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KATHERINE ELIZABETH HOLDERITH

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## Abstract

This study seeks to explore the monastic spirituality of women in England from the early to high medieval periods, approximately 800-1300 CE, through the analysis of their material culture, primarily their books, bodies, and buildings – evidence of their existence and participation within monasticism. The foundation of this project is understanding how gender functioned within medieval female monasticism as such to influence and inform feminine spirituality. Constructing medieval ideas of gender within a monastic setting is crucial and it is not possible to do this without using the ideas of post-modern gender theorists. Yet it is a fine line to walk, analysing materials without imposing the modern on the medieval. The strategy is to acknowledge and understand the ‘mess’. Early within *Gender Trouble*, Butler states: ‘Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts.’ This is especially true in the medieval context, where culturally accepted meanings of gender identities are often contradictory, even as simple binaries abound. By establishing relevant discourse on medieval conceptions of gender and sex – and also understanding how certain gender-based ideologies continued to inform the study of the period – fragments of female participation in the material culture of their own spirituality becomes visible.

# Gendered Spirituality within Female Monastic Space in Britain, c. 800-1300

Katherine Holderith

SUBMITTED IN REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

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# **Impact Statement on COVID-19, Ukrainian War, and British Library Cyberattack**

This thesis has been impacted by an array of world events unforeseen at its outset in January 2019. Such events, primarily the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing Ukrainian War and the lasting effects of the British Library cyberattack, have had significant detrimental effects on this project.

Most impacted has been the ability to conduct research on primary sources in an organized and efficient manner, if at all, due to the pandemic. As Covid was realized as a global emergency in mid-March of 2020 and the world shut down as a result, my ability to travel safely to various libraries and universities for the next two years was essentially non-existent. Digital resources were supplemented where available, but often they lacked the depth of study needed for this project. Sacrifices were necessarily made, and the project consequentially suffered.

One manuscript which had been seldom studied is a twelfth-century Wherwell Monastery book, held in the National Public Library of Russia in St Petersburg (MS Q.v.l.62). Hard to access in the easiest of times due to unfriendly library communications and visa restrictions, this manuscript had to be permanently ruled out of my analysis when Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. As an American citizen, it has become almost impossible for me to enter Russia, nor would I risk the danger of doing so in today's heightened political climate.

Finally, on 28 October 2023 a hacker group attacked the digital mainframe of the British Library, crippling their online information systems and rendering access to their collections, both digital and physical, null. The repercussions of this attack have been devastating to the functionality of the library and continue presently. Living in London in

2023-2024 for work, I heavily rely on the British Library for working space, secondary sources, as well as its repository of medieval manuscripts; the majority of manuscripts examined in this project are held by them including the principal manuscript Harley 2965 (the Book of Nunnaminster). As such, I have been unable to access any primary sources in digital or physical form from the British Library in the last few months of my writing-up period. Secondary research has been continuously sourced from other university libraries.

Throughout all of this, it has been a challenging process to complete the thesis as I originally envisioned it, and indeed it has not been possible. I am very grateful, however, for the gracious people I met during this period who helped me complete the thesis as it is currently presented.

# Acknowledgments

This project is the fulfilment of the dreams of a little girl with an insatiable curiosity for the unknown. That being said, I could not have done completed this thesis without the encouragement and support of many people. Foremost is my family, especially my parents who have supported me emotionally and financially and, who, despite their best efforts, still do not really know what I have been doing for the past five years. To my dogs for love and fluffy emotional support. To my friends: you are my family. Thank you for listening to me talk about nuns eight years. My Edinburgh Book History MSc girls, Holly Sanderson and Daisy Stafford, for knowing an adventure into the wild is always good to get out of your own head. Heidi Stoner for being a friend and mentor. New friends who in the last year have become good friends despite my constant state of stress: Ellen, Rachel, and Lana you have kept me sane. Jay Buckley and the New Hampshire gang for picking me up and taking me out when I needed it most. Robert Williams for humour, intelligence, and Italy: midnights drives were never so rewarding. Eda Herzog-Vitto for being my rock no matter where we live. Katie Sue Carrico for always answering my texts and her calming presence in any time zone; I feel so lucky to be Jamie's aunt.

# Introduction

The ruins of Whitby Abbey are an easily identifiable landmark on the northeast coast of England, rising up from the cliff to mark the headland for sailors and warn those on land of the impending drop into the sea. Of the many artefacts of medieval religious life in England, Whitby remains one of the most recognizable and celebrated. Its illustrious history is taught in schools and its legendary saint Hild finds her place amongst other notable early Northumbrian figures such as Bede, Caedmon, and Cuthbert. Yet, the remains of Whitby Abbey – the name and the ruin – do not reflect its famous early history. The landmark on the headland is the ruin of a monastery likely built on the same site of Hild’s original abbey, rather than her abbey itself. This later foundation was exclusively male, likely re-established by Norman monks following the Conquest. The visible ruins date from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries – much later than Hild’s eighth-century tenure. Also, it is called Whitby. Hild would not have known the name Whitby or recognised it as the name for her foundation. Her monastery was called *Streaneshalch*, which translates roughly to ‘Streane’s Headland’ in the Northumbrian dialect of Old English. ‘Whitby’ is a later placename, likely given following the settlement of Danish raiders in the area in the ninth century.<sup>1</sup> A combination of economic decline and raids by viking Danes are the most likely reasons for why the double monastery was abandoned at some point in the ninth century, but Hild and the retinue of Northumbrian monastics remained as important figures in of Christianity in the north and early medieval England.

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<sup>1</sup> In Old Norse it translates to ‘white town’ or ‘white settlement’.

Hild is an anomalous figure in early medieval English history by virtue of the fact that she is a woman whose name and fame have carried into the present day. The majority of other women, even other abbesses or queens, were not so lucky. Augustine, for example, is a ubiquitous figure in both history and Catholicism, known for his mission to bring Christianity from Rome to England and thereafter the first archbishop of the newly established see of Canterbury, which remains heart of the English church. Those spreading the Augustine gospel rarely mention Bertha, who established a Christian practice and church in Canterbury long before Pope Gregory met his ‘angels’ and directed his missionary across Europe to the English shores. Bertha was the daughter of a Frankish king who agreed to marry the English *bretwalda* Æthelberht of Kent on the condition she could continue to practice her Christian faith. They married in *circa* 580. She brought her priest with her across the channel and rebuilt an old Roman church for her use just outside of Canterbury. It was consecrated in honour of St Martin of Tours in recognition of her birthplace. When Gregory decided to send Augustine to relieve the Angles of their pagan oppression in 596 – almost twenty years later – he wrote ahead to Bertha informing her of the impending arrival from Rome and requesting assistance in convincing her distrustful husband not to meet his missionaries with violence.<sup>2</sup> As a result of Bertha’s diplomacy, Augustine did not perish a martyr and his ‘success’ branded him one of the most effective missionaries in history.<sup>3</sup> Bertha is largely forgotten for her contributions. Without her acting as intermediary, Augustine and his companions would

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<sup>2</sup> It is possible that Æthelberht had already converted to Christianity by the time Augustine arrived, but the exact date of his conversion is unknown. Another condition of his marriage could have been his eventual conversion, or at least the possibility of it. As Bede often demonstrates throughout *HE*, it was a common enough practice for a noble Christian woman to convert their high-ranking pagan husband through marriage during this period. Also see Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 15-45. Æthelberht was certainly Christian before 601 when Gregory wrote to him, recognising him as a Christian king. Bede, *HE*, I.32.

<sup>3</sup> The level of successful conversion by Augustine was largely contained to Kent by the time of his death and has now been mostly attributed to Æthelberht himself, who converted two other local kings.

likely have died by her husband's sword on the beaches of Thanet, yet her name, life, and faith are often overwritten by his.

Bertha's small church dedicated to St Martin still stands today in a leafy churchyard on the outskirts of Canterbury at a distance from the main attractions, an unassuming building constructed from a motley collection of Roman brick, Canterbury flint, and carved sandstone. It is easy to miss – or purposely avoid – in favour of the impressive and towering Norman cathedral in the centre of town. It is, in some ways, the perfect metaphor for Bertha and the motivations behind this project, which is to recover the spaces of the overwritten, forgotten, or misused history of spirituality of medieval monastic women in England.

In part due to the misogyny of late Victorian and early twentieth-century academia, women, and their history - especially during the medieval period - were chronically understudied or disregarded entirely as the discipline of history formed and was taught as a part of the larger undertaking of public education. Women themselves were often excluded (formally or otherwise) from education through the twentieth century, especially at a university level, and thus their historical counterparts often had no advocate. As far back as 1986, Joan Scott noted that the using gender as a category of historical analysis 'requires analysis not only of the relationship between male and female experience in the past but also of the connection between past history and current historical practice.'<sup>4</sup> Male historians were often quick to dismiss women as both legitimate subjects and colleagues, and the legacy of such inequality remains relevant in modern perceptions of historical knowledge. History as it is taught today still has a distinct political flavour, more often than not defined by dates of

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<sup>4</sup> Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis', p. 1055.

military actions and the deeds of men rather than the complex social paradigms – such as gender and the contributions of women – that underlie and intertwine with such.

The marginalisation of women and women’s history is particularly notable within English medieval studies, especially during the early period of Anglo-Saxon prominence. As recently as 2010 Kathryn Maude wrote, ‘In Anglo-Saxon Studies, then, it is still possible to pretend that women’s and gender studies do not exist,’ arguing that ‘feminist approaches to Anglo-Saxon texts are still seen by many as an “add-on” rather than an essential part of the discipline.’<sup>5</sup> One major issue within the field of medieval studies is the endurance of outdated editions of manuscript texts produced with no regard to gender or social nuance, which are relied upon by scholars for use in manuscript and textual analysis. Indeed, this project relies upon the work of Walter de Gray Birch and Kuyper both of whose work are still the definitive editions of the Book of Nunnaminster and the Book of Cerne. Their work often overwrites and undermines the importance of medieval *and* contemporary female contributions to the production of texts. Maude identifies one particular instance in Walter W. Skeat’s edition of *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, originally published in 1881.<sup>6</sup> Skeat’s *Lives of Saints* was one of the many editions of manuscript texts consulted during the initial research of this project; the copy held by Durham University Library was well-used by pencils and highlighters and in desperate need of a rebinding. Initially I, no doubt along with countless others, paged into the meat of the text, only skimming the preliminary notice of which the last paragraph reads:

The modern English version of the Homilies, though revised by myself, is almost entirely the work of Miss Gunning, of Cambridge and Miss Wilkinson,

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<sup>5</sup> Maude, ‘Citation and marginalization: the ethics of feminism in Medieval Studies’, p. 253, 252.

<sup>6</sup> Maude, ‘Citation and marginalization: the ethics of feminism in Medieval Studies’, p. 254.

formerly of Dorking, who with great perseverance have translated not only most of the text as contained in this first part, but nearly all of the remaining Lives belonging to the same series. For their kind and valuable assistance I am very grateful, as it has enabled me to proceed with the work in the midst of many other engagements.<sup>7</sup>

Miss Gunning and Miss Wilkinson (first names unknown), it seems, did most of the hard work for Skeat. Yet, as Maude notes, they are not cited in any scholarship or even referenced on the title page, where Rev. Walter W. Skeat, M.A., is named as the ‘*Elington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Cambridge.*’ At that time, Cambridge did not formally admit women nor award them degrees; it is unknown if they were paid for their work.<sup>8</sup> Only in late 2019 was a new, definitive edition of Ælfric’s saint’s lives published by two female academics at University College Dublin, Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins.<sup>9</sup> The two women provide a fresh translation from newly collected manuscript sources, effectively acknowledging and restoring recognition of the work done by female scholars on medieval and Anglo-Saxon texts, both past and present.

The material marginalisation of their lives and work experienced by Misses Gunning and Wilkinson by Skeat and Cambridge is analogous to that of the spirituality of medieval monastic women, as this thesis seeks to explore. Looking at the period from *circa* 800-1300, this project primarily uses texts associated with female monasticism as sources of evidence for gender-based marginalisation, though concepts of physical space are also investigated

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<sup>7</sup> Skeat, p. vii; Maude, ‘Citation and marginalization: the ethics of feminism in Medieval Studies,’ p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> In 1897, a vote was taken at the university on allowing women to gain degrees following a four-hundred-page petition by the women at the school. In protest male undergraduates rioted, burning effigies of female scholars and throwing fireworks through the windows of the few women’s colleges that existed at the time. Cambridge did not grant women full academic degrees until 1948, the last major UK university to do so.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins, eds. and trans., *Old English Lives of Saints: Ælfric*, three vols, 2019.

through the archaeological remains of monastic foundations. The purpose of such is to recover the space and place of the material marginalisation and possible erasure of the spirituality of female monastic women in medieval England. The methodology for such investigation and analysis, as described below, is realized through a kind of ‘bibliographic archaeology’, integrating methods pioneered by Diane Watt and inspired by the growing area of research on the fragmentary nature of evidence of medieval religious women.<sup>10</sup> Such evidence will be evaluated by means of a theoretical framework utilising post-modern gender and space theories as analytical tools to explore religious women’s existence, participation, and marginalisation within their own spirituality in three areas: their books, bodies, and buildings. This is done using three manuscript case studies to cover the pre-Conquest, Conquest, and post-Conquest period of English history. While divided as such, these time periods are understood not necessarily to be distinct or even linear, but instead unconstrained and indelibly connected.

Similar to Watt, Scott, and Maude, among others, I believe it is necessary to use new and perhaps unconventional methods of research and analysis for investigation into women’s history as more traditional, masculinist methods of examination are often unsuited to the work. Such conventional methods include adherence to rigid academic disciplines, denial of theoretically orientated study, and rejection of gender-based work as a legitimate field, all of which highlight the inherent inequitable nature of the historical discipline. Instead, this project seeks to be interdisciplinary, theoretical, and explicitly female-focused. It embraces the fragmentary nature of evidence that is the female historical legacy, understanding women’s marginalisation as both a physical and theoretical space.

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<sup>10</sup> See the recent work of Katie Bugyis, Katherine Weikert, Stephanie Hollis, among others.

This is exemplified by the recent innovative work done by Jessica Hodgkinson at the University of Leicester. For her doctoral study, Hodgkinson chose to examine Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 30, the earliest biblical manuscript identifiable as having been produced in the British Isles south of the Humber River, in Kent.<sup>11</sup> The manuscript, written in the beginning of the eighth century, has been associated with the monastery of St Augustine, Canterbury due to a descriptive shelfmark added in fourteenth century, but it also possesses prayers that use feminine Latin words added to a folio 70 at some early point in its history, suggesting it could have been made and used at the female monastery of Minster-in-Thamet.<sup>12</sup> While the uncial script is consistent with the rest of the text, the hand differs, suggesting a second trained scribe. The added prayers are also unique to the manuscript, making it one of the oldest examples of female textual interaction with Christianity in England. Additionally, in 1935 Elias Avery Lowe noted bits of parchment had been scratched at in the lower margin of folio 47 to inscribe an abbreviated name: ‘EADB’ and ‘+E+’, possibly Eadburg or Eadburh, the name of a significant early abbess at Thanet and correspondent of Boniface.

In 2022 Hodgkinson continued the study of the manuscript and noticed other scratches which had been missed by scholars for at least hundred years, as they were essentially invisible. There were many more, all in the margins. To pursue an accurate and complete recording of the marginal incisions, the folios were photographed using a technique called photometric stereo, which, using state-of-the-art technology, renders the image in 3D and filters for different textual frequencies to reveal markings and measure their depth.<sup>13</sup> This method revealed the extent of the dry point inscriptions as well as confirming Lowe’s initial

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<sup>11</sup> *Summary Catalogue*, no. 3418.

<sup>12</sup> The prayer uses ‘*indignam famulam*’, the feminised versions of ‘unworthy servant’.

<sup>13</sup> Hodgkinson and Barret, ‘Women in the Margins.’

transcription on folio 70 and his assumption of an abbreviated name. On folio 1, the name 'EaDBURG' preceded by a cross (+) was discovered in the upper left margin atop the decorated 'P' of *primum.* Folio 2 revealed another instance of the same name surrounded by a rectangular border, with a lone 'E' nearby. On folio 18 a longer dry point inscription appears, partially in Old English: '+ EaDBURG BIREð Cᵝ...N'. Overall, Eadburg's name appears in the manuscript fifteen times. In addition to textual inscriptions, drawings were also incised on folios 9 and 11. These are crudely drawn people intermingled with random letters; the artist seemingly traced their thumb to use as the main body of the figures. As revealed by the photometric stereo, Eadburg is all over this book.

The discoveries made by Hodgkinson and her associate at the Bodleian, John Barret, are hugely significant to female book history in early medieval England and are illustrative of many of the tenets and motivations in this thesis, particularly the ideas of significance and marginalisation. Investigating the history of medieval women often involves specifically seeking them out by trawling through archives and secondary literature; they are not easy to find. Within manuscripts, evidence of female monastic possession is often recognised through a name, either of a woman or nunnery, scrawled in the margins of the page or on a flyleaf. Sometimes prayers using feminine Latin pronouns associate a manuscript with religious women, even if a specific foundation is not identified. In both instances, textual evidence is often meagre and almost exclusively found outside of the main body of the text. What fragments we possess of female participation in monastic textual culture is, in the most literal sense, found in the margins of manuscripts that would otherwise have been assumed to belonged to a male monastery.

While Selden Supra 30 possesses multiple pieces of evidence for female use, its significance to a female community and their spirituality was primarily speculative before

Hodgkinson's work. The recovery of the spaces of Eadburg's interaction within the manuscript required specific investigation, bibliographic archaeology, and cutting-edge technology. Without consideration for interdisciplinary methods of historical research, Eadburg would have remained where she was: invisible in the margins. Yet, due to her newfound visibility, a new generation of scholars can theorise on her interactions with the manuscript and the repercussions of such for her spirituality. For example, her incomplete inscription on folio 18 may be directly related to the text of Acts 5:18 that appears above on the page detailing the imprisonment of the apostles. Hodgkinson and Barret speculate that if 'CP...N' is 'CPÆRTERN' (*cwærtern*), meaning prison, 'perhaps Eadburg sought to mirror the text, associating herself with the Apostles in their imprisonment.'<sup>14</sup> Perhaps each page Eadburg marked was significant to her or that of Minster-in-Thamet; these discoveries give us new insight into impact of materiality upon female monastic spirituality and vice versa.

Like that of Hodgkinson, this project uses manuscripts associated with religious women as the primary sources of evidence for investigation and analysis. Yet instead of integrating new technology as a research tool, a theoretical framework is used to uncover the marginalised places and spaces of feminine spirituality. In many ways I am searching for the same thing as Hodgkinson: the marks of women, be they visible or invisible to the naked eye. Visible, or positive evidence of feminine signification is labelled as the 'excessive feminine', the definition and origins of which is described below in the Methodology section. The concepts of spirituality and its specific relation to female medieval monasticism are also explored in Chapter One.

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<sup>14</sup> Hodgkinson and Barret, 'Women in the Margins'.

However, it is first necessary to establish what it means to be a woman and/or feminine during the ascribed medieval period. Over a period of five hundred years such discourse on sex and gender naturally shifts. The first questions asked in this project contends with what it means to be a woman in England in the early medieval period, and how that definition evolved through *c.*1300. What sources were relevant for the understanding of sex and gender? How did sex inform gender? Did gender exist separately from sex? How did these sources form or inform a cultural discourse on women and femininity? As this study is concerned principally with monasticism religion, and its impact on sex and gender, must also be considered. How did Christianity inform ideas of the masculine and feminine, if at all? What bearing did Creationist ideas have on these ideas? Do origins of medieval ideas of sex and gender pre-date Christianity? How does Christian morality influence gender roles? What about physicality? How were these ideas substantiated? Only once these theories of gender, sex, and physiology from the medieval period are explored, can analysis of evidence begin.

The use of modern theory will also be explored fully in Chapter One, but it is important to initially acknowledge that such modern theory is not being applied directly to medieval history but instead being used as a tool for investigation and analysis. The exploration of medieval gender mentioned above will work to establish the relevant discourse for each time period discussed in this project and modern assumptions will not be overlaid upon historical conceptions. Gender and space theory will instead be used as tools to investigate the structures of medieval discourse on gender, religion, and monasticism, chipping away at institutionalised masculine views on medieval history and redeploying academic considerations of material evidence to uncover feminine operations of spirituality within monasticism. By establishing relevant discourse on medieval conceptions of gender and sex – and also understanding how certain gender-based ideologies continued to inform

the study of the period – fragments of female participation in the material culture of their own spirituality becomes visible.

## Sources

The primary sources for this investigation into monastic female spirituality are any and all manuscripts related to nunneries and/or nuns broadly from the period *c.* 800 to *c.* 1300. These manuscripts include extant and lost books that we infer existed from contemporary sources, such as the lost life of Hild that Bede used in his *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>15</sup> This list was initially compiled from the work done on nunnery manuscripts by David Bell in *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, but it has been added to extensively through independent research of further sources and has evolved into a large database. While this project is limited to a specific span of years, the database is not and includes manuscripts from the late sixth century to the dissolution of English nunneries in the mid-sixteenth century. Bell's catalogue includes all books that he identified as securely belonging to a nun or nunnery in England after the Norman Conquest to the Dissolution of the Monasteries as well as a brief description, location, and shelfmark. He also includes 'lost' books, such as those counted by Dissolution surveyors but failed to survive to modern day. Yet, his list has limitations, including the lack of inclusion of books from pre-Conquest houses or any manuscripts without specific named association but possess clear female provenance. Bell's list is partially derived from Neil Ker and Andrew Watson's catalogue of books within their *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, which was examined separately in this project for any supplementary information. Ker's other catalogues,

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<sup>15</sup> See note 45, below.

including *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* and *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, were also consulted for additional data. Other bibliographic resources include the major catalogues of M.R. James – which remains the primary catalogue of many Oxford college libraries – as well as the more recent works of Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge.<sup>16</sup>

The non-catalogue work of other manuscript researchers made important contributions to the work of Bell, Ker, Watson, and James. Pamela R. Robinson identified more medieval monastic manuscripts possessing feminine material, such as prayers changed to accommodate a female audience or colophons signed by a nun, which indicates ownership by a nunnery or a woman religious at some point in the book's history.<sup>17</sup> Works with clear nunnery attribution or authorship but no corresponding extant manuscript are included in the database. For example, the *vies* of Edward the Confessor and Katherine of Alexandria, which were both produced by nuns of Barking Abbey but do not survive in any manuscripts connected to the abbey, are on the list, as are significant contributions to mortuary rolls made by female monastic institutions. The work of Katie Bugyis on female monastic practice has illuminated many books certain nunneries must have possessed but did not survive to be catalogued.<sup>18</sup> These identifiable lost books, without corresponding shelfmarks, are also included. Manuscripts without specific provenance that possess material suited for a female monastic audience are also listed on the database, as are manuscripts with tenuous connections to female monasticism. Both are marked as such. Additionally, there are a few

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<sup>16</sup> Gneuss, 'A preliminary list of manuscripts written or owned in England up to 1100', Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts*.

<sup>17</sup> P.R. Robinson, 'A Twelfth-Century Scriptrix from Nunnaminster'.

<sup>18</sup> See Bugyis, particularly 'Dating the Translations of Barking's Abbess-Saints' and 'Recovering the histories of women religious.'

manuscripts which we know of surviving through the eighteenth century, only to be destroyed or severely mutilated in the Ashburnam House Fire of 1731.<sup>19</sup> Works such as Aldhelm's *De virginitate* (both prose and verse editions) and other patristic letters of significance are listed in a secondary database as there is no manuscript evidence these works were held in the intended nunneries let alone that they reached them. Books with attributions of provenance to a single person within the nunnery, especially one of high standing such as a prioress or abbess, are treated with caution as personal items likely inaccessible to the larger monastic community.

Within the database, individual major works within a single manuscript are given separate entries under the grouping of the same shelfmark. Additional information for each line item includes language(s), approximate date of creation, current location, library, and shelfmark, as well as the associated nunnery. Notes include available editions, digitisation status, and URLs to associated websites. Certain bolded letters in the first column indicate the status of the manuscript, such as 'D' for destroyed or 'R' for restricted access, as specified in a key. The database is sortable by any of these pieces of information to identify trends, classify timelines, and group libraries.

From this database, a specific range of dates was determined with 1066 as a hinge point. The date of the Norman Conquest was decided as the pivotal centre of this study in order to dismantle notions of its sudden and immediate impact on feminine spirituality and female monasticism within England. I am looking at a time period that covers a substantial and well-studied amount of political change, and it is for this reason that this study

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<sup>19</sup> These manuscripts include Cotton, Otho A.xii, containing accounts of Ethelburga, Wulfhild, and Alfred, and parts of Cotton, Galba A.xiv.

foregrounds and emphasises religious change and possible continuity. This approach seeks to understand female religious life within its own context—consciously not imposing male-dominated political narratives on these consciously female spaces. Using evidence from either side of 1066 posed a challenge, however, as the amount of collective textual evidence available is significantly larger in later centuries. There are very few pre-Conquest nunnery manuscripts extant partially due to a number of factors, including England’s fringe position in Europe, its vulnerability to Viking attacks, and its inner religious and political turmoil.<sup>20</sup> Of the over two hundred manuscripts listed in the database, *six* are extant and definitively associated with an English nunnery before the Norman Conquest: three before the so-called ‘Viking Age’ and three after.<sup>21</sup> As with any project that is looking before and after a pivotal date, the limitations on either side of that date may feel arbitrary and permeable. I have chosen to conclude this periodisation around the 1300 - although this date is not being used precisely as there are difficulties in dating precision in the manuscript tradition. Including an analysis of all manuscripts associated with English nunneries was out of scope for such a narrow project as a doctoral thesis, and indeed the number of manuscripts was overwhelming. 1300 was approximately equidistant from 1066 as 800 in years; examining a similar number of years is beneficial for analysing the rapidity of changes in discourse. Additionally, Pope Boniface VIII issued his decretal *Periculoso* from Rome in 1298, the effects of which would have been felt in English nunneries around and after 1300. The major statement of *Periculoso*, permanently enclosing all religious women within their monastery, works well

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<sup>20</sup> Though the Vikings have often been the primarily targeted by early medievalists as the destructors of Anglo-Saxon material culture pre-850, Gneuss and others have posited that there was a pattern of monastic and literary decline before the Vikings intervened to hasten such decline along. The Danes are potentially not entirely at fault. See Gneuss, ‘King Alfred and the History of Anglo-Saxon Libraries’, pp. 36-8.

<sup>21</sup> If I include inferred lost manuscripts, those with dubious attributions, and those possessing any feminine material, the number rises to twenty-five.

with the theme of space and enclosure that is woven through the thesis and provided a suitable approximate stopping point for the analysis.

The number of manuscripts remaining within this narrowed period still numbered over fifty, again heavily weighted post-Conquest. To provide a balanced analysis of the historical period, three manuscripts were identified and chosen as the principal primary sources to represent the pre-Conquest, Conquest, and post-Conquest eras with other primary sources integrated as supporting evidence. With a focus on three principal manuscripts, a detailed analysis necessary for a doctoral thesis could be done without struggling to include all listed sources based on date alone. Each manuscript was selected based on its strength of provenance (covering multiple nunneries if possible), relevance to female monasticism in England (represented by textual interactions with the manuscript), and appropriate date of creation for both the original text and any later additions.

The manuscript colloquially known as the Book of Nunnaminster, London, British Library, Harley MS 2965, was chosen as the principal source of the pre-Conquest period in England.<sup>22</sup> It contains many instances of feminine language in both its original text and later additions and was seemingly made for a pious woman and later spent time in a nunnery. Michelle Brown dates the manuscript to the first quarter of the ninth century, deviating from Neil Ker's original attribution the eighth.<sup>23</sup> Brown explicitly links the manuscript to the *Tiberius* group, a collection of manuscripts connected through palaeography and content that originated from a monastic centre in western Mercia, likely Worcester, in the late eighth and

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<sup>22</sup> See Alexander, no. 41; Backhouse and Webster, no. 164, Ker & Watson, no. 237; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 432. This thesis will use Walter de Grey Birch's 1889 edition of the manuscript throughout, *An Ancient Manuscript of the Eighth or Ninth Century Formerly Belonging to St Mary's Abbey or Nunnaminster*.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *Book of Cerne* and 'Female Book-Ownership' and Ker and Watson, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*.

early ninth centuries.<sup>24</sup> By the beginning of the tenth century, the manuscript was in Winchester as it was inscribed with the land boundaries of the Nunnaminster in the city given by Æhlswith, wife of Alfred of Wessex. Marginal and interlinear additions dated to the same period suggest the manuscript was used within the nunnery and perhaps at its brother monasteries of New and Old Minsters. Its later history is unknown until it was acquired by Roscarrock family<sup>25</sup> in the late sixteenth century, but there is nothing to suggest the manuscript left a monastic centre in Winchester and could have even remained at Nunnaminster (renamed St Mary's Abbey post-1066) until its dissolution in November 1539. The choice of this manuscript provides connections to other manuscripts pertaining to feminine spirituality and female monasticism in the pre- and post-Viking age of England without crossing the 1066 boundary. Other manuscripts that will support the evidence within Harley 2965 include the *Tiberius* group, the Cotton/Galba Prayerbooks, Ælfwine's Prayerbook, and the two early gospel books connected to Minster-in-Thanel.

Two interconnected works, the *vies* of saints Edward the Confessor and Katherine of Alexandria, both represented in Campsey Collection, British Library, Additional MS 70513,

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<sup>24</sup> The *Tiberius* Group of manuscripts consist of the Royal Prayerbook (BL, Royal MS 2.A.xx), Book of Cerne (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ll.1.10), Book of Nunnaminster (BL, Harley MS 2965), and Harleian Prayerbook (BL, Harley MS 7653). These manuscripts all possess similar palaeographical stylistic traits common during the later reign of King Offa of Mercia (757-96). See the various works of Michelle Brown on this topic, including: *The Book of Cerne* (1996); 'Mercian Manuscripts? The 'Tiberius' Group and Its Historical Context' (2000); 'Female book-ownership and production in Anglo-Saxon England: the evidence of the ninth-century prayerbooks' (2001). Alfred seemingly turned to Mercia for help rehabilitating the literary prospects of Wessex. See Rosaline Love, 'Insular Latin Literature to 900', p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> The Roscarrock (earlier, Rosecaret or Rosekareo) family were moderately wealthy landed gentry with ties to land in Cornwall dating to 1086. In the sixteenth century, the family seems to have resisted the Protestant Reform of England and maintained their Catholic faith. Patriarch Nicholas (*d.* 1633) was imprisoned and tortured in the Tower of London for his refusal to submit to the Anglican church, but while there met William Howard, fourth son of Thomas, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk. Nicholas later became Howard's companion and protégé at Naworth Castle, Cumberland, where the two men built up a considerable library of manuscripts. Their social circle included other antiquarian and bibliophiles such as William Camden, Robert Cotton, Henry Spelman, and James Ussher. See Kernow and Sheppard, 'Roscarrocks', pp. 34-35.

were chosen for the Conquest period.<sup>26</sup> The Campsey Collection is dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and, based on marginal notations, may not have arrived at Campsey Ash nunnery until later in the fourteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The *vies* of Replac and Edward, however, were composed in the second half of the twelfth century at Barking Abbey by self-identified female monastic authors. The author of *Katherine* names herself as ‘Clemence’, while that of *Eduoard* remains silent – only naming Barking as her place of inhabitancy. It is possible that Clemence is the author of both works, but for the purposes of this project exact author is not as important as the content and context of the works themselves.<sup>28</sup> Since its initial foundation in 666 CE, Barking was hailed as a continuous beacon of female learning and sanctity, though it was likely abandoned completely in the ninth century. It was refounded under the reign of Edgar in c. 965 and was later instrumental in the settlement of Duke William following the Conquest. Led by a formidable and long-lived Anglo-Saxon abbess, Barking’s position during and just following the Conquest was ideal for first-hand intersection of feminine spirituality with English politics. We are lucky that the works of two female authors from the same time period have survived which can be analysed. Other manuscripts providing evidentiary support for the *Katherine* and *Edward vies* include the

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<sup>26</sup> Jane Bliss’s translation *Vie d’Edouard le Confessuer by a Nun of Barking Abbey* in conjunction with the edited original ANF poem from the MARGOT Electronic Campsey Project (ECP) will be used as my primary sources. All verse numbers from *Katherine* and *Eduoard* are cited using the ECP citation style unless otherwise stated. ‘Kth\_##’ refers to the *Katherine* lines and ‘E\_w##’ refers to the *Edward* lines. See the Campsey website for further clarity on the sigla. Södergård’s edition is used for any ANF material cited after verse 4000. Also see: Dean and Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, no. 523; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, MacBain ‘The Literary Apprenticeship of Clemence of Barking’; and Mitchell, ‘Patrons and Politics at Twelfth-Century Barking Abbey’. [http://margot.uwaterloo.ca/campsey/cmphome\\_e.html](http://margot.uwaterloo.ca/campsey/cmphome_e.html).

<sup>27</sup> The majority of the manuscript, ff. 9-267, was written in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Ff. 1-8, which contain three saints’ lives by Nicholas Bozon, is dated to the early fourteenth century and was later added to the thirteenth century material. The entirety of this manuscript is edited and available online through the ECP.

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter Three for more information on this topic.

Goscelin works on the saints of Barking Abbey, the *scriptrix* text of Nunnaminster identified by P.R. Robinson, and the Barking hagiographical collection found in Cardiff.

Finally, a previously unstudied monastic woman's prayer was chosen for the period post-Conquest leading up to 1300. This fragmentary prayer was saved from obscurity by Tony Hunt and Jane Bliss in their collection of Anglo-Norman verse. The only known copy of the prayer is found in Oxford, Bodleian, Douce MS 282, a mid-thirteenth century manuscript that primarily consists of Anglo-Norman sermons on the Book of Joshua, but also contains a treatise of confession written on a set of misbound folios.<sup>29</sup> This untitled treatise is also found in other contemporary manuscripts, though the Douce 282 edition is the only manuscript which also contains the confessional prayer by a woman religious that immediately follows. The identification of the author as a monastic woman is not made explicit in the confessional, but its content and authorial voice indicates as such.<sup>30</sup> The confessional is not linked to any specific monastery in England, which is both a boon and a curse. The unknown and anonymous nature of the work allows for an analysis of the prayer detached from a specific monastery, unlike the previous two principal works, and could be inflated to cover female monastic spirituality across the country. In an England more connected by centralised government and religious administration based on documentation, the variation of spirituality amongst nunneries is likely to be less than those of independent

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<sup>29</sup> The only edition of this text is by Tony Hunt, "A Women's Prayer", in Tony Hunt (ed.), "*Cher Alme*": *Texts of Anglo-Norman Piety*, trans. Jane Bliss (Tempe, 2010), pp. 262–73. The only bibliographic reference to the text, aside from Hunt, groups the text under the catchall title of "Prayers to God in Prose" in Ruth Dean and Maureen Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, (London, 1999) no. 853, p. 448. They provide no other information other than the identifying folios, shelfmark, general date, and opening lines of the prayer, along a note of Hunt's forthcoming edition. The summary catalogue of Bodleian manuscripts also does not note this text, though it does include a brief description of the contents of ff. 56r–62v. Falconer Madan, et al., *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1895-1953), vol. 4, no. 21856, p. 579.

<sup>30</sup> The argument for monastic female authorship of the prayer will be expanded upon in each analysis chapter.

kingdoms or politically motivated foundations trying to survive a sudden regime change. However, there is also risk in this inflation; countering such risk will be the evidence provided in other contemporary manuscripts such as the Nuneaton miscellanea in Oxford's Fitzwilliam Museum, treatises from John Godard to women religious, and various copies of the *Ancrene Rule*. The inability to identify a specific monastery for the confessional will prove challenging specifically in Chapter Four, when the ideas of gendered monastic space are developed.

In addition to the manuscript sources outlined above, the physical spaces of monasteries will be considered through the archaeological remains of their architecture in Chapter Four. This chapter will rely heavily on archaeological detail as well as manuscript evidence from the three principal sources. The aim of this chapter is to understand how physical and textual spaces are woven together in female monastic spirituality. As I have not participated in any digs on the nunneries personally, secondary archaeological sources must be used. Preference is given to such sources that contain considerate and detailed plans of nunnery layouts, even if such sources are older. As Roberta Gilchrist has demonstrated in her *Gender & Material Culture*, analysis of secondary sources for nunnery archaeology is still a useful avenue for the exploration of gendered discourse.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study adopts a multifaceted and theoretical approach to investigate and attempt to recover the space of female religious marginalisation in medieval spirituality using four distinct medieval texts as case studies to explore and analyse the material dimensions of such spirituality. The timeframe of this study stretches from the earliest identifiable female associations and/or contributions to monastic Christianity

in England *circa* 600 to the imposition of their permanent monastic enclosure by Pope Boniface VIII's *Periculoso* in 1298. This rather large time frame was self-determining in relation to pre-twelfth-century evidence, as there is so little of it. Indeed, though there are more manuscripts and physical evidence associated with female monasticism after the Norman Conquest, though the majority of books and identifiable women themselves, such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, date from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The nunnery of Barking provides most of the literary evidence for the twelfth century and indeed it is looked at closely in Chapter Three in terms of its textual output and material structure using the *vitae Katherine* and *Edwardi*. The imposition of the *Periculoso* bull and its effect on female monasteries in England in *circa* 1300 felt a natural cut off point for research as the landscape of religious literary and books shifted significantly in the fourteenth century, with re-emergence of English as a popular written language and its associations with lay and visionary spirituality. While the use of the vernacular had always been an important aspect of female literary tradition with the monastic space, the simultaneous sharp decline of Latin literacy among the female religious populations signalled a different kind of monastic and spiritual experience for women from after *circa* 1300 – one that was less involved with Latin scholasticism and more so with spirituality at a personal level. While this change represents a significant moment in female monastic (and lay) spirituality, this project is primarily deals with the period before, during, and immediately following the Conquest; a larger project with a revised theoretical framework would be needed to include the full scope of female monastic spirituality to the sixteenth century.

The sources used here cover three languages: Latin, Old English, and Anglo-Norman French. While Latin is ubiquitous as the language of the church, the vernacular languages of OE and ANF were more localised to England. Multiple dialects of OE existed in early

medieval England, roughly identifiable to major regions, such as Mercia, East Anglia, and Kent. Most of the surviving textual material features the Wessex dialect of OE due in part to Alfred's (and Edgar's) literary and church reforms and the relative strength of the kingdom against Viking incursions and destruction. Anglo-Norman French evolved as a dialect of medieval French spoken in England following the Norman Conquest and it differs from its continental cousin in both accent and spelling. While sometimes referred to as the English bastardisation of the superior continental dialect, it was the language of the ruling class and upper-middle class elites in England post-1066. English remained as the vernacular of the lower classes, continuously influencing, and being influenced by, ANF and Latin as it too evolved. The peculiarities of OE and ANF dialects will not be discussed in depth in this project, except when relevant to the analysis. There were no limitations set with regards to language or dialect in this study, as any evidence related to the material spirituality of monastic woman was considered within the established timeframe.

The aforementioned dearth of material evidence relating to the spirituality of women religious from the period before and during the Norman Conquest created a challenge in understanding the development of its marginalisation.<sup>31</sup> Traditional methods of material recovery and analysis were supplemented with what Diane Watt coined as 'literary archaeology' in her unique and experimental study on English women's literary history.<sup>32</sup> In her monograph, *Women, Writing, and Religion*, Watt is 'concerned with piecing together the evidence of what remains and what has been lost to provide a fuller understanding' and notes that her approach is partially speculative.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, her 'speculations' are evidenced-

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<sup>31</sup> Though this lack could also be seen in itself as evidence, as is soon noted.

<sup>32</sup> Watt, *Women, Writing, and Religion*, pp. 10-14, especially p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Watt, *Women, Writing, and Religion*, p. 2.

based and follow a logical approach; her conclusions are based less on conjecture than informed deductions. Watt's canon of academic work is dedicated to the recovery of English women's contributions to literary history. Her new method of analysis is experimental but allows for important new contributions to be made to the history of women religious. This present study expands on Watt's technique of literary archaeology to include any form of extant materiality related to the spirituality of women religious in England during the established time period. It is more of a 'bibliography archaeology' than literary, though it encompasses textual analysis as well.

One of Watt's major arguments in her work is the 'overwriting' of original female monastic texts and stories by male monastic authors in order to 'improve, modernise, and preserve the earlier material,' and with little intention to destroy or censor it during the process.<sup>34</sup> The resultant modern evidence sits uncomfortably with this proposition. Overwriting may not have been the intention of some male authors, but it certainly happened. This is in part due to the bias – unconscious or not – of male writers influenced by the prevailing ideological scripts of discourse that situated men and women in an unequal binary constructed through sexual difference. The structures of written languages, particularly Latin, is also somewhat at fault for the erasure of women from textual history in part due to its reliance on the masculine gender as its default 'ungendered' case. Any attempt to acknowledge the female gender in Latin had to be purposeful and specific. Furthermore, the evolution of formal ecclesiastical structure prejudiced the survival of written texts from men who occupied positions of authority women were precluded from, such as bishop or priest.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Watt, *Women, Writing, and Religion*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> The highest position a women could achieve within the church was abbess. Previously, women were allowed to hold the title of 'deaconess.'

While material evidence, including texts, provide evidence for the spirituality of monastic women, they also possess the evidence for the circumscription of female spirituality and autonomy. Watt's method of literary archaeology demands us to look at both the positive and negative evidence: where she is present, where she is absent, and why.

I have adapted Watt's method into a more theoretical framework in an attempt to understand the multi-dimensional and nuanced relationship between materiality and female spirituality. To do so, I have relied on the work of gender theorists Monique Wittig, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, and Bill Hillier and Julie Hanson. Comprehending the impact of gender on medieval monasticism and Christianity is crucial to interpreting the positive and negative evidence of female monastic spirituality and understanding their marginalised place in the extant material records.

Positive evidence of female spirituality is understood in relation to this framework as the 'excessive feminine,' a phrase produced from the theories of Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig.<sup>36</sup> In her work, Irigaray argues '[t]he "feminine" is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex.'<sup>37</sup> Whereas in the medieval period the two sexes are understood within an oppositional binary or even a spectrum, here Irigaray states the female/feminine is unrepresentable in a male/masculine signifying economy (such as texts) as it is the negative elaboration of any recognised value. Hers is still a binary, but one of signified and unsignified representation based on sexual value, rather than just the sexes themselves.<sup>38</sup> The superiority

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<sup>36</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 80, 134; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 103; Wittig, 'The Mark of Gender', p. 64.

<sup>37</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 23, 69-70.

of the male/masculine dispossesses the female/feminine of value and space – and therefore representation – in language, culture, and nature, becoming the all-encompassing general. The female/feminine is marginalised as a result. The general is the supposedly ‘ungendered,’ but the dominance of the male/masculine replaces it, erasing the female/feminine from within the general. In order to recover her place from its marginalised position in these areas, the female/feminine must disrupt the masculine signifying economy and become visible within the spaces where she is marginalised. Irigaray calls the result of such successful attempts at signification the ‘disruptive excess,’ as by becoming visible the female/feminine is exceeding the limitations placed on her by the masculine.<sup>39</sup> Such places located and identified as instances of positive evidence of female/feminine spirituality in my sources I have labelled in this study as the ‘excessive feminine’, as they represent where such disruption has occurred as for the female/feminine to become visible and significant.

The augmentation of Watt’s theory of literary archaeology into bibliography archaeology continues with the idea of negative evidence. The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence – ish. As within the binary system of sex and gender the female/feminine is unrepresentable in a male/masculine signifying economy, then in a society where women have minimal agency to attempt disruption instances of the excessive feminine are likely few and far between and alternative evidence must be considered in conjunction with the excessive feminine. Therefore, I cannot exclude places the female/feminine *should* exist, as supported by indirect evidence, but do not. Watt provides a good example of this with *Ælfflæd*, successor to Hild at Streaneshalch, of whom there is indirect evidence of her political, cultural, and literary contributions, but who Bede – and therefore history in general

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<sup>39</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 78.

– fails to recognise in any meaningful capacity.<sup>40</sup> Bede may have been uncomfortable with the idea of women possessing significant power, as many other later churchmen were, and excluded Ælfflæd (along with many other powerful abbesses) purposefully. Many feminist scholars now support this view of Bede and other popular medieval male authors, suggesting whereas they may not have possessed a hard agenda to discredit female contributions to the church, there was at least a bias towards male leaders and masculine values in their work.<sup>41</sup> Bede and others effectively marginalised these early female church leaders, underrepresenting or fully erasing their contributions to the establishment of the early church in England as well as monastic tradition in general. Such women are unrepresented, some lost to history completely, and others only uncovered through methods such as Watt's.

In the above example, Irigaray's theory of negative female/feminine signification in relation to male/masculine value is useful as a base framework for understanding female monastic history and its fragmented status. As opposed to Ælfflæd, Bede gives the reader clues as to the importance of Hild and Streaneshalch within the Northumbrian landscape of the seventh century. He names five men who became bishops following their residency there, devotes a chapter to its Hild's patronage of a famous poet, and identifies it as the place of an important synod. Moreover, Hild seems to have possessed close relationships to other nearby, female-led monasteries (Heruteu [Hartlepool] and Hackness) and was likely a mother abbess to all three, though never explicitly named as such.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Streaneshalch later became a royal burial ground for Abbess Ælfflæd's family, including her

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<sup>40</sup> Mostly in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Watt, *Women, Writing, and Religion*, pp. 14-18.

<sup>41</sup> Along with Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion*, pp. 23-31; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church* (1992); Lees and Overing, *Double Agents* (2001) and 'Women and the Origins of English Literature.'

<sup>42</sup> Bede writes that Frigyth was acting in the place of the abbess, implying Hild, though Frigyth was at Hackness. *HE*, IV.23.

father Oswui, mother Eanflæd and ‘many other nobles.’<sup>43</sup> Due to Hild’s association with nobility and the success of Streaneshalch under her abbacy, it is possible to assume the monastery’s patronage included royal gifts. It is clear that nobility invested in the monastery chosen as their final resting place under the rule of Ælfflæd, the daughter of a powerful king who dedicated her at birth as a handmaid of Christ.

