

FEMALE SPACES, FEMALE COMMUNITIES



‘TO PROMOTE GOD’S PRAISE AND HER  
NEIGHBOUR’S SALVATION’.  
STRATEGIES OF AUTHORSHIP AND READERSHIP  
AMONG MYSTIC WOMEN IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

Madeleine Jeay and Kathleen Garay

He read to her many a good book of high contemplation, and other books, such as the Bible with doctors’ commentaries on it, St Bride’s book, Hilton’s book, Bonaventura’s *Stimulus Amoris*, *Incendium Amoris* and other similar [...] Afterwards he read of a woman called Mary of Oignies, and of her manner of life, of the wonderful sweetness that she had in hearing the word of God. [...]<sup>1</sup>

Referring to herself in her autobiography in the third person, the fifteenth-century mystic Margery Kempe (ca.1373–ca.1478) explains how she obtained inspiration and reassurance in her own spiritual journey through the examples of other women who had undergone similar mystical crises and had recorded their experiences. Margery was an almost illiterate married woman, the mother of fourteen children, who discovered a vocation for spirituality and acquired a significant knowledge of theology thanks to the sermons she attended and her sometimes confrontational conversations with the clerics and prelates she consulted for spiritual guidance.<sup>2</sup> Among the books which were read to her by a priest over a period of seven or eight years, two in the quotation above refer to works by or about mystic women. There

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B.A. Windeatt (London: 1994) 182, 191. Walter Hilton’s spiritual writings, especially the *Scale of Perfection*, were very influential in fifteenth-century England; wrongly attributed to Saint Bonaventure, the thirteenth-century *Stimulus amoris* (*The Prick of Love*) was probably written by the Franciscan James of Milan; the *Incendium amoris* (*The Fire of Love*) by the hermit Richard Rolle is an account of his mystical experiences. For details see 191–193. The manuscript Douce 114 contains besides the *Life* of Marie of Oignies those of Elizabeth of Spaalbeck and Christina Mirabilis. On the diffusion of devotional texts among English women at the end of the Middle Ages, see Bartlett A.C., *Male Authors, Female Readers. Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca – London: 1995) 1–33.

<sup>2</sup> According to Nicholas Watson, Margery’s learning and literacy were more sophisticated than often thought. Watson N., “The Making of the *Book of Margery Kempe*”, in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 395–434, 397.

is Marie of Oignies (1177–1213), a ‘holy woman to whom God had given great grace of weeping and crying’, the beguine who became a model for other women devoted to a pious life, through the circulation of her *vita* written by James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré.<sup>3</sup> ‘St Bride’s book’ refers to the *Revelations* of Birgitta of Sweden (1303–1373) which circulated all over Europe. Founder of the Bridgittine Order,<sup>4</sup> she is mentioned many times in Margery’s book, where she appears as a powerful model, perhaps because she was herself a mother who had found her way to holiness. Another model provided for Margery is Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231) who ‘also cried with a loud voice, as is written in her treatise’.<sup>5</sup> Margery’s reading programme is similar in many respects to those of two fifteenth-century aristocratic English women: Cecily of York had books read aloud by her chaplain during the evening meal, among them Hilton’s and the Pseudo Bonaventure’s books, the *Golden Legend*, the *Lives* of Saint Mary Magdalene and Saint Catherine of Siena, and the *Revelations* of Saint Birgitta of Sweden. Lady Cecile Neville also had works by Walter Hilton and by the German nun Mechtild of Hackeborn read to her.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these writings related to mystic women, Margery took great inspiration from the sites associated with them which she visited on her pilgrimages and from the women she went to meet in person. The image that we get from the readings made to her and her contacts with people and places, is one of a strong virtual community of women linked by a similar form of spirituality and a vast corpus of works attached to their names. The existence of such a spiritual network, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, leads us to reconsider the postulate that the diffusion of these works was limited.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Book of Margery Kempe* 205. Jacques de Vitry and Thomas de Cantimpré, *The Life of Marie d’Oignies*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Syon Abbey, the order’s English house, was founded by Henry V in 1415.

<sup>5</sup> *Book of Margery Kempe* 193. The identification of this text and its author are still subjects of scholarly debate. Margery was probably referring to Elizabeth, Princess of the Hungarian royal house. Daughter of Andras II, duchess of Thuringia and mother of three, Elizabeth became a Franciscan tertiary at the age of 20, after her husband’s death, and led a life of austerity. Canonized in 1235, the many literary representations of her *Life* became sources of inspiration. See the further discussion below.

<sup>6</sup> Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 10–12. On the reading programme of French aristocratic women, see Boulton M., “Littérature pieuse écrite par et pour les femmes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle” in Poirier G. (ed.), *Dix ans de recherche sur les femmes écrivains de l’Ancien Régime: influences et confluences. Mélanges offerts à Hannah Fournier* (Québec: 2008) 37–59.

<sup>7</sup> Vauchez A., “Lay People’s Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)”, in Blumenfeld-Kosinski R. – Szell T. (eds.),

The fact that some of these Lives were composed in Latin is not a sufficient proof that their intended audience was restricted to clerics or literate sections of the population. On the contrary, the passage from Margery Kempe's *Book* shows how these writings could be accessible to uneducated lay people through a personal reading or a transposition into the vernacular made by a spiritual advisor. In addition to questions of their diffusion, several questions can be raised from this example, the most controversial being the issue of the authorship of these works. It is true that only a few examples of female authorship without male mediation can be identified for this period. At the end of the tenth century, Hroswitha of Gandersheim composed hagiographies and plays; in twelfth and thirteenth-century England, at the abbey of Barking, Mary, Constance and an anonymous nun transposed Latin saints' lives into Anglo-Norman.<sup>8</sup> Beguines such as Hadewijch of Brabant and Beatrice of Nazareth wrote spiritual poetry and recorded their visions in Dutch, and the nuns of Helfta, Gertrud the Great (1256–1302) and Mechtild of Hackeborn (d.1298), noted down their visions and revelations in collaboration with the sisters of the convent. In Italy, we can include Saint Clare and possibly Angela of Foligno. At least three thirteenth-century *vitae* of saintly women can confidently be attributed to women: the *Life of Isabelle de France* by Agnes of Harcourt, the *vita* of *Douceline of Digne* by Felipa Porcelet and the biography of Beatrix of Ornacieux by Marguerite of Oingt. Another female author, Marguerite Porete, was put on trial in 1310 for her *Mirror of Simple Souls*, written in French, which circulated widely in its translations into Latin and other languages, despite the ban imposed on its diffusion.

The authorial norm, however, is the biography of a pious woman or a report of her mystical experience transcribed by her male 'secretary', her confessor or spiritual advisor, or at least mediated by him.<sup>9</sup> While,

---

*Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca – London: 1991) 21–31, 30. Our conclusion about the existence of such networks from the twelfth century does not concur with those of Scheepsma W. about Dutch mystic women: "Mystical Networks in the Middle Ages? On the First Women Writers in Dutch and their Literary Contacts", in Dijk S. van – Broomans P. – Meulen J.F. van der – Oostrum P. van (eds.), *I Have Heard About You'. Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlof* (Hilversum: 2004) 43–60.

<sup>8</sup> MacBain W., "Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers", in Short I. (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays* (London: 1993) 235–250.

<sup>9</sup> The tradition of spiritual friendships between women and their spiritual advisors goes back as far as Augustine and Jerome: Conybeare C., "Spaces between Letters. Augustine's Correspondence with Women", in Olson – Kerby-Fulton, *Voices in Dialogue*

for most of the period between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, the church establishment was willing to consider the possibility that women, always regarded as the weaker and more sinful sex, might be the vessels chosen to transmit the word of God, their chances of acceptance were much increased by some form of male authentication. The result is a situation of negotiation between the mystic and her amanuensis in which it is far from clear that she is submitting to his authority and control. On the delicate issue of attributing to the mystic herself the authorship of works produced in collaboration with a man who represents the clerical establishment, much has been said.<sup>10</sup> Interpretations of this situation go from scepticism concerning the influence of the mystic on the final text to the conviction that the women's voices can be heard even through their transcription, even when it was rendered in Latin.<sup>11</sup> The evidence presented here will suggest that while ecclesiastical authorities had the final say regarding the orthodoxy of what was published by men and women alike, especially when the texts were in the vernacular, this did not preclude forms of female manipulation of clerical authority that are manifest in the vast corpus of (auto)biographies, treatises, visions, letters, poetry, bearing witness to women's involvement in the preparation of these works and of their desire to provide a teaching through their experience, in spite of the fact that the Church prohibited them from preaching.

