of piety offered to high-status, devout laywomen (or laypeople for that matter) was one that imitated monasticism. This can be seen in writings on the active and contemplative lives, as well as in spiritual opportunities available to women in late medieval England.

Early writers on the spiritual life, particularly St Augustine and St Gregory the Great, established two lives open to Christians: the active life and the contemplative life.⁴⁴ For Gregory, the active life is:

to give bread to the hungry, to teach the ignorant the word of

⁴¹Jennifer C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 155-6; J. G. Coad, *Denny Abbey*, English Heritage Guides (London, 1989), pp. 8, 23-4.

⁴²Ward, *English Noblewomen*, pp. 150, 161.

⁴³See Chapter 2.

⁴⁴See Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 2nd ed., (London, 1960), pp. 211-48; J. P. H. Clark, "Action and contemplation in Walter Hilton", *The Downside Review* 97 (1979).

wisdom, to correct the erring, to recall to the path of humility our neighbour when he waxes proud, to tend the sick, to dispense to all what they need, and to provide those entrusted to us with the means of subsistence.⁴⁵

It is also the necessary preparation for the contemplative life.⁴⁶ The contemplative life is:

to retain indeed with all one's mind the love of God and neighbour, but to rest from exterior action, and cleave only to the desire of the Maker, that the mind may now take no pleasure in doing anything, but having spurned all cares, may be aglow to see the face of its Creator; so that it already knows how to bear with sorrow the burden of the corruptible flesh, and with all its desires to seek to join the hymn-singing choirs of angels, to mingle with the heavenly citizens, and to rejoice at its everlasting incorruption in the sight of God.⁴⁷

Both Augustine and Gregory affirm that while both lives are praiseworthy, the contemplative is the superior of the two.⁴⁸ Although Augustine and Gregory did not actually equate active life and contemplative life with the secular state and the vowed religious state respectively, by the later Middle Ages this equation was firmly established.⁴⁹

Of late medieval writers, Walter Hilton's treatment of the spiritual life is perhaps the most comprehensive.⁵⁰ In Book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection*,

⁴⁵Translated in Butler, *Western Mysticism*, pp. 222-3.

⁴⁶Butler, *Western Mysticism*, p. 225; Clark, "Action and Contemplation," p. 260.

⁴⁷Translated in Butler, *Western Mysticism*, p. 223. See also Clark, "Action and Contemplation," p. 260.

⁴⁸Butler, *Western Mysticism*, pp. 214-7, 225-7.

⁴⁹See Clark, "Action and Contemplation," p. 260-1; S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Walter Hilton's Mixed Life Edited From Lambeth Palace MS 472*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92:15 (Salzburg, 1986), p. 1.

⁵⁰No Middle English edition of *The Scale of Perfection* has been printed. I have used the translation into modern English by John P. H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward (New York, 1991). References to *The Scale* will consist of book and chapter numbers, and page references to the Clark and Dorward translation.

addressed to an anchoress, he discusses the active and contemplative lives. The active life consists of service to God and towards one's fellow Christians, and of bodily acts of penance. It is also preparation for, and thus inferior to, the contemplative life. The active life belongs to all wealthy laypeople as well as to all those, whether clergy or laity, temporal or spiritual, who have office or responsibility over others.⁵¹ Contemplative life, however, "lies in perfect love and charity, felt inwardly through spiritual virtues and by a true knowledge and sight of God in spiritual things", and belongs especially to those who for the love of God forsake the world and devote themselves to the service of God.⁵² Book 1 of the *Scale* lists three parts of contemplation. The first is rational knowledge of God and things of the spirit, and it pertains especially to "learned men and great scholars". The second is affective devotion, and Hilton divides this part into two degrees, distinguishing between the (lower) occasional and (higher) habitual possession of devotion. The lower degree, he says, can be experienced by people leading an active life. The third part, which Hilton calls "very" (i.e. true) contemplation, combines knowledge and love. This is full, infused contemplation, and can be habitually experienced only by vowed religious, especially solitaries, although God might occasionally give it to someone in active life.⁵³

Hilton evidently believes that the active, lay state can have dignity and value in its own right.⁵⁴ In Book 1, chapter 60, Hilton affirms that any layman or laywoman

who for the love of God and salvation of his soul truly and fully forsakes in his heart all the pleasures and honors of this world

⁵¹*Scale* I.2, Clark and Dorward, p. 78.

⁵²*Scale* I.3; Clark and Dorward, p. 78. Richard Rolle, in his *Form of Living*, also discusses the active and contemplative lives; see S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, EETS os 293 (London, 1988), pp. 24-5.

⁵³*Scale*, 1. 4-9; Clark and Dorward, pp. 79-83.

⁵⁴See *Scale* 1. 61; Clark and Dorward, pp. 132-3. See also Clark, "Action and Contemplation," p. 265.

that come between God and him, and all deliberate concern with earthly things, down to the bare necessity, who offers his will to be wholly his servant, according to his strength, by devout prayers and holy thoughts and with the good deeds that he can do in body and spirit, and who keeps his will wholly steadfastly set toward God - all these are especially God's servants in holy church. For this good will . . . they shall have a special reward in the bliss of heaven, before other chosen souls who did not wholly offer their will and their body to God's service as they did. ⁵⁵

Notwithstanding his praise of the lay state, Hilton states that anchorites and members of religious orders "shall have a special reward and a singular honor in the bliss of heaven for their state of life, before other souls who did not have that state in holy church, however holy they might be."⁵⁶ The lay state is good, but the vowed religious state is better.

In his *Mixed Life*, written probably at around the same date as Book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection*, Hilton describes a third form of spiritual life, one that combines the active and contemplative lives. This life, he states, belongs to those who have sovereignty over others: priests, prelates, and secular lords. Hilton's teaching on the mixed life is not, in itself, new. Gregory the Great urged all priests and religious superiors to aspire to just such a life.⁵⁷ It is in his recommendation of this life to the laity that Hilton is novel.⁵⁸ The contemplation that is advocated in *Mixed Life*, however, is actually affective

⁵⁵*Scale* 1.60; Clark and Dorward, p. 131.

⁵⁶*Scale* 1. 61; Clark and Dorward, p. 132.

⁵⁷Butler, *Western Mysticism*, pp. 227-9.

⁵⁸*Mixed Life* was written for a wealthy married lord, whom Hilton apparently knew personally. There are two versions of the text, a shorter and a longer. The shorter version is addressed to a "broþer in Christ"; the longer to a "broþir and suster" or "breþerne and systeme". Because of this change in addressee, the longer version is usually regarded as a later adaptation, designed to give the work a more general appeal. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, however, considers the longer version the original, but regards the form of address as spurious. See Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Mixed Life*, pp. x-xi. In any event, the change in address suggests that the mixed life was considered appropriate for laywomen as well as laymen.

devotion, the same as the second part of contemplation of Book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection*, which Hilton states is attainable by those in active life.⁵⁹ The third part of contemplation - the "very" contemplation - remains the prerogative of vowed religious - those living the contemplative life. For Hilton, the mixed life is the most meritorious life for those people with either spiritual or temporal sovereignty, but for those that are free of such responsibility, "lif contemplatif aloone . . . were best, moste spedefulle, most medfulle, most fair, and most worpi."⁶⁰ As in book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection*, the vowed religious, contemplative life is the ideal.

In both *The Scale of Perfection* and *Mixed Life*, Hilton seems to be responding to the spiritual needs and desires of devout laypeople. The treatises are an attempt to make some measure of contemplative, monastic spirituality available to the laity. Hilton is not the only writer to concern himself with the spiritual life of the laity, although his treatment of the subject is the most sensitive and comprehensive. The *Speculum religiosorum* or *Speculum Ecclesie* of Edmund of Abingdon, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1234 to 1240, was translated into Anglo-French, and re-translated into Latin in the late thirteenth century, and then into English as *The Mirror of Holy Church* or *The Mirror of St Edmund*. *The Mirror* is a treatise on the Christian life addressed to both religious and the laity. It contains a large amount of didactic material, covering the syllabus outlined in the Lambeth constitutions, as well as instruction on meditation and contemplative prayer.⁶¹ *A Ladder of Four Rungs* is a late fourteenth-century translation of the *Scala Claustralium*, attributed to Guigo II, ninth prior of the Grande Chartreuse. One of the best teaching manuals of the monastic contemplative technique of reading, meditation, and prayer, the Latin original was addressed to monks. The

⁵⁹See Clark, "Action and Contemplation," p. 267; Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Mixed Life*, pp. ix, 9, 31, including notes to lines 100, 351.

⁶⁰Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Mixed Life*, pp. 21-2.

⁶¹Lagorio and Sargent 72; Helen P. Forshaw, ed., *Edmund of Abingdon's Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesie* (Oxford, 1973).

English version is, however, addressed to enclosed religious and "opere Goddis lovers".⁶² Another treatise on the spiritual life addressed to the laity is *The Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God* or *Fervor Amoris*, composed in the second half of the fourteenth century. Its author considered the contemplative life to be open to all Christians, but actually attainable by only a few.⁶³ *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* is another late fourteenth-century guide to the spiritual life for the laity. *The Abbey* advocates an interior, quasi-monastic spirituality, with particular emphasis on meditation.

In fact, all of these treatises emphasize meditation. Meditation, the devout reflection on a particular theme, with the intention of deepening spiritual insight, and stimulating the will and the affections, was an essential part of the contemplative life.⁶⁴ The Franciscan meditative technique of concentrating the powers of the imagination on events in the life of Christ was evidently of interest to the laity, and efforts were made to make meditative treatises available to laypeople. The pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, originally composed for a nun, was translated several times into English. The most popular translation, entitled *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, was made by Nicholas Love, prior of Mount Grace Charterhouse, probably in the early fifteenth century.⁶⁵ Love's *Mirror* survives in whole or in part in 60 manuscripts, and was printed nine times

⁶²Lagorio and Sargent 69. The text is edited by Phyllis Hodgson, in her *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, EETS os 231 (London, 1958), pp. 100-17; the quotation is from p. 100. See also her "'A Ladder of Foure Ronges by the Whiche Men Mowe Wele Clyme to Heven': A Study of the Prose Style of a Middle English Translation," *Modern Languages Review* 44 (1949).

⁶³Lagorio and Sargent 41; Margaret Connelly, ed., *The Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, EETS os 303 (London, 1993).

⁶⁴See the entry for "Meditation" in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London, 1974), p. 898; Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York, 1961); Michael G. Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (New York, 1992).

⁶⁵For an edition of the text and a bibliography see Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love's Mirror*.

between 1484 and 1530.⁶⁶ Love refers to his readers as "common people and simple souls", and contrasts them with "ghostly folk" (probably meaning people advanced in spiritual knowledge).⁶⁷ Love maintains the traditional hierarchy of the contemplative over the active state; his lay readers are to aspire to the "mylke of ly3te doctryne" rather than the "sadde mete of grete clargye and of hye contemplacion".⁶⁸ In addition to Love's *Mirror*, there are a number of independent translations of material from the *Meditationes vitae Christi* or from the shorter *Meditationes de Passione Domini*, including *The Privy of the Passion*, which translates chapters 74-92 of the *Meditationes vitae Christe*, and *The Meditations on the Supper of our Lord, and the Hours of the Passion*, and the Middle English *Meditationes de Passione*, both of which are versions of the Latin *Meditationes de Passione*.⁶⁹ Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, together with his *Treatise on Corpus Christi*, is the most frequently found text in laywomen's manuscripts. *The Scale of Perfection* is the most frequently found text in manuscripts known to have belonged to women religious.

Thus in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, we can see attempts to make a measure of monastic, contemplative spirituality available to the laity. However, in all this effort to cater for the devotional needs of laymen and laywomen, the monastic life is held up as the spiritual ideal. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, written specifically for laypeople who wish to "be in religyon", but who are prevented

⁶⁶Lagorio and Sargent, p. 3106.

⁶⁷Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, p. xxxii. Sargent points out two references that suggest that Love includes his Carthusian brothers among his audience.

⁶⁸Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, p. 10.

⁶⁹Lagorio and Sargent 62. Another translation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* is the *Speculum Devotorum*, written for a woman religious by a Carthusian; see Lagorio and Sargent 63; and James Hogg, ed., *The Speculum Devotorum of an Anonymous Carthusian of Shene, edited from the Manuscripts Cambridge University Library Gg.1.6 and Foyle, with an Introduction and a Glossary*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 12 (Salzburg, 1973).

from doing so by poverty, marriage, or family pressures. The text does not offer them an alternative form of piety, based on lay experience, but rather directs them towards a quasi-monastic life, instructing them to construct a spiritual nunnery within their hearts. For the author of *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, for Walter Hilton, and for authors of other treatises on the spiritual life addressed to the laity, there is no alternative form of active, lay spirituality to equal that of the contemplative.

That the model of piety offered to laywomen was one that imitated monasticism can also be seen in the forms of spiritual life available to them. Opportunities for women to lead a religious life in late medieval England were limited: becoming a nun was the traditional religious career for women, but in addition to this, women could lead less formal spiritual lives as anchoresses, hospital sisters, or vowesses.

Anchoresses vowed chastity and stability, and were enclosed for life in cells that were usually attached to parish or monastic churches.⁷⁰ The anchoritic life appears to have been a predominantly female vocation; although there were male anchorites, they were outnumbered by anchoresses from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.⁷¹ While male anchorites were almost always members of religious orders or priests, their female counterparts were usually laywomen, although nuns could and did seek permanent solitary enclosure.⁷² Anchoritism offered these women the opportunity to lead an ascetic life of penitence and prayer. Theoretically free from all worldly cares and responsibilities, and from daily monastic routine, an anchoress was thus able to devote herself entirely and continuously to contemplation.

Hospitals offered women a quasi-regular life focussing on the traditional

⁷⁰On anchoresses, see especially Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London, 1914); and Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1985).

⁷¹Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, pp. 19-20. Men, unlike women, could become hermits, who were not enclosed.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 22.

female role as provider of charity.⁷³ Many larger hospitals had sisters attached to them, some of whom appear to have lived under vows and contributed to the spiritual life of the hospital, while others were laywomen responsible for basic nursing care.⁷⁴ Although little is known about the social origins of hospital sisters, it is likely that many came from the lower rungs of the social scale, given the nature of the work.

The third spiritual opportunity available to laywomen in late medieval England was to become a vowess.⁷⁵ Vowesses took a formal vow of perpetual chastity, but did not vow either poverty or obedience. Unlike anchoresses and hospital sisters they continued to live in their own homes in secular society. They were usually, although not necessarily, widows. In the case of married women, husbands were also required to take a vow of chastity.⁷⁶ According to P. H. Cullum, most vowesses were of gentry status,

⁷³The term hospital encompasses a diverse range of charitable institutions that cared for the poor and the sick. For medieval hospitals see Rotha Mary Clay, *The Mediaeval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909); Miri Rubin, *Charity and community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987); P. H. Cullum, "Hospitals and Charitable Provision in Medieval Yorkshire, 936-1547" (D. Phil. dissertation, University of York, 1989); P. H. Cullum, *Cremetts and Corrodies: Care of the Poor and Sick at St Leonard's Hospital, York, in the Middle Ages*, Borthwick Paper 79 (York, 1991). Little has been written on hospital sisters; see Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, pp. 154-6; Cullum, *Cremetts and Corrodies*, pp. 7, 15. I owe much of my knowledge of hospital sisters to discussions with Patricia Cullum. Women's role as provider of charity is analysed by P. H. Cullum in her "'And Hir Name was Charite': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Gloucester, 1992).

⁷⁴In his will of 1408, the poet John Gower distinguished between "every sister professed" and "each of them who is a nurse of the sick" at St Thomas's Hospital, Southwark. See Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals*, p. 154.

⁷⁵Very little has been written about vowesses. See Mary C. Erler, "Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses," in *Medieval London Widows*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London, 1994), 165-81; and P. H. Cullum, "Vowesses and Veiled Widows: Female Lay Piety in the Late Medieval Province of York," forthcoming in *Northern History*.

⁷⁶Margery Kempe's long and eventually successful struggle to persuade her husband to agree to a celibate marriage is the best known example. See

although some belonged to the nobility and the urban elite. Women's motives for taking the vow are seldom evident. In some cases husbands made deathbed requests to their wives to remain chaste, or in their wills promised specific economic benefit.⁷⁷ Other women may have taken the vow to avoid pressures to remarry. It is likely that for many the reasons to become a vowess were wholly or partly spiritual. The view that while married women reap thirty-fold, widows reap sixty-fold and virgins reap one hundred-fold had, by the later Middle Ages, become a commonplace. Like Margery Kempe, women must have welcomed release from the marital debt, which they felt hindered their progress in the spiritual life. However, as both Mary C. Erler and P. H. Cullum have pointed out, it is difficult to identify a particular vowess spirituality.

These three forms of spiritual life offered to laywomen all followed, to a greater or lesser extent, the monastic model. Anchoresses, like nuns, were enclosed. Freedom from the daily routine of monastic life enabled anchoresses to follow a more purely contemplative life than nuns. Hospital sisters lived in communities similar to those of nuns and were sometimes under vows themselves. All three lifestyles required celibacy, and were thus incompatible with marriage and motherhood. As Margery Kempe discovered, there were no recognized, orthodox, forms of spiritual life where women could combine an active sexual life and the pursuit of spiritual perfection. Married women had to carve out their own niches and define their own devotional space, rather than accepting that of the cloister or the anchorhold.⁷⁸ It is clear that only a minority of women in late medieval England were accommodated by the paradigms of anchoress, hospital sister, and vowess. This may be due, to

Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, eds., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, EETS os 212 (London, 1940).

⁷⁷Erler, "Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses," p. 167; Cullum, "Vowesses and Veiled Widows".

⁷⁸Anna Cheifetz offers an innovative study of women's devotional space in "'Spiritual Mansions': Female Space and the Privatisation of Piety in Late Medieval England" (M. A. dissertation, University of York, 1992).

some extent, to family and economic pressure, but it is likely that many women preferred marriage to celibacy, and informal forms of spirituality to formal.

Forms of female lay piety, including the beguines, tertiaries, and the Sisters of the Common Life, found in continental Europe do not seem to have appeared in England. Beguines, who seem to have emerged spontaneously in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, were found in northern Europe, especially in the towns of northern France, the Low Countries, the Rhineland, and Switzerland.⁷⁹ Tertiaries, laywomen associated with one of the mendicant orders, usually Franciscan or Dominican, were found in southern Europe, particularly in Italian cities.⁸⁰ The Sisters of the Common Life were part of the late fourteenth-century religious reform movement, the *devotio moderna*, which began in the Low Countries under Geert Groote of Deventer.⁸¹ Beguines and tertiaries are generally considered to be parallel movements, offering women lives of poverty, charity, and penance. Both beguines and tertiaries promised chastity, although they did not make solemn vows to this effect, and were free of a monastic *regula* or rule. Neither had a

⁷⁹The standard work in English on the beguines is Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1954); see also P. Devlin, "Feminine Lay Piety in the High Middle Ages: the Beguines," in *Medieval Religious Women 1: Distant Echoes*, ed. J. A. Nichols and Lilian T. Shank (Kalamazoo, 1984). Carol Neel argues that antecedents to the beguines can be found in earlier communities of religious women in her "The Origin of the Beguines," in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M. Bennett *et al.* (Chicago and London, 1989).

⁸⁰There is almost no literature on tertiaries; see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), pp. 17-9; and her *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), *passim*.

⁸¹Sarah King, "The Sisters of the Common Life at Deventer, 1374-1418: A New Beginning?" *Mystics Quarterly* 18 (1992). A succinct discussion with bibliography of the *devotio moderna* is given by Otto Gründler in "Devotio Moderna," in *Christian Spirituality II: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (London, 1989).

prescribed way of life, a formal institutional structure, or communal living arrangements. In contrast, the Sisters of the Common Life followed the monastic model more closely: they held all property in common, and practised the monastic ideals of poverty, chastity, and obedience, although they did not take solemn vows, and their daily routine imitated that in monastic houses. Although beguines and tertiaries, and to a lesser degree, Sisters of the Common Life, began as informal lay movements, each was increasingly regularized. By the fourteenth century beguines lived in enclosed beguinages, and by the late fourteenth century the tertiaries had been given a rule and were living in quasi-monastic communities. In the second half of the fifteenth century most of the houses of the Sisters of the Common Life adopted the rule of the third order of St Francis (i.e. the Franciscan tertiaries).

Movements such as the beguines, the tertiaries, and the Sisters of the Common Life stand as witness women's desire to lead a devout life while still remaining in the world; the fact that each of the three was increasingly regularized is witness to official anxiety about unsupervised religious women. None of these forms of female lay piety, as such, were found in England. However, two communities of laywomen that resembled them were found by Norman Tanner in mid-fifteenth-century Norwich.⁸² Tanner describes these groups as "communities of laywomen closely resembling beguinages", but they equally resemble tertiaries and Sisters of the Common Life. Who were these women? They may have been vowesses who chose to live together, whether for reasons of economy or friendship. Some of the evidence presented by P. H. Cullum in her study of vowesses in late medieval Yorkshire suggests that some women may have taken their vows together.⁸³ Or they may have been women, perhaps widows, leading some sort of informal religious life together.

⁸²The women were variously described in wills as sisters living together, sisters dedicated to chastity, sisters dedicated to God. A third group of women may have lived together under some sort of religious vow at an unknown date in a house in the churchyard of St Peter Hungate parish. See Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), p. 65.

⁸³P. H. Cullum "Vowesses and Veiled Widows."

It is possible that movements such as the beguines, tertiaries, and Sisters of the Common Life were never established in England, as such, because of different patterns of economic geography. These forms of female lay piety were urban phenomena, and attracted women primarily from the urban classes. With the exception of London, England had no cities to compare with the large cities of the Low Countries, the Rhineland, and northern Italy.⁸⁴

Whatever the reasons for which continental forms of female lay piety did not establish themselves in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is unlikely that any novel forms of lay piety, especially one that considered the lay state equal to the religious, would have been officially sanctioned in the fifteenth century. The fourteenth-century texts that made some measure of monastic spirituality available to the more devout members of the laity were not followed by texts that promulgated an alternative lay form of piety. The limited range of spiritual opportunities in the fifteenth century can be attributed in part to the spread of Lollardy in the late fourteenth century. Although it can be argued that Lollardy directly affected only a minority of the population, and that Lollard writings, whether in Latin or English, had little influence on English theology, the Church's response to Lollardy had a greater impact. The Church clearly recognized Lollardy as a threat, and reacted to prevent the spread of heresy among a laity that was both literate and spiritually motivated. Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions of 1409 sought to limit all theologizing, whether in Latin or English, restricting preaching and teaching, as well as the production and use of theological writings in Latin and

⁸⁴Ann K. Warren demonstrates that there was a sharp increase in the number of anchoresses in the thirteenth century, when movements such as the Beguines and tertiaries emerged on the Continent. Warren considers this increase in female anchoritism to have been the English equivalent of the emergence of such forms of female lay piety. See Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, pp. 20-22.

English.⁸⁵ In addition, lay piety came under greater scrutiny.

In its campaign against Lollardy the Church re-affirmed the traditional hierarchy of the contemplative (monastic) state over the active (lay) state. This was no doubt intended, in part, to counter certain Lollard views. Lollards clearly did not hold the enclosed state to be superior to the lay. They regularly stressed the value of marriage, often to the detriment of celibacy, and they occasionally claimed that marriage was legitimate for the clergy.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Lollards objected to monks, canons, friar, nuns, hermits, and "emperour clerkis" because they separated the individual from the common life of the Church in a way not envisaged by Christ.⁸⁷ Yet the Church's reiteration of traditional teaching was also to contain burgeoning lay piety within recognized, impeccably orthodox bounds.

THE IMPACT OF TEXTS WRITTEN AND RECOMMENDED FOR WOMEN ON WOMEN'S USE OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

It is clear from Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, and from Appendices 2 and 3

⁸⁵The Constitutions are printed in D. Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol. 3 (London, 1737), 314-9; see also Anne Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?", in her *Lollards and Their Books* (London and Ronceverte, 1985). Originally published in *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982). The Constitutions specified, among other things, that preachers were to keep their material appropriate to their audience, and were not to discuss the sacraments beyond the simple presentation of the church's determinations on them. Anyone teaching others was forbidden to treat theological matters. The works of John Wycliffe and of others since his time were not to be read without having first been examined and found to be orthodox. The translation of holy scripture into English, and the ownership of any translation of the Bible made since the time of Wycliffe was forbidden without the express permission of the local diocesan or the provincial council. Anne Hudson has pointed out that this last injunction actually pertained to any theological writings in Latin or English; see her "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" pp. 148-9.

⁸⁶Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), p. 292.

⁸⁷Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 347-51.

that women's reading was not limited to what is written or recommended for them. Indeed, texts addressed to women form only a small proportion of the corpus of religious literature known to have been in women's hands. Copies of the *Ancrene Wisse*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, *The Doctrine of the Heart*, *The Scale of Perfection*, the *Speculum Devotorum*, and *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* were owned by laywomen.⁸⁸ Women religious possessed copies of the *Ancrene Wisse*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, *The Commandment*, *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*, *The Doctrine of the Heart*, *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*, *The Scale of Perfection*, and *Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*.⁸⁹ Women whose religious status is

⁸⁸See pp. 113-4 above.

⁸⁹A copy of the *Ancrene Riwe* was given to the nuns of Canonsleigh by their foundress Matilda de Clare (London, BL MS Cotton Cleopatra C.vi). The nuns of Esholt priory received a copy of *The Chastising of God's Children* from Agnes Stapilton in 1448, and the prioress of Easebourne was bequeathed a copy of the same by mercy Ormesby in 1451; see, respectively, *North Country Wills*, pp. 48-9, and Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills," p. 116. Printed copies of *The Chastising* were owned by Katherine Palmer and Edith Morepath, nuns of Syon Abbey (Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Bb.2.14), and by Mary Newell and Audrey Dely, also nuns of Syon (Göttingen University Library). A manuscript, now Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.40, containing Rolle's *The Commandment* and *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*, belonged to Joan Moursleyght of Shaftesbury Abbey. Sibilla de Felton, abbess of Barking, owned a copy of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*, now in the collection of Miss Christina Foyle. Maud Wade, prioress of Swine Priory gave her copy of the *De Remediis* to Joan Hyltoft of Nun Coton (London, BL MS Harley 2409). Copies of *The Doctrine of the Heart* belonged to Christine St Nicholas, a minoress of London, who left it to her house, and to the nuns of Bruisyard Abbey, who received it from Margaret Purdans (Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Caston, ff. 163v-165r; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112). Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* was extremely popular among women religious: the full text was owned by Elizabeth Wylby of Campsey Priory (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 268), Rose Pachet of Syon Abbey (Oxford, All Soul's College MS 25), Joan Sewell of Syon (Philadelphia, Rosenbach Foundation Inc., H 491), the nuns of Shaftesbury (London, BL MS Add. 11748), and the Minoreesses of London (London, BL MS Harley 2387). A copy of what was probably Book 1 was bequeathed by Eleanor Roos to the wife of her nephew Robert Roos in 1438 (*TE* 2, pp. 65-6). Book 2 only belonged to Margery Pensax, anchoress of Hawton, Nottinghamshire and later of Bishopsgate, London (London, BL

unknown owned copies of *The Commandment*, *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*, and *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*.⁹⁰ We see again that laywomen and nuns read virtually the same texts.

The few recommendations on what to read made by the authors of religious treatises addressed to women religious, which include holy scripture, the writings of "holy faders" and "holy doctours", *Stimulus Amoris*, and saints' lives, seem in general to have been heeded, but by no means did they delimit women's use of religious literature. Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, at the beginning of this chapter, show that Bibles and portions of the Bible were among the books in women's possession. Exactly what is meant by the writings of "holy faders" and "holy doctores" is not clear. As the terms are found in the Middle English translations of Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum* and *The Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades* respectively it is likely that they refer to the works of the early church fathers and later theologians, of which very few were owned by women, usually nuns, but the translators may have used the terms in a more general sense, to include works such as the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, attributed in the Middle Ages to Bonaventure, which circulated widely in various English translations among both laywomen and women religious.⁹¹

Ms Harley 2387). Copies of *The Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom* belonged to the Elizabeth Wylby above who also owned *The Scale of Perfection* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 268), and to Alice Lego of Ankerwyke Priory (Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 390/610). In addition, copies of *The Myroure of oure Ladye* (Aberdeen, University Library MS 134 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS C.941), *The Orchard of Syon* (New York, Public Library, Eng. 1519), and *The Tree and XI Frutes of the Holy Ghost* (Cambridge, Trinity College C.7.12) belonged to, respectively, Elizabeth Monton, Elizabeth Strickland, and Margaret Windsor, nuns of Syon Abbey in the sixteenth century; see Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 184-7 and 308-10. None of these last three books is included in Appendix 1.

⁹⁰An Agnes Dawns owned *The Commandment* and *The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte* (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.6.40), and a certain Elizabeth owned *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness* (London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597, formerly Coughton Court).

⁹¹Nicholas Love's translation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, is the single most common text found in

Stimulus Amoris, also attributed to Bonaventure, was one of the books read to Margery Kempe, and copies of the English translation, *The Prickyng of Love*, were owned by several nuns of Dartford Priory (Kent) and by Joan Newmarch, daughter and heiress of Sir Hugh Shirley (d. 1403) and Beatrice de Braose (d. 1440), and wife of Robert Newmarch.⁹²

Saints' lives, as Appendices 2 and 3 reveal, were tremendously popular with women. Where lives of individual saints are found in women's hands, they tend to be of female saints, and this prevalence suggests that women saints were seen to be particularly relevant role models for women readers and listeners.⁹³ In 1486 Agnes Vavasour, nun of Swine Priory (East Riding), received a copy of the Life of Saint Katherine in English from Thomas Hornby, and six years later Isabel Liston of Norwich bequeathed her Life of Saint Margaret in English to her daughter Margery London.⁹⁴ Katherine Babington, sub-prioress of Campsey Priory (Suffolk), left her copy of Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine*, now London, BL MS Arundel 396, to her house. A Life of Saint Katherine of Siena belonged to Cecily Neville, duchess of York, and in her will of 1495 she bequeathed it to her grand-daughter

manuscripts known to have belonged to laywomen. See Appendix 3.

⁹²For the books read to Margery Kempe see Meech and Allen, eds. *The book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 39, 143. Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Downside Abbey MS 26542 was owned by Beatrice Chaumbir of Dartford, who specified that after her death the book was to go to Emma Wynter and Denise Caston, also nuns of Dartford; London, BL MS Harley 2254 belonged to Alice Branthwait, prioress of Dartford c. 1461-70 and to Joan Newmarch, whose arms (not impaled with those of her husband) are painted on the first page of this manuscript. The information about Joan was supplied by A. I. Doyle to J. P. H. Clark, and printed in J. P. H. Clark, "Walter Hilton and the *Stimulus Amoris*," *Downside Review* 102 (1984), p. 79, n.6.

⁹³For female saints, particularly virgin martyrs, as models for women, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Saints' Lives and the Female Reader", *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27 (1991); and Katherine J. Lewis, "Paradigmatic Young Women? The Upbringing and Education of Virgin-Martyrs in some Late-Medieval English Narratives", paper presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July, 1995.

⁹⁴TE 3, p. 165; Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg Wolman, f. 171v.

Bridget, a nun at Dartford Priory (Kent). Anne Harling (d. 1498) owned English versions of the Lives of Saints Katherine, Margaret, and Anne.⁹⁵ The Life of Saint Katherine from the *Gilte Legende* belonged to Alice Lego, a nun of Ankerwyke Priory (Buckinghamshire) in the early sixteenth century, and a manuscript containing the Lives of Saints Katherine and Margaret belonged to William Bodley (d. 1540), a London grocer, and his successive wives Elizabeth and Beatrice (d. 1557)⁹⁶. Lives of women saints were not only copied for women, but also composed for them. A nun of Barking Abbey composed an Anglo-French life of St Katherine in the twelfth century, possibly for use in the nunnery.⁹⁷ The thirteenth-century lives of Saints Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana, which form part of the so-called Katherine Group, are linked linguistically and textually with the *Ancrene Riwle*, and it is generally believed that they were written for the same anchoresses for whom the *Ancrene Riwle* was written.⁹⁸ Lydgate wrote his *Invocation to Saint Anne* and his *Legend of St Margaret* for, respectively, Anne, countess of Stafford (d. 1438), and her daughter Anne (d. 1432), wife of Edmund Mortimer. Lydgate's younger contemporary, Osbern Bokenham, dedicated six of his thirteen lives of women saints to women, although only two of the lives seem to have been specifically requested by the dedicatee.⁹⁹ A copy of Bokenham's collection

⁹⁵The three Lives are found in London, BL MS Harley 4012, which also contains the Life of St Patrick. This manuscript is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4 below.

⁹⁶Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 390/610; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 142.

⁹⁷W. MacBain, ed., *The Life of St Catherine by Clemence of Barking*, Anglo-Norman Text Society 18 (Oxford, 1964).

⁹⁸See Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Medieval English Prose for Women* (Oxford, 1992), pp. xii-xiii. Elizabeth Robertson states unequivocally that the Katherine Group texts were written, "if not to the anchoresses of the Deerfold themselves, at least to a similar group of female contemplatives"; see her *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1990), p. 1.

⁹⁹For these works by Lydgate and Bokenham, see Chapter 1 above.

was copied for presentation to a nunnery in 1447.¹⁰⁰

Notwithstanding the popularity of saints' lives, the corpus of religious literature in the hands of women, both lay and religious, went beyond the range of texts written or recommended for them. There was clearly a failure on the part of religious writers to respond to the needs of the female reading public. Laywomen, who represent a relatively new element in the reading public, have almost no literature specifically addressed to them. As I have shown, there were a small number of works written for widows, and a few texts may have been intended for use by maidens.¹⁰¹ But there were no religious treatises written specifically for married women, just as there were no models of religious life that allowed women to combine an active sexual life with the pursuit of spiritual perfection.¹⁰² Furthermore, although a large number of treatises of spiritual guidance were written for women religious, only a few seem to have enjoyed any amount of popularity with actual nuns and anchoresses. Evidence from wills and inventories, and from extant manuscripts and incunabula demonstrates women's creativity in fashioning their own literary devotional culture. Women's use of religious literature was not circumscribed by the narrow range of texts addressed and recommended for them; they chose their reading (and listening) material from a wide range of texts available to them in English and French, and to a much lesser degree, in Latin.

I have argued elsewhere that women took an active role in commissioning their religious manuscripts and selecting their contents.¹⁰³ Certainly book-sellers and others involved in commercial book production, in

¹⁰⁰Mary S. Serjeantson, ed., *Legendys of Hooly Wummen by Osbern Bokenham*, EETS os 206 (London, 1938), p. 289.

¹⁰¹See Chapter 2 above.

¹⁰²See Chapter 2 above.

¹⁰³Anne Marie Dutton, "Pious Books for Pious Women: The Vernon Manuscript and Women's Devotional Reading in Late Medieval England" (M. A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991).

contrast with authors, responded to the female market. With few exceptions, the manuscripts owned by women, both lay and enclosed, are relatively uniform in appearance. For the most part, the books appear to be professional productions, made of quality materials, and neatly written. They seem to have been conceived of as a whole rather than being constructed of booklets, although this is as yet a largely impressionistic observation, which suggests that they were bespoke productions.¹⁰⁴ All but eight manuscripts are entirely religious in content, but none of these eight can be considered a miscellany of different types of literary texts.¹⁰⁵ Nearly all books contain fewer than eight separate religious texts.¹⁰⁶ Most have catchwords, and some have running

¹⁰⁴I have carried out only a preliminary codicological examination. For booklets see P. R. Robinson, "'The Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," *Codicologica* 3 (1980); and Ralph Hanna, "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations," *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986).