Though Hild founded and was instrumental in growing the initial reputation of the abbey, Ælfflæd kept it relevant, powerful, and rich with her connections and strong leadership. Yet the success of Ælfflæd’s rule, and the results of such prosperity (including any literary or spiritual culture), are unmentioned by Bede in *HE* and his *vitae Cuthberti*. Though her prowess as a spiritual advisor and political strategist are mentioned in both Stephen of Ripon’s *vitae Wilfredi* and an anonymous *vitae Cuthberti* (both dated to the early eighth century), her name, reputation, and importance is virtually unknown today, especially when compared to other women of early medieval England, such as Hild, Æthelburh, and Leoba.<sup>44</sup> She is named, but her likely significant contributions to early medieval Christianity in England, let alone monastic culture, are unknowable. Even with the relative fame of Hild, her personal contributions to monastic life and spirituality are unknown and unrepresented; to Bede her primary act is as the producer of great men. Despite a chapter dedicated to her and other passing references in Bede’s *HE*, I would classify Hild as a marginalised figure. Her life is primarily valued through the achievements of others, mostly men, and the reader never hears directly from her in the text though it is clear she was an influential advisor. She is an

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<sup>43</sup> Bede, *HE*, II.15.

<sup>44</sup> Both Bede’s and the Anonymous lives of Cuthbert are found in *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede’s Prose Life*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave, (1940); Stephen of Ripon, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (1927).

example both positive and negative evidence of material female spirituality; we know her name and her success, yet are denied her voice, text, and any material legacy.

With the exception of being used for examples in this Introduction, Hild, Ælfflæd, their monasteries, and their successors are not included in this project as there is no material evidence directly linked to them.<sup>45</sup> The four primary texts used in this project were so chosen because of their connection directly to the production of material culture in a female monastic setting. The evidence used here is primarily derived from books – though Chapter Four combines the textual with the structural – but is above all material. Whereas Watt’s literary archaeology is evidence-based, it is also slightly esoteric. My method of bibliography archaeology is grounded in the physical, understanding the dimension of space as a necessary facet of the positive and negative evidence of female and feminine spirituality. The method is interdisciplinary, recognising books as both texts and objects. The knowledge imparted from this pairing is not mutually exclusive to the disciplines of literature, archaeology, or book history; instead, taken together, more can be understood as physical materiality and textual discourse inform each other. Text and its method of transmission are bound intricately together, especially during the periods of manuscript creation and transmission. Therefore, the books in this study are examined using close reading practices and analysed simultaneously as objects to understand their impact on female monastic spirituality.

In addition to the physicality of the book, the physicality of the female body is also considered as a dimension in the methodological analysis as it was the foundation for the

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<sup>45</sup> There are two possible exceptions. First, J.E. Cross argues a lost life of Hild was produced at Whitby and is traceable through *The Old English Martyrology* in ‘A Lost Life of Hilda of Whitby’, (1982) pp. 15-17. The second is an anonymous *Life of Gregory the Great* dating from the eighth century, produced at Whitby, likely under Ælfflæd and survives in St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex Sangallensis 567. However, there is no specific evidence it was produced at the direction of the abbess or within the female contingent of the double monastery. Andrew Breeze argues for this in ‘Did a Woman Write the Whitby Life of St Gregory?’

perceived hierarchical sexual (and therefore spiritual) difference during the medieval period as well as the inscriptional surface of social discourse. Just as ‘within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency or as imitation and negative image of the [masculine] subject’ in Irigaray, so the female body was found substandard to the male in medieval physiology.<sup>46</sup> The female sex and the feminine gender are inextricably linked in medieval discourse through the popular theories of natural philosophers such as Aristotle, Galen and Soranus, as explained in Chapter One. The natural deficiencies of the physiology of the female sex (such as their inability to expel their sex organs due to their lack of heat) informed the natural deficiencies of their gender (such as their weak moral capacity or tendency towards lasciviousness). In effect, their body functioned as the medium for the inscription of cultural and spiritual values, the primary of which being the dominance of the male and masculine values.<sup>47</sup> The intended result of such cultural inscription could be perceived as Foucaultian: compelling bodies to signify the prohibitive law as their very essence, style, and necessity.<sup>48</sup> No separation between what is inscribed and the inscription itself as discourse would not be internalised, but incorporated into the very production of the body. However, Foucault is rejected in favour of a methodological framework that separates the body and the self as the inscribed exterior and psychical interior, as theorised by Butler and Grosz.<sup>49</sup> The evidence – historical, textual, and material – surveyed in this project supports this gap between the discursive ideological scripts and their internalised interpretation. The liminal space between the two can be understood as the immaterial spirituality of female religious.

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<sup>46</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 134. Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion*, p. 33.

While those in the medieval period did not recognise the separation of gender and sex, it is necessary in this project to understand where they intersected and how this was influential on female spirituality. Here, the materiality of the female body functions similar to that of a book: both as an object and a text to be read. It would be wrong to discount the female body as significant material evidence of the marginalisation of female monastic spirituality, as – though no skeletons will be directly analysed in this study – it existed physically and influenced the production of material culture. Like any manuscript that has survived today with links to a nunnery, the female body alone is an example of the excessive feminine.

The constitution of female spirituality through evidence of the excessive feminine within the three material places mentioned as investigative locations – books, bodies, and buildings – implies its existence within physical space as well as discourse. As mentioned above, the evidence used in this project is grounded in the physically extant materials, which necessitates the contextualisation of the excessive feminine in space and time as well as discourse. Space is a dimension to any social interaction and has the ability to influence and/or enforce cultural discourse. Within this framework, space is used as aspect of analysis, drawing primarily from the theories of Hillier and Hanson. They expound: ‘human spatial organisation, whether in the form of settlements or buildings, is the establishment of patterns of relationships composed essentially of boundaries and permeabilities of various kinds... spatial complexity is manipulated and adapted for social purposes.’<sup>50</sup> Space is inherently human and social, carrying the social effects of such with it. Hillier and Hanson primarily theorise on the implications of buildings and settlements, and their work is integral to

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<sup>50</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, pp. 54-5.

understanding the spatial dimensions of female monasticism as it extends to structures in Chapter Four. It is also useful in decoding spatial relationships within texts and between bodies.

Space is also an important dimension to the consideration of negative evidence of the female/feminine in material evidence. As mentioned above, Hild is a relatively well-known figure in early medieval history, but I argue she is a marginalised figure in the larger scheme of material history, especially with regards to her contributions to early female monastic spirituality. Her absent voice – especially in comparison to male figures which feature in Bede – reverberates loudly across the English historical landscape. With the power, influence, and wealth she possessed (as demonstrated by the success of her monasteries and leadership over the Easter synod), she certainly possessed a voice. Where is it? It is in the margins of history, unsignified and inarticulate when compared to the value of the male and masculine. Irigaray expresses her ideas on marginality in relation to space and place:

This “position” is explained by the difficulties women encounter when they try to make their voices heard in places already fixed within and by a society that has simultaneously used and excluded them, and that continues in particular to ignore the specificity of their “demands” even as it recuperates some of their themes, their very slogans. This position can be understood, too, through women's need to constitute a place to be among themselves, in order to learn to formulate their desires, in the absence of overly immediate pressures and oppressions.<sup>51</sup>

In Bede, Hild is seen but not heard; acknowledged, but her voice and contributions to monasticism are overwritten. She, and other women like Ælfflæd, exist in margins of texts

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<sup>51</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 127.

written by men, both literally and figuratively. As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, margins are the domain of the female and feminine. However, as Irigaray notes, there is also power in the constituting a purely feminine space.<sup>52</sup>

In this methodology, space and place are understood as the literal, physical expression of cultural discourse. As Hillier and Hanson note, ‘Spatial order is one of the most striking means by which we recognise the existence of the *cultural* differences between one social formation and another, that is, differences in the ways in which members of those societies live out and reproduce their social existence.’<sup>53</sup> This thesis acknowledges, maps, and analyses space in the material remains of religious women in conversation with theories of Irigaray, Butler, and Grosz in order to draw conclusions on their spirituality: where it existed, how it functioned, and why it developed in such ways.

## **Outline of Thesis**

The bulk of this thesis is divided into three chapters, each a case study of a specific time period and manuscript(s) exploring themes monastic space: textual space (books), bodily space, and physical space (buildings). Each of the principal manuscripts will be explored and analysed within these themes using the methodology as described above. These are preceded by a chapter on modern and medieval theories.

After a brief introduction on spirituality, gender, and space, the modern theory foundations of the project are outlined as a framework is built up through which to analyse

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<sup>52</sup> The idea of spaces for those who identify as women for purposes feminine expression without male/masculine judgment or oversight has remained an important topic in the twenty-first century. As recently as 2025, the hit song ‘Super Graphic Ultra-Modern Girl’ by the artist Chappell Roan states to the men: ‘We’re leaving the planet and you can’t come.’

<sup>53</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, p. 27.

the manuscripts in each theme. The primary theorists used for this framework are Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, and Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson. Butler's ideas expounded in *Gender Trouble* are important for understanding gender and gendered monasticism as a repeated performance within specified cultural norms. Using her work, it is possible to detangle monastic tropes informed and reinforced by gender. Butler is also used to understand the physicality of gender performance and how the body functions as the site of discursive boundaries. Michel Foucault is also addressed in his theory of the historically-created body. Is female monasticism informed by the body of a woman? How does this body exist within monasticism? Grosz, in her *Space, Time and Perversions*, is also interested in how the body experiences discourse, specifically gendered discourse. From her the idea of the 'lived experience of the body', in which exterior inscriptions of discourse construct a psychological interior, is introduced and addressed. Her theories allow for an understanding of feminine monastic spirituality existing not simply on the site of inscription, but also beneath, or inside it. Her work changes the how and where we look for the feminine. Irigaray, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, and Butler work to construct, deconstruct, iterate, and locate gender. Irigaray is used specifically to locate the feminine within marginalised space using her tool of 'mimesis', which is incorporated into the framework of analysis. She writes the masculine as the optional and incorporeal 'universal', whereas the feminine must be signified in its expression and can never indicate a universal. The feminine, it seems, is tied to the body, at once conceptualised on and marginalised by the masculine. Finally, the spatial theories stemming from Hillier and Hansen's work is used to understand how space, time, and gender are necessary components of each other. It is not possible to inhabit a created space without being subjected to the relevant discourse of that space.

In addition to the framework of modern theory used for analysis, Chapter One includes information on shifts in medieval theory on gender, sex, and space as they must be understood for their effect on female monastic spirituality. Not every aspect of medieval culture will be considered, only those which are most relevant to women and monasticism. The discussion will focus on the evolution of understanding on sex and gender broadly from c. 600 – 1300, though it is important to note such an evolution should not be thought of in a linear sense, but rather an amalgamation of semi-accepted truths. Soranus, Galen, Constantine the African, and Aristotle are consulted for their contributions, as well as how certain aspects of female physiology were placed on a moral scale. Chapter One concludes with the intersection of gender and monasticism in the medieval period through the concepts of virginity and brides of Christ. The prominence of certain biblical texts, specifically the *Song of Songs*, as well as those from patristic writers and monastic reformers are examined for their influence on religious discourse.

As mentioned above, Chapter Two is the first to provide analysis of the first period using the Book of Nunnaminster, British Library, Harley MS 2965. The first section of the chapter examines textual space to discern the location of the female monastic spirituality. Harley 2965 is evaluated in the context of the rest of the *Tiberius* group of manuscripts for marks of the textual feminine excess, understanding how the slip of a scribal hand can lead to new evaluations of feminine spirituality in the early ninth century. Using methods derived from the work Diane Watt, these fragmentary pieces of evidence are used to create a fuller picture of how prayers and books were used during this period by religious women. The second section of the chapter analyses the Book of Nunnaminster in terms of bodily space, specifically investigating its connection between the body of Christ and the female body. The question of allegorical versus literal interpretation of each is pursued, and the centrality of the

body to female monastic worship is posited. Finally, the third section of chapter looks at the physicality of monastic space using archaeological studies. Nunnaminster found itself in a rare situation as an urban nunnery within Winchester, the location of two other male monasteries also established by royal patronage. The inscription of Æhlswith's land grant to the nunnery at the end of the Book of Nunnaminster is analysed with detailed especially paid to how monastic space is gendered in Winchester according to each monastery and the impact of such delineations.

Chapter Three analyses two manuscripts, the *vies* of saints Katherine of Alexandria and Edward the Confessor in the same pattern of books, bodies, and buildings. In part one, examining and providing close reading of the texts, the *vies* are contextualised within their religious-political situation a century following the Norman Conquest. The texts raise the question of the importance of *lectio divina* in the new monastic position at Barking and what it means for women to be writing in twelfth-century England. Part two explores the body as the site of female identification with Christ as Anselmian discourse evolved to humanise him. The significance of *imitatio Christi* to women religious is studied as the importance of physicality potentially transcends established gender in female texts. Part three looks specifically at Barking Abbey, as both *vies* of Katherine and Edward were written there, and their survival is perhaps a testament to the literary wealth of the nunnery. Its status as a preeminent female monastic establishment is scrutinized from a politically informed gendered perspective, looking at the implications of it as the initial home of William the Conqueror to its proximity to the new capital of London. The history of Barking as an abbey is far from neutral.

Chapter Four focuses on a long-forgotten thirteenth century Anonymous Women's Prayer. Part one examines textual significance the prayer in the context of affective devotion

as women's writing developed within the changing discourse of female monasticism in the later thirteenth century. Part two seeks to understand the importance of bodily intactness throughout the text, physicality, both of the author and Christ, is expressed in extremely literal and graphic terms in 'A Woman's Prayer.' As the text is anonymous in both author and provenance, it cannot be tied directly to a nunnery. However, the nunnery landscape in the thirteenth century is analysed in general, using the small nunnery of Wykeham as a case study. Though many nunneries may have been founded in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the motivations for their founding were different than those of male monasteries and, as such, affected the spaces in which these nuns existed.

Through these chapters I hope to demonstrate the complexity of the female monastic spirituality in relation to their experience as women existing in a male-dominated field and society. Often women's voices are left entirely out of the conversation on monasticism, or not taken into account as legitimate sources of information. It is only in last quarter of the twentieth century that interest in the field of female monasticism in England has been renewed, and with great vigour. Many scholars have come before me to whom I owe a great debt, enlightening this academic field and the experiences of medieval religious women. I believe it is also important, however, to look at this subject through an interdisciplinary perspective, gathering information from many areas of interest to build a more complete picture of medieval nuns. With so little evidence compared to that of male monasteries, it is necessary to find new ways to understand the feminine side of history.

# **Chapter One: Interpreting Monastic Women in the Middle Ages**

## **Defining Spirituality within the Medieval Female Monastic Context**

The investigation into female and feminine spirituality is the bedrock that underlies this project and as such it is necessary to define the term ‘spirituality’ as it will be used throughout the dissertation. The term spirituality will only be used in reference to Christianity spirituality in this project, as opposed to the more generally agnostic and all-encompassing definition it has gained in the modern world. Though other major religions existed during this period and may have had meaningful textual interactions with each other (e.g., Judaism and Christianity through the Old and New Testaments), this project will only deal with Christianity and Christian interpretations of texts.

Additionally, the definition of monastic spirituality will be inclusive of all forms of vocational female religious devotion, not just the formal, rule-based institutions recognised by English charters and the Roman church. Despite English monasticism being increasingly defined during reforms from the tenth to fourteenth centuries, such definitions and formal recognitions often excluded the variety of religious vocation undertaken by women. There is significant evidence to support the idea of an informal ‘domestic monasticism’, where independently wealthy women gathered small numbers of like-minded women within her own property to devote themselves to Christ and received no formal recognition like that of a monastery. Often these types of institutions lasted one or two generations before they naturally dissolved. This is but one way the definition of ‘religious woman’ has become more

nuanced as recent studies have uncovered the variety of ways medieval women perceived and interacted with monasticism away from the stringent structures of the church.<sup>54</sup>

This thesis focuses primarily on formal institutions such as endowed nunneries for which there is considerable material evidence, but also integrates the nuance of female religious devotion and vocation throughout the defined time period, especially in relation to the early origins of Harley 2965 and motivations for writing the prayer found in Douce 282. A religious woman is defined by her devotion to Christ in a vocational sense, not a formal title or association with a formal institution. While religious women include anchoresses, canonesses, and nuns, the title should also extend to unnamed devotees who perhaps did not attach themselves to any specific rule or monastery. There is merit in studying the spirituality of these women who exist on the liminal fringes of monasticism, and it is within the scope of this project to do so.

Additionally, it is worth noting that this thesis seeks to comprehend spirituality primarily from a historical perspective, rather than a pure theological angle, though there is natural crossover from the two disciplines as they inform each other. Understanding female and feminine spirituality, in this context, is a particularly useful approach to discerning the space and place afforded to women during the medieval period and in history itself. This seemingly simple proposal belies the intricate depths of research and methodology required to satisfy it with an answer. However, this project seeks to embrace nuance and complexity rather than diminish the history of medieval history of women in favour of simplicity.

In terms of Christianity specifically, Sandra Schneiders describes spirituality as the ‘lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith and living of

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<sup>54</sup> For an exploration of ‘non-traditional’ religious women, please see Foot, *Veiled Women*, volumes I and II.

discipleship in their individual and corporate actualization(s).'<sup>55</sup> It is deeply personal exercise, but also functions within a larger, collective experience. Schneider breaks down a more general definition of spirituality into three major components: 'a conscious and deliberate way of living' that 'orients the subject beyond purely private satisfaction towards the ultimate good, the highest value, that the person recognizes', where 'the ultimate value functions as a horizon luring the person toward growth.'<sup>56</sup> Spirituality, then, is a purposeful choice of individual participation in belief with a net positive result.

The larger question of 'choice' looms over any idea of medieval thought as the modern concept of 'choice' was most often reserved for upper-class intellectuals who possessed the wealth and literacy to weigh options of food, politics, and career. Even so, choice of religion was often not a choice at all if an individual wanted to maintain their status amongst a society of their peers. Choice within religion, then, is the deviation from the average accepted levels of participation with the dominant religion, applicable within both lay and monastic spirituality. Within medieval England, religion was often not a choice, but a function of personhood. Their chosen individual participation in such religion, such as attending daily mass, patronising churches, or annotating prayerbooks, determined their level of spiritual participation.

Spirituality must also possess a larger function outside of personal fulfilment; there must be the satisfaction of a 'greater good' or higher value. As such, spirituality cannot be applied negatively. For example, an addiction is a neurological chemical imbalance satisfied only by a singular, individual need of the next 'fix.' While it is a lived and sometimes

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<sup>55</sup> Schneiders, 'Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality', p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> Schneiders, 'Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality', pp. 16-7.

transcendent experience that can be participated in both on an individual and collective level, it possesses no larger purpose to it and no factor of personal growth. Satisfying an addiction is functionally selfish with no net positive outcome. Smoking a cigarette may satisfy the chemical craving for nicotine within the brain, but unless it is smoked as a function of a higher belief in positivity and/or the power of lung cancer, it cannot possess a spiritual component. Similarly, the acquisition of power or pleasure for one own's sake, which may come at the expense of others, also cannot possess a spirituality as it is also inherently an act for only selfish gain. Any form of betterment must be a corporate as well as an individual gain.

Schneiders, I believe, offers the most complete definition of spirituality without specifying it to Christianity. She relates it as a sublime and dynamic aspect of a human life experience within larger collective understanding. Until very recently with the rise of modern science and accepted atheism, any religion and related form of spirituality would have provided the driving force and explanation of human existence. Christian spiritual practices represent a unique evolution from such earlier traditions as they merged and developed according to the overarching tenets of the religion. Specifically, '[a]ll Christian spirituality is Christian because of its rootedness in the normative texts and communal experience of the church. It is, by definition, the living of Christian faith.'<sup>57</sup> As such, monasticism played perhaps the largest role in the development of such spirituality in the medieval period, especially as it concerned women.

Ulrike Wiethaus notes '[m]edieval spirituality in the West developed in tandem with the expanding pastoral, administrative, and political reach of the Roman Church,' requiring

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<sup>57</sup> Schneiders, 'Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality', p. 25.

‘institutional approval’ for any advancements or individual forays.<sup>58</sup> The institution, in this case, may have been as large as papal authority or as small as the local bishop, but any instance of medieval Christian spirituality was recognised as part of a larger collective belonging, rather than an isolated and individual experience. Even hermits, anchorites, and recluses existed connected to the fabric of larger religious community as such vocations required external support for their survival. The spiritual individualism that would characterise very early eremitic monasticism in the desert and later Protestant practices did not and could not exist in such a religion so reliant on the stability and approval of one major centralised church. A collective identity grounded in faith bound early medieval Christians together, even if they lived far from Rome on the outskirts of the known world.

The communal aspect of Christian spirituality naturally led to the creation of holy collectives, usually in the form of monasticism, where especially devoted individuals could practice their faith together. Wiethaus argues that ‘monasticism formed the stable core of medieval spirituality,’ as such foundations became the centres of religious innovation and textual production.<sup>59</sup> The zealous piety within these communities fostered intellectualism and creativity, regulated by strict liturgical routines, monastic *regulae*, and papal authority. In monasteries some form of Latin literacy became a necessity, as spiritual ideals were reproduced and disseminated using the primary tool of Christian conversion: the book. Manuscripts were inherently a shared endeavour as their production required (in most cases) an exemplar to be copied, a scribe, an editor, an illuminator, a reader, and possibly an audience. Exemplars could be borrowed from other monastic institutions or personal

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<sup>58</sup> Wiethaus, ‘Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West’, pp.107-8.

<sup>59</sup> Wiethaus, ‘Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West’, p. 108.

libraries, and the scribe could pick and choose the texts they wanted to include based on their personal preference or spiritual leaning. The finished product was understood not necessarily to be simply a personal possession, but a semi-public item of collective devotion; books often outlived people and their ideas could travel further than their author ever ventured. In this way, medieval spirituality was often understood as more public than private. It was performed for the benefit of personal faith and devotion, as well as corporate salvation.

The Christian idea of saints and sainthood functioned in support of communal spirituality and monasticism, on both institutional and local levels. A saint, or an individual especially connected to the divine, operated as a liaison between the general masses of unsanctified humanity and God. Sainthood had to be earned through various hardships, trials, or even death in conjunction with the mission of Christianity; the saint's commitment to Christ despite these adversities provided an example of ideal fidelity for a wider Christian community and provided evidence for Christianity as the one true faith. Hagiography could, in theory, be as effective in conversion as the New Testament, but it often acted as supplemental material to the story of Jesus. Nonetheless, saints served as key figures for the retention of Christian practice within communities.

While the process to recognise an individual as a saint became more formalised as the administrative depth and capabilities of the papacy continually expanded outside of Rome throughout the medieval period, early saints, especially those native to specific regions, faced no such bureaucratic hurdles. Early followers of Jesus mentioned in the New Testament standardised the fundamentals of sainthood and are considered primary saints with universal Christian significance, such as the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, protomartyr Stephen, and

gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.<sup>60</sup> Those who spread, regulated, and were possibly martyred for their Christian worship during the late Roman period, as well as influential popes and writers, such as Hilarius, Benedict of Nursia, his sister Scholastica, George, and Agnes are secondary saints to the initial milieu that retain a broad, orthodox appeal to worshipers. However, tertiary saints, those highly localised to specific regions or populations, are no less important in establishing and maintaining spirituality, especially in medieval England.

The successful (re-)Christianisation of England in the seventh century relied upon the intertwined strategies of monasticism, local saints, and royal women simultaneously pursuing a communal religious experience. As discussed in the Introduction, Bertha did not land on the foreign shores of pagan England from France alone: she brought with her a priest and likely a retinue of Christian female servants. In Canterbury she established a church dedicated to her local saint, Martin of Tours, and attended liturgical practices with her fellow Christians. Augustine's arrival in Kent proceeded without bloodshed due to the commonality of faith between him and Bertha, who convinced her pagan husband, King Æthelberht, to trust someone who shared her system of benevolent worship authorised by texts and a central church in Rome. According to Bede, Augustine and the other missionaries first used Bertha's church as their monastic church, where they 'assembled to sing psalms, to pray, to say Mass, to preach, and to baptize.'<sup>61</sup> Once Æthelberht, among others high-status men, had been

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<sup>60</sup> Universal significance today depends, naturally, on how various sects of Christianity evolved to interact with the idea of sainthood. Modern Catholicism still regards saints as principal figures worthy of devotion and prayer and continues to canonise certain individuals as saints if their holiness can be confirmed. Most modern protestant factions do not recognize saints, stemming from fifteenth century reforms that disallowed their veneration on the grounds of idol worship.

<sup>61</sup> Bede, *HE*, I.26.

converted, he gave the Christians land and old buildings to establish a larger monastery for residence and prayer.<sup>62</sup>

Following the founding of multiple churches in Kent and his own episcopal blessing in Arles, Augustine was tasked with consecrating ‘twelve bishops in different places’ to establish his apostolic see as per Gregory’s orders from Rome.<sup>63</sup> Other bishops of Augustine’s choosing were to be sent afield to the English cities of London and York on conversion missions and in turn establish their own sees. The Christianisation of England, as described in Gregory’s letter, was strategically planned. Assuming Augustine was successful in his mission, his religious community in Canterbury would be the source and model for spiritual conversion of the rest of the disjointed country. Gregory recognised, as perhaps Augustine did not, the protracted stability a monastic foundation imparts upon areas of Christianity. An institution of living worship contributes to ‘the textural production and the reproduction of spiritual ideals, fostering pilgrimage sites and the cult of relics, nurturing mystical impulses through liturgical routine and continuous community support, and amplifying creative spiritual insights through ... exegetical and liturgical resources,’ as Wiethaus notes.<sup>64</sup> In Gregory’s letter to Æthelberht upon the news of his conversion, he emphasises Augustine’s monastic background and knowledge of scripture as confirmation of his spiritual authority.<sup>65</sup> It is through the spiritual principles of monasticism that England is converted.

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<sup>62</sup> Bede, *HE*, I.27,33.

<sup>63</sup> Bede, *HE*, I.27,29.

<sup>64</sup> Wiethaus, ‘Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West’, p. 108.

<sup>65</sup> Bede, *HE*, I.32.

Yet, Christianity nor monasticism would have succeeded in England without the role of women as intercessors and leaders of spiritual practice. Gregory's strategy in Kent was repeated in Northumbria with the marriage of King Edwin to Bertha's daughter Æthelburg (Tata), who, like her mother, brought a priest and a retinue of Christian ladies with her to pagan lands and was a principal factor in convincing Edwin to convert.<sup>66</sup> Among those baptised in Kent with Edwin in *c.* 627 was Hild, future abbess of Hartlepool, Hackness, and Streaneshalch.<sup>67</sup> Eanfled, Edwin's daughter by Æthelburg, was initially consecrated to Christ and is said to be the first baptised in Northumbria by Paulinus.<sup>68</sup> However, she later married King Oswui, nephew of Edwin, having fled to the safety of Christian Kent following her father's death. Her daughter, Ælfflæd, was dedicated to religious life at Streaneshalch, under Hild's tutelage. Following Oswui's death, Eanfled joined her daughter and niece at Streaneshalch, where she co-ruled as abbess with Ælfflæd until her own death.

While Æthelberht, Edwin, Augustine, and Paulinus authorised the spread of Christianity in early medieval England, the practical work underlying conversion, retention, reproduction, and innovation was performed by royal women. Eanfled is a great example of the power of female spirituality in England, as she finds herself in centre of the story. Eanfled was raised in the Christian faith and did not abandon it, unlike her brothers, when she was exiled to Kent. Instead, her dedication revived its political and lasting success in Northumbria. Her husband Oswui granted the land to Hild upon which Streaneshalch was founded. Their son, Ecgrith, endowed the dual monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow and married

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<sup>66</sup> Bede, *HE*, II.9. Pope Boniface writes directly to Æthelburg advising her to use her marital influence to pressure her husband into accepting Christianity, *HE*, II.2. Æthelburg later become abbess of Lyminge and a local saint.

<sup>67</sup> *HE*, IV.23. Bede does not mention Hild's baptism when he initially recounts the conversion of Edwin, despite naming other nobility during the first and second baptism occasions in Northumbria.

<sup>68</sup> Bede, *HE*, II.9

Æthelthryth, future saint of Ely. Ælfflæd ensured the continued success of Streaneshalch, elevating the monastery in both learning and influence.

The monastic success and spiritual devotion of Hild earned her a sainthood; Eanfled, Ælfflæd, and Æthelburg are also considered saints in the English tradition, though they are not formally recognised by the modern catholic church. The practice of monasteries founded and ruled by women recognised as abbess-saints was common in the first bloom of Christianity in England, from the early seventh to ninth centuries. Such women and their monasteries include Æthelthryth and Seaxburh of Ely, Mildrith and Eadburg of Thanet, Æthelburh of Barking, Eanswith of Folkestone, Æbbe of Coldingham, and Modwenna of Burton, among many others. These women were all informally revered as saints within their local communities. Their spiritual influence was primarily constructed and disseminated through hagiographical texts. The circulation of these texts through monastic centres in England stimulated the financially lucrative business of pilgrimage and relic acquisition and helped to secure the lasting impact of their monastery and legacy.

From its initial arrival in England in the late sixth century with Bertha, Christian spirituality was inherently both a material and female endeavour. Its history is bound together through textual production, purpose-built structures, and the function of the female body within the male political economy. That spirituality is a lived and human experience makes it intrinsically dynamic and nuanced – a unique experience within a collective belief. However, superficially examining the material evidence spanning from the early to late medieval period often produces a more formulaic view of sanctity and spirituality for any given period. The related experiences of Christianity for both men and women differ, but they are transparent and straightforward, almost automated in their repetition of tropes and themes.

There is a tension, then, between the known complexity of the human experience of spirituality and the material evidence we possess of it from the medieval period. This tension is particularly acute in the study of religious women due to their material involvement, or seeming lack thereof, within their own spiritual lives. The dynamism of their participation often develops in relation to various monastic reforms, political upheavals, and/or theological innovations from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The impact of these events, as argued in this thesis, produced widely accepted ideological scripts, which continuously developed and evolved, influencing religious discourse in the Christian west and the spirituality of medieval religious women in England. This project looks for the spaces in which the spiritual complexity of these religious women existed through their material remains. It seeks to understand medieval monastic spirituality as a public, performative function of communal Christianity, but also as an internal, multi-dimensional, complex, and discursively curated expression of female monasticism.

## **Defining Gender, Gender Theory, and Space**

Understanding women's roles within medieval monasticism is inextricably linked to the period's conceptualisations of gender. Prior to examining primary sources, it is imperative to define gender within the context of c. 850 – c.1300 and its intersection with monastic practices. Gender, once a descriptive category in medieval studies, gained analytical recognition in the twentieth century and subsequently became a significant area of study with the advent of fourth-wave feminism and critical theory. Joan W. Scott, in 1986, emphasised the importance of gender as an analytical category in history, critiquing contemporary gender theorists. She asserted, 'We must ask more often how things happened to find out why they happened; ... we must pursue not universal, general causality but meaningful explanation.'

Utilising gender as a framework for historical analysis facilitates the exploration of previously unexplored subjects and enables the reconsideration of significant topics. History is broadened and revitalised through the application of gender theory. The incorporation of gender necessitates the integration of subjective human experiences with events to enhance understanding, thereby bringing individuals to the forefront within the broader social context.

Critical gender analysis of history is not to be understood as synonymous with ‘women’s studies,’ though women are often a starting or focal point for gendered analysis as they were often ignored in history with few exceptions. Gender is, according to Scott, ‘a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes’ and ‘a primary way of signifying relationships of power.’<sup>69</sup> It is an inescapable and integral aspect of humans’ relationship to one another. A gendered analysis of history seeks primarily to understand and organize relationships of inequality within a social reality that includes the masculine and feminine, though it is not limited to a male-female binary. It is interested in the construction of a gendered identity and how such constructions intersect with power in society.

Using gender as a category for historical analysis also expands the academic idea of history, breaking down archaic barriers to instead invite interdisciplinary investigations. It allows for a widening understanding of what is considered history and who belongs to it. Political history often ignored social histories of subjective and personal experiences. Yet, ignoring these social histories often obscures the complexity and nuance of the human experience. It is commonly noted that history is written by the victors, but it is also written by those in power who often ignore the social groups who do not meet their standard of

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<sup>69</sup> Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’. p. 1067

importance. The understanding of what is ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ informs this power construct, the analysis of which can uncover new and deeper meanings within history allowing for new categories of study and a critical understanding of the relationship between the sexes; why those in power have remained there and how and why these relationships were altered according to various places and times.

The use of modern gender theory to analyse the historical record of the Middle Ages could be viewed by some as an attempt to force together two disparate and anachronistic academic disciplines to try to form an argument. And indeed, without the proper consideration of both gender and history, there are grounds for such views. However, modern gender theory is not at odds with a medieval study as gender is understood as constructed in both instances. The difference between the modern and medieval is *how* gender is constructed. Using foundational post-structural gender theorists such as Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, and Michel Foucault it is possible to enact a framework for analysis appropriate for the medieval period. Use of their theories can change perspectives and uncover new narratives.

## **Modern Theory Foundations**

The foundation gender construction is built upon, in both historical and modern terms, is a sexed body.<sup>70</sup> The gender of that body is then derived from the culturally determined meanings inscribed and ascribed to the specific characteristics of these sex organs.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, as Judith Butler argues, a person’s gender is acknowledged and accepted in society by repeating and therefore performing such acts which are embedded with cultural

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<sup>70</sup> For the purposes of this project I am excluding the ‘intersex’ body, commonly known as hermaphroditic.

<sup>71</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 6.

meaning. Scott, agreeing that gender is based on culturally perceived differences between the sexes, includes power as a facet of gender. She argues that gender is a primary way of signifying power and is constituted using four interrelated elements: culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations; normative concepts to interpret and limit these symbols; political notions related to social institutions; and subjective identity.<sup>72</sup> As gender is defined based on culturally available meaning, it is then possible to construct gender identities within a specific time, place, and context.

The body, therefore, is central to the creation of a gender identity. It informs and is the place of cultural inscription. Michel Foucault argues the body is a medium, essentially a blank page, for receiving these inscriptions, but in doing so is ‘fully transvaluated into a sublimated domain of values.’<sup>73</sup> Butler, interpreting Foucault, states, ‘the body is not an independent materiality that is invested by power relations external to it, but is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.’<sup>74</sup> The body is transformed by its inscribed cultural values and is thereby controlled within that bounded system.

Elizabeth Grosz develops the material aspects of the body as a site of cultural inscription from Foucault, separating out the corporeal from the cultural and the surface from the interior.<sup>75</sup> She considers the idea of the ‘lived experience’ of the body. For Grosz, the body may be a surface to be inscribed upon, but such surface inscriptions ‘generate an interior, an underlying depth, individuality, or consciousness.’<sup>76</sup> The body is an object laden with cultural symbols which construct a psychical interior. Social law is therefore

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<sup>72</sup> Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, pp. 1067-68.

<sup>73</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 130. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, ‘Docile Bodies’, pp. 135-168.

<sup>74</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (1995).

<sup>76</sup> Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 34.

internalized, and bodies express a subjective reflection of it. This reflection, and the internalized social law, is informed by the dimensions of space and time. The nuance of Grosz' ideology encapsulates the contradictory and complicated nature of gender, which correlates with Scott's five-part definition. Gender remains separate from the body as manufactured notion of society, but the body nonetheless internalises and lives (performs) it; how the body lives its gender identity is dependent on its place in space and time. As Judith Butler states, the conception of gender is 'constituted as a social temporality.'<sup>77</sup>

Judith Butler's theories on gender performativity help to expand a framework of the cultural construction of a gender identity. For Butler, the body is 'not as a ready surface awaiting signification, but as a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained.'<sup>78</sup> She questions the Foucauldian body that exists as a blank, pre-discursive figure, instead retaining the Lacanian ideal that there is no pre-discursive reality. Instead, the body is defined by its various acts and its boundaries are fixed sites of corporeal permeability and impermeability.<sup>79</sup> Also, Butler notes that 'gender is also the norm that can never be fully internalised,' but exists as a surface signification.<sup>80</sup> This does not refute Grosz but intensifies the idea of gender as a 'lived experience.' Though continually repeated and potentially easy to perform, gender identity – and its corporeal boundaries – must be consciously sustained. Gender is never an innate identity as its performance must comply within the limitations of culturally ascribed values, specific to a time and place.

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<sup>77</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 141.

<sup>78</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

<sup>79</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 180.

<sup>80</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 141.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, medieval interpretations of gender are decidedly tethered to physiological underpinnings.<sup>81</sup> Such physiology, similar to the modern ‘biology-is-destiny’ formulation, were also informed by culturally constructed narratives that primarily hinged on Galenic binaries. This created a socially formed gender identity that was inseparable from the physiologically sexed body. The foundation of this project is understanding how gender functioned materially within medieval female monasticism as such to influence and inform feminine spirituality. Constructing medieval ideas of gender within a monastic setting is crucial and it is not possible to do this without using the ideas of post-modern gender theorists. Early within *Gender Trouble*, Butler states: ‘Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts.’<sup>82</sup> This is especially true in the medieval context, where culturally accepted meanings of gender identities are often contradictory, even as simple binaries abound. Providing a coherent and balanced analysis of medieval gender is a challenge. Sometimes, just finding the women is a greater one.

Why is it so hard to locate women within history? Luce Irigaray argues that the feminine, and therefore those who identity as women (or simply not male), remain deficient and even inarticulate in language, and therefore history.<sup>83</sup> The masculine assumes the general – the subject – and the feminine is located in language as a complimentary, yet deficient, reflection of the masculine, the Other, and the object of masculine exploitation. This

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<sup>81</sup> Using the term ‘biology’ or ‘biological’ would be anachronistic.

<sup>82</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 3. It is also important to recognise that definitions of gender can and will change between such a large period of time as 850 to 1300. This will be explored throughout the project.

<sup>83</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 77.

exploitation in language is representative of the cultural reality, where the female sex is subjugated within the masculine signifying economy.<sup>84</sup> Irigaray writes,

Women are thus in a situation of *specific exploitation* with respect to exchange operations: sexual exchanges, but also economic, social and cultural exchanges in general. A woman “enters into” these exchanges only as the object of a transaction, unless she agrees to renounce the specificity of her sex, whose “identity” is imposed on her according to models that remain foreign to her.<sup>85</sup>

The specificity of her sex is, as Butler theorises above, the cultural markers of her gender identity, an identity that is created and defined against the more ‘valuable’ male identity, both of which exist within a masculine signifying economy.

The primary location of feminine exploitation is the (female) body. As the masculine occupies the place of the universal general subject/person in language and culture, it supersedes its gender identity, cleaving itself from the sexed body. As Butler notes, ‘the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom’ where, as a mirror to the male, ‘the female sex becomes restricted to its body’.<sup>86</sup> Cultural markers of gender are therefore also restricted to the female, as it must signify itself as distinct from the general/male. The sexed body, and all associated with it, becomes a distinct marker of the feminine. This idea, ‘The use, consumption, and circulation

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<sup>84</sup> Wittig, ‘Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body’, in ‘The Mark of Gender’, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 85.

<sup>86</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 11-12.

of their [women's] sexualized bodies,' as Irigaray argues, 'underwrite[s] the organization and reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part in as 'subjects'.<sup>87</sup>

This raises the question: can the female sex escape the mark of the feminine, of the Other? Can it escape the body to which it is confined and become articulate in language? Can it constitute itself away from the masculine? Irigaray suggests yes – but the entire system must be broken and then rebuilt. In the meantime, there are tactics to combat the primacy of the masculine discourse. She suggests that 'linear reading is no longer possible' and recommends 'mimicry' in order to disrupt the discourse. Irigaray defined mimicry as: 'An interim strategy for dealing with the realm of discourse (where the speaking subject is posited as masculine), in which the woman deliberately assumes the feminine style and posture assigned to her within this discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her.'<sup>88</sup> By submitting herself willingly and acknowledging her place (or lack thereof) within the masculine discourse, women can understand and deconstruct their exploitation. In doing so, they are constituting a place of their own to reclaim feminine discourse, breaking the generality of the masculine and its subjugation of the feminine.

If the masculine occupies the general, the feminine occupies a place separate and lesser from the masculine: beside it, underneath it, in between it, or erased by it. Irigaray defines marginality as a 'position' occupied by those who identify as women 'when they try to make their voices hear in places already fixed within and by a society that has simultaneously used and excluded them'.<sup>89</sup> She identifies marginality as a legitimate position of feminine occupation, and, as such, identifies margins as a potential space for feminine

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<sup>87</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 84.

<sup>88</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 220

<sup>89</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 127.

discourse. Irigaray goes on: ‘This position can be understood, too, through women's need to constitute a place to be among themselves, in order to learn to formulate their desires, in the absence of overly immediate pressures and oppressions.’<sup>90</sup> To be truly themselves outside of male discourse, women need a space of their own, hopefully on their own terms.

As gender is constitutive element of social relationships between bodies, such social relationships must be relayed between and by those bodies in space – the monastic space for the purposes of this project. The body must exist in space, but also that space is organised by those bodies living their cultural recognizable symbols. Space is defined by bodies and bodies are defined by space; they possess a symbiotic relationship dependent on discourse. While Irigaray seeks the feminine in language, it is important to not discount the physicality of gender and how space is also a component of gender. Lydia Coon supports this idea, described one aspect of gender as ‘the positioning of the body in space’, suggesting gender’s cultural interpretations is expressed physically in the material world as it is necessarily tied to a sexed body.<sup>91</sup> How can space be analysed in relation to gender, and vice versa? What methods can be used to identify gendered spaces? Can this be used for medieval monasticism?

In her ground-breaking study on female monastic spaces, Roberta Gilchrist uses theories of space as posited by Bill Hillier and Julie Hanson in their monograph *The Social Logic of Space*. She applies their work on access analysis, also referred to as gamma-analysis, to available data on monasteries, comparing male against female.<sup>92</sup> In doing so, Gilchrist

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<sup>90</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 127.

<sup>91</sup> Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, ‘Symbolism and Seclusion’, especially pp. 160-167. Access-analysis is ‘a syntactic analysis of interior spaces.’ Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, pp. 90-91.

finds a substantive connection between gender and space in her work, writing, '[b]oth secular and monastic women demonstrated constructions of female sexuality which centred on monogamy and chastity facilitated by spatial segregation.'<sup>93</sup>

Hillier and Hanson's work is relevant to this project as they identify space, like gender, as 'one of the most striking means by which we recognize the existence of the cultural differences between one social formation and another, that is, differences, in the ways in which members of those societies live out and reproduce their social existence.'<sup>94</sup> Space is performed and constructed in many of the same ways gender is as it is reliant on the material expression of a body, and can also be interpreted in terms of power and identity.

The social logic of space assumes that humans will deploy themselves in space in some way, and, being social creatures, will relate their own spatial actions to those of others in a culturally significant way. The purposeful manipulation of space gives rise to patterns that can be interpreted. At their core, these patterns are negotiations of boundaries and permeability: who is allowed to go where and why. Levels of permeability are related to levels of controlled access, that is, those allowed across a boundary. The 'why' of who is allowed across a boundary – and why that boundary exists in the first place – is culturally significant. Boundaries exist in landscapes, some of which are found naturally, man-made settlements, and buildings. They create a dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside', which offers new meanings to systems of social solidarity and difference.

Access to spaces within a settlement, like a city or town, is analysed by Hillier and Hanson using what they have termed 'alpha-analysis', or syntactical analysis represented

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<sup>93</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 169.

<sup>94</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space* (1984), p. 27.

graphically. When analysing access inside a connected structure, like a building, house, or monastic enclosure, gamma-analysis is used.<sup>95</sup> This analysis can be translated into ‘maps’ where permeability of spaces is represented by lines linked to one another by a point. Levels of access within the structure are then measured from an invariable point of entry and analysed according to purpose based on potential cultural meaning. Gamma-analysis of structures are especially important as ‘the spatial structure of each building embodies knowledge of social relations’ due to its construction and perception by members of a culturally significant society.<sup>96</sup> Each space is imbued with individual meaning or meanings that are relevant to society in which the bounded spaces exist. Monastery complexes, either individual buildings or expanded enclosures, are imbued with meaning that is significant to both religion and gender. Like the body and gender, space and society are necessary dimensions of each other, each informing the other as they are created and change. By using gamma-analysis, it is possible to understand how their environment affected the inhabitants of these spaces, specifically gendered monastic spaces, over time.<sup>97</sup>

The inhabitant of space, defined by Hillier and Hanson, is ‘if not a permeant occupant of the cell, at least an individual whose social existence is mapped into the category of space within that cell: more an inhabitant of the social knowledge defined by the cell than the cell itself.’<sup>98</sup> The space and the individual, a participant in society, are again dimensions of each other. It is the social knowledge applied to both the inhabitant and the space which defines their ‘place.’ The places where religious women occupied changed at different points in the

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<sup>95</sup> Hillier and Hanson define gamma-analysis as ‘alpha-analysis interpreted for permeability,’ *Social Logic of Space*, p. 147.

<sup>96</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, p. 184.

<sup>97</sup> This project does not employ alpha-analysis.

<sup>98</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, p. 146.

medieval period, most significantly from the late Anglo-Saxon to the high medieval periods. These changes were informed by culturally available discourse and had effects on the gendered spirituality of monastic individuals.

This project extends Hiller and Hanson's theory of social space to include monastic enclosures, but also books and bodies as material spaces saturated with cultural meaning throughout the early medieval and medieval period in England. The female monastery is a space specifically defined by gender boundaries and physical boundaries, allowing primarily – and then only – women behind its physical walls. These structural boundaries are not so different from bodily ones in terms of discourse. There is an exterior and an interior to both, with levels of permeability suffuse with social meaning. Butler insists that 'the body must itself be understood as an incorporated space' based on its surface signification.<sup>99</sup> The construction of buildings and bodies rely on their boundaries for the reproduction of a culturally understood performance. Without the tension between two spaces a boundary provides, there is no difference.