Margery Kempe's description of her own 'reading' and receptivity can be extrapolated to both the production and dissemination of writings presenting the spiritual journeys of exceptional women from the end of the twelfth to the fifteenth century. She did not passively receive the *Lives* or testimonies that were read to her but regarded them as templates for her own spiritual progress. We can safely assume that she related the models of behaviour they described to the women who performed them, and not to the men who were responsible for the written text.

---

57–72 and Vessey M., "Response to Catherine Conybeare. Women of Letters?" in *ibid.* 73–96. These women were often from patrician backgrounds and were able to read and write Latin.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Bilinkoff J., *Related Lives, Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca: 2005) especially ch. 3, "Whose *Life* is this Anyway?" 46–75.

<sup>11</sup> See the studies gathered by Chance J. (ed.), *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Gainesville: 1996), especially the article by Greenspan. See also the cases examined by Coakley J.W., *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power. Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (New York: 2006) 45–67.

Our discussion will follow the few threads that can be retraced of the production, circulation and reception of works identified with mystic women, and consider how they took inspiration from one another. The traditional process of circulation of writings through the copying of manuscripts, raises methodological issues specific to the Middle Ages, especially when women are concerned. Not all the women who knew how to read were able to write, and for most of them their lack of training in Latin marginalized them from the highest forms of literacy.<sup>12</sup> Most of the evidence of the circulation and reception of works related to women's devotion comes from examples found in the *Lives* themselves, although some can also be found in testimonies from their entourages or in the information provided by the physical composition of manuscripts. The overview to be presented here represents the preliminary stage of an inquiry, requiring further research, on the networks that the pious women and their communities developed between themselves. We will suggest that these networks both facilitated and supported a distinct gynocentric literary practice, one which made it possible for mystic women, from the twelfth century to the end of the Middle Ages, to learn from and support one another in the writing and reading of spiritual texts.

In many respects Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) can be seen as the model for subsequent writings associated with women's experiences of spirituality. While she can be considered as an author in her own right, her association with Volmar, the spiritual partner who acted as her secretary became the norm after her. The great majority of these works, especially the biographies, were the result of a partnership between the mystic woman and her mediator in the production of the written record of her spiritual journey. We will begin our study with Hildegard and her influence on the other great twelfth-century German visionary, Elizabeth of Schönau (1129–1164) and her possible impact on the beguinal movement in Belgium and the Netherlands.

As lay women, who led pious lives in urban communities without taking vows or being cloistered, the beguines knew of Hildegard. Among the best known of them, Marie of Oignies can be considered, even more than Hildegard, as an inspiration for generations of women involved in a spiritual quest. Her influence extended to Southern France, Germany, and England, as we see in Margery's

---

<sup>12</sup> Chance J., "Introduction", in Chance, *Gender and Text* 1–21.

testimony. The impact of the type of ascetic devotion described in the lives of Marie of Oignies and the other mystic women from Belgium by two preachers, James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré, can also be traced in the group of nuns cloistered in the monastery of Helfta in Germany, which produced some of the most important examples of spiritual work. Another great figure, herself a model for other women, is Elisabeth of Hungary, whether or not she was the actual author of the text to which Margery refers; accounts of her life and miracles circulated widely. Finally, at the end of the Middle Ages, the visions and biography of Birgitta of Sweden were highly influential, as we have seen with Margery Kempe. We will follow the path drawn by these major figures of female spirituality in the Middle Ages in order to trace the production and reception of the works attributed to them.

Hildegard of Bingen's authorship of the important theological and visionary works attributed to her is not contested, in spite of the fact that she had to rely on her scribe Volmar.<sup>13</sup> Besides the composition of liturgical music for which she is popular nowadays, she composed major works (*Scivias*, *Liber vitae meritorum* or *Book of Life's Merits*, and the *Liber divinorum operum* or *Book of Divine Works*) in which she celebrates God's creation. In her writings on the 'Nature of things' (*Liber subtilitatum*), she demonstrates a knowledge of the human body, especially of the female body, concentrating on ailments and their cures. Placed under the care of the recluse Jutta at the age of eight, as her reputation spread, she gained the attention of Bernard of Clairvaux. More revealing from the perspective of a study of women's networks, are her friendship with the young nun, Richardis von Stade, and her influence on the abbesses of convents who asked for her advice. Among the many letters she exchanged with her contemporaries, we can mention those of the abbesses of Aitwick (Oudwijk) near Utrecht and Sophie of Kizzingen who wanted to know if they could resign their responsibilities and become recluses. There is also a letter from the abbess Adelheid of Gandersheim, who had been educated by Hildegard, as well as correspondence with the Benedictine visionary, Elizabeth of Schönau.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> It is worth mentioning that she also benefited from the collaboration of nuns of her convent, particularly Richardis von Stade.

<sup>14</sup> *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. J.L. Baird – R.K. Ehrman, vol. 1 (New York: 1998–2004), vol. 2 (Oxford: 2006) and Clark A.L., *Elizabeth of Schönau: A Twelfth-Century Visionary* (Philadelphia: 1992).

Elizabeth's ecstatic visions were first recorded by other sisters of her convent until her brother Ekbert took upon himself to play the role of her editor and translator from German into Latin.<sup>15</sup> He transposed her oral descriptions into written records in order to publicize them, probably suppressing potentially questionable visions in his effort to legitimize them. There are indications that Elizabeth kept describing her visions to some sisters who wrote them down.<sup>16</sup> Her revelations, first announced in his preaching by Hildelin, the abbot of the monastery, have been transmitted in at least 145 manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> In her *Liber viarum Dei* (*Book of the Ways of God*) she acknowledges the role played by Hildegard of Bingen in her self-awareness as agent in the production of her texts, in the affirmation of her own involvement in the creation of a book:

On a certain day while I was in a trance, [the angel] had led me as if to a meadow in which a tent was pitched and we went into it. And he showed me a great pile of books kept there and said: 'Do you see those books? All of these are still to be dictated before the judgment day'. Then, raising one from the pile he said: 'This is the *Book of the Ways of God* which is to be revealed through you after you have visited sister Hildegard and listened to her'. And indeed it began to be fulfilled in this way immediately after I returned from her.<sup>18</sup>

Another testimony of this identification of a mystic woman with the books written under her name can be found in the codex 1942 of the Biblioteca Governativa in Lucca, the only illuminated manuscript of Hildegard's last work, the *Liber divinorum operum*. In the margin of the ten miniatures, we can see an image of the visionary represented transcribing her experience.<sup>19</sup> This could be one of the first representations of a woman as an author, portrayed with the same dignity as the evangelists or the biblical prophets.<sup>20</sup> As well as this visual testimony

<sup>15</sup> On Ekbert's role, see Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power* 25–44.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Elizabeth of Schönau* 52–53, and Clark A.L., "Holy Woman or Unworthy Vessel? The Representations of Elisabeth of Schönau", in Mooney C.M. (ed.), *Gendered Voices. Medieval Saints and their Interpreters* (Philadelphia: 1999) 35–51, in which she explains the interactions between brother and sister.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>19</sup> See a reproduction on [www.hildegard-society.org/bibliography.html](http://www.hildegard-society.org/bibliography.html), accessed August 15, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Sansy D., "Iconographie de la prophétie. L'image d'Hildegarde de Bingen dans le *Liber divinorum operum*", in Vauchez A. (ed.), *Les textes prophétiques et la prophétie en Occident (XII–XVII siècle)* (Rome: 1990) 405–416, 406.

of authorship, there is the *Vita St. Hildegardis*, which has been called the first ‘autohagiography’ of the Middle Ages.<sup>21</sup> After the death of Volmar in 1173, his successor Gottfried of Disibodenberg prepared the first book of Hildegard’s *vita* with the contribution of Theodoric of Echternach for the prologue and the second and third chapters.<sup>22</sup> The core of the text, however, is a first person account by Hildegard herself of events of her life and her visions, prepared for inclusion in the biography planned by Volmar and used by his successors. The resulting text is a polyphony of voices, with Hildegard representing herself as a prophet, the ‘Sybil of the Rhine’, Gottfried painting her as the aristocratic foundress and abbess of the Rupertsberg monastery, and Theodoric responsible for the final form and developing a new model of sanctity. This model offers a new spiritual avenue for women, the bridal mysticism based on the *imitatio Christi* that will define, with the biographies of saintly women by James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré, the medieval representation of feminine spirituality.