¹⁰⁵I have not included manuscripts where non-religious texts were added later on flyleaves. Cambridge, St John's College MS B.7, belonging to a Margery Carew contains four folios of *Ipotis*; Lincoln Cathedral MS 199, belonging to Heynings Priory (Lincolnshire), contains extracts from a lapidary, Philippe de Thaon's *Li Compoz*, and a breviary for secular use; London, BL MS Cotton Cleopatra, given to Canonsleigh Abbey (Devon), contains notes on numbers; London, BL MS Lansdowne 436, belonging to Romsey Abbey (Hampshire), contains a short chronicle of Saxon kings from Hengist to Egbert; London, BL MS Sloane 779, owned by Margaret Woodward, a minoress of London, contains a copy of Caxton's translation of *The Game of Chess*, copied from his edition of 1474; London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597, belonging to an Elizabeth, contains extracts from Benedict Burgh's translation of the *Parvus Cato* and *Cato Major*; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 416, belonging to Anne Colville of Syon Abbey (Middlesex), contains a Middle English translation of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*, Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and *Governance of Kings and Princes*, and Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 408, belonging to Godstow Abbey (Oxfordshire), contains an English translation of the Abbey's cartulary.

¹⁰⁶Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 322, which was intended for Pernelle Wrattisley, nun of Dartford Abbey (Kent), and its sister volume London, BL MS Harley 1706, belonging to Elizabeth de Vere, wife of the 13th earl of Oxford, are notable exceptions. See A. I. Doyle's discussion of the two manuscripts: "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* vol. 25, part 2, new series (1958).

titles and/or lists of contents. While few contain illumination, most have some measure of decoration, such as rubricated titles, incipits, and explicits, coloured paraphs and capitals (usually in red and blue), and sometimes more elaborately decorated initials and borders.¹⁰⁷ The lack of illumination suggests that these were books to be read rather than books to be looked at.

Texts owned by women in the fifteenth century reveal an interest in the interior spiritual life that is not, for the most, seen in women's reading in the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The range of devotional literature known to have been owned or used by women in the fourteenth century and earlier is limited, consisting mainly of saints' lives and, to a lesser extent, didactic works, although this limited range may to some extent be due to the small number of wills and extant manuscripts from the fourteenth century in the sample used in this thesis.¹⁰⁹ In general, saints' lives focus on the physical rather than the

¹⁰⁷Those manuscripts that do contain illumination include: Cambridge, University Library MS Kk.1.7, owned by a Joan Game; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 18.1.7, owned by Edmund lord Grey of Ruthin and his wife Catherine Percy; and London, BL MS Royal 15.D.ii, owned by Cecily Welles, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 124/61, owned by Joan Wentworth, has spaces left for illumination. Two further manuscripts contain illumination, but neither was made for the woman concerned: London, BL MS Royal 19.D.ii, which was taken with John, king of France, at Poitiers, sold to William de Montacute, second earl of Salisbury, who gave it to his wife Elizabeth, and London, BL MS Additional 42555, which Abingdon Abbey lent to Joan, wife of David II of Scotland.

¹⁰⁸The act of reading, and particularly private reading, is itself a part of interiorization.

¹⁰⁹Of the 16 testamentary transmissions of devotional literature before 1400, nine are collections of saints' lives, and five are didactic treatises such as the *Manuel des péchés*, books of *Vices and Virtues*, and what is probably Saint Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*. For bequests of saints' lives, see the wills of Elizabeth de Burgh, lady Clare, 1355 (London, Lambeth Palace Reg. Islep ff. 164v-166v; Cavanaugh pp. 151-2), Eleanor Bohun, duchess of Gloucester, 1399 (London, Lambeth Palace Reg. Arundel 1, f. 163; *RW*, pp. 177-86; *TV*, pp. 146-9; Cavanaugh, pp. 110-11), Robert de Roos of Ingmanthorp, 1392 (*TE*, pp. 178-80; Cavanaugh, pp. 747-8), and Thomas de Roos of Ingmanthorp, 1399 (*TE*, pp. 251-3; Cavanaugh, p. 748), and the inventory

psychological, and on the exterior rather than the interior. We read of what the saint does (or does not do) and says, and in the case of martyrs, what torments he or she suffers. We are offered little insight into the inner workings of the saint's mind; hope, doubt, and inner conflict are not usually the stuff of hagiography.¹¹⁰

In the fifteenth century there is a greater diversity of texts in women's possession. While hagiographic and didactic works remain popular, other types of literature, particularly guides to leading a spiritual life, such as *The Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, or *The Scale of Perfection*, and texts that encourage moral self-scrutiny, such as *The Mirror of Sinners*, *A Treatise on Three Arrows of Doomsday*, or William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptationes* are frequently

drawn up at the death of Isabella, wife of Edward II (PRO E 101/393/4, f. 6b; Cavanaugh, pp. 456-60). For the bequests of didactic texts see the wills of Simon de Bredon, fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and canon of Chichester, 1368 (Cavanaugh, pp. 127), and Eleanor Bohun, duchess of Gloucester (noted above). The remaining two transmissions of devotional literature involve a roll of the Passion, bequeathed to Isabella Fauconberge by Mary Roos. (See *TE*, pp. 201-3; Cavanaugh, pp. 746.) Of the ten extant manuscripts known to have belonged to or have been used by women in the fourteenth century and earlier, five contain devotional literature. Hagiographical material forms the largest part of this literature: London, BL MS Lansdowne 436, belonging to Romsey Abbey (Hampshire), contains a collection of the lives of 47 English saints, as well as a short chronicle of Anglo-Saxon kings; London, BL MS Additional 70513 (formerly Welbeck Abbey, Duke of Portland MS I.C.I.), containing the lives of 11 saints, belonged to Campsey Priory (Suffolk); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 1038, containing the *Vitae Patrum* and other narrative texts, belonged to Philippa de Coucy (d. 1411), who probably acquired it before her divorce, in 1387, from Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford. The remaining two manuscripts are London, BL MS Cotton Cleopatra C.vi, containing the *Ancrene Riwle*, given to Canonsleigh Abbey in the early thirteenth century by its foundress, Matilda de Clare, and Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, ff. 1-9v, containing Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteau d'Amour* and a French exposition of the Pater Noster.

¹¹⁰The Life of St Edward the Confessor written by a nun of Barking Abbey would seem to be exceptional; see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "'Clerc u lai, muïne u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), p. 72 and n. 60.

found. In texts such as these there is a privileging of interior devotion over outward action. Nicholas Love, in his *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, for example, warns that spiritual purity is more important than bodily purity. Outward observances, he says, are not as important as inward virtues such as charity, meekness, patience, devout prayer, and abstinence.¹¹¹ In contrast with hagiographic texts, there is a greater emphasis on the thoughts, emotions, and imagination of the individual Christian. In Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, which was particularly instrumental in making Franciscan meditative techniques accessible to the non-literate, the audience is instructed to visualise events in the life of Christ, "with the ynnere y3e of thy soule", using the imagination to flesh out the story.¹¹² This meditation is to lead to inward compassion; the audience is exhorted to share the sufferings of Christ, Mary, and the apostles. But Love is not concerned solely with meditational exercise. He advises the reader:

Thow that wilt fele the swetnesse and the fruyte of these meditatiouns take hede al gates and in all places deuou3tly in thy mynde byholdyng the persone of oure lorde Jesu in alle his dedes . . . and principally byholdyng his blisshed face 3if thou kunne ymagyne it.¹¹³

The Doctrine of the Heart espouses a spirituality that is entirely interior. Addressed to nuns, it instructs the audience to prepare their hearts to receive God. The heart, says the author, is a house; it must be cleaned, furnished,

¹¹¹Nicholas Love, *Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, ed. James Hogg and Lawrence F. Powell, 2 vols. *Analecta Cartusiana* 91 (Salzburg, 1989), pp. 147-8. This is a theme in many devotional treatises addressed to women. For example, Richard Rolle, in *The Commandment*, tells his addressee that "no þyng may make þe religious bot vertu3 and clenness of soule in charitee" (S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, EETS os 293 (London, 1988), p. 38); and the author of *The Doctrine of the Heart* affirms that a soul is a virgin only when it is kept clean from corruptible thoughts and desires only charity (Mary Patrick Candon, "The Doctrine of the Heart: Edited from the Manuscripts with Introduction and Notes" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1963), p. 47).

¹¹²Hogg and Lawrence, eds. *Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf*, p. 237.

¹¹³Hogg and Lawrence, eds., *The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf*, pp. 100-1.

and protected to receive the guest who is Christ. The heart must also be prepared like meat: it must be skinned through the forsaking of worldly goods, roasted in the fire of tribulation, and basted with charity. The audience is also exhorted to prepare their hearts as a bride would prepare herself for her husband, as a properly dressed virgin. And so the *Doctrine of the Heart* continues.

Treatises found in women's hands in the fifteenth century such as *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and *The Doctrine of the Heart*, are thus indicative of a trend towards interiorisation. This trend was shared by both laywomen and women religious, as demonstrated by their common literary devotional culture, but interest in interiority was not unique to women, for men owned such texts too. This interest can be seen as part of what has been recognized as the increasingly private nature of late medieval aristocratic spirituality, as witnessed by the aristocracy's increasing use of private pews in parish churches and of private oratories and chapels, and the trend towards private devotions.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, I would suggest that the interior spiritual life was particularly appealing to both laywomen and women religious. It could not be regulated in the same fashion as the exterior life, and it thus offered women a greater level of privacy and autonomy than was available to them in the physical world. Women's use of psychological space can perhaps be seen as a version of Virginia Woolf's "room of one's own" in an era when

¹¹⁴Kate Mertes states in her *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford, 1988), p. 46, that "one can state almost categorically that every noble and gentle household had a chapel and at least one chaplain". For pews and chapels as part of the privatization of religion see Colin Richmond, "Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman," in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (Gloucester, 1984), pp.198-9, and Christine Carpenter, "The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth-Century England", in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 63 and n. 39. Colin Richmond, in his "The English Gentry and Religion c. 1500," in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 135-8, argues that the religious individualism of the gentry can also be seen in the limited gentry participation in parochial life and fraternity activity.

women had little access to private space.¹¹⁵ This privileging of the psychological over the physical, moreover, permitted laywomen to transcend, at least privately, the perceived limitations of the lay, active state and its subordination to the vowed religious state. Married women could build an abbey of the Holy Ghost within their heart wherein they could lead devout lives that were the equal of those led by vowed religious. Interiority also allowed women - both lay and enclosed - to overcome the medieval association of women or the feminine with the flesh.¹¹⁶ As Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out, such an association, combined with the negative view of marriage and sexuality found in much early Christian thought, could and did encourage misogyny.¹¹⁷ In the interior life, however, the body was of little consequence.

The range of devotional literature known to have been owned or used by women in the fifteenth century is, as I have noted above, far more diverse than in the fourteenth century. Nonetheless, it is remarkably conservative. Most of the texts owned in the fifteenth century were the products of earlier centuries. For example, at the end of the fifteenth century Elizabeth de Vere, countess of Oxford, and Pernelle Wrattisley, nun of Dartford Priory (Kent), owned copies of *A Ladder of Foure Ronges by the which men mowe wele clyme*

¹¹⁵Anna Cheifetz explores this in her "Female Space and the Privatization of Piety."

¹¹⁶The association of women with the body is examined in Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, and her *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991); Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia, 1991); Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury, eds., *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia, 1993). Medical views are examined in Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge, 1993). In her "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?", in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, 1974), 67-87, Sherry Ortner suggests that the identification of women with the physical or natural is a cross-cultural phenomenon.

¹¹⁷Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 262.

to *heven*, a late fourteenth-century translation of the *Scala Claustralium*, attributed to Guigo II (d. 1188), ninth prior of the Grande Chartreuse.¹¹⁸ Anne Harling (d. 1498) and an Elizabeth owned a copies of *The Mirror of St Edmund*, composed early in the thirteenth century, and first translated into Middle English in the fourteenth century.¹¹⁹ Similarly, the earliest copy of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*, which was written before he left England in 1359, known to have been in women's hands belonged to Sibilla de Felton, Abbess of Barking (Middlesex). This is not in the collection of Miss C. Foyle at Beeleigh Abbey.¹²⁰

Not only is the corpus of devotional literature known to have been owned by women to a large extent old-fashioned, but there is very little influence from Continental devotional trends. The *devotio moderna*, as Roger Lovatt has pointed out, failed to take root in England.¹²¹ The circulation of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi* in England was restricted to what Lovat calls "a small, conservative, intellectual and spiritual elite" - mainly the Carthusians and Bridgettines. The first English translation, known as *Musica Ecclesiastica*, which did not include Book IV, survives in only four manuscripts. One of these, now Glasgow, University Library, Hunterian 136,

¹¹⁸London, BL MS Harley 1706, ff. 47v-54r; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 322, ff. 52v-61v.

¹¹⁹Anne Harling's copy, now incomplete, found in London, BL MS Harley 4012, was probably acquired in the 1460s; see Chapter 4. Elizabeth owned or used London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597, formerly Coughton Court, also at the end of the fifteenth century. An extract from the French *Merure* (the exposition of the Pater Noster) is found in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, belonging to the nuns of Nuneaton Priory (Warwickshire) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An extract from the English *Mirror* is found in Cambridge, University Library MS II.6.40, belonging to Joan Mouresleygh, a nun of Shaftesbury Abbey (Dorset) in 1441 and 1460, and later to an Agnes Dawns.

¹²⁰Another copy, London, BL MS Harley 2409, was given to Joan Hiltoft, nun of Nun Coton Priory (Lincolnshire) by Mald Wade, prioress of Swine Priory (East Riding), sometime before 1482.

¹²¹Roger Lovatt, "The *Imitation of Christ* in Late Medieval England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1968).

was written for Elizabeth Gibbs, Abbess of Syon, in 1502. The second translation was commissioned by Lady Margaret Beaufort, who had connections with both the Bridgettines and the Carthusians, and Margaret herself translated Book IV from a French version. The translation was published by both Pynson and de Worde in 1502-4.

The writings of continental women visionaries such as Saint Bridget of Sweden, Mechtild of Hackeborn, and Saint Catherine of Siena also achieved only a very narrow circulation among women, chiefly among nuns from wealthy houses, and laywomen with connections with such houses.¹²² The *Revelations* of Saint Bridget of Sweden, or extracts from them, were owned by the nuns of Swine priory (East Riding), Joan Mouresleygh, a nun of Shaftesbury Abbey (Dorset) in 1441 and 1460, Elizabeth Sewerby (d. 1468), and Cecily Neville, who bequeathed her copy to her grand-daughter Anne de la Pole, prioress of Syon, in 1495.¹²³ Copies of Mechtild of Hackeborn's *Book of Ghostly Grace* belonged to the nuns of Swine and to Richard III and

¹²²There is no direct evidence to suggest that the writings of other women visionaries circulated among women in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Margery Kempe sought the counsel of Julian of Norwich, but there is nothing to suggest that she was aware of Julian's *Revelations*. It is possible that Margery learnt of Angela of Foligno and Dorothea of Montau during her visits to, respectively, Assisi and Danzig, and parallels can be drawn between Margery and these two women, but again there is no suggestion that Margery knew of their writings. B. A. Windeatt briefly discusses Angela and Dorothea in the introduction to his translation of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp. 20-2.

¹²³A list of books given to the nun of Swine by Peter, vicar of Swine, is contained in Cambridge, King's College MS 18, f. 104v, and printed in the *Catalogue* [check reference]; see Ker, *MLGB*, p. 184. Joan Mouresleygh owned Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.40, containing Revelation 6, chapter 65 on ff. 58v-74r; see Lagorio and Sargent 76. For biographical information about Joan, see Ker, *MLGB Supplement*, pp. 62, 109. An English copy of the *Revelations* is listed in the probate inventory of Elizabeth Sewerby; see *TE* 2, pp. 161-8. The will of Cecily Neville is printed in Nichols, ed., *Wills from Doctors Commons*, pp. 1-8. An English Book of Saint Bridget, which may have been a copy of the *Revelations*, was bequeathed by Margaret Purdons, a widow of Norwich, to the nuns of Thetford Priory (Norfolk) in 1481; see Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Caston, ff. 163v-164v, and Tanner, *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 112.

Anne Neville.¹²⁴ Eleanor Roos bequeathed a "Maulde Buke" to Dame Joan Courtenay in 1438, and Cecily Neville bequeathed a "boke of Saint Matilde" to her grand-daughter Bridget, a nun of Dartford priory (Kent).¹²⁵ Both of these were probably *The Book of Ghostly Grace*. Texts attributed to Mechtild were owned by Anne Harling (d. 1498), a Dame Anne Bulkeley, and an Elizabeth.¹²⁶ Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo* seems to have been more rarely found among women. The Middle English translation, *The Orchard of Syon* was made for the nuns of Syon in the fifteenth century, and was printed by de Worde in 1519. One of the surviving printed copies belonged to Elizabeth Stryckland, a nun of Syon.¹²⁷ An extract from the *Dialogo* is found in London, BL MS 2409, which Maud Wade, prioress of Swine, gave to Joan

¹²⁴For Swine, see note 123. This copy of Mechtild's writings may have been in Latin. Richard and Anne owned London, BL MS Egerton 2006; see Theresa A. Halligan, ed., *The Book of Ghostly Grace of Mechtild of Hackeborn* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 3-5.

¹²⁵Eleanor Roos's will is printed in *TE* 2, pp. 65-6; see Cavanaugh, p. 749. For Cecily's will, see note 123 above.

¹²⁶*God's Words to St Moll* is found in London, BL MS Harley 4012, owned by Anne Harling; the same text, with minor spelling variants appears in the sister manuscript, London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597 (formerly Coughton Court, Throckmorton collection), owned by an Elizabeth. These manuscripts are discussed more fully in Chapter 5. Rosalynn Voaden points out that the text is not taken directly from *The Booke of Ghostly Grace*, but rather amalgamates and expands various passages. *A short meditacion and informacyon of oure lord Jhesu shewyd to Seynt Maude be reulacon* is found in London, BL MS Harley 494, belonging to Dame Anne Bulkeley, who may have had some connection with Syon Abbey. According to Voaden, this text bears little direct relation to anything written by Mechtild. Extracts from Mechtild's writings are also found in *The Myroure of oure Ladye* and the *Speculum Devotorum*. See Rosalynn Voaden, "The Company She Keeps: Mechtild of Hackborn in Late-Medieval Devotional Compilation," in *The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge, forthcoming). I am grateful to her for allowing me to read this paper.

¹²⁷*The Orchard of Syon* was edited by Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS os 258 (London, 1966). See also Lagorio and Sargent 74. Elizabeth Stryckland owned New York, Public Library Spencer Engl. 1519 (pr.bk.); see Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 186, 310.

Hiltoft, nun of Nun Coton, before 1482.

The writings of the mystics Henry Suso (d. 1365) and Jan van Ruysbroek (d. 1381) also circulated among women, but in greatly simplified and edited versions. Suso's *Horologium Sapiencie* was translated in Middle English as the *Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*, and addressed to a woman. The translation is only about half the length of the original, and Roger Lovatt points out that "it disregards much of the material in the [original] work, places a falsely exclusive emphasis on other elements, and generally over-simplifies its protean character."¹²⁸ *The Chastising of God's Children* draws about one-third of its material from Book 2 of *De ornatu spiritualis desponsationis*, Geert Groote's Latin version of Jan van Ruysbroek's *Die Gheestelijke Brulocht (The Spiritual Espousals)*, although this material is adapted and simplified.¹²⁹

The conservative nature of much of the devotional literature known to have been owned or used by women in the fifteenth century is surely due to a large extent to the church's campaign against Lollardy. Archbishop Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions of 1409 stipulated the examination and licensing not only of all translations of scripture into English, but also any book in Latin or

¹²⁸Roger Lovatt, "Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter, 1982), p. 57. Copies of *The Seven Points* belonged to Elizabeth Wylby, a nun of Campsey Ash priory (Suffolk) (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 268); Alice Lego, a nun of Ankerwyke Priory (Buckinghamshire) (Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 390/610; and to Cecily Welles, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville and wife of John Welles (a list of books, including *The Seven Points*, is found in London, BL MS Royal 15.D.ii, belonging to Cecily).

¹²⁹Copies of *The Chastising* belonged to Agnes Stapilton, who bequeathed it to the nuns of Esholt priory (West Riding) in 1448 (see *NCW* pp. 48-9, and *Cavanaugh* pp. 815-6); Mercy Ormesby, who bequeathed it to the nuns of Easebourne priory (Sussex) in 1451 (see H. R. Plomer, "Books Mentioned in Wills," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1902-4), p. 116, and *Cavanaugh*, pp. 629-30). Printed copies of *The Chastising* were owned by Edith Morepath and Katherine Palmer (Göttingen, University Library) and Mary Newell and Awdry Dely (Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Bb.2.14), all of whom were nuns of Syon Abbey; see Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 185, 309.

English that treats theological matters.¹³⁰ We can see here a concern with the access of the non-Latinate and, thus, those without theological training, (i.e. nuns and the laity) to scriptural and theological writings, most likely because of anxieties of potential misinterpretation by an unsophisticated audience. The prevalence of older, established texts and the limited reception of continental writings may be a reflection of the church's fear of novelty in the wake of a heresy that placed such a great emphasis on books.

¹³⁰See Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" p. 149.

CHAPTER 4

SECULAR READING:

ANNE HARLING AND LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, MS HARLEY 4012

In the multitude of women, manuscripts, and texts that have appeared in the previous three chapters, it is all too easy to lose sight of the individual woman. Yet it is to the details of the lives of individual women that we must turn if we are to gain any insight into ways in which women might have integrated their ownership of religious literature with the rest of their lives. Such studies have already been made of two of the most powerful women in fifteenth-century England, both mothers of kings: Cecily Neville, duchess of York, and Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby. In this chapter I present the first of two case studies of women book-owners, examining a less well-known laywoman, Dame Anne Harling, the owner of London, BL MS Harley 4012. In terms of her social background and of the texts in her hands, Anne can be considered largely representative of the female lay owners of religious literature.

MS Harley 4012 is a collection of Middle English religious treatises, in both prose and verse.¹ Although the book contains no illumination, it is nonetheless carefully presented, with red titles, blue and red paraphs, blue capitals with red decoration, and initials in gold leaf with purple, blue, and green foliage, which extend into the borders of the folios.² It is, in fact, an extremely pretty, if unassuming, manuscript, and as such it is typical of the manuscripts belonging to laywomen, examined in Chapter 3. On f. 153r, partly visible to the eye but quite clear under ultra-violet light, is written in a fifteenth-century hand: "Thys ys the boke of dame anne wyngefeld of

¹A full description of MS Harley 4012 and its sister manuscript, London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597, formerly Coughton Court, Throckmorton, is given by Edmund Wilson in "A Middle English Manuscript at Coughton Court, Warwickshire, and British Library MS. Harley 4012," *Notes and Queries* 24 (1977). A list of the contents of MS Harley 4012 is contained below in Appendix 4.

²See especially ff. 1v, 3r, 83v.

ha[r]lyng" ([-r] is no longer visible).

Dame Anne Wingfield, née Harling, was born *ca.* 1426, the daughter and heiress of Sir Robert Harling of East Harling, a Norfolk knight, and his wife Jane Gonville, daughter and heir of Edmund Gonville, who was herself the sole heiress of the Gonville family of Norfolk who founded Gonville College, Cambridge.³ In 1435, Sir Robert Harling was killed in battle in France, leaving Anne an heiress of considerable landed wealth; as the heiress of both the Harling and Gonville families, Anne owned at least 15 manors and ten advowsons in Norfolk, as well as four manors and one advowson in Suffolk and four manors in Cambridgeshire.⁴ Anne was a valuable enough commodity for there to be some dispute over the rights to her wardship, and it was apparently over the issue of Anne's wardship that Sir John Fastolf, who eventually became Anne's guardian, and William, Earl of Suffolk fell out.⁵

In 1436, the Earl of Stafford undertook to bring the young Anne, unmarried, to Chancery by 10 February, 1437, so that it could be decided whether or not the king was entitled to her wardship and marriage. It is likely that Stafford hoped to acquire these rights, but if this was the case, he was unsuccessful. On 9 February, 1437 Stafford's bond was cancelled, and Anne

³Anne Harling is discussed by Gail McMurray Gibson in *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago and London, 1989), pp. 96-106. Gibson is evidently unaware of Anne's ownership of MS Harley 4012. For Edmund Gonville, founder of Gonville Hall, see Christopher Brooke, "Chaucer's Parson and Edmund Gonville: Contrasting Roles of Fourteenth Century Incumbents," in *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, ed. David M. Smith. Borthwick Studies in History 1 (York, 1991), pp. 1-19.

⁴Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the county of Norfolk*, vol. 1 (London, 1905) pp. 316-21; *CIPM Henry VII*, vol 2 (London, 1915), pp. 73-6 (Norfolk); 127-8 (Cambridgeshire).

⁵On the issue of Anne's wardship, see PRO C.54.287, memb. 21d (*CCR 1435-41*, p. 102); PRO C.66.440, memb. 29 (*CPR 1436-41*, p. 41; Anthony Robert Smith, "Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459)" (D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1982), pp. 135-8; Anthony Smith, "Litigation and Politics: Sir John Fastolf's Defense of his English Property," in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. Tony Pollard (Gloucester and New York, 1984), pp. 65-6.

was brought to Chancery by William, Earl of Suffolk, to whom Henry sold the wardship and marriage for £100. However, as Anthony Smith points out, the wardship was not the king's to grant, and it seems to have caused ill-feeling between Suffolk and Fastolf, who evidently wanted it. Fastolf's interest in the case is indicated by the presence of his councillor, Edmund Wichingham, acting as one of Suffolk's representatives in this matter. Suffolk soon sold his rights to Sir John Clifton, a military colleague of Fastolf, and an East Anglian himself, for 500 marks, who then sold them for the same price to Fastolf, Robert Harling's uncle by marriage, who, as we shall see, profited greatly from the sale of Anne's marriage.

The laws concerning wardship make no formal provision for the care of the ward herself, and we do not know what happened to Anne herself during her wardship, whether she continued to live at under her mother's care and tutelage or moved to live in the household of her guardian John Fastolf.⁶ It would not be unreasonable to imagine that Anne was raised in Fastolf's household, or in another aristocratic household, given that it was common for aristocratic children and adolescents to be placed in the households of their social peers and superiors.⁷

Anne was married successively to three men of high standing, and she was three times widowed. In 1438, Anne married Sir William Chamberlain of Weston Favell, Northamptonshire, an English captain in the French wars, and who was made Knight of the Garter by Edward IV in 1461.⁸ The marriage

⁶For the relevant laws on wardship, see Frederick Pollock and Frederick William Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 319-22.

⁷See Jennifer Ward, *The English Noblewoman in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 96-7; Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London, 1984).

⁸In her will (discussed in detail below), Anne bequeaths to the church of Weston Favell, vestments and altar cloths decorated with the arms of William and her own arms, as well as 26s. 8d. Chamberlain's bravery in France was acclaimed by Holinshed. According to Blomefield, *Topographical History of Norfolk*, p. 320, Chamberlain was of Gedding in Suffolk. Blomefield also

settlement, dated 2 August 1438, is found among the Fastolf papers at Magdalen College, Oxford.⁹ Sir William, it states, was to marry Anne within the feast of St Michael (29 September) of that year, and to pay Fastolf £1 000 "of gold in noblis" before the marriage, and another 1500 marks of gold within twelve months of the marriage, a sum six times greater than that paid by Fastolf (and 20 times that paid by Suffolk) to acquire the right to Anne's marriage. The sum suggests that Chamberlain was willing to pay a great deal of money, which was acquired probably through his military exploits, to purchase what life had not given him: land. Contact with Fastolf did not cease upon Anne's marriage, for she is mentioned in two other documents in the Fastolf Papers: no. 80 is an undated memorandum of Anne's claim for satisfaction of various articles of silver plate given as security for sums of money lent by Fastolf to Sir William Chamberlain and no. 102 is an acknowledgement, dated 1 March 1475, by Anne and her second husband Sir Robert Wingfield of the receipt from the bishop of Winchester, executor of the will of Sir John Fastolf, of £20 in full satisfaction of all claims and debts.¹⁰

At her marriage to William, Anne was between the ages of 12 and 14. Twelve was the minimum legal age for marriage, and the marriage settlement itself states that Anne was not yet 14. Whatever the usual age of gentry women at marriage - and this has still to be firmly established - Anne was exceedingly young, and we must wonder about the feelings of this child bride, married to a military man many years her senior. We do not, however, know

refers to Chamberlain's will, dated 3 March, 1461 and proved in East Harling church 21 April, 1462, but I have been unable to find this will. The precise date of Chamberlain's election to the order of the Garter is not known, for his name does not occur in the Windsor tables. That he was, however, elected in the first year of Edward's reign is known, and it has been conjectured that he died before he could be installed. His plate was still in the twelfth stall on the sovereign's side of St George's Chapel in 1841; see George Frederick Beltz, *Memorials of the Most Noble Order of the Garter* . . . (London, 1841), pp. xxiii; lxvii-lxviii, n.3; clxii.

⁹Oxford, Magdalen College, Fastolf Papers, no. 17.

¹⁰Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript," p. 302, n. 12.

when the marriage was consummated. Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood state that it was "normal practice to wait until the woman was fourteen before consummating the marriage", and that this was often specified in the contract, but such is not specified in the contract for Anne's marriage. Lady Margaret Beaufort, about whom Jones and Underwood were writing, was married at the age of twelve and gave birth to the future Henry VII when she was 13; she herself gave witness to the emotional and physical trauma of conception and birth at such an early age when she advised against the marriage of one of her grand-daughters to James IV of Scotland because she feared that James would not wait until the young princess was of a suitable age before trying to consummate the marriage.¹¹ At the beginning of their marriage, in the late 1430s, Chamberlain was away fighting in France; during these years the young Anne may have continued to live with her mother, and the marriage may not have been consummated until Anne was older.¹²

In 1447 William founded a chantry in East Harling church to celebrate a daily mass for the souls of Anne's parents, Robert and Joan, to be known as the chantry of Robert Harling, Knight.¹³ This was in accordance with Sir Robert Harling's wishes, expressed in his will, dated in London, 5 June, 1421, and proved 12 December, 1435.¹⁴ Anne must have played no small part in the founding of the chantry; after all, it was for the benefit of her own parents. Anne must have also played a large part in the substantial rebuilding of the church of St Peter and St Paul at East Harling during the late 1440s and 1450s, including the erection of the perpendicular-style steeple, completed *ca.* 1449.

¹¹Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 40, 95.

¹²I do not know when Anne's mother, Joan, died. She was evidently still living in 1438, when the contract for Anne's first marriage was drawn up.

¹³*CPR 1446-1452*, p. 65. In 1458 Anne and William alienated in mortmain 9 marks of rent issuing from Faukeners Manor, held by William in Anne's right.

¹⁴Norwich, NRO, NCC, reg. Surflete, f. 157r-v.

For William, this must have been a way of demonstrating his newly-acquired (for a exorbitant price) lordship, and his anticipation of the continued influence of the Chamberlain line at East Harling.¹⁵ But William's ambition was to be thwarted by the lack of heirs. From 1457 until 1461 William served on various Norfolk Commissions, and he served as Justice of the Peace for Norfolk from 1454 until his death in March or April 1462.¹⁶

On William's death, Anne was around 36 and childless. She could not have had much hope of bearing an heir for her second husband, Sir Robert Wingfield, of Letheringham, Suffolk, whom she married sometime between May, 1463, when she appears in the Paston Letters as "Lady Chamberlen" and 1472, when she appears as Robert's wife in a document relating to Rushworth College, Norfolk.¹⁷ It is likely that Anne married Sir Robert Wingfield before 1472: another document relating to Rushworth College, dated 1469, was issued by Robert at East Harling, and it is highly unlikely that Robert

¹⁵Christine Carpenter, in "The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth-Century England," in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 66, points out that the rebuilding of parish churches and the erection of towers, which was common among the gentry who had recently acquired a new residence, was intended to demonstrate "to the local world that they had acquired lordship over acres and over the men who went with them." In response to Carpenter's observations, Colin Richmond remarks that that we can never know the motives that lay behind the decisions to build such structures; see Colin Richmond, "The English Gentry and Religion, c. 1500," in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 132-3. None the less, it seems to me that Chamberlain, who had acquired his fortune as a professional soldier, and then paid a tremendous sum to acquire a well-landed bride, would have been particularly concerned with proclaiming the arrival of the Chamberlains at East Harling.

¹⁶*CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 402, 489-90, 494-5, 517, 558, 606, 671-2; *CPR 1461-1467*, pp. 66, 67, 135, 568.

¹⁷*The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davis, vol. 2 (London, 1976), p. 294; E. K. Bennet, "Notes on the Original Statutes of the College of St. John Evangelist of Rushworth, co. Norfolk, founded by Edmund Gonville A.D. 1342," *Norfolk Archaeology* 10 (1888), p. 364. The college of secular canons at Rushworth (now Rushford) was founded by one of Anne's Gonville ancestors, and Anne continued her family's patronage. It was suppressed under Henry VIII.

would have been living at East Harling if he had not been married to Anne. It is possible that they were married earlier than this date, for Anne, in her will, names Robert's nephew - another Robert Wingfield - as her chief executor, stating that she had raised him from the age of three.¹⁸ The younger Robert was born *ca.* 1464; thus Anne's first period of widowhood may have ended as early as 1467 or before.¹⁹

Sir Robert Wingfield was born in 1430, the second son of Sir Robert Wingfield of Letheringham, Suffolk. He came of a family active in politics: both his father and his elder brother, Sir John Wingfield, were members of parliament.²⁰ Like his father before him, the younger Sir Robert was a servant of the Duke of Norfolk and his connection with the Norfolk household went beyond that of service, for his maternal grandmother was the widow of Thomas de Mowbray, first duke of Norfolk (d. 1399). I suspect that Anne's marriage to Robert may have been the work of the third duke, John de Mowbray, who was *not only Robert's lord, but the lord from whom Anne held* two of her principal manors in Norfolk - East Harling with Hill Harling, and Kenninghall.²¹

Robert Wingfield had an extremely successful political career in East Anglia. He was M.P. for Suffolk 1455-6, "Marshal of the King's Marshalsea" in 1462, and served on various Norfolk commissions from at least 1464 until 1480. At some point between 15 December 1464 and 20 February 1466 he was knighted, and I imagine that he married Anne after, rather than before, he

¹⁸PRO Prob. 11/11, PCC 26 Horne. Anne's will is also printed in *TE* 4, pp. 149-54.

¹⁹This younger Robert Wingfield died in 1539; see *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 21, p. 662.

²⁰The elder Sir Robert (1400-54) was M.P. for Hertfordshire 1449-50; Sir John (1428-81) was M.P. for Suffolk 1478. See Josiah C. Wedgwood and Anne D. Holt, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439-1509* (London, 1936), pp. 955-7.

²¹See Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, p. 957; *CIPM Henry VII*, vol. 2 (London, 1915), pp. 73-6.

was knighted.²² He was also J.P. for Norfolk 1469-70 and 1470-6, the gap occurring because he followed Edward IV into exile, and M.P. for Norfolk 1472-5. Robert's loyalty to Edward at the Readeption did not go unrewarded; in 1471 he was described as "the King's Knight", and he was the Controller of the Household of Edward IV from 1474-81.²³

Robert Wingfield died shortly before 13 November 1481, and sometime after 9 February, 1491, Anne married John, fifth Lord Scrope of Bolton (b. 1437 or 1438). She was his third wife, just as he was her third husband. It is possible that she met him through her connection with the court.²⁴ Why Anne remarried after at least nine years of widowhood remains a mystery, but certainly as a wealthy widow with extensive landholdings she may have come under pressure to remarry. John Scrope himself was by no means an unfamiliar face in East Anglian politics, and moreover, Millicent, the sister of his great-grandmother, Margaret Scrope, née Tiptoft, married Sir John Fastolf as her second husband in 1409.²⁵ Scrope thus made another link between Anne and her former guardian. Anne Harling's third marriage was the shortest of all three; Scrope died in 1498, and Anne herself died only a few

²²*CPR 1461-1467*, p. 390, where Robert appears as "esquire" and p. 568, where Robert appears as "knight". Wedgwood suggests that Robert was probably knighted at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville; see Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, p. 957.