The idea of a culturally informed structure is also extended to books, especially those explicitly linked to female monasticism. A book, specifically a codex, features exterior boards and interior pages, both of which hold meaning if read properly. Language, as Irigaray theorises, is understood as possessing dimensions, one which is perceptible (the masculine) and the other which must be separately and specifically perceived (the feminine). Her idea of language, and therefore texts, possessing a boundary of perceptibility is not new, though her application of gender to it is. The founding fathers of western monasticism, such as saints Benedict, Augustine, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great, and significant reformers like Bernard

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<sup>99</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 67.

of Clairvaux, amongst others, argued for the importance of *lectio divina*, or divine reading.<sup>100</sup> This practice understands simple reading without due contemplation to be a shallow experience, and only through extended contemplation and prayer could the true meaning be uncovered. Again, there is the cultural significance of exterior and interior, crossing a boundary, and the permeability of a space. The text itself is the literal cultural inscription and the meaning is located in a separate, incorporated space accessible only through non-linear reading.

In this project, books, bodies, and buildings are bound together within female monastic spirituality in medieval England. They are dimensions of each other and change accordingly. Using a framework as informed by Butler, Irigaray, Foucault, and Hillier and Hanson, each of these will be analysed in terms of feminine monastic spirituality, looking for spaces and identifying patterns where it existed in specific manuscripts as a gendered concept from the late Anglo-Saxon to high medieval period.

A criticism often identified within historiography, amongst other humanities subjects, is an adherence to thinking using binary opposition specifically when it comes to gender and sexuality. Scott writes in her article on using gender within historical analysis: ‘normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols ... typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine.’<sup>101</sup> Using absolute definitions of gender and sexuality in historical analysis limits the possibilities for alternative interpretation of metaphors and symbols relating to them. It binds historical investigations to only what is

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<sup>100</sup> Robertson, *Lectio Divina*, pp. 38-70.

<sup>101</sup> Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, p. 1067.

known. This thinking is prominent within late nineteenth and early twentieth century historical publications, much of which has informed education to this day. The gender binary was certainly informative in studies of female monasticism in England. Their influence has had a lasting effect evident in the relatively small (but growing) community of academics who study religious women in England compared to those who study male monasticism. Up to the 1980s, the definitive work in the field was still Eileen Power's *Medieval English Nunneries*, published in 1922. It is important for modern historians not only to dismantle these binary ideas applied to gender, but also binary thinking applied to history.

As much as deconstructing binary thinking in relation to analysis is necessary, it is also important not to apply anachronistic thinking to a historical context. Within the medieval period, the binary construct was an important mindset and used often in theology to separate ideas and create hierarchies. Constructing binaries involved necessitating an 'Other' used to stabilize a dominant position. It not only positions two forms against each other, but also restricts the binary to those two forms. Power relations are made much simpler and more rigid when a binary like male/female is applied, for instance. It was relatively easy for church leaders in medieval Rome and England to remove women from upper levels of the hierarchy using the argument of the deficient feminine within the gender binary. It was an effective use of erasure and control.

The binary can be a tool that used to understand the medieval gender paradigm, which was built upon the difference between the sexes. As Gilchrist writes, 'An understanding of masculinity or femininity must be sought that is comparative and contextual, in contrast to essential binary assertions such as feminine beauty and masculine violence.'<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 77.

Deconstructing the binary completely would do a disservice to contextualising gender during the period. However, recognising it within context does not mean it should also be deployed in analytical thinking. Analysis should remain fluid and open to changing possibilities as new evidence is uncovered even as the medieval mindset may be mired in binary opposition.

## **Sex and Gender in the Middle Ages**

Medieval conceptions of gender and sex were not static throughout the period nor related to contemporary discipline of 'hard' science. Knowledge of sex, physiology, reproduction, and anatomy derived from biblical interpretation, natural philosophy, medical inquiries, and occasionally conjecture. Predominant arguments on sex and gender were primarily informed through replication and dissemination of classical sources from Greeks and Romans. Ideas of Galen and Aristotle permeated works of Isidore of Seville and Soranus of Ephesus, though each contributed their own philosophies. Galen and Aristotle's rediscovery in the late eleventh and early twelfth century prompted their renewed philosophical and physiological supremacy, persisting until at least the sixteenth century, though their ideologies remained influential through the nineteenth.

Early medieval conceptions of sex and physiology from the sixth to ninth centuries largely depended on views of Greek physician Soranus, introduced to the Latin West by Moschion in the sixth century.<sup>103</sup> He had the most significant influence in the Latin West after his complete *Gynaecium libri* was translated into Latin in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>104</sup> Soranus used Hippocratic (d. 360 BCE) theory extensively and also integrated new ideas

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<sup>103</sup> Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 22.

<sup>104</sup> Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 43. Shortly after the introduction of Soranus, the work of Galen was translated, but it was not influential until much later in the tenth century, when it became the leading authority.

derived from the Methodic school of medicine in Alexandria. He largely disregarding the concept of balanced humours. Though he acknowledged sexual differences, Soranus tends to minimise differences between male and female physiology and treated them as essentially similar. His works, being so derivative, were primarily influential in continuing a classical ideology based on the work of Hippocrates but were influential as Christianity and monasticism began to root itself in England.

The influence of Soranus dwindled in favour of Galen (*d.* 201 CE) in the early tenth century as his works were introduced the Latin west.<sup>105</sup> Galen, again using Hippocrates and now Aristotle, introduced the theory of heat differentiation between the sexes, which was the primary cause of sexual difference. This is the primary theory that underlies the medieval ideological framework on sexual physiology. Galenic physiology postulated that male and female possessed varying degrees of heat on a spectrum based on their humoral constitutions.<sup>106</sup> This perspective viewed the sexes as anatomically complementary, leading to a one-sex model differentiated by heat. The male's excessive heat resulted in the expulsion of external sex organs, while female's cooler constitutions kept theirs internal. Women exhibiting traits similar to men were considered 'hotter,' and vice versa. Masculine traits were hotter and drier, while feminine traits were colder and wetter. Despite some overlap, the hottest woman was still considered colder than the coldest man.

Galen's theories incorporated the work of both Hippocrates and Aristotle (*d.* 322 BCE), who had yet to be rediscovered in western Europe. Whereas Hippocrates emphasised balance between sexes, Aristotle assigned greater value to heat, creating a hierarchical binary.

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<sup>105</sup> Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 22.

<sup>106</sup> See Anne E. Bailey, 'The Female Condition: Gender and Deformity in High Medieval Miracle Narratives,' for more on 'sex polarities.'

Naturally occurring heat was of profound physiological and intellectual importance, as it was deemed crucial for attaining perfection, according to Galen and Aristotle.<sup>107</sup> This positioned naturally hot men as superior to women in every way. Galen also further developed the humoral model of Hippocrates.<sup>108</sup> The balance of the four humours (black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm) determined the physiological quality of a human body. Galen's work remained the primary medical model throughout medieval and early modern periods, even as Aristotelian influence gained strength. In Galenism, humours were believed to work on the body in numerous ways, purifying and converting bodily fluids under the direction of relevant *pneuma*.<sup>109</sup>

The concept of a universal bodily fluid was significant in medieval thought, particularly regarding procreation and the feminine. Blood, the unifying life force, was the basis of the circulatory system. Its primacy led Hippocrates, Galen, and Isidore to conclude it transformed into other liquids, such as mucus, semen, and pus. Of particular interest was the connection between menstrual blood – indeed any blood from the womb – and breastmilk as nourishing fluids during pregnancy and post-partum weaning. Isidore and Galen posited that ‘The blood used for the nourishment of the uterus [*i.e.*, menstrual blood] goes to the breasts and takes on the quality of milk.’<sup>110</sup> These physiological traits were exclusive to females; they sustained a child through a bodily act. The only bodily act a male needed to provide was the production and expulsion of semen.

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<sup>107</sup> Blamires, *Women Defamed, Women Defended*, p. 41; Galen, *De usu partium*, bk II, ch. 299-301.

<sup>108</sup> Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>109</sup> According to Galen, there are two different types of *pneuma*. The *pneuma zotikon*, or ‘vital’ *pneuma* is the life principle which travels throughout the body through the blood of the arteries from the left-side of the heart. The *pneuma psychikon* should not be confused with the soul, but is the ‘life spirit’ that is a result of the blood flow to the brain. Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>110</sup> Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 52.

The ability to produce and expel the ‘seed’ for creating life was a physiological achievement seemingly reserved for men. The male seed was ejaculated, which made it easier to understand in medical and religious contexts as opposed to the internal and unknowable equivalent within the female body.<sup>111</sup> The female contribution to procreation was determined to be internal undeveloped life matter.<sup>112</sup> The male seed, retaining its author's heat, provided information which endowed the female matter with life force. This Galenic and Aristotelian model strengthened the idea of male dominance in procreation and further linked intelligent creation to masculinity. The male seed was seen as the active creator, while the female matter was passive. This perceived male superiority supported the soul/body binary applied to sexes even before the virgin birth miracle of Christ. Although women were deemed necessary for procreation, they were not thought to provide any material for intelligent design or the soul.

This hierarchical binary rooted in sexual physiology continued to evolve and inform sexual and gender discourse as the work of Aristotle was fully reintroduced to the Christian west, instead of through Galen. Aristotle also supported a binary thinking, mapping ideas of male/female onto hot/cold and further onto strong/weak, soul/body, mind/matter, and right/left. These types of simple binaries were easily translated into Christianity, where ideas of light/dark and good/bad were reinforced through such natural philosophy.

Aristotelian hierarchical binaries and Galenic humoral theory supported negative connotations of female pleasure and feminine excess. Women's cold and moist qualities were believed to cause this excess, as their lack of heat inhibited proper bodily regulation. Joan

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<sup>111</sup> For a discussion on the medieval conception of sperm, also known as ‘The Precious Liquor’, see Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, pp. 52-60.

<sup>112</sup> ‘The Indefinable Additive’, also known as the female contribution to procreation, is found in Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, pp. 59, 61-70. Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, ch. 738b: ‘Thus the physical part, the body, comes from the female, and the Soul from the male, since the Soul is the essence of a particular body.’ Blamires, *Women Defamed, Women Defended*, p. 40.

Cadden notes that while male sexuality was acknowledged, the female capacity for sexual pleasure without a divine purpose suggested it deviated from the natural ideal. Excessive feminine pleasure became morally entrenched in the context of sexual relations. This natural state purportedly rendered their bodies and minds susceptible to immoderate behaviours such as lustfulness and emotionality. The deficiency of heat was thought to make females mentally and physically weak, undermining their capacity for self-moderation. These physiological traits informed gendered identities, linking feminine qualities with physical and mental weakness, excess in food, drink, or sexual activity, and heightened emotions. Women's inability to expel their sexual organs and their role in pregnancy confined them to interior, domestic spaces. Gendered interpretations of physiology tied women to their bodies, with each feminine trait reflecting this materiality. Perceptions of the body shifted with prevailing discourse. This thought progression was combined with Christian teachings, with Genesis providing biblical support for male superiority. Binary oppositional thought freed men from bodily associations, linking masculinity with the soul and elevating them above materiality.

Medieval medical authorities and natural philosophers such as Soranus, Aristotle, and Galen, and significantly influenced gender identities through their ideas on physiological sex differences. They employed binary thinking that favoured the masculine and marginalised the feminine, including in the body. Physiological traits shaped social relationships between sexes. With the integration of Christian thought, religious symbols were applied to each gender based on 'natural' attributes, reinforcing moral and unequal power dynamics. The feminine was consistently viewed as an inferior reflection of the masculine. Its association with virginity, particularly in monasticism, stemmed from its perceived 'natural' imperfections.

## **Gender and Religion:**

### **Understanding Virginity, Women, and Brides of Christ**

Virginity is a concept that is inextricably linked to women and their bodies in Christianity, although it is a fundamental Christian value that originally applied to both sexes. At its core, it is an ascetic practice focused on self-discipline and the rejection of indulgence. It represents an emulation of Christ. Those who choose to practise a celibate life would be venerated in heaven for overcoming such earthly enticements, regardless of gender. However, the notion of Christian virginity evolved from its earliest manifestation as an ascetic practice of desert monastics to a female-specific concept by the Middle Ages, becoming intertwined with gender, theology, and natural philosophy.

The idea of Christian virginity begins with the Original Sin committed by Adam and Eve in Genesis. In both allegorical and literal readings of the Fall, humanity moves from spirituality to matter, from soul to body, as knowledge of the flesh is gained. The postlapsarian body was an irredeemable consequence of the Original Sin as flesh now existed within the intersection of moral, sexual, and gender binaries. However, regaining prelapsarian purity became possible with Christ's earthly sacrifice; the body was no longer an irredeemable evil, but a challenge for ascetic practice.

The body, flesh, and associated sexuality presented Christians with a challenge. Physiologically and philosophically associated with the female through classical texts, and theologically associated with the Fall, flesh was deemed impure, unstable, mutable, and weak. Controlling the flesh by denying it was an effective tool in this struggle. It became imperative for Christians, especially monastics, to seek a life of minimal corporeal influence. The rejection of body that allowed for the promotion of the soul did not diminish the body's

function as the soul's container, however. The ideal practice would be to diminish the flesh while maintaining its integrity to preserve the soul. An impermeable flesh enables the protection of the soul. The commitment to virginity as an ascetic practice was initially a venture undertaken by both male and female religious, but quickly became gendered enterprise through influential texts written by various fathers of the early Christian church.

The *Cantica Canticorum* (*Song of Songs*) was first used as an example by Origen in his commentary on the Old Testament book to relate the allegorical marriage of the human soul and the word of God. While the soul and the Word are above materiality and their marriage is mystical and intangible, their coupling is depicted using erotic imagery, sexualising the relationship.<sup>113</sup> Contemporary to Origen, Tertullian produced commentaries on Christian theology and morality, specifically virginity, promoting the 'brides of Christ' ideal for consecrated virgins. Arguing 'the flesh is the very condition upon which salvation hangs,' Tertullian shifts sanctity discourse from spiritual to anatomical.<sup>114</sup> Virginity then becomes carnal and gendered, existing on Earth within sexed – and therefore gendered – bodies. Later patristic followers of Tertullian, including Cyprian and Jerome, adopted his bridal metaphor in their writing on consecrated virgins and the *Cantica Canticorum*.

Identifying virgins as brides aligned consecrated female virgins with the *sponsa* of the *Cantica*. Virginity, once a Christian monastic ideal for both sexes, was repositioned to apply only to women, as men could not be brides within the gendered roles of the heterosexual matrix. Tertullian's followers embedded his ideals into their writing, promoting a female-specific definition of virginity for consecrated women. Bugge calls this a shift towards a

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<sup>113</sup> Origen, *Song of Songs: Commentary*.

<sup>114</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, p. 25; Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum*, bk 8, ch. 2.

'monialic' meaning of the bride ideal and virginity, 'in which the *sponsa* was defined simply as the virgin woman dedicated to Christ.'<sup>115</sup> This shift aligned with the Western church's move away from Origenist allegorical interpretations of the *Cantica* and towards a more approachable, physical Christ. Christ, as God on earth, was male, a son born of Mary, existing within the gender binary – a natural fit to *sponsa/sponsus*. Thus, even virginal women could not escape their sexed bodies and inferior relation to men. Placing Christ within the marriage concept reinforces the superior nature of the masculine gender and its association with the spiritual.

As Tertullian's *sponsa Christi* doctrine spread, Origen also influenced Ambrose (c.339-397). He explored the *Song's* bridal imagery in his partial exegeses, transforming the pneumatic reading into a more ecclesiological one.<sup>116</sup> Ambrose incorporated Origen's marriage of soul and Word, but also introduced a connection between the Hebrew and Pauline interpretations of the *Cantica*, where the *sponsa* is the collective people of the Lord (the *ecclesia*); the *sponsus* is the Word of God made lover (Christ). Through Ambrose, the bride's imagery moves from individual to corporate. The soul becomes a feminine aggregate, *ecclesia*, to be wed to Christ. The *sponsa* takes on a specific female understanding within a binary that sees the *sponsus* as Christ, but the female as a collective. Augustine expanded the *ecclesia* interpretation in the west with *De civitate Dei*, the bride being the City of God on earth awaiting God in heaven.<sup>117</sup> Augustine's ecclesiological commentary on the *Cantica Canticorum* became the most popular interpretation as Rome split from Eastern Orthodoxy

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<sup>115</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 66.

<sup>116</sup> Ambrose's monialic analysis of the *Song* are found in his *De virginibus*, *De institutione virginis*, *Expositio psalmi cxviii*, and *De Isaac vel anima*. Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 62; Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ*, p. 177.

<sup>117</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, bk XVII, ch. xx (PL 41.566).

and anti-Docetism.<sup>118</sup> The *Cantica* remained a metaphor, but no longer intangible; Christ was becoming as material as his church on earth. Augustine and later Bede's ecclesiological reading dominated biblical exegesis in early medieval England until the eleventh century. Bede's Expositionis in *Cantica canticorum libri septem* was the de facto reading until Bernard of Clairvaux's ideas were introduced.<sup>119</sup>

Ambrose also advanced the *sponsa Christi* ideal for consecrated virgins. Drawing from Origen's pneumatics and Athanasius' writings on virginity as an enclosed garden, Ambrose promoted virginity as a state of discipline, necessitating systematic control of consecrated virgins.<sup>120</sup> Though Tertullian initially wrote on the veiling of virgins as a symbol to their marriage of Christ, Ambrose put those ideas into action.<sup>121</sup> The Ambrosian veil acts in both a gendered and a disciplinary context. First, it identifies consecrated virgins as specifically female – only a woman wears a veil within a gendered material culture. Second, the veil distinguishes a woman as married, a *sponsa*, placing her within the materiality of matrimony. She is beholden to her husband, even if her husband is of heaven. The marriage bond reinforces the patriarchal structure, simultaneously robbing consecrated virgins of bodily freedom and submitting them to the bonds of the church. Ambrose effectively conflates the *sponsa* of the *Cantica*, the consecrated virgin, with carnal marriage in his image of the sanctified female, who then faces a literal enclosure of her chosen lifestyle.

By the time Aldhelm was writing in England in the late seventh century, consecrated virgins were established in the western Christian tradition as *sponsae Christi*, yet his prose

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<sup>118</sup> Gregory, *Super Cantica canticorum exposition*, i, (PL 79.478). See Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 65.

<sup>119</sup> Also following Bede: Alcuin and Aelfric. See Mattis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages*.

<sup>120</sup> Elliot, *Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>121</sup> Elliot, *Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, p. 47.

treatise *De virginitate*, written for the female community at Barking Abbey, seemingly shies away from the idea of connecting virginity exclusively with women and *sponsae*. His treatise is explicitly dedicated to ‘virgins of Christ’ (*Christi virginibus*) and he goes on to name Abbess Hildelith and many other nuns presumably residing at Barking at the time of writing. He states they are ‘to be celebrated not only for the distinction of [their] corporeal chastity, which is [the achievement] of many, but also to be glorified on account of [their] spiritual purity, which is [the achievement] of few’: both of which have been designated as distinct aspects of female sanctity.<sup>122</sup> However, Aldhelm’s statement belies his intended audience. Barking at the time was double monastery under an abbess, housing both monks and nuns. The virgins to which he refers are women *and men* who have preserved their corporeal chastity and spiritual purity as ‘*virginibus*’, though a feminine noun, could apply to either sex in ecclesiastical Latin. He addresses his treatise to specific named women but would have expected his work to circulate through both sexes at the monastery. As Aldhelm warms to his theme on the virtues of virginity, he is more explicit in its importance for both men and women, perhaps even leaning towards its greater importance for men. He names twenty-nine examples of male virgins in contrast to twenty female examples. For Aldhelm in his prose *De virginitate*, virginity is not just the domain of a consecrated woman.

Aldhelm's reduced focus on virginity as a female-specific spiritual trait may indicate his intended audience. Many female residents of Barking were not pure corporeal virgins or had been married, coming to a religious vocation later or as an escape from worldly threats. Elliot suggests Aldhelm's ‘de-emphasis’ on female virginity was a strategy for developing a

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<sup>122</sup> Aldhelm, *Prose*, p. 59: ‘*devotæ germanitatis affectu venerandis, et non solum corporalis pudicitiae præconio celebrandis, quod plurimorum est: Verum etiam spiritualis castimonie gratia glorificandis, quod paucorum est*’.

spirituality suited to a community of women with diverse marital backgrounds.<sup>123</sup> However, I disagree that Aldhelm is conspiring to deemphasise female virginity overall. The prose *De virginitate* is cognisant of its dual audience, even as it is addressed primarily to monastic women. Its stress on virginity as a feature of consecrated life for both sexes does not negate its fundamental importance for women. Aldhelm's gender-democratic view on virginity can be read as following the ecclesiological interpretation of the *Cantica Canticorum*, focusing on the collective *ecclesia* rather than the individual soul. Virginity should apply to a collective, gender-inclusive monastic *sponsae*, still gendered and dedicated to a heavenly reward.

Aldhelm specifically promotes the *sponsa Christi* as a gendered ideal for women in his work. Five of his female virgins in the prose *De virginitate* are described as possessing a 'celestial bridegroom,' or being married to a heavenly spouse. This imagery is never used for male virgins. He would have been familiar with the *sponsa* imagery through the works of Ambrose, Cyprian, Jerome, and Augustine, who are all referenced in the treatise.<sup>124</sup> Aldhelm writes to the women of the Barking community, but he does so in the patristic tradition, promoting religious women as *sponsae* and gendering them within a hierarchical binary, reemphasised in his later verse treatment of *De virginitate*.<sup>125</sup>

The patristic ideals of virginity from Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, and Aldhelm remained Western monasticism's primary interpretation of chastity until major monastic and intellectual reform periods, such as the twelfth century. Using new sources from late

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<sup>123</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, p. 70.

<sup>124</sup> Ambrose potentially influenced Aldhelm's structure of the prose *De virginitate*. See Askwith, 'Patristic Background to Anglo-Saxon Audience', especially Chapter Two: 'The Construction of Virginity in the Church Fathers', pp. 69-134, and the prose and verse works of Aldhelm, ed. Lapidge and Herren.

<sup>125</sup> *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, ed. Lapidge and Herren.

antiquity, Bernard of Clairvaux is credited with reviving the popularity of the Origenist *Cantica Canticorum* as well as producing his own commentary that combined Cistercian principles.<sup>126</sup> He argued for returning to the allegorical interpretation of the *sponsa/sponus* as man's soul union with Christ, promoting the Cistercian idea of inward searching for holy perfection while maintaining eastern pneumatic thought.<sup>127</sup> His intention was to elevate the conversation above physicality and create a mystical man-Christ connection. His reintroduction of pneumatic marriage was widely accepted and disseminated. However, in England the *sponsa* remained primarily associated with feminine spirituality in England. The net effect of Bernard's work was to enforce the idea of a spiritual marriage within monasticism, which was then augmented by the arguments made in Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*.

Anselm (d. 1109) composed *Cur Deus homo* between 1094–98, arguing for Christ's dual humanity and divinity to have saved mankind through crucifixion. In effect, Christ must have been fully God *and* fully man to overcome the Original Sin, with his humanity from his earthly mother and divinity from his heavenly father.<sup>128</sup> Anselm's theory of juridical atonement was not new; he drew on Tertullian's works, who developed ideas from Bishop Irenaeus in the second century CE.<sup>129</sup> However, *Cur Deus homo*'s ideas were unmatched in influence in western Christendom.

The Anselmian interpretation of juridical atonement shifted the discourse on Christ's humanity and love for the human race. New emphasis was placed on his passion and

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<sup>126</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Sermones in Cantica Canticorum' (PL 183.779-1198). Also see Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 90-96.

<sup>127</sup> Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St Bernard*, p. 70; Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>128</sup> Davies and Evans, 'Why God Became Man', pp. 260–356.

<sup>129</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 81.

crucifixion suffering as his physicality was reconsidered; such bodily suffering could only demonstrate the intensity of his love for mankind, representing salvation's true cost. This refreshed passion reading gave rise to intense meditative prayers focusing on his bodily suffering.<sup>130</sup> Christ's newfound humanity provided him with a sexed body, and his sexuality was considered for the first time; as a man with a sexed body, he could be situated within the gender binary. Anselmian thought's influence helped ground Christ from the pneumatic to the physical. As the *sponsa Christi* motif continued to be associated primarily with feminine spirituality in England, Christ was positioned to become more than an absent husband to religious women.

Hugh of St Victor, contemporary to Bernard, also wrote on the new monastic reform trend of eastern pneumatic thought. He produced *De sacramentis*, arguing the importance of spiritual marriage over physical to preserve the virginal state, representing the spiritual conjunction between God and the human soul.<sup>131</sup> His ideas coincided with the emerging popularity of the spousal idea in the *Cantica Canticorum* to create Christ as the ideal husband, primarily for religious women. By elevating the fusion of souls over bodies, virginity is preserved, whereas the physical marriage act would violate the ideal of prelapsarian human perfection.<sup>132</sup> The Victorine ideal departs from previously dominant Augustinian thought, which sanctioned physicality in marriage for procreation.<sup>133</sup> Spiritual marriage resolves the nature of the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Joseph, who did not engage physically in marriage.<sup>134</sup> It also allows humanity to attempt to reclaim their

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<sup>130</sup> See Sarah McNamera, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*.

<sup>131</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, bk I, ch viii, 13 and bk II, ch. xi, 3 (PL 176.314-481-482).

<sup>132</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *De beatae Mariae virginitate* (PL 176.859-860, 874).

<sup>133</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 86.

<sup>134</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 86.

prelapsarian position under God. The implications of a virgin, spiritual marriage in lay or monastic settings allowed for fusing the pneumatic with the monialic, putting marriage to Christ on equal footing with earthly marriage. With Christ's newfound humanity, the divine *sponsus* became a legitimate competitor for a woman's hand in marriage and virginity a matrimonial pursuit.

These new interpretations of Christ, marriage, and virginity from monasteries transformed the gendered discourse of monastic spirituality as the church implemented its own ideas concerning virginity. The interaction of monastic intellectual with ecclesiastic practical would significantly affect spiritual discourse for both genders. In 1073, Pope Gregory VII was elected to the papal see and began implementing reforms, including celibacy for all clerics.<sup>135</sup> As the initial response of outrage was met with the threat of excommunication, the reform was slowly adopted from the late eleventh century.

Clerical celibacy had serious implications for ideas of gender and virginity. First, it produced a large population of celibate churchmen who walked and talked like consecrated monks. Their new enforced celibacy upgraded their spiritual status from physically sullied to above the body. This undermined the exclusivity of virginity within cloistered monasticism and challenged the contemporary discourse on masculinity in both lay and spiritual populations. Second, celibate clerics were caught in a role between the spiritual and the lay.<sup>136</sup> They had a sexed body outside of the cloister, a step down from true ascetic devotion. Yet, the cleric's sexed body could not fulfil its role to maintain the gender binary through

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<sup>135</sup> Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*, pp. 3-4; Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 81; Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage*, pp. 95-113.

<sup>136</sup> For more on ideas of monks and gender, see Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*; Réal, 'Nuns and Monks at Work'; DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*; Raverty, 'Are We Monks, or are We Men?'; Mallon, 'Medieval Monastic Community as Pre-Modern Same-Sex Family'.

intercourse and procreation. Its lack of role fulfilment threatened the masculine's supremacy over the feminine. Without the physiological opposition of masculine, how could the feminine be defined in the binary? Could it be equal or even superior? What could prevent a celibate cleric from being described as feminine?

With celibacy, clerics' ability to define their masculinity was destabilised. Virginity was monasticism's domain, not masculinity. Instead of redefining masculinity, there was a push to 'enhance' the feminine to retain its position as the atrophied opposition against the newly castrated masculine in the gender binary. Women and femininity became diminished, spiritually and materially, to restabilise the masculinity of the male population. Jo Ann McNamara notes, 'Experience indicates that the masculine gender is fragile and tentative, with weaker biological underpinnings than the feminine. It requires strong social support to maintain fictions of superiority based on physical strength.'<sup>137</sup> By removing a tradition demonstration of male virility, the primary underpinning of masculine identity in the medieval period, the gender binary destabilized, especially among those closest to the church. Male populations needed to shift the discourse in their favour, demonising and weakening the feminine, to restabilise their power.<sup>138</sup> With virginity now required of all churchmen and monastics, religious women had to work extra hard to prove their sanctity within the new cultural discourse.

The ability for religious women in England to perform sanctity according to discursive definitions of feminine spirituality was, by the early fourteenth century, difficult. Virginity models had shifted from gender-inclusive monasticism to ones primarily associated

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<sup>137</sup> McNamara, 'Herrenfrage', p. 3.

<sup>138</sup> McNamara, 'Herrenfrage', p. 11: 'the newly celibate clerical hierarchy reshaped the gender system to assure male domination of every aspect of the new public sphere.'

with women, as their gender identity became inseparable from the body through physiological evidence. The idea of chaste femininity should have freed women from their flesh and elevated them to an incorporeal status. However, patristic writers increasingly trapped them within the *sponsa* metaphor from the *Cantica Canticorum*. Even as virgins, they were placed within the heterosexual matrix, unable to overcome their gender. Their gender identity reliant on their sexed body strengthened with Anselm's Man-God Christ, Victorine spiritual marriage, and Bernard's reintroduction of the *sponsa* ideal to the Christian West. Though Bernard and Hugh attempted to impart pneumatic readings of the *sponsus* to monasticism, Anselm's work coupled with Aldhelm's enduring legacy grounded Christ physically to female religious in England. He became a viable alternative as a husband to other men. As the religious masculine was threatened by a fleshy Christ and lack of sexual ability, the feminine, now synonymous with the flesh, was transformed into sinful materiality.

## Chapter Two: The Book of Nunnaminster

There is a significant challenge in utilising books or other textual sources to investigate female spirituality in medieval England. Literary and textual domains have predominantly been the purview of men and the masculine, with the written word historically employed to overwrite, expunge, erase, and otherwise undermine women and the feminine, particularly in monastic contexts. The experiences of women are frequently unrecorded or unacknowledged in written form. In the period between the Norman Conquest and the early fourteenth century, written evidence increasingly became the sole record accepted as factual, thereby diminishing the previous legitimacy of oral testimony, a tradition primarily associated with women. Illiteracy thus became a form of historical marginalisation; those lacking literacy skills were unable to insert themselves into the written record, assuming their documents even survived. As nascent institutions such as universities were exclusively accessible to men, only the most affluent and well-connected women could attain an education, and even then, merely a small number from the medieval period remain known to contemporary scholars. Books, manuscripts, and texts were predominantly a masculine endeavour.

The book, in manuscript codex form, was the primary form of dissemination for Christian thought and discourse during the medieval period. The Bible and other fundamental Christian texts, functioned as a technology, applying specific knowledge to achieve and reproduce practical goals. It provided Christianity with a vehicle for spreading its message, remembering its past, and encapsulating its authority.<sup>139</sup> With the (re)arrival of Christianity

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<sup>139</sup> See R.N. Swanson's introduction, to *The Church and the Book* (Woodbridge, 2004) and Stuart G. Hall 'In the Beginning it was the Codex: the Early Church and its Revolutionary Books' in the same volume, pp. 1-10.

on English shores in the late sixth century, the book began to supersede the orality of pagan traditions, gaining status and reverence.

The importance of textual and manuscript culture to Christianity was not lost on monastic women in England. The abbesses of the infamous monastic double-house of early Anglo-Saxon England were renowned for their centres of book production and education. Bede relates the story of Hild, who took in an illiterate farmhand to Whitby where he flourished through his education.<sup>140</sup> Aldhelm wrote *De virginitate* (both prose and verse) in florid and difficult Latin for Hildelith and her community at Barking.<sup>141</sup> Boniface relied on Eadburg of Minster-in-Thanel for fine, golden copies of the gospels to replenish his supply on the continent.<sup>142</sup> Yet it is also significant that only the male side of the correspondence survives. There are no extant letters from Abbesses Hild, Hildelith, or Eadburg, despite their historical status and knowledge of the existence of such letters. We do not know how long these letters were kept or when they were lost; there is no record of them. These female texts are lost to time while the male texts have survived over fifteen hundred years.

In the early fifteenth century a dedicated monk of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, Thomas of Elmham, wrote a promotional history of his monastery and included a chapter on the oldest books belonging to the abbey, some of which arrived in England with Augustine.<sup>143</sup> Through his descriptions some of these manuscripts have been identified in present-day collections. One associated in general with Thomas's list is Cambridge, Corpus Christi

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<sup>140</sup> This is the poet Caedmon, mentioned in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, bk. IV, ch. 24. Sherley-Price (1990), pp. 248-251.

<sup>141</sup> Lapidge and Herren (1979), pp. 1-4, and (1985).

<sup>142</sup> Boniface to Eadburga, c. 735. MGH, epistle 35; trans., Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, pp. 42-3. Joan Ferrante created the *Epistolae* project in conjunction with Columbia University to collect and translate medieval women's Latin letters from the fourth to thirteenth centuries. It uses a variety of sources, which will be cited in conjunction with the website. This is free resource for anyone interested: <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu>.

<sup>143</sup> Emms, p. 32.

College, MS 286, a sixth-century manuscript now known as the Gospels of St Augustine.<sup>144</sup> Tradition holds that this manuscript was the gospel book sent with Augustine from Rome to England to convert the heathen Angles. Richard Emms makes a plausible argument that CCCC 286 is the *Textus Evangeliorum* described by Thomas in the fifteenth century; however, there is no way to definitively prove his theory, as the leaves Thomas described are now lost.<sup>145</sup> If Emms is correct, the Gospels of St Augustine should be considered by a different name: the Gospels of St Mildreth.

The *Textus Evangeliorum* was primarily associated with St Mildreth, the legendary abbess of Minster-in-Thanel in the early eighth century. As a wealthy monastery producing high quality work during this period, it likely it held fine books within its own collection.<sup>146</sup> However, Viking inclusions in the ninth century forced the community to move to the relative safety of Canterbury, where books from its collection could have passed into the library there. With the continuation of the Viking attacks, any books once held by Thanet could have remained in the Canterbury collection for safekeeping. Without any written acknowledgment of these manuscripts' association with Thanet and Mildreth, other than what done by Thomas, their age and location associate them only with the male house at Canterbury and Augustine. This lends spiritual and political authority to Canterbury and removes it from Thanet. Any feminine history of these speculative manuscripts, the *Textus Evangeliorum* in particular, is overwritten by their masculine history.

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<sup>144</sup> Emms, p. 37.

<sup>145</sup> Emms, pp. 35-37.

<sup>146</sup> Emms also associates the *Codex Aureus*, now Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, MS A.135, with the scriptorium at Minster-in-Thanel, pp. 37-9.

This is just one, semi-hypothetical example of the marginalisation of monastic women and their feminine spirituality within medieval English history. It is directly related to the importance of books, manuscripts, and textual space within Christianity with consequence to their legendary status, especially when associated with male figures. Canterbury remained one of two most powerful archbishoprics in England throughout the medieval period and remains a centre of the Anglican church today. In comparison, Minster-in-Thanet is little remembered for its illustrious past. It was abandoned by the nuns for good before 1030 and given as a monastic grange to Canterbury. It remained as such until the dissolution.<sup>147</sup>

Textual space is a significant area to look for the marginalisation and erasure of feminine monastic spirituality, even as it was dominated by a masculinist historical discourse, due to the importance of the book to Christianity as a whole.<sup>148</sup> As the book is also the primary source of cultural discourse responsible for the construction of monastic gender identity in the medieval period, evidence the excessive feminine is sometimes difficult to discern.

## **Textual Space**

The Book of Nunnaminster, is a small codex consisting of a collection of gospel extracts, prayers, and meditations likely created for personal use though used in many ways.<sup>149</sup> Harley 2965 is written in Latin using primarily masculine language, as the majority of medieval monastic manuscripts are. The preponderance of masculine language, especially in Latin, in a manuscript is not enough to determine gendered use as the masculine singular is

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<sup>147</sup> Today it is still inhabited by Benedictine nuns who returned in 1937 and lays claim to the 'oldest inhabited monastic house in England'. <https://minsterabbeynuns.org>

<sup>148</sup> As books are equally important to other popular religious movements such as Islam and Judaism.

<sup>149</sup> Bugyis, 'Practice of Penance', p. 49, n. 59.

frequently left uncorrected, even if was used in a female monastic setting. There are hundreds of extant medieval monastic manuscripts and manuscripts fragments whose provenance is indeterminable but are assumed to come from male communities because there is no specific evidence of female use. These assumptions should not be supported through the generalising use of masculine Latin. From the point of view of a scribe, using the Latin masculine is better than the feminine. The Latin masculine, especially in its plural form, subsumes both genders and becomes ‘general-neutral’, even as it is written as masculine.<sup>150</sup> A manuscript with gender-neutral (masculine) prayers possesses more value long-term as it can be sold to and used by either male or female communities. The male communities, of which there was a significantly larger number of in England, would not need to edit the for their use.<sup>151</sup> Female communities often would not go through the trouble. They either did not have the Latin capability, or there was not opportunity within the text to do so; prayers spoken aloud could be edited orally.<sup>152</sup> The use of masculine language within a Latin language text becomes the ungendered neutral as the masculine was deemed suitable for nuns and monks; edits or corrections to make the Latin specific for feminine monastic use is the only visible textual gendering.

The visible textual gendering specific to monastic women is a material representation of the ‘excessive feminine’: a linguistic mark of the immoderate and imperfect female of medieval physiology.<sup>153</sup> Using the framework derived the hierarchy of male/female, the

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<sup>150</sup> Additionally, the Latin masculine plural, deemed gender neutral, is used to denote mixed-gender groupings, no matter the numerical breakdown of men and women. Sixteen women and two men? The masculine plural would still be used.

<sup>151</sup> Gilchrist, using Knowles and Haddock, writes, ‘Minimum estimates are 736 monasteries for men, 153 nunneries, 18 double houses, 6 nuns’ cells attached to male houses and 4 ‘quasi-double’ houses’, *GMC*, p. 36.

<sup>152</sup> For instance, psalters – set texts of the psalms – are frequent survivors of nunneries, but they do not offer much in the way of feminine customisation.

<sup>153</sup> Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 13.

visible feminine excess is acting outside the confines of the binary, exceeding the visible limits placed on it by masculine language to secure a place for itself among the text. It is overcoming the generalising totality of the Latin masculine singular and plural to identify itself as feminine. In order to accomplish this, the editor and/or scribe must deliberately assume the Latin feminine style, purposely submitting it into the text as it is copied and rewritten.<sup>154</sup> Editing in feminine Latin throughout a text functions within the framework of Luce Irigaray's mimicry as it is attempting to uncover/recover the place of the feminine within a work through non-linear reading, making that which is unperceived in generalising language perceptible.

Feminine mimesis for the purpose of recovering gendered space of monastic spirituality operates well within the masculine economy of medieval manuscript production. Following the early medieval period of legendary abbess-led scriptoria, it is unknown how many nunneries producing manuscripts for economic consumption. Female religious were better known for their creation of fine textiles. By the end of the twelfth century, manuscript production had shifted away from monasteries to a lay professional population.<sup>155</sup> It was likely that in the tenth century, nunneries were capable of, but were not as involved with, manuscript production as monastic brethren or secular canons. Yet, with the exception of entirely new pieces of work, almost all manuscript production consisted of the copying of existing exemplars in various formats for dissemination. This repetitive type of production, both in function and text, presented a unique opportunity to play with language 'fixed' within monastic cultural discourse. Through the visible inclusion of feminine language into

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<sup>154</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, pp. 76-77, 220. Also see Methodology in the Introduction.

<sup>155</sup> See Overly, 'The Cost of Doing Scribal Business', p. 26, n. 4.

comprehended text, a scribe has the opportunity to recover a place of feminine monastic spirituality – rendering ideas originally conceptualised for the male monasticism in a masculine language accessible for the women religious as well.

The excessive feminine is identified within the primary text of Harley 2965 in multiple places. In the original text written in the ninth century, folio 23v contains, ‘*inconcusam ab inimici emissione me custodiat*’ and folio 25v, ‘*concede me peccatrici*’.<sup>156</sup> The tenth-century additions that contain feminine associations are found on the flyleaves: a confessional prayer and a vernacular account of land belonging to Æhlswith given to Nunnaminster. Walter de Grey Birch produced an edition of Harley 2965 in 1889 and noted the instances of feminine Latin usage within the text.<sup>157</sup> Based on their instance, he posits the manuscript was likely written by a woman, copied from an exemplar using masculine Latin; the female scribe likely inserted the feminine forms unconsciously as she copied.<sup>158</sup> Together, the textual evidence indicates to him the use of the manuscript by an abbess.<sup>159</sup> While I appreciate Birch’s enthusiastic leap from two small instances of feminine wording to a ninth-century female scribe, there is no other evidence to support his theory. The use of the manuscript in a nunnery by a religious woman is more likely, based on the tenth-century flyleaf additions. There is no evidence to indicate where the book resided in between its creation date and arrival at the Nunnaminster, nor that it was created by a woman.<sup>160</sup> At least some of the tenth-century additions, however, were likely done by a female hand.

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<sup>156</sup> de Gray Birch, pp. 15-17.

<sup>157</sup> de Gray Birch, pp. 15-16.

<sup>158</sup> de Gray Birch, p. 17.

<sup>159</sup> de Gray Birch, p. 15, 17.

<sup>160</sup> Brown suggests it was in the possession of Æhlswith and travelled with her from Merica to Winchester.

Within the primary text of the manuscript, or the textual body, the feminine forms of Latin words are not easily recognised. They are not interlinear annotations or corrections; the scribe wrote them in amongst other forms. There are a large number of words within the body of the text specifically gendered for male use; Birch tabulated thirty words total compared to the two instances of feminised Latin. The inclusion of feminine forms seems likely done in scribal error rather than intentional gendering. As Birch mentioned above, this could be due to the unconscious linguistic preference a female scribe, but it is more likely the result of an ‘uncorrected’ manuscript exemplar, especially when the feminine evidence in Harley 2965 is contextualised amongst similar texts.

The *Tiberius* group of manuscripts possess other evidence of feminised language and the excessive feminine. A prayer occurs in both Cambridge, UL, L1.1.10 (Book of Cerne) and Harley 2965 beginning ‘*Deus refugiam pauperum.*’<sup>161</sup> The version of the prayer in the Book of Nunnaminster uses the masculine forms *purificatus* and *sanctificatus* while Cerne’s version of the prayer makes use of the feminine forms of *purificata* and *santificata*.<sup>162</sup> There is no other feminine or female-related material within or associated with CUL L1.1.10, other than its scribal connections to the *Tiberius* Group, to indicate it was ever possessed by a monastic woman or community.<sup>163</sup> The Royal Prayerbook, British Library Royal MS 2.A.xx, possesses significant female material within its litany as well prayers focused on blood and menstruation.<sup>164</sup> Its abecedarial prayer on ff. 29r-38v features wording very similar to the

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<sup>161</sup> In Harley 2965, f. 24r, and in CUL L1.1.10, f. 70r. Brown, ‘Female book-ownership’, p. 56 and *Book of Cerne*, pp. 136-143. A.B. Kuypers produced an edition of CUL L1.1.10 in 1902, ‘*The Prayer Book of Aedelwald the Bishop, Commonly Called the Book of Cerne*’. See also, Alexander, no. 66; Backhouse and Webster, no. 165; Ker, no. 27.

<sup>162</sup> Brown, ‘Female book-ownership’, p. 56.

<sup>163</sup> See Brown, *Book of Cerne* for more comparisons between the *Tiberius* group manuscripts.

<sup>164</sup> See Alexander, no. 35; Backhouse and Webster, no. 163; de Gray Birch, pp. 101-13; Kuypers, pp. 201-25. Within the Royal Prayerbook there is a gospel extract that relates to women and the flow of blood (f. 9r) and

cycle of prayers found on ff. 19r-32v of Harley 2965, which suggested to Jennifer Morrish a common exemplar.<sup>165</sup> The fragmentary Harleian Prayerbook, British Library, Harley 7653, likely the earliest of the group, also features a strong female presence in its litany as well as some Latin feminine forms.<sup>166</sup> '[U]t pro me dei famula oretis' is written on f. 1r and the prayer on ff. 6v-7r uses 'famul[a]e tu[a]e' even after the masculine 'peccatori'.

Instances of feminine influence and the excessive feminine appear in all the *Tiberius* manuscripts, yet they are a primarily masculine in textual form; these bits are but hints of the feminine that have snuck past the scribal stylus perpetuating masculine forms. Their inclusions, being so casual and so few, are likely in error, rather than deliberate. Yet their existence indicates textual feminine spirituality in another, related textual space.

The creation dates and palaeographical links between the *Tiberius* manuscripts support the theory of one or more common exemplars potentially within a single, originating scriptorium. Brown has theorised the fragmentary Harleian Prayerbook as the most likely common exemplar, partially due its relative age. The preference for the masculine form over the feminine when given the option to gender words within the text suggests these books were written in a scriptorium or various related scriptoria residing within a majority male monastic space. However, it is possible these manuscripts were copied by or for women.

Brown suggests the *Tiberius* group manuscripts were created through the patronage of royal Mercian woman and adapted specifically for them, which would explain the inclusion

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also two prayers concerning bleeding on ff. 16v and 49v. These include invocations addressed to 'Beronica,' a name given in early tradition to the woman cured of the flow of blood and equated with St Veronica. See de Gray Birch, p. 111, and Brown, 'Female book-ownership', p. 57.

<sup>165</sup> Morrish, *An examination of literature and learning in the 9th century* (1982).

<sup>166</sup> See Backhouse and Webster, no. 162; Ker, no. 244; Printed in de Gray Birch, pp. 114-9 and Warren, vol. 2, pp. 83-6.

of feminised Latin within the main textual body.<sup>167</sup> Based on the manuscript evidence of the *Tiberius* group, using feminised Latin to adapt a text for a female audience was certainly possible and very much done during this initial monastic period of England. However, the placement, occurrence, and sporadic nature of the use of feminine forms across the manuscripts in addition to the generality of the litany material does not support Brown's idea. Her theory mirrors that of Birch: a male scribe unconsciously using the masculine Latin, only remembering occasionally to correctly use the feminine. I believe it more plausible the manuscripts were created for more general (male) audience using exemplars that featured feminine Latin and human error took its natural course.<sup>168</sup>

The parallel prayers in Nunnaminster and Cerne suggest a common source, yet the only words within Cerne, *purficata* and *sanctifica*, use the feminine endings.<sup>169</sup> Despite the large amount of evidence for later female usage in Harley 2965, the same prayer uses the masculine endings for the same words. *Peccator* (gen. *peccatoris*) is one of the most common Latin nouns within monastic texts gendered specifically for women; a female sinner is a *peccatrix* (gen. *peccatricis*). A scribe would have been more likely to overlook the proper gendered declension of such commonly used words as 'famule', than the distinct gendered forms of 'sinner'. Additionally, every other noted use of this prayer in Wilmart only uses the Latin masculine, suggesting the exemplar for the Harleian prayerbook was uniquely feminised.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> If so, this is an example of overwriting or erasure as per Watt. Brown, 'Female Book Ownership', p. 50.