In this new definition, we must consider the role played by Guibert of Gembloux who exchanged letters with Hildegard and visited her twice.<sup>23</sup> From the time of his second visit, in 1177, he acted as her secretary until her death and finally undertook a biography which remained unfinished because of his duties as abbot of the abbeys of Florennes and Gembloux, near Namur in Belgium. His *Vita S. Hildegardis* ends in 1141, when Hildegard’s public life begins. By the contacts he maintained with the monks of Villers who revered Hildegard, Guibert played an important role in establishing the link between the visionary and the spiritual climate in Belgium especially among the beguines.<sup>24</sup> He contributed to the legitimization of the devotion of the *mulieres sanctae*, celebrated by James of Vitry, Thomas de Cantimpré

---

<sup>21</sup> Newman B., “Hildegard and her Hagiographers. The Remaking of Female Sainthood”, in Mooney, *Gendered Voices* 16–34, 16. This *vita* was part of a considerable effort of publication of Hildegard’s works by her daughters and her friends to secure her canonization (*ibid.* 30).

<sup>22</sup> See the introduction by Hugh Feiss of his translation of Gottfried of Disibodenberg and Theodoric of Echternach, *The Life of Saintly Hildegard*, trans. H. Feiss (Toronto: 1996) 6–12, and details of the composition in Newman, “Hildegard and her Hagiographers” 17–18.

<sup>23</sup> *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen* 3. On the relationship between Guibert and Hildegard, see Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power*.

<sup>24</sup> McDonnell E.W., *The Beguines and the Beghards in Medieval Culture. With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick: 1954) 281–286.

and their other biographers. It is clear that, from the abbey of Villers, a center for the pastoral care of nuns, the *Vita S. Hildegardis* ‘influenced the new wave of mystical hagiography from the Low Countries’.<sup>25</sup>

With the women, nuns or beguines, known through their biographies composed by such prominent figures such as Vitry and Cantimpré, the question of authorship becomes more complex than it seems at first. It cannot be denied that Jacques’s biography of Marie of Oignies and Thomas’s *Lives* of Christina the Mirabilis, Lutgard of Aywières and Margaret of Ypres, written in Latin, must be attributed to the two Dominicans, both of whom were determined to promote the spirituality of these women and their communities.<sup>26</sup> It would be wrong, however, to imagine that the men had total control over a narrative that, especially in the case of Marie of Oignies, betrays the negotiations that must have occurred between the beguine and the biographer. On several occasions in her *Vita*, Jacques admits that she does not conform to the model of restrained behaviour he considered suitable for the new type of female devotion he was advocating through the example of her sainthood. He had to reprimand her because of her excessive contrition for small sins, not worthy of consideration, and was uncomfortable with her lack of moderation in her fasting and mortifications.<sup>27</sup> While the first impulse for writing Marie’s *Life* came from Fulk, Bishop of Toulouse, in order to promote examples of lay devotion that would counterbalance the heretic beliefs of the Cathars, Jacques found personal challenges, as well as rewards, in his relationship with Marie. As Thomas de Cantimpré recounts at the beginning of his addition to the *Life*, Jacques had been attracted to Oignies, where he became a regular canon, by Marie’s renown:

When Master Jacques de Vitry, who later became bishop of Acre and now is bishop of Tusculanum and a cardinal of the Roman see, heard in Paris, France, the name of the blessed handmaid of Christ, Marie

---

<sup>25</sup> Newman, “Hildegard and her Hagiographers” 32. About Hildegard’s influence in fourteenth and fifteenth-century England and the diffusion of Hildegardiana, see Kerby-Fulton K., *Books under Suspicion. Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: 2006) 188–204.

<sup>26</sup> Christina the Mirabilis: 1150–1224; Lutgard of Aywières: 1182–1246; Margaret of Ypres: 1182–1246.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *The Life of Marie d’Oignies*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1998) 60–61, 110; Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power* 68–88.

d'Oignies, he abandoned his theological studies in which he was immoderately interested and came to Oignies where she had recently gone.<sup>28</sup>

Thomas's testimony, whether factually accurate or not, reveals the perception of the beguine's prestige by an important theologian, who was to become a powerful prelate. The indications that she acted as his mentor are explicit, for example when she advised him when he began to preach.<sup>29</sup> If we rely on both biographers, Marie developed her theological culture and mastered the art of preaching, with her frequent hearing of sermons and her devotion to preachers and 'faithful pastors of souls.'<sup>30</sup> Again when Thomas insists that by her 'prayers and special merits', Jacques 'reached in a short time such a pre-eminence in preaching that scarcely any mortal equalled him', we are less interested in the accuracy of the fact than in the image he constructs of Marie and her influence.<sup>31</sup>

Marie's role cannot be understood if we isolate her from the group of beguines, recluses, and nuns representing a new genre of female spirituality, women who, in order not to risk being considered as heretics, had to be legitimized in their choice of a life out of the cloister.<sup>32</sup> From the details in the Belgian beguines' biographies, it is possible to reconstitute the sort of spiritual network that existed between these exceptional figures, who are presented as examples to be admired. Marie herself played a role in Lutgard of Aywières's vocation, prophesying about her miracles.<sup>33</sup> Lutgard, in turn, had been previously comforted in her choice of a cloistered life in the Cistercian monastery of Aywières by the words of Christina Mirabilis.<sup>34</sup> Christina herself, after spectacular manifestations of her spiritual gifts described in

---

<sup>28</sup> Thomas de Cantimpré, *The Supplement to Jacques de Vitry's Life of Marie d'Oignies*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1998) 218.

<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that James of Vitry found another mentor in Christina of Stommeln and that Marie was also considered as his mentor by John of Nivelles: McDonnell, *The Beguines and the Beghards* 27, 40.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Life of Marie d'Oignies* 112.

<sup>31</sup> His last chapter of her biography is dedicated to her afterlife impact on James of Vitry: she appeared to him in visions and continued to advise him (Thomas de Cantimpré, *Supplement* 244–255).

<sup>32</sup> Neel C., "The Origins of the Beguines", in Bennett J.M. et al. (eds.), *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages* (Chicago – London: 1989) 240–260, 254–256 about her predecessors, the *Lives* of Rycwer, who entered the abbey of Prémontré in 1121, and the blessed Oda of Rivreulle (1131–1158).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas de Cantimpré, *The Life of Lutgard of Aywières*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1991) 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

detail in her *Life* by Thomas de Cantimpré, stayed for nine years with the anchoress Yvette of Huy (1158–1228).<sup>35</sup> Yvette's *Life* by Hugh of Floreffe is one of the great biographies, along with Thomas de Cantimpré's *Life* of Lutgard, related to Cistercian theology in the diocese of Liège.<sup>36</sup>

Among these *vitae*, the anonymous one of Juliana of Mont Cornillon is an important witness to the impact of the mystic, primarily because her name is attached to the 'Feast of the Sacrament', or 'Corpus Christi'.<sup>37</sup> Its influence is clear in spite of the fact that only seven manuscripts have been traced and three of these have subsequently been lost. The author worked from the recollections of John of Lausanne, Juliana's friend and confessor, and from a fragmentary *Life* written in Walloon by Eve of St. Martin.<sup>38</sup> A protégée of Juliana, Eve continued her efforts to popularize the *Corpus Christi* feast and became an anchoress. The anonymous *vitae* of Ida of Nivelles, Ida of Lewis and Ida of Louvain demonstrate the same devotion to Christ's Passion, presented by their biographers in similar narratives. Links can be traced between some of these women. Ida of Nivelles developed a close friendship with Beatrice of Nazareth at the Cistercian community of La Ramée where she had been sent to learn how to write manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> Ida, who had spent several years with the beguines in Nivelles, was more spiritually advanced and took her under her wing. Beatrice's biographer, presumably Goswin of Villers, knew Ida's *vita* and makes several references to it. Another important figure who appears to have belonged to Beatrice's spiritual network was Lutgard of Aywières, whose *vita* was also probably known to Beatrice's biographer.

As we have seen with Margery Kempe's testimony, the diffusion of the biographies of these women extended their network beyond the areas of Nivelles and Liège. Marie of Oignies's *vita* survives in one manuscript in English, one in French and 26 manuscripts in Latin. A version of her *Life* was copied with the biography of the thirteenth-

---

<sup>35</sup> Thomas de Cantimpré, *The Life of Christina the Astonishing*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Hugh of Floreffe, *The Life of Yvette of Huy*, trans. J.A. McNamara (Toronto: 1999).

<sup>37</sup> *The Life of Juliana of Mont Cornillon*, trans. B. Newman (Toronto: 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Goodich M., *Miracles and Wonders. The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350* (Aldershot – Burlington: 2007) 6.