²³His accounts as controller for 1479-80 are among the Exchequer Accounts in the PRO.

²⁴John's second wife, Elizabeth St John, widow of William, lord Zouche, was god-mother to Edward V.

²⁵Sir Roger Scrope, 2nd Lord Scrope of Bolton married Margaret, elder daughter and coheir of Robert Lord Tiptoft of Bently and Castle Coombe, Wiltshire. His younger brother, Sir Stephen Scrope of Bently married Margaret's younger sister Millicent. In 1409 Millicent married Sir John Fastolf - who became Anne's guardian. Two stained glass windows - one in the south side of the nave of East Harling church and one over the rood-loft - bearing the arms of Scrope quartering Tiptoft were recorded by Blomefield, *Topographical History of Norfolk*, vol. 1, p. 329; see also Christopher Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass Painting in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1950), p. 43.

weeks later, on 18 September 1498. She was around 72 and childless.

It was during her marriage to Sir Robert Wingfield, or during her time as his widow (i.e. between *ca.* 1469 and 1492) that Anne wrote her name in what is now MS Harley 4012. On the basis of dating and contents, it is very likely that the manuscript was made for Anne in the 1460s or 70s. Internal evidence from the manuscript suggests production in the mid-fifteenth century: one of the texts contained within it, *The Pardon of the monastery of Shene whiche is Syon* (ff. 110r-113r) contains references to John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1443 to 1452 and Walter Lyhert, alias Hart, Bishop of Norwich from 1446 to 1472. Thus the manuscript cannot date from before 1446 at the very earliest. More tellingly, the hand of MS Harley 4012, which is consistent throughout the manuscript, has been dated by M. B. Parkes as *ca.* 1460, clearly suggesting production in the 1460s or even 1470s.²⁶ That the book was made for Anne is also suggested through its inclusion of at least two texts that had particular significance for her: *The Life of St Anne* (ff. 130v-139v) and the above-mentioned *The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene which is Syon*. St Anne was not only Anne's name saint, but also a saint to whom, as discussed in greater depth below, Anne had particular devotion. A connection with Syon Abbey, which explains the appearance of *The Pardon of Syon*, further suggesting that the manuscript was made for Anne, is provided by Anne in her will, when she bequeathes "to the hous of Syon, *where I am a suster* x. s. [*italics mine*]"

If the book was indeed produced for Anne during the 1460s or 70s (or perhaps somewhat earlier or later) we know nothing of the circumstances surrounding its production. Surviving documentary evidence tells us almost nothing of Anne's life during these years, or indeed, about Anne's life at all; they tell us far more about her husbands' activities than about her own. Historians researching the lives of medieval women are used to making a small amount of evidence speak volumes, but the sources for Anne's life immediately preceding and during her marriage to Sir Robert Wingfield do not respond to

²⁶Edward Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript," p. 299.

coaxing. We do know that the 1460s and early 1470s witnessed immense changes in Anne's life. She was widowed in 1462, after a marriage lasting 24 years, spent at least one year, and probably until at least 1466, as a widow, and then remarried and took on the responsibility of raising her new husband's young nephew. Many of Anne's most formative years must have been spent as Chamberlain's wife: her years of adolescence, her first experience of marriage and sex, years of hope for an heir, and years of disappointment as one was never born. In all probability Anne was very attached to William, and his death must have brought about emotional upheaval. Anne's love for William is suggested in her will, drawn up at the end of her life, after she had outlived three husbands, in which she requests burial in "the tombe *with* my late worshipfull husbond Sir William Chamberleyn accordyng to my promyse made vnto hym afore this tyme."

Her second marriage must have witnessed continued disappointment and sorrow as the couple remained childless, and it certainly brought Anne more firmly into the world of political turmoil. Shortly after his marriage to Anne, Sir Robert Wingfield followed Edward IV into exile. We do not know what happened to Anne during her husband's absence, whether she accompanied him or remained behind to administer what were, in fact, her own estates in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. It is not unlikely that she stayed in England to ensure that her own and her husband's land interests were protected. We do not know what dangers Anne faced as the wife of a man whose loyalties lay with a king who was no longer on his throne, but we can be sure that if the political events of 1470 had not turned out as they had, Anne's life might have been very different.²⁷ Wingfield's subsequent appointment to the position of Controller of the King's Household brought Anne into the proximity and influence of the court, and that too must have brought changes into her life.

²⁷The fate of the widows of peers killed or executed during the Wars of the Roses is examined in Joel T. Rosenthal, "Other Victims: Peeresses as War Widow, 1450-1500," in *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*, ed. Louise Mirrer (Ann Arbor, 1992).

The external facts of Anne's life shed little light on her spiritual life. To put her ownership of MS Harley 4012 into the context of her piety, and to understand how Anne might have used this collection of religious treatises, we must turn to other sources which allow us some insight into her religiosity: her will, records of her patronage of the collegiate church at Rushworth, now Rushford, in Norfolk, and the surviving stained glass from her parish church at East Harling. We are fortunate indeed that these sources survive; they make Anne Harling a more accessible historical subject, and the survival of more than one source allows for a more rounded picture of Anne's piety to emerge.

Anne's will, registered in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, is remarkable by virtue of its length and detail.²⁸ Anne emerges from it as a wealthy and well-connected woman. The will is dated 28 August, 1498, eleven days after the death of her third husband, John Scrope, and only three weeks before her own death. In it Anne describes herself as "Anne Scrop, Lady Scrop of Harlyng." It is evident that Anne never lost her East Harling connection throughout her three marriages. She did not impale her arms with those of her husbands, but rather used those of the families whose heir she was: Harling with Mortimer (her paternal grandmother, whose heir she was through her father) and Gonville.²⁹ Anne and her husbands appear to have lived at her chief manor at East Harling, for wherever she or her first two husbands appear in records they are described as "of Harling"; her third husband, John Scrope (a Yorkshireman) died at her manor at East Harling. The picture of religious interest, affiliation, and patronage that Anne paints in her will is decidedly local: all but three of the religious institutions to which she leaves bequests are East Anglian, and of those, all but one lie in Norfolk or Suffolk. I shall return to Anne's patronage of these local institutions below.

The preamble to Anne's will is particularly interesting. Stating, as

²⁸PRO Prob. 11/11; PCC 26 Horne. The will is also printed in *TE* 4, pp. 149-54.

²⁹See Bennet, "Original Statutes," p. 382; Blomefield, *Topographical History of Norfolk*, vol. 1, plate opposite p. 326.

every testator does, that she is of sound mind and body, she commends her soul to God, Jesus "and vnto the merites & suffrages of his bitter pasion", the Virgin Mary, all angels, and all the "courte and company of heven". This is a common preamble to a will, and we should not place much confidence in its originality; the preamble to the will of her third husband, John Scrope, is almost identical to hers. But unlike John, Anne also commends her soul to four specific saints: Peter, Paul, John the Evangelist, and Anne. Souls are seldom commended to particular saints, and we must wonder if Anne had a particular devotion to each of the four. Anne's parish church at East Harling was dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, and her mention of them may indicate strong ties with her parish church. Similarly, Rushworth college, founded by Anne's Gonville ancestors, and to which Anne was a generous benefactress throughout her lifetime, was dedicated to St John the Evangelist; Anne's commendation of her soul to St John may reflect her dedication to the college. Norman Tanner, in his study of the wills of Norwich testators, found that the saints mentioned in the preambles to wills (excluding the Virgin Mary and All Saints) were usually the patron saints of the testators' parish churches, and he suggests that the inclusion of saints "in the commendatory clause may simply represent another change of fashion in the way scribes phrased wills - the patron saint of the testator's parish church being more or less automatically included - rather than the devotion of the testators to particular saints."³⁰

Other parts of Anne's will do, however, suggest a particularly personal devotion to St Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, the fourth saint mentioned in the preamble. Anne requested burial not in the Harling family chapel in the parish church, founded by Anne and Sir William Chamberlain at her father's wish and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but in the chapel of St Anne in her parish church of East Harling, in the tomb of her first husband Sir William Chamberlain, and she bequeathed two vestments, two altar cloths, a chalice, a missal, and a corporax to the altar of the St Anne chapel. Anne's

³⁰Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), p. 83.

apparent devotion to her namesake saint is confirmed by Blomefield's note that Anne herself founded the chapel to St Anne, and, as we have seen, by the appearance of a *Life* of the saint in Harley 4012. (Indeed, as discussed above, the appearance of the *Life* of St Anne in Harley 4012 is one reason why I believe that the manuscript was made for Anne.) Such a devotion is easily understandable: first, St Anne was Anne Harling's name saint, and second, Anne Harling was childless.³¹ St Anne, because of her conception of the Virgin Mary in her old age, was an obvious saint to whom a married laywoman whose youth was behind her might pray for an heir. Certainly St Anne, who had herself experienced the pain and shame of childlessness, and who had experienced the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary as a mature woman, would be likely to intercede with God on behalf of Anne Harling, to fulfil her prayer for an heir. The power of St Anne in the matter of conception is attested to by Osbern Bokenham, in his *Life of St Anne*, written, as he says, for his friend Katherine Denston. At the end of the poem Bokenham entreats the saint:

Prouide, lady, eek þat Ion denstone
 & kateryne his wyf, if it plese þe grace
 Of god aboue, thorgh þi merytes a sone
 Of her body mow haue or they hens pace
 As they a dowghter han, yung & fayre of face
 Wyche is anne clepyde in worshyp, lady, of þe
 & aftyr to blysse eterne conuey hem alle three.³²

Anne's childlessness was obviously of some concern to her: in 1490 she endowed Rushworth College with the income of three of her estates. In the endowment charter, Anne describes herself as a widow, growing old, childless, and with no hope of children. In the charter she deeds the income of the three estates for the establishment of a free grammar school at Rushworth, for 13 children of the diocese of Norwich. Five of these children, she

³¹The theme of Anne's childlessness and her devotion to St Anne is explored in Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, pp. 93-106.

³²Mary S. Serjeantson, ed. *Legendys of Hooly Wummen by Osbern Bokenham*, EETS os 206 (London, 1938), pp. 57-8.

stipulates, are to be poor children, and are to be fed, clothed, and raised within the college itself, to be known as "Dame Annys Childeryn"; thus, she says, "the woman to whom God had denied the blessing of children will still leave children of her own who shall call her blessed."³³ The closest that Anne came to motherhood was in raising her second husband's nephew, another Robert Wingfield (*ca.* 1464-1539), from the age of three, and she explicitly reminds the younger Robert of his filial duty towards her in her will when she appoints him as her executor: "I name & ordeyne and make myn executours my right trusty frende my neveu Robert Wyngefild esquier/. which I haue brought vp of a childe sythen he was .iij. yere of age . . ."

Gail McMurray Gibson has pointed out that the cult of St Anne was particularly strong in East Anglia.³⁴ Certainly Anne Harling would have been able to identify with the saint, and find in her a role model. Like her name saint, Anne had three successive husbands. And like her name saint as she appears in English versions of her life, Anne Harling was wealthy; the grandparents of Christ who appear in Anne's own copy of the *Life of St Anne* in Harley 4012 are described as "rich folke" who "had of riches grete plente"; indeed they were not so far different from the aristocratic *Wingfield family*.³⁵

The cult of St Anne was also a celebration of family ties and

³³Bennet, "Original Statutes," pp. 368-71. This provision exceeds that drawn up by Anne in an earlier will, dated 10 February, 1477 (with no testament), PRO c.54/330, memb. 5d-3d (*CCR 1476-85*, pp. 137-9, where the year is incorrectly given as 1479). In this will, Anne deeds the remainder of three manors to the master of Rushworth College to find three secular priests to pray for her soul, one of whom is to be a grammar teacher for 13 poor children, five of whom are to sing in divine services.

³⁴Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, pp. 82-3.

³⁵Bokenham also makes this point in his *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, p. 45: I mene to ioachym, in the cyte/ Off nazareth dwellynge & of dauid hows,/ a ryche man & of gret dignyte.

relationships of kinship.³⁶ The holy family was a matriarchal one, with St Anne at its head, surrounded by her three husbands, her three daughters and their husbands and children. St Anne is, in effect, a dynastic saint; her importance comes through being the mother of the Virgin Mary, and the grandmother of Christ. As discussed in greater detail below, Anne Harling was thoroughly occupied with dynasty. In her will, she displays solicitous concern with her natal family and her families through marriage. Anne was the last surviving member of two prominent families and had survived three husbands, and she uses her will to erect lasting reminders of her and her kin. Many of the recipients of her testamentary bequests were her namesakes - god-daughters, and relatives through marriage.

Returning now to Anne's will, Anne proceeds to detail bequests to 26 churches and chapels, and to 25 religious houses, beginning with the parson and the high altar of East Harling church, to which she bequeathes 100 s., "in recompense of all oblacions and personall tythes withhold and beyng behynde." This is the greatest sum of money bequeathed by Anne to any religious institution, which may suggest that Anne's spiritual life was firmly centred on her parish church. To the church itself she leaves two altar cloths and a frontal, all decorated with her own arms and those of her husbands, as well as curtains. Anne also leaves bequests to two chapels within her parish church: that of St Anne, where, as we have seen, she requests burial, and that of the Virgin Mary, founded by her father and where he was buried. Although Anne's will tells us little of the nature of her lifetime involvement with her parish church, non-testamentary sources reveal that she was a lifelong patroness of the church. It would appear from the heraldry installed in the nave that Anne and her first husband, Sir William Chamberlain, financed the substantial rebuilding of the church, including the erection of the

³⁶See Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, "Introduction", and Sheingorn "Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History," in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn (Athens, Georgia, 1990).

perpendicular-style steeple, completed *ca.* 1449.³⁷ Anne and her second husband, Sir Robert Wingfield, continued the patronage, installing an exceptionally beautiful series of stained glass windows in the east end of the church, above the high altar. The windows, from the Norwich school of glass painting, depict the joys and sorrows of the Virgin, as well as portraits of Anne, Sir William Chamberlain, and Sir Robert Wingfield, each with their own arms. Unfortunately the portrait of Anne is no longer extant. A comparison of two descriptions of the glass in East Harling church, one published in 1805 and the other in 1950, reveals that the heraldic glass in the nave and south aisle has not survived.³⁸ Most of this heraldry is of Anne's natal family, and her three families by marriage. The heraldry that Anne and her husbands installed in the fabric of the church is echoed by her bequests to the church of altar cloths and a frontal decorated with her own arms and those of her husbands.

Anne then proceeds to list testamentary bequests to 25 other churches and chapels; to three colleges - Gonville Hall in Cambridge, founded by her Gonville ancestors; Rushworth College, also a Gonville foundation; and Attleborough College, founded by Sir Robert de Mortimer, whose granddaughter and co-heiress was Anne's paternal grandmother, Cecily Mortimer; to 13 monasteries and ten nunneries; and to six individual religious (Sir William Feld, the master of Fotheringay; Dame Elizabeth Mountenay, a nun at the Benedictine priory of Thetford; Barbara Jernyngham, a nun at the Augustinian priory of Campsey and Anne's kinswoman; Dame Anne Jernyngham, a nun at the Franciscan abbey of Bruisyard and also Anne's kinswoman; the parson of Weston church; and "my lord cardynal").³⁹ The bequests to these churches and religious institutions consist mainly of money and of cloths or other liturgical objects displaying Anne Harling's own coat of arms, the arms of her husbands, or the arms of her parents: Anne bequeaths over £ 50 in cash (a

³⁷Blomefield, *Topographical History of Norfolk*, vol. 1, p. 326.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 329-32; Woodford, *Norwich School*, pp. 42-55.

³⁹Anne states these relationships in her will.

sum that exceeded the annual income of many religious houses), as well as 51 altar cloths, 13 vestments, and two frontals, all with heraldic decoration.

Much of the cloth that Anne bequeaths is itself extremely valuable: velvet, sarcenet, cloth of gold, damask, and silk. Occasionally Anne would specify the value of the cloth to be given to a particular institution: to the church at Addington she gave "a vestement to the price of xxvj .s. viii d/." as well as two altar cloths displaying her and her husbands' arms, and 13s. 8d.

Anne's bequests to an exceptionally large number of churches, chapels, and religious houses are striking: why so many institutions? One explanation is that Anne was an exceptionally pious woman, and her ownership of a collection of religious treatises would support this. Another reason is that Anne had an over-riding concern with dynasty. The two reasons are not mutually exclusive. Anne's concern with dynasty manifests itself first of all in her testamentary patronage of institutions connected with her family. As far as I have been able to determine, most of the churches and chapels listed in her will lie on her estates, and/or contain the remains of some of her *ancestors*. Bequests to these churches may simply be a way of reconfirming her own and her family's status on these manors. Similarly, the three colleges which she remembers in her will were founded by her ancestors, and Anne may simply be continuing a tradition of family patronage, again confirming her family's status as founders. Documents surviving from Rushworth College, however, reveal that Anne was a great benefactress to the College throughout her life, and her testamentary bequests to Rushworth therefore demonstrate a more complex relationship with the college than is discernible in her will.⁴⁰ Six of the 23 monastic houses that receive bequests also have a connection to Anne's family, as she herself indicates in her will: Anne's great-grandmother Margery Tudenham and her great-aunt Elizabeth Hemgrave were buried in the church of the Augustinian friars of Thetford; her "cosyn" Sir Thomas Tudenham was buried in the church of the Augustinian friars of London; unspecified ancestors were buried in the churches of the Augustinian canons of

⁴⁰See Bennet, "Notes on the Original Statutes," pp. 363-73.

Heringfleet and Buckenham; her kinswoman Barbara Jernyngham was a nun at the Augustinian priory of Campsey; and another kinswoman, Anne Jernyngham was a nun at the Franciscan abbey of Bruisyard.

Anne's concern with dynasty displays itself most prominently in her many bequests of cloth and liturgical items such as chalices displaying her own arms and those of her husbands and parents. A visitor to almost any of the 29 churches and chapels listed in Anne's will, as well as to several of the monastic houses could not help but be struck by the heraldic decorations: the arms were displayed on altar cloths, on frontals, on chalices, and on the priest's own vestments. Furthermore, Anne gave specific instructions that stained glass windows bearing her own arms as well as those of her husbands were to be installed in eleven churches, ten of which were monastic churches. It was Anne's intention that the windows celebrating her and her family be prominent and visible: to the Carmelite friars in Cambridge Anne left 40 s. "to sette vp bothe my husbondes armys & myn departed in the pryncipall wyndowe of the quire." Anne does not include East Harling among these eleven churches, but she does not need to, as heraldic and iconographic glass had already been installed there. Thus, these bequests to eleven churches may represent only a partial picture of Anne's presence in the stained glass of parish and monastic churches.⁴¹

Bequests such as these are not unusual in the wills of the nobility and gentry, and concern with lineage is a part of aristocratic culture. The sheer number of bequests such as these in Anne's will is in part due to the fact that she was the sole heiress and indeed the last surviving member of two prominent families - the Harlings and the Gonvilles - and that she had no heirs of her body. Anne herself makes this point poignantly in her 1490 endowment charter to Rushworth College, wherein she states that she no longer has any

⁴¹Schemes of heraldic decoration in the windows of parish and monastic churches are exceedingly common throughout the later Middle Ages. A discussion of the heraldry in Etchingam Church, Sussex, which provides an interesting comparison with that at East Harling is given in Nigel Saul, *Scenes From Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 140-60.

kinsmen "within three degreys." She was, moreover, a widow three times over, and only her third husband had any children to survive him and to commemorate his name. Anne was using her testamentary bequests to garner prayers and commendations for herself, her husbands, her parents and ancestors. The receiving of a gift carried with it the obligation to repay the giver, to offer a gift in return. The way to repay a testamentary bequest was to remember and pray for the soul of the testator.⁴² Anne herself spells this out: most of her bequests to religious houses are accompanied by specific requests for prayers and for a "dirige and masse", and at the end of her will, she bluntly declares that her executors should "desire all suche personys as I haue in this my testament or last wille geuen or bequethed eny thinge that they of their charitie pray to almighty god for my sowle and for myn auncestres sowles." Moreover, by seeing Anne's own arms and those of her husbands and ancestors prominently displayed in churches and religious houses, the viewers would be prompted to pray for them. In her bequest of 40s. to Syon Abbey (Middlesex), part of which was to be used for the installation of a stained glass window with the usual heraldry, Anne states that it is "for a remembraunce to pray for vs."

A sense of personal and family status pervades Anne's bequests to religious institutions. Her bequests of altar cloths, frontals, vestments, and stained glass displaying her own arms as well as those of her husbands and parents, and occasionally other members of her family, emphasize her family's status as founders, as lords of the manor, as patrons and benefactors - as a family to be taken notice of. To what extent, we might wonder, were these bequests part of the process of self-advancement so frequently seen amongst the gentry?⁴³ Bound up with this sense of social status is a sense of spiritual

⁴²For an anthropological and sociological study of gift-giving see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London, 1966).

⁴³We can see Anne's upward mobility in her marriage to John, lord Scrope. In addition to her bequests to churches, colleges, monastic houses, individual religious, and pilgrimage sites (which are discussed below), Anne left bequests to 128 named individuals, ranging from "olde Jone" and "Loste

status. The prominent memorials that Anne left to remind people of her earthly existence were ones that represented her as a generous benefactress, an involved member of her parish church, a woman who used the good fortune of wealth and position for the glory of God. By leaving such prominent evidence of her testamentary patronage Anne was ensuring, whether consciously or unconsciously, not only the prayers of those who would survive her, but also that she enjoyed a lasting reputation as a pious woman.

In Anne's choice of monastic legatees there appears to be a preference for Augustinian canons and canonesses: five or six male houses, out of the 13 mentioned, and two female houses out of the ten mentioned are of this order.⁴⁴ Even if we make allowance for the fact that her patronage of two of the men's houses and one of the women's may be due to family connections rather than to any personal preference, there is still a marked preference for Augustinian regulars, a preference on which none of the surviving evidence for Anne's life sheds any light, and we must wonder if Anne received most of her spiritual direction from the Augustinians, if her own confessor (and it is likely that she had one) was of that order.⁴⁵

The most interesting and perhaps most revealing aspect of Anne's monastic bequests, although not altogether clear, is her description of herself as a "sister" of five of the houses: the Augustinian friars of Norwich, the Franciscan friars of Bury St Edmunds (Babwell), the Augustinian nuns of Campsey Ash, the Franciscan nuns of Bruisyard, and the Bridgettine abbey of

the miller", through her kinsmen and kinswomen, to members of other East Anglian gentry families, the Countess of Oxford, and the Duke of Surrey. Many of her bequests to her social equals and superiors consisted of silver, gold, and precious jewels. Gift-giving was an important aspect of aristocratic culture, and by her widespread gift-giving, Anne was leaving a record of herself as a particularly generous woman.

⁴⁴The uncertainty over the number of male houses here is due to Anne leaving a bequest to the "priory of the monkes of Thetford", which could mean the Cluniac or the Augustinian priory there.

⁴⁵As mentioned above, some of Anne's ancestors were buried in two men's houses - Buckenham and Heringfleet, and her kinswoman Barbara Jernyngham was a nun at one of the women's houses - Campsey Ash.

Syon. With the exception of Syon, all of these monasteries and nunneries were local houses. Further evidence of interaction between Anne and Syon is provided by the appearance of *The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene which is Syon*, a list of indulgences granted to those who went to Syon and said particular prayers on particular feast days and holy days, in MS Harley 4012.

It is likely that being a "sister" was membership of a confraternity associated with a religious house, or something like a confraternity but less formally organised. These associations were virtually ubiquitous in fifteenth-century England, and concurrent membership of several confraternities was relatively common. Membership brought privileges: prayers while alive, prayers after death, a choice of confessor from amongst the community with which the confraternity was associated, and certain indulgences were the most common.⁴⁶ It may have ensured that members would receive divine judgement as religious rather than as laymen and laywomen, and it may have given the right to be buried in the habit of the order. If one of the houses where Anne was a sister conferred the right to be buried in the habit, this may explain the figure of Anne on the memorial brass over the tomb of Anne and Sir William Chamberlain at East Harling church. Although the brass itself has not survived, the outlines of the two figures and of the accompanying emblems are carved into the stone. The garments, and especially the head-dress that Anne appears to be wearing resemble a religious habit rather than secular dress.⁴⁷ Whatever the particular privileges obtained through her status as "sister", Anne was taking no chances with the health of her soul - no doubt five sisterships were better than one.⁴⁸

⁴⁶See R. N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance Before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 210-13; C. E. Clark-Maxwell, "Some Letters of Confraternity," *Archaeologia* 75 (1926); *idem.*, "Some Further Letters of Confraternity," *Archaeologia* 79 (1929).

⁴⁷See W. B. Slegg, "The Chamberlaine Tomb at East Harling, Norfolk," *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society* 7 (1943). As Anne evidently never took a vow of chastity, her head-dress cannot be that of a vowess.

⁴⁸Norman Tanner points out that many Norwich citizens belonged to more than one confraternity; see his *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 75.

Further evidence of Anne's day-to-day pious practices is offered through her bequests of personal devotional objects, such as books and beads. Anne bequeathed six books, at least four of which are religious. To her mother-in-law (most probably Elizabeth Scrope, who was still alive in 1498), Anne left her embroidered psalter, and to her god-son Edmund de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, she left a "premer whiche kyng Edward gauffe me". Another primer, this one clasped with silver and gilt, was left to her god-daughter Anne Fitzwater "for a remembraunce to pray for me". A white book of prayers was bequeathed to Dame Joan Blakeney, who also appears in the will (1497) of Katherine Kerr, a widow of Norwich, as the recipient of "þe book of sent kateryn".⁴⁹ Anne gave a French copy of Christine de Pisan's *Epistole d'Othéa* to Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, and she gave an unidentified French book to her nephew Sir Edward, probably Sir Edward Wingfield, the son of Sir Robert Wingfield's elder brother Sir John, and brother of the Robert Wingfield raised by Anne.⁵⁰ Except for the white book of prayers, which remains unidentified, all of the religious books are what I have termed paraliturgical. There is no mention of devotional literature. What is now MS Harley 4012 does not appear. This is a reminder that wills do not provide a complete list of a testator's literary collection, and in any event, we do not know if MS Harley 4012 remained in Anne's possession until her death in 1498.⁵¹

⁴⁹Norwich, NRO, NCC, reg. Multon, f. 90v. Mary C. Erler has informed me that Dame Joan Blakeney was another Norwich vowess.

⁵⁰Anne's copy of Christine de Pisan's *Epître d'Othéa* could have come to her through her connection with Sir John Fastolf. The *Epître d'Othéa* was translated into English by Stephen Scrope, whose widow Millicent married, as her second husband, Sir John Fastolf in 1409. A copy of the French original, now Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 570, was made for Fastolf.

⁵¹Richard Marks suggested to me that the white book of prayers, bequeathed to Dame Joan Blakeney may be MS Harley 4012. However, I feel that this is unlikely as other ownership marks in the manuscript suggest that it stayed in the East Harling region. On f. 152v is copied a legal document between a "Thomas Curleys de wylb' [Wilby] in com' norff' yoman" and a Peter Payn de Banham. Both Wilby and Banham are Norfolk villages very

Bequests of beads, i.e. rosaries, provide further evidence of Anne's religious practices during her lifetime. Anne bequeathed four sets of beads: to her sister-in-law Katherine, Anne left a "peyre beedes corall"; her "nece" Eleanor also received coral beads decorated with gold. Anne left a set of gold beads that had formerly belonged to her sister-in-law Elizabeth Wingfield to her niece and god-daughter, another Elizabeth Wingfield. A second set of gold beads was carefully divided between four pilgrimage sites - Our Lady of Walsingham; Our Lady of the Pew, in Westminster Abbey; St Edmund of Bury; and St Thomas of Canterbury; and between "my lord cardynall" and Thomas Fincham, one of her executors.

Anne mentions one further pilgrimage site, the Rood of North Door, in St Paul's, London. Only two of the five sites, Our Lady of Walsingham and St Edmund of Bury, are East Anglian; all five are national sites, attracting pilgrims from all over the country. Along with Syon Abbey, where Anne was a "sister", these are the only spiritual interests outside of East Anglia mentioned in Anne's will.⁵² Anne's bequests to these five pilgrimage shrines, and to Syon abbey are all the more noteworthy in light of the marked local nature of her religious interest, affiliation, and patronage. Anne's interest in and support for these non-local institutions may have stemmed from the period when Sir Robert Wingfield was the Controller of the Household of Edward, when Anne would have had court connections and come into contact with national, rather than regional, devotional trends. Syon was a royal foundation, having been established by Henry V, and royal and noble patronage (especially that of noblewomen with courtly connections) of the house was common. Edward IV was granted the status of founder at Syon. Anne may have been influenced by their offerings. Likewise, the privy purse expenses of Queen Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, for February - March, 1502, reveal that offering were made on the queen's behalf at a

close to East Harling.

⁵²There is one further exception - the church at Weston Favell, Northamptonshire, home of Anne's first husband, Sir William Chamberlain.

number of shrines, including Our Lady of Waslsingham, St Thomas of Canterbury, the Rood of the North Door of St Paul's, and Our Lady of the Pewe.⁵³ Although these offerings postdate Anne Harling's bequests, it is likely that both were part of a wider, court-influenced circle of devotional interests.

Absent from Anne's will is any sort of specifically charitable bequest.⁵⁴ No direct mention is made of the poor, although it is possible that some of the recipients named in her will were paupers.⁵⁵ Similarly, no mention is made of her funeral plans. In light of Anne's concern with status, these omissions are puzzling, but here it is salutary to remember that wills are not a complete catalogue of an individual's interests. Charitable provision and funeral details may well have been made before Anne's death, and given the extraordinary detail of Anne's will, it is likely that this was the case. Earlier provision for charity is found in a previous will (without a testament), drawn up by Anne in 1477 when she was still married to Sir Robert Wingfield, which details resources for almsgiving, for the marriage of poor maidens, for the education of poor gentlemen at Cambridge, and for the repair of highways. While it is unlikely that this will was intended to be used by her heirs at her death eleven years later, it nonetheless suggests that such matters may have been sorted out in advance of the making of her last will and testament.

Anne Harling is an example of a woman who did not choose one of the three spiritual opportunities available to laywomen, but who instead carved out

⁵³Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 195.

⁵⁴This is in contrast to the findings of P. H. Cullum, who demonstrates in her "'And Hir Name was Charite': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Gloucester, 1992), that women were more likely than men to make charitable bequests.

⁵⁵Anne bequeathed the residue of all her goods to her executors, specifying that they were to dispose of them "to the pleasure of god and for the weell of my sowle my husbondes sowles fy ffader and moderes sowles and all myn auncestris sowles in suche wise as I haue shewed & declared vnto them and none other wise."

her own devotional niche within marriage and the secular world. She emerges from the pages of her last will and testament as a deeply pious woman, whose spiritual life was centred firmly in East Anglia, although she participated in certain, court-centred devotional trends. The multitude of her bequests demonstrates her concern for the health of her soul; the nature of those bequests shows the importance she placed on social and spiritual status. It is within this context that we must consider her ownership of London, BL MS Harley 4012.

MS Harley 4012 is a collection of 18 Middle English religious treatises, in both prose and verse. Judging from the physical appearance of the manuscript, its careful presentation, the uniformity of script, and the decoration scheme, MS Harley 4012 appears to have been a professional production. However, there is little indication of where it was produced. Edmund Wilson has pointed out that the Harley hand is similar to that of the scribe named by Pächt and Alexander "The Master of Sir John Fastolf", named after Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 570, containing *Livres des quatre vertus* and Christine de Pisan's *Épistole d'Othéa*, made for Fastolf and bearing his motto "Me fault fayre" and the date on f. 93.⁵⁶ Other manuscripts attributed to this scribe include Oxford, University College 85, containing treatises on the governance of princes; Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 764, containing treatises on heraldry; Oxford, Bodleian Library Auct. D. inf. 2. 11, a book of hours of the use of Sarum that is held to have belonged to Henry VIII; Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 45 (SC 4095), a psalter, made for use in London or in the adjoining counties.⁵⁷ N. Davis noted that the hand of the manuscript resembles that of a scribe of Fastolf's in three letters dated from 1455 to 1456, written at Caistor.⁵⁸ The fact that Anne was briefly Fastolf's

⁵⁶Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript," p. 299; Otto Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1966), no. 695, pp. 54-5.

⁵⁷Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol 1, nos. 726 (p. 57), 670 (p. 53), 696 (p. 55).

⁵⁸Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript," p. 299-300.

ward lends support to the notion that her manuscript was written by the so-called Master of Sir John Fastolf, but tells us nothing definitive about the workshop wherein MS Harley 4012 was produced.

The dialect of the texts in the manuscript sheds little light on its production. There is disagreement about the location of the dialect: Edward Wilson, writing in 1977, believed it to be "East Midland and most probably Norfolk" (but does not say which text(s) he used to reach this conclusion), whereas *The Linguistic Atlas of Later Middle English*, using ff. 1r-26v (part of *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*), places it in Leicestershire (LP 299; grid 482 295).⁵⁹ In any event, I am wary of placing too much emphasis on dialect evidence.

In both its contents and its physical appearance, MS Harley 4012 is typical of the religious books in women's hands in the fifteenth century.⁶⁰ Nearly all of the texts contained in MS Harley 4012 are found in other manuscripts that are known to have belonged to women.⁶¹ And like MS Harley 4012, most of the manuscripts examined for this thesis appear to be professional productions, neatly written on parchment, with little decoration beyond red and blue initials and paraphs, and small gold capitals with coloured foliage and flowers. Such books, I believe, were books to be read and studied; they were books to impart knowledge rather than books to be looked at and admired as works of art. Although Anne Harling signed her will, she did not make marginal notes in her manuscript, and indeed, few of the 74 extant manuscripts and incunables have contemporary annotations. No doubt this is a reflection of the general inability of women, even when they were able to read,

⁵⁹*Linguistic Atlas of Later Medieval English*, vol. 3, pp. 236-7.

⁶⁰See Chapter 3 and Appendices 2 and 3.

⁶¹The exceptions are the acephalous text beginning "for rememeber ther also ther be many thingis þat be not exceptable before god" (f. 104r-v); *The Four Manners of Washings* (f. 105r-v); the poem beginning "Ihesu the sonne of mare mylde" (ff. 106r-108v); the *Appeal of Christ to Man from the Cross* (f. 109r-v); *The Pardon of Syon* (ff. 110r-113r); and the *Life of St Anne* (ff. 130v-139v).

to write more than their names. As discussed earlier, reading and writing were separate skills in the Middle Ages.

MS Harley 4012 closely resembles a recent acquisition of Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 3597, formerly amongst the Throckmorton collection at Coughton Court, Warwickshire. A comparison of the two manuscripts was published by Edward Wilson in 1977.⁶² The hand of what look to be the original contents of Lambeth Palace MS 3597 (items 1-9 and 11) has been dated by M. B. Parkes as the third quarter of the fifteenth century.⁶³ The two manuscripts share eight items (if the incomplete *Mirror of Saint Edmund* of MS Harley 4012 is included); these are the first eight texts in MS Harley 4012, and all but two texts of those that appear to be the original contents of Lambeth Palace MS 3597 (*The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, *The Charter of our Heavenly Heritage*, *Four Things be Needful*, *The Mirror of Sinners*, *God's Words to Saint Moll*, *The Twelve Degrees of Meekness*, *The Article of the Faith*, and *The Mirror of Saint Edmund*). They occur in slightly different orders in the two manuscripts, but their similarity does suggest that the two books derive from a common ancestor. The texts in MS Harley 4012 that indicate that it was produced for Anne Harling (i.e. *The Life of Saint Anne* and *The Pardon of Syon*), however, do not appear in Lambeth Palace MS 3597, which suggests a greater range of exemplars. Like MS Harley 4012, Lambeth Palace MS 3597 was a woman's book; it belonged to a certain "Elyzbeth", whose name appears on f. 95r. Wilson suggests that this Elizabeth may be Elizabeth Baynham, second wife of Sir Robert Throckmorton (1451-1519), or Elizabeth Throckmorton, Sir Robert's sister (d. 1547), the last abbess of Denny Abbey in Cambridgeshire.⁶⁴ This last Elizabeth was the owner of Oxford, Bodleian Library Hatton 18, containing the *Speculum Vitae*.