<sup>168</sup> These theoretical exemplars were likely made for a female audience, potentially a monastic one.

<sup>169</sup> Sixteen other prayers overlap between the Book of the Cerne and the Book of Nunnaminster. One prayer is similar but not exact. See Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 141-2 for the prayers and more detail on other manuscript commonalities within and without the *Tiberius* group. Also, Kuypers, p. xxxii and Birch, 'Appendix A,' p. 101, and 'Appendix B,' p. 114.

<sup>170</sup> See Brown, 'Female Book Ownership', p. 58, especially n. 29, and Wilmart, p. 279, n. 30.

The possibility of exemplars written with feminised Latin suggests the possibility of an earlier or contemporary female monastic spirituality with an accompanying book culture for which larger evidence of such has not survived. It is only through these early textual fragments of the feminine that a small amount of their spirituality is discerned. The feminine is continually overwritten, literally, as texts are copied and disseminated. Without the survival of the remnants of the Harleian Prayerbook, knowledge of the use of these prayers within female communities would be lost, as all other extant copies use the masculine Latin. The survival of hints of feminine spirituality is due partially to the luck of scribal errors as well as renewed political and ecclesiastical stability in some parts of the country, with the joint power of Wessex and Mercia creating a nascent England.

Within the *Tiberius* group, the feminine in language is marked out by its Otherness. Its use is inconsistent with the general, masculine language that characterises the textual body. Latin, the primary language of written work during the early medieval period, especially within the church, functions both as language of obstruction and revelation. Its linguistic characteristics that divide its vocabulary into three genders operates to inject discourse into every sentence, unconsciously or not and potentially at the expense of contradiction. For example: *anima*, or 'soul', is a feminine first declension noun characterised and recognised in texts through its use of various 'a' suffixes, which, more often than not, signal the feminine gender to the reader. Yet *anima* (along with *sapientia* and *natura*) is an immaterial spiritual quality primarily associated with maleness and the masculine within the religious hierarchical binary. In Latin, the feminine word *anima* cannot be emblematic of the female sex and its inherent physicality, as the idea of the soul is pure enough to escape the confines of human sexuality.

The feminine in Latin is most apparent when the text is personalised for a specific audience. Often, specific words are chosen as to indicate the intended gender of the audience or reader. As mentioned above, ‘sinner’ is a favourite, and becomes either *peccator* or *peccatrix*. This noun is descriptive, originating from the verb *peccō* and configured using either a masculine or feminine agent noun suffix to distinguish the gender of the sinner. The sin itself, *peccātum*, is neuter second declension, but it is optional in Latin to gender the person who committed the sin. The root of the word remains the same, but the suffixes tell the discursive story.

It is easy to change the gender of a Latin word within a medieval manuscript if you have a knife and stylus handy. Scraping off an ‘-ae’ from the parchment and replacing it for an ‘-i’ (or any equivalent replacement) relegates the feminine excess to the invisible margin, a liminal space, and returns the offending word to the visible masculine general. It is more of a displacement than a replacement. The simplicity of this action and its ease of execution functions to maintain the superiority of the masculine in primary language of medieval discourse; the feminine, in its linguistic atrophy, is effortlessly erased. Yet, where it does manage to survive, the remnants of the feminine excess are significant in illuminating the spirituality of women religious.

Each of the prayerbooks within the *Tiberius* group are unique, though related through style, palaeography, and content. Broadly, each manuscript possesses a theme that links the individual prayers together. As with Cerne, the theme of the Book of Nunnaminster is the Passion of Christ. The manuscript includes Gospel extracts related the passion,<sup>171</sup> a series of

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<sup>171</sup> All of the Gospel of Matthew and the first half of Mark is wanting, but we can make an educated guess based on the content of the remaining Mark, Luke, and John.

prayers on the life of Christ from the virgin birth to Pentecost, and prayers for protection detailing each part of the body. These are interspersed with various prayers, confessionals, and appeals to saints. Many of the prayers within Nunnaminster are consistent with those in Harley and Royal, but the primary overlap of content is with Cerne. At least sixteen of the prayers in Nunnaminster are also recognisable in Cerne.<sup>172</sup> Due to the other commonalities between the manuscripts this is not necessarily a surprise. More interesting is the preponderance of multicultural liturgical elements in all of the *Tiberius* manuscripts.

The Royal Prayerbook frequently makes use of pieces of the public liturgy, including parts of the *Pater Noster*, Apostles Creed, *Magnificat*, *Benedictus*, *Benedicte*, *Gloria* and even some liturgical lections with its selection of Gospel extracts.<sup>173</sup> The second half of *O virginibus* in Royal (f. 34r) is very similar to the second half of *De tenebris* (f. 28v) in Nunnaminster. However, Royal does not include the opening lines of its prayer *Deus qui humanae substantiae* (f. 29r), also found in Nunnaminster (f. 21r) which correspond to part of a collect for the third mass of the Nativity in the Leofric Missal and collect for Vespers of the Nativity in the Sacramentary of Gellone.<sup>174</sup> Nunnaminster continuously samples from Gelasian sacramentaries in its *De epiphania* (f. 21v) and *Oratio in Caena Domini* (f. 24r). The former is taken from a collect for the Feast of the Epiphany and the latter from a collect for Maundy Thursday and is also among the prayers for sinners in the Leofric Missal. Public liturgy is influential in the Nunnaminster prayers *De auriculo absico* (f. 25r), *De inrisione Domini* (f. 26r), *De tenebris* (f. 28r), and *Item de Resurrectione* (f. 31r).

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<sup>172</sup> See footnote 171.

<sup>173</sup> Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 136-143; Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', p. 463.

<sup>174</sup> The Leofric Missal is held at Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579, while the Sacramentary of Gellone is in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Latin 12048.

Much of the content in Nunnaminster is also in Cerne, such as the *De epiphania* (f. 69v) and *Oratio in Caena Domini* (f. 70r). Cerne creates three new prayers by combining verses from the Psalms, New Testament, *Gloria*, and *Pater Noster*. The extant fragment of the Harley Prayerbook does not contain any public liturgy or Roman sources but includes version of the *Te Deum* found in various Irish texts and *Rogo Patrem* from the Leabhar Breac.<sup>175</sup> This is in keeping with Royal, Nunnaminster, and Cerne, all of which also possess Irish material: the Celtic Prayer of Moucan (f. 25r), the Lorica of Laidcenn (f. 37v), and loose, Irish-influenced litanies, respectively.

Examining the individual contents of these manuscripts together, it is possible to identify more than one kind of overlap and define potential sources. The influence of a missal, psalter, Gelasian sacramentary, and gospel book are apparent as well as a significant Celtic texts. The number of source manuscripts involved is not possible to tally as many pieces could overlap within the same books. The *Tiberius* contents correspond with other, extant manuscripts available in Anglo-Saxon England and beyond, but are often the earlier (or earliest) example of the text. For example, the collects in the Book of Nunnaminster pre-date their counterparts' inclusion in the Leofric Missal by approximately a century.

When analysed closely, the *Tiberius* manuscripts are precisely designed through the careful selection and combination of liturgical and religious texts. Prayers from exemplars are picked apart for phrases or ideas, reworked, and inserted specifically for precise spiritual impact around the theme of the receiving manuscript. Often, the content in the manuscript represents a very early example of the work within England or a work on theological innovations of religious discourse imported from the continent. For instance, the texts pulled

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<sup>175</sup> Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', p. 463. Also see Warren, 'The Antiphony of Bangor', vol. 2, pp. 86, 93-5.

from the Gelasian sacramentaries for the Books of Nunnaminster and Cerne would have only come into fashion fifty or so years before at Charlemagne's behest (c. 800). This positions the scribes at Worcester (if indeed that was where these manuscripts were made) as creators of *a la carte* prayerbooks, with their materials likely chosen by their patrons interested in the latest spiritual trends from both sides of England. The patrons, as suggested by Michelle Brown, were likely powerful women.

Though the connection between Ælswith and the Book of Nunnaminster is circumstantial, it was most likely in her possession before it reached the nunnery. Nunnaminster was likely founded by her with the help of her son, King Edward the Elder, during his programme of monastic investment in Winchester in the early tenth century.<sup>176</sup> Ælswith's notable piety is mentioned within contemporary sources; following the death of her husband it would have been a traditional path for her, a pious widowed queen, to found and retire to a nunnery. Further, the land on which Nunnaminster was founded is possibly Ælswith's dowry, as she would likely have only owned lands in Wessex, especially in Winchester, through her marriage. The first quire of Harley 2965 is unfortunately missing, but the evidence found within the rest of the manuscript suggests a change of ownership in the early tenth century; no additions or superfluous hands appear before this date. The tenth-century hand(s) adds confessional prayers and an OE account of Ælswith's land given to the nunnery.<sup>177</sup> New manuscript owners often mark folios with shelfmarks, scrawled names, or family crests. Most of these marks are acquired during second- or third-hand ownership,

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<sup>176</sup> Edward is also responsible for founding and building New Minster following his father's wishes. See 'New Minster' in the VCH Hampshire, pp. 116-122.

<sup>177</sup> The practice of recording land grants on the flyleaves is not uncommon. For another female manuscript example, see Barking MS Oxford, Bodley 155. There are two land transactions recorded on f. 196v, one from Gilbeard of Stifford, Essex, and a copy of a land tithe from Adam, son of Leomarus of 'Cochefelda'.

rather than following its acquisition through patronage. A scribe or author may include the patron's name in the prologue, primary textual body, or colophon. The Book of Nunnaminster possesses no such marks before the tenth century (that we know of), suggesting it likely stayed within the possession of the same family. As Brown and others have proposed, this is most probably the Mercian royal family, from which Ælthswith hails.<sup>178</sup> It is entirely possible this manuscript was created for her mother, Eadburh, or grandmother, both of the royal Mercian line, during Mercia's years as the dominant and rich kingdom in early medieval England, and passed down to Ælthswith, possibly given as a wedding gift when she married Alfred. The parallel history of both Ælthswith and the Book of Nunnaminster cannot be overlooked.

The analogous contents of Nunnaminster to Cerne, Royal, and Harley suggest that the rest of *Tiberius* manuscripts were also linked or patronised by pious Mercian noblewomen in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Earlier Mercian noblewomen, it seems, took advantage of Offa's (or more likely his wife Cynethryth's) connections to the Carolingian empire, and therefore Rome, importing the latest in religiosity from the continent while also maintaining the links to Irish Christianity.<sup>179</sup> They likely kept up this connection throughout successive rulers, as evidenced by the *Tiberius* group, until Viking incursions made it difficult to retain any substantial communication.

The contents of *Tiberius* manuscripts are derived primarily from liturgical works, suggesting the spirituality of religious women in Mercia during this time was substantially influenced by popular lay practice originating from the continental practice, but with an

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<sup>178</sup> Brown, 'Female book-ownership', 'Mercian Manuscripts?', and *The Book of Cerne*.

<sup>179</sup> See Williams, *Kingship and Government*, p. 57-58, 27.

Anglo-Saxon twist. Most of the prayers within Cerne and Nunnaminster echo popular public liturgy, primarily of the Gelasian sacramentary – a Roman rite with Gallic residue. The manuscripts, which are later connected to monasteries, are significantly connected to public worship. This is indicative of their possible patrons and owners. The prayers within the Book of Nunnaminster are representative of the many early medieval noblewomen in England who straddled the line between monastic and lay; their political power could be expressed through religion. Such religiosity and interpretation of monasticism would be coloured by their lives spent outside of a nunnery; their books reflect on reliance on familiar, popular texts that later informed their monastic spirituality.

Brown has theorised such popular texts and prayers could have been transmitted through manuscript ‘pamphlets’, of which Harley could be one. This would preclude the necessity of major binding and illumination, easing constraints on expensive resources such as gold leaf and expediting their ‘publication’. Pamphlets could be easily disseminated throughout religious populations, with scribes copying the latest texts and then passing it on. The possession of multiple pamphlets at a religious house such as Worcester could explain the common sources for the *Tiberius* group without the exemplar being transcribed in full in any of the manuscripts. Extracting specifics from each pamphlet was key to creating personalised prayerbooks for important patrons. If indeed pamphlets were created and used for quick dissemination of religious texts, their lack of survival not surprising. Likely unprotected by substantive binding and made on cheap parchment, their importance relative to massive and fine manuscripts was miniscule.

Based on the textual evidence stemming from Mercian and then Wessex, the most significant areas of later nunneries, feminine monastic spirituality was practiced primarily through personalised interactions with the public liturgy. Texts from such were collected and

tailored for use, resulting in personalised prayerbooks that could be in lay or monastic settings. Earlier monastic women in England kept and interacted with manuscripts based more on a broad spirituality. Cuthswith, Abbess of Inkberrow, owned a fifth-century copy of Jerome's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* in early seventh-century England.<sup>180</sup> The community at Barking in the late seventh century were familiar with foundational patristic texts.<sup>181</sup> Eadburg wrote her name and some doodles in a copy of the Acts of Apostles in the eighth century at her abbey of Minster-in-Thamet.<sup>182</sup> Plus, Thanet also likely possessed the Gospels of St Mildreth (Augustine) until the ninth century.<sup>183</sup> Such evidence suggests that early monastic woman, some coming from a lay background, had comprehensive knowledge of biblical texts and important commentaries. Feminine monastic spirituality was conceptualised on the basis on texts that also informed the masculine.

Once Carolingian reform was introduced to England, the broad, native spirituality of female monasticism became more defined and narrowed in response. Coon notes that the major goals of Carolingian monastic reform were to regularise monasticism under the Benedictine rule, imposing a uniform understanding of the *regula* on liturgical, education, hygienic, material, and culinary practices.<sup>184</sup> Reformers sought to avoid any controversial practices, which could include practices of language and asceticism. For instance, elements of language that evolved specifically during the medieval period were deemed uncouth in comparison to the purity of 'classical' Latin.

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<sup>180</sup> Wurzburg, Universitatbibliothek, M.p.th.q.2.

<sup>181</sup> This is evidenced through their correspondence with Aldhelm. His *de Virginitate* included references and full excerpts from the words of Ambrose, Tertullian, Jerome, Cyprian, and Augustine, among others. See Lapidge and Herren for both prose and verse editions of Aldhelm.

<sup>182</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Selden Supra 30. See Introduction.

<sup>183</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 286.

<sup>184</sup> Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*, p. 52

Due to the supposed limited intellectualism physiologically inherent in women, any system of education disproportionately favoured male learning, both in access to institutions and materials. The religious women of Mercia who had access to the Tiberius group of textual material were more than likely high status or royal women who could afford to dedicate their lives to Christian learning. Their connection to religious discourse suggests they personally interpreted liturgical texts coming from both the Continent and Ireland, rather than relying on the broad spirituality of church fathers. Their level of specificity within such texts as the Gelasian Sacramentary indicates a profound knowledge of spirituality and understanding of Carolingian liturgy, which they moulded and adapted to their use.

The amount of textual evidence available to researchers working within feminine spirituality in early medieval England is very small and often restricted to a location. The conclusions that can be ascertained are limited due to this lack of material. Yet, the lack of material is also indicative of a larger conversation concerning the discourse of gender, language, and religion during this period. The evidence that we do possess of a specific feminine monasticism exists only because of its audacity to survive. Latin is a language that both reveals and hides gender. Remnants of the feminine are easily marginalised by the linguistic superiority of the masculine in a text. However, specifically using the feminine Latin instantaneously exposes its existence in language and, therefore, religion. Often it is only an excessive, or powerful feminising force that reveals itself through masculine mimesis, such in the case of the Mercian noblewomen and the sources for the *Tiberius* manuscripts; they personalised, feminised, continental and Irish texts, showing off the depth of their religious devotion and education. Yet even evidence of the strength of their feminine spirituality was mostly overwritten in the manuscripts that survive.

The tenth-century reform movement in England continued to limit the textual spaces of the feminine as monastic women themselves faced limitations on their movements. As directed in the *Regularis Concordia*, monastic women (and men) were newly required to be enclosed. So ostracised by language within the textual body, female religious found places to exist outside of primary locations of monasticism, within the margins of books and landscape.

The name of the Book of Nunnaminster is derived from the tenth-century additions found on the rear flyleaves. Specifically, the OE inscription on fol. 40v gives Ælthswith's land for the purpose of founding a female monastery. Additionally, on fol. 41r, someone, most likely a woman, wrote a confessional prayer using the ablative singular feminine form of sinner, '*peccatrice*.' This prayer was initially written for confession between a nun and priest but was modified for confession between two monastic women by another hand writing '*vel soror*' about '*frater*' in the interlinear space.<sup>185</sup> A later hand, separate from the *peccatrix*, has written '*vel peccatori*' above '*peccatrice*', modifying the prayer for either gender who requests to take confession from a senior monastic figure. There are additional annotations on the fol. 41r that give away no distinct gender: a prayer for absolution and a fragmentary *oratio*. These additions could have been made at Nunnaminster or New Minster, the neighbouring male monastery where the '*vel peccatori*' was likely added.

The passing of manuscripts between monasteries was not uncommon in the medieval period, especially between the three inhabiting within the crowded city walls of Winchester.<sup>186</sup> Helen Foxhall-Forbes has documented the 'squabbles' that took place between

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<sup>185</sup> Bugyis, 'Practice of Penance', p. 51.

<sup>186</sup> See Chapter Four for an exploration of monastic space between these three Winchester foundations.

the Old Minster, New Minster, and Nunnaminster in the tenth century as land boundaries and waterways between the three were rearranged to suit the new enclosure directives of the *Regularis Concordia*.<sup>187</sup> Likely at some point in the first half of the twelfth century a prayerbook belonging to Ælfwine, the celebrated and long dead abbot of New Minster, found its way to the nuns of Winchester.<sup>188</sup> It is unclear if the book was a gift as there is no inscription, but it is possible the book was given to the nuns of the newly named St Mary's Abbey following the removal of the New Minster monks to Hyde Abbey in the early twelfth century.

Unlike the Book of Nunnaminster or any of the *Tiberius* manuscripts, Ælfwine's prayerbook has definitive male provenance in the form of a coded inscription and it possesses no obvious scribal errors that include feminine forms within the primary textual body.<sup>189</sup> Evidence of the feminine excess is located solely in the margins and flyleaves. Folios 61v, 67v, an 68r of British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvi contain interlinear additions in a twelfth-century hand of feminine forms of words: *'famulum/am tuum/am'*, *'peccatori/trici'*, and *'peccator/trix'*, respectively. The other half of the prayerbook manuscript, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvii, includes a twelve-line woman's prayer on fol. 74r in a contemporary twelfth-century hand. Despite the age of Ælfwine's prayerbook – approximately a century old by time evidence of a female hand appears – it was clearly used in the twelfth century by female religious. Where previously in the eighth- and ninth-century women were seemingly the early adopters and connoisseurs of new prayer styles and religious discourse, this

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<sup>187</sup> See Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', and Rumble, *Property and Piety*.

<sup>188</sup> Formerly singular, this manuscript is now bound as two books: BL, Titus D.xxvi and Titus D.xxvii.

<sup>189</sup> Ælfwine was the dean and abbot of New Minster, 1023-1032. This book contains references to the death of his mother in the calendar as well as the coded inscription which reveals his name.

evidence suggests later generations adapted what was given to them, the hand-me-down prayerbooks from male institutions. Their spirituality is instructed rather than instructive, and any femininity that exists is adapted from the masculine forms, not the other way around.

This is true at least in Winchester, a prominent area for political and religious change during Edgar's reign and following the Conquest with close ties to continental reforms. Earlier evidence from Leominster suggests that the tradition of personalised prayerbooks for female religious was still being carried on through the eleventh century, though in a different manner than in the ninth. The Nero/Galba Prayerbook, British Library, Cotton Nero A.ii, ff. 3-13 and Cotton Galba A.xiv, is a piecemeal manuscript consisting of over one hundred individual prayers in Latin and OE composed by many different hands.<sup>190</sup> Its construction diverges the common practice of writing then binding; it seems the book was first bound then inscribed *ad hoc*, like a medieval commonplace book.<sup>191</sup> The manuscript's wealth of information on the nature of feminine monastic spirituality is somewhat diminished by its partial destruction in the Ashburnham House Fire of 1731, but there is still much to be learned from its leaves thanks to some truly superhuman palaeographic efforts of Bishop, Ker, and Muir.

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<sup>190</sup> This MS is partially dated by a prayer included for the soul of King Æthelred II (he would need it), who died in 1016. Scribal activity and additions continued through the second half of the eleventh century. For an edition of this prayerbook, see Bernard Muir, *A Pre-Conquest English Prayer-book (BL MSS Cotton Galba A.xiv and Nero A.ii (ff.3-13))* (1988). Bishop, Ker (no. 157), and Muir all originally attributed this prayerbook to Nunnaminster on the evidence of female saints in the second litany. Bugyis accepts and reiterates the argument of Hillaby, Rushforth, and Stokes for a Leominster provenance in her article 'Practice of Penance', n. 73: 'They argue for a Leominster provenance, citing the inclusion of two rare Celtic hymns, *Altus prosator* and *Adiutor laborantium*, and the sequence of three Leominster saints in the second litany: Æthelmod, Edfrith, and Hemma (fol. 93v). These saints were not included in any other surviving Anglo-Saxon litany, but the feast days of Æthelmod and Hemma also appear in a liturgical calendar that was once a part of the Galba prayer book but is now found at the beginning of London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.ii, fols. 3r-13v. Moreover, a fragment of a prayer to Hemma is found on fol. 152v of the Galba prayer book. This folio is very badly damaged, but the word "Hemman" is just visible in the first line.' See Hillaby, pp. 25-40; Rushforth, pp. 36-38; Stokes, pp. 50-51.

<sup>191</sup> Bugyis, 'Practice of Penance', p. 54; Muir, *Prayer-book*, p. xvi-xvii.

Evidence of feminine use for the Nero/Galba prayerbook is found within the calendar, prayers, and through interlineal glossing. The calendar contains a large number of Anglo-Saxon saints, both male and female.<sup>192</sup> However, it is the calendrical additions of Æthelnod, Eadfrith, and Hemma that locates the manuscript provenance at Leominster, likely a female institution.<sup>193</sup> The common feminine word *peccatrix* and its declensions are commonly used, occasionally glossed with a masculine ending.<sup>194</sup> Other Latin words such as ‘*famulos*’ and ‘*perfidus*’ gendered for masculine use have been glossed with feminine letterings. Sometimes the glossing hand ‘corrects’ for the feminine unnecessarily, which renders the grammar unintelligible rather than changes the gender of the words, as was likely the scribe’s intention.<sup>195</sup> This is indicative of a semi-Latinate individual who recognizes masculine words but does not possess the skills to make grammatically correct additions. Additionally, the same hand may be responsible for five short prayers possessing more unusual syntactical errors.<sup>196</sup> There is no definitive evidence to suggest this hand is that of a woman religious, but as the prayer on Galba f. 108r-v contains feminine use of the Latin and the ‘corrections’ are to the feminine, it is likely the hand was female.

As this manuscript consists of disjointed sections rather than planned prayers, I would not describe any segment of it as having a planned, primary textual body; sections were seemingly copied *ad hoc* for use. The largest block of continuous text is that of a prayer programme using the penitential psalms devised by Alcuin before his death in 804 found on

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<sup>192</sup> Werburga, Milburga, Edward Martyr, Erckenwald, Machatus, Æthelbrihti, Hemma, Dunstan, Bede, Leofrith, Sexburga, Mildreth, Kenelm, King Oswald, Æthelburga, Ætheldrytha, Eadfrith.

<sup>193</sup> See above, note 192.

<sup>194</sup> Feminine endings on ff. 6v, 53v, 85v; ‘*Peccatrix*’ is glossed for a possible masculine ‘*tor*’ on folio f.53v.

<sup>195</sup> Possibly, f. 55v: ‘*delectata*’, f. 78v, ‘*ea*’.

<sup>196</sup> The prayers are on Cotton Nero ff. 13r, 13v and Galba ff. 36v-37r, 37r-38v, 108r-v.

ff. 59r-62r. This text, without the prologue which accompanies it here and in many other examples, is also found in Ælfwine's prayerbook.<sup>197</sup>

Alcuin's devotional text is based on the seven penitential psalms and was very popular in England from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, as evidenced by number of surviving manuscripts containing it. However, it would have been declining in popularity following the influx of continental religious trends with the arrival of the Normans as the twelfth century approached. Indeed, many of the texts within Nero/Galba are also found in other, older manuscripts including those from the *Tiberius* group. Others have no known analogue. One devotional compilation appears in Galba twice, once incomplete on f. 57v and again, expanded in Latin and OE, on ff. 114v-117v.<sup>198</sup> It is constructed of various biblical verses and liturgical responses. Muir describes it as 'if someone had originally brought these texts together to form a short devotional text for Trinity Sunday for his or her personal use, which, however, was firmly rooted in the liturgy with which that person was so intimately familiar.'<sup>199</sup> This description is almost identical to the one I provided above for the content of the *Tiberius* manuscripts as the practices found in them, including the Irish content, are the same.

The Nero/Galba prayerbook is an interesting mixture of the *Tiberius* group and the Ælfwine prayerbook. Though it is dated contemporary to the latter, its style and content is more reminiscent of the former. Ælfwine's prayerbook does not possess any Irish material; rather, it is constructed primarily from Roman sources, its primary theme being the Trinity,

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<sup>197</sup> These folios are misbound in the manuscript. See Muir, *Prayer-book*, for correct foliation. BL, Titus D.xxvi+xxvii, ff. 46v-50v.

<sup>198</sup> Muir, *Prayer-book*, nos. 27, 69, pp. 74, 147-9.

<sup>199</sup> Muir, *Prayer-book*, p. 147.

the Virgin Mary, and the Cross. It is aligned with other manuscripts of eleventh-century Winchester focused on private devotion, allowing the penitent to envisage their journey following Christ to the gates of heaven.<sup>200</sup> Nero/Galba, while maintaining its link to contemporary practices of spirituality, reaches to the past to inform its devotional material. Most prayers in the manuscript seem directly influenced by the content of the *Tiberius* group, though less thematic and more chaotic. Prayers which are not from ninth-century Mercian prayerbooks are taken from eleventh-century Winchester missals, edited by reforming church fathers.<sup>201</sup> Location is potentially a large factor in considering the devotional material available for women religious; Worcester and Leominster were quite close. However, the consistency of the Nero/Galba prayerbook with older material is more of a reflection of the marginality feminine spirituality faced following periods of political and religious reform, characterised by a generation (or more) of lag of in adopting new practices.

Looking at patterns of foundation in England during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Roberta Gilchrist has observed that female monasteries are often established a generation after male monasteries of a similar style and purpose due to allocation of patronage.<sup>202</sup> I believe the same principle applies to practices of spirituality much earlier. Following any period of reform which held influence in medieval England, discourse on women and the feminine is often impacted negatively, with renewed applications of physiologically based misogyny. The impact of such is the distancing of religious women – and women in general – from liturgical innovation, keeping them reliant on older texts and/or

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<sup>200</sup> Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', p. 466.

<sup>201</sup> Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', p. 467.

<sup>202</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, specifically Chapter 2.3: 'Medieval religious foundations for women: numbers, status and distribution', pp. 36-50. On p. 41 she writes, 'The overall pattern in the founding of nunneries is one of time-lag, or a delayed response.'

texts in which any form of their spirituality is relegated to the margins. No longer do women possess the exemplars from which copies for masculine communities are made; instead, their practice is either only evidenced in the marginalia of the primary textual body or in centuries-old prayers.

## **Bodily Space**

The textual space of the Book of Nunnaminster as it related to the expression of feminine spirituality have been explored in the previous section, but the manuscript remains important to the initial creation of feminine bodily space within monasticism. Its existence within the context of the *Tiberius* group and the Winchester court supports the theory of a strong female monastic spirituality that was historically overwritten by the masculine. Nonetheless, it is possible to determine the female body represented within the Book of Nunnaminster as a corporate one, subsuming the individual in for the interest of the overall monastic ascetic health. To achieve ultimate salvation, individuals become one in imitation of the Holy Trinity, strengthened by their numbers in their pursuit of heavenly perfection.

The Book of Nunnaminster is not a book that concerns the individual, though it was likely used for private devotion during its existence. It is a book that supports a community through prayer, specifically the allegorical body of Christ: the church, or *ecclesia*. It weaves meditative prayer around the central theme of Christ's *passio*, incorporating mystical elements from Gospel extracts to prayers, and the ancient *Lordica of Laiden*. The text is designed to create a body removed from its physicality to reach a meditative state in noetic communion with God. Individual corporality is removed in favour of the allegorical body of Christ. Nonetheless, religious women were unable to completely ignore contemporary

discourse surrounding their bodies; their interpretation of the Book of Nunnaminster relied on their bodily commitment to the divine.

Harley 2965 did not – and does not – exist in a vacuum, both in terms of theme and production. Brown, in her monograph on the Book of Cerne has provided in-depth comparison between the *Tiberius* group, referring to the theme of Harley 2965 as ‘strongly developed’ but ‘may be less symbolic and metaphorical than those of Cerne and Royal’ and attributes this to its early stage in the development of the *Tiberius* group manuscripts.<sup>203</sup> I disagree with Brown on this point and argue that the theme of Harley 2965, the Passion of Christ, is strongly developed using the symbolic and metaphorical, though in a different style from Cerne and Royal, reflecting a stronger connection to the feminine body.

The manuscript begins, as mentioned in the previous section, imperfectly, halfway through an extract from the Gospel of Mark on the Passion of Christ. Birch estimates one quire of eight or ten pages is wanting, a sizeable percentage of missing text, even if the general contents of that text can be generally deduced.<sup>204</sup> Within a manuscript that presents such fragmentary evidence as Harley 2965, these would be crucial to further understanding its use. In addition to the missing primary text, which can be reverse engineered, we are also missing indeterminate information on the opening flyleaves. As mentioned in Chapter Two, flyleaves in manuscripts are crucial textual spaces for marginalised femininity and usually contain information on the book’s provenance, as well as containing snippets of prayers, pen trials, and names. The association of Harley 2965 with Æhlswith and Nunnaminster would

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<sup>203</sup> Brown *The Book of Cerne*, p. 154. Within the *Tiberius* group, Brown posits the Harleian Prayerbook was the earliest produced in the late eighth century, followed by Nunnaminster, Royal, and Cerne in chronological order.

<sup>204</sup> de Gray Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript*, p. 9. Harley 2965 is not a lengthy manuscript as it only contains forty-one folios in its present state, though it is very sturdy for its age. Brown writes the parchment in Harley 2965, as well as Cerne and Royal, is a ‘very comparable “stout” membrane’, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 42.

likely not exist without the information contained on the end leaves of the manuscript. It is probable more information was contained on the opening leaves of Harley 2965, but unfortunately these leaves and our missing Gospels are likely lost for good.

Using the Book of Cerne as a rubric, it is entirely possible that these leaves also contained what Brown calls the ‘*exhortation*,’ or a vernacular instruction manual on how to use the prayerbook written in contemporary hand of the early ninth century, possibly the primary scribe of the manuscript.<sup>205</sup> Like Harley 2965, Cerne begins imperfectly. At least the first half of the *exhortation* text is missing, as it starts on folio 2r in the middle of a sentence. Kuypers surmised one folio from the quire is missing which contained the rest of the Old English *exhortation*.<sup>206</sup> It is not determinable if the *exhortation* used both sides of the missing folio, but it is likely. As the two manuscripts are so similar in structure, it is conceivable that such an instruction manual existed for Harley 2965 as well. The assumed length of the text in Cerne fits within the space of Harley 2965’s missing quire while still allowing for the missing Gospel texts. The existence of an *exhortation* for Harley 2965 is important in the context of how the manuscript was used and by whom. Cerne’s exists, as Brown argues, to ‘reinforce the unity of the *communio sanctorum* in the form of the Church on earth and in heaven, in order that the use might both enjoy and contribute to the benefits of communion.’<sup>207</sup> The theme of Cerne’s extracts from the Gospels and following prayers support this notion, focusing on prayers of redemption through communion for various saints rather than the life of Christ as in Harley 2965. This emphasis on the *communio sanctorum* in the *exhortation*

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<sup>205</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 129. Kuypers, *Book of Cerne*, p. xiii. The dialect of the *exhortation* is also Mercian.

<sup>206</sup> Kuypers, *Book of Cerne*, p. xiii.

<sup>207</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 129. She notes that though this may have been the most apparent purpose of the text, it was not the only possibility for its use.

and the rest of the Cerne text informs Brown's argument for Cerne possessing a more symbolic and metaphorical – and thus more theologically developed – theme than Harley 2965. If such a text existed for the Book of Nunnaminster, it would serve to underline the substantiveness of this manuscript's texts and reinforce what I believe is a fully allegorical theme based on a feminine body.

The symbolism and metaphor within Harley 2965 are analogous to those in Cerne and Royal – the reinforcement of Church unity in celestial and terrestrial realms – albeit approached through a distinct methodology, specifically via a mystical focus on the corporeal form. Though Cerne and Harley 2965 share many texts (approximately seventeen), the bulk of each manuscript is very different. Where Cerne uses the theme of redemption through communion, Harley focuses on achieving *communio sanctorum* through the *vita Christi*.<sup>208</sup> Following the excerpts from the Gospels, prayers attributed to Gregory the Great and Augustine, and two other, more general prayers, are forty-three individual prayers concerning the life and body of Christ in more-or-less chronological order.<sup>209</sup> The prayers which focus on the suffering of Christ on the cross are interspersed with those concerned with various body parts. The prayer *de cruce domini* is followed by *de veste eiusdem*, *de collo*, and *de brachis et manibus*. After Christ has died on the cross, the prayers turn to his closed eyes (*de luminibus clausis*), nostrils (*de naribus*), ears (*de auribus*), and side (*de latere domini*). An earlier prayer refers to his circumcision.<sup>210</sup> In comparison to Cerne and Royal, Harley 2965's theme is more

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<sup>208</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 150.

<sup>209</sup> BL, Harley 2965, ff. 20r-32v.

<sup>210</sup> This is significant for later medieval women, especially St Katherine of Siena, who imagined her engagement ring to Christ as his foreskin, the only instance of his bodily remains on Earth.

literal, but only superficially. The use of the prayerbook, in conjunction with the prevailing theology and physiology, needs to be examined in its discursive context.

Harley 2965, as well as Cerne and Royal, were likely designed as private devotional texts to encourage contemplation and strength one's bond with God. This is understood through the structure of these manuscripts and the texts that are included. The extracts from the Gospels are designed to mentally enable the reader to place themselves inside the moment of the Passion from four accounts they know very well. The texts from 'Gregory' and 'Augustine' provide authority to the practice, as do the two prayers concerning the condition of angels and the omnipotence of the lord, and then the meditative prayers begin. Like the extracts from the Gospel, major events from the life of Christ are narratives that would have been intimately familiar to the reader, and perhaps they would have had a personal connection to one. They dictated the year, more intensely in a monastic setting but also for the lay population. Familiarity with the narrative structure allows for a more nuanced experience of the texts, as the reader can look beyond the story. These prayers in chronological order of Christ's life were not included in the manuscript to relate his story as the Gospels did, but to direct the focus of the reader's mind for meditation to achieve a deeper contemplation for the *communio sanctorum*.

Losing oneself in contemplation was vital to carrying out effective prayer, reaching what John Bugge refers to as monastic 'noetic communion' with God.<sup>211</sup> Through an ascetic practice, one could realise a mental intimacy with God and form a mystical connection to

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<sup>211</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 41. Noetic here meaning 'a special mental intimacy with God for which the ascetical practices of the monk are preparatory. In its highest form it is often presumed to be "mystical," involving the intuitive perfection of truths otherwise incommunicable, and is even through to extend at times to the vision of the Godhead.'

communicate incommunicable perceptions of truth and faith, or, in the case of *communio sanctorum*, promote the solidarity of God's church in heaven and on earth for the common good of all. A direct line to God increases the efficacy of your prayers. An ascetic practice within monasticism likely meant the denial of one's postlapsarian body – and all the baggage that comes with it – in favour of something purer. However, the question arises: If to reach this higher state of contemplation to affect true noetic communion with God through asceticism, does one need to *completely* eradicate the postlapsarian body? Does one need to try to achieve the asexual, prelapsarian state of being?<sup>212</sup> Thomas Aquinas would say yes, but not for another four hundred years yet.<sup>213</sup> In the context of the Book of Nunnaminster (and Cerne and Royal), the answer is no, at least not in the literal sense. Instead, the devotional practice promoted in these prayerbooks focuses on allegory, denying one's own body in favour of the mystical 'body' of His church, *ecclesia*, or even Christ's human form.

The denial of one's own body to achieve an effective contemplative practice is what I would call a masculine spiritual interpretation of the prayerbooks, specifically in Harley 2965. The association of the masculine with the spirit or soul derives from the bible and classical physiology and has been discussed in Chapter One. Adam, made from clay, is transformed by God into flesh. Eve originates from flesh and has stronger associations with it even before the Fall. She then introduces the impurities of the flesh to her mate and humanity with her transgression, further tying together negative implications to the flesh and the feminine.<sup>214</sup> The feminine association with the flesh is reinforced in the New Testament

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<sup>212</sup> See Bugge, *Virginitas*, Chapter 2, 'Virginity and the Monastic Economy of Perfection', pp. 30-58, specifically the section on 'Contemplation and Prophecy', pp. 41-47.

<sup>213</sup> Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274. See his work *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, trans. McGlynn.

<sup>214</sup> Adam, made from clay, is transformed by God into flesh. Eve originates from flesh and has stronger associations with it even before the Fall.

through Christ's virgin birth. Mary is required to provide the life matter from which Jesus is formed, but God (instead of Joseph) imbues him with his divine soul. The connection between the binaries of male/female, divinity/humanity, and soul/body is carried over into physiology and medicine, where it was believed the male sperm was the active contributor to life, whereas the female sperm remained passive, only providing the material upon which the male sperm could work. These physiological and biblical systems of difference created inequalities between gender and strengthened the argument for the superiority of masculine over feminine. Denying the flesh in favour of the soul in order to achieve a spiritual contemplative state would be the goal within the practice of masculine spirituality. The closest way to commune with God would be an attempt to shed their flesh (usually metaphorically, but also physically in some extreme cases), as it weighs down their purer spirit.<sup>215</sup>

The bottom of folio 27r and the top of 27v contain a prayer labelled by Birch as *De Brachis et Manibus*, which features in the cycle of meditative prayers on the *passio*. In it, the reader/supplicant recognises the suffering of Christ's hands and arms on the cross, especially significant for their *stigmata*. The reader/supplicant then asks the Lord to direct spiritual work through their hands and pleads with Him not to dismiss them as unworthy of doing such work. The prayer is short enough to include here:

*O Dei dextera donatorque salutis. Qui brachia tua sancta extendisti in ligno crucis. Insuper et sanctas ac uenerabiles manus tuas in cruce perforare*

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<sup>215</sup> While the negative associations of the flesh with the female and feminine is strong during this period due to the prevailing medical teachings and biblical exegesis, it is nowhere near the misogynistic heights it will reach in England after the Norman Conquest and into the later medieval period. The spirit is considered purer than the flesh, but the flesh is not yet a literal immediate threat. Such practices of denying one's flesh involved wearing hair shirts or self-flagellation.

*clauibus pertulisti. Gratias tibi reffero domine Ihesu Christe et per hoc adiuro  
ad me porrige manum misericordiae tuique acumine timoris et dilectionis  
pectus meum perfora durissimum. Et opera manum mearum dirige et custodi.  
Et ne me indignum dispicias opera manum tuarum. Domine Ihesu Christe  
amen.*<sup>216</sup>

The first imagery of the hand introduced in the prayer intertwines the physical with the metaphorical, associating a fleshy, human attribute with the divine. The text then moves on to the familiar image of the Christ on the cross, focusing on his upper limbs, and ends with the plea. A masculine supplicant reading this prayer would likely interpret it as a Christ sacrificing his flesh for humanity at large to take his rightful place, recognising what Christ was able to achieve through his hands in spite of his fleshy constraints. By imitating Christ through the denial of the flesh, the supplicant can overcome his body too in order to perform God's work. It is not the flesh that imbues such hands with power, but rather the collective effort of divine prayer in spite of the flesh.

The masculine spiritual reading of the Harley 2965 is one that focuses on the rejection of the earthly body in favour of the body of the church. This *ecclesia* is constructed of all the souls, in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, which exist under Christ. By coming together in faith through *communio sanctorum*, these souls overcome the flesh to form the spiritual body of *ecclesia*: a body without flesh. The *passio*, a story of bodily suffering, is transformed into allegorical retelling of losing the restraints of the flesh, as only then can one be redeemed and

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<sup>216</sup> de Gray Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript*, p. 72: 'O God's right hand and giver of salvation, Who stretched out thy holy arms in the wood of the cross. In addition, you suffered your holy and venerable hands to be pierced with nails on the cross. And direct and guard the works of my hand, and do not dismiss me as unworthy of the works of your hand. Lord Jesus Christ, amen.'

accepted into heaven by the lord. Masculine spirituality is, in essence the denial of the body and the flesh. Feminine spirituality, however, embraces it.

In the ninth century, the body of Christ is still understood as metaphor, rather than the literal significance it will embody later in the twelfth century and beyond. Yet, the feminine connection to Christ and his humanity should not be understated, even if remains on an allegorical level. Just as it is the denial of the flesh and body that enhances the *communio sanctorum* of masculine spirituality, it is precisely that flesh which provides the pathways for deep connection for the feminine for women to engage in the *communio sanctorum* on their own terms. Women and the feminine, as mentioned earlier, are intrinsically bound to the flesh under the terms of medieval religion and physiology (which are, themselves, inseparable). Their nature according to this masculinist discourse disallows them from the same attempt at bodily denial as a man using the texts in Harley 2965 would; unlike men, women could never truly be separated from their flesh. Instead of attempting the impossible either attempting to remove themselves from the discourse, or physiologically becoming a man (not just a woman with manly qualities), women are left to contend with their nature, incorporating it into their spirituality rather than denying it, and therefore, themselves.

The prayers and other material in Harley 2965 would appeal to female spirituality specifically because of their theme of Christ's *passio* and the necessary bodily association of it. Whereas his spirit is divinely endowed, Christ's body is made from Mary's own flesh. He was able to exist on earth due to the unique feminine contribution of her 'life matter', making His body distinctively feminine in nature. The flesh of Christ, which is detailed in prayers regarding specific individual parts such the arms, hands, ears, nostrils, side, and so forth, are where women locate themselves and their spirituality in connection to him. It is not the initial, masculine reading of 'he shed his flesh to unleash the divine and therefore we must

too' that feminine spirituality embraces, but rather 'his flesh is our flesh and his flesh allowed him to save us.' That which they have in common, the body, is used as a focal point for the noetic communion between women and Christ so they can participate, in a distinctly feminine way, in *communio sanctorum*. This is not to be confused with how Anselm later in consolidates Christ into the Man-God, as that mode of philosophical thinking has not yet been achieved. For religious women, Christ is still distinct in his two forms, Man and God; the literal and the allegorical are united within the body.

That being said, the female connection to Christ and his flesh was tempered by moral discourse regarding the levels of sexual access to the female body. Virginity, as discussed in Chapter One, was initially non-gendered aspect of masculine monastic spirituality. As the feminine and flesh became more intertwined in the social and theological discourse, however, the significance of corporeal purity diminished in importance within the masculine monastic context. The male and masculine became disassociated from notions of corporeal sinfulness, while the female and feminine body acquired these connotations. Virginity was still encouraged for men, but it was not necessitated until much later in the medieval period. At the time of the writing of Harley 2965, female virginity within monasticism was also not necessary, though it was preferred.<sup>217</sup> A life of chastity after the dissolution of marriage, either through earthly or heavenly separation, was an acceptable prerequisite for monastic admittance, particularly for upper-class women. However, a woman could not be engaged in sexual relations of any kind if they were to join a monastery. The body must remain intact and resist any attempts of immoral penetration. Bodily purity was key to the idea of noetic

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<sup>217</sup> Aldhelm ranked the holiness of women on a scale in his *de Virginitate*: virgins would receive the most rewards in heaven, followed by chaste widows, and married woman. (*Prose*, ch. XIX, p. 75)

communion, as it was believed those in heaven existed within a pure, prelapsarian state.<sup>218</sup> Chaste female bodies were, essentially, good enough, but it was also the intention behind the chastity that empowered them.<sup>219</sup> The lack of emphasis on the prior actions of an individual body and more so the intended sanctity of the collective lessened the individual responsibility for unflagging sanctity. This is the thesis of *communio sanctorum* in Harley 2965; it is a private prayerbook, but the prayers used together positively impact the *ecclesia* as a whole.

The concept of *ecclesia* was recognised by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians and supported by Augustine in his *Civitate dei* as the body of church on earth, in heaven, and everywhere in between.<sup>220</sup> Both argued for the unity of this body to strengthen it. Paul writes, ‘God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.’<sup>221</sup> The notion of *ecclesia* would transform as discourse evolved through the centuries, but it remained primarily based in allegory during the Anglo-Saxon era of English medieval history. Christ’s body was realised as one’s own, but devotions to Christ could be expressed through bodily metaphor. By the eighth century, *ecclesia* was understood as a combination of the body of the church and the body of Christ. Involvement in *ecclesia* was strengthened through sacramental practices like the Eucharist and devotional practices like meditative prayer. As participation in such *communio sanctorum* was coloured by concepts of gender

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<sup>218</sup> Though not necessarily virginal, depending on who you asked. See Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 43.