<sup>39</sup> *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth, 1200–1268*, trans. R. deGanck (Kalamazoo: 1991) xvii.

century German mystic Lukarde of Oberweimar.<sup>40</sup> Christina Mirabilis's *vita* circulated in twelve Latin manuscripts, one in English and three in Dutch.<sup>41</sup> However, the written word was not the only channel of their influence; we also have evidence that their reputations travelled through personal contacts. We know, for example, that James of Vitry met Saint Francis of Assisi in 1216, two years after Marie's death, an encounter that must have acquainted the founder of the Franciscans with the kind of spirituality which had developed in Belgium.<sup>42</sup> A more specific link between the beguines and Franciscan spirituality can be traced with the Provençal visionary Douceline of Digne (1215–1274). Her brother Hugh was a famous Franciscan preacher who had spent time in Paris around 1240, before her decision to settle a group of beguines in Hyères. According to her *vita*:

at that time, there was no house of beguines, and no one had heard of them in Provence. [...] The holy mother was the first beguine in Provence and she was the origin of all those who took that name.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, Douceline's ambition was to lead, with the guidance of her brother, a movement of pious women, in her case related to the Spiritual Franciscans, similar to the groups in Northern France and Belgium that he must have described to her after his stay in Paris. Groups of lay women who called themselves beguines are reported in Provence and Languedoc, especially around a figure like Peter-John Olivi, until the beginning of the fourteenth century when Pope John XXII prohibited their activities and they were prosecuted by the Inquisition. The houses instituted by Douceline in Hyères and Marseilles were the first ones in Southern France and foundations were also established under the patronage of Saint Louis in Paris, Rouen and near Amiens. The French communities follow the Flemish model: Louis IX had visited the beguines of Ghent in 1228. Flemish cloth merchants contributed to the beguinage founded in Orléans, and the community of Corbie in Picardy sheltered Saint Colette before she became a recluse and the reformer of the Poor Clares.<sup>44</sup> All these interactions show that we

---

<sup>40</sup> Manuscript of Berlin, SB Preussischer Kulturbesitz, cod. Theol. Oct. 188, Teil II, 14th century.

<sup>41</sup> Newman, "Hildegard and her Hagiographers" 32.

<sup>42</sup> McDonnell, *The Beguines and the Beghards* 434.

<sup>43</sup> *The Life of Saint Douceline Beguine of Provence*, trans. K. Garay – M. Jeay (Woodbridge: 2001) 29, 31.

<sup>44</sup> On these links, see McDonnell, *The Beguines and the Beghards* 224–232.

should look beyond the mere attestation of written evidence preserved in libraries for evidence of networks of communities of women inspired by their leading figures. Their impact appears to have depended on informal verbal exchanges as well as on more formal readings and commentaries on the works related to these spiritual models. Again, in this kind of situation, the issue of authorship must take into account a mode of reception in which the woman mystic is presumably more important than the cleric who narrated her story or contributed to the publication of her experiences.

Germany is another area where the writings attached to pious women from Belgium and the Netherlands were influential. Soon after its foundation in 1228, the Cistercian monastery of Helfta became an important center of spirituality and mysticism under the guidance of its abbess Gertrud of Hackeborn and the renown acquired by its nuns, especially Gertrud the Great, Mechtild of Hackeborn, and Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210–ca.1285), all three prolific writers. The community was a place of learning with the teaching of Latin and the scholarly curriculum typical of the thirteenth century including the seven liberal arts.<sup>45</sup> The nuns, busy collecting, copying and illustrating manuscripts, knew the works of major theologians such as Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of Saint-Victor.<sup>46</sup> The atmosphere was one of intellectual collaboration, so that it is often difficult to attribute specific names to some of the important works produced at Helfta. Under the title of *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*, we have a composite text, part hagiography written by a nun of the convent, part autobiography, and account of her visions by Gertrud the Great, of which Books Three to Five were compiled under her direction and the supervision of another nun.<sup>47</sup> The *Book of Special Grace* which records the visions and revelations received by Mechtild of Hackeborn, the choir mistress of the convent, renowned for her beautiful voice, is the result of their compilation in Latin by two sisters, one of them being Gertrud the Great, who had discussed their respective mystical experiences with Mechtild. In this context of spiritual and intellectual

---

<sup>45</sup> See Barratt A., "Introduction", *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness* vol. 1–2 (Kalamazoo: 1991) 11–15, 11–12.

<sup>46</sup> Walker Bynum C., "Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta", in *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: 1982) 170–262, 176.

<sup>47</sup> Barratt, "Introduction", Book Three, *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness* 10–12. Gertrud the Great also wrote down her *Spiritual Exercises*.

friendship, Gertrud was aware of the need to teach the generations of sisters to come and also readers outside the convent. According to her sister biographer:

She also devoted a good deal of effort to collecting and writing down everything which she thought might sometime be of use to anyone [...] Where she knew that there was a special shortage of the sacred books, she willingly did what she could to get hold of the necessary copies [...] If she found anything useful in holy Scripture which seemed hard for the less intelligent to understand, she would alter the Latin and rewrite it in a more straightforward style, so that it would be more useful to those who read it. She spent her whole life in this way, from early morning until night, sometimes in summarizing passages, sometimes in commenting on difficulties in her desire to promote God's praise and her neighbour's salvation.<sup>48</sup>

However Gertrud's works, untranslated from Latin, did not have the same impact as the poetry and spiritual texts written in Middle High German by Mechtild of Magdeburg. Mechtild began writing her *Flowing Light of the Godhead* before joining Helfta, when she was a beguine in Magdeburg.<sup>49</sup> Urged by her confessor, the Dominican Heinrich of Halle, to note down her mystical experiences, she wrote six books, adding a seventh one when she retreated to Helfta around 1270. Heinrich of Halle, who may have edited the first books, died before Mechtild with the consequence that he did not influence the last one which she dictated to the nuns because of her blindness. Regarding the earlier books 'there is now prevailing agreement that Heinrich let Mechtild's text speak for itself'.<sup>50</sup> The similarity of themes strongly suggests exchanges between her group of beguines in Magdeburg and those from Brabant.<sup>51</sup> Another indication of a possible link can be found in Gertrud the Great's second book of her *Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*, with the importance given to the devotion to the Sacred Heart. As we have seen, the love for the heart of Jesus and passion for its wounds also played an important role in the experiences of the

---

<sup>48</sup> *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*, Book One 50, 57. On Gertrud's self-awareness as a writer, see Barratt, "Introduction" to Book Three 10.

<sup>49</sup> Mechtild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. F. Tobin (New York: 1998). Poor S.S., *Mechtild of Magdeburg and Her Book. Gender and the Making of Textual Authority* (Philadelphia: 2004).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 6–7 on the discussions about the extent of Henry's intervention and the fact that Mechtild participated in the editing process.

<sup>51</sup> Mechtild de Magdebourg, *La lumière fluente de la Divinité*, trans. W. Verlaquet (Grenoble: 2001) 10: these exchanges went as far as southern Germany and Bohemia.

Flemish visionaries, particularly Lutgard of Aywières and Beatrice of Nazareth.<sup>52</sup>

After Mechtild's death, her first six books were translated into Latin, omitting some of her criticism of the clergy and erotic imagery. It was through the original vernacular, however, that her work reached the fourteenth-century mystic Margaret Ebner (1210–ca.1285), a Dominican nun at the monastery of Maria Medingen near Dillingen in Swabia. Margaret's spiritual advisor and friend, Henry of Nördlingen, active among the mystical group of 'Friends of God' in Basel, introduced her to Mechtild's writings.<sup>53</sup> As a priest and confessor, he was in contact with nuns and the eminent Dominican friars John Tauler and Henry Suso. For his circle, he contributed to the adaptation of Mechtild's text into Middle High German.<sup>54</sup> He urged Margaret to record her *Revelations*, and thanks to his friendship with her, we have the correspondence they exchanged. She began writing in 1344, sometimes dictating to Elsbeth of Scheppach, who would become prioress of the monastery.<sup>55</sup> Just as at Helfta, an important activity of the monastery was the copying of manuscripts, some of them still preserved in Maria Medingen written by Margaret's hand, and the acquisition of scholarly texts. The twenty-year friendship between Henry of Nördlingen and Margaret Ebner was as important for the priest as for the mystic: he got from this connection the authority he needed to represent the Friends of God in Upper Germany.<sup>56</sup> In return he connected her with the spiritual writings of the 'Friends of God'. *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, an important source for this group, thanks to the adaptation in Middle High German that Henry had supervised, is also a constant reference in his correspondence with Margaret as well as in her *Revelations*. Influenced by Mechtild's style and the account of her mystical experience, Henry quotes her in his letters to reassure Margaret about what she could not understand concerning her own manifestations of God's grace.<sup>57</sup> The impact of the *Flowing Light* on Margaret's

<sup>52</sup> Barratt, "Introduction" to Book One, *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness* 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Margaret Ebner. Major Works*, intr. Schmidt M. – Hindsley L.P. (New York: 1993) 27–58; Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power* 149–169. The expression 'chosen friends of God' can be found in Mechtild's *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*: see *Margaret Ebner. Major Works* 28.