One of the difficulties in interpreting manuscript ownership is that the rationale behind the selection of the texts is seldom apparent. We do not know

⁶²See note 1 above.

⁶³Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript," p. 296.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 298 and n. 5.

who chose the contents of MS Harley 4012. It is possible that it was Anne herself, using contacts made during the brief period of her wardship under Fastolf, through connections with various religious houses where she had kin, or where she was a "sister", or through social and cultural networks that facilitated the borrowing of books. We know that Anne borrowed books, for the inventory of John Paston II, drawn up before 1479, lists "a boke of Troylus whyche William Bra[...] hath hadde neer x yer and lent it to Da[...] Wyngfeld". The people to whom Anne bequeathed books in her will (her mother-in-law, probably Elizabeth Scrope, widow of the fourth lord Scrope of Bolton; her god-son Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk; Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey; her nephew Sir Edward, probably Sir Edward Wingfield; her god-daughter Anne Fitzwater, and Dame Joan Blakeney, a Norwich widow) might represent a personal book-borrowing and lending network during Anne's lifetime; studies of the libraries and literary connections of these six people might be tell us more about the kinds of texts likely to have been used by Anne Harling. On the other hand, the choice of texts in MS Harley 4012 may be the work of someone else, perhaps a confessor or a friend.⁶⁵ As we do not know who was responsible for the compilation, we must wonder whose agenda was represented by the compilation of texts owned by Anne. Although it is unlikely that this will ever be determined, we can be sure that someone felt that the religious treatises contained within MS Harley 4012 were appropriate reading material for a wealthy, married or recently widowed, gentry woman.

The most striking aspect of Anne's programme of devotional reading is the penitential nature of much of its contents. The tone of the collection is set by the first text, *The Cleansing of Man's Soul* (ff. 1r-68v), which occupies over one third of the manuscript as it now exists, although this proportion would be smaller if the manuscript originally contained the full text of *The Mirror of St Edmund*. *The Cleansing* is a lengthy prose compilation consisting of three sections on the actions necessary for penance - contrition, confession,

⁶⁵Gail McMurray Gibson says that Anne was a member of the literary circle grouped around Alice Chaucer, but I have found no evidence of Anne's involvement in such a group. See Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, p. 196.

and satisfaction.⁶⁶ *The Four Manners of Washings* (f. 105r-v; beginning imperfect) is perhaps the conclusion to or an excerpt from a longer work on confession or penance similar to the *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*.⁶⁷ *The Four Manners of Washings* summarises four ways by which the soul is washed: contrition, penance, satisfaction, and (here differing from *The Cleansing*) charity. The theme of penitence is also found in *The Charter of Our Heavenly Heritage* (ff. 69r-72r), an extract from the *Pore Caitiff*.⁶⁸ Like the Middle English Charters of Christ, it develops the metaphor identifying the crucified body of Christ with a legal charter or land grant. *The Charter* falls into two sections: in the first, the reader is exhorted to forsake sin, think about Christ's crucifixion, and live according to the faith. In the second, and here we see the penitential theme, the reader is exhorted to undertake penance and think about the Last Day, considering the divine judgement that one will receive for one's actions. The author of the *Mirror of Sinners* (ff. 73r-77r) takes a similar position to the author of *The Charter of Our Heavenly Heritage*, urging men and women to think continually about the day of their death, to recognise their wretchedness in the eyes of God, and to amend themselves while the opportunity still exists. "And therefore amende þee now, whiles tyme is of mercy, so þat þow be not dampned in the dreedful day of goddes greete vengeance," warns the text, and it concludes:

Lerne wel, eer þow go hennes, to sauoure, to vnderstonde, and wisely to purueye þee for the laste þinges; so þat þow bee euere-moore reedy, what tyme þat oure lord cometh to clepe thee, for to entre with hym in to the blisse þat euer schal laste.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Raymo 84; Michael G. Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," in *Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), p. 158. The treatise was edited by Charles L. Regan, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul: Edited from MS Bodl. 923 with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1963).

⁶⁷Raymo 93.

⁶⁸See Lagorio and Sargent 87.

⁶⁹Carl Horstman, ed., *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, vol. 2, (London, 1896), p. 440.

Further concern for the fate of the soul after death, specifically with Purgatory and the beneficial effect of prayers and indulgences, is demonstrated through the appearance of the prefatory sentence preceding the poem *Wofully Araide* (f. 109r): "Hosomeuer saith þis praier in þe worship of þe passion shall haue C 3ere of pardon", and through *The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene, which is Syon* (ff. 110r-113r), a list of indulgences granted to those who come to Syon and recite certain prayers. Fascination with the subject of Purgatory may explain the appearance of *The Life of St Patrick*, containing part of *St Patrick's Purgatory*, alongside the lives of the three female Saints Katherine, Margaret (who frequently appear together), and Anne, whose significance for Anne Harling has already been discussed.

The interest in sin, penance, and purgatory displayed in Harley 4012 - and let us, for the moment, assume that this is indicative of Anne Harling's interest in such spiritual matters (after all the ownership note in the back of the book suggests that the book was of some value to Anne) - mirrors the concern with purgatory displayed in Anne's will, in her requests for masses, diriges, and prayers, and in her final request that her executors "desire all suche personys as I have in this my testament geuen eny thinge, that they of their charite pray to Almighty God for my sowle and for myn auncestres' sowles." It suggests that this concern was not simply a death-bed one, but was rather something which occupied Anne's conscience throughout her lifetime, and confirms the conclusions drawn from testamentary studies that late medieval piety was dominated by the fear of purgatory.⁷⁰ Anne's interest in these

⁷⁰See, for example, Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise* (London, 1972); Christine Carpenter, "The Religion of the Gentry," p. 58-60, and her *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 237-9; Nigel Saul, "The Religious Sympathies of the Gentry in Gloucestershire, 1200-1500," *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions* 98 (1980), p. 109; P. W. Fleming, "Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent," in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. Tony Pollard (Gloucester, 1984), p. 37. But not all historians agree on the centrality of Purgatory. See Peter Heath, "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Hull Wills," in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (New York, 1984), p. 228; Colin Richmond, "Religion and the Fifteenth-

spiritual matters of sin, penance, and purgatory must have been stimulated by the fact that she had been widowed; her first husband, Sir William Chamberlain, was presumably (or so Anne would have believed) in Purgatory and it would be understandable for Anne to be concerned about such matters.

The religious significance of Anne's ownership of MS Harley 4012 is paramount. It tells us something of Anne's spiritual interests or, in the event that Anne did not play a role in deciding the contents of her book, what someone believed her spiritual interests to be. It is a valuable addition to her will in that it offers a second view into her personal piety, and we are lucky to have both sources surviving for the same individual. As I have already mentioned, MS Harley 4012 does not appear among the books bequeathed by Anne in her will, which include a psalter, two primers, Christine de Pisan's *Epistle of Othéa*, an unidentified French book, and a book of prayers. Nevertheless, Anne's possession of the manuscript has a social and a political significance as well as a religious one. It is a mark of Anne's social status, as are the multitude of her generous testamentary bequests. Certainly the cost of a professionally-produced book such as MS Harley 4012 would prohibit many people from owning one. Moreover, as I have shown in Chapter One, laywomen's ownership of religious treatises appears to have been predominantly, although not exclusively, aristocratic. This is not simply due to the nature of the evidence, viz. extant manuscripts and wills. Although the vast majority of surviving manuscripts known to have been in the possession of laywomen belonged to members of the aristocracy, considerable numbers of wills survive for women of lower social standing. In these wills (predominantly those of the urban elite) I have found primers and psalters, but I have found less evidence of such women owning the sorts of texts found in MS Harley 4012 until the end of the fifteenth century.⁷¹

Century English Gentleman," p. 195; and Clive Burgess, "'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented': an Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England," in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750*, ed. Susan J. Wright (London, 1988).

⁷¹See Chapter 1 above.

Anne's ownership of such a collection of religious texts is also a mark of her spiritual status, for even amongst aristocratic ladies the possession of the type of religious texts contained in Anne's book does not appear to have been all-pervasive. Psalters and books of hours appear to have been far more common.⁷² Seen in this context, the ownership of a collection of predominantly penitential treatises such as MS Harley 4012 takes on a greater significance. It is a visible, obvious indication not only of wealth, but also of piety, and it would therefore have helped to establish Anne as a devout woman.

I say a visible indication because it is highly likely that other people knew of her possession of the book. We have seen that Anne borrowed books, and she may have lent books as well. As I have already discussed, there is evidence to suggest that women shared their books with each other, forming cultural networks. Furthermore, Anne had both her name and her place of residence written into MS Harley 4012, which suggests that other people used or at least saw the manuscript; there is no need to record your ownership of something if you are the only person to use it.

We have already seen that Anne's construction of herself as a pious woman is also evident in her will. Anne's bequests to such a large number of churches, chapels, and monastic houses consisted, for the most part, not only of money but also of strikingly visible evidence of her benefaction: altar cloths, vestments, frontals, and stained glass windows, all bearing her own arms, those of her husbands, and sometimes those of her parents. For example, to her parish church at East Harling she left two altar cloths and a frontal "with my bothe husbondes armys and myn departed in the corneres." Among her bequests to the chapel of St Anne in the same church were two vestments for the chaplain, similarly decorated with her arms and those of her husbands. And to the Carmelite friars in Cambridge she left a vestment and two altar cloths with her arms and those of her husbands, as well as 40 s. "to sette vp both my husbondes armys & myn departed in the pryncipall wyndowe

⁷²See chapter 1 above.

of the quire." Of course, as a childless widow and as the last member of two families, Anne was leaving visible reminders of herself, her husbands, and her family in order to stimulate prayers from the living; but she was also leaving a high-profile record of herself as a generous benefactress, an involved parishioner, a pious woman. No one who entered those churches could have failed to notice Anne.

I believe that Anne's possession of MS Harley 4012 can be seen not only as evidence of Anne's personal piety, but also as part of a strategy to construct herself as a pious, and thus respectable, woman. Piety (orthodox piety, that is, and the piety of Anne's texts was undeniably orthodox) implied propriety: a pious woman was necessarily a chaste woman; a pious woman was a respectable woman. Such a reputation would have been extremely beneficial to a woman in Anne Harling's position, and it is to this position that I shall now turn.

Anne acquired the book probably in the 1460s or 70s and wrote her name in it when she was the wife or widow of Sir Robert Wingfield. It is to this period of her life that we must look if we are to understand her ownership of MS Harley 4012. Sir Robert was a politically ambitious man. A servant of the Duke of Norfolk, he later entered the service of Edward IV, following his king into exile in 1470. Wingfield was rewarded for his loyalty: in 1471, after his return to England, he was described as "the King's Knight", and he was the Controller to the Household of Edward IV from 1474 to 1481. I do not know what happened to Anne while Sir Robert was in exile with Edward, whether she accompanied him or remained behind to administer what were, in fact, her own estates in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. It is not unlikely that she stayed in England, to ensure that her own and her husband's land interests were protected. As the wife of an absent man whose loyalty lay with a king who was no longer on his throne, Anne would have needed the protection offered by an irreproachable reputation: piety had a political value. From a practical viewpoint such a reputation was extremely valuable insofar as it could protect a woman with an absent husband against slander, against accusations of marital infidelity, as well as engendering respect and trust in

those with whom she had business dealings.

Anne's activities after Edward's return to England and the subsequent appointment of her husband to the position of Controller of the Household also remain unrecorded. She might have remained at her principal manor of East Harling to oversee the administration of her estates; equally she might have followed her husband into royal service, becoming a member of the household of Queen Elizabeth. We know from earlier household accounts of both Elizabeth and her predecessor Queen Margaret of Anjou that the wives of prominent members of the King's household were often ladies-in-waiting to the queen.⁷³ In either case, it is quite likely that Anne would have spent time at court. She was certainly acquainted with the King, for she later bequeathed in her will "a Premer whiche kynge Edward gauffe me" to her godson the Duke of Suffolk. Her connection with the court continued after Robert's death, as can be seen from a letter from William Paston III to John Paston III, dated 7 March, 1487. Describing the plans of Henry VII for a royal progress to Norwich, William notes that it would take the king "þan to Bery, þan to Dame Anne Wyngfeldys, and soo to Norwyche".⁷⁴ Anne's construction of herself as a pious woman, and the contemporary equation of piety with moral righteousness and sexual propriety would have benefitted her at court, an environment believed to be licentious and morally reprehensible.

This view of the court is a common one in both literary and historical writing. Caxton's translation of *The Curial*, made in 1484, portrays courtiers as self-obsessed, deceitful and corrupt. A life at court, he says, is "an euyl lyf." It is moreover, a licentious life: "and also it may be called of them that ben amoureuse, a deserte lyberte."⁷⁵ John Blacman, writing retrospectively

⁷³A. R. Myers, "The Household of Queen Margaret of Anjou," in his *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, ed. Cecil H. Clough (London, 1985), pp. 135-209; and his "The Household of Queen Elizabeth Woodville, 1466-7," in *ibid.*, pp. 251-318.

⁷⁴Davis, ed., *Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, p. 654.

⁷⁵William Caxton, *The Curial Made by Maystere Alain Charretier*, ed. Paul Meyer and Frederick J. Furnivall. EETS es 54 (London, 1888), p. 14.

about the court of Henry VI, contrasted the licentiousness of the court with the behaviour of Henry VI, in order to establish Henry as a man of piety bordering on asceticism. He describes how one courtier brought before Henry "a dance or show of young ladies with bared bosoms who were to dance in that guise before the king" and the King's resultant disgust, and how Henry, anxious to ensure the virtue of his household members, "kept careful watch through hidden windows of his chamber, lest any foolish impertinence of women . . . cause the fall of any of his household."⁷⁶ Certainly his successor Edward had a reputation for intemperance with respect to sex and food: "No man ever took more delight in his pleasures than he did, especially in the ladies, feasts, banquets and hunts," declared Philippe de Commynes;⁷⁷ and Dominic Mancini condemned Edward as a man

licentious in the extreme; moreover, it was said that he had been most insolent to numerous women after he had seduced them, for, as soon as he grew weary of dalliance, he gave up the ladies much against their will to the other courtiers. He pursued with no discrimination the married and unmarried, the noble and lowly: however, he took none by force.⁷⁸

Whether Edward was indeed a man of inordinate lust, and whether court was truly a place of dubious morality is itself both questionable and irrelevant. What matters is that they were seen to be so. This belief must have been especially harmful to women at court; aspersions of sexual impropriety might have been cast at them through association. The fact that there seem to have been few women at court would have made women's position there more vulnerable. A reputation for piety, which brought along with it a reputation for chastity and good behaviour, would have been an excellent defense against slander. Christine de Pisan understood this well, and

⁷⁶J. Blacman, *Henry the Sixth: A Memoir by John Blacman*, trans. M. R. James (Cambridge, 1955), p. 8. I am indebted to P. H. Cullum for this reference.

⁷⁷Philippe de Commynes, *Memoirs*, trans. by Michael Jones (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 414

⁷⁸D. Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*, trans. C. A. J. Armstrong, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1969), p. 67.

she states firmly in *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* that "there is no doubt that a lady is more feared and respected and held in greater reverence when she is seen to be wise and chaste and of firm behaviour," and that "certainly there is nothing so great in this world that she could have and nothing she should so much love to accumulate . . . [than] a good name."⁷⁹ Christine was writing with experience of the French court, but the experience of women at the English court must not have differed greatly from their French sisters. The Knight of the Tower, whose instructional work for his three daughters was translated twice into Middle English, echoes Christine's advice:

My dere doughter yf ye wyst and knewe the grete worship
whiche cometh of good name and Renomme, ye shold peyne
your self to gete and kepe it . . . the good woman . . . payneth
her selfe to kepe her body clene and her worship also.⁸⁰

The value of a woman's reputation, and especially her sexual reputation was a recurrent theme in courtesy literature addressed to women. *How the good wijf tau3te hir doughtir*, a fourteenth-century poem, written apparently for young women in towns and cities, and couched as a mother's instructions to her daughter stresses the importance of a good name:

For a sclandre reised ille
Is yuel for to stille . . .

For he þat cacciþ to him an yuer name
It is to him a foule fame . . .

þi good name is th þi freendis
greet ioie & gladnes . . .⁸¹

The late fifteenth-century Middle Scots poem, *The Thewis of Gud Women*, which seems to address a female audience of a wider range of social status,

⁷⁹Christine de Pisan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp. 76, 56.

⁸⁰William Caxton, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, ed. M. Y. Offord, EETS ss 2 (London, 1971), p. 151.

⁸¹"How the good wijf tau3te hir dou3tir", in Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Manners and Meals in Olden Time: The Babees Boke, etc.*, EETS os 32 (London, 1868), ll. 36-7, 64-5, 143-4; pp. 37, 38, 43.

makes the same point while warning that a woman can lose her reputation through keeping the wrong company:

Fle ill folk and susspekit place:
Gret lak folowis illyklynes
For euir defamyt cumpany
Defadis the honor of al wy.

Fle fra defamyt cumpany:
Lyk drawys to lyk ay comonly.⁸²

The reputation, and especially the sexual reputation of women of lesser social standing than Anne Harling was important enough to warrant litigation if it was slandered, and ecclesiastical court records document cases of women bringing suit for defamation.⁸³ It is likely that aristocratic women took steps to ensure their good name.

The alternative to respectability, according to the Knight of the Tower, was dishonour and shame. Improper or forward behaviour could ruin a woman's prospects for marriage, and he recounts a tale of a woman who failed to obtain the Knight as a husband through her "malepernes & the lyght manere that me semed to see in her." Such behaviour could also damage her existing marriage, and the Knight warns his daughters against having extra-marital affairs, and even against the reputation of having such affairs, "for by such a cause many good maryages haue ben left & forgotten."⁸⁴ Thomas More was of the same opinion, stating that Edward IV's affairs were "to the destruction of many a good woman."

To interpret Anne's ownership of Harley 4012 purely in terms of political expediency would be overly simplistic if not downright foolish.

⁸²"The Thewis off Gud Women", in *The Good wife Taught her Daughter & the Good Wyfe wold a pylgremage & The Thewis of Gud Women*, ed. Tauno F. Mustanoja (Helsinki, 1948), pp. 180, 182.

⁸³See R. H. Helmholz, ed., *Select Cases on Defamation*, Seldon Society 101 (1985); J. A. Sharpe, *Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York*, Borthwick Paper 58 (York, 1980). I am indebted to Sarah Salih for these references.

⁸⁴*The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, pp. 27-8, 172.

Outward signs of devotion would have been meaningless without inner fervour, and it is unlikely that they would have been able to establish reputation for piety without such fervour. That Anne's piety was genuine I do not doubt, but the possession of genuine piety does not preclude its use to political advantage. Harley 4012 can be seen not only as evidence of Anne Harling's personal piety, but also as part of her construction of herself as a pious, and thus respectable, woman. A man, we are told, is judged by the company he keeps. A man - and a woman - is also judged by what he or she owns, what he or she does, how he or she presents himself or herself. Anne Harling must surely have been aware of this.

CHAPTER 5
ENCLOSED READING: SIBILLA DE FELTON
AND THE NUNS OF BARKING ABBEY

Books were central to the lives of medieval nuns in a way that they were not to the lives of most laywomen. The days and nights of nuns were punctuated by the services of the Divine Office, and the celebration of the mass, which involved the use of breviaries, missals, graduals, antiphonals, processionals, hymnaries, diurnals, and psalters. Not all nuns were literate, of course, and it would seem that many of those who were read Latin with varying degrees of comprehension. But even those who were illiterate would have understood how the books were used during the services. We know less about the ways in which the use of non-liturgical books was woven into the fabric of the lives of women religious. In my second case study of women book-owners, I examine the life and books of a nun, Sibilla de Felton, Abbess of Barking (Essex) from 1393 until her death in 1419. It is ironic that the devotional concerns of women religious, whose lives revolved around the worship of God are less accessible to the scholar than those of their secular counterparts. This is a problem of sources: we cannot turn to wills, which despite their limitations, are perhaps the most personal of all medieval documents and one of the most valuable sources for medieval piety. Nuns did not leave written wills as they did not, theoretically at least, have personal property to bequeath. The private spiritual life of *Sibilla de Felton is thus less accessible than that of Anne Harling.*

Sibilla was born *c.* 1359, the second of three daughters of Sir Thomas de Felton of Litcham in Norfolk, and his wife Joan, the daughter of Sir Richard Walkefare.¹ Sir Thomas, who held eleven manors in

¹*CIPM* xv 1-7 Richard II, pp. 139-41. Sir Thomas and Joan also had a son, Thomas, but he died before 1381; see *CPR 1381-85*, p. 558. Brief biographical information is also given in J. B. L. Tolhurst, *The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*, vol. 1, Henry Bradshaw Society 65 (London, 1927), p. vi; *VCH Essex*, vol. 2 (London, 1907), p. 121, n. 24; E. A. Loftus and H. F. Chettle, *A History of Barking Abbey* (Barking,

Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk, played an active role in the Hundred Years War: from 1362 until 1377 he was seneschal of Aquitaine, and in recognition of his services there he was made Knight of the Garter, only a few weeks, as it turned out, before his death on 26 April, 1381.² Sometime before her father's death, Sibilla married a member of the de Morley family.³ By 1384, presumably after her husband's death, Sibilla had taken the veil at the Benedictine Abbey of Barking in Essex, becoming abbess in 1393, at about the age of 34.⁴ Taking the veil was a recognized alternative for widows, although the number that actually did so probably remained small. Eileen Power suggests that it was probably more common for widows to become vowesses than to become nuns.⁵ Entering the religious life after being widowed seems to have run in Sibilla's family, for when her elder sister Mary was widowed in 1374, she became a nun at the Minories in London. However, Mary's vocation proved short-lived. She ran away from the Minories in 1385, and married her second husband, John Coursoun, shortly

1954), p. 44; George Frederick Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter* (London, 1841), pp. 278-9.

²Sibilla's maternal grandfather, Sir Richard Walkefare, was also a military figure of some renown. For both men, see Beltz, *Memorials*, p. 278.

³Sibilla's husband is never named. Beltz, Tolhurst, *et al.* say that she married Sir Thomas de Morley, but I have been unable to identify her husband. Many Morleys appear in the Patent Rolls, Close Rolls and Inquisitions Post Mortem. A Sibyl de Morley, wife of Robert de Morley, appears in *CIPM*, xvi 7-15 Richard II, p. 412, where she is described as deceased, with a son and heir aged 24 years.

⁴Sibilla is described as a nun of Barking in *CCR* 1381-85, pp. 563, 596; her election as abbess is recorded in *CPR* 1391-6, pp. 319, 328; London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3, ff. 339r-340r.

⁵Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 38, n. 2. Caroline Barron points out that there is little evidence for London widows becoming nuns, and suggests that numbers may have been greater among the gentry; see her "Introduction: The Widow's World in Later Medieval London," in *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London, 1994), p. xxvi.

thereafter.⁶ Unlike her sister, Sibilla proved to be a nun of dedication and ability. The recent work of Marilyn Oliva on nunneries in the diocese of Norwich suggests that nuns acquired and retained monastic offices primarily through ability and merit.⁷ For Sibilla to have been elected to the highest position within the abbey at a relatively young age by Barking standards and after less than 13 years as a nun, argues for her leadership capabilities and dynamism. Such qualities no doubt came from her experience of managing a household during her marriage.

The nunnery that Sibilla chose - or that was chosen for her, for we know nothing of the circumstances surrounding her entry into the religious life - was one of the oldest, largest, and wealthiest houses for women in the country.⁸ It was founded *ca.* 666, apparently by St Erkenwald, later Bishop of London, and is said to have been refounded by King Edgar, nearly a century after the Danes allegedly massacred the community in 870. From at least the Conquest, Barking was held as a royal foundation; it enjoyed (or

⁶Catherine Paxton, "The Nunneries of London and Its Environs in the Later Middle Ages," (D. Phil. Dissertation, Oxford University, 1992), pp. 61-2; VCH London, vol. 1, p. 518; *CPR 1381-5*, p. 355; *CCR 1381-5*, p. 596.

⁷Marilyn Oliva, "Aristocracy or Meritocracy? Office-holding Patterns in Late Medieval English Nunneries," *Women in the Church*, Studies in Church History 27, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, (Oxford, 1990). But see my comments below on the social status of the abbesses of Barking.

⁸For the history of Barking Abbey see R. A. Bush, "The Community of Barking Abbey," (M. A. dissertation, University of London, 1991); *Barking Abbey 1300th Anniversary: An Exhibition at Barking Central Library, 3-22 October, 1966*; William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* vol. 1 (London, 1846), pp. 436-446; Loftus and Chettle, *History of Barking Abbey*, R. Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*, vol. 2 (London, 1710), pp. 32-5; Winifred M. Sturman, "Barking Abbey: A Study in its External and Internal Administration from the Conquest to the Dissolution," Ph. D. dissertation, University of London, 1961); and VCH Essex, vol. 2 (London, 1907), pp. 115-122. For the archaeology of Barking Abbey see Alfred W. Clapham, "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking: A Sketch of its Architectural History and an Account of Recent Excavations on its Site," *Essex Archaeological Transactions* 12 (1913): 69-87, incl. plates; and Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*, vol. 2 (London, 1921), pp. 7-9.

endured) royal patronage; the king claimed the right to nominate a nun at each succession to the throne, and, at each new creation of an abbess, to appoint a corrodian and to claim an annual pension for a royal clerk until the new abbess could find him a benefice.⁹ The abbess of Barking was a powerful woman. She had precedence over abbesses of other houses, she was a magnate in six counties, and was one of four abbesses who, holding of the king by barony, could be summoned by the king to perform military service. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, she maintained a separate household of considerable size, consisting of a gentlewoman, esquire, marshal, cook, buyer, and an unspecified number of gentlemen, yeomen, and grooms. The abbess's household had its own kitchen with its own clerk, to whom the cellaress sometimes applied for food supplies, and it is likely that the abbess had her own building.¹⁰

Although nunneries were largely aristocratic institutions, there seems to have been a tendency for the wealthier nunneries to attract women from the higher ranks of the aristocracy. Barking was not only wealthy, but it also had the status of a royal foundation and a long history. It is, however, difficult to determine the social status of the nuns, for few lists survive of the members of the community.¹¹ Working from these lists, and from the wills of testators who mention daughters and other family members in the abbey, Winifred M.

⁹The royal appointments to Barking are found in the Close Rolls and Patent Rolls.

¹⁰See "The Charthe longynge to the Office of the Celeress of the Monasterye of Barking", London, BL Cotton Julius D.viii, ff. 40r-47v, printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp. 442-5; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," pp. 264-7.

¹¹A list of fifteen nuns professed on the feast of the Ascension, 1397 is recorded in London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3, f. 388r; a list of nuns at the election of Elizabeth Lexham as abbess in 1473 is in London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/7, f. 8r; of Elizabeth Grene as abbess in 1499 is in London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/7, f. 17r, and of Dorothy Barley as the last abbess in 1527 is in London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/10, f. 93r. A list of the nuns pensioned at the Dissolution is in *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic Henry VIII*, 15, 1540 (London, 1896), p. 542. All of these lists are transcribed in Bush, "The Community," pp. 52-7.

Sturman concludes that Barking attracted women from the social elite: from royalty, nobility, upper and lower gentry, and from the merchant class of London. In the fifteenth century the house also drew recruits from the families of small landholders in Essex and Barking itself.¹² In general, the abbesses were of particularly high status. Of the fifteen abbesses who ruled from the Conquest to the beginning of the fourteenth century, four were members of the royal family. Sibilla was the eighth abbess to rule during the fourteenth century; her predecessors were Anne de Vere (1295-1318),¹³ of the de Vere family, earls of Oxford; Eleanor de Weston (1318-1329); Yolande de Sutton (1329-1341), of the Sutton family of Wivenhoe, whose male members' names frequently appear among the Essex J.P.s in the fourteenth century and as stewards of Barking Abbey; Maud Montague (1341-1352), daughter of William, Lord Montague, and sister of the Earl of Salisbury; Isabel Montague (1352-1358), sister of Maud; Katherine de Sutton (1358-1377) of the same family as Yolande de Sutton above; and Maud Montague (1377-1393), niece of Maud and Isabel Montague above, and daughter and co-heiress of Edward, Lord Montague. Most of Sibilla's fifteenth- and sixteenth-century successors as abbess were from similar backgrounds: Margaret Swynford (1419-1433), believed to be a daughter of Katherine Swynford and her first husband Hugh, and the god-daughter of John of Gaunt; Katherine de la Pole (1433-1473), the eldest daughter of Michael, third earl of Suffolk, killed at Agincourt; Elizabeth Lexham (1473-1479); Elizabeth Shuldham (1479-1499), sister of Edward Shuldham of Norfolk, D. C. L., Warden of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Elizabeth Grene (1499-1527); and Dorothy Barley (1527-1539). Winifred M. Sturman suggests that the last three abbesses came from lesser gentry families.¹⁴ But without knowing more about the population at Barking as a whole, it is hard to determine whether status was a particularly significant

¹²Sturman, "Barking Abbey," pp. 400-10.

¹³For each abbess listed, the first date is that of her election, the second that of her death.

¹⁴See note 12 above.

factor in the election of an abbess.¹⁵

Barking is generally held to have enjoyed a tradition of female learning that survived the Conquest and continued until the Dissolution.¹⁶ This belief is based on the production of texts for and by the nuns, and on the surviving books from the house. In the seventh century, Aldhelm addressed his treatise *De Virginitate* to its abbess and nuns.¹⁷ In the late twelfth century Barking produced two Anglo-French saints' lives: *The Life of St Edward*, by an unidentified nun, and *The Life of St Catherine*, by a nun named Clemence.¹⁸ Katherine de Sutton, abbess from 1358 to 1377, revised the Latin Easter dramatic offices, demonstrating some considerable ability in Latin composition.¹⁹ The surviving books from Barking Abbey suggest that the house enjoyed higher standards of education and intellectual achievement than many other nunneries. At least eleven, and possibly as many as 18 books, are

¹⁵Marilyn Oliva, in "Aristocracy or Meritocracy," argues convincingly that ability and merit were more important than social status in the election or appointment to monastic office. Her conclusion is based on the examination of the nunneries of the diocese of Norwich, which seem to have attracted women from less exalted families than did Barking.

¹⁶See Bush, "The Community of Barking Abbey"; A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* xxv (1958); Phyllis Hodgson, "The Orchard of Syon and the English Mystical Tradition," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1964, p. 235.

¹⁷See Jocelyn Wogan Browne, "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), p. 83, n. 41.

¹⁸See M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh, 1950); Ö. Södergaard, ed., *La vie d'Edouard le confesseur, poème anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle* (Uppsala, 1948); and W. MacBain, ed., *The Life of Saint Catherine by Clemence of Barking*, ANTS 18 (1964).

¹⁹Nancy Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton: The First Woman Playwright," *Educational Theatre Journal* 30 (1978). Katherine's work was copied into the abbey's ordinal; see J. B. L. Tolhurst, *The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*, vol. 1, Henry Bradshaw Society 65, pp. 92-112.

known to survive from Barking Abbey.²⁰ This is the second largest collection of books known to survive from a female monastery; it is surpassed only by Syon Abbey (a veritable upstart, given the long history of Barking), from which at least 54 books survive from the nuns' library. In general, the number of extant books known to have belonged to individual nunneries seldom exceeds five.

In addition to the extant books, a list of "certaune bookes yn the abbey of Barkynge" is found in the inventory of the goods of William Pownsett, the last steward of the abbey, written 8 March 1554.²¹ The inventory lists 29 books, apparently from the abbey, some of which may have been bound together. The list reads as follows:

The inventory at Estchepe

Certaune bookes yn the abbey of Barkynge.

In primis virgill and Tullis officis <i>with</i> a comment	xx d.
Item a booke de modo <i>confitendi</i> & a byble yn lattyn	
	ij s. iiij d.
Item a booke de causa boemica	iiij d.
Item an enchiridion milite christe	vj d.
Item Isoppes fabels	ij d.
Item a booke called <i>gemma predicantium</i>	vij d.
Item a booke called <i>vocabulus vtriusque iuris</i>	xij s.
Item ij bookes/ one of the decres of the lawe thother of the distinctions of the lawe	iijs. iiij d.
Item a booke de epistola Nichola Lier	vij d.

²⁰See Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 6, 228, and *Supplement*, pp. 2, 76; and A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 25 (1958). For earlier discussions of the books of Barking Abbey, see M. R. James, "Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries," *ibid.* 21 (1933), p. 35; and N. R. Ker, "More Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries," *ibid.* 23 (1945), pp. 301-2, 310. The books are listed below in Appendix 5. It is possible, as Doyle suggests (p. 243), that some of the books, such as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 38 and Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.29 (James 1133) were for the use of the chaplains attached to the house.

²¹Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, D/DP F234. Loftus and Chettle mention this document by its former shelfmark: D/DP F13. The inventory is also mentioned by Sturman, "Barking Abbey," p. 289.

Item ij bookes of sermondēs	x d.
Item one booke called destructorium vitiorum	viiij d.
Item one booke called cathologus sanctorum	xij d.
Item a booke called haimo super epistolas pauli	xx d.
Item one booke called casus Barnardi & an other called Rantole [?] divinatorum officiorum	xij d.
Item a book super epistolas chanonitas	viiij d.
Item one called summa hostensis and nother called testus sententiarum	xvi d.
Item a booke callid decem libri ethicorum an other called opus aureum sanctorum & an other called summa aurea	xviiij d.
Item one booke called Tarlaret	vj d.
Item a booke called thomus primus opus dionisii	ii s.
Item a booke called dionisyus super spalmos [sic]	ii s.
Item a booke called dionysyus super iiij evangelia	ii s.

It is difficult to know what to make of this list. Although many of the works can be identified with a reasonable degree of certainty, they are nonetheless problematic.²² We may well wonder from whose library - or whose

²²Books that can be identified include "virgill", "Tullis officiis", which is Cicero's *De Officiis*, and "Isoppes fabels". The "enchiridion milite christe" was probably the work by Erasmus, and judging from its value, it was probably a printed copy. "Haimo super epistolas pauli" no doubt refers to the commentary of Haimo of Auxerre on the Pauline Epistles. The "summa hostensis" and the "summa aurea" may both refer to the *Summa Aurea* of Henricus de Bartholomaeis or Henricus de Segusio, cardinal Hostiensis. The "decem libri ethicorum" was possibly Aristotle. "Thomus primus opus dionisii" was probably the first tome of the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, while "dionisyus super spalmos" and "dionysyus super iiij evangelia" were surely the commentaries of Dionysius the Carthusian on the psalms and evangelists respectively. The contents of some of the other works can be inferred from the descriptions or titles given in the inventory. The book "de modo confitendi" was presumably a work on confession, and similarly, the book called "gemma predicantium" was probably a work on preaching, perhaps a collection of sermons. The "vocabulus vtriusque iuris" was presumably a dictionary of canon and Roman law, and the books on "the decres of the lawe" and on "the distinctions of the lawe" no doubt were also books on canon and/or secular law. The book "de epistola Nichola Lier" appears to have been a collection of the letters of Nicholas of Lyra, but it may have been his *Postills*. The "destructorium vitiorum" was probably a work on the vices and virtues, of which there were many, and the "cathologus sanctorum" may have been a collection of saints' lives. The book "super epistolas chanonitas" was surely a commentary on the Epistles. The book called "testus sententiarum" was possibly a collection of sentences. The "opus aureum sanctorum" was probably *The Golden Legend*. I have been unable to identify the books "de causa boemica", "casus Barnardi", "Rantole divinatorum officiorum", and

libraries - the books come. Some of the titles, such as "a booke de mode confitendi & a byble yn lattyn", "an enchiridion milite christe", "destructorium vitiorum", "cathologus sanctorum", and "opus aureum sanctorum" are not unlike those found in the hands of nuns and laywomen.²³ Others, such as the Latin teaching texts "virgill", "Tullis officis", "Isoppes fabels", and works of scriptural exegesis such as "haimo super epistolas pauli", "a book super epistolas chanonitas", "thomus primus opus dionisii", "dionisyus super spalmos", and "dionisyus super iiii evangelia" would, if they belonged to the nuns, argue for a much higher level of learning at Barking than has previously been estimated. But it is most unlikely that works on preaching such as "gemma predicantium" and "ij bookes of sermondess", and especially works on law such as "vocabulus vtriusque iuris" and "ij bookes/ one of the decres of the lawe thother of the distinctions of the lawe" were for the use of the nuns, as both preaching and law were exclusively male preserves. This last group of books - and even the entire contents of the list - may have belonged to or been for the use of the chaplains of the abbey or canon lawyers employed by the abbess. Equally, some of the books may be from the nuns' collection. There is no way of knowing, and unless something else comes to light about the library at Barking Abbey, the books "yn the abbey of Barkynge" listed in the inventory of William Pownsett are likely to remain problematic.