<sup>219</sup> For Augustine, pride was the ultimate sin. A sexual sin committed without immoral intentions could be more easily excused. *Civitate Dei*, bk XIV, chs. xxiii-xxiv (PL 41.430-35). Also see Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 2729.

<sup>220</sup> Augustine, *Civitate Dei*, bk XVII, chs. xx (PL 41.566).

<sup>221</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:24-26. Vulgate: ‘*Deus temperavit corpus ei cui deerat abundantiosem tribuendo honorem ut non sit scisma in corpore sed id ipsum pro invicem sollicita sint membra et si quid patitur unum membrum conpatiuntur omnia membra sive gloriatur unum membrum congaudent omnia membra.*’

difference, so was the concept of *ecclesia*. Within masculine spirituality, *ecclesia* was equated more with the divine spirit of Christ. Male practice focused on how to remove their body from their prayers entirely and create a completely metaphorical relationship. Whereas feminine spiritual practice relied more on the mystical body of Christ, where biblical mystery (faith) encounters flesh.

The feminine spiritual relationship to Christ was created through flesh, but the body of Christ remains allegorical within the devotional practice of Harley 2965 texts, creating a strong and mystical connection between reader and writing. The *passio* theme of the prayers, in collaboration with the Irish material, explores the mystical aspects of the Christian body. This appeals to a feminine spiritual practice, which embraces the body instead of denying it in favour of the spirit as the masculine does. Harley 2965 stands out amongst the other manuscripts found within *Tiberius* group as potentially the most mystical, as others, such as Cerne, feature themes that are more grounded in liturgy. Yet, the prayers and Gospel extracts Harley 2965 contains many of what the modern Catholic Church now refers to as the ‘mysteries,’ focusing on those which refer to Christ, the Passion, and bodily suffering. These prayers, emphasising the mystical miracles of the body of Christ are then followed by a prayer *contra uenenum* (f.37r-v), the Lorica of Laidcann (f.38r-40r), and a prayer for sight (f.40v). These prayers are where the manuscript emphasises its underlying mysticism and connection to female spirituality.<sup>222</sup>

The bodily mysticism of Christ is continually embraced following the cycle of the *passio* prayers with references to salvation through his body and blood (the Eucharist), his resurrection, and the relevance of such to female spirituality, especially within a fragmentary

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<sup>222</sup> Not that someone rising from the dead after three days is ‘natural’, but it *is* accepted Christian doctrine.

confessional prayer.<sup>223</sup> The prayer against poison, *contra uenenum*, immediately follows two small *oratio* to God thanking him for his heavenly protection of the minds and bodies of his followers. The prayer is, on the surface, on theme as it requests divine protection from against a bodily harm and it begins like a prayer. Yet, it reads as a charm, detailing poisonous animals (dragons, serpents, toads, vipers, scorpions) which are destroyed by his holy might. Its pits the power of God against villainous creatures of nature, these earthly monsters. It reads, ‘*Tu domine extingue hoc venenatum virus. Extingue operationes eius moritferas et vires quas in se habet evacua.*’<sup>224</sup> As opposed to positioning God as benign creator and omnipotent authority for good, the prayer characterises him as a heavenly force against supernatural beings who lurk in the darkness. It is only after these lines that the text returns to prose reminiscent of the Latin Vulgate rife with Christian imagery of crosses, cups, St Peter, and light. It is an abrupt change. Brown explains the *contra ueneum* text as an adapted version of a prayer to St John. It also appears in the Cerne manuscript, but in a different form.<sup>225</sup> She writes: ‘The difference in treatment of this prayer in the two manuscripts is instructive. In Harley 2965 the preface which introduces the version in Cerne is placed at the end of the prayer and the reference to John is expunged. The piece is transformed into a superstitious ritual’.<sup>226</sup>

The connection to nature within the prayer exhibits pagan characteristics, suggesting that the Christianity represented in the manuscript is reverting to a nature-based religious

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<sup>223</sup> The second half of this prayer occurs on f. 34r. Its first lines, the first of which are mid-sentence, are filled with bodily imagery: ‘*Ossibus et in carne. Peccaui in medullis et in renis. Peccaui in anima mea et in omni corpore meo.*’ We can only presume that the rest of the prayer detailed more place where the penitent had sinned, in a kind of reverse Lordica of Laidcenn.

<sup>224</sup> de Gray Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript*, p. 90, ff. 37r-v. ‘You, Lord, destroy this venomous poison, destroy its deadly operation and void the powers that are in it.’

<sup>225</sup> See Kuypers, *Book of Cerne*, no. 61.

<sup>226</sup> Brown, *Book of Cerne*, p. 154.

paradigm. It signifies a Celtic Christianity, which evolved separately from Roman. In terms of the evolution of Christianity within Britain, especially Mercia, this could represent a specific phase of development for female personal devotion and/or monasticism. The book connects divine power with natural mysticism of healing charms for the body, emphasising its relevance in the process to the reader. It is through this combination that the reader can stay safe from that which poisons the body and the mind.

The inclusion of the *Lorica of Laidcenn* accentuates the prayerbook's connection to Celtic Christianity and its influence on Anglo-Saxon Christianity that was, at this time, so connected to Rome and the continent. Whereas the *passio* cycle of prayers focuses on various body parts, it is in specific reference to Christ and how his limbs come together create his body, the *ecclesia*. The *Lorica* is more general in its plea for protection, relying on the intervention of the apostles, archangels, as well as the Trinity. Yet, it is more specific in terms of enumeration of body parts. The *Lorica*, meaning 'breastplate', lists everything the soles of the feet to nostrils, creating an anatomical catalogue for protection.<sup>227</sup> It is seemingly less interested in the protectors, than what they can protect. The body, so thoroughly disjointed, is textually strewn across the prayer. Each part, separated as such, becomes an inert piece of natural world. In his dissertation examining various protection prayers, Kyle Williams argues,

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<sup>227</sup>A partial list: 'Deliver my skull, head with hair, and eyes, mouth, tongue, teeth, and nostrils, neck, breast side, limbs, joints, fat and two hands, up to the top of my head with hair. Be a helmet of safety to my head, to my forehead, eyes and tri-form brain, (40) nose, lips, face, and temple, chin, beard, eyebrows, ears, cheeks, jowls, septum, nostrils, pupils, irises, eyelids and the like, gums, breath, jaws, gullet, teeth, tongue, mouth, uvula, throat, larynx, and epiglottis, cervix, the core of my head, cartilage; and be a merciful protection to my neck..' ('*Tuta pelta protegente singula, Ut non tetri demones in latera Mea librent ut soleant iacula Gigram, cephalen cum iaris, et conas Patham, liganam, sennas atque michimas Cladum, crassum, madianum, talias Bathma, exugiam, adque binas idumas; Meo ergo cum capillis uertice Galea salutis esto capite, Fronte, oculis, et cerebro triforme, Rostro, labie, facie, timpore, Mento, barbe superciliis auribus, Genis, buccis, internaso, naribus, Pupillis, rotis, palpebris, tautonibus, Ginguis, anile, maxillis, faucibus Dentibus, lingue, ore, ubae, guttore Gurgulione et sublingue ceruice, Capitali, ceotro, cartilagine*'). de Gray Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript*, pp. 90-95.

that separately ‘each limb is imbued with a talismanic quality’ until it they are united.<sup>228</sup> Only put together as a cohesive body do the limbs merit divine protection. Through the textual division of limbs, the prayer interacts with themes of nature and the divine but is reliant on the idea of intactness to accomplish noetic communion. Only a whole, unbroken body can guard against threats of evil. Without protection placed of each limb, orifice and sense, a body – allegorical or physical – is easily penetrated.

As if given the initiative to create their ideal holy body, the last prayer before the later end leaf additions lists the ideal attributes from biblical fathers which the supplicant wishes to possess: ‘The head of Christ, the eyes of Jesse, the nose of Noah, tongue of Solomon, the neck of Timothy, the mind of Benjamin, the breast of Paul, the joints of John, the faith of Abraham’.<sup>229</sup> It is a list of fragments, of disparate pieces chosen to create a better whole, that includes physical and spiritual features. Through the reading of this prayer, the supplicant is assembling an integral Christian figure, bringing together the Old and New Testaments in one. It is a reflection on bodily intactness, but also on *communio sanctorum*, how embracing the epitomes of religious goodness facilitates spirituality and noetic communion with the divine. It is through these realised ideals that the supplicant is able to ‘see’ her faith clearly, as if Christ was guiding her eyes.<sup>230</sup>

## Monastic Space

Recorded in English on the bottom of the flyleaf, folio 40v, of Harley 2965, are the boundaries land held by Æhlswith, wife of King Alfred of Wessex. It reads:

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<sup>228</sup> Williams, *The Assembled Body*, p. 51.

<sup>229</sup> de Gray Birch, p. 96. Harley 2965, f. 40v: ‘*Caput Christi oculos Gesæie frons nasuum Noe labia lingua Salomonis collum Timothei mens Benjamin, pectus Pauli, iunctus Iohannis, fides Abrahæ*’.

<sup>230</sup> ‘*Pro dolore oculorum*’, de Gray Birch, p. 96. Harley 2965, f. 40v.

*Þæs hagan ge mære þe ealhswið hæfð æt wintan ceastre lið up of þem forða  
on þone westmestan mylen gear weste weardne þæt east on þone ealdan welig  
7 þonan up andlanges þæs eastran mylen geares p[æ]t norð on þa ceap stræt  
þoñ þær east andlanges þære ceap stræte oð cyninges burg hege on þone  
ealdan mylen gear þæt þær 7 langes þæs ealdan myle geares oð hit facað on  
þæm ifihtan æsce þæt þær suð ofer þa twi fealdan fordas on þa stræt midde  
þæt þær eft west andlangres stræte 7 ofer 20 þone ford þæt hit sticap eft on  
þæm westemestan mylen geare.<sup>231</sup>*

As well as belonging to Æhlswith, this land is also home to the nun's minster (Nunnaminster), later St Mary's Abbey, in Winchester. The location of the recording in a manuscript with strong links to Nunnaminster suggests it was written down as confirmation of the nun's property holdings within Winchester if anyone should question their claim to the land and then held within the monastery itself. The manuscript was composed *c.* 800 and there are flyleaf additions from various points in the tenth century, but the land boundaries note was likely added in *c.* 900, possibly around the time of Æhlswith's death in December of 902. It is possible this note is a partial copy of the original land grant, as it does not contain any witness signatures, nor does it mention the Nunnaminster explicitly. Also, the verbal tenses used by the author imply Æhlswith is alive at the time of its initial writing (e.g., which Æhlswith *has* [*hæfð*]), though she may not have been at the date of the grant's addition to the manuscript. Nonetheless, its inclusion within the Book of Nunnaminster is significant, as it

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<sup>231</sup> de Gray Birch, p. 96 and Rumble, Document I, pp. 45-49: 'The boundary of the tenement which Æhlswith has at Winchester runs up from the ford on to the western side of the westernmost mill-yair, then east to the old willow and thence up along the eastern mill-yair, then north to the market street; then there east along the market street as far as king's city hedge, on to the old mill-yair, then there along the old mill-yair until it strikes the ivy-covered ash, then there south over the double fords to the middle street, then there west again along the street and over the ford, so that it strikes again at the westernmost mill-yair.'

defined space and boundaries in which the nunnery and the religious women it contained was to exist for the next six hundred years.

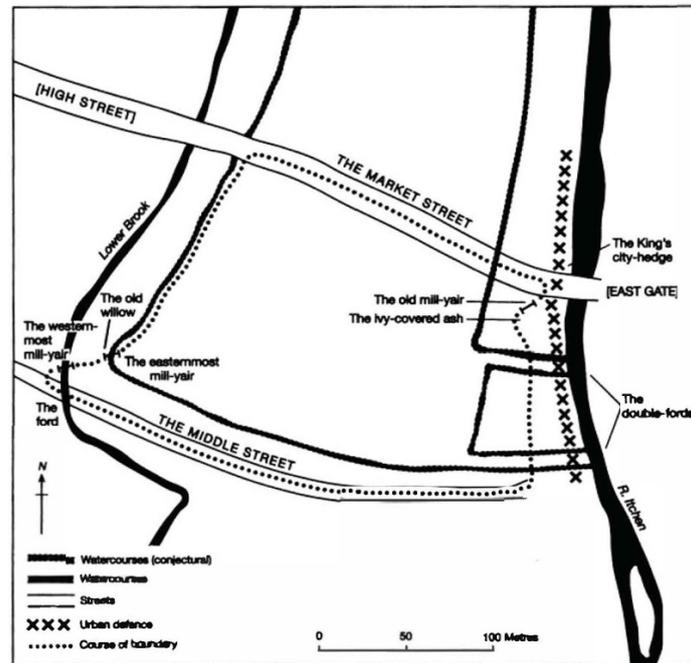


Figure 1: Æhlswith's land grant as outlined in the *Book of Nunnaminster*.<sup>232</sup>

The gift of Æhlswith's land situated the Nunnaminster within the confines of the Winchester city walls, very close to the Bishop's Palace and the two male monasteries that would come to be known as the Old Minster and the New Minster. This positioning made Nunnaminster a relatively unique nunnery within the monastic landscape of post-Conquest England. According to Lawrence Butler, only twenty-five of approximately 150 nunneries in England could be qualified as urban foundations, and of those twenty-five, the majority are on the outskirts of an urban area.<sup>233</sup> Most of these, like Nunnaminster, are pre-Conquest foundations in Wessex founded by members of the royal family.<sup>234</sup> Yet, Nunnaminster stands

<sup>232</sup> Rumble, *Property and Piety*, p. 49

<sup>233</sup> Butler, 'Medieval urban religious houses', p. 168; Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 63.

<sup>234</sup> i.e.: Shaftesbury, Romsey, Wimborne, Wilton, and Amesbury. Butler, 'Medieval urban religious houses', p. 168, and Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 63-4.

alone as capital city nunnery contained within burghal walls with such great proximity to two other very successful monasteries. In essence, Winchester featured a monastic district, or what Butler calls ‘a remarkable religious enclave.’<sup>235</sup>

There is no evidence of a religious foundation for women in Winchester previous to the establishment of the Nunnaminster by Æhlswith.<sup>236</sup> The only foundation within city walls previous to the tenth century was the Old Minster, likely established in seventh century with no clear record of regular occupation by monastic religious.<sup>237</sup> It is possible that there were religious women attached to the Old Minster, as was common with other large male foundations at the time, or an informal establishment for religious women within Winchester, but there is no extant record of either.<sup>238</sup>

The documents that grant the lands for New Minster and Nunnaminster are dated within a few years of each other. It is likely that their foundations were both funded primarily by Edward and the crown, with him taking honorary position of founder of the New Minster and his mother, the Nunnaminster.<sup>239</sup> The lands upon which the New Minster were established were acquired by Edward from a Bishop Denewulf and the community of the ‘wound church,’ whose buildings were also ceded for the new foundation.<sup>240</sup> In contrast, the flyleaf note for the Nunnaminster foundation contains no such detail, as the lands are referred to as belonging to Æhlswith (*þe ealhswið hæfð*) as opposed to being acquired or purchased. As the text contained within Harley 2965 is likely a copy – or even a summary – of the Nunnaminster’s property, it is possible that any such details were omitted. Rumble also

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<sup>235</sup> Butler, ‘Medieval urban religious houses’, p. 168.

<sup>236</sup> Likely with the help of her son, Edward. See Foot, *Veiled Women I*, p. 50.

<sup>237</sup> See Rumble, *Property and Piety*, especially ‘Document V’, pp. 98-135.

<sup>238</sup> See Foot, *Veiled Women I*, p. 15, n. 56, and p. 175.

<sup>239</sup> Rumble, *Property and Piety*, p. 45.

<sup>240</sup> Rumble, *Property and Piety*, p. 45.

suggests Æhlswith's *haga* was a part of her marriage dowry to Alfred.<sup>241</sup> This would be consistent with the details we know of Æhlswith's life as well as suggested provenance for Harley 2965.

According to Asser's *Vitae Alfredi*, Æhlswith married Alfred, the fifth son of the late King Æthelwulf of Wessex and heir apparent to his brother King Æthelred, in 868 at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.<sup>242</sup> Æhlswith was descended from the royal Mercian line and married into the Wessex royal family to strengthen the political ties between the two kingdoms, much like her daughter Æthelflæd would do in *c.* 887. Brown posits that Harley 2965 travelled with Æhlswith to Wessex.<sup>243</sup> The manuscript, as mentioned earlier, was likely made in Mercia, possibly in the diocese of Worcester.<sup>244</sup> The Book of Nunnaminster pre-dates both Æhlswith and the Nunnaminster, as it was likely written in the first half of the ninth century or near the end of the eighth. There is no conclusive evidence that it ever belonged to Æhlswith, but due to the feminine material of the books as well as its provenance, it is possible that she brought it with her to Wessex and bequeathed it to the Nunnaminster upon her death. If the book and the land both belonged to her, both allowed for a legacy of feminine monastic spirituality within a defined space.

This legacy was taken up by King Edgar and a group of reforming bishops, Æthelwold, Dunstan, and Oswald, who, in *circa* 970 enacted new *regulae* upon all three Winchester monasteries. Secular canons were to be removed from both Old and New

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<sup>241</sup> Rumble, *Property and Piety*, p. 46.

<sup>242</sup> Keynes and Lapidge, 'King Alfred', chapter 73. Asser, writing Alfred's life, also records much of Æhlswith's life and lineage. Curiously, he records her mother's name, Eadburh, from whom her royal blood descends, but does not name Æhlswith, only referring to her in relation to her marriage to Alfred. See chapter 29.

<sup>243</sup> Brown, 'Female Book Ownership'.

<sup>244</sup> See Brown, 'Female Book Ownership' and *Book of Cerne*.

Minster; there are no documents that detail the reformation of the Nunnaminster, but presumably any secular canonesses residing there were also asked to commit themselves as full women religious or leave. The precincts of all three monastic were separated from the city and enlarged through the destruction of nearby private property ceded to the crown. The document detailing the changes, which survives as cartulary copy added to the *Codex Wintoniensis* in the mid-twelfth century, does not make clear if existing boundaries between monasteries were reinforced as well, only that all three precincts now entirely separate from the *civium tumultu*.<sup>245</sup> Edgar gives these lands in perpetuity, unalienable from the monasteries by anyone.<sup>246</sup> Unlike some of his other royal decrees and land grants, Edgar enlists his queen Ælfthryth as a witness, honouring the pronouncements made in the *Regularis Concordia* that the queen would be the protectress of the nunneries.<sup>247</sup> Nonetheless, she is the only woman present in the list of witnesses; the name of the abbess of Nunnaminster does not appear alongside those of the abbots of New and Old Minster. Rumble does not mention the missing name of the Nunnaminster abbess but notes the likely omission of some of the witnesses when copied into the *Codex Wintoniensis*. It is then possible that her name could have appeared and was later removed, though this is unlikely based the regular omission of abbess names in other monastic documentation from the reign of Edgar.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> BL, Additional MS 15350, f. 8v. Printed and translated in Rumble, *Property and Piety*, pp. 136-139. Also, Sawyer, no. 807.

<sup>246</sup> This is holds until King Henry VIII's Dissolution. Even then, the land Nunnaminster inhabited was given to the city rather than private individuals.

<sup>247</sup> Symons, *Monastic Agreement*, p. 2: 'And he [Edgar] saw to it wisely that his Queen, Ælfthryth, should be the protectress and fearless guardian of the communities of nuns' ('*coniugique suae Ælfthrythae sanctimonialium mandras ut impauidi more custodis defenderet caustissime praecepit*').

<sup>248</sup> See Rumble, *Property and Piety*, pp. 45-237.

There is little evidence for practical separation between the monasteries within this new monastic precinct, though each foundation was enclosed separate of each other. The male minsters sit practically on top of one another, and it is unlikely a major form of boundary separated them as it was not required by gender. The Nunnaminster has more space between it and its brother foundations (see Figure 2). New and Old Minster sat to west and south, respectively, but there was space between their walls. A road ran in between, as did two waterways, with small pieces of land on either sides of the roads. The city walls were to the east of the Nunnaminster, and a major road and waterway to the north. The minster was almost certainly entirely closed off by walls by Edgar as part of his plan of general monastic enclosure, though these walls could have existed earlier specifically as a part of the initial construction of the Nunnaminster. Most of the Nunnaminster remains unexcavated and it is hard to determine exactly where its walls and buildings would have stood and how could have been altered during periods of major political change. The survey conducted at in 1538 by Henry VIII's dissolution assessors provides some insight into its plan, but the survey has not been explored through excavation.

Despite the lack of archaeological investigation, it is possible to analyse the site of the Nunnaminster and its relation to the spaces of feminine spirituality.<sup>249</sup> In comparison to precincts of New and Old Minster, the Nunnaminster's is significantly smaller. It is approximately half as large of Old Minster and a third smaller than the New Minster in *c.* 1100. While each of the male foundations were enlarged significantly during their various refoundations (or in New Minster's case, moved entirely in 1116), the Nunnaminster remained relatively static in placement and size until its dissolution. Though Edgar promised

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<sup>249</sup> Qualmann, 'Excavations on the Site of Nunnaminster', pp. 18-23.

each monastery will receive more space within the city, the boundaries of the Nunnaminster are vary only slightly from Æhlswith’s initial land grant. It is noted in Edgar’s diploma that any secular houses found within the new monastic present boundaries would be demolished, and the land would be given over to the monasteries which they bordered. However, this seems to have disproportionately affected New and Old Minster, with them gaining much more land than their female counterpart. In fact, the nuns may have actually lost land. This is potentially due to restrictions presented within the urban landscape at the time and some underhanded political negotiating.

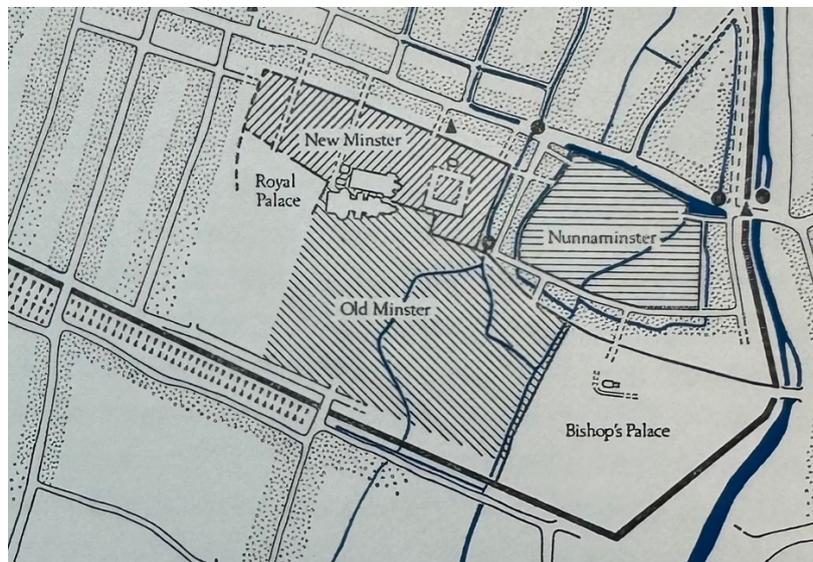


Figure 2: Minster precincts in late Anglo-Saxon Winchester<sup>250</sup>

The Nunnaminster was naturally bounded by waterways on three sides, as well as bisected by one. Æhlswith’s land included the ‘westernmost mill-yair’ (*westmestan mylen gear*) of another waterway further west than the one which naturally bounded their land, which also contained a mill-yair (‘the eastern mill-yair’ [*eastran mylen gear*]).<sup>251</sup> The

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<sup>250</sup> Biddle, fig. 25.

<sup>251</sup> A ‘mill-yair’ (*mylengear*) is a ‘traverse stream-dam of weir’, Rumble, p. 47, n. 4.

westernmost waterway abutted onto New Minster's land and during the monastic enclosure period, it seems that this waterway was diverted entirely to serve New Minster by Æthelwold and Edgar, ruining a mill owned by the nuns.<sup>252</sup> Additionally, there were further land disputes between Old and New Minster. To keep his own peace and create accord between the three 'squabbling siblings,' as Helen Foxhall-Forbes calls them, Edgar gave two of New Minster's mills to the Nunnaminster, as well as one hundred and twenty *mancuses* of red gold, in exchange for the diverted waterway and any land there attached.<sup>253</sup> New Minster was also granted land outside of Winchester's South Gate for its troubles with the Old Minster. One of Nunnaminster's new mills sat *inside* the new precinct of the Old Minster; they could gather income from it, but not use it themselves. The second mill, also a former asset of New Minster, resided somewhere within the city, though its location is lost. Based on the documentary evidence, it is also outside the bounds of the Nunnaminster and presented the same issue as its other new mill. The nuns may own it, but it is a passive form of income.

The Nunnaminster, therefore, actually lost land in Winchester through Edgar's redistricting. In negotiation for the transfer of two mills, they gained valuable sources of income, but were henceforth contained within these bounds of their precinct until the dissolution. Examining the map of the original land boundaries (see Figure 2), it is easy to imagine how the Nunnaminster's lands could have been expanded to the east or west, either to the city walls to the east or to street to the west. Its precinct could have even abutted up against that of the New Minster – like the Old Minster – keeping the disputed waterway on

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<sup>252</sup> It is unclear if this ruined mill is the same as the 'mill-yair' mentioned in the original boundaries. Harley 2965 uses '*milen gear*' and MS Add. 15350 uses just '*mylne*'. Rumble posits it was a separate mill fed by the mill-yair, which is now lost. *Property and Piety*, p. 142.

<sup>253</sup> A *mancus* is a monetary unit denoting a gold coin or a certain amount of weight in gold, usually 4.25g. Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', pp. 653-684.

their lands instead of ceding it to the monks. Yet, the precinct boundaries of the Nunnaminster remained static through Æthelwold's refoundation as well as changes that came as a result of the Conquest.

It is likely the initial church and monastic buildings of Æhlswith's intended nunnery were constructed of wood; indeed, the minster is noted as in a state of disrepair by the time of Edgar's reign.<sup>254</sup> There is no mention of building plans during Edgar's reform period later that century, but it is probable that some of the Nunnaminster and its buildings were upgraded to stone during its revitalisation, with most structures constructed in stone during its final 'refoundation' at the arrival of the Normans. Though the nunnery was rededicated to Eadburh – saint, Nunnaminster abbess through the reform period, and daughter of King Edgar – in 1108, it was henceforth known as St Mary's Abbey, Winchester, losing its literal Old English name under the new Anglo-Norman regime.<sup>255</sup>

The likely configuration of the foundations within their neighbourhood in Winchester from *c.* 900 to 1066 is odd. New Minster and Old Minster abut each other on their south and north walls, respectively, with their churches being the closest points of contact. As seen in the map below (Figure 5), there is hardly enough spaces between the two churches to run a wall. Simon Hayfield produced a drawing (Figure 4) of the two minsters as they would have been in Winchester in the 990s based on the archaeological evidence produced by Martin Biddle and his archaeological team.<sup>256</sup> There is barely enough space for a man to walk between the two churches, let alone a wall divide them. Though all three minsters are

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<sup>254</sup> Qualmann, 'Excavations on the Site of Nunnaminster', p. 18.

<sup>255</sup> Qualmann, 'Excavations on the Site of Nunnaminster', p. 18. It is also possible that Eadburh is a reference to Æhlswith's mother.

<sup>256</sup> Biddle and Hayfield, *The Search for Winchester's Anglo-Saxon Minsters*.

neighbours to one another, the Nunnaminster it is substantially separated from its brothers in comparison to their incestuous relationship. It is almost as far as it could be from them without removing itself from the city walls.



Figure 3: Drawings of Old Minster (left) and New Minster (right) based on archaeological evidence, c. 990.<sup>257</sup>

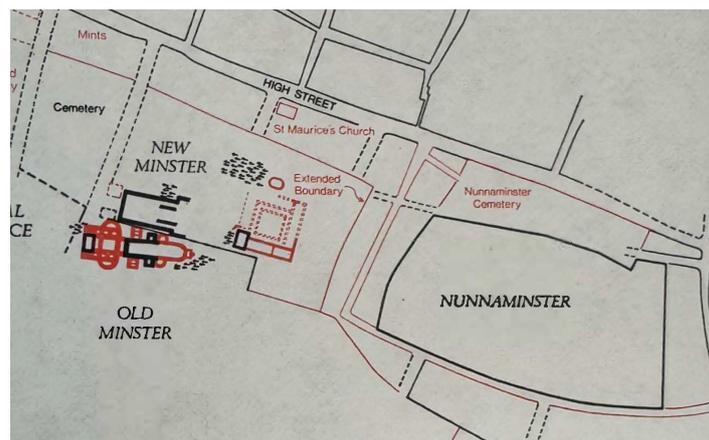


Figure 4: Winchester, c. 963-1066 with new features in red.<sup>258</sup>

In being so removed from the male minsters, Nunnaminster is also removed from access to the Royal Palace, which sat directly to the west of Old and New Minsters (Figure 3). Even before the period of reform and enclosure, the religious women in Winchester were

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<sup>257</sup> Biddle & Hayfield, p. 55. Drawing done by Simon Hayfield.

<sup>258</sup> Biddle, Winchester 963-1066.

separated by a greater distance to royal authority than males. The bishop's palace, another site of authority and feature of the monastic quarter of Winchester, sits to the south of Nunnaminster, separated by a street (Colebrook Street) and a waterway pre-1066. Again, the religious women are further removed from the religious men, who, at New Minster, share a wall with the palace precinct. There is so much space around the Nunnaminster relative to the precincts of male power in Winchester, where space between them seemingly does not exist; their boundaries are shared.

Hillier and Hanson, in *The Social Logic of Space*, theorise that human spatial organisation, which can also be viewed as humans deployed into space, will give rise to patterns and forms in space related and adapted to social purpose through various boundaries and permeabilities. 'Spatial complexity,' they note, 'is manipulated and adapted for social purposes.'<sup>259</sup> Again, it is important to also recognise time as an aspect of space. The relationship between the three minsters is being examined at specific places in time, *c.* 900 and *c.* 965. Their relationship changes as time does and the social relation to space inevitable evolves. Spatial patterns within the monastic neighbourhood include shared boundaries between precincts of masculine power.

Power, at this time in Winchester, is derived from political and monetary assets, which are both derived from the monarch. Before 1066, the largest landholders in the city were the king, the abbot of New Minster, the abbot of Old Minster, the bishop of Winchester, and the abbess of Winchester, in that order.<sup>260</sup> All of these positions derived income from their properties and commanded power in the city (and country) in relation to their holdings. As

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<sup>259</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space*, p. 54-55.

<sup>260</sup> Biddle, *Winton Domesday*, 'Introduction' pp. 1-29.

the smallest landholder of the five, especially in relation to their brother monasteries, Nunnaminster's position is relatively weak in terms of monetary and political prowess. Its location within Winchester reflects this. It is two monasteries removed from the royal palace and though neighbours with the bishop's palace, still isolated through additional space. The Nunnaminster borders only its own land holdings, making it adjacent to nothing in particular.

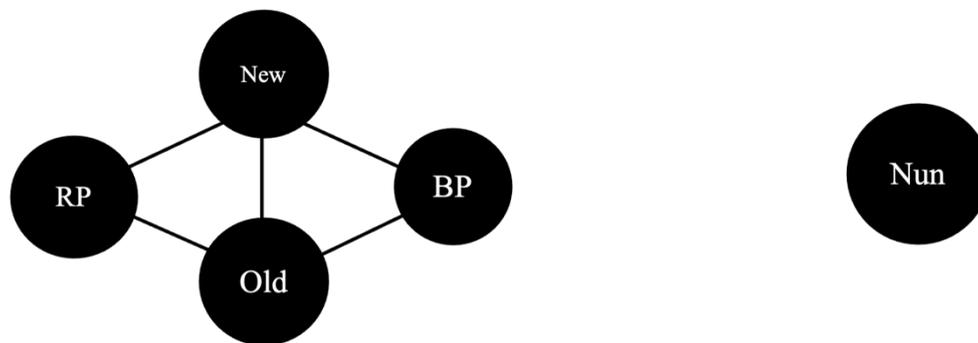
Katherine Weikert, in her study on Anglo-Norman space, uses Hillier and Hanson's theory of space and applies it to the medieval concept of privacy, which did not exist as it does today.<sup>261</sup> Instead, space was divided into 'less secluded' and 'more secluded' areas, similar to modern-day concepts of public and private spaces. The level of seclusion a space is determined through access analysis, whereby the seclusion of the space is measured by levels of access provided to it through doors, halls, and rooms. Access analysis is usually used with buildings and their interior, but its principles can also be applied to the Winchester city map. Instead of doors, gates provide access to monastic precincts; walls of the precincts act as interior walls would of a building. Using Figure 2 again, access to analysis to areas of power can be determined.

According to the excavation and analysis done by Biddle in Figure 2, the Royal Palace (RP) is accessible through at least three different gates; one gate provides access to the palace from the street, creating a permeable space; one gate is positioned on the wall it shares with New Minster (New); and the last gate on the map is positioned on the wall it shares with Old Minster (Old). New Minster and Old Minster likewise share a wall with a gate to allow access between the minsters and finally there is wall shared with the bishop's palace; the map does not indicate there is any gated access. New Minster also three points of permeability to

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<sup>261</sup> Weikert, *Authority, Gender, and Space*, p. 53.

the public and Old Minster, two. The Bishop's Palace (BP) also has two. Access-analysis of the precincts can be depicted in the following ways:



*Figure 5: Simple access-analysis of major Winchester precincts*

Nunnaminster (Nun), meanwhile, is not connected in any way to this complex though it is located less than a block away. It sits just to the east with three points of permeability, which are all public access points. They are isolated from the area of convergence for masculine political and religious power, though they are not far away.

Even before the enclosure decreed by Edgar and Æthelwold, Nunnaminster would have felt its isolation through space. Weikert posits that ‘implied boundaries are largely considered to be as efficient as physical ones.’<sup>262</sup> Therefore, it is possible not much changed between the Nunnaminster’s initial foundation and its mid-tenth century refoundation. The biggest physical change for the nuns would likely have been its ‘final’ rebuild in 1108 when the tenth-century stone buildings were rebuilt, which resonated with Norman permanence for the nuns. The religious women of Winchester were enclosed through the implication of their spatial isolation long before the physical walls went up in 965, and then subsequently rebuilt after the Conquest.

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<sup>262</sup> Weikert, *Authority, Gender, and Space*, p. 50.

How, then, did this social and spatial isolation affect feminine spirituality at the Nunnaminster in the pre-Conquest period, being so close and yet so far away? How is this reflected in their books and their practice? And what can this tell us about potentially other houses in this period?

There is a clear indication of book sharing between the three Winchester minsters in the tenth and eleventh centuries. There is little evidence that can separate a manuscript's provenance between the Old and New Minsters, let alone the Nunnaminster – with the exception of femininized Latin and a few localised saints. An example of book sharing is contained within British Library, MS Cotton Titus D.xxvi and D.xxvii. Previously conjoined, together these two manuscripts are now known as Ælfwine's Prayerbook, in reference to the bishop of Winchester who owned the manuscript and died in 1057.

It is not known how or exactly when his prayerbook ended up in female religious hands, but feminine material was added to it in the twelfth century, likely done by the nuns next door. Helen Foxhall-Forbes makes a convincing argument that the nuns could have had the manuscript almost immediately following Ælfwine's death due to similarities between it and the Vitellius Psalter, which is dated to *c.* 1062.<sup>263</sup> The Vitellius Psalter is a known Winchester Manuscript due to its palaeography and inclusion of Winchester saints. However, it has the focus of a scholarly debate whether to attribute it to Old or New Minster as its place of origin; Nunnaminster was not even considered previously, despite knowledge of its active

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<sup>263</sup> BL MS Vitellius E.xviii. Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', p. 663: 'If Ælfwine's book passed to the Nunnaminster shortly after his death, it might have been used there in the compilation of the Vitellius Psalter: this book contains the feasts of the conception and oblation of Mary in its calendar, but these are extremely unusual in English calendars before 1100 and these two feasts appear otherwise only in Ælfwine's prayerbook. These would have been especially appropriate for a female house, although the New Minster also had a dedication to Mary and she was particularly prominent in many reformed houses because of the model of virginity she offered.'

scriptorium during this period and the inclusion of a female saint with ties to Nunnaminster, Eadgyth, in the calendar.<sup>264</sup> The nuns and their accomplishments face marginalisation by modern historians in uncovering the book history of Winchester.

Yet, it is clear that books and documents moved between the three monasteries as opposed to having one centralised archive. The cartulary that survives from Old Minster does not record any landholdings of Nunnaminster, though we know they existed.<sup>265</sup> There is no dedication to the women religious of Winchester in Ælfwine's prayerbook, but it was most likely held within their monastery after his death. The survival of the manuscript and the feminine additions indicate not only that the nuns received the prayerbook, but also interacted with it, changing the text to suit their spiritual needs. The use of the prayerbook within Nunnaminster in the twelfth century also indicates an interaction with the evolution of theological discourse within female monastic houses, as it differs in content and style from Harley 2965, which they also likely held at this time.<sup>266</sup> The influence of Celtic Christianity has all but disappeared from the prayers, as has the long, meditative prayers on various sins. Christ is secondary to worship at the Cross, and the prayers are more general in the forms of collects, psalms, and offerings to the crucifix. Additionally, drawn images are featured as meditative devices separate from the text; Harley 2965 possesses no illustrations, nor does the Nero/Galba Prayerbook – a late Anglo-Saxon prayer book with female monastic links.<sup>267</sup>

The position of Nunnaminster within Winchester was an awkward one. At once, it was a royal monastic house with ties to Alfred and also socially, monetarily, and politically

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<sup>264</sup> Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', p. 663, note 47. Saint Eadgyth is a legendary abbess of Nunnaminster.

<sup>265</sup> See Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', p. 661.

<sup>266</sup> There is no indication that the book, once arriving at Nunnaminster, ever left until its dissolution.

<sup>267</sup> See Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', p. 465-6. Nero/Galba Prayerbook: BL MSS Cotton Nero A.ii, ff. 3-13 and Cotton Galba A.xiv.

isolated from its brother foundations. It goes unmentioned in a surviving eleventh-century funerary text that involves stopping at various churches and chapels in the monastic precinct of Winchester.<sup>268</sup> Almost every parish church, including those at male minsters are mentioned. It is likewise left out of the writing of Palm Sunday processions through Winchester that New and Old Minster certainly took part in.<sup>269</sup> It is unknown if their Palm Sunday celebrations featured inside their enclosure, or they performed the procession at all. Their marginalised position within the city, especially after the Benedictine reforms, contributed significantly to their ability to practice their spirituality anywhere but inside their precinct, away from the chroniclers and casual observers. Whereas shared monastic purpose may have metaphorically collapsed the walls between the Old and New Minsters, the space afforded to the Nunnaminster by Ælhwit – and then subsequently Edgar – drew them away and inwards, seeking their feminine spirituality within their walls and within themselves.

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<sup>268</sup> Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', pp.657-9.

<sup>269</sup> Foxhall-Forbes, 'Squabbling Siblings', p. 657; MS CCCC 201.

## Chapter Three: Two *Vies* from Barking Abbey

Barking Abbey, perhaps more than any other female monastery in medieval England, has a long and evidenced tradition of writing, copying, and collecting hagiographical literature. Most of these *vitae* concern female saints connected to their own institution until the late twelfth century, excepting Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, specifically addressed to the community in the late seventh century. The contents of this work suggest Barking also had broad interests in earlier saints, theological exegesis, and Latin grammar.<sup>270</sup> The transmission of such ideas, however, was seemingly exemplified using hagiography as the primary medium.

Bede uses a *libellus* of Barking as a source for chapters on the history of the abbey and the legend of founding Abbess Æthelburh, which was produced by the community likely under Abbess Hildelith following the death of her predecessor.<sup>271</sup> The relatively short amount of time between Æthelburh's death and Bede's writing suggests the *libellus* was popular and quickly in circulation throughout the major monastic centres in England, perhaps having been promoted by Hildelith to foster a cult of Æthelburh at Barking.<sup>272</sup> Goscelin mentions he used

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<sup>270</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, p. 59: 'In your writing... the mellifluous studies of the Holy Scriptures were manifest in the extremely subtle sequence of your discourse. ... I...very much admired the extremely rich verbal eloquence and the innocent expression of sophistication.'

<sup>271</sup> Bede, *HE*, Book IV.6-10. When Aldhelm writes to Hildelith, Æthelburh's successor, he does not mention a recent passing, suggesting the period of mourning had passed. See Watt, 'Lost Books,' pp. 2-6 and Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School', p. 40.

<sup>272</sup> Æthelburh's death is dated to c. 680 and Bede had completed his history by 731, beginning it as early as c. 700. Bede travelled outside of Wearmouth-Jarrow to visit other monasteries, such as Lindisfarne, and interacted with major figures within the religious community of the British Isles, such as Adomnán of Iona, Bishop Egbert of York, and Bishop Wilfrid, who was a spiritual acquaintance to the early abbesses of Whitby. In *HE*, IV.xix, Bede asks Wilfrid about Æthelthryth, abbess of Ely, died c. 679. Additionally, he admits to being an admirer of Aldhelm, and therefore would have been at least passingly familiar with Barking despite the geographical disparity. The lives of these early royal abbesses clearly interested Bede even if he had an agenda when writing; he likely sought out sources such as the Barking *libellus* from his contacts across England, perhaps specifically from Nothhelm of London. See Watt, 'Lost Books', p. 3, n. 5.

a Barking *libellus* and an earlier vernacular life of Wulfhild (*d. c.* 1000) as sources for his work when hired by Abbess Ælfgifu to write various *vita* in the Latin tradition for the community in 1086.<sup>273</sup> It is unknown if the *libellus* is the same book that Bede used centuries earlier, but the presence of the later *vita* suggests Barking continued to nurture a literary culture of theological involvement based in hagiography.<sup>274</sup>

Goscelin produced a substantial amount of textual material for Ælfgifu during his tenure at Barking, which Bugyis argues ‘is the most significant and extensive collection of original texts written for a community of religious women in England during the Middle Ages.’<sup>275</sup> He wrote, at least, a *vita* of Æthelburh, lections for Hildelith, a *vita* and *translatio* for Wulfhild, plus two separate versions of *translatii* for Æthelburh, Hildelith, and Wulfhild. His proliferation of writing at Barking is likely no accident. Abbess Ælfgifu sought to stabilise Barking’s precarious position under the new Norman regime, while simultaneously persevering and promoting the culture of learning and hagiography at Barking. Doing so would attract royal patronage – previously withheld under Wessex rule – and women of status.<sup>276</sup>

Ælfgifu’s plan worked, though she did not live to see the nunnery reach its full potential, likely during the time of the writing of the Katherine and Edward *vies* in the second

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<sup>273</sup> See Hollis, ‘Barking’s Monastic School’, p. 52. Both manuscripts are now lost, though it is possible that the Wulfhild life is contained in Cotton Otho A.xii, a tenth-century manuscript, destroyed in the Cotton Fire, which we know possessed the lives of Wulfhild, Æthelburh, Hildelith, and Erkenwald, and possibly belonged to Barking.

<sup>274</sup> It is possible Goscelin’s *libellus* is the same manuscript as Bede’s, or perhaps a later copy. When Barking community decamped to London to shelter themselves from the ninth-century Viking raids, they likely brought important manuscripts with them to preserve their history and culture. The female community at Minster-in-Thamet, an easy target for coastal raiders, removed themselves to Canterbury and brought books with them. The famous Gospels of Saint Augustine (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 286) is a prime candidate for actually being a Thanet manuscript. See Emms, p. 37.

<sup>275</sup> Bugyis, ‘Manuscript Remains,’ p. 156.

<sup>276</sup> See: Mitchell, ‘Patrons and Politics at Barking’; O’Donnell, ‘Authors and Patrons at Barking Abbey’; Hayward, ‘Translation-Narratives’; and Hollis, ‘Barking’s Monastic School’.

half of the twelfth century. She inherited an abbey with a small but respectable standard of functional literacy and used the political upheaval to her advantage.<sup>277</sup> In doing so, Ælfgifu cultivated the wealth and learning that would lead to Barking's future literary triumphs.

Three manuscripts survive that contain Goscelin's work done for Barking: Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 176; Cardiff, Public Library, MS 1.381; and Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, MS Memb. I.81. Of the three, Bugyis links TCD 176 and Cardiff 1.381 through intricate palaeographical and textual analysis, concluding that TCD 176 was likely the exemplar for the material in Cardiff 1.381, and both have scribal connections to Barking dating to the twelfth century.<sup>278</sup> Additionally, two other manuscripts traced to Barking testify to the renewed literary culture at the nunnery begun until Wulfhild and carried on through the Conquest. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 155 is an early eleventh-century gospel book likely written at Barking with a twelfth-century addition that mentions Ælfgifu.<sup>279</sup> Bodleian, MS Laud Latin 19, late twelfth-century, possesses copies of the *Cantica canticorum* and *Lamentations*. A Barking *ex libris* was inscribed on folio 1r in the early thirteenth century.

The tradition of literary culture at Barking Abbey may not have been unbroken throughout its long history, but it maintained its use of hagiography as a primary method of interpreting and disseminating theological discourse. As this chapter argues, the *vies* of Katherine and Edward produced at Barking in the twelfth century were primary vehicles for

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<sup>277</sup> Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School,' pp. 48-53.

<sup>278</sup> Bugyis, 'Manuscript Remains.'

<sup>279</sup> See Bugyis, 'Manuscript Remains,' pp. 167-175. The inscription states the gift of tithes made from Adam of Cockfield to Abbess Ælfgifu for his sister Edith. Bodley 155, f. 196v.

religious women to augment predominant ideological scripts with their own commentary, creating spaces for their own feminine spirituality.