<sup>54</sup> Tobin, "Introduction", *Flowing Light of the Godhead* 8.

<sup>55</sup> *Margaret Ebner. Major Works* 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 33–39, 46–47.

*Revelations* is manifest in her Passion mysticism, her compassion for Christ's wounds. If the *Flowing Light* Latin translation, the *Lux divinitatis*, was directed to a male readership, the vernacular version was meant to be shared among groups of women. Margaret of the Golden Ring, a member of the 'Friends of God', bequeathed its manuscript to beguines living in Einsiedeln near Zurich. In a foreshadowing of the modern lending library, each house of women was to keep the book for one month and then pass it along to another community.<sup>58</sup>

Returning to Margery Kempe's account of her spiritual role models, we find that her reference to Elizabeth of Hungary, like the one to Marie of Oignies, is primarily concerned with her public, disruptive behaviour. Just as she draws validation from Marie's 'plenteous tears', and finds that Marie, like Margery herself, could not prevent 'her weeping, her sobbing nor her crying' from disrupting religious services, so she records that 'Elizabeth of Hungary cried with loud voice, as is written in her treatise'. As we have earlier indicated, both the identity of this Elizabeth of Hungary and the treatise have been the subjects of vigorous scholarly debate. The first modern editor of Margery's book, Hope Emily Allen, assumed the reference to be to Elizabeth of Hungary and Thuringia<sup>59</sup> but this identification has been called into question, first by Alexandra Barratt<sup>60</sup> and then by the editor of the two Middle English translations of Elizabeth of Hungary's *Revelations*, Sarah McNamer.<sup>61</sup> Both have suggested firstly, that the text to which Margery refers was probably either the Latin 'original'<sup>62</sup> or a Middle English version of what was to become the first English text by a female visionary to appear in print, published as *The Reveleacions of Saynt Elyzabeth the Kynges Daughter of Hungarye* by Wynkyn de

---

<sup>58</sup> Poor, *Mechtild of Magdeburg and Her Book* 89–95. In the sixteenth century, a Middle High German manuscript adapted from Heinrich of Nördlingen's 1345 translation also includes Mechtild's writings with those of Elizabeth of Schönau; at the same time we see the emergence of a Latin tradition of compilations centered around the authorship of holy women (*ibid.* 173–178).

<sup>59</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. S.B. Meech – H.E. Allen., vol. 1 (London – New York: 1940, 1961) 324, n. 154, 13–14. The note is signed by Allen.

<sup>60</sup> Barratt A., "The Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary: Problems of Attribution", *The Library*, Sixth Series 14 (1992) 1–11.

<sup>61</sup> McNamer S., *The Two Middle English Translations of the Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* (Heidelberg: 1996).

<sup>62</sup> Barratt suggests that the Latin versions may, in turn, have derived from a non-Romance vernacular. "The Revelations" 5–6.

Worde between 1491 and 1494<sup>63</sup> and reissued by the same publisher in 1500. Secondly, both Barratt and McNamer also reject a connection between this text and Elizabeth of Thuringia and suggest her great niece, the Dominican nun Elizabeth of Töess (ca.1294–1336), as the more likely candidate for authorship.<sup>64</sup> Roger Ellis, who is unconvinced about a possible link with Elizabeth of Töess, agrees that this manuscript has a good claim to be the text to which Margery was referring.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of whether or not this was indeed the ‘treatys’ in question, this text, describing a series of thirteen mystic visions received by a certain ‘Saint Elizabeth’, circulated widely in both Latin and vernacular manuscript versions; as well as two Middle English and twelve Latin versions, McNamer records French, Latin, Spanish and Catalan translations.<sup>66</sup>

Complicating Margery’s murky reference to a treatise of Elizabeth of Hungary still further is Hope Emily Allen’s apparent identification of the text in question as James of Vitry’s *vita* of Elizabeth of Thuringia.<sup>67</sup> There is no evidence that Vitry ever composed such a *vita*<sup>68</sup> and Ellis, citing an exchange with Sarah McNamer, suggests that Allen may have meant to refer to James of Voragine, the author of

<sup>63</sup> The revised STC assigns the date as [1492?]. Jackson W.A. – Ferguson F.S. – Pantzer K.F., *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*. 2nd edition, 3 vols. (London: 1976–1991) no. 24766.

<sup>64</sup> McNamer states that, among the candidates for Elizabeth’s *tretys*, ‘it can now be identified with confidence as a copy of the *Revelations*’. *Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* 45. She also indicates that ‘Hope Allen accepts that the *tretys* is a copy of the *Revelations*; see Meech and Allen 1940: 224’. We presume the page reference is a misprint for the notes on 324 but here Allen’s note on the *tretys* is less clear than McNamer suggests. Allen first cites Vitry’s (*sic*) *Life* in the *Legenda Aurea*, then the Middle English verse version by Bokenham and only thirdly the Oliger edition of the Meditations of Saint Elizabeth ‘which have probably otherwise influenced Margery’. (*Book of Margery Kempe*, vol. 1, 324, n. 154/13).

<sup>65</sup> Ellis R., “Margery Kempe’s Scribe and the Miraculous Books”, in Phillips H. (ed.), *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition* (Cambridge: 1990) 161–175, 167.

<sup>66</sup> McNamer 17–8 also records a Norfolk influence evident in the language of the Middle English manuscript version. *Ibid.* 16. However, this text nowhere implies that the ‘seynt Elizabeth’ concerned was the daughter of the king of Hungary.

<sup>67</sup> *Book of Margery Kempe* vol. 1 324, n.154/13. The note begins: ‘In Cardinal de Vitry’s Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, her gift of tears is described in a long affecting passage (*Legenda Aurea*, 761 sq.)’.

<sup>68</sup> It is not mentioned, for example, in the most comprehensive published bibliography of Elizabeth: Imre B., *Szent Erzsébet Irodalma* (Budapest: 1907).

*The Golden Legend*, written about 1260.<sup>69</sup> Our own research suggests that Voragine's *vita* of St. Elizabeth, included in his *Golden Legend* collection, an account which clearly presents the life of Elizabeth of Thuringia, may indeed be the treatise to which Margery refers. In this widely and enduringly popular compilation of more than a hundred saints' lives,<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth<sup>71</sup> is the only near-contemporary woman to be included. That her *Golden Legend vita* was known, and also that it was attributed to Voragine in East Anglia during the fourteenth century is conclusively demonstrated by its incorporation into Osbern Bokenham's *A Legend of Holy Women*. In a retelling that retains much of Voragine's original, Bokenham credits his source in the opening lines of his Prologue:

In the year of grace 1231 (as Voragine says in his Golden Legend), on November 19th [...] there passed out of this world Saint Elizabeth, daughter to the king of Hungary and wife to Landgrave, prince of Thuringia. Her life it is my wish to declare in English, however barren my speech.<sup>72</sup>

Discussing the possible candidates for Margery's 'Elizabeth of Hungary' text, Roger Ellis suggests that the *Golden Legend vita* was 'known in East Anglia' because of Bokenham's translation.<sup>73</sup> Bokenham lived at Clare Priory in Suffolk, just 50 miles from Margery's home in Lynn. However, because his unique manuscript was copied and presumably completed in 1447, this work is too late to be Margery's *tretyz*.<sup>74</sup> The original *Golden Legend* text was certainly circulating in England; Delany, the editor of Bokenham's *Legend*, refers to an earlier compilation, translated from a French version of *Legenda Aurea*, called *Gille Legende*, made before 1438.<sup>75</sup>

In the context of female readership, we should note that Bokenham's inclusion of Elizabeth's life in his collection was at the request

---

<sup>69</sup> Ellis R., "Margery Kempe's Scribe and the Miraculous Books" 175.

<sup>70</sup> There are approximately 900 extant manuscripts and the work was the most often reprinted book between 1470 and 1530: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/goldenlegend> (consulted January 12, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Chapter 168 in the *Golden Legend*.