While evidence such as the production of religious works for and by the nuns of Barking, and the surviving books from the house has endowed Barking with the reputation of an intellectual community, its sparseness obscures possible fluctuations in the standards of learning. There are, moreover, indications, to suggest that Sibilla de Felton undertook a programme of educational and spiritual development, particularly in the use of vernacular religious literature.

The state of learning at Barking when Sibilla entered the community is

"Tarlaret".

²³See Appendices 2 and 3 below.

far from clear. There are no surviving visitation records from the fourteenth century (or from the fifteenth century, for that matter), so we know nothing of the opinions of the bishops of London. The Latinity and creativity of one of Sibilla's fourteenth-century predecessors as abbess, Katherine de Sutton (elected 1358, died 1377) is attested to by her writing of religious drama to be performed in the abbey church on Easter Sunday before Matins.²⁴ Of the surviving manuscripts from the abbey, at least two predate Sibilla's rule as abbess: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 155, a tenth- or eleventh-century copy of the four Gospels in Latin, which belonged to Barking by around 1100; and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Lat. 19, a thirteenth-century manuscript containing glossed copies of the Song of Songs and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, with a contemporary *ex libris* inscription.²⁵ Four other manuscripts - London, BL Cotton MS Otho A.v, Cardiff, Public Library MSS 1.381, ff. 81-146, and 3.833, and Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.29 - were written before Sibilla took office, but it is not clear when they came into the abbey's possession.²⁶

²⁴Bush, "The Community," pp. 39-46; Nancy Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton,"; Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1980).

²⁵Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 155, f. 196v contains an eleventh-century list of lands belonging to Gilebeard in Stifford, with witnesses, in Old English, and a twelfth-century copy of an attestation of a deed by which Adam som of Leomarus of "Cochefelda" gave a tithe from land at "Laleseie" to Barking. An early thirteenth-century inscription in Laud lat. 19, f. 1r reads "Hic est liber sacratissime dei genitricis marie et beate aethelburge virgine berkingensis ecclese quem qui abstulerit aut super eo fraudem fecerit anathematis mucrone feriat".

²⁶Doyle has suggested that London, BL Cotton MS Otho A.v, containing the abbey's Kalendar, was for the use of the chaplains; see his "Books Connected," p. 243. N. R. Ker believes that Cardiff, Public Library MS 3.833 probably belonged to Barking by the late thirteenth century, and that the first two texts in Cardiff, Public Library MS 1.381, ff. 81-146 (Goscelin's Life of St Ethelburga and the Lectons for St Hildelitha) were probably written at or for Barking, and that the the manuscript was probably annotated and foliated there c. 1500. See Ker, *MMLB* vol. 2, pp. 369-71 and 348-9. Ker rejects Barking's ownership of Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.29, a collection of Latin religious texts but does not say why; see Ker, *MLGB* p. 6. Further

Sibilla herself did much to foster intellectual life at Barking. In 1404, only eleven years after being elected abbess, she commissioned what is now Oxford, University College MS 169, containing the ordinal and customary of the abbey.²⁷ An ordinal is essentially the autocue to the liturgy, a book of directions for the proper carrying out of the liturgy on any specific day. It indicates by incipits, sometimes accompanied by Gregorian notation, the parts of the Proper and sometimes the Ordinary of the mass to be sung by the choir, and the antiphons, psalms, lessons, hymns, chapters, collects, and commemorations to be used at the Hours of the Divine Office. Directions relating to the Mass and the Office are interspersed with instructions on other liturgical practices, such as processions and various accretions to the Office found in medieval monasteries. All were taken from various service books, such as the missal, gradual, antiphonal, and processional, to which the Barking ordinal refers but which have been lost. The customary defines the ceremonial (i.e. the prescribed and formal actions carried out during the liturgy). The Barking customary is incorporated into the rubrics of the ordinal, and the ceremonial for certain occasions such as the election and installation of an abbess or the consecration of a virgin, is placed at the end of the volume.

An inscription on f. 6v states that the ordinal and customary were made for Sibilla's personal use, and for the use of those who succeeded her as abbess. During vacancies the book was to be kept in the library, until the new abbess was elected.²⁸ The abbess, as head of the house, was responsible for

mention of books belonging to the abbey is found in the Patent Rolls, which record an attack in 1363 on three nuns and their (male) servant, and the theft of their habits, books, and other goods; *CPR 1361-1364*, p. 386.

²⁷This has been edited by J. B. L. Tolhurst; see note 1 above. Sturman provides a short but informative discussion of the ordinal and customary, while pointing out that a full examination would require the skills of a liturgist, which both she and I lack. See Sturman, "Barking Abbey," pp. 308-17. Such an examination, however, would tell us an enormous amount about the liturgical life at Barking.

²⁸Oxford, University College, MS 169, f. 6v: "Memorandum *quod* anno domini millessimo quadringentesimo quarto domina Sibilla *per*missione diuina abbatissa de Berkyng hunc librum ad usum abbatissarum in dicta domo in

the house. By commissioning the ordinal and customary, Sibilla ensured correct liturgical practice at Barking - that the nuns during her rule as abbess, and all future nuns, under the care of her successors, carried out their primary responsibility, the worship of God in the Divine Office and in the Mass, according to the prescribed form.

The Barking customary contains additional material that is outside what is usual in such a book, concerning more domestic affairs of the abbey. These passages are interwoven with the liturgical portions, and give some indication of some of Sibilla's interests and concerns. The instructions outlining the observances for the first Monday in Lent contain directions for an annual book distribution to take place immediately after Terce:

After Terce, while mass is being sung in the chapter, the librarian shall lay out a carpet in the middle of the chapter house, placing on it all of the books from the cupboard. When mass has finished, everyone shall bring into the chapter the book that was assigned to her the previous year. . . . after the Rule has been read, let the librarian get up and sitting in the middle of the chapter, read the names in the table, and announce which book everyone had the previous year. She should read the names slowly, pausing between each name. When one of them hears her name, let her get up immediately and place the book on the carpet, and if she has read it through let her bow towards the cross. All those who have read their books through should likewise bow towards the cross and sit down again. Let all those who have not read their books thoroughly prostrate themselves before the abbess and ask forgiveness, saying *Mea culpa*. Let them then arise and receive penance from her, and return to their place.²⁹

After the books have been returned, all of the obedientiaries except the prioress resign their office, to be reappointed by the abbess if they have done their job well. These directions are followed by ordinances taken from the decrees of the general chapter of the Benedictines at Northampton in 1225.

futurum existencium concessit & in librario eiusdem loci post mortem cuiuscumque *in* perpetuum commemoraturum ordina[vit] (faded) donec electio inter moniales fiat tunc predictus liber eidem electe in abbatissam *per superiores domus post stallacionem* deliberetur".

²⁹Tolhurst, *Ordinale and Customary*, vol. 1, pp. 67-8 (my translation).

The Latin ordinances are followed by a French translation specially adapted for nuns, which was probably read out, outlining the duties of the obedientiaries, and the proper care of books. Books, declare the ordinances, are not to be left open in the choir or cloister; nothing is to be written in them, nor are any folios to be cut. They are to be kept clean and in good condition so that they remain for future years.³⁰ The customary then returns to the process of book distribution. The newly-appointed (or reappointed) librarian then re-assigns a book to each nun, beginning with the abbess and prioress, and continuing through the hierarchy of the community, taking care that the smaller books were given to the obedientiaries, and the larger ones to the nuns who were less occupied.³¹

The directions for the annual distribution of books that Sibilla has included and elaborated in her ordinal and customary are based on Chapter 48 of the Benedictine Rule, which says, "In these days of Lent let them [the monks] each receive a book³² from the library, which they shall read through consecutively; let the books be given out at the beginning of Lent."³³ Sibilla greatly expanded the instructions given in the Rule. While the Barking customary is by no means unique in its inclusion of directions for an annual book distribution, it is unusual in the degree of elaboration.³⁴ However, as far as I know, it is unique in its inclusion of ordinances taken from decrees of

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 70.

³²Benedict may have meant a book from the Bible. See A. Mundó, "Bibliotheca: Bible et Lecture de Carême d'après Saint Benoit," *Révue Benedictine* 60 (1950).

³³*The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans. Abbot Justin McCann (London, 1952), pp. 111-3.

³⁴Francis Wormald, "The Monastic Library," in *Gatherings in Honor of Dorothy E. Miner*, ed. Ursula E. McCracken, Lilian M. C. Randall, and Richard H. Randall, jr. (Baltimore, 1974), p. 100. (Reprinted from Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright, eds., *The English Library Before 1700* (London, 1958)). The Barking Ordinal and Customary are the only such books to survive from a medieval nunnery.

the 1225 general chapter of the Benedictines. The fact that greatly expanded directions for an essentially domestic matter, along with instructions for the care of books, are included in a book that codifies liturgical practice indicates the importance of books and reading to Sibilla. Reading was not simply another part of the daily activity for religious, prescribed by St Benedict, and her emphasis on spiritual and intellectual advancement may well represent an attempt to revitalize Barking.³⁵ The directions regarding an annual book distribution tell us not only that Barking possessed a library, but that it was, at least during Sibilla's rule as abbess, a library of some considerable size. It was large enough to provide a book for each nun. Elsewhere the ordinal speaks of "sinquante Dames", which thus suggests that the number of books would be at least 50.³⁶ It was important enough in the eyes of the abbess to warrant the office of a librarian, rather than a sacristan, the obedientiary responsible for the the care of the ornaments of the church, including books.³⁷ On the Wednesday of Holy Week, when the annual washing of the church took place, the librarian had to collect any books left in the choir and put them away in the cupboard. This cupboard stood near the chapel of St Mary Magdalen in the abbey church.³⁸ Moreover, the directions tell us that a written record was kept of the books issued to nuns, suggesting a high level of internal administration in the abbey.

One book per year, however, seems woefully inadequate to the modern mind, especially as the Benedictine Rule prescribes at least two hours per day

³⁵Eileen Power argues that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed declining intellectual and moral standards in nunneries. See her *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 237-55, and my reservations about her conclusions on pp. 147-8.

³⁶Tolhurst, *Ordinale and Customary*, p. 360.

³⁷At Syon Abbey, which seems to have had the largest nunnery library, books were the responsibility of the sacristan; see Mary Carpenter Erler, "Syon Abbey's Care for Books: Its Sacristan's Account Rolls 1506/7-1535/6," *Scriptorium* 39 (1985).

³⁸Tolhurst, *Ordinale and Customary*, p. 90

of private reading, although many manuscripts may have contained more than one text. Nevertheless, it argues for radically different ways of reading from those used by most of us today. It suggests a slow, reflective reading, where one considers and savours individual words, phrases and sentences, as well as following the text, leading to meditation and prayer. This is exactly the sort of reading described in the treatises of spiritual guidance addressed to women religious.³⁹ *The Manner of Good Living*, for example, instructs the reader to "rede ouer this boke and rede it thorough a gayne and agayne".⁴⁰ Walter Hilton tells the anchoress to whom his *Scale of Perfection* is addressed to "take it [i.e. the book] as it will come, and not all at once."⁴¹

Sibilla's contribution to intellectual and devotional life at Barking went further than commissioning the abbey's ordinal and customary. In the 26 years during which she was abbess she acquired at least three manuscripts containing vernacular devotional treatises: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 923, a copy of *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*; Beeleigh Abbey, Miss Christina Foyle, containing Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fonds français 1038, a collection of six French devotional treatises, mostly hagiographic, including *La Vie des Saintz Pères*, *Les Voyages que saint Antoine fist en outre mer*, *L'estoire de Balaam et de Josaphat*, *L'avenement Antecrist*, *Si comme Nostre Sires uendra iugier le monde*, and *L'assumptiom Nostre Dame*, which, according to a note on f. 4r, Sibilla purchased from the executors of Philippa de Coucy (d. 1411), widow of Robert de Vere, ninth earl of Oxford, and Duke of Ireland.⁴² Sibilla was in a

³⁹See Chapter 2 above.

⁴⁰Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517, ff. 1v-2r.

⁴¹Scale 1:92; Clark and Dorward, p. 160.

⁴²The manuscript also contains a recipe in English, "ffor to makin aqua vite" on the end flyleaf in a later hand from the French contents; see Bibliothèque Impériale, Département des Manuscrits, *Calalogue des Manuscripts Français*, vol. 1: Ancien Fonds (Paris, 1868), p. 177. The de Vere family, earls of Oxford, were long-standing patrons of Barking; see

position to commission and purchase her own books. As abbess she would have been able to direct the use of the abbey's resources to no small degree. In addition, she seems to have had her own source of revenue, sharing the income from the manor of Aslakby, Linconshire, with her mother until her mother's death, and afterwards as the sole recipient.⁴³

Through Sibilla de Felton's association with four manuscripts, we know more about her reading than we do about any other nun's.⁴⁴ The manuscripts suggest that she was a well-educated woman, literate in English, French, and Latin. Together, their contents form a well-rounded and fairly sophisticated programme of devotional reading. It is striking that all of the Middle English texts are associated with women. *The Cleansing of Man's Soul* is addressed to "bretheren & sustren"; *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, a translation of the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, addressed to a nun, was written ostensibly for "lewde men & women & hem þat bene of symple vndirstondyng", although Michael Sargent points out that Love may include his Carthusian confrères among his audience;⁴⁵ the third English version of *De Remediis Contra Temptationes* is addressed to a "sustir", and a collection of extracts from *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*, in English, was also addressed to a "sister".⁴⁶

Doyle, "Books Connected."

⁴³Thomas de Felton, Sibilla's father, enfeoffed the manor to John Leche, clerk, Hugh Fastolf, and William de Rudham, their heirs and assigns, who granted it to Thomas, Joan, and Sibilla, for life, with remainder to William de Morle, knight, and his heirs. See *CIPM* xv, 1-7 Richard II (London, 1970), p. 140; *CPR 1374-1377*, p. 110; *Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids . . . 1284-1431*, vol. 6 (London, 1920), p. 480.

⁴⁴Loftus and Chettle say that Sibilla's name is also found at the end of Bodley 155, the abbey's copy of the four Gospels, but I have not found her name there; Loftus and Chettle, *History of Barking Abbey*, p. 46.

⁴⁵Michael Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (New York, 1992), pp. xxxii, xli-xliv.

⁴⁶See M. B. Hackett, "William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn*, ed. J. A.

In the light of Sibilla's additions to the customary, dealing with the annual distribution of books, her acquisition of these three manuscripts looks very much like part of a programme to improve Barking Abbey's standards of learning and spirituality. This raises the question of the very nature of nunnery libraries. All of Sibilla's books were her own books; it is her name rather than the abbey's that is recorded in them. In fact, most of what we know about nunnery libraries, including that of Barking, is from manuscripts that apparently belonged to individual nuns. Of the eleven books known to survive from Barking, seven contain ownership inscriptions.⁴⁷ Only one of these is an *ex libris* from the abbey itself.⁴⁸ The other five manuscripts are known to have belonged to the abbey through liturgical evidence, donor inscriptions, and contents. Another eight manuscripts may have belonged to the abbey.⁴⁹

How far was the private ownership of books in nunneries actually private? While the Benedictine Rule condemned private property within the monastery, it did allow religious to give and receive articles with the superior's permission. But I suspect that nuns did share their books with their sisters. There is little point in writing your name in your book if no-one else will see it. As I have already discussed, there is evidence to suggest that the *familiae*, or households, into which nunnery populations tended to divide in the later Middle Ages shared books, and it is likely that book-lending extended beyond the boundaries of these households.⁵⁰ David Knowles points out that it was common for individual religious to give their books to their monastery on the

Watt, J. B. Morrall, and F. X. Martin (Dublin, 1961), p. 348.

⁴⁷Beeleigh Abbey, Miss C. Foyle; London, BL Add. 10596; London, Lambeth Palace 1495.4; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 923; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Lat. 19; Oxford, University College 169; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1038.

⁴⁸Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Lat. 19.

⁴⁹The manuscripts surviving from Barking Abbey are listed in Appendix 5.

⁵⁰See Chapter 1 above.

deaths, and it indeed seems that books owned by individual nuns frequently remained in the nunnery after the death of their owners.⁵¹ An inscription in the ordinal and customary, discussed above, reveals that the book was to remain in the abbey for the use of each successive abbess. Another of Sibilla's books, now in the possession of Miss Christina Foyle, stayed at Barking until the Dissolution, after which it was given by Margaret Scrope, one of the former nuns, to a Mistress Agnes Goldwell. However, the manuscript that Sibilla bought from the executors of Philippa de Coucy, now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1038, did not stay within the abbey, but went to Charles d'Orleans, so obviously not all books owned by individual nuns became part of the nunnery library after their deaths.⁵²

There is some slight evidence from the medieval binding of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Lat. 19, the only book surviving from Barking with the abbey's *ex libris*, to suggest that the corporate library may have increased some time after the thirteenth century. Neil Ker has pointed out that the spine of the manuscript contains the title "cantica canticorum glos", in a thirteenth-century hand, along with a later pressmark, "b:3:". ⁵³ This suggests, albeit tentatively, that at some later date the numbers of books at Barking increased

⁵¹For example, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 268; Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Bb.2.14; Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.15; Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunterian 136; Göttingen, University Library, *Chastising of God's Children*, 1493; London, BL MS Addit. 10596; London, BL MS Arundel 396; London, BL MS Harley 2254; untraced MS sold at Sotheby's 12 December, 1932, lot 387 (Meade Falkner sale). See Appendix 1.

⁵²Doyle, "Books Connected," p. 241. It is likely that Charles acquired the manuscript when he was in the care of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, and his wife Alice Chaucer. William's kinswoman, Katherine, was abbess of Barking from 1433 until 1473.

⁵³Ker, "More Manuscripts," p. 301, and plate IIa. Pressmarks are rare in nunnery books. Two of the surviving manuscripts from Campsey Ash Priory (Suffolk) bear pressmarks: Cambridge, University Library MS Addit. 7220 [OE.94] and London, BL MS Addit. 40675 [DD.141]

so that pressmarks were necessary.⁵⁴ Although this evidence cannot be linked with Sibilla de Felton rule as abbess, it does not rule out the likelihood that she undertook a programme of literary and spiritual revival.

I would like to focus on two of the manuscripts owned by Sibilla de Felton: the Foyle MS and Bodley 923. Bodley 923 is small, pocket-sized book, neatly written in a single hand on 152 parchment folios, and in medieval binding. Like most of the manuscripts examined for this thesis, it contains no illumination, but is nonetheless carefully presented, with chapter headings in red, red and blue paraphs, blue capitals with red decoration, and some initials in gold leaf with blue and purple decoration. The border decoration in blue and purple on f. 4r is not unlike that found in the abbey's ordinal and customary, Oxford, University College 169, and both manuscripts may be products of the same workshop. All Latin passages are underlined in red, followed by an English translation. A. I. Doyle considers it "a commercial product of the best metropolitan type".⁵⁵ I have not seen the Foyle manuscript, and so I have had to rely on published material.⁵⁶ It is larger than Bodley 923, measuring 242 X 165 mm, written in black and red on 178 parchment leaves. Doyle points out that several anglicana hands are found in the copy of *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, "in a succession of manners more that of a communal rather than a commercial product", but I do not know about the hand(s) of the copy of Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*.⁵⁷ However, unlike Bodley 923, the Foyle manuscript contains

⁵⁴Pressmarks may have been a good way of keeping track of books out on loan to nuns.

⁵⁵A. I. Doyle, "Reflections of Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*", *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 14 (1983), p. 86.

⁵⁶My discussion of the Foyle manuscript is based on *The Essex Review* no. 233, vol. 59 (January, 1950); Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. lxxviii-lxxvix; Doyle, "Reflections," p. 86.

⁵⁷Doyle, "Reflections," p. 86. Sargent describes the hand as early-fifteenth-century bastard Anglicana; he does not mention the presence of more than one hand.

some illumination, which Doyle says is of the same style as that from London, *ca.* 1400-10.

It is likely, on the basis of dating and dialect, that both manuscripts were made for Sibilla herself, probably at her own instance. Both date from the early fifteenth century: Bodley 923 has the date 1401 written above her ownership inscription on f. 153v, albeit in a different hand from that of the inscription, and the Foyle manuscript must date from between Love's completion of his treatise and Sibilla's death in 1419. That Love completed his translation in the first decade of the fifteenth century is known from the Latin *Memorandum* accompanying the text in many of the copies, which states that the text was submitted for approval to Archbishop Arundel around 1410. This note has been the subject of much discussion. A. I. Doyle has suggested that the treatise may have circulated before it was licensed by Arundel, which would explain why some of the earliest manuscripts, including Sibilla's, lack the *memorandum*. Thus Sibilla's manuscript may date from before *ca.* 1410.⁵⁸ The close dating of both manuscripts to Sibilla's rule as abbess make it likely that she was the original owner. Dialect evidence also points to Sibilla, living at Barking in south-west Essex.⁵⁹ The spelling of the main scribe of *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* in the Foyle manuscript has been identified by Professor Samuels as south-west Essex, although other, linguistically mixed, anglicana hands share in the copying.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, I know nothing about the dialect of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*, also in the Foyle manuscript. Charles L. Regan, in his edition of *The Cleansing of Man's Soul* from Bodley 923 in his Ph. D. dissertation,

⁵⁸Doyle, "Reflections," p. 86.

⁵⁹I am wary, however, of placing too much emphasis on dialect evidence: twentieth-century students can read a variety of Middle English dialects, often unaware of the diversity of dialects, and no doubt fourteenth- and fifteenth-century men and women could do so as well. Also it is likely that they used a number of dialects; Sibilla was from a Norfolk family, living in an Essex nunnery with connections to the court.

⁶⁰Doyle, "Reflections," p. 86. Sargent places the dialect in northern, non-coastal Essex; Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. lxxviii-lxxvix.

assigns the dialect to London, again, very close to Barking.⁶¹ Although we do not know who chose these texts, it is likely to have been Sibilla herself, for her commissioning of the abbey's ordinals and customary, and her purchase of a manuscript from Philippa de Coucy's executors suggest that she was a woman who chose her own reading matter.

It is evident from these two manuscripts that Sibilla was at the forefront of the audience for new English devotional literature.⁶² This should come as no surprise, for we have seen her concern for books and reading in her commissioning of the ordinal and customary in 1404. Her manuscripts are among the earliest surviving copies of the texts found within them. As discussed above, Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, his translation and adaptation of Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, was written in the first decade of the fifteenth-century, and submitted for approval to Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, around 1410, presumably to comply with anti-Wycliffite Lambeth Constitutions of 1409.⁶³ *The Mirror* became one of the most widely disseminated literary works of medieval England. Sibilla's copy, predating her death in 1419, and possibly predating the text's authorization by Arundel, is one of the earliest known surviving copies, and the earliest known copy in a southern dialect.⁶⁴

The other text found in the Foyle manuscript is an English translation of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*. According to M. B. Hackett, who was the first to identify Flete as the author, Flete wrote the Latin original before he left England for Italy on 17 July, 1359. The first English translation was most likely made at the end of the fourteenth century or at the

⁶¹Charles L. Regan, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul: Edited from MS Bodl. 923 with Introduction, Notes and Glossary", (Ph. D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1963), p. liv. Regan suggests that the manuscript may have been transcribed at Barking.

⁶²A. I. Doyle makes the same conclusion. See Doyle, "Books Connected," p. 240.

⁶³See Chapter 3, n. 85.

⁶⁴See Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. lxxviii-lxxvix.

beginning of the fifteenth century, for the earliest surviving English copies, including Sibilla's, date from the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁶⁵ There are three English versions of the *De Remediis*; the copy in the Foyle manuscript is probably the first and earliest version (what Hackett calls M.E.I).⁶⁶ Likewise, *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, in Bodley 923, is believed to have been composed at the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century for an East Midlands nunnery, possibly Barking itself.⁶⁷

Sibilla's books demonstrate not only that she had her finger on the pulse of new English devotional literature, but that she was aware of events in political and ecclesiastical circles that were to have profound and far-reaching effects. At the turn of the fifteenth century, official worries about the threat posed by Lollardy were strong.⁶⁸ The statute *de Heretico Comburendo* of 1401 forbade unlicensed preaching, the holding of conventicles, and the dissemination of unlicensed books, and commanded that obdurate heretics who refused to abjure in the church courts should be handed over to the secular arm and burnt. In 1407, as part of a campaign against Lollardy, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, called a convocation at Oxford that was to lead to the promulgation of the anti-Wycliffite Lambeth Constitutions of 1409. The first two of these constitutions stipulated the terms for the licensing of preachers in the vernacular and in Latin, and the examination of their orthodoxy; the third demanded that preachers keep their comments appropriate

⁶⁵Hackett, "William Flete," pp. 340, 346-7.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁶⁷Raymo, p. 2299.

⁶⁸I follow Anne Hudson's use of the terms "Lollard" and "Wycliffite" as synonyms. See Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 2-4. The following discussion of Lollardy is based primarily on the work of Anne Hudson; see her *Premature Reformation* and "Lollardy: The English Heresy?," in her *Lollards and their Books* (London and Ronceverte, 1985). (First published in *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982).)

to their audience (for example, clerical vices were not to be criticised before the laity); the fourth forbade preachers to discuss the sacraments beyond the simple presentation of church doctrine, and the fifth forbade anyone teaching others to treat theological material. The sixth specified that no writings of Wycliffe nor any written since his time be read in the schools or elsewhere before having been examined for orthodoxy; the seventh forbade the translation of any part of the Bible into any vernacular, as well as the reading of any such translation before it was approved by the local diocesan or provincial council; the eighth and ninth regulated university debate on theological and ecclesiastical questions; the tenth specified that chaplains were to be licensed before celebrating mass in the province of Canterbury; the eleventh required the monthly examination of the theological views of all students in the Oxford halls; the twelfth and thirteenth dealt with the infringement of the Constitutions. The sixth and seventh constitutions have been the focus of Anne Hudson's inquiry into the anxiety about the use of the vernacular. She points out that not only Biblical translation, but all theological literature of the type that formerly would have been written in Latin was to be examined and licensed and concludes that "by 1407, when the terms of Arundel's Constitutions were drafted the authorities had perceived the danger of English."⁶⁹ There was thus some considerable anxiety in the first decade of the fifteenth century about vernacular religious writings, an anxiety that strikes a discordant note with the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281, which highlight the need for instruction in the vernacular.

The three texts in the Foyle MS and Bodley 923 are striking in their emphasis on doctrinal issues that were strongly denied by Lollards. The anti-Wycliffite stance of Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* has been well documented, most recently by Michael Sargent, in the introduction to his critical edition of the text, and so needs little comment here.⁷⁰ Love

⁶⁹Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?," p. 146.

⁷⁰Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. xliv-lviii. See also Elizabeth Salter, *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,"* *Analecta Cartusiana* 10 (Salzburg, 1974); and Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 437-40.

evidently intended his work for the education of the faithful and the confutation of Lollards. Sargent points out that Love, in adapting his Latin source, added a

good deal of material commenting directly on Wycliffite positions. These additions group themselves around three primary themes: obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the related question of church offerings; auricular confession; and the sacrament of the Eucharist.⁷¹

In some passages Love specifically refers to the Lollards, condemning their beliefs. *The Mirror* is not simply a translation of Pseudo-bonaventure's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, but a conscious anti-Lollard polemic.

The necessity and efficacy of auricular confession, one of the key theological issues most strongly denied by the Lollards, is a dominant theme also in Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*.⁷² "And if it so be þat 3e haue consentid and fallen in ony temptacion," counsels Flete, "beth sory and crieth god mercy perof . . . and meke you louly to þe sacramentis of holy cherche."⁷³ The forgiveness of sins, he states, necessitates contrition, the acknowledgement of one's sins to God, and confession to a priest:

For þou3 oo man hade do all the synnes þat euer were don and euer shullen bee do, þou3t and seyde in to þe day of jugement, and he were wery contrite and asked god for3evenesse, and mekely lowned hym to þe sacramentis of holy cherche, he shuld haue mercy and for3euenesse of allhis synnes.⁷⁴

Flete cannot have intended the *De Remedis* as an anti-Lollard text, given that he most probably wrote it before 1359, well before the controversy over Wycliffe's writings, and until a critical edition of his Latin original is available, it is difficult to know if the emphasis on auricular confession is the

⁷¹Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, p. xlvi.

⁷²All quotations from Flete are taken from Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick, eds., "'Remedies Against Temptations': The Third English Version of William Flete," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 5 (1968). This is not the same version as that which appears in the Foyle manuscript.

⁷³Colledge and Chadwick, eds., "Remedies Against Temptation," p. 223.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 225.

work of a translator. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the *De Remediis* in the Foyle MS, alongside Love's *Mirror*, throws the affirmation of the sacrament into relief.

The third text in Sibilla's two manuscripts under discussion, *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, is a long treatise focussing entirely on the sacrament of penance. It is divided into three sections, which define, explain, and defend the three actions necessary for penance: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The treatise, and especially the second section, is thus a valuable tool in the refutation of the Lollard denial of the necessity for oral confession to a priest. This second section also contains a great deal of didactic material, which covers much of the curriculum outlined in the Lambeth Constitutions of 1282 for the instruction of all Christians: including expositions of the Twelve Articles of the Faith, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Ten Commandments, the five Wits, the Seven Works of Mercy, and two forms of confession adapted for religious.⁷⁵ In the light of official anxiety about Lollardy - and the treatise dates from the same era - *The Cleansing of Man's Soul* becomes an exposition of orthodoxy.

All three texts stress the value of the authorized prayers of the church as opposed to private, individual prayer. In the light of anxiety about orthodoxy, authorized prayer takes on greater value, as it helps guard the individual from error. In his chapter on the Sermon on the Mount, Love provides a lengthy discussion of the Pater Noster that is not found in the Latin original. He does not expound the prayer, referring the reader to "many oper tretees & bokes bope in latyne & in english" that do so. Rather, he defends particularly the claims of the authorized prayers of the church as opposed to personally-composed prayers. One could not do better, asserts Love, than to pray that God's will be done.⁷⁶ However, Anne Hudson points out that Lollards also held the Pater Noster in high esteem, in accordance with their insistence on the primacy of the Bible; thus we should see Love's discussion of

⁷⁵See the discussion of *The Cleansing of Man's Soul* in Chapter 4 above.

⁷⁶See Sargent, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. xliii-xliv.

the prayer more as confirmation of orthodoxy.⁷⁷ Similarly, William Flete highlights the value of the Creed: to overcome temptation, he says, "sey sometyme among, in pe worchepe of god and in dispite of pe fend, 3oure crede, and knowlyche 3oure beleue and 3oure hope be mouthe, and penk on pe wordes of Seynt Poule, pat seyth: Knowleche of mouth is don to helthe of soule."⁷⁸ And the author of *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, in the section on satisfaction, enjoins devotion to the liturgy, and warns against neglect of the liturgy for private prayer.

Sibilla's ownership of these three treatises, which if not all overtly anti-Lollard could at least be read as such, was surely informed by contemporary anxieties about Lollardy and orthodoxy. Her third vernacular manuscript, which she purchased from the executors of Philippa de Coucy, now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1038, further illustrates her orthodoxy. The manuscript is primarily a collection of saints lives and legends. Wyclif more or less rejected post-biblical saints, and although opinion varied among the Lollards, many were iconoclasts.⁷⁹ However Sibilla might have used the texts, they would help to ensure that Barking was free of error and heresy. As abbess of Barking she was responsible for her house and its inmates; her collection of manuscripts indicate that she took care to put her house in order. Her commissioning of the ordinal and customary of the abbey demonstrates her concern for correct liturgical practice at Barking - that her nuns, and all future nuns, carried out their primary responsibility, the worship of God in the Divine Office and in the Mass, according to the prescribed form. Her additions to the customary dealing with the annual distribution of books suggests that she placed a high value on intellectual standards, and was keen to see her community achieve a high level of learning. Her acquisition of three manuscripts containing vernacular religious treatises, together with the additions to the customary, suggest that she undertook a programme of

⁷⁷Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 196, 310-11.

⁷⁸Colledge and Chadwick, "Remedies Against Temptation," p. 223.

⁷⁹See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, esp. pp. 302-4.

educational and spiritual renewal in the nunnery. And finally, her ownership of texts that refute Lollard positions and re-affirm orthodoxy, at a time when Lollardy threatened stability (as can be seen in Oldcastle's ill-fated revolt in 1414) shows her awareness of the dangers of heterodoxy and her commitment to established doctrinal positions.

On whose initiative was Sibilla acting? At the remove of nearly six hundred years, it is difficult to tell. While I have suggested that Sibilla was a dynamic abbess who cared for her house and who was in touch with events in political and ecclesiastical circles, it is likely that both secular and ecclesiastical authorities had an interest in ensuring the orthodoxy of nuns' spirituality. In 1401, parliament passed the statute *De Heretico Comburendo*, and although it is possible to see this legislation as "a concession to a loyal supporter in the immediate aftermath of Henry's seizure of the throne when that throne was far from secure and any significant ally was worth retaining", it nonetheless signified Henry IV's anti-Lollard stance.⁸⁰ As the head of a royal house, Sibilla may have been acting in accordance with the king's wishes.

As no visitation records survive for Barking in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we must rely on the surviving books to offer us a glimpse into the spirituality of the house. However, it was during Sibilla de Felton's rule as abbess that Henry V founded the Bridgittine Abbey of Syon. The house was known for its strictness, and Ann Hutchison has drawn attention to the emphasis placed on books and reading.⁸¹ The fact that one of Sibilla's nuns, Matilda Newton, was chosen to be the new community's first abbess is

⁸⁰Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 118.

⁸¹Ann Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989); "The Myroure of oure Ladye: A Medieval Guide for Contemplatives," in *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, vol. 2, *Analecta Cartusiana, Spiritualität Heute und Gerstern* 35:19 (Salzburg, 1993).

surely testimony of Barking's high moral and intellectual standards.⁸² In the fifteenth century, a manuscript containing extracts of the later Wycliffite Bible - London, BL MS Add. 10596 - was owned by a nun named Matilda Hayle, and later by another nun named Mary Hastings, who also appears among the nuns who elected Elizabeth Greene as abbess in 1499.⁸³ Under the 1409 Lambeth Constitutions, the nuns would have been required to have permission from the bishop of London in order to possess such a book. That they evidently did so may indicate, on one hand, possibly declining Latin standards, but on the other hand, the impeccable orthodoxy and trustworthiness not only of the two nuns, but also of Barking Abbey.