## Textual Space

Female and feminine spirituality in England became less localised following the Norman Conquest. It continued to be influenced by continental sources, though on a more national scale as the country moved towards a more centralised government with standardised ecclesiastical structures.<sup>280</sup> Such changes are exemplified in the two mid-twelfth century hagiographical accounts written in Anglo-Norman French (ANF). The *vies* of Saints Katherine of Alexandria and Edward the Confessor were both composed by women at Barking Abbey contemporary of each other.<sup>281</sup> It is unclear whether both texts were authored by the same nun of Barking, though works share similarities in style. The *scriptrix* of *Katherine* identifies herself as ‘Clemence of Barking’ but the *Edouard* author remains an anonymous female member of Barking. There has been much scholarly debate as to this topic, but it will not be examined here in depth as it does not serve the purposes of the project.<sup>282</sup> As a result, each author will be treated separately as Clemence and the Anonymous Nun. Additionally, Clemence and the Nun will both be referred to as authors, rather than scribes or translators, as their *vies* are not simply direct translations of Latin traditions, but original pieces of hagiography in terms of style, content, and meaning.

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<sup>280</sup> See Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record* (2001).

<sup>281</sup> Bliss, *Vie D’Edouard*, pp. 38-39. See below, n. 284.

<sup>282</sup> Bliss, editor and translator of the text, believes the authors are two separate women in her 2014 edition, exploring this in ‘Who Wrote the Nun’s Life of Edward?’ (2012). Mitchell, in ‘Patrons and Politics at Twelfth-Century Barking Abbey’, p. 357, n. 47, and MacBain ‘The Literary Apprenticeship of Clemence of Barking’, also support different authorship for *Katherine* and *Edward*. For further discussion see Erdman and Fogel *Evidence for Authorship* (1966), Love *Attributing Authorship*, (2002) p. 81, Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature* (1963) pp. 60-66, and Laurent *Plaire et édifier* (1998) p. 263.

Both *Vies d'Edouard* and *Katherine* survive in the Campsey Ash manuscript collection of Saints' Lives, British Library, Add. 70513, which was partly composed at the end of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century.<sup>283</sup> It is the only known collection of medieval hagiography written entirely in French and in which three works of medieval women appear. Evidence of Campsey's possession is found on flyleaf f. 1r, where '*cest liure est a conuent de campisse*' was inscribed at some point in the fifteenth century. Previously, someone had also claimed the manuscript for the priory on flyleaf f. 265v in the fourteenth century, stating: '+ *Ce livre de viseie a la priore de kanpseie de lire a mengien* +'. It is not clear if this manuscript was made for Campsey or later gifted to the priory, but the religious women certainly felt a claim to it, possibly due to the large amount of feminine material it contained.<sup>284</sup> The entire contents of the manuscript are in ANF, which was most probably the primary language of the nunnery based on the lack of Latin inscriptions found within this and other books belonging to the monastery.<sup>285</sup>

The copies of *Edouard* and *Katherine* are two of the earliest texts found within the manuscript; the majority other *vies* included were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These are not the only extant copies of the texts, suggesting a substantial dissemination of the nuns of Barking's works both in terms of distance and time.<sup>286</sup> The survival of the works of Barking is a testament to their influence and popularity in England

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<sup>283</sup> Reminder: All ANF quotes for *Katherine* and *Edward* is taken from the Campsey Manuscript as edited by the Campsey Project using their verse numbers and citation style unless otherwise stated. 'Kth\_###' refers to the *Katherine* lines and 'E\_w###' refers to the *Edward* lines. See the Campsey website for further clarity on the sigla.

<sup>284</sup> The manuscript contains mostly English lives, many female, including those of Audrey (Ethelburga), Faith, Osith, and Modwenna.

<sup>285</sup> Other manuscripts from the period linked to Campsey are BL, Add. 40675 and BL, Add. 7220, both of which have French inscriptions of possession.

<sup>286</sup> *Edward* MSS: Vatican, MS Reg. Lat. 489, ff. 1r-35r; Paris, BnF fonds fr. 1416, ff. 157r-181r; BL, Egerton 745, ff. 91r-130r. *Katherine* MSS: Paris, BnF fr. 23112, ff. 317v-334v; Paris, BnF n.a.f. 4503, 43r-74r.

during the high Middle Ages. The reputation and relative affluence of the abbey would have aided in such a text finding a large audience amongst religious and lay women of upper and upper-middle classes, as well as male communities.

Both Clemence and the Nun use Latin *vitae* as their primary sources for *Katherine* and *Edouard*; Clemence uses the Vulgate version and the Nun uses Ælred's *vita*.<sup>287</sup> Yet, their works are not one-to-one translations of Latin into ANF. Instead, these authors edit and develop the story in translation. They introduce contemporary religious and political thought into the work, expanding and adapting it to provide discursive commentary that reflects of their spirituality. Both texts masculinise female characters and feminize male characters to showcase the socio-religious discourse on monastic reading. The choice of subjects for these authors at Barking signifies a recognition of and engagement in the political realities of female monasticism and feminine spirituality.

Writing in ANF presented the women of Barking with the ability to change their Latinate fate of textual marginalisation through the reclamation of a vernacular for the transmission of feminine monastic spirituality. As mentioned above, Barking's literary culture during before the Conquest is well evidenced by indirect sources, but none of the manuscripts mentioned by Aldhelm, Bede, or Goscelin survive. It is the result of such meticulous literary and bibliographic archaeology that any of Barking's early literary culture can be reconstructed. Yet, it is important to understand how these Latinate sources marginalised female spirituality even as we celebrate these successes.

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<sup>287</sup> Ælred's *vita* is, in turn, based on the work of Osbert. See Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, pp. 12-13. The Vulgate version of St Katherine is dated to the eleventh century, see Wogan-Brown, 'Introduction', pp. xxvii-xxviii.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Bede was perhaps uncomfortable with the amount of religious and political influence early abbesses wielded and often downplayed the contributions of women such as Aelfflæd of Whitby. He does the same to Hildelith, praising her ‘observances of the regular discipline and making provision for the needs of the Community,’ and mentioning the massive undertaking of translating those in the cemetery to the church.<sup>288</sup> However, Bede does not include many details regarding Hildelith; he suggests the reader instead read the same source he did to compile the history. This source is of course unnamed.<sup>289</sup> Bede assumes that his audience possesses the ability to identify his source as well as acquire a copy. However, as no copies of the Barking *libellus* survive, it is unlikely it received the same amount of circulation in England or on the continent as the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which survives in over one hundred manuscripts.<sup>290</sup> In a competition of extant Latin manuscripts, those from a male house almost always outnumber those of a female, likely due to a variety of gender-based restrictions and resources.

Additionally, it can be inferred from Boniface’s letter to Abbess Eadburg of Minster-in-Thamet that he counted Hildelith among his correspondents and she related, likely by letter, her account of the vision of a monk of Much Wenlock.<sup>291</sup> However, Boniface does not record nor send Hildelith’s vision to Eadburg as specifically requested.<sup>292</sup> Rather, he decidedly one-ups Hildelith’s second-hand account from Wenlock Abbess Milburg and relates instead his

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<sup>288</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV.10.

<sup>289</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV.10: ‘And whoever wishes to read about the wonderful things that happened there will find in the book which is often the source of my information how a bright heavenly light was seen there...’

<sup>290</sup> See the ‘Textual Introduction’ Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors’s 1969 edition of *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. xxxix-lxxiv, for the various manuscripts and their histories.

<sup>291</sup> See Watt, ‘Lost Books’, p. 13, for an account of this and her argument for textual rather than oral transmission of Hildelith’s account.

<sup>292</sup> Kylie, *The English Correspondence of Saint Boniface: Being for the Most Part Letters Exchanged between the Apostle of the Germans and His English Friends*, p. 78: ‘Thou didst ask me, dear sister, to send you an account as the venerable Abbess Hildelida gave it to me...’

own personal account of talking with the visionary monk, verified by other brethren who witnessed the episode. In doing so, Boniface is relying entirely on lower male authorities – albeit primary sources – rather than the senior authority of abbesses Hildelith and Milburg. His overwriting of these female accounts is only emphasised by his addressee: another renowned abbess whose request he blatantly denies in favour of his ‘superior’ tale.

Any further inference of literary culture at Barking is not possible until its refoundation in the tenth century under King Edgar. This lack of textual evidence is not uncommon, as very few books survive from England in the late eighth and ninth centuries, likely from a combination of monastic decline and Viking attacks. The Barking community fully removed to London during this period as a consequence of one or both of these events. As such, the next text that can be inferred from Barking is a late tenth-century vernacular life of Abbess Wulfhild used by Goscelin to write his *vita Wulfhildae*. Hired by Abbess Ælfgifu to create a canon of hagiography for Barking, Goscelin made use of the many written source he says were available to him, including Bede and a *libellus* of abbey’s history. He also used the oral testimony of a Barking nun named Wulfrun-Judith who must have been in extreme old age.<sup>293</sup>

Any literary culture that existed at Barking following its refoundation in the tenth century arrived with Wulfhild. She was educated with her sister Wulfthryth (*d.* 1010) at Wilton as novices.<sup>294</sup> When Edgar attempted to sexually assault her at Wilton he was rebuffed

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<sup>293</sup> Wulfrun-Judith’s name attests to the period of great change in which she lived, likely changing her original Anglo-Saxon name of Wulfrun to a more Norman Judith to honour and suit the new patrons of Barking.

<sup>294</sup> According to Goscelin in his *vitae Edithae* and *Wulfhildae*, Edgar visited Wilton where Wulfhild and Wulfthryth lived. He initially pursued Wulfhild sexually, but she escaped his grasp – perhaps by dedicating herself to God during his visit. Wulfthryth, her cousin, was potentially too young to be veiled and protected by the church and was therefore stolen away from the nunnery by the king to become either a wife or concubine (it is unclear). Edgar was forced to do penance for his actions by Dunstan. There are various versions of this story. See Osbern, *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, Eadmer, *Vita S. Dunstani*, and Goscelin, *Vita Edithae* and *Vita Wulfhildae*.

by her veil, and she was given the abbacy and opportunity to refound Barking in recompense for his actions. However, this gift was more of a punishment as Barking was considerably poorer than any of the other southern nunneries: it was not endowed by the Wessex royal family.<sup>295</sup> Despite the poverty and hardships she faced, it seems that Wulfhild still managed to impart a culture of learning which she brought with her from Wilton. At the time of her death in *c.* 1000, her legacy of scholasticism and education had been realised by the institution of a monastic school. This was headed in the eleventh century by Wulfrun-Judith, Goscelin's later source.<sup>296</sup> According to Goscelin and attested by Abbess Ælfgifu, Wulfrun was a highly educated scribe and produced fine copies of manuscripts, including one which was stolen by a Norman priest.<sup>297</sup> Ælfgifu (*c.* 1047 – *c.* 1114) was instructed under Wulfrun, and it is possible Barking's *scriptrix* manuscript of religious texts was either produced or corrected under her tenure.<sup>298</sup> Ælfgifu's long abbacy ensured the continuation of such educational tradition begun by Wulfhild, and it is likely Barking had a relatively large population of Latinate women in residence as the twelfth century commenced. It was likely not until after Ælfgifu's death that the nunnery shifted its literary culture into Anglo-Norman French.

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<sup>295</sup> For Barking's relative poverty, see Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School', pp. 40-48.

<sup>296</sup> Wilton was considered intellectual centre and school the education of high-status women as early as 955. See Hollis, 'Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture', p. 41, and 'Wilton as. Centre of Learning', pp. 307-38.

<sup>297</sup> Colker, 'Texts of Jocelyn of Canterbury,' p. 412. The timeline of Wulfhild and Wulfruna-Judith does not entirely fit together. For Wulfhild to have instructed her in any meaningful way, and for her to still be alive to talk to Goscelin, Wulfruna must have lived well into her nineties and/or Wulfhild died later than *c.* 1000. Based on the work by Bugyis, 'Dating the Translations of Barking's Abbess-Saints', Wulfruna-Judith died after 1087 and before 1092.

<sup>298</sup> Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS 155: contains the four gospels, each originally preceded by Jerome's prefaces and lists of *tituli* and the Benedictine use of *Capitulare Evangeliorum*. The manuscript written by two main hands, one of the late tenth century and the other of the early eleventh century. There are corrections throughout in a later eleventh-century hand.

Following the death of their last Anglo-Saxon abbess, the rich female Anglo-Norman population of women at Barking necessitated a change in the literary traditions fostered at the Barking. The tenure of Ælfgifu had provided stability and growth but had also prolonged Anglo-Saxon religious customs at the house. Hollis puts forth Adelidis, abbess of Barking (c. 1136-1166) and wealthy widow, as the instigator and initial patron of ANF work emerging from the nunnery's scriptorium.<sup>299</sup> It was not until after her death that *Katherine* and *Edouard* were likely written, but she is credited as the 'critical turning point' for the propagation of ANF culture at Barking.<sup>300</sup> The shift from Latin to French at Barking is very sudden when examining extant evidence. However, inferences from literary history of Barking from the late tenth century suggests there was a substantial amount of material written in the vernacular that is now lost, especially given the learned community. The composition *Katherine* and *Edouard* in ANF at Barking represents a sharp departure from its Anglo-Saxon past and served to pull the nunnery into the twelfth-century present. Writing the *vies* was the nuns of Barking's way of interpreting and inserting themselves into the ideological scripts of discourse on feminine spirituality, at a time when such discourse was radically shifting. They sought to create a space for themselves in the discourse through textual transmission.

Translating works from the Latin *vitae* of a prominent English church father to the vernacular was an opportunity for female writers such as Clemence and the Nun to locate themselves and their spirituality within prominent narratives of Christian and cultural discourse. The cult of Saint Katherine was a continental import to England, arriving on the island's shores along with the Norman boats.<sup>301</sup> Her cult was primarily established in western

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<sup>299</sup> Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School', pp. 54-55.

<sup>300</sup> Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School', p. 54.

<sup>301</sup> Auslander, 'Clemence and Katherine', p. 168.

Europe at the abbey of Rouen in the mid-eleventh century following the monks' acquisition of her relics.<sup>302</sup> Clemence's decision to translate her Latin *vita* reflects an acknowledgement of the continental links of Katherine and Clemence, rather than an attempt to displace them, and allows her a more intimate relationship with the saint. Conveyed as an intelligent noblewoman, Katherine would have appealed as a literary subject to the educated, upper-class religious women that primarily resided at Barking. Though Hildelith, Æthelburh, or Wulfhild would have also functioned as such a figure, choosing a virgin martyr recognised within the Catholic church as a 'universal' saint signals Barking's willingness and ability to engage in cross-cultural religious ideas beyond the boundaries of their own monastery.

Barking Abbey was very aware of their domestic and continental competition for patronage and influence in the sphere of women religious. In addition to the surviving pre-Conquest houses of Wilton, Nunnaminster, Shaftesbury, and Wherwell, the popular Fontevrault movement of the early twelfth century had claimed the attention of the Plantagenet royals. Amesbury was refounded by Henry II as Fontevrault in 1177, in addition to two other Fontevrault houses founded in association with the Plantagenets in the twelfth century, and the motherhouse in Anjou supported approximately 3,000 nuns by 1117.<sup>303</sup> Fontevrault was a religious and cultural force of reckoning for high-status Anglo-Norman woman in the twelfth century. Barking, though attractive to noble women looking to enter a religious life, did not gain the same royal milieu of inhabitants, alive or dead, as other prominent female monasteries.<sup>304</sup> It had to prove its value amongst other wealthy nunneries

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<sup>302</sup> Auslander, 'Clemence and Katherine', pp. 166-7. Also see Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*.

<sup>303</sup> The two other Fontevrault houses in England were Nuneaton and Westwood. See Elkins, 'Male Religious and Female monasticism in the South', pp. 57-8 in *Holy Women of Twelfth Century England* and Vernerde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society*.

<sup>304</sup> See Hollis, 'Barking's Monastic School' and O'Donnell, 'Authors and Patrons' in the same collection.

through the relevance of its disseminated works to those looking to reward or join their brand of feminine spirituality. By translating *Katherine* and *Eduoard* into ANF, Clemence and the Nun illustrated their multi-linguistic literary ability and theological acumen to a wide audience excited by religious reform.

Clemence recognises the discursive position her work must achieve in the prologue to *Katherine*, acknowledging a previous Anglo-Norman translation of the text that was ‘well set out according to the standards of the time’ but ‘men’s quality has changed’; her new edition promises to ‘correct it and to make the times conform to the people.’<sup>305</sup> The other ANF translation of *vita* *Katherine* she refers to has likely not survived and we cannot know how much Clemence uses it as a model for her own *vie*.<sup>306</sup> However, we know she deviates significantly from the Vulgate passion and inserts, sometimes at length, her own words and commentary. Based upon the relevance of the commentary to twelfth century thought in combination with Clemence’s stance in her prologue, it is likely that the additions of text with reference to Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Honorius of Autun, and various bestiaries are her own work rather than that of the previous translation.

Within her *vie*, Clemence balances the notions of an inscribed socio-political exteriority and a psychical interiority, or the lived experience of the text, for female religious in England, especially at Barking, through the figure of Katherine. She integrates sources topical to women religious within twelfth-century theological discussions, situating her work amongst such themes that she regards as foundational to feminine spirituality at the time. The

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<sup>305</sup> Wogan-Browne, ‘Saint Catherine’, p. 3. ‘*Ele fu jadis translate / Solunc le tens ordené; / Mes ne furent dunc si veisdus / Les homes, ne si enviuis / Cum il sunt al tens de ore / Et après lui serrunt uncore. / Pur ceo ke le tens est mué / Et des homes la qualité / Et la rime vile tenue / Kar ele est aukes corumpue.*’ (Kth35-44)

<sup>306</sup> Clemence writes that she is ‘transposing’ the work from Latin to the vernacular, but also notes that she will ‘correct it’ the earlier ANF translation where it is ‘defective.’

relationship between Clemence and the dominant ideological scripts of religion and women is not cause and effect; she is not seeking to adhere or overcome. Rather, both construct and are constructed by each other. Clemence's purpose in writing is to provide a legitimate textual space for contemporary feminine spirituality. She uses Katherine as 'a self-enclosing text' to embody a message through narrative structure; Katherine's character functions to reflect discursive inscriptions upon women religious and voice the resulting psychological interiorities.<sup>307</sup> She lives the text as Clemence would. Katherine is described as '[c]onfident in God and in her own intelligence', a description that reflects the nuns of Barking as well.<sup>308</sup> Constituting Katherine as an enclosed textual space for feminine spirituality within monasticism was necessary for Clemence in a time where women were the victims of gendered exclusion from intellectual and liturgical spaces in the church. Katherine exemplifies the ability of monastic women to perform *lectio divina*. As outlined in the *Regularis Benedicti*, as well as in texts by Augustine and Jerome, *lectio divina* is the ability to read past the literal text on a page to understand the deeper, spiritual meaning.<sup>309</sup> In order to do so, a person must be trained and educated. Intelligence is key to spirituality. Clemence uses Katherine and her *vie* to develop this monastic ideal within a feminine space, interacting with contemporary discursive models of female monasticism to display her own intelligence and that of her abbey.

The patristic ideals behind *lectio divina* help to enforce the masculine/feminine binary by understanding the text, including words and letters, as an allegorical female body and the spiritual truth uncovered through learned reading as the male soul. Religious writing during

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<sup>307</sup> Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*, p. 181.

<sup>308</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 6. 'En Deu et en son sen s'afie' (Kth193)

<sup>309</sup> Robertson, *Lectio Divina*, pp. 38-70.

this period can be interpreted allegorically in the same way, as the text represents the human, postlapsarian interaction with the divine, as opposed to a purer method of spiritual instruction from God that transcends any materiality. Augustine, Jerome, Benedict, and Ambrose follow this Pauline method of textual analysis, associating the letter of the text with anything sinful and fleshy, like the female body. The divine meaning, or the soul of the text, is hidden beneath the letters. Following Paul, Augustine writes in *De Doctrina Christiana*: ‘when that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally.’<sup>310</sup> The reader cannot be seduced by the pleasurable act of literal reading if he seeks the text’s true meaning. Origen, in writing his commentary on the *Cantica Canticorum*, worries about literal readers missing the spiritual truth of the book and only focusing on its carnality; he goes as far as to argue only those who can understand it should possess it.<sup>311</sup> He expresses an anxiety around reading shared with his patristic brethren. *Lectio divina* must be done only by properly trained persons, otherwise the spiritual truths may be wrongly interpreted, leading to dangerous conclusions and, likely, hellfire. By using Katherine in her work, Clemence argues for the continued learning of women religious parallel to that of the male university culture. Her work appeals to religious men, as Katherine does not wish to become male nor does she read in the masculine style, penetrating and uncovering the female textual body. Instead, Clemence presents a feminine *lectio divina* that does not threaten the superiority of the masculine in the gender hierarchy. The text, and Katherine contained within, reads as a woman does, uniting the female textual body with Christ in purity of intention to maintain its integrity.

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<sup>310</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, bk III, ch. V.ix: ‘Cum enim figurate dictum sic accipitur, tamquam proprie dictum sit, carnaliter sapitur’.

<sup>311</sup> Origen, *The Song of Songs*, pp. 22-23. Also see Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics*, p. 22.

To develop her argument and reflect her own *lectio divina*, Clemence restructures and rewrites the rhetorical battle between Katherine and the fifty clerks. A key difference between the source *vita* and the translated *vie* is the characterisations of the men whom she argues. They are not outlandish heathen creatures as represented in the Vulgate. Rather, the clerks argue using the same rhetorical logic as Katherine. Even though she wins the debates and converts the clerks, they are worthier opponents for her to best than the caricatures of the Latin *vita*. Elevating the abilities of the pagan clerks allows for further elevation of Katherine's intelligence and faith, which reflects back onto Clemence and the Barking nuns. Both women are able to impress their audiences while remaining female. Through Katherine, Clemence uses her knowledge of liturgy, philosophy, and poetry to argue her position: both education and faith are necessary facets of a true feminine spirituality.<sup>312</sup> In possessing one without the other it is not possible to fully comprehend Christ. The structure of rhetorical debate found within *Katherine* offered Clemence opportunity to engage in intelligent discourse through textual transmission in a time where universities were developing out of cathedral schools in theological hotspots, such as Paris, Canterbury, and Vienna. As a woman she was disallowed from physically joining these schools, but her text demonstrates that intelligent feminine *lectio divina* differs significantly from masculine, even when using the same sources. Katherine, as a woman, has different concerns with her spirituality.

A full examination of Clemence's sources has not been done and it is outside the purview of this project to provide a full edition of the text, but certain authors are

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<sup>312</sup> Scholarly learning as tenet of feminine spirituality and sanctity is supported in the *vitae* of two Barking abbesses, Æthelburh and Wulfhild, who championed education when they refounded the abbey. Both of these *vitae* were likely available at the monastery at the at the time of Clemence's writing and/or read aloud during mealtimes. See Bugyis, 'Manuscript Remains' for their specific dating and Barking provenance.

immediately identified through their influence on the text and Clemence. She engages with them through Katherine, debating their logic with supporting characters. Yet, Clemence uses Katherine's innate physiology to take these ideas further: Katherine embodies them as if living the text. Clemence unites her ideas on feminine spirituality within Katherine as the inscription of discourse becomes her psychical reality. Katherine's position against the clerks and Clemence's position as a nun are both strengthened by their chosen roles as brides of Christ. As both a man and a god, Christ fulfils the role of husband in ways previously inconceivable. With the marriage of Anselm's ideas to those of Bernard of Clairvaux, Christ is able to become a fully realised bridegroom within a spiritual marriage, in which Katherine (and Clemence) participates enthusiastically. Her commitment to chastity, a notion revitalised by Bernard, represents this lived ideal. Her body is inscribed with the chaste ideal and her interiority accepts Christ as bridegroom.

The connection between the interior spirituality and exterior beauty as lived by Katherine allows for the ultimate marital bond that protects her throughout her ordeal, both spiritually and physically. When Maxentius attempts to woo Katherine, he is denied as Christ fulfils her inside and out. She says, 'I love him so much that I cannot be parted from him; for I love him alone, and him alone do I desire.'<sup>313</sup> Her statement underlines Christ as both God and Man; he is at once an omnipotent being and legitimate husband. He provides nourishment for Katherine when she is jailed, sends angels to break apart the torturous wheel, and makes her beautiful for her goodness. Maxentius, even if he was not attempting to seduce Katherine having just murdered his wife, could only offer good that reward her externally,

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<sup>313</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 23. '*Jeo l'aim tant ke ne puis partir, / Kar li sul aur et li sul desir.*' (Kth1365-6).

rather than fulfil internally. He consistently demonstrates his disregard to bodily *integritas*, burning the converted clerks, leaving his wife's body to be picked apart by vultures, and threatening to sexually assault Katherine. Her spiritual *integritas* maintains the veracity of her body through chaste devotion to Christ. Katherine lives, physically and spiritually, the discourse of twelfth-century Christianity.

The anonymous Nun of Barking Abbey echoes Clemence in her work on King Edward the Confessor, yet her subject is quite opposite. Edward is a different character from Katherine in almost every way. His death is relatively recent rather than ancient history; he is a new and national saint, the first English saint officially canonised by Rome in 1161; he did not die a martyr, but through natural causes; the consequences of his death were significant, not necessarily to Christianity, but to England; finally, he is male. Where is feminine spirituality found in a *vie* of a male saint? Why did the Nun choose Edward as her subject instead of Hildelith, Wulfhild, or even the Confessor's widow, Queen Emma? What did she have to say translating the life of Edward into French?

The Nun pushes ideas of lived feminine spirituality even further in *Vie d'Edward* than Clemence, using a prominent figure just out of living memory. She chooses to write Edward using hagiographical tropes taken from female *vita*, which, through irregular, maintains feminine spiritual connection a male saint and invites a political male audience. Edward embodies much of the same discourse Katherine does, though the concept of soul marriage is expanded to include a husband, wife, and Christ. Like Katherine, 'God resided completely in his thought, and he in God's will. In his heart he places the Holy Spirit, so that his body and

heart were made perfect.’<sup>314</sup> Though he is well-fed with earthly food, the author implies Edward ‘grew up well’ due to his supplementary nourishment by God acting as wet-nurse.<sup>315</sup> His bodily *integritas* is maintained in his marriage to Edith, who also does not wish to violate her promise to Christ. Instead of a marriage consummated physically, Edward and Edith are joined through their chastity to Christ, creating a kind of Trinity figure in their sanctified soul marriage. The Nun writes at length on the ‘sweetness’ of their marriage and defends it to those who may doubt its veracity. It is only through such commitment to chastity that Edward could gain ‘the spirit of prophecy’ exemplified later in her *vie*.<sup>316</sup>

Within the same chapter, the Nun expounds on the untrustworthiness of the human body through Edward’s anxiety surrounding his marriage, seemingly speaking directly to the reader her opinions on the subject. She writes, ‘This [frail] vessel is the human body, and no virtue is safe in it; above all, chastity rarely finds safety there.’<sup>317</sup> The Nun attributes the body’s frailty to its ‘natural weakness’, even if it is strengthened against sinfulness.<sup>318</sup> Yet, this bodily anxiety is related back to Edward, rather than Edith. As with Katherine, the Nun uses Edward to live the text. Edward becomes both a male and female figure, depending on the audience. He prays to God using the examples of Joseph, Susanna, Judith, and Mary as chaste figures, saying ‘I want to emulate *her* chastity’ in reference to Mary specifically.<sup>319</sup> For the Nun, chastity is not a gendered concept, an idea which Bernard put forth in his

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<sup>314</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 65. ‘*Deu maneit tut en sun pensé / Et il en la Deu volenté. / En son quer mist saint Esperit, / Ke cors et quer feseit parfit.*’ (E\_w275-8)

<sup>315</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 65. ‘*Cest bon vallet ki bien tehi.*’ (E\_w280)

<sup>316</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 89. ‘*esperit de profecie*’ (E\_w1456)

<sup>317</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 84. ‘*Cest [fieble] vessel est le cors humain, / En ki nul bien nen est certain / Et ensurquetut chasteté / Relment i trove seurté.*’ (E\_w1109-1112)

<sup>318</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 84. ‘*la fieblesce de nature*’ (E\_w1136)

<sup>319</sup> Emphasis mine. Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 85. ‘*Mes certes, tant cum je purray, / Sa chasteé sivre voudray.*’ (E\_w1209-10)

*Commentary.* Edward's chastity is not differentiated from that of Judith or Mary. The inconstant body which chastity seeks to conquer, however, is decidedly feminine. Edward's prayers to Mary characterise her as the giver of Christ's humanity, his fleshiness. Susanna and Judith's tales are both centred on their bodies and the sins which they could deliver. The Nun positions Edward's character to relate feminine spirituality through a male speaker. Bodies, she recognises, are characterised as feminine no matter the sex of the soul inhabitant. Chastity, therefore, does not apply just to women, but to men as well, as Bernard argues. It is the application of such chastity which differentiates the religious man from the religious women. Whereas men must battle their bodies for control over their urges and constant temptations of the feminine flesh, women must accept chastity within themselves to create a complimentary psychological interior as their flesh is already ascribed with sinful discourse.

Within the *vie*, Edward acts within the confines of feminine hagiographical heroics. His commitment to spiritual and physical chastity is the source of his power and sanctity. He does not need to discover his devotion to Christ as other male saints do, but from birth he seeks a pious life. He is positioned, in concert with Edith, as a bride of Christ in all but name. Yet, the Nun also explicitly aligns Edward with Christ, writing him as *imitatio Christi*. How can he be both? Interpreting him through the lens of masculine discourse, he can only be *imitatio Christi*, as the new Anselmian heterosexual matrix prohibits a *sponsus Christi*. However, examining Edward as both a bride of Christ and a Christ figure is possible through the pen of a female monastic author.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Anselmian doctrine of a Man-God Christ was significant in shifting the discourse of feminine spirituality. Christ's newfound physicality emphasised that of women religious, securing those who considered themselves *sponsa Christi* within the heterosexual matrix of marriage opposite their divine husband, as

exemplified by Katherine in Clemence's *vie*. The increased importance on such physicality, both of Christ and women, resulted in a feminine monastic spirituality in the twelfth century primarily characterised by an iterated embodiment of text: the inscription of discourse upon the female body developing a psychical interior, which then also contributes to such discourse, and the cycle continues as the discourse evolves. For a female monastic, embodying Christ's physical love led to a stronger internal identification as *sponsa Christi*, with some later women experiencing mystical unions and bodily miracles. This does not happen with Edward, though the Nun frequently attests to Christ's residence within his body as a result as his chastity, aligning him throughout her text with such feminine spirituality. God acts as witness to his marriage with Edith, described as a 'covenant they had set between them'.<sup>320</sup> However, Edward's embodiment of such feminine spirituality does not result in the *sponsa Christi* in the text due to his male physiology. The body upon which the discursive spirituality is inscribed by the Nun is different from her own. Instead, such embodiment of divine love results in Edward becoming as a Christ-like figure, a trope continually emphasised by the Nun throughout the *vie*, instead of a *sponsa Christi*.

Like Clemence and Katherine, the Nun uses Edward to exist within the discourse of feminine spirituality to engage with the larger theological conversation in the twelfth century. She writes her *vie* from a female perspective, using hagiographical tropes as if her subject was female. Yet, as a man, Edward cannot become a culturally accepted bride of Christ, internalising his spirituality within his body. Instead, he functions as an imitation of Christ, exhibiting his sanctity externally and publicly. Christ lives in him and acts through him,

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<sup>320</sup> Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 88. 'Del covenant ke entr'eus fu mis' (E\_w1395)

rather than acting upon him. Edward's spirituality is not enclosed or limited by his body, nor by the allegorical body of the text. It is an active participant in his story.

Both *vies* of Katherine and Edward demonstrate the power and limitations of religious women in England writing in the twelfth century. While advocating for intellectual recognition of female monasteries, the authors also attempted to transform feminine physicality into a means of interaction with Christ and the divine. In doing so, they produced two of the most theologically engaged pieces of literature of the twelfth century from any monastery, male or female.

## **Bodily Space**

In the centuries surrounding the Norman Conquest, the discourse regarding the feminine body evolved due to, in part, the likewise evolution of thought regarding the body of Christ. Formerly Christ's body was held as entirely metaphorical, but Anselm of Canterbury's revolutionary work on the subject, encapsulated in his *Cur Deus Homo*, shifted its place from the metaphorical to the literal, influencing how the Eucharist was performed and how Christians participated in their faith.<sup>321</sup> This shift was not immediate, though its effects were felt soon after the influence work entered scholastic circulation in the twelfth century. The *corpus Christi* still represented the *corpus Ecclesia*, but Anselm's work also resulted in an acceptance of Christ as a man-God, a fleshy deity, and, with it, new associations with the female body. This had a significant impact on how monastic women

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<sup>321</sup> For more on this subject see G.R. Evans, *Anselm*; McNamar, *Affective Meditation*; Bynum focuses often on Eucharistic devotion in her work, particularly *Fragmentation and Redemption*, *Jesus as Mother*, and *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*.

interacted with their spirituality and body. This interaction will be explored through *La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur* and *La Vie de Katherine*.

As outlined in Chapter One, Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*, which, drawing from larger debates on human salvation, argued that for Christ to have truly saved all mankind through his crucifixion, he must have been both fully God and fully human, with his humanity (flesh) the consequence of his earthly mother. The influence of his work led to the rise of new forms of prayer, including meditations on Christ's Passion, and increased connection between women and the body through Mary and Eve, whereas men were more associated with the soul.<sup>322</sup>

The connection between the female and the flesh was pushed further by the reforms of Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) and his followers, such as Pope Urban II. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they enacted new decrees on clerical celibacy, denying a large population of men access to the female body within the spiritual economy and invalidating those who previously did. Enforcing these decrees and quelling the riots of dissatisfied priests involved a campaign of targeted attacks against women, encouraging misogynist vilifications of the feminine to elevate the purity of the masculine soul over the inherent sinfulness of the flesh. The imposition of clerical celibacy was a flashpoint in terms of the changing discourse surrounding women, their bodies, and the church.<sup>323</sup> As priestly celibacy was enforced, the purity of the celibate state was promoted over all forms of sexual interaction with the female

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<sup>322</sup> Bliss notes 'it is not possible to ascertain whether the library [of Barking] possessed any works by Anselm,' but suggests later 'Anselm may have influenced the Barking nuns indirectly, or orally' through the knowledge of mutual acquaintance Osbert of Clare (See *Vie d'Edouard*, 29-31 for her full argument).

<sup>323</sup> For a deep dive into the gendered implications of clerical celibacy, see Jo Ann McNamara, "The Herrenfrage: Restructuring the Gender System, 1050–1150", in Clare Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (London, 1994), pp. 3–30; and R.N. Swanson, "Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation", in D.M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London, 2015) pp. 170–87.

body, even in marriage. Removed from imposing the hierarchical heterosexual binary through sex, reproduction and marriage, clerical men needed to redefine their masculinity against women. They did so by promoting the masculine purity of their souls over the bodily lustiness of women, pushing “feminine” attributes further away from a state of holy perfection. Religious and lay women found themselves increasingly distanced from church politics as they could no longer marry priests, were ineligible to become deaconesses, and seemingly in a constant state of sin due to discourse around their gendered bodies.<sup>324</sup>

The texts of *Clemence* and the *Nun* do not reflect an obsession with the inherent sinfulness of the feminine or the body. Though there is a focus on chastity, it is not the explicit domain of the female. King Edward is portrayed as more concerned about his promise of chastity to Christ than his wife Edith, who likewise desires to remain chaste.<sup>325</sup> Anxieties concerning the flesh are shared between the genders. Only the physical dimension of pain is seemingly connected to the feminine, and even so it is in reference Christ using *imitatio Christi*. The influence of the works of Anselm, Bernard, and Rome upon the spirituality monastic women were not simple, but a complex series of negotiations between accepted theology and personal piety.

*Clemence* and the *Nun*, within their respective *vies*, are concerned with their connections to the body of Christ in a literal and metaphorical sense. This marks a stark difference from pre-Conquest spirituality, which mainly dealt with *corpus Christi* through allegorical interpretation of the literal body. The two *vies* incorporate the metaphorical, the *ecclesia*, but also align their protagonists significantly with the literal flesh and blood of

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<sup>324</sup> See McNamara, “The Herrenfrage”, p. 7.

<sup>325</sup> For more on the chastity of Edward and Edith, see Thelma Fenster, ‘On the Equal Chastity’.

Christ in various aspects. Both Katherine and Edward are positioned as Christ-like figures by their authors using direct comparisons from the Gospels, especially the *passio*, where the most bodily connections are hewn. However, the comparison of Edward to Christ is more explicit than that of Katherine. Edward and Christ are often written in parallel by the Nun, both described as ‘king’:

‘As King Jesus freed Holy Church when he suffered death, so also did Edward free it, with all his might, all his life.’<sup>326</sup>

‘he [Edward] was crowned first on earth, and then in heaven for his goodness. By his terrestrial crown, he gained the celestial.’<sup>327</sup>

‘Then when King Jesus was born and crowned on earth, he reigned in the Holy Cross and called us back from harsh exile.’<sup>328</sup>

Her use of the title places Edward and Christ within the same rank, coupling them as rulers with a common responsibility to their people. This humanises Christ as it elevates Edward. In positioning Edward as *imitatio Christi*, Nun writes independently of her source material. She deviates from Ælred’s themes of compassion and piety and instead invents a Christ-Edward.<sup>329</sup> In doing so, Edward becomes an accessible human and a holy king, the

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<sup>326</sup> Bliss *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 75. ‘*Si cum li reis Jhesus franchi / Saint’ Eglise quant mort soffri, / Ensement l’ad Edward franchie / A sun poer tute sa vie.*’ (E\_w791-4)

<sup>327</sup> Bliss *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 57. ‘*Qu[e] il deus feiz le corona: / En terre est primes coroné / Et puis en ciel pur sa bunté.*’ (E\_w18-20)

<sup>328</sup> Bliss *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 74. ‘*Puis quant li reis Jhesu fu nez / Et en terre fu corunez, / En sainte croiz regna, / De dur eissil nus repella.*’ (E\_w751-4)

<sup>329</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 5.

embodiment of Christ on earth. As with Christ, his flesh is recognisably feminine, derived from his mother, but his commitment to chastity allows him the noetic communion with God.

In this way, the Nun's character of Edward functions twofold: as *imitatio Christi* and as the location of the feminine spirituality. His body, while humanising him, also feminises him. Edward's anxiety towards and protection of his chastity underlines the connection between him and any women religious; in order to have a connection with God, their bodily purity must be intact, rather than in 'pieces', as the Nun writes.<sup>330</sup> As opposed to denying his body in favour of his soul, Edward embraces the strength gained from maintaining his chastity as it fuels his commitment to his spirituality. He is portrayed, in this way like, like a nun, whose body is both the source of their power and potential sin.

Katherine and Edward are written very similarly, both possessing grace, wisdom, and virtue as beloved rulers with a commitment to Christ, and both *imitatio Christi*. Yet superficially, Katherine is less of an obvious comparison than Edward. Clemence is initially more subtle in drawing parallels between the two virgin martyrs throughout her *vie*, which later culminate in explicit references to the *passio*. Yet, Katherine is only child of a great king who leaves his entire kingdom to her. She tasks herself with distributing the wealth of it fairly.<sup>331</sup> She is wise beyond her age, displaying 'as much intelligence as if she had lived a long time,' as so described by her enemy Emperor Maxentius.<sup>332</sup> She suffers extended trials of starvation with only God as her nourishment and displays grace when faced with anger.<sup>333</sup> These parallels accumulate as the action climaxes with Katherine's martyrdom. Here there

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<sup>330</sup> Bliss *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 84.

<sup>331</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 5.

<sup>332</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 9, '*Une pucele ai ci ou mei / Ke despit nos deus et nostre lei. / Mut est jofne, mes son grant sens / Mustre qu'ele ait passé lung tens.*' (Kth423-426)

<sup>333</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 30.

are the explicit comparisons to Christ. Clemence references Luke 23:27-8 when, ‘seeing the ladies weep, she [Katherine] began to comfort them,’ just as Christ turned to the women mourning him as he walked to his crucifixion.<sup>334</sup> In the ultimate *imitatio*, ‘she suffered death on a Friday at the hour God suffered it,’ though refrained from rising three days later from her tomb on Mount Sinai.<sup>335</sup>

Clemence uses more implicit parallels between Katherine and Christ to allow her audience to build the relationship between the two figures before they are explicitly compared. Such subtle links allow the reader/audience to make their own connections, as opposed to the author using stark and unambiguous imagery from the *incipit*. She is, in a sense, providing her reader/audience with agency to discover the story in their own minds and make their own connections. However, Clemence abandons this subtlety as the king inflicts more torture upon Katherine as she approaches death, forcing the body to the forefront and intertwining Christ’s *passio* with her martyrdom.

Christ’s body is removed from the metaphorical and enters the literal as *vie* shifts focus from the resistance of Katherine’s speech to that of her body. She identifies bodily pain, such as that Christ would have felt on the cross, as the necessary precursor to joy obtained in heaven. She says, ‘Since he wanted to save me through pain, it is fitting that through pain I come to him.’<sup>336</sup> It is in this physical connection to the female body where feminine spirituality is located. By describing these acts of bodily defiance of torture, Clemence is

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<sup>334</sup> Wogan-Browne, ‘Saint Catherine’, p. 41, ‘*Les dames prent a conforter, / Pur ceo que plus les veit plurer.*’ (Kth2535-2536). Luke relates: ‘A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”’ (NIV)

<sup>335</sup> Wogan-Browne, ‘Saint Catherine’, p. 42, ‘*Mort souffrit par un vendredi / A l’hure ke Deus la suffri,*’ (Kth2643-2644).

<sup>336</sup> Wogan-Browne, ‘Saint Catherine’, p. 25, ‘*Ke de mon Deu m’en voillie retraire. / Bien dei par peine a lui venir / Kant par peine me deigna guarir.*’ (Kth1474-1476).

routing spirituality through the flesh, the domain of the feminine. As masculine spirituality often denies the body in favour of the soul, a masculine interpretation of such physical acts would dismiss the flesh as an unworthy vessel for Katherine's soul. However, that would belie the strength of connection the flesh holds between women religious and Christ. Through the depiction of bodily torture that Katherine, as Christ, endures, monastic women can locate their own connection to Christ; his feminine flesh offers them an opportunity for *imitatio Christi*. When she is beheaded, her blood flows out as milk from the wound, a physiological function only available to women. The Christ portrayed in *Katherine* is one to appeal to religious women specifically for *imitatio Christi* through their common flesh.

Just before her beheading, Katherine challenges the executioner: '...she stretched out her white neck to the sword. "Friend," she said to the grim sergeant, "do the will of the tyrant. Do not be slothful, for my bridegroom summons me."' <sup>337</sup> Her short speech is also the last time Katherine will speak of Christ as her bridegroom, as the executioner then swiftly beheads her. <sup>338</sup> From the beginning of the *vie*, Christ is introduced to as Katherine's 'immortal lover' at the same time she is introduced to the audience. His significance to her, specifically as heavenly spouse, is critical to her sanctity and her position against Maxentius. As within *Vie de Katherine*, marriage is an equally important theme within *Vie d'Edouard*, though his bride, Edith, exists solely on the mortal plane. The fundamentals of these two marriages are similar, however, as they are both grounded in chastity. The participants are not united by the physicality of marriage act, but through the lack of it. These are soul marriages.

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<sup>337</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Saint Catherine', p. 42, '*Son bel col a l'espee tent: / "Ami," fait ele a mal sergant, / "Fai la volenté al tyrant, / Ne seez ore perceus, / Kar ja m'apele mis espus."*' (Kth2613-2616)

<sup>338</sup> With a flying jump, which seems like overkill for a teenage girl.

As the idea of *corpus Christi* evolved, so necessarily did the idea of *sponsa Christi*. Before the twelfth century, the Augustinian tradition of *sponsa Christi* prevailed. Commenting on the *Cantica Canticorum* in his *Civitate Dei*, Augustine read the nuptial union as a metaphor for the ecclesiological union of Christ with his collected church, the city of God on earth, as described in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.<sup>339</sup> Hugh of St Victor's hugely influential work on the sacrament of marriage shifted this thought from the corporate to the individual and revived the pneumatic reading of soul marriage. In his *de Beatae Mariae Virginitate*, he argues that marriage at its purest, prelapsarian intention did not include any physical union, only spiritual, as sexuality did not exist before the Fall.<sup>340</sup>

These renewed readings of the *Cantica* significantly downgraded the monastic opinion of the physical marriage act, perhaps in support of the newly enacted edict of clerical celibacy. Marriage as Hugh described it now offered the option of the divine as opposed to a human partner, without undermining the validity of a spiritual marriage. Instead of earthly contentment, soul marriage offers spiritual fulfilment. Marriage, however, is still necessarily between two souls, be it human/human or human/divine; Hugh's interpretation does not support the hypothetical and metaphorical polyamory of the *ecclesia*. Christ no longer acts as *sponsa* to the collective church, but to individual souls within it.

Contemporary to Hugh of St Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux produced an equally influential exegesis on the *Song of Songs*, deepening the idea of soul marriage. His reintroduction of Origenist, pneumatic ideas regarding the *Song of Songs* revived an authentic

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<sup>339</sup> *Civitate Dei*, bk XVII, ch. xx (PL 41.566); Ephesians 5:21-33; Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 65, 86. Augustine's argument is later reinforced by the homilies of Pope Gregory the Great that interprets the bride of the *Song* as a collective 'soul of mankind' as opposed to the individual souls of Christians. See *Super Cantica canticorum expositio*, i (PL 79.478).

<sup>340</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *de Beatae Mariae Virginitate* (PL, 176.857-876). Bugge, *Virginitatis*, p. 85.

understanding of virginity through the nuptial imagery contained within the *canticae*.

However, by his own admission, his work is entirely metaphorical and primarily suitable for masculine spirituality, writing, ‘This commingling of the Word [God] with the soul is purely spiritual, and nothing corporeal or concrete in it.’<sup>341</sup> Bernard argues that virginity restores the image of God in the soul, making it the most suitable for a spiritual union.<sup>342</sup> With metaphor clearly established, Bernard takes advantage of the erotic imagery within the *Cantica* to invest affectivity into his argument. He writes of the ‘rapture of the pure soul into God’ and ‘the soul ravished by the Word’s unutterable sweetness.’<sup>343</sup> He uses the marriage act as derived from the nuptial imagery, dramatizing his sermon and sexualising it. However, the union of the two souls, human and divine, is not cheapened by this imagery but elevated by it, as it creates (and relates) intimacy within the relationship with God that transcends mere human knowledge of love.