<sup>72</sup> Bokenham O., *A Legend of Holy Women*, trans. S. Delany (Notre Dame – London: 1992) 175.

<sup>73</sup> Ellis, "Margery Kempe's Scribe and the Miraculous Books" 164.

<sup>74</sup> Delany, "Introduction", *A Legend of Holy Women* ix. Margery appears to have still been alive in 1438; she likely died between 1438 and 1440.

<sup>75</sup> Delany, "Introduction", *A Legend of Holy Women* xiv.

of a noble female patron, perhaps a namesake of the saint, Elizabeth Vere, Countess of Oxford. At the end of the *vita* Bokenham invokes the saint's aid for his patron:

Finally, lady, attend to the true intent of her who particularly commanded me to compose your legend and who loves you affectionately in her heart. I mean Dame Elizabeth Vere. Purchase her a charter of pardon, and when she shall pass from this outlawry, bring her to the contemplation of God. Amen and thank you Jesus.<sup>76</sup>

Unlike the thirteenth-century Latin *vitae* by Cæsarius of Heisterbach<sup>77</sup> and Dietrich of Apolda<sup>78</sup> or the brief *Life* written by Elizabeth's own confessor, Conrad of Marburg, in support of her canonization, Voragine's *Golden Legend* account presents the mystic side of Elizabeth's actively charitable life, showing her as a visionary, possessed of the spiritual 'gift of tears'. He reports:

In order to make her prayers a rich sacrifice to God, Elizabeth often sprinkled them with a profusion of tears, but she shed her tears happily and without any unseemly change of countenance, weeping with sorrow and rejoicing at the sorrow [...] <sup>79</sup>

Voragine also tells of Elizabeth's visions:

She often had visions of heaven in the course of her prayer and contemplation. One day, in the holy season of Lent she was in church and her eyes fixed intently on the altar, as if she were gazing at the very presence of God [...] When she got home [...] such joyousness swept over her face that she burst out laughing. Then, after she had for some time been filled with joy by this vision, suddenly she was weeping.<sup>80</sup>

It is surely these elements of Elizabeth's legend which appealed to Margery; not only was the subject of this *trebys* a queen, and therefore all but immune from popular criticism, a wife and mother like Margery, but also one who experienced heavenly visions. While we do not find direct confirmation of Margery's assertion that Elizabeth 'cried with a

<sup>76</sup> Bokenham, *A Legend of Holy Women* 195.

<sup>77</sup> Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Schriften über die hl. Elisabeth von Thüringen*, ed. A. Huyskens, *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 86 (1908).

<sup>78</sup> Dietrich of Apolda, *Die Vita der heiligen Elisabeth des Dietrich von Apolda*, ed. M. Rener (Marburg: 1993).

<sup>79</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend; Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan, vol. 2 (Princeton: 1993) 304.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 310.

loud voice',<sup>81</sup> Voragine reports that she shed tears and, albeit in a less spectacular fashion than Margery, behaved in surprising ways, disrupting the sacred space. It seems likely that this visionary and emotional element of Elizabeth's spirituality, presented in the *Golden Legend*, may have had as its source another text 'authored' by women. The *Libellus* of Elizabeth's four serving women,<sup>82</sup> an account assembled as part of the evidence presented for her canonization in the years immediately following her death, appears to be an almost verbatim transcription of the women's evidence. It is here we find almost the exact words used above by Voragine, and subsequently adapted by Bokenham:

On a certain day during Lent kneeling, leaning against the wall, for a long time she had her eyes fixed on the altar [...] and after some time she began to laugh sweetly, with an utterly cheerful face. However, after much time, she shed copious tears from her closed eyes.<sup>83</sup>

The need to assemble the most reliable evidence for the canonization initiative allows the voices of the lowly serving women to be heard and their composite *vita* was not only incorporated in the dossier sent to the Pope but was destined to become part of one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages and the many translations and adaptations which sprang from it. As we have seen in the case of Margery, Elizabeth's life continued to resonate and provide a role model for women of the period. The list includes Isabelle of Navarre (1242–1271) and Elizabeth's namesake and great niece, Elizabeth (Isabel) of Portugal (1271–1336). Isabelle, daughter of King Louis IX and wife of Thibaut of Champagne, King of Navarre, appears to have requested an account of Elizabeth's life from the poet Rutebeuf, who dedicates his poem to her.<sup>84</sup> Like Elizabeth of Hungary, she became a Franciscan tertiary following the death of her husband in 1270. The younger

<sup>81</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe* 193.

<sup>82</sup> *Der Sog. Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum s. Elisabeth confectus*, ed. A. Huyskens (Kempten – Munich: 1911). The women's testimony is also included in *Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der hl. Elisabeth Landgräfin von Thüringen*, ed. A. Huyskens (Marburg: 1908).

<sup>83</sup> *Der Sog. Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum* 35–36: 'Quandam vero die in quadagesima genibus flexis acclinata est parieti diutissime oculos habens defixos ad altare [...] et tandem cepit dulciter ridere in magna vultus hilaritate. Post magnam autem horam clausis oculis emisit lacrimas infinitas [...]' (our translation). Compare Bokenham, *A Legend of Holy Women* 191–192.

<sup>84</sup> Cazelles B., *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: 1991) 152. Part of the 'A' text of the poem is translated 153–169.

Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, devoted herself to providing hospitality for pilgrims and the poor. Following the death of her husband, Diniz, in 1325, she also retired to a small house near the monastery she had founded, became a Franciscan tertiary, and lived out her life in poverty.<sup>85</sup> Clearly Elizabeth of Hungary, like Marie of Oignies, was one of the ‘patron saints’ of the beguines and the other lay women who emulated them.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the testimony of the women in the *Libellus* concerning Elizabeth’s death, provides a remarkable echo of Marie’s own demise. ‘When her last hour was approaching’, Vitry records, Marie ‘began to sing I know not what in a low voice for a very long time’ while Voragine, incorporating the women’s account into the *Golden Legend*, says of Elizabeth:

She was brought low with fever and lay with her face turned toward the wall, and those who stood around her heard her humming a sweet melody. When one of her maids asked her what this meant, she answered: ‘A little bird perched between me and the wall, and sang so sweetly that I too had to sing’.<sup>87</sup>

As Margery Kempe’s testimony also reveals, the accounts of the visions of Birgitta of Sweden became so widely read that they had a significant impact on popular piety. She was considered a great prophetess, another sibyl. This rich patrician and mother of eight children took the transcription of her revelations extremely seriously and worked closely with the four scribes who translated and edited her texts. Her first amanuensis was her confessor, Matthias, canon of Linköping cathedral. Then Peter, Prior of Alvastra, the convent where she retired after her husband’s death, and another Peter, Prior of Skänninge helped her. The last supervisor of the editing of her revelations was Alfonso of Jaen, whom she had met while on pilgrimage and who shared the last part of her life in Rome.<sup>88</sup> Around seven hundred visions and messages from God were recorded, compiled in

---

<sup>85</sup> Capes F., “St. Elizabeth of Portugal”, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: 1909), online: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05391a.htm>. Farmer D.H., “Elizabeth of Portugal”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: 2003), online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t100.e543>, both consulted January 12, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Wiethaus U., “The Death Song of Marie d’Oignies: Mystical Sound and Hagiographical Politics in Medieval Lorraine”, in Kittell E.E. – Suydam M.A. (eds.), *The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries* (New York: 2004) 168.

<sup>87</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 312.

<sup>88</sup> While in Rome she is supposed to have influenced Catherine of Siena.

1377 in the *Liber celestis revelaciones*, usually called *Revelaciones*. The *Liber celestis imperatoris ad reges* and the *Tractatus de summis pontificibus*, with visions about political and clerical leaders, were published in 1380. The collection, entitled *Extravagantes*, reports visions she had in Sweden before she went to Rome. Her other works include her *Rule* for the Bridgettine Order she founded and liturgical writings, the *Sermo angelicus* as well as prayers and songs.<sup>89</sup> She took great care to report her visions accurately, noting them down in Swedish and supervising their translation: the scribes had to retranslate from Latin to Swedish orally for her so that she could check the accuracy of their writing. In her *Extravagantes*, she describes the problems she had finding the right words to transmit the messages from God.<sup>90</sup>

The circulation of Birgitta's writings both in manuscripts and editions, in Latin or in translations, is an incontestable proof of their popularity. The first printed publications appeared in 1491 in Middle Dutch at Antwerp, and in Latin in 1492 at Lübeck. Germany was a center for the diffusion of Bridgettine texts in Germany, parallel to the foundation of Bridgettine monasteries.<sup>91</sup> In England the *Revelations* arrived in the 1380s and became favourite reading for an increasing audience of lay as well as religious people.<sup>92</sup> The episode of her spiritual pregnancy suggests, thanks to Brigittta's influence, continuity between Marie of Oignies and the mystics of the end of the

---

<sup>89</sup> On the importance of books for Birgitta, and the reception of her works at Syon abbey, see Krug R., "Reading at Syon Abbey", in *Reading Families. Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca – London: 2002) 153–206 and Schirmer E., "Reading Lessons at Syon Abbey. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* and the Mandates of Vernacular Theology", in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 345–376. More generally on nuns' literacy: Bell D.N., *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo: 1995).