When Sibilla de Felton is compared with Anne Harling, the subject of Chapter 4, a remarkable number of similarities emerge.⁸⁴ The most obvious of these is social background. Both women came from Norfolk gentry families with substantial land holdings that extended beyond that county. Anne's first husband was a Knight of the Garter, as was Sibilla's father. Both women experienced marriage and widowhood. Anne's marriages were childless, but we do not know whether Sibilla had children. Both were pious, book-owning women, possessing the same text - *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*, although I have so far discussed their ownership of it in different contexts: Anne's as part of the penitential nature of her piety, her concern for the health of her

⁸²Matilda Newton was professed at Barking in 1397; see London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3, f. 388r. Matilda was never confirmed as abbess of Syon, and she returned to Barking as a recluse in 1417. Margaret Deanesly surmises that Matilda was removed from her office because "she was not possessed of sufficient tact to guide the heterogeneous community"; Margaret Deanesly, ed., *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole* (Manchester, 1915), p. 115.

⁸³See London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/7, f. 17r.

⁸⁴I should point out that these similarities became apparent only after I had completed the research; they were not the reasons for which the two women were chosen as subjects. Anne and Sibilla were chosen first because they were book-owning women, one lay and one religious, and second because information about their lives was relatively accessible.

soul after death, and Sibilla's as part of an orthodox, anti-Lollard agenda.

Another similarity is a concern with family and status. In chapter 4 I discussed Anne Harling's preoccupation with dynasty, her concern for her natal family and her three families by marriage, the Chamberlains, the Wingfields, and the Scropes of Bolton, through her patronage of institutions connected with her natal family, her testamentary bequests of cloths and liturgical items displaying her own arms and those of her parents and husbands, as well as monetary bequests to pay for the installation of stained glass windows bearing her own and her husbands' arms. I have placed Anne's dynastic concern in the context of aristocratic notions of lineage, and viewed it as part of a larger concern with status - both social and spiritual.

It has been argued that medieval nuns renounced their secular identity and status upon profession. In principle, when a woman became a nun she gave up personal possessions, sexuality, and individuality, and adopted the same dress and round of daily activities as every other member of her house and order. She exchanged family relationships for the hierarchy of the nunnery, and became a member of a monastic community rather than a member of a particular family. The other nuns were indeed her sisters.⁸⁵ So far as lineage was concerned, a nun was effectively dead: although land could pass to her legitimate children, if she had been married before becoming a nun, it could never pass to the nun herself.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Sibilla de Felton clearly *did not leave behind her secular* identity when she entered Barking Abbey. It appears that she continued to use her personal arms, for at the foot of f. 6v of Oxford, University College 169, the ordinal and customary, are traces of two coats of arms, transferred from the leaf that was once opposite but is now missing. According to J. B. L.

⁸⁵Roberta Gilchrist touches upon these issues while discussing gender identity in medieval nunneries; see Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 18-21.

⁸⁶Although nuns could evidently receive income from land; see p. 239 above and n. 42.

Tolhurst, the coat of arms in the bottom left hand corner is an impaled one, apparently Felton (Gules, two lions passant ermine, crowned or) with possibly Morley (Argent, a lion rampant sable, crowned or). If these identifications are correct, the arms would be Sibilla's own, as a married woman. In the opposite corner is the impression of another coat that contains the Felton arms in one quarter.⁸⁷ Sibilla may have identified more with her natal family, for she seems to have used her maiden, rather than her married, name inside the nunnery. Her name is recorded in three of her four manuscripts as "Sibilla de Felton" (in the fourth she is simply identified as "Sibilla", and in the records of her election as abbess and in all documents involving Sibilla in her role as abbess she is referred to as Sibilla de Felton. She is called by her married name only in licenses, indentures and inquisitions involving lands held by members of her natal family, which were drawn up at the instance of her family.⁸⁸ It is clear that Sibilla was also concerned with her status as abbess; she records not just her name in her books, but her position as abbess. "Iste liber constat domine Sibille de ffelton abbatisse de Berkyng", reads the inscription on f. 4v of the Foyle manuscript, and the same wording is found on f. 153v of Bodley 923. The ordinal and customary were made at the instance of "domina Sibilla *per*missione diuina abbatissa de Berkyng", and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français was bought by "dame Sibille de ffelton abesse de Berkyng". If, as I have suggested for Anne Harling, Sibilla had her name written in her books to remind potential borrowers from whom they had borrowed the book, recording her position as abbess along with her name would no doubt ensure that the books were returned promptly! Life within the nunnery was as hierarchical as life outside it, and as the abbess of Barking, Sibilla was a particularly powerful woman.

Her position as abbess did not prevent Sibilla from being concerned with the fate of her soul after death, another similarity that she shares with

⁸⁷Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, pp. v-vi.

⁸⁸See, for example, *CPR 1391-6*, p. 699; *CCR 1381-5*, pp. 563-4, 596; *CIPM xv 1-7 Richard II*, pp. 139-41.

Anne Harling. We have already seen that Anne was careful in her will to ensure that masses, diriges, and prayers would be said for her soul, as well as for the souls of her parents, husbands, and other family members. Her final testamentary request was that her executors:

desire all suche personys as I have in this my testment geven
eny thinge, that they of their charite pray to Almighty God for
my sowle and for myn auncestres sowles.

The penitential nature of many of the texts in Anne's manuscript, Harley 4012, suggests that this concern was not simply a death-bed one, but one that occupied her throughout her life.

Although Sibilla left no will, her inscription in the front of the ordinal and customary is not unlike a testamentary bequest: the book was to be handed down to each successive abbess in her turn. The book was thus intended to become a sort of family heirloom, and the family was, of course, the community of nuns at Barking. Just as testamentary bequests of books and other items carried with them the unspoken expectation that the recipient would pray for the soul of the donor, so too must this "bequest" have carried the same expectation.⁸⁹ In addition to her gift of the ordinal and customary, Sibilla also gave two pittances to the abbey, one to be distributed on Trinity Sunday, and the other in Lent. Sibilla's pittances are among the three recorded in the Account Roll of the Office of Pensions, 1536-7. The third pittance was given by a dame Margaret Saxham, whose anniversary was also kept at the abbey, but whose name does not appear on any of the few surviving

⁸⁹Other nuns were more explicit. Dame Elizabeth Horwode, abbess of the London Minories, purchased what is now London, BL MS Harley 2397, containing Book 2 of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, his *Mixed Life*, and the commentary on *Bonum Est* attributed to Hilton, for the use of the nuns; on f. 94v is an inscription asking the nuns to pray for the souls of Elizabeth, her parents, and Master Robert Alderton. What is now Glasgow, University Library MS Hunterian 136, containing *Musica Ecclesiastica* (the first three books of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*), was made for Elizabeth Gibbs, abbess of Syon, in 1502. Notes at the bottom of the first two flyleaves request the sisters and brothers of Syon to pray for Elizabeth.

lists of nuns.⁹⁰ However, there is no such thing as a free lunch; the nuns who received food, wine, and money each year would have been expected to pray for Sibilla's soul in return.

Sibilla's concern for the health of her soul after her death can also be seen in her probable foundation of a chantry in the abbey church at Barking. The *Liber Regis* and the chantry certificates of Henry VIII and Edward VI both mention a chantry in the abbey church founded by Sibilla.⁹¹ The chantry had two priests and an annual income of £14.13s.4d.,⁹² although by the Dissolution there was only one priest, who received £7.6s. There is some confusion about this chantry. R. Newcourt, writing in the early eighteenth century, discusses what may be the same chantry, saying that in 1395 a perpetual chantry was founded at the tomb of St Ethelburga within the abbey church for the good estate of Sibilla de Felton, a nun named Margaret Sayham, Sir John de Felton, John Hermesthorp, every abbess, and all of the nuns, for the souls of Sibilla and the others when dead, for the souls of Sir Thomas de Felton, John and Agnes Say, and of all the faithful deceased. Newcourt surmises that the chantry was founded either by Sibilla herself or by a member of her family as she was the only person to present to it during her lifetime, and after her death "the Abbess alone, for the most part, did the like."⁹³ Newcourt, unfortunately, does not give his source for this information, and I have been unable to find it. That there was a chantry dedicated to St Ethelburga, served by two priests, is clear from both the *Liber Regis* of Henry VIII and from the registers of the bishops of London. and the bishops' registers

⁹⁰PRO, S.C. 6 HVIII/928. This is printed in Sturman, "Barking Abbey", where Sibilla's pittances are on p. 522.

⁹¹PRO, E 301/20 no. 59; *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempus Henr. VIII*, vol 1 (London, 1810), p. 435.

⁹²PRO E 301/20, no. 59 gives £ 14.13s. as the annual income.

⁹³R. Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*, vol. II (London, 1710), pp. 32-3.

show that the abbess presented to it.⁹⁴ But this chantry was not endowed by the de Felton family.⁹⁵ Winifred Sturman believes that the chantry founded by Sibilla is in fact that founded around 1398 by her elder sister, Mary de Felton, at the altar of the Resurrection in the abbey church.⁹⁶

Despite the general belief that members of religious orders were assured of salvation, and the fact that monastic communities prayed for their departed members, Sibilla was sufficiently concerned about the fate of her soul after her death to ensure that prayers would be said that would speed her soul through purgatory. As abbess of Barking, her obit was in the abbey Calendar, but she also made extra provision through her gift of the ordinal and customary, pittances, and probably a chantry as well. She was not the only abbess to make extra provision, as the list of anniversaries kept at Barking will testify, but she seems to have been the only one to go to such lengths.⁹⁷ Sibilla's worry about Purgatory may stem from the fact that she had had an earthly husband before becoming the bride of Christ. We have already seen that she may have been reluctant to shake off her secular identity. Moreover, her position as abbess of one of England's largest, wealthiest, and most powerful nunneries may have allowed greater opportunity for pride and non-observance of the Benedictine Rule. We have seen Sibilla's conscientious care for her abbey; here we see it for her soul.

Perhaps the most interesting similarity between Sibilla de Felton and Anne Harling is that both women may have used their religious literature not

⁹⁴*Valor Ecclesiasticus*, I, p. 435; London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3, ff. 222v-223r, where the chaplain of St Ethelburga's chantry was ordered to instruct the new chaplain of a chantry founded by Sibilla's sister, Mary de Felton, at the altar of the Resurrection.

⁹⁵Sturman, "Barking Abbey," pp. 157-8.

⁹⁶London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3, ff. 222v-223r; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," p. 158.

⁹⁷Anniversaries kept at Barking are recorded in the Account Roll of the Office of Pensions, 1536-7: London, PRO, S.C. 6 HVIII/928, and printed in the appendices to Sturman, "Barking Abbey".

only for spiritual instruction and guidance, but also for more political purposes. Anne, I have suggested, may have used her ownership of Harley 4012 as part of a programme to establish herself as a devout, and thus respectable and honourable woman, a reputation that would have been advantageous to her as a woman whose husband was absent - in exile with Edward IV and later in Edward's household - and as a woman who was probably at court, a place of rumoured moral laxity. Sibilla too, I would suggest, used the ownership of her manuscripts to establish herself and the abbey under her rule as devout, learned, and, most importantly, orthodox. The official anxiety about the use of the vernacular for spiritual writings no doubt included anxiety about women's use of such literature, as women were generally held to possess less reason and discretion than men, and thus were more likely to fall into error. Women, as I have demonstrated read almost exclusively in the vernacular. Sibilla, by undertaking a programme of intellectual and spiritual revival at Barking, and by establishing that she and her nuns were orthodox, was ensuring that vernacular reading at Barking Abbey was above suspicion.

CONCLUSION

The boundaries of the literary world of Anne Harling and Sibilla de Felton, and of all women in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were defined by men. It was men who controlled access to formal education, who wrote the religious literature that circulated in late medieval England, and, more importantly, who authorized texts and established the limits of orthodoxy. Although female authors of religious works were by no means absent, in general their writings do not appear to have achieved widespread circulation among women.¹

It is clear, however, that within these bounds, women exercised no small degree of choice. They could and did commission texts and manuscripts, they purchased second-hand books, and they appear to have formed networks that facilitated the lending and sharing of books, all of which indicate that women determined what religious literature they read and listened to. Women could also choose how to read such literature. There was evidently some concern about women's readings of texts. Several treatises of spiritual guidance addressed to a female audience attempted to control women's critical responses by stressing that God spoke to humanity through books, by constructing a humble reader, and by narrowly defining the purposes of reading. Ultimately, however, an individual's responses to and interpretations of a text reflected personal experience, and were thus to some extent beyond

¹For example, the short text of Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* survives in only one manuscript, now London, BL MS Add. 33790, owned by Carthusian James Grenehalgh, and the long text survives only in seventeenth-century versions. Similarly, there is only one surviving copy of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which belonged to the Carthusians of Mountgrace, now London, BL MS Add. 61823. For other texts by women in Middle English see Alexandra Barratt, ed., *Women's Writing in Middle English* (London and New York, 1992). Jocelyn Wogan-Browne discusses Anglo-Norman hagiographic texts by women in her "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman hagiography in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993). For women's ownership of the writings of continental women visionaries, see Chapter 3 above.

control.

Evidence from wills and probate inventories and from extant manuscripts and incunabula demonstrates women's creativity in constructing their own literary devotional culture. Very few religious texts were addressed specifically to laywomen, who thus had to carve out their own niches. Similarly, although a corpus of spiritual treatises was addressed to nuns and anchoresses, the literature actually in the hands of women religious went beyond what was written for them. Women, both lay and enclosed, owned and used a wide range of religious literature, from simple explanations of elements of the faith, through saints lives and other narrative works, to scriptural writings, guides to leading a spiritual life, and treatises that encourage moral self-scrutiny. A small number of women owned works of canon law and theology.

Evidence of women's book ownership demonstrates that women religious and laywomen from the nobility, gentry, and to a lesser extent from the mercantile élite - the two principal female audiences of religious literature - had access to the same types of spiritual texts, and indeed to many of the same texts. To some extent, this common literary devotional culture can be explained by the finding that nuns generally came from the same social and cultural background as secular women book owners, and they seem to have shared many of the same spiritual and secular concerns. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the education of nuns went beyond that of their secular counterparts. While some women were evidently able to read Latin, it appears that laywomen and women religious generally did not possess a good enough grasp of the language to understand long, complex documents and treatises. Women, both lay and enclosed, owned and used religious literature in English and French. Another factor underpinning the finding that laywomen and nuns shared a literary devotional culture is that the models of female piety offered to laywomen encouraged them to imitate, to a greater or lesser extent, women religious.

It is important to consider the possibility that women actively chose this commonality. Women religious may have chosen to use literature in the

vernacular not simply because they were not taught sufficient Latin but because they rejected male Latinate culture, preferring to identify with their secular sisters. As women, nuns and anchoresses were excluded from the Church hierarchy, and they could not become priests. My study of Sibilla de Felton suggests that enclosed women, despite their vowed state, still constructed themselves as part of the social groups from which they had come. Their choice of religious literature may have been another element in their construction of self.

This identification with the laity seems to underlie Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*. Julian's text reveals her to be a sophisticated theologian, and Edmund Colledge and James Walsh have argued that she "received an exceptionally good grounding in Latin, in Scripture and the liberal arts, and that thereafter she was able and permitted to read widely in Latin and vernacular spiritual classics."² None the less, Julian chose to write in English, disclaiming her learning, and calling herself a "simple creature that cowde no letter."³ Julian wrote explicitly for those who were "simple", with whom she evidently identified:

we arn al one in comfort; for sothly it was not shewid me that
God lovid me better than the lest soule that is in grace . . . for
if I loke singularly to myselfe I am right nowte; but in general I
am in hope, in onehede of charitie with al myn evyn cristen.⁴

Julian does not cite authorities, nor does she quote directly from the Latin bible, thus locating herself within a non-clerical, non-Latinate discourse. *A Revelation of Love* reminds us that women's use of the vernacular should not be regarded as necessarily lesser than men's - particularly clerics' - use of Latin, and it suggests that women may not have viewed the relationship between latinity and vernacularity as a hierarchical one. For women, and

²Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, eds., *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 44-5.

³Marion Glasscoe, *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love* (Exeter, 1986), p. 2.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 10.

particularly for women religious, Latin may have been a masculine symbol.

Devout laywomen from the nobility, gentry, and, in the fifteenth century, from the mercantile élite may have chosen to participate in the literary culture of women religious not simply because they were encouraged to model themselves on nuns but also because there may have been secular advantages to doing so. A woman's reputation was of particular importance, and to be seen to be pious and to imitate the practices of professed women may have been socially and politically beneficial.

Women, both lay and enclosed, could use their reading and listening activities in various ways. Male authors stressed that women were to use books to guard themselves against idleness and temptation, to educate themselves, and to increase their devotion. Women surely read and listened to religious literature for spiritual benefit, but they could also have used such literature as part of a programme to construct an individual or corporate identity.

Throughout this thesis, I have drawn on evidence from wills and probate inventories and extant manuscripts and incunabula, which demonstrates that women owned books, borrowed books, and gave books to each other. However, such evidence seldom records whether women read and listened to their books. Bequests of books such as the primer "which I daily use", found in the 1459 will of Agnes Bedford of Hull, are exceedingly rare, as are books that have been annotated in women's hands.⁵ None the less, the finding that women's choice of religious literature was not restricted to texts addressed to them, and the finding that women more commonly gave their devotional books to other women - while they gave their liturgical and theological books

⁵Agnes's bequest is mentioned in Peter Heath, "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of Hull Wills," in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Barrie Dobson (New York, 1984), p. 226. Dorothy Coderington, a nun of Syon in the sixteenth century, annotated her printed copy of *The Tree and Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost*, now Ampleforth Abbey C.V.130 (STC 13608), correcting it against London, BL MS Add. 24192; see J. J. Vaissier, *A Devout Treatise called the Tree & xii. Frutes of the Holy Ghost* (Groningen, 1960), pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.

primarily to men - suggests that women were indeed familiar with the contents of the books in their hands.

APPENDIX 1

EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA CONTAINING RELIGIOUS LITERATURE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN IN WOMEN'S HANDS

Books marked with an asterisk (*) are those that I been unable to examine personally.

1. Women Religious

Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland MS 449
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 268
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 123 (possibly only ff. 1r-9v)¹
Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 390/610
Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Bb.2.14 (incunable)
Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.15
Cambridge, University Library MS Add. 8335
Cambridge, University Library MS Ee.3.52
Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.40
Glasgow, University Library MS Hunterian 136
*Göttingen, University Library *The Chastising of God's Children*.
Westminster, 1493. (incunable)
Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 199 (Deposited in Nottingham University
Library)
London, BL MS Add. 10596 (possible only ff. 25r-83v)²

¹There is some question regarding the original contents of this manuscript; see Betty Hill, "Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS. McClean 123," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 12 (1965) [vol. 210 of the continuous series]. The first gathering (ff. 1r-9v), containing Grosseteste's *Chasteau d'Amour* and a prose exposition on the Pater Noster, also contains the two inscriptions that indicate its ownership by women religious. At the top of f. 1r is written "Iste liber constat Alicia scheyntoun & post ea conuentu", and at the end of the exposition of the Pater Noster, on f. 9r, is written "Iste liber constat domine margarete ssylemoun & discipulas suas. Et post mortem suam couentu de Nunetoun. The rest of f. 9r and all of 9v are blank. The second gathering begins with f. 10r. It thus seems clear that the first gathering belonged to women at Nuneaton Priory (Warwickshire), but it is not clear whether they owned any or all of the remaining contents.

²A. I. Doyle has pointed out that this manuscript comprises two parts, the second of which (ff. 25r-83v) contains two ownership inscriptions of nuns at Barking Abbey (Essex). According to Doyle, the two parts were together by the middle of the sixteenth century (the date of the present binding), and he

London, BL MS Add. 11748
 London, BL MS Add. 70513
 London, BL MS Arundel 396
 London, BL MS Cotton Cleopatra C.vi
 London, BL MS Egerton 2710
 London, BL MS Harley 993
 London, BL MS Harley 2254
 London, BL MS Harley 2387
 London, BL MS Harley 2397
 London, BL MS Harley 2409
 London, BL MS Lansdowne 436
 London, BL MS Royal 7.F.iii
 London, BL MS Sloane 779
 London, Lambeth Palace 1495.4 (incunable)
 *Maldon, Essex, Beeleigh Abbey, Miss C. Foyle (Nicholas Love, *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and William Flete, *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*)
 *New York, Public Library MS 19
 *New York, Public Library Spencer Eng. 1519 (incunable)
 Oxford, All Souls College 25
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 155
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 923
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 322
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 372
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 18
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Lat. 19
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 416
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 408
 Oxford, Jesus College MS 39 (Deposited in the Bodleian Library)
 Oxford, Magdalen College MS 41
 Oxford, University College MS 169 (Deposited in the Bodleian Library)
 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français MS 1038
 *Philadelphia, Rosenbach Foundation Inc. H 491 (incunable)
 Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Downside Abbey MS 26542

*Untraced incunable listed in *Catal. Bibliothecae Harleianae* (1744), iii, n. 1560: *The Chastising of God's Children*. London, 1494. Listed in Ker, *MLGB*, p. 28.

*Untraced MS, Meade Falkner Sale, Sotheby, 12 December, 1932, lot 387 to Tregaskis.

suggests that both parts might have been at Barking from the time when they were written; see A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 25, part 2 (1958), pp. 241-2.

2. Laywomen

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 142
Cambridge, University Library MS Add. 3042
Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 18.17
London, BL MS Add. 42555
London, BL MS Cotton Vitellius F.vii
London, BL MS Egerton 2006
London, BL MS Harley 45
London, BL MS Harley 1706
London, BL MS Harley 2254
London, BL MS Harley 4012
London, BL MS Royal 15.D.ii
London, BL MS Royal 19.D.ii
*Maldon, Essex, Miss C. Foyle (*Speculum Devotorum*)
*New Haven, Mellon Centre for British Art. *The Scale of Perfection*.
Westminster, 1494.
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS E mus.35
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 73
Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 220
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français MS 1038
*Tokyo, Professor Takamiya 8

3. Unknown Women

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 124/61
Cambridge, St John's College MS 29
Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.40
Cambridge, University Library MS Kk.1.7
London, BL MS Harley 494
London, BL MS Harley 2406 (possibly only ff. 1r-11v)³
London, BL Stowe MS 38
London, Lambeth Palace MS 3597
*Manchester, John Rylands University Library MS English 94
*Manchester, John Rylands University Library MS Chetham 6723
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 288
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C 882

³John P. H. Clark and Cheryl Taylor have noted that this manuscript is made up of three parts. At the end of the first part (ff. 1r-11v) is written "Iste liber pertinet Domine Matilde Stuerd". It is not clear whether Matilda owned all of what is now MS Harley 2406 or just ff. 1r-11v; see John P. H. Clark and Cheryl Taylor, eds., *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 124, (Salzburg, 1987), Vol. 1, pp. 7-9.

APPENDIX 2

RELIGIOUS TEXTS NOTED IN WILLS AND INVENTORIES

Titles of texts are listed as they appear in the will or inventory (or in its printed form), and have been modernized where possible.

The following abbreviations have been used for language: E= English; F=French; L=Latin; U=Unspecified.

1. NOBILITY AND PROBABLE NOBILITY

Narrative

	Language
Holy Legend	U
Legend	U
Legend	U
Legend	U
Legend Book	U
Legenda Aurea	F
Legenda Aurea	F
Legenda Aurea	U
Legenda Aurea	F
Legenda Sanctorum	E
Legenda Sanctorum	U
Legenda Sanctorum	E
Life of Saint Katherine of Siena	U
Martyrology ¹	U
Roll of the Passion	U
Roll of the Passion	U
Saintz Ryall ²	U
Vitae Patrum	U

¹Early martyrologies were calendars, naming the martyr and the place of martyrdom under the day of the festival. Later martyrologies included stories of the lives of the martyrs. See Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1977), p. 325.

²From its title, this would appear to be a work on royal saints. An inventory of the possessions of Isabella, queen of Edward II, drawn up in 1358 includes among a list of "libri romanizati" a book of "sang're regali"; see Cavanaugh, pp. 456-60.

Didactic

Book of the Pater Noster, glossed	E
Pastorelx Seint Gregoire	U
Vices and Virtues	U
Vices and Virtues	U

Visionary/Mystical

Book of St Matilda	U
Revelations of St Bridget	U

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Book of Prayers and Devotions	U
-------------------------------	---

Scriptural

Apocalypse	F
Apocalypse	F
Bible	U
Bible	F
Bible	F
Bible	U
Bible	U
Bible	F
Bible	U
Epistle	U
Epistles and Gospels	F
Epistles and Gospels	F
Gospels	F
Gospels	F
Gospels	U

Canon Legal

Decretals	U
Decretals	F

Theological

De Causa Dei Contra Pelagianos	U
--------------------------------	---

Unidentified

Bonaventure	E
Hilton	E

2. GENTRY AND PROBABLY GENTRY

Narrative

Barlaham and Josephat	F
Barlaham and Josephat	F
St Gregory's Dialogues	U
Legenda Sanctorum	U
Legenda Sanctorum	F
Liber de Passioni Domini	U
Life of Christ	E
Misterio Passionis Domini	E
Life of St Margaret	E
Visitation of the Virgin Mary	U
Vita Christi	L
Vita Sanctorum	F
Vita Sanctorum	F

Didactic

Liber de Credo in Deum	U
Liber de Credo in Deum	U
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff	E
Vices and Virtues	U

Guides

The First Book of Master Walter	E
The First Book of Master Walter	E

Moral

Book of Tribulation	U
Chastising of God's Children	U
Chastising of God's Children	E
Grace Dieu (Pilgrimage of the Soul)	F
Prick of Conscience	U
Prick of Conscience	U

Visionary/Mystical

Maulde Buke	U
Maulde Buke	U
Revelations of St Bridget	E
Revelations of St Bridget	E

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Book of Prayers and Devotions	U
Rolle's Meditation of the Passion	U

Scriptural

Apocalypse	U
Apocalypse	F+L
Bible	U
Bible	L
Doctors on Matthew	U
Gospels	F
Gospels	F

Unclassified

Spirit of Guy	E
Spirit of Guy	E

Unidentified

Bonaventure	U
-------------	---

3. GENTRY/MERCHANT

Narrative

Life of St Margaret	E
The Passion of Jesus Christ	U

Moral

Merce and Gramerce (Henry of Lancaster's Livre de Seyntz Medicines)	U
---	---

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Gaudes Beate Mariae	U
---------------------	---

4. MERCHANT AND PROBABLE MERCHANT

Guides

The Doctrine of the Heart

Moral

Prick of Conscience	E
St Patrick's Purgatory	E

Unclassified

Sermon of Atkwyne (Speculum Gy of Warwick)	E
--	---

Unidentified

Book of St Bridget	E
Book of St Katherine	U
Book of St Katherine	U
Hilton	U

5. WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Narrative

Legenda Aurea	U
Legenda Sanctorum	E
Life of Christ	E
Life of St Katherine	E
Life of St Katherine of Siena	U
Vitae Patrum	U

Didactic

Manuel des Péchés	F
Pastorelx Seint Gregoire	U
Vices and Virtues	U

Guides

The Doctrine of the Heart	U
---------------------------	---

Moral

Chastising of God's Children	E
Chastising of God's Children	U
Prick of Conscience	U
Prick of Conscience	E

Visionary/Mystical

Book of St Matilda	U
Revelations of St Bridget	U

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Scroll of Prayers and Devotions	U
---------------------------------	---

Scriptural

Bible	F
-------	---

Canon Legal

Decretals	F
-----------	---

Unidentified

Bonaventure	U
Bonaventure	E
Book of St Bridget	E
Hilton	E

6. UNKNOWN WOMEN

Narrative

Legenda Sanctorum	E
Passion of Jesus Christ	U

Didactic

Liber de Oracione Domenica	U
----------------------------	---

Moral

Merce and Gramerce (Henry of Lancaster's Livre de Seyntz Medicines)	U
St Patrick's Purgatory	E

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Gaudes Beate Marie U

Scriptural

Apocalypse U
Liber de Evangeliiis U

Unclassified

Sermon of Altquyn (Speculum Gy of Warwick) E

Unidentified

Hilton U
St Crisostom U
St Gregory U

APPENDIX 3

RELIGIOUS TEXTS FOUND IN EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN IN WOMEN'S HANDS

Titles of texts have been modernized except where they are commonly known by their medieval version. The following abbreviations have been used for languages: E=English; F=French; L=Latin.

1. WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Narrative

	Language
Assumption of the Virgin Mary	F
Barlaam et Josephat	F
Cursor Mundi	E
De Adam Nostre Premer Pere	F
Gilte Legende	E
L'Assumpcion nostre dame	F
L'Avenement Antichrist	F
Life of St John the Apostle	F
Life of St Katherine	E
Life of St Katherine (Capgrave)	E
Life of St Rumoldi	L
Lives of 11 Saints	F
Lives of 47 Saints	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (Chapter 2)	E
Paraphrase of Bible History	F
Passion of Our Lord	F
Passion of St Bartholomew	F
Passion of St Edmund	L
Passion of St Lawrence	F
Passion of St Peter	F
Vie de Saintz Peres	F
Vitae Patrum	E
Voiages de St Antoine	F

Didactic

ABC of Devotion	E
Benedictus	E
Description of Faith, Hope, and Charity	E
Disce Mori	E
Exposition of Pater Noster	F

Exposition of Pater Noster	F
Form of Confession - Five Senses	E
Form of Confession - Seven Sins	E
Interpretation of the Mass	E
Magnificat	E
On Humility	E
Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte	E
Pater Noster with Exposition	F
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Seven Works of Corporal Mercy	E
Seven Works of Spiritual Mercy	E
Speculum Vite	E
St Brendan's Confession	E
Treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins	Y
Treatise on the Ten Commandments	E

Guides

Ancrene Wisse	E
The Doctrine of the Heart	E
The Commandment (Richard Rolle)	E
Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God	E
Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God	E
Eight Chapters on Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
Ladder of Four Rungs	E
Mending of Life (Richard Rolle)	E
Musica Ecclesiastica (Books 1-3 of Thomas à Kempis, Imitatio Christi)	E
Mixed Life	E
Mixed Life	E
Nine Points	E
Prycking of Love	E
Prycking of Love	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom (Henry Suso)	E
Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom (Henry Suso)	E
Treatise of Ghostly Battle	E
Treatise of Perfect Love	E

Moral

The Chastising of God's Children	E
The Chastising of God's Children	E
The Chastising of God's Children	E
The Cleansing of Man's Soul	E
A Comfortable Treatise to Strengthen the Faith	E
The Cordyall	E
De Remediis Contra Temptationes	E
De Remediis Contra Temptationes	E
The Five Wiles of King Pharaoh	E
How a Man Shall Know	E
Meditacio Sancti Augustini	E
Nota de paciencia infirmiter	L
Pety Job	E
The Pilgrimage of the Soul	E
Six Masters on Tribulation	E
Treatise of Discretion of Spirits	E
Treatise of Parce Michi Domine	E
Treatise of Tribulation	E
The Twelve Profits of Tribulation	E

Visionary/Mystical

Extract from Documento (St Catherine of Siena)	E
Extract from the Revelations of St Bridget	E

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Hymns	L
Meditation	E
Prayer	L
Prayers	E
Prayers	L
Prayers	E

Ars Moriendi

Book of Craft of Dying	E
Book of Craft of Dying	E
Book of the Craft of Dying (from Somme le Roi)	E
Kunne to Di3e (from Henry Suso's Horlogium Sapienciae)	E
Sex Observanda Omni Christiano in Extremis	E
Sex Observanda Omni Christiano in Extremis	L

Cult

Oleum Effusum (Richard Rolle)	E
On the Instruments of the Passion	E
Quia Amore Langeo	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi (Nicholas Love)	E
Treatise on the Eucharist	E

Scriptural

Gospel of Nicodemus	F
Gospels	L
Gospels	E
Historia Scholastica (Peter Comestor)	L
Lamentations of Jeremiah	L
The Old Testament from Genesis to Job, with commentary	F
Song of Songs	L
Tobit	E
Susannah (Part of Daniel)	E

Theological

Allegoriae (Probably Hugh of St Victor)	L
Collection of Sententiae	L
Gemma Animae (Honorius Augustodunensis)	L
Homiliary	L
Extract from Speculum Spiritualium	L
Speculum Ecclesiae (Pseudo-Hugh of St Victor)	L
Sermo Sancti Augustini	L

Unclassified

Canticus Amoris (poem addressed to Christ)	E
Chasteau d'Amour (Robert Grosseteste)	F
Commentary on "Bonum Est" (ascribed to Walter Hilton)	E
Extract from Mirror of Holy Church (Edmund of Abingdon)	E
How to Pray	E
Northern Homily Cycle	E
Paraphrase of Sarum Calendar	E
Paraphrase of Sarum Calendar	E
Poem on mortality (from Lydgate's <i>Fall of Princes</i>)	E
Poem on mortality (also from Lydgate's <i>Fall of Princes</i>)	E
Sermun del Secl	F
Si Comme Nostre Dieu	F

2. LAYWOMEN

Narrative

Balaam et Josaphat	F
L'Assumpcion Nostre Dame	F
L'Avenement Antichrist	F
Life of Our Lady (John Lydgate)	E
Life of St Anne	E
Life of St Katherine	E
Life of St Katherine	E
Life of St Margaret	E
Life of St Margaret	E
Life of St Nicholas	E
Life of St Patrick	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (Nicholas Love)	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (Nicholas Love)	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (Nicholas Love)	E
Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (Nicholas Love)	E
Speculum Devotorum	E
Vie de Sainz Peres	F
Voiages de St Antoine	F

Didactic

Description of Faith, Hope, and Charity	E
Exposition of the Creed	E
Form of Confession	E
Form of Confession - Seven Sins	E
Mirror to Lewd Men and Women	E
Mirror to Lewd Men and Women	E
On Humility	E
On the Eight Beatitudes	E
On the Five Bodily Senses	E
On the Five Spiritual Senses	E
On the Four Cardinal Virtues	E
On the Seven Virtues	E
On the Seven Deadly Sins	E
On the Seven Works of Charity	E
On the Seven Works of Mercy	E
On the Ten Commandments	E
On the Three Theological Virtues	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Seven Degrees of Humility and Pride	E
St Brendan's Form of Confession	E

Guides

Ancrene Wisse	F
Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God	E
Four Things Be Needful	E
The Gathered Counsels of St Isidore	E
Ladder of Four Rungs	E
Mending of Life (Richard Rolle)	E
Mirror of St Edmund	E
Mixed Life (Walter Hilton)	E
Nine Points on Perfection	E
Pricking of Love	E
The Scale of Perfection (Walter Hilton)	E
Treatise of Ghostly Battle	E
Treatise of Ghostly Battle	E
Treatise of Ghostly Battle	E
The Twelve Degrees of Meekness	E

Moral

Augustinus de Contemptu Mundi	E
The Cleansing of Man's Soul	E
De Remediis Contra Temptationes	E
Four Manners of Washings	E
Four Profitable Things	E
Le Livre de Tribulacion	F
Meditacio Sancti Augustini	E
The Mirror of Sinners	E
The Mirror of Sinners	E
Nota de paciencia infirmiter	L
Nota de paciencia infirmiter	L
On Charity and Temptation	E
Pety Job	E
Six Masters on Tribulation	E
Six Masters on Tribulation	E
Six Masters on Tribulation	E
Three Arrows of Doomsday	E
Treatise of Parce Michi Domine	E
The Twelve Profits of Tribulation	E
The Twelve Profits of Tribulation	E

Visionary/Mystical

The Book of Ghostly Grace (Mechtild of Hackeborn)	E
God's Words to St Moll	E

Prayers, Meditations, and Devotions

Meditation on the Shedding of Our Lord's Blood	E
Meditation on the Passion (Richard Rolle)	E
Prayer	E
Prayer	L
Prayers	E
Seven Oes of Christ	E

Ars Moriendi

Book of Craft of Dying	E
Book of Craft of Dying	E
Book of the Craft of Dying (from Somme le Roi)	E
Kunne to Di3e (from Henry Suso's Horologium Sapienciae)	E
Sex Observanda Omni Christiano in Extremis	E
Sex Observanda Omni Christiano in Extremis	L

Cult

On the Virtues of the Mass	E
Quia Amore Languet	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi	E
Treatise on Corpus Christi	E

Scriptural

Apocalypse	L
Apocalypse	F
Bible Hystoriaux	F

Unclassified

Appeal of Christ to Man	E
Aristotle's ABC	E
Poem on mortality (from Lydgate's <i>Fall of Princes</i>)	E
Poem on mortality (also from Lydgate's <i>Fall of Princes</i>)	E
Canticus Amoris	E
Complaint of the Dying Creature	E
General Sentence of Excommunication	E
How to Pray	E
Paraphrase of Sarum Calendar	E
La Lumere as Lais	F
On Spiritual Reading	E
Si Comme Nostre Sire Vendra	F

Pardon of Syon
Jesu the Son of Mary Mild

E
E

3. UNKNOWN WOMEN

Didactic

Explanation of the Articles of the Faith	E
Explanation of the Seven Deadly Sins	E
Explanation of the Seven Virtues	E
Explanation of the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy	E
Explanation of the Seven Works of Spiritual Mercy	E
Explanation of the Ten Commandments	E
Explanation of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit	E
Explanation of the Creed	E
Form of Confession	E
Lists of Elements of the Faith	E
Lists of Elements of the Faith	L
On Confession	E
The Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte	E
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Pore Caitiff - Charter of Heavenly Heritage	E
Pore Caitiff - Treatise of Ghostly Battle	E

Guides

The Commandment (Richard Rolle)	E
Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God	E
Four Things Be Needful	E
Mirror of St Edmund	E
Mirror of St Edmund	E
Treatise of Perfect Love	E
Treatise on the Way of Perfection	E
The Twelve Degrees of Meekness	E

Moral

The Cleansing of Man's Soul	E
The Mirror of Sinners	E
The Pilgrimage of the Soul	E
The Pilgrimage of the Soul	E
The Prick of Conscience	E
The Prick of Conscience	E
The Three Arrows of Doomsday	E
Treatise of Tribulation	E

Visionary/Mystical

God's Words Shown to St Moll E
A Meditation Shown to St Maud E

Prayers, Meditations, Devotions

Contemplation of the Joys of Our Lady E
Meditations for Mass E
Seven Sorrows of Our Lady E
Prayers and Meditations E

Cult

Treatise on Receiving the Sacrament E
Verses on Corpus Christi L

Unclassified

Tract on a Vision of St Bridget E
Verses on the Agnus Dei L

APPENDIX 4

CONTENTS OF LONDON, BL MS HARLEY 4012

This manuscript is described in Edmund Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript at Coughton Court, Warwickshire, and British Library MS Harley 4012," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 24 (1977), pp. 299-301. I give here a brief list of the contents, along with bibliographic references for the texts. The following abbreviations have been used: IMEV: C. Brown and R. H. Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943); IPMEP: R. E. Lewis, N. F. Blake, and A. S. G. Edwards, *Index of Printed Middle English Prose* (New York and London, 1985); Jolliffe: P. S. Jolliffe, *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writing of Spiritual Guidance* (Toronto, 1974); Raymo: R. R. Raymo, "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, gen ed. A. E. Hartung, (New Haven, 1967-), Vol. 7, pp. 2255-2378 and 2470-2582.