The impact of Hugh and Bernard’s works on female monasticism cannot be underestimated. Both of their theses worked to fuse the pneumatic with the monialic, the spiritual with the marital. In the context of the strengthening Anselmian idea of a man-God, this had the result of producing Christ as a viable alternative bridegroom for monastic women, with no less of a marriage contract to be fulfilled. Bernard’s allegorical *Cantica* exegesis is re-examined through the lens of feminine spirituality, filtered through the discourse of associations with the flesh, as opposed to the soul. The eroticism Bernard highlights descends from pure metaphor into marital expectation of divine and chaste nuptials. Christ becomes not just a bridegroom, but a true husband and lover.

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<sup>341</sup> *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs*, p. 90. Also see Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 92. (PL 183.779-1198)

<sup>342</sup> *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs*, p. 90. Also see Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 92.

<sup>343</sup> *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs*, p. 90. Also see Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 92. (PL 183.779-1198)

In both *vies*, there is the expectation that the chaste female characters, Katherine and Edith, will ascend to their heavenly bridegroom, despite Edith also being married on the earthly plane. Especially within Clemence's text, Christ is continuously mentioned by Katherine as her marital partner, as if he is standing beside her and ready to physically contest Maxentius on the next page. The consistent positioning of Christ as lover is often the result of editorial decisions by Clemence. She initially describes him within courtly love tropes of French *roman* and supports this initial positioning with later insertions, all of which is not found within the Vulgate. Clemence adds of Katherine: '...she showed disdain for all mortal lovers, devoting herself to an immortal lover whose love is chaste and pure and everlasting in its delight. In this delight there is no pain, for its joy is never illusory.'<sup>344</sup> Wogan-Browne notes, 'Clemence invokes key oppositions in the rhetoric of courtly love (pain in joy, and joy in suffering, vv. 153-4), whilst showing how Katherine's chaste love transcends them.'<sup>345</sup> During her rhetorical sparring, Katherine enumerates the Anselmian idea of Christ as both man and God, saying 'If he is man, then he is not God. If he is God, then he is not mortal. You refuse to allow that it could be true that Jesus is both God and man.'<sup>346</sup> Not only do these passages indicate that Clemence, and perhaps other monastic women at Barking, had access to and read Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, but also that she (through Katherine) is willing to challenge those who deny her divine marriage as insubstantial.

Edward tackles soul marriage both in heaven and on earth. As king, Edward is expected to marry and produce heirs in order to mitigate any succession crisis to the English

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<sup>344</sup> Wogan-Brown, 'St Catherine', p. 5. '*Tuz ses mortels amanz despit / Et a nent mortel amant se prist, / La k'amur est chaste et pure / Et dunt deliz tut tens dure. / En cel delit n'ad nule peine / Kar la joie n'est unkes veine.*' (Kth149-154).

<sup>345</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'St Catherine', p. 64, n. 13.

<sup>346</sup> Wogan-Brown, 'St Catherine', p. 15. '*S'il est home, dunc n'est pas Deus. / Et s'il est Deus dunc n'est pas mortels. / Granter ne vols ke ceo seit dreit, / Ke Jhesu Deu et home seit.*' (Kth811-814)

crown. However, as a saint-in-the-making, his primary concern is for his chastity. He condemns the human body as a ‘frail vessel’ in which to hold chastity, indeed ‘no virtue is safe in it; above all chastity rarely finds safety there.’<sup>347</sup> The weakness of the body is a ‘natural’ aspect of the flesh, even to a man as strong in sanctity as Edward.<sup>348</sup> He does not want to marry, as the demands of a royal marriage would obstruct and undermine his promise to God, and ‘He feared that if he took a wife he would offend his Creator.’<sup>349</sup> He should not have worried. Edith gladly accepts his offer of a chaste marriage, and ‘they lived their friendship without wicked pleasure and without sin. Their love was great joy to them – true pleasure and refined sweetness.’<sup>350</sup> Edward and Edith are referred to as husband and wife, with great love and respect between them, but their primary relationship is that of friendship. There is no lust or sexual intimacy there, as Bernard suggests exists within a soul marriage with Christ. The love between Edward and Edith does not transcend human love; only soul marriage with Christ can achieve pure love.

To convince Edith of a holy life, Edward elaborates on the benefits of chastity:

This is the perfect chastity by which man is brought close to God. Chastity is so glorious that she becomes God’s bride, for God is supreme chastity. He leads her into his presence, and there he bestows on her all the sweet enjoyment of his divine love. Wherever he is, there shall she be, and wherever

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<sup>347</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 84 ‘*fioble vassel*’ (E\_w1107); ‘*En ki nul bien nen est certain / Et ensurquetut chasteté / Relment i trove seurté.*’ (E\_w1110-1112)

<sup>348</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 84 ‘*la fieblesce de nature*’ (E\_w1136)

<sup>349</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 84 ‘*Duta que c’il femme preist / Ke sun creatur n’ofendist*’ (E\_w1101-2)

<sup>350</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 88. ‘*Issi maintindrent l’amisté / Senz fol delit et senz peché. / Grant joie lur fu lur amur, / Verai (ms:Veraie) delit, fine dulçur.*’ (E\_w1405-8)

he goes, she will follow him. Nor can anybody ever have this sweet closeness without chastity.<sup>351</sup>

Here, chastity is championed by the male protagonist, rather than the female, but is nonetheless couched in the feminine language of the body, gendered as female, and called a bride. Chastity is the ultimate foil to the weak nature of the body. Through his masculine attributes alone, Edward's chastity is protected: the determination within his soul is enough to preserve it. The chink in his amour, so to speak, is his mortal body, the natural faults and weakness of it, acquired after the Fall. Edith's soul, as well, is given over to God. As for her natural feminine weakness of the flesh, 'God nourished her saintly body so that it would be chaste for the chaste king.'<sup>352</sup> A male author would perhaps write Edith as a 'manly' woman; her lack of weak feminine qualities shifts her position towards the other side of the gender spectrum. Her soul is aligned with Christ and thus faultless. Her body, chaste, is never given over to temptation and she remains loyal to Edward until his death.

Edith remains, under the care of the Nun's pen, firmly feminine, and still strong. Edward, too, maintains his masculinity, but aspects of feminine spirituality feature within his character. In addition to his heralding of chastity and 'conversion' of Edith to it, his *miracula* are often related to a bodily or medical ailment.<sup>353</sup> By curing people of their ills, he is nourishing their body, usually a domain of the feminine domestic or of a feminine Christ. Additionally, he steps into the bridal motif in the *vie*, reversing the traditional gender role

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<sup>351</sup> Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 88. 'Ceo est parfite chaste / Dunt home est a Deu fet privee. / Tant est chasteé gloriuse / K'ele est a Deu faite espuse, / Kar Deu ki chasteé est souveraine, / Desque a sa presence la meine, / La lui rent tute la duçur / Del delit de sa fin' amour. / U que il seit, ou lui serra, / U que il volt, ele le sivera. / Ne ceste duce privetee / Ne avera ja nuls sanz chasteé. / Pur ceo vus di, ma bele amie, / Ke vus maintenez chaste vie. / En ciel en serrez honuree / Certes et de mei plus amee.' (E\_w1353-68)

<sup>352</sup> Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 86. 'Aveit Deus sun saint cors nori, / Ke chaste fu al chaste rei.' (E\_w1266-7)

<sup>353</sup> For example: 'Gille Michel the Cripple,' 'The King's Evil,' 'The Blind Man of Lincoln,' 'Ralph the Norman Cured,' 'The Sewing-Girl,' 'Osbert's Fever,' and 'Gerins Cured Likewise,' as titled in Bliss.

within the heterosexual binary usually represented in medieval English hagiography.<sup>354</sup>

Edward is delivered a ring from Saint John the Apostle as his death is foretold simultaneously; he is soon to join Christ in heaven as an eternal lover. The section is rife with erotic language. John is made drunk with knowledge suckling at Christ's breast. Edward likewise possesses an unquenchable thirst for this story of John, Jesus, and the retrieval of his ring.

The feminine, initially positioned as chastity's foil through the 'natural' qualities of the flesh, becomes a complex negotiation of spirituality in relation to Christ's position as soul bridegroom, or divine husband. The connections between the feminine and the flesh also function as pathways to *imitatio Christi* within female spirituality. It is the central position of the feminine body within social discourse that allows for a uniquely female relationship to monasticism. However, it is necessary to adjust the reading process for these works to understand this. Reading *Vies d'Edouard* and *Katherine* to comprehend feminine spirituality necessitates this non-linear experience, where it is vital understand the discourse of the body under which this text was written.

## Monastic Space

Barking Abbey has claim to possess the longest continuous history of any nunnery in England, having been founded in 666 by St Erkenwald, Bishop of London, for his sister Ethelberga, who became the first abbess of the monastery. From 666 to its dissolution in 1539, Barking has a relatively unbroken and illustrious history, including its notoriety

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<sup>354</sup> For instance, the lines describing Edward's early life note his dedication to God from his infancy. Though he was not given in faith to a monastery as some female saints were, 'As soon as he was anointed in baptism, he was joined fully to God, so that God resided completely in him and he was completely in God ... In his heart he placed the Holy Spirit, so that his body and heart were made perfect.' (Bliss, *Edouard*, p. 65)

immediately post-Conquest as the temporary home of William the Conqueror and then as a house of literary accomplishment in the twelfth century.<sup>355</sup>

One of the six early medieval royal nunneries to survive the Conquest, Barking was located closer to London than Winchester, the *de facto* capital of late Anglo-Saxon England and Wessex. The abbey's location presented it both with advantages and difficulties. Its position on the Thames made it vulnerable to Viking attacks in the ninth century, and in 870 it was destroyed by Danish invaders.<sup>356</sup> The Barking nuns, who held property all over modern-day Essex, moved to a residence in London where presumably they remained until King Edgar refounded Barking Abbey at its original location eight miles outside of London. It enjoyed a relatively close relationship with London and benefited from Edward the Confessor's investment at Westminster, moving both politics and religion to the city and away from the former Wessex capital. The nunnery was refounded once again by William I, following his conquest of England, dedicating their church to St Ethelburga and confirming their possessions under Abbess Ælfgifu, who remained in office throughout the political turmoil of Edward-Harold-William. It remained a house that attracted high-status and learned women, with its abbesses including Mary Becket, sister of the martyred Thomas, and Maud, illegitimate daughter of Henry II.

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<sup>355</sup> William the Conqueror, upon conquering London, built a series of fortifications along the Thames, including what would be known as the Tower of London. During the construction period of Winter 1066-1067, William decamped to Barking Abbey, according to William of Poitiers, to ensure his safety from rebellious Londoners. In her PhD thesis, 'Patronage and Politics at Barking Abbey', p. 98, Emily Mitchell posits that the Barking nuns were not actually in residence at the abbey during the Conqueror's visit; they had likely sought safety at their residence within the London walls as William battled his way to the city.

<sup>356</sup> Knowles and Haddock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, p. 210; *VCH Essex*, 'Abbey of Barking', p. 116. Also see the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 71, in Swanton, recounts: 'Here the raiding army went across Mercia into East Anglia ... and conquered all that land, and did for all the monasteries to which they came.'

In many ways, Barking Abbey is the most equivalent to a male monastery as it was the largest and, at certain points, richest monastic foundation women could access. Certain scholars, such as Eileen Power, offered direct comparisons to the largest and richest male monasteries, such as Glastonbury or Canterbury, of whom Barking falls well short.<sup>357</sup> However, providing a one-to-one comparison of Barking – or any female monastic institution – to Glastonbury et al. would belie and belittle its important place in women’s history. Barking Abbey, due to its unique positioning within England and English monastic history, offers insight into the continued exploration of feminine spirituality through the dimensions of space, place, and time using both archaeological sources and the extant textual evidence, specifically the *vies* of Edward the Confessor and Katherine of Alexandria.

Barking Abbey, as mentioned above, was located approximately eight miles outside of the City of London, and its ruins are easily accessible today by public transport within the modern city. The abbey is inherently connected to London. Its initial foundation was given by St Erkenwald, Bishop of London, and it continued to possess landholdings within the city as well, where the community would retreat in the event of Viking incursions.<sup>358</sup> Bede writes the initial monastery under Ethelburga was founded as double house for both men and women seeking religious life, though it was primarily intended for women as Erkenwald and Ethelburga believed there were no monasteries in England available for the needs of religious women.<sup>359</sup> Ethelburga became the first abbess under the instruction of Hildelith, a nun ‘from

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<sup>357</sup> Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 162.

<sup>358</sup> Their primary location in London still stands as All Hallows Church by the Tower.

<sup>359</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book IV.7, p. 217. It is likely that Minster-in-Thamet was founded at approximately the same time as Barking.

abroad' brought in to help Ethelburga in the building of a community.<sup>360</sup> The initial endowments of Barking came not from Erkenwald, but from east Saxon princes.<sup>361</sup>

It is not known exactly where the original monastery was located in Barking; recent excavations only reveal archaeological history dated to the twelfth century.<sup>362</sup> In examining the ruins in the early twentieth century, Alfred Clapham observed that the site which the monastery occupied from at least the Norman Conquest did not correspond with the account provided by Bede, who describes 'the site on which the monastery was built' as 'very limited' so that the bones of the dead sisters were translated into the church to make space.<sup>363</sup> Roberta Gilchrist implies that Barking could have been refounded on the same site, as it 'may have been planned according to the restricted nature of the site.'<sup>364</sup> Using Bede, it is possible to map at least some of the early Anglo-Saxon monastery's buildings. The women's monastery sat apart from the men's, but close enough that plague would threaten one house if the other was afflicted, seemingly a short walk. It is unclear if they shared a church, but the religious women had their own oratory to perform the monastic hours. They also possessed, at least, a dormitory for the majority of the community, as well as a separate small cell for the abbess, and another space for learning and/or eating. Bede relates nothing of the male buildings other than a tomb.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Page, 'House of Benedictine nuns: Abbey of Barking', p. 116

<sup>361</sup> See Susan Kelly, *Charters of Barking Abbey and Waltham Holy Cross*.

<sup>362</sup> However, some timber excavations have been possibly linked to the abbey's earlier history. See 'Saxon timber structures from the Barking Abbey excavations' by Ken McGowan, *Essex Journal* volume 22, 1987 and Kay Slocum, 'Tracing Sacred Pathways: Processions at Barking Abbey', *Session: Digitizing Sacred Space: Barking Abbey, Forty-Eighth International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Western Michigan University, May 12, 2013.

<sup>363</sup> Clapham, 'Benedictine Abbey of Barking', p. 71; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.10

<sup>364</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 131.

<sup>365</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk IV, ch.7, p. 217.

It is possible this original site was abandoned after the monastery was attacked in 870 by the Danes and the community removed to London.<sup>366</sup> It could have been rebuilt in its known location during its refoundation under King Edgar. It was rebuilt extensively in stone after the Conquest in 1180 and continued to be added to through to the fifteenth century. The ruins that exist today reflect its post-Conquest structure and final rededication under Abbess Maud in 1215.

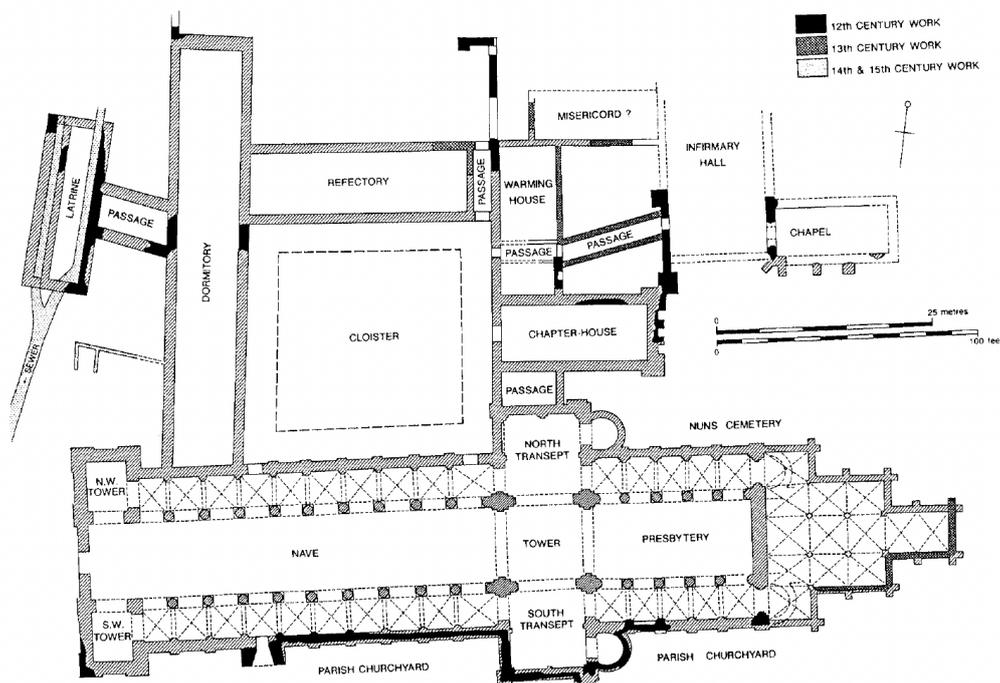


Figure 6: Plan of Barking Abbey post-conquest<sup>367</sup>

The high status of Barking among nunneries is reflected in its size and architectural features. Often, the cloister area of monasteries is used as an indicator of their relative status, but Gilchrist argues the total length of the monastery church is the best indicator of developed status of nunneries, as the dimensions of nunnery cloisters is often not varied enough to

<sup>366</sup> See above, note 358.

<sup>367</sup> Reproduced from Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 114.

provide any significant findings.<sup>368</sup> Of the thirty-two nunneries she lists, Barking possessed the largest church by far, measuring 102.9 metres; Romsey and Shaftesbury, also both pre-Conquest nunneries, follow Barking with churches the lengths of 78 and 76.2 metres, respectively.<sup>369</sup> Clapham notes Barking's church was the largest in Essex, twenty-four feet longer than Rochester Cathedral.<sup>370</sup> The monastery also contained a more elaborate system of sanitation, atypical of most female houses in England, through a common feature of almost all male houses whose sanitation systems were often more advanced than contemporary castles and manor houses. Barking's latrine, close and attached to the nuns' dormitory, was flushed using a culvert split into two channels. Most nunnery latrines were not flushed by water, instead consisting of garderobes, and were also not as easily accessible; Barking's two drain systems emphasises the import placed on sanitation within the monastery as would befit the high-status population.

The nuns' cloister is located on the north side of the church at Barking; while this feature is not unusual for foundations in the nearby vicinity, it is relatively uncommon in the overall landscape of England monasticism and has gendered implications. In the standard monastic plan, cloisters were likely constructed on the south and east of the church in order to gain the most heat and light for the occupants. The majority of monastic foundations in England, approximately sixty-two per cent, possess a south cloister. Initially, those that did not possess the standard architectural plan were thought to have moved their cloister on the basis of the availability of the site and/or access to running water. This is indeed the

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<sup>368</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 44: 'When the dimensions of nunnery buildings are considered, cloister areas mainly range from c.200-330 sq. m (n=13); with the majority under c. 550 m. No meaningful comparison can be made between the nunneries and the large Cistercian, Benedictine or Cluniac male houses.'

<sup>369</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 45. Wilton, Nunnaminster, Wherwell, and Amesbury are not listed due to lack of information and thus comparisons are impossible.

<sup>370</sup> Clapham, 'Benedictine Abbey of Barking', p. 82.

explanation for some, such as Rochester and Tintern, but far from all. Looking at the position of cloisters in relation to water sources at the sixty-one nunneries with site information available, Gilchrist found that ‘a higher proportion of north cloister nunneries than south cloister ones actually had water sources to the south of the site,’ suggesting that the position of the cloister in these cases was a deliberate choice unaffected by natural resources.<sup>371</sup>

Barking Abbey’s site offers no reliable answers under these considerations. Its water source is to the west and the advanced sanitation system indicates the nunnery had more than enough funds to manufacture a suitable situation, if need be, unlike other poorer nunneries.

The positioning of the cloister thus continues as an unresolved mystery until relevant discourse is analysed in combination with geographical data; in doing so, a pattern emerges with a possible explanation. In describing the northern position of Barking’s cloister Clapham notes: ‘Indeed, in the monastic houses in the neighbourhood of London, this position is almost more the rule than the exception.’<sup>372</sup> He is not wrong. The three closest nunneries to Barking – Clerkenwell, St Helen’s Bishopsgate, and Halliwell – all possess northern cloisters. Further outside of Greater London, Sopwell, Higham, and Malling are built to the standard southern monastic cloister. Gilchrist identified two other clusters of north cloister monasteries, each centred around a pre-Conquest double-house foundation: in East Anglia, Chatteris is surrounded by Bungay, Cambridge, Crabhouse, Denney, Hitchingbrooke, Ickleton, and Shouldham; in Yorkshire, Watton is surrounded by Arthington, Thicket, and Wilberfoss.<sup>373</sup> The ‘cluster nunneries’, most of which were founded in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, were seemingly built to emulate the older house’s unique cloister situation.

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<sup>371</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 131.

<sup>372</sup> Clapham, ‘Benedictine Abbey of Barking’, p. 82.

<sup>373</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 13.

In looking at other pre-Conquest foundations of record, certain houses which had formerly been double monasteries and then refounded as male monasteries, such as Chester, Repton, Malmesbury, and Minster-in-Thanel, also possessed northern cloisters.<sup>374</sup> There are two common denominators which connect these houses. First, all of these houses, both female and male, were pre-Conquest double houses refounded in a period of political activity, either for reform or re-establishment purposes. Second, all of these pre-Conquest double houses were headed by a powerful abbess and later saints.

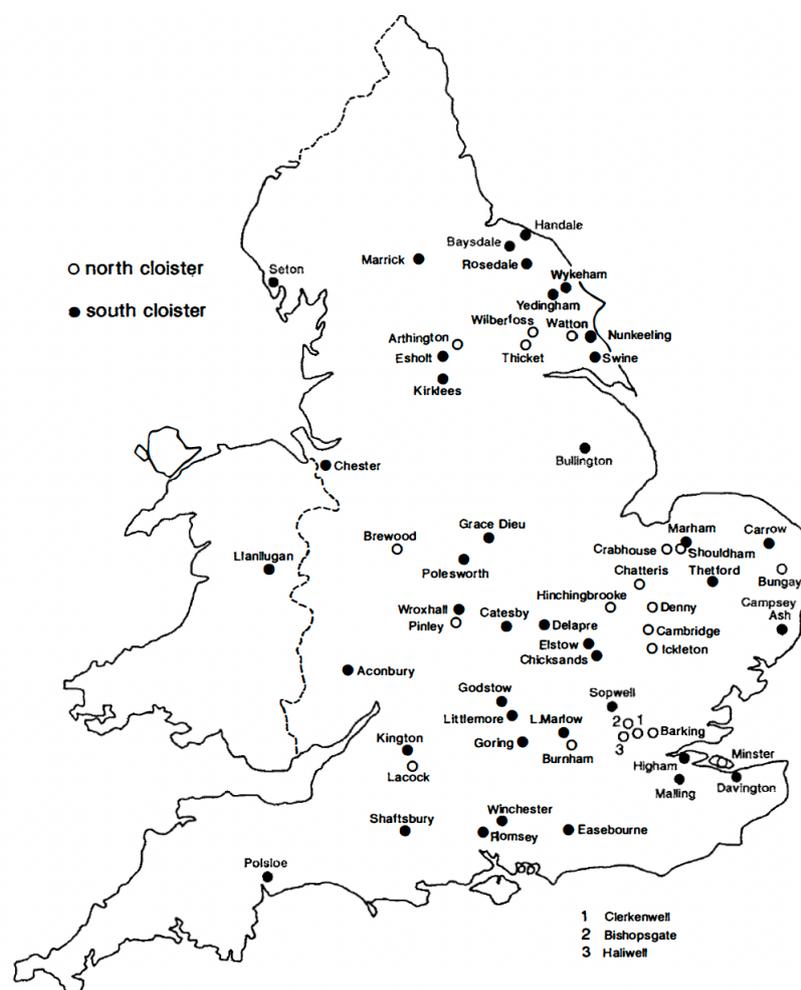


Figure 7: Distribution of North and South cloister in English Numeries.<sup>375</sup>

<sup>374</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 137.

<sup>375</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 132

As mentioned in Chapter One, women – and their fate – were determined by physiological features based on classical humoral theory. Men were considered the superior gender due to their ‘natural’ attributes of being hot and dry, which pushed their sex organs to the outside of their bodies. These warm qualities led to associations of men with the sun, and thus southerly (and easterly) places. Medieval gender discourse, operating on sliding spectrum bookended by polarities, dictated that woman – true women – be the opposite of men. Women were wet and cool, operating interiorly where their sex organs remained, and associated with the moon, the left (the north side of an east-facing church), and the north.<sup>376</sup>

Nunnery cemeteries often laid to the north and/or west of the church. This is consistent at Barking, where the nuns’ cemetery is directly north of the church presbytery. The cloister is northwest of the church, and the nuns’ dormitory to the left (west) of the cloister. Barking Abbey’s layout seems to reinforce medieval gender notions of space and place for women, which makes sense for a nunnery. However, northern cloisters persist in male monasteries as well, but only the ones associated with pre-Conquest abbess-saints. Gilchrist theorises ‘Perhaps nunneries refounded on sites of earlier double houses used a north cloister to invoke associations of the royal Saxon lineage of their abbess-founders, in an attempt to redefine their collective identities and attract continuing patronage.’<sup>377</sup> I agree with Gilchrist’s theory of collective identities. These refoundations all occurred during periods of political reform or upheaval. In order to prove its significance within the cultural landscape – and thus face being written out of history – a monastery would need to strengthen its collective identity, reaching back into its history to prove its cultural importance. For pre-

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<sup>376</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>377</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 137.

Conquest monasteries, this history often began with a woman, either an abbess, foundress, or female saint, whose miraculous actions attracted fame, money, and legitimacy to the foundation.

Reformers and monks manoeuvred through the political implications of the Conquest by leveraging nostalgia of the pre-Viking Age monastic period in their favour for staying power in and patronage from the new regime. The so-called great monastic period, that of double houses, Bede, Hild, and scholastic learning, was the goal of the tenth-century reform period under Edgar and Æthelwold who saw the decline of English monasticism as a failure of the state. The Normans lords, seeking to legitimise their new rule through Christianity, patronised and rebuilt establishments with long and legendary histories, connecting the country's English history to its Norman present. The abbess-saints of the legends were honoured through architecture: northern cloisters representing of the epitome of women. Barking Abbey, with a history to rival any great male monastery and the abbess-saints to support it, was an ideal location for the melding of the old and new. Its northern cloister could have been a consequence of location, but it was more likely a meaningful design decision fraught with the implications of gender in a period of discursive evolution.

In the twelfth century, when Clemence and the Nun were writing their respective *vies*, Barking Abbey was a veritable political powerhouse of female monastic energy and work. It had survived Viking attacks, reforming bishops, and a Norman conquest with its reputation and prestige intact. It was the closest major nunnery to London and enjoyed the patronage of William the Conqueror following his productive stay there in the winter of 1066/67 while the Tower was under construction. The abbey's success was no accident. It attracted Norman women of high status while maintaining its weighty Angle-Saxon roots. To retain its relevance, it occupied a place within the evolving space of monastic England that was both

discursively relevant and conforming. It had to remain significant without being offensive, at least overtly so. The abbey's physical features sought to ground it in its legendary and decorated past. Yet, it was the women religious who maintained Barking Abbey's place as the apex of learned female spirituality in England through their writing, synthesising place, space, and discourse and testing the boundaries of each.

The language of both *vies* is significant, both in locating female spirituality textually, as mentioned in Chapter Three, but also for placing the works on a political and discursive spectrum. Both *Katherine* and *Edouard* are works of editorial translation from sources in Latin. Clemence is primarily using the anonymous Vulgate *vitae* Katherine as her source, which was the most popular version of Katherine's life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>378</sup> Within her prologue, Clemence also mentions another vernacular version of the life, but neither knowledge nor evidence of that version has survived and so it cannot be known how much she was influenced by it.<sup>379</sup> If there ever was one, no catalogue of the library at Barking has survived and any extant manuscripts that can be traced to Barking do not include a copy of the *vita Katherine*, though we know Clemence must have possessed one, either her own copy, the abbey's copy, or one on loan from another monastery. The Latin used in the *vita* is fairly elaborate, as Wogan-Browne notes, and required a scholar skilled in both Latin and ANF to render an intelligible and accurate translation.<sup>380</sup> Through Clemence's

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<sup>378</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 137.

<sup>379</sup> There are two possibilities here. The first is a thirteenth-century ANF lyric prayer of Katherine's life 'Très duce Katrine' in BL, Egerton 613, f. 6v, an unidentified manuscript possibly from a nunnery, perhaps Barking. See articles from Betty Hill on this MS, 'British Library MS Egerton 613', parts I and II. Also, *Recueil d'anciens texts bas-latins, provençaux et français*, ed. P. Meyer, pp. 375-6. The other version is a dramatised version of the *vie*, a fragmentary version of which is found in Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS French 6. This may have also been part of a Barking manuscript that also included a copy of the *Life of Saint Lawrence*. It was almost certainly owned by the nuns of Derby at one point, see Russell 'Rylands French MS 6', pp. 41-7. Also see McBain, 'Literary Apprenticeship', pp. xiii-iv and Bray, 'The Legend of Saint Katherine', pp. 64-6, and E.C. Fawtier-Jones, 'Les Vies de Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie', pp. 100-3.

<sup>380</sup> Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths*, p. xxviii.

additions and translation, it is clear ‘she knew, and made skilful use of, courtly, devotional and didactic literary registers, in both Latin and Anglo-Norman.’<sup>381</sup> Women may have been denied access to the new universities, but Clemence was no less a scholar due to her lack of higher education. Through Katherine, she makes this clear to her audience.

Through her *vie*, Clemence engages with contemporary theological and political discourse, as enumerated by those such as Anselm of Canterbury and Honourius of Autun, inserting herself into the debate on chaste marriage and hopping on such trends as proverbial reflection and courtly language.<sup>382</sup> As a result, her vernacular translation of *Katherine* is more theologically aware than the Latin *vita*. It is also culturally significant to her audience, both those attached to Barking and further afield.

In her prologue, Clemence explains her purpose in translating the *vie*:

I intend to tell of someone who truly loved him [God] and translate her life, transposing it from Latin into the vernacular, so that it will be more pleasing to those who hear it. ... it is necessary to correct it and to make the times conform to the people. I am not correcting it out of arrogance, for I see no acclaim. He alone should be praised from whom I derive my small amount of knowledge.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths*, p. xxviii

<sup>382</sup> Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths*, p. xxviii. She notes, ‘Further work needs to be done on Clemence’s sources before a full picture of her reading and learning is possible’, but acknowledges that the *vie* is ‘more, not less, theologically aware than clerical Latin hagiography’, p. 245. Fenster continues Wogan-Browne’s initial analysis of Anselmian engagement at Barking in ‘On Equal Chastity’, attesting to the Nun’s deep understanding of his theological themes and arguments in her *vie d’Eduoard*.

<sup>383</sup> Wogan-Browne, p. 3. ‘*Pur sa pité me deit aider / A cest ovre ke voil traier / De une sue veraie amie, / Dunt translater voil sa vie, / De latin espundre en romanz / Pur ceo ke plus plaise as oanz. ... Pur ceo l’estut amender / Et le tens solunc la gent user. / Ne l’amend pas pur mun orgoil, / Kar preisé estre n’en voil; / Il sul en deit lo[e]nge avoir / De ki sent mun povere saveir.*’ (Kth29-50).

She acknowledges her use of the vernacular and justifies it as more pleasing to the ear than Latin, which religious women would have used every day for the monastic hours and prayers. However, it is likely that some women, even at Barking, would not have been Latinate and would not know the language beyond its liturgical use. The population of Latinate women – and men – outside of Barking and other major monasteries would have been even smaller. Translating the *vie* into the vernacular neatly skirts past this uncomfortable reality within the ecclesiastical community. Within her *vie* Clemence is not only translating the life of Katherine, but also incorporating contemporary theological debates and the philosophies of church fathers. She is effectively removing a barrier of access to these discussions, admitting her audience to participate in them. By using the common language of England and France Clemence ensures a large audience for her work; by using courtly language and devotional narrative she ensures its popularity and cultural relevance. Her *Vie de Katherine* places her – and Barking – squarely within the cultural zeitgeist. Clemence shows that her abbey is not just a passive recipient of discourse, but also an active contributor; there is a permeability to Barking's walls.

Saint Katherine, whose cult in western Europe originated at Rouen, made an impact on English shores with the landing of the Norman forces in 1066. Previously, her only link to England was supposedly through another saint, Edward the Confessor, who is said to have brought a vial of her holy oil back from Rouen.<sup>384</sup> While the connection between Katherine and Edward is not mentioned in either *vie*, it was likely known as legend amongst those in the

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<sup>384</sup> See Auslander, 'Clemence and Catherine', p. 168, and K.L. Lewis, *The Cult of Saint Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval Europe*, pp. 52-3.

monastery, as Edward held special status within Barking, which is exemplified in the anonymous Nun's *vie*.

The association of Edward and Barking is as not simple, but it is significant to the authorisation of Norman rule in England as well as locating corporate female spirituality at Barking. The Anonymous Nun follows two previous lives of Edward for her *vie* but deviates significantly from both to place her monastery within a place of the esteemed and holy elite. Her primary source is Ælred of Rievaulx's Latin *vita*, written approximately 1161-16. This is in turn based on Osbert of Clare's earlier Latin *vita* (c. 1138), who is using material of an anonymous life to inform his own. The Nun has adapted her exemplars considerably. Like Katherine, she has successfully translated a challenging Latin text into Anglo-Norman French, as well as shifted verse into prose. This shift of genre gave the Nun more freedom in her adaptation of the story, which she used to insert her own exploration of the current spiritual and political discourse.

Perhaps most significant and obvious is her decision to give Queen Edith a voice. Previously, Edward's wife and queen remained a passive figure in his story, despite historical knowledge of her active political life alongside him.<sup>385</sup> Ælred and Osbert deny her direct interaction with the reader and audience. The Nun uses her as a character through which the idea of chaste marriage idealised and embodied with Edward. Chastity is described in the *vie* as a 'treasure' within the 'frail vessel' of a human body that could 'too easily fall to pieces.'<sup>386</sup> The keeping of true chastity required the maintenance of an intact body; the violation of a body – either through physical or mental penetration – dismantled its

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<sup>385</sup> See Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 7, but especially Thelma Fenster, 'On Equal Chastity'.

<sup>386</sup> Bliss, *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 84. 'Kar en fieble vassel esteit / Et de poi tost depescereit. (E\_w1107-8).

impermeable walls and, therefore, undermined its virtuous state. By agreeing to a chaste marriage with Edward and having henceforth maintained her own virginity, Edith represents the ideal nun. The true marriage she seeks is not an earthly one but heavenly, as ‘chastity is so glorious that she becomes God’s bride.’ The Nun positions the ideal marriage as one between two souls, rather than two bodies. She elevates the idea of bodily intactness as one not to be desired by just religious persons, but by all seeking the dignity of God’s love. She makes her point clear: this is what the upper status women religious believe and practice at Barking; this is what elevates them.

Edward does more than just represent an ideal in marriage to the Nun, however. He also endows the monastery with his holiness, authorizing it as a place of sanctity and miracles. After his death, both the *vita* and *vie* relate that Edward heals a nun at Barking who is suffering from the severe bodily effects of a ‘quartan fever.’<sup>387</sup> She dreams she must travel to Westminster, Edward’s substitute for Rome where his relics now lay, in order to be cured.<sup>388</sup> However, she is reluctant to go so far due to her bodily state, arguing ‘I’m sure that if it’s truly your will, you could perfectly well cure me here [at Barking]’ and then proceeding to flatter his miraculous powers.<sup>389</sup> This works, and the nun wakes up cured the following morning. The Nun changes this story very little from Ælred, but her version changes the implications for her abbey. In Ælred’s *vita*, the healing miracle is coming from Westminster to Barking over a period of time with her prayers until she is fully cured; the miracle is aimed at an individual nun for a specific purpose. In the Nun’s *vie*, the abbey itself is made as a

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<sup>387</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 197. ‘*de fievre quartaine*’, Södergård, *La Vie*, v.6454.

<sup>388</sup> For Westminster as a substitute for Rome, see Edward’s ‘failed’ pilgrimage and his recompense to Pope Leo IX, Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, pp. 94-104.

<sup>389</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 197. ‘*E certes, se vus bien vulez / tres bien guarri ci me purrez*’, Södergård, *La Vie*, v.6508-9.

place of intercession for the nun. She is introduced as a veiled nun of ‘our abbey,’ Barking, ‘here to this day, in sanctity and worthiness,’ implying the abbey is home to such women and extending these qualities to the abbey as a whole.<sup>390</sup> Edward heals her because she is a veiled Barking nun, not just because of her anonymous individual prayers. In doing so, he re-authorises the corporate sanctity of the abbey and endows it with a little sprinkle of masculine spirituality. Barking’s place as a holy site is reinforced by this miracle, becoming a stand-in Westminster for occasional proxy miracles from Edward.

The sick nun’s worthiness is mired in discourse of female religious spirituality, but in the context of the Nun’s *Vie d’Edouard*, it primarily implies the intactness of her chastity, and therefore her body. Within the *vie*, the metaphor of bodily intactness, as earlier, can be extended to the abbey in general, reflecting the intactness continuity of Barking from the Anglo-Saxon to the Anglo-Norman period, but also to England and its continuity through the Conquest. The metaphor of bodily intactness, especially in regard to Edward, reflect the anxieties surrounding the intactness of England through the Conquest. As a chaste king in a chaste marriage, Edward did not produce any heirs, opening the throne up to anyone who had claim and others like William of Normandy. As Jennifer Brown writes, ‘All of the early iterations of the *vita* of St Edward the Confessor reflect an anxiety about the fractured and broken body of England,’ reflecting not only the Conquest but also the civic anarchy caused by Stephen and Matilda’s wars.<sup>391</sup> The Nun was likely writing during the reign of Henry II, who many saw as the answer to their war-torn prayers. As a descendent of Alfred, he carried

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<sup>390</sup> Bliss, *Vie d’Edouard*, p. 196. ‘*E unkore est tresqu’a cest jur / En sancté e en grant valur*’, Södergård, *La Vie*, v.6446-7.

<sup>391</sup> Brown, ‘Body, Gender and Nation’, p. 146. ‘The Anarchy,’ as it has come to be known, lasted from 1138 to 1153.

‘English’ (read: Anglo-Saxon) blood and brought peace not seen since the Confessor’s reign.<sup>392</sup> Henry II represented the continuity of England as an intact political state, marrying the old to the new. Likewise, Edward’s holiness bestowed upon Barking in the *vie* authorised the nunnery as a place of continuous and powerful sanctity, connecting its powerful Anglo-Saxon past to its place in the Anglo-Norman present. In doing so the abbey maintains its importance, both in relation to Westminster and the king, attracting valuable patronage from powerful families. Barking Abbey’s place as a location for high status learned women religious remained secure due to it legitimised corporate integrity.

The women of Barking created a monastic space for themselves within the discourse of spirituality that was changing as quickly as England. The location of the abbey within the political and physical landscape was crucial to this. Its place informed their own feminine discourse and affected how they interacted within the larger discourse of the church. Both *vies* indicate that Clemence and the Nun were knowledgeable of the contemporary theological landscape, integrating the influential ideas of Anselm into their works. Their connections and proximity to Westminster situated them close to power, which they used to their spiritual and political advantage. Spiritually, the abbey acted as proxy pilgrimage for those unable to not wanting to visit Westminster, which in turn represented a proxy Rome. Politically, the abbey effectively became Westminster when William took up residence there following his successful invasion. The defeated Anglo-Saxon lords travelled to Barking, not Westminster, to pay him homage. It is possible that the land William’s tower was built on was

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<sup>392</sup> Henry II, son of Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I, son of Edith/Matilda of Scotland, daughter of Margaret of Wessex.

given by Barking to William; it sits adjacent to the nuns' London refuge, All Hallows Church.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> I have been unable to corroborate with claim with any other sources so far. Sturman does not allude to it in their exploration of Barking Abbey land holdings, nor does Mitchell pp. 98-99. However, the VCH Essex mentions land in London near the All Hallows Church that belonged to Barking before the Conquest, specifically '28 houses, which render 13 shillings and 8 pence, and moiety of a church which, in King Edward's time, used to render 6 shillings and 8 pence, and now does not' (vol. 1, p. 448) and William I issued a protective grant confirming the rights and lands of the abbey 1066x1087 implying some personal involvement in their well-being, *RRAN*, no. 240.

## Chapter Four: An Anonymous Women's Prayer

### Textual Space

Tucked away in the middle of a mid-thirteenth century Anglo-Norman manuscript containing an edition of Origen's sermons from the Book of Joshua are a set of folios which have never been closely examined. The bibliographic entry in the *Summary Catalogue* of the Bodleian, which records the Rufinius edition of the sermons and an untitled confessional treatise on those folios ff. 56r-62v, fails to identify a second confessional treatise that follows the end of the fifth sermon on folio 73r.<sup>394</sup> It is easy to miss; both works are copied in a very similar, possibly the same, hand and there are no chapter headings or coloured initials to indicate a new prayer.<sup>395</sup> Only an 'amen' featuring a, explicit and lengthy 'n' functions as an *explicit* to the fifth sermon. Based on the lack of recorded bibliographic information, Tony Hunt and Janet Bliss were likely the first to identify the second treatise in their monograph of translated Anglo-Norman religious texts in 2010 and the text has remained untouched by the scholarly community since.<sup>396</sup> Douce 282 seems to contain the only extant copy of this treatise, sadly a fragment that ends abruptly on f. 77r imperfect. With no other name or exemplar, Hunt and Bliss titled the treatise 'A Women's Prayer.' The treatise will be titled consistent with Hunt

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<sup>394</sup> Falconer, *A summary catalogue of western manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. 4, no. 21856, p. 579. The general confessional treatise also occurs in London, BL, Harley 273; London, Lambeth Palace Library, 182; and Dublin, Trinity College, 374. See Hunt below, 'Woman's Prayer', p. 262.

<sup>395</sup> Tony Hunt argues the scribal hand is the same for the fifth sermon as well as the female confessional prayer. It is certainly very similar, but it could be two different scribes. See below, Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 262.

<sup>396</sup> Hunt provides an edition of 'A Woman's Prayer' in full, with an introduction, transcription, and translation done by Bliss. The only bibliographic reference to the text aside from Hunt group the text under the catchall title of "Prayers to God in Prose" in Ruth Dean and Maureen Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, (London, 1999) no. 853, p. 448. They do not single out the second text and provide no other information other than the identifying folios, shelfmark, general date, and opening lines of the prayer, along a note of Hunt's forthcoming edition.

and Bliss' edition throughout the thesis in reference to the '*ancele pecheresse*', or 'sinful handmaiden', who likely composed the prayer.

The prayer begins with an immediate identification of the gender of the speaker:

Dear Lord, Our Father, have mercy on this your wretched, sinful handmaiden  
for the love of your dear Son, who endured death for me through his  
generosity and without my deserving it.<sup>397</sup>

She identifies herself quickly as a 'handmaiden' of God, using the noun '*ancele*' and the feminine adjective '*pecheresse*'. However, without a colophon or any other identifying marks of authorship, it is not possible to definitively establish if the author/speaker as female, or indeed a monastic woman. The likelihood this prayer was used in a monastic setting is high, as the rest of the manuscript's contents, especially the Joshua sermons, indicate its use either for monks or nuns.<sup>398</sup> Additionally, two of the three other manuscripts that contain the more general confessional treatise were likely owned by monasteries, suggesting it was common enough amongst contemporary professional religious. Due to the general nature of the sermons and treatise, it is also not possible to narrow down an area in England where the manuscript could have been located. It is entirely possible that it belonged to a nunnery or a less formal group of religious women at the time, but there is no hard evidence for female ownership other than its main content.

It is also more likely that the author of this confessional is a woman than a man, to say nothing of how and where the confessional was used. An anonymous confessional treatise in

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<sup>397</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 264-5: '[B]eau Sire Pere, merci aez de ceste vostre cheitive ancele pecheresse pur amur de vostre du Fiz, ke pur mei endura la mort par sa franchise sanz mes dessertes.' All translations are from his edition, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>398</sup> Hunt has also produced an edition of these sermons. Tony Hunt, *Sermons on Joshua*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, vol. 13 (London, 1998).

the vernacular is not uncommon in medieval England – another one appears in this manuscript alone as referenced above. However, it is significantly less common to have a text from a female perspective in this time. More often a male writer composes a didactic treatise for a female religious from a clear male point of view and provides his name.<sup>399</sup> A male author, whether anonymous or not, is usually explicit in his instruction of spirituality. His religious authority comes from a place of masculine status, like John Godard, expressed through his position in the church, or through the belief of the innate superiority of men over women.<sup>400</sup> There is no known instance of a man writing a first-person confessional treatise as a woman for use within the setting of feminine spirituality. If this did occur, it is unlikely the treatise would be entirely feminine, as confessional treatises whose reflected gender was more ambiguous could enjoy more popularity.

The first untitled treatise is more general in its language and also from a first-person point of view. It is also found in two other thirteenth-century composite manuscripts: Dublin, Trinity College, MS 374 and London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 182. The Trinity 374 and Lambeth 182 manuscripts have another text in common, a popular *Pater Noster* commentary by Adam of Exeter.<sup>401</sup> Based on dating of extant texts, it is determined the commentary was originally addressed to a female religious leader (*'tres chere mere'*) and her companions (*'vus femmes de religion'*).<sup>402</sup> Yet, this text is more often found addressed to male religious or lay

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<sup>399</sup> Notable authors include John Godard, Osbert of Clare, Alan of Tewksbury, Simon of Waverly and Hugh of Reading.