<sup>90</sup> Ellis R., "The Divine Message and its Human Agents: St. Birgitta and her Editors", *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order, Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 1 (Salzburg: 1993) 209–233, 210–211.

<sup>91</sup> Montag U., "The Reception of St. Birgitta in Germany", in Morris B. – O'Mara V. (eds.), *The Translations of the Works of St. Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars, The Medieval Translator. Traduire au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: 2000) 106–116.

<sup>92</sup> On Bridget's influence in England, see Cleve G., "Margery Kempe: A Scandinavian Influence in Medieval England", in Glasscoe M. (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* (Cambridge: 1992) 163–178 and Grisé C.A., "Continental Women and the Textual Relics of Prayers in Late-Medieval England", in Jenkins J. – Bertrand O. (eds.), *The Medieval Translator. Traduire au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: 2007) 167–168. On the great number of English versions, see Pezzini D., "Brigittine Tracts of Spiritual Guidance in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study in Translation", in Ellis R. (ed.), *The Medieval Translator* (London: 1991) 175–207.

Middle Ages. One instance of her experience of intimacy with Christ expressed itself in the form of a maternal encounter with the infant Jesus. According to Claire Sahlin, Birgitta may have been inspired by Marie's visions of Jesus in various forms. Birgitta could have heard from her confessor, Matthias of Linköping, how Marie saw Christ on the day of his nativity crying in the cradle and feeding from the breasts of the Virgin.<sup>93</sup> Bridget's own experience of mystical pregnancy was a reference point for the fourteenth-century German visionary Dorothea of Montau (1347–1394), the mother of nine children. Dorothea herself, who spent two years among the Einsiedeln beguines, provides a good example of networks of spiritual women inspiring one another. She claimed that the foetus-like movements in her womb were even greater than Birgitta's.<sup>94</sup>

The same form of holy competition between mystics for the most spectacular marks of God's grace can be found in Margery Kempe's own attitude toward Birgitta. The reading of the Swedish mystic's works, among others, was a source of inspiration for Margery to the point where she saw herself as a mediator whose responsibility was to legitimize and augment the truth of what was written in the books of her model. Once when she was hearing mass, she saw a dove fluttering from the host and heard Jesus's voice telling her: 'My daughter Bridget never saw me in this way'.<sup>95</sup> The voice then confirms Margery's prophetic and proselytizing mission:

For in truth I tell you, just as I spoke to St. Bridget, just so I speak to you, daughter, and I tell you truly that every word that is written in Bridget's book is true, and through you shall be recognized as true indeed.<sup>96</sup>

Birgitta's influence came also from Margery's personal contact with people and places connected with the saint. During her pilgrimage in Rome, she met the visionary's servant who spoke to her, through

---

<sup>93</sup> Sahlin C. L., "A Marvelous and Great Exultation of the Heart: Mystical Pregnancy and Marian Devotion in Bridget of Sweden's Revelations", *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order* vol. 1 108–128, 111.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 118; the account of Bridget's experience of spiritual pregnancy was read to the sisters of her convents on Christmas day (*ibid.* 119). The theologian Johannes of Marienwerder wrote down Dorothea's visions and made a biography (Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power* 193–210). About the point of view of the husband on her mystical experiences, see *The Flounder* by Günter Grass. Lukarde of Oberweimar also experienced a mystical pregnancy (we thank Piroška Nagy for this information).

<sup>95</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe* 83.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

an interpreter, of the saint's mystical experiences and allowed her to visit the room in which she had died.<sup>97</sup> Another crucial encounter for Margery was with the anchoress Julian of Norwich who advised her and legitimized her spiritual journey.<sup>98</sup> From all of her encounters and exchanges, we can obtain a good sense of the complex reality of authorship in the Middle Ages, especially when a semi-literate woman is involved. The proem of the *Book of Margery Kempe* gives a detailed account of the difficult steps that led to the transcription of 'her feelings and revelations, and her form of living'.<sup>99</sup> Twenty years after she was first counselled to note them down by those to whom she confided – prelates, theologians, anchorites – she felt ready to undertake what she considered her mission. Unable to find a scribe, she had recourse to a man close to her, who used to live in Germany, an Englishman by birth who had returned to England with his family. The problem was that this man, believed to be her son, could write neither German nor English correctly, according to the priest who agreed to decipher this first draft and complete the work. Margery kept control over her text: it was she, not her scribe, who 'was primarily responsible for the Book's structure, arguments, and most of its language'.<sup>100</sup>

Clearly evident from the case of Margery Kempe herself as author and true also of the mystic women's *vitae* examined here, including those which she, as a 'reader', cites in support of her own spiritual practice, is a polyvocal conception of authorship. As has been observed of Margery and is equally applicable to the other authors discussed here, 'obedience, as constructed by Kempe's revelations, is a matter of negotiated agreement between Kempe and Christ to which confessors are mere adjuncts'.<sup>101</sup> These works, situated in a 'gynocentric' liturgical tradition,<sup>102</sup> demonstrate literary practices embedded in sociability, in

---

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 131–132. Dorothea of Montau's possible influence can be explained by mercantile links between Lynn and Danzig as well as Margery's visit to Danzig and her family ties to Prussia: Stargardt U., "The Beguines of Belgium, the Dominican Nuns of Germany, and Margery Kempe", in Heffernan T.J. (ed.), *The Popular Literature of Medieval England* (Knoxville: 1985) 277–313, 307.

<sup>98</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe* 77–81. Julian wrote her own visionary experience in the *Revelations of Divine Love* or *Showings*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>100</sup> Watson, "The Making of the *Book of Margery Kempe*" 397.

<sup>101</sup> Dillon J., "Holy Women and their Confessors", in Voaden R. (ed.), *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England* (Cambridge: 1996) 115–140, 135.

<sup>102</sup> Wiethaus, "The Death Song of Marie d'Oignies" 168.

which the production of texts arises ‘out of social relationships and situations that are established and maintained through talk’.<sup>103</sup> This notion of textual production as a collective, collaborative undertaking, unsettles our idea of a single author wholly responsible for a text, as well as our perception of a sharp distinction between literacy and orality. Close examination of this kind of practice demonstrates that non-literate women were not excluded from the production of books by their lack of ability to read or write.

As our examples have revealed, literate mystic women like Hildegard of Bingen who sometimes used scribes, or others who relied upon their admirers, male clerics or female members of their communities or households to record their visions and revelations, did not renounce their roles as authors. These women’s continuing responsibility for their texts is affirmed by the reception of their testimonies; those who received their works, either as listeners or as readers, associated the spiritual lessons they contained with the mystic women themselves and not with their intermediaries. The spiritual practices of Marie of Oignies, Elizabeth of Hungary, and Bridget of Sweden provided role models for Margery Kempe, the reader, a woman acutely aware of the need for authorial control. Nor was she exceptional in this regard; as we have seen, mystic women authors learned from, and provided inspiration and support for one another, and other women who read their works became an essential part of the collaborative pattern of dissemination. All were partners in their shared enterprise, succinctly defined by Gertrud the Great as being ‘to promote God’s praise and her neighbour’s salvation’.

---

<sup>103</sup> Watson, “The Making of the *Book of Margery Kempe*” 438 ; Scheepsma, “Mystical Networks in the Middle Ages” 56–57: even if he does not see hard evidence of ‘intertextual relationships’, he recognizes the existence of oral transmission and story-telling traditions. For a general view of the medieval concept of authorship, see Minnis A.J., *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Aldershot: 1988).