1. 1r-68v. The Clensynge of Mans Sowle
[The Cleansing of Man's Soul]

Raymo 84

2. 69r-72r. The Charter of oure eritage
[The Charter of Our Heavenly Heritage, an extract from the *Pore Caitiff*]

IPMEP 166
Jolliffe B

3. 73r. Foure thingis be nedefull to euere cristen man and woman to rule
them bi to obtayne þe blisse of heuen.
[Four Things Be Needful]

Jolliffe I.9
Raymo 147

4. 73r-77r. Here is the mirroure of sinnes [*sic*]
[The Mirror of Sinners]

IPMEP 213
Jolliffe F.8

5. 77v-78r. Theis be the wordis that oure saueoure Ihesu spake to his holy spouse and virgen Sent Moll
[God's Words to Saint Moll]

Jolliffe I.31(b)
Raymo 142

6. 79r-83v. Here beginneth a tretis of mekenes *withoute* whiche noman maie com to ane other vertue or loue of godd for hit is the ground of all *perfeccion* of goodnes and vertue
[The Twelve Degrees of Meekness]

Jolliffe G.19
Raymo 77

7.83v-100v. Here foloing be the artikell of the faith redy for euery man to rede and se
[Article of the Faith]

Raymo 41

8. 101r-103v. theis Chapers foloing
[List of the 30 chapters of the *Mirror of St Edmund*, and chapters 1 to 3 (ending imperfectly at the foot of f. 103v in mid-sentence)]

IMPEP 800

9. 104r-v. [acephalous text beginning: "for rememeber ther also ther be many thingis þat be not exceptable before god and but if a man euer refuse them he shall neuer com wher god is not none of his Sentis . . .]

Jolliffe lists this as part of item 10 below, under E.8.

10. 105r-v. [acephalous text beginning "Herfor now breuely I will make a nende and a recapitilacon of þe forsaide fowre maner of wassingis . . . "
[The Four Manners of Washings]

Jolliffe lists this, together with item 9 above, under E.8.
Raymo 93

11.106r-108v. Ihesu the sonne of mare mylde
[poem]

IMEV 1779

12. 109r-v Hosumeuer saith þis praier in þe worship of þe passion shall haue
C 3ere of pardon. Wofully araide
[Appeal of Christ to Man from the Cross]

IMEV 497

13. 110r-113r. Here begynneth the pardon of the monastery of Shene whiche is
Syon
[The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene which is Syon]

IPMEP 184

14. 113v-114v. Here is folung a short and a frutefull tretes how that ther was
assembled viii wise men and masters for to declare what meret tribulacion is
mor manne mekely suffred
[Six Masters on Tribulation]

IPMEP 287
Jolliffe J.2(d)

15. 115r-123v. Here begynneth þe life of Sent Katryne
The Life of St Katherine

Prose version c.¹
IPMEP 28

16. 124r-130r. Here begynneth þe lif of Sent Margaret
[The Life of St Margaret (prose)]

17. 130v-139v. Here begynneth þe lif of Sent Anne
[The Life of St Anne]

IMEV 3207

18. 140r-151v Here is þe lif of Sent Partick and extract sui purgatorii
[The Life of St Patrick. Ending imperfect]

IMEV 3038

¹Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen, eds., *St Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster M7* (Cambridge and Helsinki, 1993), p. 11.

APPENDIX 5

BOOKS SURVIVING FROM BARKING ABBEY (ESSEX)

These books are listed in M. R. James, "Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 21 (1933), p. 35; N. R. Ker, "More Manuscripts From Essex Monastic Libraries," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 23 (1942-5), pp. 301-2, 305, 310; A. I. Doyle, "Books Connected With the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* n.s. 25 part 2 (1958), pp. 239-43; Ker, *MLGB*, pp. 6, 228; and Ker, *Supplement*, pp. 2, 76.

1. Books whose provenance is unquestioned:

Beeleigh Abbey, Miss C. Foyle (Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and William Flete, *De Remediis Contra Temptationes*)
Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.3.54 (James 1226)
London, BL MS Add. 10596 (possibly only ff. 25r-83v)
London, BL MS Cotton Otho A.v
London, Lambeth Palace 1495.4 (incunable)
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 155
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 923
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Lat. 19
Oxford, Magdalen College MS 41
Oxford, University College MS 169
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français MS 1038

2. *Books whose provenance is uncertain:*

Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.29 (James 1133)
Cardiff, Public Library MS 1.381, ff. 81r-146v
Cardiff, Public Library MS 3.833
London, BL MS Lansdowne 381(2)
London, BL MS Cotton Julius D.viii, ff. 40r-47v
London, BL MS Harley 1706
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 33
Nijmegen, University Library MS 194, ff. 41r-104v

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

See also the manuscripts and incunables listed in Appendix 1.

Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.7.47 (1375)
Cambridge, University Library MS Hh.1.11
Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.6.39
Cardiff, Public Library MS 1.381
Cardiff, Public Library MS 3.833
Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, D/DP F234
London, BL MS Add. 24202
London, BL MS Harley 1706
London, Guildhall Library, MS 9171/2
London, Guildhall Library, MS 9171/3
London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/3
London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/7
London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/10
London, PRO C.54.287
London, PRO C.66.440
London, PRO C.54/330
London, PRO E 301/20
London, PRO Prob. 11/11.
Oxford, All Souls College MS 24
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Add.A.42
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 938
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 517
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B.408
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.894
Oxford, Jesus College MS 39
Oxford, Magdalen College, Fastolf Papers, no. 17
Oxford, Magdalen College, Fastolf Papers, no. 80
Oxford, Magdalen College, Fastolf Papers, no. 102
Oxford, St John's College MS 94
Oxford, St John's College MS 173
Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Caston
Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Heydon
Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Moulton
Norwich, NRO, NCC Reg. Wolman
York, BIHR Prob. Reg. 2
York, York Minster Library MS Add. 2

Printed Primary Sources

Medieval texts are listed under their modern editors or translators.

Aarts, Florent G. A. M., ed. *De Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte: A Late Medieval English Exposition of the Lord's Prayer* (Nijmegen, 1967).

Armstrong, C. A. J., trans. *The Usurpation of Richard III by D. Mancini*. 2nd edition. Oxford, 1969.

Ayto, John, and Alexandra Barratt, eds. *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*. EETS os 287. London, 1984.

Barratt, Alexandra, ed. *The Book of Tribulation, ed. from MS Bodley 423*. Middle English Texts 15. Heidelberg, 1983.

Barrat, Alexandra, ed. *Women's Writing in Middle English*. London and New York, 1992.

Bazire, Joyce, and Eric College, eds. *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*. Oxford, 1957.

Blunt, J. H., ed. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*. EETS es 19. London, 1873.

Candon, Mary Patrick. "The Doctrine of the Heart: Edited from the Manuscripts with Introduction and Notes." Ph. D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1963.

Chadwick, Noel Allan. "An Edition of *Disce Mori* (pp. 1-177): Introduction and Seven Deadly Sins." M. A. Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1966.

Clark, A., ed. *Lincoln Diocese Documents*. EETS os 149. London, 1941.

Clark, Andrew, ed. *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford*. EETS os 142. London, 1911.

Clark, John P. H., and Rosemary Dorward, trans. *Walter Hilton's The Scale of Perfection*. New York, 1991.

Clark, John P. H., and Cheryl Taylor, eds. *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*. Analecta Cartusiana 124. Salzburg, 1987.

- Clay, John William, ed. *North Country Wills: Being Abstracts of Wills Relating to the Counties of York, Nottingham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland at Somerset House and Lambeth Palace, 1383-1558*. Publications of the Surtees Society 116. Durham, London and Berlin, 1908.
- A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household Made in Divers Reigns from King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*. London, 1790.
- Colledge, Edmund, and Noel Chadwick, eds. "'Remedies Against Temptation': The Third English Version of William Flete." *Archivo Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 5 1968: 201-40.
- Colledge, Edmund, and James Walsh, eds. *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*. 2 vols. Toronto, 1978.
- Colledge, Edmund, and James Walsh, trans. *The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations of Guigo II*. London and Oxford, 1978.
- Connolly, Margaret, ed. *Contemplations of the Love and Dread of God*. EETS os 303. Oxford, 1993.
- Christine de Pisan. *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson. Harmondsworth, 1985.
- Davis, Norman, ed. *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*. 2 Vols. London, 1971, 1976.
- Dean, Ruth J., and M. Dominica Legge, eds. *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Norman Prose Version*. Medium Aevum Monographs 7. Oxford, 1964.
- Fiero, Gloria K., Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain, eds. and trans. *Three Medieval Views of Women: La contenance des fames, le bien des fames, le blasme des fames*. New Haven and London, 1989.
- Forshaw, Helen P., ed. *Edmund of Abingdon's Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesie*. Oxford, 1973.
- Furnivall, Frederick J., ed. *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London, A.D. 1387-1439, with a Priest's of 1454*. EETS os 78. London, 1882.
- Furnivall, Frederick J. ed. *Manners and Meals in Olden Time: The Babees Boke, etc.* EETS os 32. London, 1868.

- Furnivall, Frederick J., and I. Gollancz, *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, revised by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle. EETS es 61. 1892. Reprint. Oxford, 1970.
- Glasscoe, Marion, ed. *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love*. Exeter, 1986.
- Glauning, Otto, ed. *Lydgate's Minor Poems: The Two Nightingale Poems*. EETS es 80. London, 1900.
- Halligan, Theresa A. ed., *The Book of Ghostly Grace of Mechtild of Hackeborn*. Toronto, 1979.
- Hanham, Alison, ed. *The Cely Letters, 1472-1488*. EETS os 273. London, 1975.
- Harvey, Ralph, ed. *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living Translated by Richard Misyn*. EETS os 106. London, 1896.
- Helmholz, R. H. ed. *Select Cases on Defamation*. Seldon Society 101.
- Herbert, J. A., ed. *The French Text of the Ancrene Riwe*. EETS os 219. London, 1944.
- Hirsh, John C., ed. *Barlam and Iosaphat*. EETS os 290. London, 1986.
- Hodgson, Phyllis, ed. *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*. EETS os 218. London, 1944.
- Hodgson, Phyllis, ed. *Deonise Hid Diuinite*. EETS os 231. London, 1958.
- Hodgson, Phyllis, and Gabriel M. Liegey, eds. *The Orchard of Syon*. EETS os 258. London, 1966.
- Hogg, James, ed. *The Rewyll of Seynt Sauioure*. Vol. 4: *The Syon Additions for the Sisters from the British Library MS Arundel 146*. Salzburger Studien zur Anlistik und Amerikanistik band 6. Salzburg, 1980.
- Hogg, James, ed. *Richard Whytford's The Pype or Tonne of the Lyfe of Perfection*. 6 Vols. Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 89. Salzburg, 1979-89.
- Hogg, James, ed. *The Speculum Devotorum of an Anonymous Carthusian of Shene, edited from the Manuscripts Cambridge University Library Gg.1.6 and Foyle, with an Introduction and a Glossary*. Analecta Cartusiana 12. Salzburg, 1973.

- Hogg, James, and Lawrence F. Powell, eds. *Nicholas Love's Mirroure of the blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*. 2 Vols. Analecta Cartusiana 91. Salzburg, 1989.
- Horae Eboracensis: The Prymer or Hours of the BVM*. Surtees Society 132. Durham and London, 1920.
- Horstmann, K. "Orologium Sapientiae or The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom aus MS. Douce 114." *Angia* 10 (1888): 323-89.
- Horstmann, C. "Prosalegenden." *Anglia* 3 (1880): 328-60.
- Horstman, Carl, ed., *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*. 2 Vols. London, 1895-6.
- Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids . . . 1284-1431*. Vol. 6. London, 1920.
- Jacob, Fraser, and H. C. Johnson, eds. *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1439*. Vol. 2. Canterbury and York Society 2. Oxford, 1937.
- James, M. R., trans. *Henry the Sixth: A Memoir by John Blacman*. Cambridge, 1955.
- Jenkinson, Hilary, and G. Herbert Fowler. "Some Bedfordshire Wills at Lambeth and Lincoln." *Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* 14 (1931): 79-131.
- Jones, Michael, trans. *Memoirs of Philippe de Commynes*. Harmondsworth, 1972.
- Kane, Harold, ed. *The Prickyng of Love*. Salzburg Studies in English Literature: English and Renaissance Studies 92:10. Salzburg, 1983.
- Kingsford, Charles Lethbridge, ed., *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*. Camden Society, 3rd series 29. 1919.
- [Kirchberger, Clare, trans.] "From the Letter of St Jerome to Demetriades." *Life of the Spirit* 5 (1951): 399-406.
- Kock, Ernst A., ed., *Three Middle-English Versions of the Rule of St Benet and Two Contemporary Rituals for the Ordination of Nuns*. EETS os 120. London, 1902.
- Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic Henry VIII*. Vol. 15. London, 1896.

- MacBain, W. ed. *The Life of St Catherine by Clemence of Barking*. Anglo-Norman Text Society 18. Oxford, 1964.
- Mayor, John E. B., ed. *The English Works of John Fisher*. EETS es 27. 1876. Reprint. New York, 1975.
- McCann, Justin, trans. *The Rule of St Benedict*. London, 1952.
- McCarthy, Adrian James, ed. *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*. Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92; Studies in the English Mystics 1. Salzburg, 1981.
- McCracken, Henry Noble, ed. *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, edited by Henry Noble McCracken. Part 1. EETS es 107. London, 1911.
- Meech, Sanford Brown, and Hope Emily Allen, eds. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Edited by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen. EETS os 212. Oxford, 1940.
- Meyer, Paul, and Frederick J. Furnivall, eds. *The Curial Made by Maystere Alain Charretier*. EETS es 54. London, 1888.
- Millett, Bella, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds. *Medieval English Prose For Women*. Oxford, 1992.
- Munro, J., ed. *John Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine and St. Gilbert of Sempringham, and a Sermon*. EETS os 140. London, 1910.
- Murray, Valerie. "An Edition of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle and Milicia Christi*." D. Phil Dissertation, Oxford University, 1970.
- Mustanoja, Tauno F., ed. *The Good wife Taught her Daughter & the Good Wyfe wold a pylgremage & The Thewis of Gud Women*. Helsinki, 1948.
- Nelson, Venetia, ed. *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen*. Heidelberg, 1981.
- Nicolas, Nicholas Harris, ed. *Testamenta Vetusta: Being Illustrations from Wills . . . From the Reign of Henry the Second to the Acession of Queen Elizabeth*. 2 vols. London, 1826.
- Nichols, John Gough, and John Bruce, eds. *Wills From Doctors' Commons*. Publications of the Camden Society 83. 1863.

- Nichols, John A. *A Collection of All the Wills Now Known to be Extant of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Book Royal from the Reign of William the Conqueror to that of Henry the Seventh Exclusive*. London, 1780.
- Offord, M. Y., ed. *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*. EETS ss 2. London, 1971.
- Ogilvie-Thomson, S. J., ed. *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*. EETS os 293. Oxford, 1988.
- Ogilvie-Thomson, S. J., ed. *Walter Hilton's Mixed Life Edited From Lambeth Palace MS 472*. Salzburg Studies in English Literature; Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92:15. Salzburg, 1986.
- Paues, A. C. *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*. 1902. Revised Edition. 1904.
- Perry, George G., ed. *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*. EETS os 26. London, 1867.
- Petry, Ray C., ed. *Late Medieval Mysticism*. Philadelphia, 1957.
- Raine, James, ed. *Testamenta Eboracensia*. 6 vols. Publications of the Surtees Society 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106. London, 1836-1902.
- Regan, Charles L. "The Cleansing of Man's Soul: Edited from MS Bodl. 923 with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary." Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1963.
- Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. *Eighth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. London, 1881.
- Ryan, William Granger, trans. *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. 2 Vols. Princeton, 1993.
- Salu, M. B., trans. *Ancrene Riwe*. 1955. Reprint. Exeter, 1990.
- Sargent, Michael G. ed. *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. New York, 1992.
- Sarjeantson, Mary S., ed. *Legendys of Hooly Wummen of Osbern Bokenham*. EETS os 206. London, 1938.
- Sharpe, J. A. *Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York*. Borthwick Paper 58. York, 1980.

- Skeat, "Nominale sive Verbale." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1903-6: *1-*50.
- Södergaard, Ö., ed. *La vie d'Edouard le confesseur, poème anglo-normand du XIIIe siècle*. Uppsala, 1948.
- Stapleton, Thomas, ed. *Plumpton Correspondence*. Camden Society 4. 1839.
- Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 2. 1816. Reprint. London, 1963.
- Tolhurst, J. B. L., ed. *The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*. 2 vols. Henry Bradshaw Society 65, 66. London, 1927-8.
- Vaissier, J. J., ed. *A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & xii Frutes of the Holy Goost*. Gronigen, 1960.
- Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempus Henr. VIII*. Vol 1. London, 1810.
- Westra, M. S., ed. *A Talkyng of þe Loue of God*. The Hague, 1950.
- Wilkins, D., ed. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*. Vol. 3. London, 1737.
- Wills and Inventories Illustrative of the History, Manners, Language Statistics, &c. of the Northern Counties of England, from the Eleventh Century Downwards*. Surtees Society 2. London, 1835.
- Wilson, E., and I. Fenlon, eds. *The Winchester Anthology with an Introduction*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Windeatt, Barry, trans. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Harmondsworth, 1985.
- Windeatt, Barry, ed. *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Wright, Thomas, ed. *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*. EETS os 33. 1868.
- Wykes, Barbara E. "An Edition of Book 1 of *The Scale of Perfection* by Walter Hilton." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957.

Secondary Works

- Abram, Annie. "Women Traders in Medieval London." *Economic Journal* 26 (1916): 276-85.
- Abram, Annie. *English Life and Manners in the Later Middle Ages*. London, 1913.
- Acheson, Eric. *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c. 1422-c.1485*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Adamson, John William. "The Extent of Literacy in England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Notes and Conjectures." *The Library*, 4th ser., 10 (1929-30): 163-93.
- Aers, David. "The Making of Margery Kempe: Individual and Community." In *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430*, edited by David Aers, 73-116. New York and London, 1988.
- Alexandre-Bidon, Danièle. "La Lettre Volée: Apprendre à lire à l'enfant au moyen âge." *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilizations* 44:4 (1989): 954-6.
- Allen, Hope Emily. *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and Materials for his Biography*. M. L. A. Monograph ser. 3. New York, 1927.
- Archer, Rowena E. "'How ladies . . . who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates': Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages." In *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, 149-81. Stroud, 1992.
- Archer, Rowena E. "Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers." In *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, edited by Tony Pollard, 15-35. Gloucester and New York, 1984.
- Armstrong, C. A. J. "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Medieval Culture." In *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by C. A. J. Armstrong, 135-56. London, 1983. Originally printed in *For Hilaire Belloc: Essays in Honour of his 72nd Birthday*, edited by Douglas Woodruff, 73-94. London, 1942.
- Ashley, Kathleen, and Pamela Sheingorn, eds. *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*. Athens, Georgia, 1990.

- Aston, Margaret. *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion*. London, 1984.
- Atkinson, Clarissa. *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe*. Ithaca and London, 1983.
- Atkinson, Clarissa. "'Your Servant, My Mother': The Figure of Saint Monica in the Ideology of Christian Motherhood." In *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female Image in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, edited by Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles, 139-72. Boston, 1985.
- Axon, W. E. A. "The Lady Margaret as a Lover of Literature." *The Library*, 2nd ser., 29 (1907): 34-41.
- Baker, Derek, ed. *Medieval Women*. Studies in Church History Subsidia 1. Oxford, 1978.
- Barking Abbey 1300th Anniversary: An Exhibition at Barking Central Library, 3-22 October, 1966*.
- Barratt, Alexandra. "Dame Eleanor Hull: A Fifteenth-Century Translator." In *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, edited by Roger Ellis, 87-101. Cambridge, 1989.
- Barratt, Alexandra. "'Dear Sister': Advice to Women on Reading in Middle English Devotional Treatises." Unpublished paper delivered at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July 1994.
- Barratt, Alexandra. "Works of Religious Instruction." In *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, edited by A. S. G. Edwards, 413-22. New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1984.
- Barron, Caroline M. "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London." *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989): 35-58.
- Barron, Caroline M. "Introduction: The Widow's World in Later Medieval London." In *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, edited by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Barron, Caroline M., and Anne F. Sutton, eds. *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Bäumli, Franz H. "Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 237-65.

- Bell, H. E. "The Price of Books in Medieval England." *The Library*, 4th series, 17 (1937): 312-32.
- Bell, Susan Groag. "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture." In *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, edited by Judith M Bennett *et al.*, 135-161. Chicago and London, 1989. Originally printed in *Signs* 7:4 (Summer, 1982).
- Bell, Rudolph M. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago and London, 1987.
- Beltz, George Frederick. *Memorials of the Most Noble Order of the Garter* . . . London, 1841.
- Bennett, Andrew, ed. *Readers and Reading*. London and New York, 1995.
- Bennet, E. K. "Notes on the Original Statutes of the College of St. John Evangelist of Rushworth, co. Norfolk, founded by Edmund Gonville A.D. 1342." *Norfolk Archaeology* 10 (1888).
- Bennett, H. S. "The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century." *The Library*, 5th ser., 1 (1947): 167-78.
- Bennett, J. A. W. *Middle English Literature*. Oxford, 1986.
- Berndt, Rolf. "The Period of the Final Decline of French in Medieval England (Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries)." *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 20 (1972): 341-69.
- Bestul, Thomas H. "Devotional Writing in England Between Anselm and Richard Rolle." In *Mysticism, Medieval and Modern*, edited by Valerie M. Lagorio, 12-28. Salzburg, 1986.
- Bibliothèque Impériale, Département des Manuscrits. *Calalogue des Manuscrits Français*. Vol. 1: Ancien Fonds. Paris, 1868.
- Biller, Peter. "The Common Woman in the Western Church in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries." In *Women in the Church*, edited by W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, 127-57. Studies in Church History 27. Oxford, 1990.
- Birchenough, Edwyn. "The Prymer in English." *The Library*, 4th series, 18 (1937-8): 177-94.
- Bischoff, Bernhard. "The Study of Foreign Languages in the Middle Ages." *Speculum* 36 (1961): 209-24.

- Blake, N. F. "Middle English Prose and its Audience." *Anglia* 90 (1972): 437-55.
- Blake, N. F. "Varieties of Middle English Religious Prose." In *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honor of Rossell Hope Robbins*, edited by Beryl Rowland, 348-56. London, 1974.
- Bloch, R. Howard. *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Chicago and London, 1991.
- Blomefield, Francis. *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the county of Norfolk*. Vol. 1. London, 1905.
- Boenig, Robert. "Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God, Richard Rolle, and Aelred of Rievaulx." *Mystics Quarterly* 16 (1990): 27-33.
- Boffey, Julia. "Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England." In *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, 159-82. Cambridge, 1993.
- Boffey, Julia, and Carol M. Meale. "Selecting the Text: Rawlinson C. 86 and Some Other Books for London Readers." In *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts*, edited by Felicity Riddy, 143-69. Cambridge, 1991.
- Bolton, Brenda. "Mulieres Sanctae." In *Women in Medieval Society*, edited by Susan Mosher Stuard, 141-58. Philadelphia, 1976.
- Borland, C. R. "A Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh . . ." Vol. 1: Theology. Unpublished catalogue held at the National Library of Scotland.
- Boyle, Leonard E. "The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology." In *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, edited by Thomas J. Heffernan, 30-43. Tennessee Studies in Literature 28. Knoxville, 1985.
- Brady, Mary Teresa. "The Pore Caitiff: An Introductory Study." *Traditio* 10 (1954): 529-48.
- Braswell, Mary Flowers. "Sin, the Lady, and the Law: The English Noblewoman in the Late Middle Ages." *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 14 (1986): 81-101.

- Brooke, Christopher. "Chaucer's Parson and Edmund Gonville: Contrasting Roles of Fourteenth Century Incumbents." In *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, edited by David M. Smith, 1-19. Borthwick Studies in History 1. York, 1991.
- Brown, Carleton and Rossell Hope Robbins. *The Index of Middle English Verse*. New York, 1943.
- Brundage, James A., and Elizabeth M. Makowski. "Enclosure of Nuns: the Decretal *Periculoso* and its Commentators." *Journal of Medieval History* 20 (1994): 143-55.
- Burgess, Clive. "'By Quick and By Dead': Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol." *The English Historical Review* 405 (1987): 837-58.
- Burgess, Clive. "Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered." In *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, edited by Michael Hicks, 14-33. Gloucester, 1990.
- Burgess, Clive. "'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented': an Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England." In *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750*, edited by Susan J. Wright, 56-84 (London, 1988).
- Burton, Janet. *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Burton, Janet E. *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Borthwick Papers 56. York, 1979.
- Bush, R. A. "The Community of Barking Abbey." M. A. Dissertation, University of London, 1991.
- Butler, Cuthbert. *Western Mysticism*. 2nd ed. London, 1960.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. New York, 1991.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. 1982. Reprint. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. 1987. Reprint. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988.
- Cadden, Joan. *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*. Cambridge, 1993.

- Carey, Hilary M. "Devout Literate Laypeople and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Later Medieval England." *Journal of Religious History* 14 (1987): 361-81.
- Carpenter, Christine. *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Carpenter, Christine. "The Fifteenth-Century Gentry and Their Estates." In *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, edited by M. Jones, 36-60. New York, 1986.
- Carpenter, Christine. "The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth-Century England." In *England in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Daniel Williams, 53-74. Woodbridge, 1987.
- Catto, Jeremy. "Religion and the English Nobility in the Later Fourteenth Century." In *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, edited by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden, 43-55. London, 1981.
- Cavanaugh, Susan H. "A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300-1450." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980.
- Cazelles, Brigitte. *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century*. Philadelphia, 1991.
- Cheifetz, Anna. "'Spiritual Mansions': Female Space and the Privatisation of Piety in Late Medieval England." M. A. Dissertation, University of York, 1992.
- Chesney, Kathleen. "Notes on Some Treatises of Devotion Intended for Margaret of York (MS. Douce 365)." *Medium Aevum* 20 (1951): 11-39.
- Christianson, C. Paul. *A Directory of London Stationers and Book Artisans 1300-1500*. New York, 1990.
- Clanchy, M. T. *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*. 2nd ed. London, 1993.
- Clanchy, M. T. "Learning to Read in the Middle Ages and the Role of Mothers." In *Studies in the History of Reading*, edited by G. Brookes and A. K. Pugh, 33-9. 1984.
- Clanchy, M. T. "Looking Back From the Invention of Printing." In *Literacy in Historical Perspective*, edited by Daniel P. Resnick, 7-22. Washington, 1983.

- Clanchy, M. T. "Why is the Virgin Mary Depicted as a Pious Reader From the Twelfth Century Onwards?" Unpublished paper given at the Women and the Book Symposium at St Hilda's College, Oxford, 27-30 August, 1993.
- Clapham, Alfred W. "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking: A Sketch of its Architectural History and an Account of Recent Excavations on its Site." *Essex Archaeological Transactions* 12 (1913): 69-87.
- Clark, J. P. H. "Action and Contemplation in Walter Hilton." *The Downside Review* 97 (1979): 269-74.
- Clark, J. P. H. "Walter Hilton and the *Stimulus Amoris*." *Downside Review* 102 (1984): 79-118.
- Clark-Maxwell, C. E. "Some Letters of Confraternity." *Archaeologia* 75 (1926): 19-60.
- Clark-Maxwell, C. E. "Some Further Letters of Confraternity." *Archaeologia* 79 (1929): 179-216.
- Clay, Rotha Mary. *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*. London, 1914.
- Clay, Rotha Mary. *The Mediaeval Hospitals of England*. London, 1909.
- Coad, J. G. *Denny Abbey*. English Heritage Guides. London, 1989.
- Coakley, John. "Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans." *Church History* 60 (1991): 445-60.
- Coldicott, Diana K. *Hampshire Nunneries*. Chichester, 1989.
- Coleman, Janet. *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400*. New York, 1981.
- Colledge, Eric. "The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God: A Fifteenth-Century English Ruysbroek Translation." *English Studies* 33 (1952): 49-66.
- Collett, Barry. "The Civil Servant and Monastic Reform: Richard Fox's Translation of the Benedictine Rule for Women, 1517." In *Monastic Studies: The Continuity of Tradition*, edited by Judith Loades, 211-28. Bangor, 1990.
- Constable, Giles. "Twelfth-Century Spirituality and the Late Middle Ages." *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5 (1971): 27-60.

- Cotton, Nancy. "Katherine of Sutton: The First Woman Playwright." *Educational Theatre Journal* 30 (1978): 475-81.
- Cotton, Nancy. *Women Playwrights in England*. East Brunswick, NJ, 1980.
- Coulton, G. G. *Life in the Middle Ages*. Vol. 4. Cambridge, 1930.
- Courtenay, William J. *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England*. Princeton, 1987.
- Crawford, Anne. "The Piety of Late Medieval English Queens." In *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay*, edited by Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill, 48-57. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Dover, New Hampshire, 1985.
- Cressy, David. *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*. Cambridge, 1980.
- Cressy, David. "Literacy in Pre-Industrial England." *Societas* 4 (1974): 229-40.
- Cressy, David. "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730." *The Historical Journal* 20:1 (1977): 1-23.
- Croft, P. J. *Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond: Descriptions of Two Unique Volumes Associated With One of the First Patrons of Printing in England*. London, 1958.
- Cross, Claire. "Great Reasoners in Scripture: The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530." In *Medieval Women*, edited by Derek Baker, 359-80. Studies in Church History Subsidia 1. Oxford, 1978.
- Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 2nd ed. Oxford, 1974.
- Cullum, P. H. "'And Hir Name was Charite': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire." In *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, 182-211. Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1992.
- Cullum, P. H. *Cremetts and Corrodies: Care of the Poor and Sick at St Leonard's Hospital, York, in the Middle Ages*. Borthwick Paper 79. York, 1991.
- Cullum, P. H. "Hospitals and Charitable Provision in Medieval Yorkshire, 936-1547." D. Phil. Dissertation, University of York, 1989.

- Cullum, P. H. "Vowesses and Veiled Widows: Female Lay Piety in the Late Medieval Province of York." Forthcoming in *Northern History*.
- Cullum, P. H., and P. J. P. Goldberg. "Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: 'To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor'." *Northern History* 29 (1993): 24-39.
- Daichman, Graciela S. *Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature*. Syracuse, 1986.
- Davies, W. J. Frank. *Teaching Reading in Early England*. London, 1973.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. 1988.
- Deanesly, Margaret. "The Gospel Harmony of John de Caulibus, or S. Bonaventura." In *Collectanea Franciscana* II, edited by C. L. Kingsford, 10-19. Manchester, 1922.
- Deanesly, Margaret, ed., *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. Manchester, 1915.
- Deanesly, Margaret. *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions*. Cambridge, 1920.
- Deanesly, Margaret. "Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." *Modern Language Review* 15 (1920): 349-58.
- de Hamel, Christopher. *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Peregrination after the Reformation*. Publication of the Roxburghe Club. Otley, 1991.
- Denholm-Young, N. *The County Gentry in the Fourteenth Century*. Oxford, 1969.
- Denley, Marie. "Elementary Teaching Techniques and Middle English Religious Didactic Writing." In *Langland, The Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S. S. Hussey*, edited by Helen Phillips, 223-41. Woodbridge and Rochester, 1990.
- Despres, Denise. *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late Medieval Literature*. Norman, Oklahoma, 1989.
- Devlin, P. "Feminine Lay Piety in the High Middle Ages: the Beguines." In *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, edited by J. A. Nichols and Lilian T. Shank, 183-95. Kalamazoo, 1984.

- Dinn, Robert. "Baptism, Spiritual Kinship, and Popular Religion in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 72 (1990): 93-106.
- Dobson, R. B. *Durham Priory 1400-1450*. Cambridge, 1973.
- Doiron, Marilyn. "The Middle English Translation of Le Mirouer des Simples Ames." In *Dr. L. Reypens-Album*, edited by Alb. Ampe, 131-52. Antwerp, 1964.
- Doyle, A. I. "Books Connected With the Vere Family and Barking Abbey." *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 25, pt. 2. n.s. (1958): 222-43.
- Doyle, A. I. "Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England (c. 1375-1530): Assessing the Evidence." In *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, edited by Linda L. Brownrigg, 1-19. Los Altos Hill, California, 1990.
- Doyle, A. I. "English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII." In *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, edited by V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne, 163-81. London, 1983.
- Doyle, A. I. "The English Provincial Book Trade Before Printing." In *Six Centuries of the Provincial Book Trade in Britain*, edited by Peter Isaac, 13-29. Winchester, 1990.
- Doyle, A. I. "More Light on John Shirley." *Medium Aevum* 30 (1961): 93-101.
- Doyle, A. I. "Publication by Members of the Religious Orders." In *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, 109-23. Cambridge, 1989.
- Doyle, A. I. "Reflections of Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ." *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 14 (1983): 82-93
- Doyle, A. I. "A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th and Early 16th Centuries, with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein." 2 vols. Ph. D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1954.
- Doyle, A. I. "A Text Attributed to Ruusbroec Circulating in England." In *Dr. L. Reypens-Album*, edited by A. Ampe, 153-71. Antwerp, 1964.