*Selective Bibliography*

- BARRATT A., "The Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary: Problems of Attribution", *The Library*, sixth series 14 (1992) 1–11.
- , "Introduction", *The Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*, vol. 1–2 (Kalamazoo: 1991) 11–15.
- BARTLETT A.C., *Male Authors, Female Readers. Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca – London: 1995).
- BELL D.N., *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo: 1995).
- BILINKOFF J., *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca: 2005).
- BOKENHAM O., *A Legend of Holy Women*, trans. S. Delany (Notre Dame – London: 1992).
- The Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. S.B. Meech – H.E. Allen, vol. 1 (London – New York: 1940, 1961).
- The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B.A. Windeatt (London: 1994).
- BOULTON M., "Littérature pieuse écrite par et pour les femmes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle", in Poirier G. (ed.), *Dix ans de recherche sur les femmes écrivains de l'Ancien Régime: influences et confluences. Mélanges offerts à Hannah Fournier* (Québec: 2008) 37–59.
- BYNUM C.W., "Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta", in *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: 1982) 170–262.
- CAESARIUS OF HEISTERBACH, [Die] *Schriften über die hl. Elisabeth von Thüringen*, ed. A. Huyskens, *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 86 (1908).
- CAPES F., "St. Elizabeth of Portugal", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: 1909).
- CAZELLES B., *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: 1991).
- CHANCE J., "Introduction", in Chance J. (ed.), *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Gainesville: 1996) 1–21.
- CLARK A.L., "Holy Woman or Unworthy Vessel? The Representations of Elisabeth of Schönau", in Mooney C.M. (ed.), *Gendered Voices. Medieval Saints and their Interpreters* (Philadelphia: 1999) 35–51.
- , *Elizabeth of Schönau: A Twelfth-Century Visionary* (Philadelphia: 1992).
- CLEVE G., "Margery Kempe: A Scandinavian Influence in Medieval England", in Glasscoe M. (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* (Cambridge: 1992) 163–178.
- COAKLEY J.W., *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power. Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (New York: 2006).
- CONYBEARE C., "Spaces between Letters. Augustine's Correspondence with Women", in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 57–72.
- Der Sog[enannte] Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum s. Elisabeth confectus*, ed. A. Huyskens (Kempten – Munich: 1911).
- DIETRICH OF APOLDA, *Die Vita der heiligen Elisabeth des Dietrich von Apolda*, ed. M. Renner (Marburg: 1993).
- DILLON J., "Holy Women and their Confessors", in Voaden R. (ed.), *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England* (Cambridge: 1996) 115–140.
- ELLIS R., "The Divine Message and its Human Agents: St. Birgitta and her Editors", *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order, Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 1 (Salzburg: 1993) 209–233.

- , “Margery Kempe’s Scribe and the Miraculous Books”, in Phillips H. (ed.), *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition* (Cambridge: 1990) 161–175.
- FARMER D.H., “Elizabeth of Portugal”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: 2003).
- GOODICH M., *Miracles and Wonders. The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350* (Aldershot – Burlington: 2007).
- GOTTFRIED OF DISIBODENBERG – THEODORIC OF ECHTERNACH, *The Life of the Sainly Hildegard*, trans. H. Feiss (Toronto: 1996).
- GREENSPAN K., “Autohagiography and Medieval Women’s Spiritual Autobiography”, in Chance J. (ed.), *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Gainesville: 1996) 216–236.
- GRISÉ C.A., “Continental Women and the Textual Relics of Prayers in Late-Medieval England”, in Jenkins J. – Bertrand O. (eds.), *The Medieval Translator. Traduire au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: 2007) 165–178.
- HILDEGARD OF BINGEN, *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. J.L. Baird – R.K. Ehrman, vol. 2 (Oxford: 2006).
- , *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. J.L. Baird – R.K. Ehrman (New York: 1998–2004).
- HUGH OF FLOREFFE, *The Life of Yvette of Huy*, trans. J.A. McNamara (Toronto: 1999).
- JACOBUS DE VORAGINE, *The Golden Legend; Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan, vol. 2 (Princeton: 1993).
- JACQUES DE VITRY, *The Life of Marie d’Oignies*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1998).
- IMRE B., *Szent Erzsébet Irodalma* (Budapest: 1907).
- JACKSON W.A. – FERGUSON F.S. – PANTZER K.F., *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: 1976–1991).
- JEAY M., “La *Vie de sainte Douceline* par Felipa Porcelet: les mobiles d’une hagiographe du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Dix ans de recherche sur les femmes écrivains de l’ancien régime: influences et confluences. Mélanges offerts à Hannah Fournier* (Québec: 2008) 17–36.
- KERBY-FULTON K., *Books under Suspicion. Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: 2006).
- KRUG R., “Reading at Syon Abbey”, in *Reading Families. Women’s Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca – London: 2002) 153–206.
- The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth, 1200–1268*, trans. R. DeGanck (Kalamazoo: 1991).
- The Life of Juliana of Mont Cornillon*, trans. B. Newman (Toronto: 1988).
- The Life of Saint Douceline Beguine of Provence*, trans. K. Garay – M. Jeay (Woodbridge: 2001).
- MACBAIN W., “Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers”, in Short I. (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays* (London: 1993) 235–250.
- Margaret Ebner. *Major Works*, trans. L.P. Hindsley (New York: 1993).
- MCNAMER S.E., *The Two Middle English Translations of the Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* (Heidelberg: 1996).
- MCDONNELL E.W., *The Beguines and the Beghards in Medieval Culture. With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick: 1954).
- MECHTILD DE MAGDEBOURG, *La lumière fluente de la Divinité*, trans. W. Verlaquet (Grenoble: 2001).
- , *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. F. Tobin (New York: 1998).
- MINNIS A.J., *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Aldershot: 1988).
- MONTAG U., “The Reception of St. Birgitta in Germany”, in Morris B. – O’Mara V. (eds.), *The Translations of the Works of St. Birgitta of Sweden into The Medieval European Vernaculars, The Medieval Translator. Traduire au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: 2000) 106–116.
- NEEL C., “The Origins of the Beguines”, in Bennett J.M. et al. (eds.), *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages* (Chicago – London: 1989) 240–260.

- NEWMAN B., "Hildegard and her Hagiographers. The Remaking of Female Saint-hood", in Mooney C.M. (ed.) *Gendered Voices. Medieval Saints and their Interpreters* (Philadelphia: 1999) 16–34.
- PEZZINI D., "Brigittine Tracts of Spiritual Guidance in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study in Translation", in Ellis R. (ed.), *The Medieval Translator* (London: 1991) 175–207.
- POOR S.S., *Mechtild of Magdeburg and Her Book. Gender and the Making of Textual Authority* (Philadelphia: 2004).
- Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der hl. Elisabeth Landgräfin von Thüringen*, ed. A. Huyskens (Marburg: 1908).
- SAHLIN C.L., "'A Marvelous and Great Exultation of the Heart': Mystical Pregnancy and Marian Devotion in Bridget of Sweden's *Revelations*", *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order, Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 1 (Salzburg: 1993) 108–128.
- SANSY D., "Iconographie de la prophétie. L'image d'Hildegarde de Bingen dans le *Liber divinatorum operum*", in Vauchez A. (ed.), *Les textes prophétiques et la prophétie en Occident (XII–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Rome: 1990) 405–416.
- SCHEEPSMA W., "Mystical Networks in the Middle Ages? On the First Women Writers in Dutch and their Literary Contacts", in Dijk S. van – Broomans P. – Meulen J.F. van der – Oostrum P. van (eds.), *'I Have Heard about you'. Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlof* (Hilversum: 2004) 43–60.
- SCHIRMER E., "Reading Lessons at Syon Abbey. The *Myroure of Oure Ladye* and the Mandates of Vernacular Theology", in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 345–376.
- STARGARDT U., "The Beguines of Belgium, the Dominican Nuns of Germany, and Margery Kempe", in Heffernan T.J. (ed.), *The Popular Literature of Medieval England* (Knoxville: 1985) 277–313.
- THOMAS DE CANTIMPRÉ, *The Life of Christina the Astonishing*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1999).
- , *The Supplement to Jacques de Vitry's Life of Marie d'Oignies*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1998).
- , *The Life of Lutgard of Aywieres*, trans. M.H. King (Toronto: 1991).
- VAUCHEZ A., "Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)", in Blumenfeld-Kosinski R. – Szell T. (eds.), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca – London: 1991) 21–31.
- VESSEY M., "Response to Catherine Conybeare. Women of Letters?", in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 73–96.
- WATSON N., "The Making of the *Book of Margery Kempe*", in Olson L. – Kerby-Fulton K. (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue. Reading Women in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: 2005) 395–434.
- WIETHAUS U., "The Death Song of Marie d'Oignies: Mystical Sound and Hagiographical Politics in Medieval Lorraine", in Kittell E.E. – Suydam M.A. (eds.), *The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries* (New York: 2004) 152–179.