- Doyle, A. I., ed. *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. Poet. A. 1.* Cambridge, 1987.
- Driver, Martha. "Pictures in Print: Late Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century English Religious Books For Lay Readers." In *De Cella in Seculum. Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, edited by Michael G. Sargent, 229-244. Cambridge, 1989.
- Du Boulay, F. R. H. *An Age of Ambition.* New York, 1970.
- Duffy, Eamon. "Holy Maydes, Holy Wyfes: the Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England." In *Women in the Church*, edited by W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood, 175-96. *Studies in Church History* 27. Oxford, 1990.
- Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580.* New Haven and London, 1992.
- Dugdale, William. *Monasticon Anglicanum.* Vol. 1. London, 1846.
- Dutton, Anne M. "Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500." In *Women, the Book and the Godly*, edited by Jane H. M. Taylor and Lesley Smith, 41-54. Cambridge, 1995.
- Dutton, Anne M. "Pious Books for Pious Women: The Vernon Manuscript and Women's Devotional Reading in Late Medieval England." M. A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991.
- Dyer, Christopher. *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520.* Cambridge, 1989.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader.* Oxford, 1968.
- Edwards, A. S. G., general ed. *Index of Middle English Prose.* Cambridge, 1984- .
- Egbert, Donald Drew. "The So-Called 'Greenfield' *La Lumere as Lais* and *Apocalypse*, Brit. Mus., Royal MS. 15 D II." *Speculum* 11 (1936): 446-52.
- Elliott, Dyan. *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock.* Princeton, 1993.
- Erler, Mary Carpenter. "Syon Abbey's Care For Books: Its Sacristan's Account Rolls 1506/7-1535/6." *Scriptorium* 39 (1985): 293-307.

- Erler, Mary C. "Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses." In *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, edited by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton, 165-83. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Evans, Ruth, and Lesley Johnson, eds. *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*. London and New York, 1994.
- Ferrante, Joan M. "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy." In *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, edited by Patricia H. Labalme, 9-42. New York, 1984.
- Fisher, Sheila, and Janet E. Halley, eds. *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*. Knoxville, 1989.
- Fleming, P. W. "Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent 1422-1529." In *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, edited by Tony Pollard, 36-58. Gloucester and New York, 1984.
- Frankis, John. "The Social Context of Vernacular Writing in Thirteenth Century England: The Evidence of the Manuscripts." In *Thirteenth Century England I: Proceedings of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Conference 1985*, edited by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd, 175-184. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfenbüttel, New Hampshire, 1986.
- Friedman, J. B. "Books, Owners and Makers in Fifteenth-Century Yorkshire: The Evidence from some Wills and Extant Manuscripts." In *Latin and Vernacular*, ed. A.J. Minnis, 111-27. Cambridge, 1989.
- Galbraith, V. H. "The Literacy of the Medieval English Kings." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 5th ser., 21 (1935): 201-38.
- Gibson, Gail McMurray. "Saint Anne and the Religion of Childbed: Some East Anglian Texts and Talismans." In *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, edited by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, 95-110. Athens, Georgia and London, 1990.
- Gibson, Gail McMurray. *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*. Chicago and London, 1989.
- Gibson, J. S. W. *Wills and Where to Find Them*. Chichester, 1974.
- Gilchrist, Roberta. *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women*. London and New York, 1994.

- Gilchrist, Roberta. "Medieval bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body." In *Framing Medieval Bodies*, edited by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, 43-61. Manchester, 1994.
- Gillespie, Vincent. "*Lukynghe in haly bukes: Lectio* in Some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies." *Analecta Cartusiana* 106, part 2 (1984): 1-27.
- Gillespie, Vincent. "Vernacular Books of Religion." In *Book Production and Publishing*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, 317-44. Cambridge, 1989.
- Given-Wilson, Christopher. *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community*. London and New York, 1987.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. "Female Labour, Service and Marriage in the Late Medieval Urban North." *Northern History* 22 (1986): 18-38.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. "Lay Book Ownership in Late Medieval York: The Evidence of Wills." *The Library* 6th ser. 16 (1994): 181-9.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. "Marriage, Migration, and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence." In *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, edited by P. J. P. Goldberg, 1-15. Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1992.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. "Women in Fifteenth-Century Town Life." In *Towns and Townspeople*, edited by J. A. F. Thomson, 107-28. Gloucester, 1988.
- Goldberg, P. J. P., ed. *Woman is a Worthy Wight*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1992.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. *Women, Work, and Life-Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520*. Oxford, 1992.
- Goodman, Anthony. "The Piety of John Brunham's Daughter, of Lynn." In *Medieval Women*, edited by Derek Baker, 347-58. Studies in Church History Subsidia 1. Oxford, 1978.
- Gougaud, Louis. *Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages*. London, 1927.
- Graff, Harvey J. *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradiction in Western Culture and Society*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987.
- Gray, Douglas. "Popular Religion and Late Medieval English Literature." In *Religion in the Poetry and Drama of the Late Middle Ages in England*, edited by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti, 1-28. Cambridge, 1990.

- Green, D. H. "Orality and Reading: the State of Research in Medieval Studies." *Speculum* 65 (1990): 267-80.
- Green, R. F. *Poets and Princepleasers*. Toronto, 1980.
- Griffiths, Jeremy, and Pearsall, Derek. *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Gründler, Otto. "Devotio Moderna." In *Christian Spirituality II: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt, 176-93. London, 1989.
- Guddat-Figge, Gisela. *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*. Munich, 1976.
- Hackett, M. B. "William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*." In *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynne*, edited by J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall, and F. X. Martin, 330-48. Dublin, 1961.
- Hamill, Frances. "Some Unconventional Women Before 1800: Printers, Booksellers, and Collectors." *Proceedings of the Bibliographical Society of America* 49 (1955): 300-314.
- Hanna, Ralph. "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations." *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 100-111.
- Hanawalt, Barbara A. "The Widow's Mite: Provisions for Medieval London Widows." In *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*, edited by Louise Mirror, 21-45. Ann Arbor, 1992.
- Hannay, Margaret Patterson. *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*. Kent, Ohio, 1985.
- Harris, Kate. "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade." In *Book Production and Publishing 1375-1475*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, 163-99. Cambridge, 1989.
- Hartung, Albert E., general ed. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. New Haven, 1967- .
- Harvey, Barbara. *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience*. Oxford, 1993.

- Heath, Peter. "Between Reform and Reformation: the English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 647-78.
- Heath, Peter. "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of Hull Wills." In *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Barrie Dobson, 209-34. New York, 1984.
- Helmholz, Richard H. "Married Women's Wills in Later Medieval England." In *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, edited by Sue Sheridan Walker, 165-82. Ann Arbor, 1993.
- Hicks, M. A. "The Piety of Margaret, Lady Hungerford." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987): 19-38.
- Hill, Betty. "Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS. McClean 123." *Notes and Queries* n.s. 12 (1965): 87-90. (Vol. 210 of the continuous series.)
- Hill, Betty. "The History of Jesus College, Oxford MS 29." *Medium Aevum* 32 (1963): 203-13.
- Hirsh, John C. "Prayer and Meditation in Late Mediaeval England: MS Bodley 789." *Medium Aevum* 48 (1979): 55-66.
- Hodgson, Phyllis. "'A Ladder of Foure Ronges by the Whiche Men Mowe Wele Clyme to Heven': A Study of the Prose Style of a Middle English Translation." *Modern Languages Review* 44 (1949): 465-75.
- Hodgson, Phyllis. "*The Orchard of Syon* and the English Mystical Tradition." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1964: 229-49.
- Holzknrecht, Karl Julius. *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia, 1923.
- Hope, William H. St John. "The Last Testament and Inventory of John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford," *Archaeologia* 66 (1914-15): 275-348.
- Horrall, Sarah M. "'For the Commun at Understand': *Cursor Mundi* and its Background." In *De Cella in Seculum*, edited by Michael G. Sargent, 97-107. Cambridge, 1989.
- Hudson, Anne. *English Wycliffite Writings*. Cambridge, 1978.
- Hudson, Anne. "'Laicus litteratus': the Paradox of Lollardy." In *Heresy and Literacy*, edited by Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, 222-36. Cambridge, 1994.

- Hudson, Anne. "Lollard Book Production." In *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, 125-42. Cambridge, 1989.
- Hudson, Anne. "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" In her *Lollards and Their Books*, 141-63. London and Ronceverte, 1985. Originally published in *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982): 261-83.
- Hudson, Anne. *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History*. Oxford, 1988.
- Hudson, Anne. "Some Aspects of Lollard Book Production." In *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, edited by Derek Baker, 147-57. *Studies in Church History* 9. Oxford, 1972.
- Hughes, Jonathan. *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire*. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, 1988.
- Hull, Suzanne W. *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books For Women 1475-1640*. San Marino, 1982.
- Hussey, S. S. "The Audience for the Middle English Mystics." In *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, edited by Michael G. Sargent, 109-22. Cambridge, 1989.
- Hutchison, Ann M. "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household." In *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, edited by Michael G. Sargent, 215-27. Cambridge, 1989.
- Hutchison, Ann M. "*The Myroure of oure Ladye*: A Medieval Guide for Contemplatives." In *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*. 2 vols. *Analecta Cartusiana* 35:19; *Spiritualität Heute und Gestern* 19, vol. 2, 215-227. Salzburg, 1993.
- James, M. R. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*. Cambridge, 1912.
- James, M. R. "Manuscripts From Essex Monastic Libraries." *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 21 (n.s., 1933): 34-46.
- Jarman, T. L. *Landmarks in the History of Education: English Education as Part of the European Tradition*. London, 1951.

- Johnson, Ian. "Prologue and Practice: Middle English Lives of Christ." In *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, edited by Roger Ellis, 69-85. Cambridge, 1989.
- Johnson, Lynn Staley. "The Question of Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe." *Speculum* 66 (1991): 820-38.
- Johnson, Penelope D. *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France*. Chicago and London, 1991.
- Johnstone, Hilda. "Isabella, The She-Wolf of France." *History*, n. s. 21 (1936-7): 208-18.
- Jolliffe, P. S. *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance*. Toronto, 1974.
- Jolliffe, P. S. "Middle English Translations of *De Exterioribus et Interioribus Hominis Compositione*." *Medieval Studies* 36 (1974): 259-77.
- Jones, Michael K., and Malcolm G. Underwood. *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Keen, Maurice. *English Society in the Later Middle Ages 1348-1500*. London, 1990.
- Keiser, George R. "Lincoln Cathedral Library Ms. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe." *Studies in Bibliography* 32 (1979): 158-179.
- Keiser, George R. "More Light on the Life and Milieu of Robert Thornton." *Studies in Bibliography* 36 (1983): 111-119.
- Keiser, George R. "Patronage and Piety in Fifteenth-Century England: Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, Symon Wynter and Beinecke MS 317." *Yale University Library Gazette* (October 1985): 32-46.
- Keiser, George R. "'To Knawe God Almyghtyn': Robert Thornton's Devotional Book." *Analecta Cartusiana* 106. *Spatmittelalterliche geistliche literatur in der nationalsprache*. Band 2. 1984: 103-125.
- Kekewich, Margaret. "Edward IV, William Caxton, and Literary Patronage in Yorkist England." *M.L.A. Review* 66 (1971): 481-7.
- Ker, N. R. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*. 2nd edition. London, 1964.

- Ker, N. R. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*. Supplement to the 2nd Edition, ed. Andrew G. Watson. London, 1987.
- Ker, N. R. *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*. 4 vols. Oxford, 1969-1992.
- Ker, N. R. "More Manuscripts From Essex Monastic Libraries: With Notes on Manuscripts Connected with Essex Parish Churches." *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 23 (1945): 298-311.
- Kettle, Ann J. "'My Wife Shall Have It': Marriage and Property in the Wills and Testaments of Later Mediaeval England." In *Marriage and Property*, edited by Elizabeth M. Craik, 89-103. Aberdeen, 1984.
- Kibbee, Douglas A. *For to Speke Frenche Trewely: the French Language in England 1000-1600*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1991.
- Kieckhefer, Richard. *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu*. Chicago and London, 1984.
- King, Sarah. "The Sisters of the Common Life at Deventer, 1374-1418: A New Beginning?" *Mystics Quarterly* 18 (1992): 120-30.
- Kingsford, Charles L. *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford, 1913.
- Kingsford, C. L. "Historical Notes on Mediaeval London Houses." *London Topographical Record* 10 (1916): 44-144 (Part 1); 11 (1918): 28-81 (Part 2); 12 (1920): 1-66 (Part 3).
- Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane. *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago and London, 1987.
- Knowles, David. *The Religious Orders in England*. Vol. 2. Cambridge, 1955.
- Knowles, David, and R. Neville Hadcock. *Medieval Religious House: England and Wales*. London, 1953.
- Kren, Thomas. *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the Department of Manuscripts of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Collaboration with the Huntington Library and Art Collections, June 21-24, 1990*. Malibu, 1992.
- Krochalis, Jeanne E. "The Books and Reading of Henry V and His Circle." *The Chaucer Review* 23 (1988): 50-77.

- Lacy, K. E. "Women and Work in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century London." In *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Britain*, ed. L. Duffin and L. Charles, 24-78. London, 1985.
- Lagorio, Valerie M., and Michael G. Sargent. "English Mystical Writings." In *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, vol. 9, edited by A. E. Hartung, 3049-3137 and 3405-3471. New Haven, 1993.
- Lander, J. R. *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509*. London, 1976.
- Lawson, John. *Medieval Education and the Reformation*. London, 1967.
- Lawson, John, and Harold Silver. *A Social History of Education in England*. London, 1973.
- Leclercq, Jean. *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*. Translated by Catharine Misrahi. New York, 1961.
- Leclercq, Jean. *Women and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*. Cistercian Studies 104. Kalamazoo, 1989.
- Legge, M. Dominica. "Anglo-Norman and the Historian." *History* n.s., 26 (1941): 163-75.
- Legge, M. Dominica. *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*. Edinburgh, 1950.
- Legge, M. Dominica. *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background*. Oxford, 1963.
- Lehrman, Sara. "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages." In *The Roles and Images of Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Douglas Radcliffe-Umstead, 133-44. University of Pittsburgh Publications on the Middle Ages and Renaissance 3. Pittsburgh, 1975.
- Leroquais, Abbé V. *Les livres d'heures: Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Vol. 1. Paris, 1927.
- Lewis, Katherine. "Paradigmatic Young Women? The Upbringing and Education of Virgin Martyrs in some Late-Medieval English Narratives." Unpublished paper presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July, 1995.
- Lewis, R. E., N. F. Blake, and A. S. G. Edwards. *Index of Printed Middle English Prose*. New York and London, 1985.
- Linguistic Atlas of Later Medieval English*. 4 vols.

- Lochrie, Karma. *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*. Philadelphia, 1991.
- Loftus, E. A., and H. F. Chettle. *A History of Barking Abbey*. Barking, 1954.
- Lomperis, Linda, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*. Philadelphia, 1993.
- Lovatt, Roger. "Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England." In *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, edited by Marion Glasscoe, 47-62. Exeter, 1982.
- Lovatt, Roger. "The *Imitation of Christ* in Late Medieval England", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1968), 97-121.
- Lucas, Peter J. "The Growth and Development of English Literary Patronage in the Later Middle Ages and Early Renaissance." *The Library*, 6th ser., 4 (1982): 219-48.
- Marks, Richard, and Nigel Morgan. *The Golden Age of English Manuscript Painting 1200-1500*. London, 1981.
- Martin, C. A. "Middle English Manuals of Religious Instruction." In *So Meny People Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Medieval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, edited by Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels, 283-98. Edinburgh, 1981.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison. London, 1966.
- McCarthy, Joseph M. *Humanistic Emphasis in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais*. Leiden and Cologne, 1976.
- McLaughlin, Eleanor Commo. "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology." In *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Tradition*, edited by Rosemary Radford Ruether. New York, 1974.
- McDonnell, Ernest W. *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene*. New Brunswick, NJ, 1954.
- McFarlane, K. B. "The Education of the Nobility in Later Medieval England." In his *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*. Oxford, 1973.
- McFarlane, K. B. *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*. (Oxford, 1973).

- McMahon, Clara. *Education in Fifteenth-Century England*. New York, 1968.
- McNamer, Sarah. "Female Authors, Provincial Setting: The Re-Versing of Courtly Love in the Findern Manuscript." *Viator* 22 (1991): 279-310.
- McNiven, Peter. *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby*. Woodbridge and Wolfboro, 1987.
- McSheffrey, Shannon. "Literacy and the Gender Gap in the Late Middle Ages: Women and Reading in Lollard Communities." In *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, 157-70. Cambridge, 1995.
- McSheffrey, Shannon. "Women and Lollardy: A Reassessment." *Canadian Journal of History* 26 (1991): 199-223.
- Meale, Carol M. "' . . . alle the bokes that I have of latyn, englisch, and frensch': Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England." In *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, 128-58. Cambridge, 1993.
- Meale, Carol M. "'Gode Men/Wiues Maydnes and Alle Men': Romance and Its Audiences." In *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, edited by Carol M. Meale, 209-25. Cambridge, 1994.
- Meale, Carol M. "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status." In *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, edited by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, 201-38. Cambridge, 1989.
- Meale, Carol M. "The Compiler at Work: John Colyns and BL MS Harley 2252." In *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall, 82-103. Cambridge, 1983.
- Meale, Carol M., ed. *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*. Cambridge, 1993.
- Mertes, Kate. *The English Noble Household 1250-1600*. Oxford, 1988.
- Miner, John N. *The Grammar Schools of Medieval England: A. F. Leach in Historiographical Perspective*. Montreal and Kingston, 1990.
- Minnis, A. J., ed. *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*. Cambridge, 1994.

- Minnis, A. J., ed. *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Mitchell, Linda E. "Noble Widowhood in the Thirteenth Century: Three Generations of Mortimer Widows, 1246-1334." In *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*, edited by Louise Mirror, 169-90. Ann Arbor, 1992.
- Moore, Samuel. "General Aspects of Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages." *The Library*, 3rd ser., 4 (1913): 369-92.
- Moore, Samuel. "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450 I." *PMLA* 27 (1912): 188-207.
- Moore, Samuel. "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450 II." *PMLA* n.s. 28 (1931): 79-105.
- Moran, Jo Ann Hoeppe. *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese*. Princeton, 1985.
- Moran, Jo Ann Hoeppe. "Literacy and Education in Northern England, 1350-1550: A Methodological Inquiry." *Northern History* 17 (1981): 1-23.
- Moreton, C. E. "The 'Library' of a Late-Fifteenth-Century Lawyer." *The Library*, 6th ser. 13 (1991): 338-46.
- Mundó, A. "Bibliotheca: Bible et Lecture de Carême d'après Saint Benoit." *Révue Benedictine* 60 (1950): 65-90.
- Myers, A. R. "The Household of Queen Elizabeth Woodville, 1466-7." In his *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, edited by Cecil H. Clough, 251-318. London, 1985.
- Myers, A. R. "The Household of Queen Margaret of Anjou." In his *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, edited by Cecil H. Clough, 135-209. London, 1985.
- Myers, A. R. "The Jewels of Queen Margaret of Anjou." In his *Crown, Household and Parliament in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Cecil H. Clough, 211-229. London, 1985.
- Neel, Carol. "The Origin of the Beguines." In *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, edited by Judith M. Bennett *et al*, 240-60. Chicago and London, 1989.

- Newcourt, R. *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*. Vol. 2. London, 1710.
- Nichols, John A., and Lillian Thomas Shank, eds. *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 1. Cistercian Studies 71. Kalamazoo, 1984.
- Nichols, John A., and Lillian Thomas Shank, eds. *Peace Weavers: Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 2. Cistercian Studies 72. Kalamazoo, 1987.
- Norton, C., D. Park, and P. Binski. *Dominican Painting in East Anglia: The Thornham Parva Retable and the Musée Cluny Frontal*. Woodbridge, 1987.
- Oliva, Marilyn. "Aristocracy or Meritocracy? Office-Holding Patterns in Late Medieval English Nunneries." In *Women in the Church*, edited by W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 27, 197-208. Oxford, 1990.
- Orme, Nicholas. "Chaucer and Education." *The Chaucer Review* 16 (1981): 38-59.
- Orme, Nicholas. *Education in the West of England 1066-1548*. Exeter, 1976.
- Orme, Nicholas. *English Schools in the Middle Ages*. London, 1973.
- Orme, Nicholas. *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530*. London and New York, 1984.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" In *Women, Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, 67-87. Stanford, 1974.
- Pächt, Otto, and J. J. G. Alexander. *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*. 3 vols. Oxford, 1966-1973.
- Pantin, W.A. "Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman." In *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essay Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. Jonathan G. Alexander and Margaret T. Gibson. Oxford, 1976, 398-422.
- Pantin, W.A. *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*. Cambridge, 1955. Reprint. Toronto, 1980.
- Parkes, M. B. "The Literacy of the Laity." In *Literature and Western Civilization: The Medieval World*, edited by David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby, 555-77. London, 1973.

- Parrey, Yvonne. "'Devoted Disciples of Christ': Early Sixteenth-Century Religious Life in the Nunnery at Amesbury." *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 67, no. 164 (October, 1994): 240-48.
- Paxton, Catherine. "The Nunneries of London and its Environs in the Later Middle Ages." D. Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992.
- Paying, S. J. "Social Mobility, Demographic Change, and Landed Society in Late Medieval England." *The Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 45 (1992): 51-73.
- Pearsall, Derek. "The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century." *Essays and Studies* 29 (1976): 56-83.
- Pearsall, Derek. *John Lydgate*.
- Pearsall, Derek, ed. *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*. Cambridge, 1990).
- Perot, Michelle, ed. *Writing Women's History*, translated by Felicia Pheasant. Oxford, 1992.
- Petroff, Elizabeth Alvida. *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*. New York and Oxford, 1994.
- Pezzini, Domenico. "Bridgettine Tracts of Spiritual Guidance in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study in Translation." In *The Medieval Translator II*, edited by Roger Ellis, 175-207. London, 1991.
- Pfaff, R. W. *New Liturgical Feasts*. Oxford, 1970.
- Pfander, H. G. "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England and Observation on Chaucer's Parson's Tale." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35 (1936): 243-58.
- Plomer, H. R. "Books Mentioned in Wills." *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1904): 99-121.
- Pollock, Frederick and Frederick William Maitland. *The History of English Law*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, 1911.
- Power, Eileen. *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535*. Cambridge, 1922.
- Power, Eileen. *Medieval Women*. Edited by M.M. Postan. Cambridge, 1975.

- Price, Jocelyn G. "The *Liflade of Seinte Iulienne* and Hagiographic Convention." *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 14 (1987): 37-58.
- Prince, Gerald. "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee." In *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, edited by Jane P. Tompkins, 7-25. Baltimore, 1980.
- Rabinowitz, Peter J. *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*. Ithaca, NY, 1987.
- Raine, Angelo. *Mediaeval York*. London, 1955.
- Raitt, Jill, ed. *Christian Spirituality II: High Middle Ages and Reformation*. 1988. Reprint. New York, 1989.
- Raymo, R. R. "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction." In *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, Vol. 7, edited by A. E. Hartung, 2255-2378 and 2470-2582. New Haven, 1986.
- Revell, Peter. *Fifteenth Century English Prayers and Meditations: A Descriptive List of Manuscripts in the British Library*. New York and London, 1975.
- Rhodes, Jan. "Private Devotion in England on the Eve of the Reformation." Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Durham, 1974.
- Riches, S. J. E. "'The Pot of Oure Hope': The Image of St Anne in the Late Medieval Period." M.A. Dissertation, University of York, 1991.
- Richmond, Colin. *John Hopton: A Fifteenth-Century Suffolk Gentleman*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Richmond, Colin. *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase*. Cambridge, 1990.
- Richmond, Colin. "Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman." In *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Barrie Dobson, 93-208. Gloucester, 1984.
- Richmond, Colin. "The English Gentry and Religion c. 1500." In *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, edited by Christopher Harper-Bill, 121-150. Woodbridge, 1991.
- Riddy, Felicity. "'Women Talking About the Things of God': A Late Medieval Subculture." In *Women and Literature in Britain c. 1050-1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, 104-27. Cambridge, 1993.

- Riehle, Wolfgang. *The Middle English Mystics*. Translated by Bernard Standring. London, Boston and Henley, 1981.
- Rigby, S. H. *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender*. Basingstoke and London, 1995.
- Ringbom, Sixten. "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Piety." *Gazette des beaux arts*, 6th ser., 73 (1969): 159-70.
- Robbins, Rossell Hope, and John L. Cutler. *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*. Lexington, 1965.
- Robertson, Elizabeth. *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience*. Knoxville, 1990.
- Robertson, Elizabeth. "The Rule of the Body: The Feminine Spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse*." In *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, edited by Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley. Knoxville, Tennessee, 1989.
- Robinson, P. R. "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts." *Codicologica* 3 (1980): 46-69.
- Robinson, P. R. *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737-1600 in Cambridge Libraries*. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1988.
- Roisin, Simone. "L'Efflorescence cistercienne et la courant féminin de piété au XIIIe siècle." *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique* 39 (1943): 342-78.
- Rosenthal, Joel T. "Aristocratic Cultural Patronage and Book Bequests, 1350-1500." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 64 (1982): 522-48.
- Rosenthal, Joel T. "Aristocratic Widows in Fifteenth-Century England." In *Women and the Structure of Society*, edited by Barbara J. Harris and Jo Ann K. McNamara, 36-47. Durham, NC, 1984.
- Rosenthal, Joel T. "Other Victims: Peeresses as War Widows, 1450-1500." In *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*, edited by Louise Mirrer, 131-52. Ann Arbor, 1992.
- Rosenthal, Joel T. *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege in Fifteenth-Century England*. Philadelphia, 1991.

- Rosenthal, Joel T. *The Purchase of Paradise: Gift-Giving and the Aristocracy 1307-1485*. London and Toronto, 1972.
- Ross, John. *Delafield: The Family History*. 2 vols. New York, 1945.
- Rosser, Gervase. "Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages." In *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750*, edited by Susan J. Wright, 29-55. London, 1988.
- Rosser, Gervase. "Parochial conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th ser. 1 (1991): 173-89.
- Rothwell, William. "The Role of French in Thirteenth-Century England." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 58 (1976): 445-66.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*. Vol. 2. London, 1921.
- Rubin, Miri. *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge*. Cambridge, 1987.
- Rubin, Miri. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge, 1991.
- Rubin, Miri. "The Eucharist and the construction of Medieval Identities." In *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, edited by David Aers, 43-63. Hemel Hempstead, 1992.
- Russell, G.H. "Vernacular Instruction of the Laity in the Later Middle Ages: Some Texts and Notes." *Journal of Religious History* 2 (1962): 98-119.
- Saenger, Paul. "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages." In *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Roger Chartier and translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, 141-73. Cambridge, 1989.
- Saenger, Paul. "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Scripts and Society", *Viator* 13 (1982), 367-414.
- Salter, Elizabeth. *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ."* *Analecta Cartusiana* 10. Salzburg, 1974.

- Sandler, Lucy Freeman. "The Image of the Book-Owner in the Fourteenth Century." In *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium*, edited by Nicholas Rogers, 58-80. Stamford, 1993.
- Sargent, Michael G., ed. *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*. Cambridge, 1989.
- Sargent, Michael G. "Minor Devotional Writings." In *Middle English Prose: A Critical guide to Major Authors and Genres*, edited by A. S. G. Edwards, 147-75. New Brunswick, NJ, 1984.
- Sargent, Michael G. "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1970): 225-40.
- Sargent, Michael G. "Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*: The London Manuscript Group Reconsidered." *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), 189-216.
- Saul, Nigel. "The Religious Sympathies of the Gentry in Gloucestershire 1200-1500", *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* 98 (1980): 99-112.
- Saul, Nigel. *Scenes From Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400*. Oxford, 1986.
- Scase, Wendy. "St Anne and the Education of the Virgin: Literary and Artistic Traditions and their Implications." In *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Rogers, 81-96. (Stamford, 1993).
- Scattergood, V. J. *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*. London, 1971.
- Scattergood, V. J. "Two Medieval Book Lists." *The Library*, 5th series, 23 (1969): 236-9.
- Scattergood, V.J. and J.W. Sherborne, eds. *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*. London, 1983.
- Schofield, R. S. "The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England." In *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, edited by Jack Goody, 311-25. Cambridge, 1968.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York, 1988.

- Scott, Kathleen. "Caveat Lector: Ownership and Standardization in the Illustration of Fifteenth-Century English Manuscripts." In *English Manuscript Studies*. Vol. 1, edited by Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths, 19-63. Oxford, 1989.
- Shaw, Judith. "The Influence of Canonical and Episcopal Reform on Popular Books of Instruction." In *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, edited by Thomas J. Heffernan, 44-60. Tennessee Studies in Literature 28. Knoxville, 1985.
- Sheils, W. J., and Diana Wood, eds. *Women in the Church*. Studies in Church History 27. Oxford, 1990.
- Sheingorn, Pamela. "Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History." In *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, edited by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, 169-198. Athens, Georgia, 1990.
- Sherborne, J. W. "Aspects of English Court Culture in the Later Fourteenth Century." In *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, edited by V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne, 1-27. London, 1983.
- Slegg, W. B. "The Chamberlaine Tomb at East Harling, Norfolk." *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society* 7 (1943): 126-9.
- Smith, Anthony Robert. "Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459)." D. Phil. Dissertation, Oxford University, 1982.
- Smith, Anthony. "Litigation and Politics: Sir John Fastolf's Defense of his English Property." In *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, edited by Tony Pollard. Gloucester and New York, 1984.
- Smith, Lesley and Jane H. M. Taylor, eds. *Women, the Book and the Godly*. Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference, vol. 1. Cambridge, 1995.
- Sotheby & co., *Catalogue of the Well-Known collection of Fine Illuminated and Other Manuscripts, Rare Early Service Books, Incunables and other Valuable Printed Books, formed by the late John Meade Falkner, Esq. 12 December, 1932*.
- Starkey, David. "The Age of the Household: Politics, Society and the Arts." In *The Later Middle Ages*, edited by Stephen Medcalf. London, 1981.
- Stock, Brian. *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Princeton, 1983.

- Stock, Brian. "Medieval Literacy, Linguistic Theory, and Social Organization," *New Literary History* 16 (1984-5): 13-29.
- Stratford, Jenny. "Joan Buckland (d. 1462)." In *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, edited by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton, 113-28. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Sturman, Winifred M. "Barking Abbey: A Study in its External and Internal Administration from the Conquest to the Dissolution." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1961.
- Suggett, Helen. "The Use of French in England in the Later Middle Ages." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 28 (1946): 61-83.
- Sutton, Anne F. "Lady Joan Bradbury." In *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, edited by Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton, 209-238. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Swanson, R. N. *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance Before the Reformation*. Manchester, 1993.
- Swanson, R. N. *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*. Oxford, 1993.
- Swanson, R. N. "Literacy, Heresy, History and Orthodoxy: Perspectives and Permutations for the Later Middle Ages." In *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, edited by Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, 279-93. Cambridge, 1994.
- Tanner, Norman P. *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*. Toronto, 1984.
- Tait, Michael Beckwith. "The Brigittine Monastery of Syon (Middlesex) with Special Reference to its Monastic Usages." D. Phil. Dissertation, Oxford, University, 1975.
- Tarvers, Josephine Koster. "'Thys ys my mystrys boke': English Women as Readers and Writers in Late Medieval England." In *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, edited by Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods, 305-27. *Studies in Medieval Culture* 31. Kalamazoo, 1992.
- Taylor, Jane H. M. and Lesley Smith, eds. *Women, the Book and the Godly*. Cambridge, 1995.

- Thompson, James Westfall. *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley, 1939, Reprint. New York, 1963.
- Thomson, J. A. F. "Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16 (1965): 178-95.
- Thrupp, Sylvia. *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500*. 1948. Reprint. Ann Arbor 1962.
- Thompson, Sally. *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries After the Norman Conquest*. Oxford, 1991.
- Thomson, K. M. *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library*. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfboro, New Hampshire, 1989.
- Tillotson, John H. *Marrick Priory: A Nunnery in Late Medieval Yorkshire*. Borthwick Paper 75. York, 1989.
- Tuck, J. Anthony. "Carthusian Monks and Lollard Knights: Religious Attitudes at the Court of Richard II." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1984): 149-61.
- Turville-Petre, Thorlac. "The Relationship of the Vernon and Clopton Manuscripts." In *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, edited by Derek Pearsall, 29-44. Cambridge, 1990.
- Uitz, Erika. *Women in the Medieval Town*. Translated by Sheila Marnie. London, 1990.
- Underwood, Malcolm G. "Politics and Piety in the Household of Lady Margaret Beaufort." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987): 39-52.
- Usilton, Larry W. "The King's Women and their Corrodies." In *The Worlds of Medieval Women: Creativity, Influence, Imagination*, edited by Constance H. Berman, Charles W. Connell, and Judith Rice Rothschild, 69-85. Morgantown, West Virginia, 1982.
- Vale, M. G. A. *Piety, Charity and Literacy Among the Yorkshire Gentry 1370-1480*. Borthwick Paper 50. York, 1976.
- VCH Essex. Vol. 2. London, 1907.
- VCH London. Vol. 1
- VCH Wiltshire. Vol. 3.

- Voaden, Rosalynn. "The Company She Keeps: Mechtild of Hackborn in Late-Medieval Devotional Compilation." In *The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, edited by Rosalynn Voaden. Cambridge, forthcoming.
- Walker, Sue Sheridan, ed. *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*. Ann Arbor, 1993.
- Ward, Jennifer C. *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*. London and New York, 1992.
- Warner, George F., and Julius P. Gilson. *British Museum Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*. Vol.2. London, 1921.
- Warren, Ann K. *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1985.
- Watson, Andrew G. *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 700-1600 in the Department of Manuscripts, The British Library*. 2 vols. London, 1979.
- Watson, Andrew G. *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 435-1600 in Oxford Libraries*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1984.
- Wedgwood, Josiah C. and Anne D. Holt, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439-1509*. London, 1936.
- Wilson, Edmund. "A Middle English Manuscript at Coughton Court, Warwickshire, and British Library MS. Harley 4012." *Notes and Queries* 24 (1977): 295-303.
- Wilson, R. M. "English and French in England 1100-1300." *History* n.s., 28 (1943): 37-60.
- Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn. "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." In *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, 61-85. Cambridge, 1993.
- Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn. "Saints' Lives and the Female Reader." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27 (1991): 314-32.
- Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn. "The Virgin's Tale." In *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, edited by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson, 165-194. London and New York, 1994.

- Wood, Robert A. "Poor Widows, c. 1393-1415." In *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton, 55-69. London and Rio Grande, Ohio, 1994.
- Woodforde, Christopher. *The Norwich School of Glass Painting in the Fifteenth Century*. London, 1950.
- Wormald, Francis. "The Monastic Library." In *Gatherings in Honor of Dorothy E. Miner*, ed. Ursula E. McCracken, Lilian M. C. Randall, and Richard H. Randall, jr., 93-109. Baltimore, 1974. Reprinted from Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright, eds. *The English Library Before 1700*. London, 1958.
- Wright, Cyril Ernest. *Fontes Harleiani*. London, 1972.