<sup>400</sup> Godard was a Cistercian monk seemingly of no status who wrote a didactic treatise to the Cistercian abbess of Tarrant Keynston in 1240x1250. See Freeman, 'John Godard's Treatise' and Talbot, 'Two Opuscula of John Godard'.

<sup>401</sup> We are not quite sure who Adam is. Hunt writes, 'Adam of Exeter is normally identified with the Adam Rufus to whom Robert Grosseteste addressed the letter ... [containing] the early *De forma prima omnium* and the *De intelligenciis*' though he also could have been the 'Adam of Oxonia' who left England to preach to the Saracens. See Hunt, *Cher Alme*, p. 73.

<sup>402</sup> Hunt, *Cher Alme*, pp. 78-9.

men; sometimes, as in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 112, the corrections from female to male are still discernible within the manuscript. Lambeth 182 and Trinity 374 both contain clean, uncorrected male versions of the commentary, which likely indicates a primary male ownership.

It seems that it was more important for male religious to have any text with feminine language in the primary text corrected for the masculine, even it was in the vernacular.<sup>403</sup> Manuscripts with female provenance, however, are less likely to change gendered language within a manuscript to suit their needs.<sup>404</sup> The treatise of the *ancele* is unapologetically female in its first instance of introduction and continues its use of feminine language throughout the text, specifically in its use of feminized adjectives. If the author were male, it is likely he would have masculinised the adjectives to describe the subject so only the words '*ancele pecheresse*' (which only appears once) necessitate change or erasure.

While the identity of the author is important, at this time we can only make an educated guess as to their gender. The narrator of the text, however, is decidedly female based on her self-identification as an '*ancele pecheresse*'. The use of the word '*ancele*' likely indicates her as a woman religious due virginal status the word implies, as one would in Latin using '*ancilla*.' The feminine adjective '*pecheresse*' supports the intentional gendering of the noun. Additionally, the confessional contains no mention of earthly marriage or other lay female subjects such as childbirth, other than references to Mary and the virgin birth. It could be used by a lay pious woman, but it makes more sense in the hands of a type of religious

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<sup>403</sup> This excludes marginal or flyleaf additions. Other examples of this include: The *Tiberius* group manuscripts, the Nero/Galba prayerbook, and Adam of Exeter's *Pater Noster* commentary from Cambridge, Pembroke College, 112.

<sup>404</sup> See Barking MS Bodley 155, Nunnaminster MS Bodley 451, and Shaftesbury's Winchester Psalter, BL Cotton Nero C.iv.

woman. The subject matter is similar to the underlying themes in Book of Nunnaminster and the *vies* of *Katherine* and *Eduoard* as it focuses is on the body, both Christ's and the reader's a place of wholeness and spirituality. However, whereas Harley 2965 offers religious meditation and the *vies* theological engagement, the *ancele* treatise is a visceral, bloody plea of forgiveness: it offers one body for another. Its emotional manipulation is effective due to its meticulous composition using a variety of rhetorical devices designed to inflict a whole-body response. Whoever the author was, they were intimately aware of the textual strengths and limitations of monastic feminine spirituality in the mid-thirteenth century.

The prayer is addressed directly to God, referred to in by a variety of titles that are both respectful and familiar: '*Sire Pere*', '*duz Pere*', '*duz Sire*', '*Beau Sire*', etc. The speaker, in one of her many instances of anaphora, repeatedly pleads to him to forgive her on his son's (Christ) behalf. '*Tres piu Pere,*' she writes, '*regardez vostre du Fiz, cum il fu cruelement treitré pur mei.*'<sup>405</sup> In his edition, Hunt often uses a renewed address to God as a paragraph break to organise the text; in the manuscript there are no such breaks, so any '*Sire*' or '*Pere*' is noticeably peppered throughout the piece, its repetition easily marked by a glance. Her pleas to God are punctuated by a verb in the imperative immediately following his title. Above, it is '*Tres piu Pere, regardez*'. The speaker often demands him to *regardez* or *esgardez* his son in his suffering in direct contrast to her own sinfulness. The combination of such repetition and demands creates a sense of urgency and brings emotional weight to the piece, resulting in the feeling of passion throughout. She is, in effect, begging.

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<sup>405</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 264-5. 'Merciful father, look upon your beloved Son, who was cruelly treated for my sake.'

This passion is directed at the relationship between the speaker and Christ, who she positions in contrast to one another through her pleas to God, his Father. Hunt posits the author has adapted the Good Friday *improperia* for her own purposes, where Christ reproaches mankind from the cross.<sup>406</sup> Traditionally in an *improperia*, Christ speaks of his goodness and man replies, in contrast, with his own innate sinfulness. Christ assumes the position of authority that stems from his position of active suffering. The author has rewritten this script for her own purposes however, positioning herself as the primary speaker and measuring herself against Christ. He is suffering on the cross, but through her only through her impression. Neither God nor Christ speak in the confessional. Christ is rarely addressed directly, as if the speaker can hardly bear it to face him. Instead, like a regretful child she apologises indirectly to the parental figure of authority, God, and seeks forgiveness through him. Though speaker is a sinner, she is also the only voice heard in the confessional, leaving the reader to perceive her vision and trust in her textual authority.

The voice of the *ancele*, which is so textually authoritative in her demands of God, is contrasted against the innate discursive sinfulness of her body. The speaker never enumerates her sins specifically; rather, she confesses to general wickedness and susceptibility to the devil derived from the feminine flesh. She assumes the consequences of the Original Sin upon herself through the possession of a female body, aligning herself with the perceived wickedness of Eve. She actions herself in place of Eve, saying, ‘I stole the hanging apple from the tree of Paradise’.<sup>407</sup> In doing so, the speaker takes responsibility for the consequence of the actions which led to the loss of prelapsarian purity, allegorical or literal. Through her

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<sup>406</sup> Hunt, *Cher Alme*, p. 276.

<sup>407</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, pp. 264-5: ‘*la pume pendante emblai en l’arbre de Parais ... mun larrecin*’.

identification with Eve, the speaker acknowledges inherent sexual impurity as a distinct female sin, and the flesh a feminine entity. It is, as she demonstrates throughout her prayer, the consistent source of human depravity.

The intensity of the writing, strengthened by the speaker's use of anaphora and her impertinence, forces the reader to reckon with their own physicality. When read to oneself, the confessional is repetitive and almost meditative. The numerous '*Beau Pere*'s provides a rhythm to the lines, inasmuch as the reader can almost use them as a breath mark.

While it is possible to read this text silently to oneself, the style of the text also lends itself to performance, either public or private.<sup>408</sup> Through such visceral description of Christ on the cross, it is easy to picture a penitent bowed at a crucifix performing her duty. The overuse of *regardez* and *esgardez* function not only to direct God's eyes, but also those of the reader and/or audience. These words challenge the previously more sanitised image of the Crucifixion as presented in the Gospels, Anselm's prayer cycles, and the Book of Nunnaminster. Instead, the author is demanding you 'Look!' upon the blood which pours from Christ's side. 'See!' how he suffers for your sake. Such insistence upon the examination of Christ's physicality during the passion invites the reader – or audience – to examine their own.

This insistence of self-identification is pushed further by the author through her use of rhetorical contrast, or *contentio*. Christ's sacrifice is regularly measured against her own failing in the strongest of terms, using bold imagery. She writes:

I committed the sin, and you bore the punishment. I contrived the wrong, and  
you endure the pain and the torment. I grew proud, and you humiliated

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<sup>408</sup> As noted in the introduction, the modern idea of privacy did not exist during the medieval period.

yourself. I grew fat on my pleasures, and you grew thin through travail and through fasting. I was disobedient, and you bought it with your life.<sup>409</sup>

Here, the speaker's short sentences form a staccato-like pattern of accusations against herself: tiny rhetorical spikes to pierce through the page as if to strike. Again, the *ancele* uses repetition at the beginnings of lines to emphasise her emotion. Her lines are a constant barrage of 'Jo's aimed at both the eyes and the heart of the reader as each statement begins anew with sentiment of self-recognition. There is no syntactical space for the reader to distance herself from the bond between text and person. Instead, the reader must become the speaker and accept the onslaught of moral failings caused by the possession of a sinful flesh.

The absorption of the reader into the prayer is performed textually but grounded in physicality. Such identification with the speaker is not possible without reference the source of her sins: the female body. The physical content of the prayer combined with the textual insistence of sinful identification results in the reader assimilating with the voice *and* body of the speaker. The importance of this is demonstrated by the theme of physicality beginning as the prayer does, with an almost immediately reference to metaphorical 'the bonds of sin' that constrain the speaker against her will; she is unable to move without the intervention of God.<sup>410</sup> Such imagery is readily accessible to readers, making the text relevant to their own sense of feminine corporeality and the discursive wickedness of its possession. The speaker underscores the connections between flesh, femininity, and sin by maintaining its origins in Eve, the manifest ancestor and original sinner. Both Eve and the speaker are then contrasted

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<sup>409</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 268-9: '*Jo fis la felunie e vus en portates le piene. Jo cuntruvai la malice e vus endurez la peine e le torment. Jo m'enorguilli e vus vus enhumiliez. Jo m'engressi de mes delices, e vus vus enmegristes par travailz e p[ar] junes. Jo fui inobediente e vus l'achatastes de la vie.*'

<sup>410</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 264-5: '*des liens de pecché*'.

against Christ, the epitome of masculine goodness. She writes, ‘See how his whole body is stretched out for mine, which has often been stretched out in mortal sin.’<sup>411</sup> Christ can wear such flesh and overcome it through its pain and destruction due to his soulful purity. She wishes to emulate him but must first acknowledge that the sin of the flesh was that of the woman. Seemingly, this is the only sin the speaker, possibly the reader, has committed.

The effectiveness of *imitatio Christi* based on the prayer relies on the reader’s ability to identify as the sinner or, better yet, inhabit the text itself. Thirteenth-century discourse continually reduced monastic women down to their physicality as men sought more control in the hierarchy of the church.<sup>412</sup> The dangers of female sex and their wanton flesh were highly publicised.<sup>413</sup> Monastic women were caught in an impossible situation of hypocrisy. Their dedication to the preservation of their virginity as a prerequisite of their vocation should have excluded them from such hypersexualising discourse. Instead, their proximity to Christian dogma made them targets. Religious women’s status as dedicated and chaste placed them in the position to potentially overcome the discursive trappings of their gender, elevating them to a non-gendered status similar to how the masculine functioned in society. However, the religious-social acceptance of the female religious as near equals was a threat to the superiority of the male sex and masculine qualities within the gender binary. As McNamara has noted, ‘the masculine gender ... requires strong social support to maintains fictions of

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<sup>411</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, pp. 266-7: ‘Esgardez cum tut sun cors est estendu pur le mein, ki suvent ad esté estendu en mortel pecché.’

<sup>412</sup> Rome’s encouragement of increased episcopal visitations in the first half of the thirteenth century is one example of the male exertion of control over religious structures such as female monasteries. See C.R. Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries* and Boureau, ‘How the Law Came to the Monks’.

<sup>413</sup> Discourse on the evils of the female physicality began much earlier, as noted in Chapter One, but grew significantly beginning primarily in the twelfth century as clerical celibacy was imposed by Rome. The anxiety surrounding female physicality is exemplified in the twelfth-century statutes of Fontevrault by Robert D’Arbrissel, where there are eighteen rules for the strict enclosure of nuns. See Simmons, ‘Anxiety, Authority, and Architecture.’

superiority.’<sup>414</sup> Without the discursive support, such fictions would crumble. Thus, religious women were discursively maligned as the church accepted and enacted Aristotelian theories on the feeble female sex, asserting an affiliation of all women, religious or lay, with original enemy, Eve. The female monastic dedication to chastity would require an enormous amount of spiritual effort as they inhabited the weakest human vessel most inclined to sin: the female body.

Religious women were reduced to a physicality they could not escape, even through religious vocation. Yet, the popular acceptance of Christ’s humanity to within Christianity offered a way for the relentlessly disparaged monastic women to embrace their physicality in their spiritual practice. Their inescapable bodies became central to their worship; their ‘innate’ sinfulness actually brought them closer to Christ. As such, the reader of the confessional *needs* to identify with the speaker if she is to practice *imitatio Christi* effectively. Without the recognition of having such a wretched physicality, there is no validity in her connection with Christ. The reader must place herself in the text, live the text, embody the text, to realise her own spirituality in imitation of Christ.

The involvement of the body within the text produces a lived experience of the text for the participant, who, in this case, must be female. The body possesses an inscriptional exteriority that creates a psychic interiority. Grosz argues, ‘a more socio-political exteriority produces interiority through the *inscription* of the body’s outer surface.’<sup>415</sup> Medieval monastic women in England in the later thirteenth century experienced a socio-religious discursive shift that left them with less acceptable options to practice their spirituality in a feminine

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<sup>414</sup> McNamara, ‘The Herrenfrage’, p. 3.

<sup>415</sup> Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 33.

manner. Such religious discourse identified and fixed on their bodies as the site of the original and all henceforth sins. The inscription of these ideological scripts upon the bodies of religious women resulted in a spiritual response in which they embraced physicality within their practice. If they were to be reduced to their bodies, they would use their bodies to for their devotion. Excluded from the liturgical traditions and theological education which had previously enabled the textual production of custom prayers and hagiography, the bodies of religious women became the only useable space where textual traditions could continue. The monastic space they were afforded for their spirituality was inside themselves: the psychical interior. It was through the use of their bodies they could access and imitate Christ.

The lived experience of the text offered monastic women the opportunity to perform their spirituality while maintaining adherence to the accepted socio-religious discourse. The prayer itself can be read as a performance piece, as mentioned earlier, but one that is primarily internalised. It is ostentatious in its affectivity for God and the suffering of Christ while simultaneously skirting around any specific instance of sin from the speaker. She repeatedly addresses God in amorous terms throughout her confession, as if constantly needing to recapture a lover's wavering attention. When she succeeds at this, the speaker directs God's focus to her sinfulness, often involving her physicality, in contrast to Christ's goodness and undue suffering, which is focused on *his* physicality. Here, one of many choices for example:

Dear Lord, give him this poor chattel of his that he bought so dear: my wretched body with all its limbs to serve him henceforth, and my sorrowful soul, for which he gave his own precious soul. This is he, dear Lord, whom you smote for the sin of your people, your gentle Son whom you so loved,

whom you so love, he who never did wrong and was judged a criminal among criminals. Alas! sweet Child!<sup>416</sup>

Her descriptions of herself, God, and Christ are, again, gaudy and overwrought as she postures for forgiveness. Her body is wretched for no other reason than having flesh and her soul is sorrowful for it. She addresses God, and then turns her attention – though not her words – to Christ, who she recognises at his right hand at the start of the prayer. Yet, they are not physically present and likely no one, other than the speaker herself, is there to watch this spiritual performance. A prayer in this format can be read as a soliloquy, staged for the edification of the speaker, recipient, and audience. It exists as much for her as it does for whomever may hear it. It is as if the speaker is an inverse Prometheus, admitting her wrongs, assuming someone will hear her, and ready to accept any punishment deemed necessary.<sup>417</sup>

Yet, the reality of the prayer is isolation. This text is now solely extant in Douce 282 and had been overlooked for at least five hundred years, despite the acknowledgment of the other various manuscript contents. Its bibliographic situation mirrors its content. We can presume to whom the prayer is for and why it was written, but how was it said? Where in the female spiritual space could it exist? Whereas previously monastic women could practice their spirituality through a variety of textual spaces and forms like those explored above, now it seems their options were much more limited and constricted. Prayers such as the Douce 282 confessional became much rarer in England as the fourteenth century approached, even

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<sup>416</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 266-7: '*Beau Sire, denez li sun povre chattel ke il cher achata, mun cheitif cors od tut les membres a li server desore e ma doleruse alme pur ki il duna le sue preciuse. Ço est cestui, duz Sire, ke vos ferites pur le pecché de vostre pueple, vostre duz Fiz ke vos tant amastes e tant amez, cil ki unkes mal ne fist e entre les feluns fu jugé cum fel. Ahi, tresduz enfant!*'

<sup>417</sup> Meanwhile, Prometheus's soliloquy centres around how he is unfairly chained to a desolate rock as he demands to know what he has done to deserve such punishment from Zeus. *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus, trans. Herbert Weir Smith, in two volumes (Cambridge, 1926).

with the larger overall number of extant nunnery manuscripts post-1300. Such types of texts were exceedingly marginalised, as the discursive mainstream became more accepting of works written *at* rather than *for* or *by* women religious. This is part, perhaps, due to new papal decree of strict enclosure for all monastic women enacted in 1298. As interaction was severely limited and female religious were excluded further from religious society, their communication with it was reduced to a point of reception, rather than participation. They became spiritually isolated within their monasteries and within their own bodies, dependent on male-authored texts promoting masculine values instead of their own.

The obsessive and escalating focus of Christian religious dogma in England from the eleventh century on the sinful feminine body collapsed the location of female monastic practice onto and into their physicality. The spiritual spaces afforded through texts and monastic buildings were marginalised by masculinist discourse until the only space femininity could exist was inside themselves. Following the speaker's plea for God to accept for his misery her 'sorrow of heart and tear of eye and travail of body,' she says, 'let me be able so to enclose your sweet love in my heart that nothing may henceforth soothe it except you.'<sup>418</sup> While the focus of her text remains on the contrast between her 'wicked' body and Christ's sinless one, the speaker makes it clear where her spiritual devotion to Christ exists: within herself.

At one point, the speaker claims, 'I am worthless by myself,' as if alone she is atrophied carcass and only the addition of Christ's love can make her whole.<sup>419</sup> The theme of wholeness is underlined by her *contentio*, constantly contrasting her failings against Christ's

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<sup>418</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 268-269: '*Et ke jo puisse la vostre duce amur si enclore en mun quor ke ren ne m'enducisse desore fors vus.*'

<sup>419</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 270-271: '*jo sui vile de mei*'.

achievements. Together, with Christ existing inside her body, they create a person worthy of heavenly rewards. Christ's presence within her creates such intactness, both spiritual and bodily. As in the *vies* of Edward and Katherine, there is a focus in the prayer on the unbroken Christian body. A metaphor for chastity, it is particularly relevant to the female speaker whose ability to participate in monasticism is reliant on her chaste body. As her sins confessed to be bodily in nature, and she asks God to 'heal my painful wounds,' it is possible that her perceived sin is linked to her chastity.<sup>420</sup> Or, as posited above, the sin could simply be her possession of flesh with the potential for such unchaste deeds. Nonetheless, her chastity is maintained only with Christ in her soul, and it must be retained to keep him there.

## **Bodily Space**

'A Women's Prayer' contained in Douce 282 was written *c.*1250, by which time the discourse surrounding *corpus Christi* had been transformed from purely metaphorical to accessibly literal.<sup>421</sup> Christ became the ultimate man-God with whom an intimate relationship was fully possible. Female monastic spirituality continued to be bound up in the discourse of the feminised body but was increasingly vilified as it was used as a foil for the increasingly fragile male perceptions of masculinity. In 1222, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, prohibited any form of female-to-female confession in a monastery in England following the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.<sup>422</sup> Nuns were only to confess to

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<sup>420</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', pp. 268-9: '*mes doleruses plaies saner*'.

<sup>421</sup> In *Vie d'Edouard*, p. 31, Bliss notes that 'manuscripts of Anselm's work were rare in the twelfth century: his writings had little influence after his death (1109), and did not begin to be taken seriously until the thirteenth century.' In Chapter Three, I argue this Anselm's wider influence was inconsequential to the nuns of Barking who likely had access to early and innovative theological work due to their high-status connections. However, the extent of Anselm's influence is highly relevant to 'A Woman's Prayer.' By 1250, Anselm's work would have been highly influential across the continent and in England. See Sharpe, 'Anselm as Author' and Slotemaker, *Search for God*.

<sup>422</sup> Freeman, 'Fourth Lateran Council of 1215'.

priests appointed to them by their bishop.<sup>423</sup> It was determined that if their bodies were the site of sin, then they could not be capable of absolving anyone else of sin. Practicing confession for monastic women became an intimate conversation between themselves and Christ.

The body, both the author's and Christ's, becomes the ideological focal point for monastic women who existed within an unresolved discursive reality concerning their own. Lateran IV under Pope Innocent III also promoted stronger ideas on the enclosure of religious women, which would be fully realized with the decretal *Periculoso* issued in 1298 by Pope Boniface VIII. Not only was the body recognised by religious women as the site of their sin and communion with Christ, but also as the enclosed place for to practice their religiosity. As monastic women were continually marginalised within Christianity, they sought new spaces in which they could exist. Unable to escape both the enclosure of the nunnery and their own flesh, they turned inwards, creating a spirituality based on and within their own 'natural' interiority. Their body was the only place that could be regarded as their own domain. Ideal spirituality for monastic women thus became increasingly focused on the impenetrability of the body by any negative forces, such as sexual sinfulness or gluttony, as maintaining its purity was necessary for communion with Christ. Chastity and asceticism were used not to deny the flesh, but instead functioned as protection of bodily intactness by penetrative forces to foster a godly relationship based on shared flesh. As a monastic woman, embracing spirituality meant embracing the body – and all the pain contained within.

As in the Book of Nunnaminster, *passio Christi* is the entry point for a feminine text regarding Christ's body. The intensity of his suffering is highlighted through his body in both

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<sup>423</sup> Bugyis, 'Practice of Penance,' p. 80.

texts, though the *corpus Christi* is interpreted in a significantly different way in ‘A Woman’s Prayer.’ As opposed to the writing found within the pre-Conquest prayerbook referenced above, which is meditative and based in liturgical practice, the writing within Douce 282 is a personal lament that wails with emotion. The prayer’s rhetorical structure can also be interpreted as meditative through its use of anaphora, but its emotionality differs to create a much more personal bodily experience. The author speaks directly to God, simultaneously recognising the miracle of the Trinity but also separating out Christ as his human son. She writes with urgency, commanding him (and herself) to look upon the suffering of his son that he undertook for her sake, using formal imperative forms ‘*Esgardez*,’ ‘*Regardez*,’ and ‘*Veez*’ constantly throughout her piece.<sup>424</sup> She demands recognition of Christ’s suffering, specifically with regards to his body in exchange for hers.

That humanity, his flesh, is the basis of her bond with Christ, providing the speaker with what she understands as a dynamic connection. Within her first lines, the author writes he is ‘clothed in my flesh,’ and continues to repeat this sentiment throughout her lamentation.<sup>425</sup> Less than two lines later she is again relying on ‘him who put on my flesh on earth and who bore it up to heaven.’<sup>426</sup> It is the same flesh with which Mary made Christ, yet also with which Eve condemned humanity.<sup>427</sup> It is sinful, holy, contradictory, and undeniably female. She talks of his body with reverence bordering on erotic and uses contrasting

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<sup>424</sup> All three verbs appear within the first paragraph of her prayer, as edited by Hunt and Bliss, ‘Woman’s Prayer’, p. 266.

<sup>425</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, p. 264-5: ‘*vestu de ma char*’.

<sup>426</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, p. 264-5: ‘*ki ma char prist en terre e la sus au cel la porta*’.

<sup>427</sup> The speaker herself compares Eve and Mary, stating: ‘Eve smiles on my wicked flesh and wishes me joy of my misdeed; holy Mary sorrowfully mourns the suffering that you endure on account of my delights.’ (‘*Eve [a] ma male char mei surrist e me fet joie de mun mesfet, e la duce Marie doleruse[me]nt se deut de la vostre pein eke vu spur le men delit endurez.*’), Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, p. 268-9.

language borrowed from courtly *roman* to underscore the imagery. She invites – rather demands – the reader and God to picture it:

See how his whole body is stretched out for mine, which has often been stretched out in mortal sin. See the fair hands without sin, how the blood came pouring out in streams, and forgive the wicked deeds my hands have done. See his unprotected side, how cruelly it is pieced with the lance. Wash me in the fountain that flowed from it. See the beautiful feet, that never stood in the path of sin but always went in the way of your commandments, how cruelly they are pieced with the iron nails. Dear Lord, forgive me the trespasses I have committed with my feet, for he gave foot for foot. Lord, King of Heaven, in your sweet mercy make me henceforth to hasten in the way of your commandments, so I may join my spirit to that of him who for pity deigned to put on my flesh. ... Alas! Lord, how that white breast is bare and that side red and bloodied, and that fair belly stretched and racked, and that royal countenance – how pale it is – and the fine long arms, how cold they grow; and the fine thighs, beautiful legs, how wretchedly and painfully they hang down, and the gentle pierced feet, how they are sprinkled with that precious blood.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Hunt 'Women's Prayer', pp. 266-267, 'Esgardez cum tut sun cors est estendu pur le mein, ki suvent ad esté estendu en mortel pecché. Esgardez les beles meins sanz pecché, cum le sanc en eissi a grant radur, e pardunez les felunies ke mes meins unt ovrees. Veez sun dessarmé coste, cum cruelment il est de la lance percee. Lavez mei de la fontaine ke de ilokes eissi. Veez les beaus piez ke unkes n'esturent en veie de pecché mes tutdis alerent en la veie de voz cumandemenz, cum il sunt cruelement percez dé clous de fer. Beau sire, pardunez mei les pecchez ke jo a li puisse joinder mun esperit ke pur pieté se deigna da ma char vestir...Ahi! Sire, cum cel blanc piz est nu e cel coste ruge e ensangleté e cel beau ventre tendi e detrait, e cel real vut, cum il est pale e ces gentiz braz lungs, cum il refreidissent e celes gentiss quisses e celes beles jambes, cum povrement e dulurusement eles pendent e ces duz piez percez, cum il sunt arusez de cel precius sanc. Ahi! duz Pere, esgardez tuz les membres de vostre cher enfant, cum nul n'est quite de peine, e tut ço suffri pur mei.'

The author's description reads of a lover lamenting the death of a beloved, with her words conveying passionate emotion and physical intimacy. She takes responsibility for his death, recognising he died in the place of her sinful flesh, but that her flesh is seemingly synonymous with Christ's, who wore it willingly. His donned human body is made from the same flesh as hers: equally sinful. The author identifies her flesh with his to the point where it is interchangeable. She uses it as the primary point of relation between her and Christ. Her spirituality hinges on his body.

The commutable nature of the flesh presented in the prayer is highlighted by the author's rhetorical use of *contentio*, derived in itself from religious theme of *improperia*, as mentioned in above. Within traditional *improperia*, Christ is the speaker, contrasting his sacrifices against the sins of humanity from his place on the cross. It is an antiphonal call-and-response sequence. However, the author of the prayer reverses the relationship: instead, *she* is speaking directly to Christ and measuring her sins against his goodness. There is no response from above, nor is this liturgical ritual; it is personal. By replacing Christ as the primary voice within the prayer, the author aligns herself with Christ, indicating equivalent nature of their bodies and signalling the union of soul marriage. Christ is her bridegroom, but he is not separate from her: he lives within her, sharing her flesh and ingratiated in her soul.

By adapting the *improperia* format, the author adapts the Irigarayan concept of 'mimicry,' purposefully reading herself into the text through the shared sinful flesh.<sup>429</sup> The author is mimicking language and a format traditionally used within a masculinist script of Christianity, resubmitting herself and her body to it to recover her spirituality within such

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<sup>429</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 220: 'to play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without being simply reduced to it.'

discourse. The primary place of her exploitation is her body. Instead of being reduced to it, however, the author uses it as a focal point within her prayer to strengthen her connection with Christ. She inserts herself as speaker, removing Christ's voice from the first-person place of authority within the text. The focus shifts, even as it references Christ's body, to the body of the first-person female. The author recognises the discourse in which she exists, understands the vilification of the female body, and functions within it to carve out space for her own spirituality.

As such, her flesh is the site of her damnation, but also of her possible redemption. Whereas a masculine spirituality recognises feminine, postlapsarian flesh only as negative, spirituality becomes more complex for those who are simultaneously used and excluded from it for attributes that were understood as physiologically natural. The shift of Christ's body from metaphorical to literal under Anselmian theology allowed religious women a deeper spiritual grasp on their own bodies. Christ had earlier become a viable alternative to a mortal husband, but he still existed outside of the feminine as his own male figure. The full, intense recognition of his humanity, as exemplified by new dedication to the Eucharist in Lateran IV,<sup>430</sup> now fused Christ with flesh, both to his own and to those who awaited him on earth. For religious women, this indicated that there was no longer any difference between their own flesh and that of Christ. Their shared flesh elevated its importance, becoming more central to their spirituality and renewing an identification with Christ. In a sense, they could become him - and he them -exchanging flesh for flesh and voice for voice.

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<sup>430</sup> Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, see Chapter 2, 'Fast and Feast: The Historical Background', pp. 31-69, especially pp. 48-63.

Identification with Christ through the feminine body necessarily had some prerequisites, the most important being chastity, as Bernard of Clairvaux championed in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*. He argued, as mentioned above, bodily chastity – really virginity – was necessary to restore the image of God in soul.<sup>431</sup> Maintaining one's virginity was positioned in the thirteenth century as a constant struggle against evil temptations for monastic men and women. 'Evil temptation' for men manifested itself in women, who would tempt their bodies – physiologically included to weakness – away from the path to God. For women, evil temptation was a personal struggle against their theological predestination. As they were the ones seen as the temptresses, daughters of Eve, promiscuity incarnate, due to their gender, religious women faced marginalisation within monasticism and enclosure to separate them from men. Ideas for the enclosure of monastic women have origins in early monasticism, but were enacted in the thirteenth century, beginning with ideas put forth at Lateran IV in 1215. Women, already seen as naturally more 'interior' beings due to their lack of heat and location of their sex organs, were pushed further inwards by the discourse surrounding their bodies in relation to religion. Any excessive femininity, recognisable traits of the feminine that exceeded the acceptable discursive binary model in the masculine economy, was vilified and relegated to the margins of society. Therefore, any religious women who signified their femininity within their spirituality was marginalised. Bound to and contained within their flesh – and increasingly their nunnery – female monastic spirituality developed into a more internalised practice. The psychical interior became the only space that was truly theirs where they could develop feminine ideas regarding lived religion.

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<sup>431</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 92

Within the masculinist spiritual economy, feminine spaces were not safe. Religious women's continuous movement inward to constitute a space for their spirituality was an essential reaction to the masculinist discourse which inscribed itself on their bodies.<sup>432</sup> The creation of their interior spirituality was a result of being pushed out of other places through repeated attempts at penetration – both of their bodies, monasteries, and texts – by powerful external forces in a position to do them harm. Virginity, though a discursive bodily inscription borne from the heterosexual matrix, was embraced within feminine spirituality. It provided female religious with a vehicle that promoted agency over their spaces through impenetrability and endorsed their connection with Christ. Virginity and its advantages were (are) masculine constructs. Yet, it created an interior space, defined for and by the body, that gave women religious a place in which to practice their spirituality. The maintenance of their chastity made the space impenetrable, even by religious men who prescribed the chastity as a means of masculine control. Within this space, religious women could, through mimicry, produce their own *feminine* discourse regarding Christianity and Christ.

Impenetrability of the feminine bodily space was crucial to their lived religiosity and spirituality. The *ancele* of 'A Woman's Prayer' says to the Lord, 'And let me be able to so to enclose your sweet love in my heart that nothing may henceforth soothe it except you.'<sup>433</sup> The act of enclosure as it applied to women religious within their monasteries, also applied to the love of Christ within themselves as a means of relief. The space that enclosure provides is the site of their religiosity and spirituality. It is a space created through the actions of masculine distrust, but wholly maintained by the feminine body. Without such an impermeable space,

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<sup>432</sup> Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, pp. 33-4, and Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 32, 127.

<sup>433</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 268-9, '*E ke jo puisse la vostre duce amur si encloure en mun quor ke ren ne m'enducisse desore fors vus.*'

they could not successfully mitigate the allegations of bodily evil against them as perpetuated by masculine religious discourse.

Female monastic devotion to Christ in thirteenth-century England was exhibited by means of internal bodily events. Within the prayer, the *ancele* does not seek to emulate Christ in any other way than through her flesh. She begs the Lord to receive her unworthy body undertaking acts of emotional and physical pain as recompense for her sins, saying, ‘be pleased to accept one thing, small though it may be, for your great misery, that is sorrow of the heart and tear of the eye and travail of my body for my sins,’ going so far as to offer herself to an emotional crucifixion.<sup>434</sup> Her spirituality is based entirely within a psychological interior based on an inscribed exterior. This kind of internalisation of religion and subsequent affectivity was not uncommon in female monasticism in the high Middle Ages throughout Europe. However, it continued to intensify in England, producing impenetrable bodily spaces where feminine spirituality could exist and even flourish, resulting in female-specific spiritual experiences, such as those of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich later in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>435</sup>

The internal bodily space of feminine spirituality was initially created and enlarged through the idea of chastity, but it extended to other somatic aspects vulnerable to sin and masculinist penetration, including food, sleep, and clothing – all of which were related to the

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<sup>434</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, p. 268-9, ‘*une chose pernez vus a gré, tut se[it] il petit, pur vostre grant povertè, ço est dolur de quor e lerne de l’oil e travail de cors pur mes pecchez*’.

<sup>435</sup> Julian of Norwich, 1343- c. 1416, was an anchoress who spent the majority of her life in a cell attached to St Julian’s Church in Norwich. At thirty years old, she had a series of revelatory visions on the Passion of Christ while seriously ill. When she recovered, she wrote down her visions and continued to ruminate on them for the rest of her life, devoting her life to religion. Her writings produced what is now known as the short and long texts of *Revelations of Divine Love*. Margery Kempe (c. 1373- c.1438) was a spiritual mystic who also experienced visions of Christ, though not an anchoress. She nonetheless committed her life to God, living chastely with her husband and going on various pilgrimages. She dictated her life to a scribe and visions to a scribe, now published as *The Book of Margery Kempe*. The two women met at some point in 1413 when Margery travelled to meet Julian in her cell.

experience of pain.<sup>436</sup> The emulation of Christ's pain through bodily suffering, and the mystical joy derived from such pain, is a feminine practice within monasticism. Religious women are connected to Christ through their flesh and through the pain that their shared flesh suffers. In contemporary hagiography, religious men sought out pain and suffering through which they could experience spirituality.<sup>437</sup> Women have pain built into their physiology through occurrences of their sexual life cycle: menstruation; sex; pregnancy; childbirth; post-partum experiences. Genesis declares the pain women experience associated with childbearing is a punishment for their Original Sin.<sup>438</sup> From puberty women experience – and come to expect – pain associated with the natural functions of their body. As such, the pain that Christ suffers on the cross is familiar to women; they too bleed.

The *ancele* author offers the 'travail of her body,' in addition to a sorrowful heart and tearful eyes, to God in recompense for her sins.<sup>439</sup> Bliss chooses the same word in translation as was originally written in ANF: *travail*. Like Bliss, the English language adopted the word directly from the French beginning in 1275 and its definition has remained consistent between the two since its integration, only weakening in recent English usage.<sup>440</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines it in its first definition as 'physical or mental work, especially of a painful or laborious nature.'<sup>441</sup> In its second definition, the work is specified as 'the effort and

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<sup>436</sup> See Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 271 for a list of Christ's sufferings while on Earth.

<sup>437</sup> Contemporary examples include some of the lives within the Campsey Ash collection (British Library, Additional MS, 70513), such as Richard of Chichester, Edmund of Canterbury, and Thomas Becket, all of whom suffered and/or were martyred for their faith. Additionally, the Romsey Legendary, British Library, Lansdowne 436, lists forty-three English saints' lives, of which about half are male including Kenelm and King Edward, both martyrs. For differences between male and female saints' lives, see: Dendle, 'Pain and Saint-making in Andreas, Bede, and the Old English Lives of St Margaret'; Rubin, 'Cults of Saints'; Smith, 'Saints and Their Cults'.

<sup>438</sup> Genesis 3:16.

<sup>439</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 268-9, '*travail de cors*'.

<sup>440</sup> 'Travail' *N.* (1), Etymology', *OED*.

<sup>441</sup> 'Travail' *N.* (1), Sense 1.a., *OED*.

pain of childbirth,' especially when phrased *in travail*, and can be used figuratively.<sup>442</sup>

*Travail*, or a conjugation, is used four times within the original text of the prayer and twice within Bliss's English translation. Each use of the word is related to the body, either that of the author or Christ, but, as argued above, the identity of the flesh in the prayer largely inconsequential as the flesh provides commonality between female religious and Christ. Again, spiritual suffering is emphasised by the feminine flesh. *Travail*, etymologically connected to childbirth, becomes a word denoting bodily suffering specifically experienced by women as recompense for the Fall. There is a duality to its definition, literal and figurative, bodily and divine, that serves to deepen the connection of the text to the spaces afforded to feminine spirituality.

The location of feminine spirituality within the body also included, necessarily, an interaction on blood. This emerges, again, from the discourse of female physiology existing within the masculine spiritual economy. The sexualisation of the female begins at birth, but peaks as she reaches sexual maturity upon her first menstruation; her blood signals her status as a viable sexual partner due to her ability to produce offspring. The woman and her body can be claimed within the heteronormative binary of marriage. This is also true of women religious. Monastic women cannot be professed as a full member of the community, become a bride of Christ, until she reaches a maturity defined by her body. A woman's worth to a man, including Christ, develops at her first bleeding. She is forever tied to that blood.

The imagery from *passio Christi* in the Gospels is bloody without the embellishment described within later exegesis. Christ wears a crown of thorns and is later flogged and struck

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<sup>442</sup> 'Travail' *N.* (1), Sense 2, *OED*.

in the head with a staff.<sup>443</sup> The mob's calls to crucify him imply the brutal act of nailing through of his hands and feet, the results of which, the *stigmata*, are later mentioned for proof of his resurrection.<sup>444</sup> John is the most descriptive in mentioning how Jesus's side was pierced with a soldier's spear that released a flow of blood and water.<sup>445</sup> The blood of Christ became increasingly important within the Catholic mass and associated literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For example, the legend of Joseph of Arimathea catching the flow of blood from Christ's side with the Holy Chalice (from the Last Supper) first appears in a French verse by Robert de Boron in the late twelfth century.<sup>446</sup> The efforts of the Fourth Lateran Council developed the liturgy of the Eucharist surrounding the transubstantiation as Christian doctrine succeeded in elevating the sanctity and mysticism surrounding Christ's body and blood. In medieval physiology, blood was the primary substance in the body which held life.<sup>447</sup> It circulated in the human body and transmuted into other bodily fluids as necessary, such as breastmilk and semen. Christ's blood was a nourishing and mystical substance, signifying life and truth. Yet, the sanctity of this blood was gained through Christ's sacrifice; its significance was directly related to pain and suffering undertaken on behalf of a sinful humanity.

The blood of Christ is introduced quickly in 'A Woman's Prayer' with other mentions of crucifixion imagery, such as the wounds on his feet, following the *ancele's* initial identification of her flesh with that of Christ. She uses terms such as 'wound' (*'plaiie'*), 'slaughter' (*'massecrer'*), 'pierced' (*'percee'*) and 'nailed' (*'clouficher'*) to evoke painful

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<sup>443</sup> Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2.

<sup>444</sup> Mark 15:13; Luke 23:21; Luke 24:39; John 20:20,27.

<sup>445</sup> John: 19:31-37.

<sup>446</sup> See Bryant, *Merlin and the Grail*.

<sup>447</sup> See Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*, p. 161.

imagery of bodily penetration and suffering resulting in blood. While others, including the *ancele*, have likely experienced pain, it is only through Christ's sacrifice all of humankind is saved. His suffering and blood represent spiritual nourishment for lives of all Christians. The author highlights Christ's pain, but also emphasises her devotion to his wounds and subsequent blood as she retells the crucifixion:

See the fair hands without sin, how the blood came pouring out in streams,  
and forgive the wicked deeds my hands have done. See his unprotected side,  
how cruelly it is pieced with the lance. Wash me in the fountain that flowed  
from it. See the beautiful feet, that never stood in the path of sin but always  
went in the way of your commandments, how cruelly they are pieced with the  
iron nails.<sup>448</sup>

The *ancele* alludes to the mystical five wounds, but always refers to her own flesh in kind to ground the pain and blood in her own body. Her spiritual practice furthers her identification with Christ as her own misery provides him recompense. The author relates the divinely gifted natural suffering of women with that of Christ, encouraging affinity and a path to his forgiveness.

The nourishing properties of Christ's blood are referenced by the author in the above quote, when she asks God to wash her in it, qualified later as his 'precious blood' (*precious sanc*), to restore her sinful body to him. She adds much later in the prayer to strengthen the properties of his blood, after another mini recounting of the passion, 'Now he has washed me in his warm blood and brought me back to your fold on his fair shoulders.'<sup>449</sup> Not only has

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<sup>448</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 267. See note above for original ANF.

<sup>449</sup> Hunt, 'Women's Prayer', p. 270-1, '*Ore m'ad lave en sun chaut sanc e m'a reporté a vostre faude sur ses beles espauldes.*'

his blood healed her ‘pitifully scabbed and snotty’ state coming from the ‘prison’ of sinfulness, but it also remedies her connection to God.<sup>450</sup> With Christ’s blood as salve for her suffering, she is re-established as a recipient of eternal life in heaven as a divine bride.

The physiological aspects of blood understood during the medieval period also allowed it a consanguinity with breastmilk. Christ was sometimes featured in medieval art with feminine breasts, feeding his followers with the milk that flowed from them.<sup>451</sup> The imagery is also found in texts, both metaphorically and literally. The text *La vie de Katherine* from the previous section was present at the nunnery of Campsey Ash by the early fourteenth century – even though it was written at Barking in the twelfth – and would have continued to provide support for a more marginalised, internal form of feminine spirituality in its text as masculine discourse evolved. Katherine, locked in her prison cell by Maxentius, and deprived of sustenance is nourished, literally, by the love of Christ. She says, ‘it never occurred to them to give me food. Thanks be to God, I had no need of it. I want you to understand that at no time did I have any earthly food, for my bridegroom, my sweet lover nourished me well in his mercy. He sent me a dove from heaven which brought me my food.’<sup>452</sup> Though she does not mention his blood specifically, blood and bodily suffering are significant themes throughout the *vie* that could have been adapted in the minds of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century women religious to suit their discursive spirituality which focused more literally on the body and blood of Christ. Perhaps most significantly to these later women religious, when Katherine is martyred, breastmilk, understood as form of transmuted blood, flows from her

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<sup>450</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, p. 270-1, ‘*tute ruignuse, morvuse e maubaillie*’.

<sup>451</sup> See Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 123.

<sup>452</sup> Wogan-Browne, ‘St Katherine’, p. 31. ‘*K’il me donassent a manger, / Merci Deu, ne ge n’en oi mester. / Et si voil ke (ms:ki) vus sachez bien, / Ke unc n’i oi manger terrien, / Kar mun espus, mun bon ami / Tres bien me peut, sue merci; / Un columb del ciel m’enveia, / Ki le men manger m’aporta.*” (Kth 1899-1906)

decapitated neck as it flowed from Christ's side. Her holiness, sanctioned by God, elevated her blood to a nourishing substance rather than one just borne from pain. The *viē* also related how, from stone tomb on Mount Sinai, oil flowed continuously that healed bodily ailments of those who venerated her. Whereas twelfth-century feminine spirituality existed in a space that allowed for Christ as bridegroom, a separate individual to his bride, thirteenth century discourse collapsed that space between soul marriage and the flesh, marginalising women religious further and pushing Christ to the anterior of their bodies, the only space left for their lived religiosity.

## **Monastic Space**

As it is not possible to discern the author, scribe, or monastery associated with 'A Woman's Prayer' in Douce 282, the final section of this chapter will examine the physical spaces of late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century monastic foundations in England as a whole, looking at specifically gendered trends in connection with the feminine spirituality of the prayer. Certain foundations will be analysed in particular based on availability of primary evidence, both archaeological and bibliographical.

Following a period of settling after the growing pains of Norman Conquest, new monastic institutions in England appeared at a rapid pace until *c.* 1220. This rapid expansion of likely caused by two connected interests: the new landholding peers of the realm anxious to mark their territory and the influence of the growing continental monastic reform movement. In her work, Gilchrist notes a time-lag between peak times of founding male monasteries versus female.<sup>453</sup> It seems that male monasteries, from Benedictine and

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<sup>453</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 41.

Cistercian<sup>454</sup> to Augustinian and medicant, were founded approximately a generation earlier than female monasteries of the same type.

There is a noticeable delayed response to the founding of female communities after the Norman Conquest, which was largely due to the political landscape of patronage. This differs greatly from the initial patterns of monasticism in England *circa* 600-850. Previously, there was an impetus for landed peers to patronise monasteries founded and ruled by royal women due to their powerful political and scholastic influence that loomed across England to France and Rome. However, as female agency, both monastic and lay, in England waned following the construction of a more centralised government and reformed church, so did their political and religious influence. The most powerful church leaders in Europe in the post-Conquest period emerged from continental abbeys renowned for learning that specifically excluded women, such as Cluny, Citeaux, and Clairvaux. The establishment alien priories in England from these mother houses promised both heavenly returns and carried fashionable political favour from powerful continental contacts. For those looking to be favoured by God and the Lady Fortune, the foundation of a male monastery was the better option, though often more expensive. Founding female monastery carried no such partisan or holy favour as women carried less political and spiritual influence as they were continually excluded from government and church structure. Any new monastic trend in England commenced with male houses. Only after such a trend had been established would smaller, poorer female houses follow.

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<sup>454</sup> The foundation of female Cistercian monasteries is hard to study because many women's communities considered themselves Cistercian without being officially accepted by the order. Only two nunneries within England were considered formally Cistercian, Tarrant Keynes and Marham. See Gilchrist, *GMC*, pp. 39, 68 for more on Cistercian nunneries in England.

Whereas fashionable male monasteries were founded post-Conquest by politically motivated trend-setters, the female monasteries that followed were often established by those of the lower social class for different reasons. Up until the twelfth century, the privilege of founding and endowing monasteries belonged solely to the upper baronial and ecclesiastical classes. When the lower gentry gained this opportunity, they chose to spread their impact locally. Instead of making inconsequential contributions to wealthy monasteries, they could found their own nearby and dedicate it to their family.<sup>455</sup> Doing so allowed smaller landowners to exert their influence over local communities and gain a more substantial foothold in the church fabric of the country. Additionally, religious women prayed daily for the acceptance of their souls into heaven and the monastery could act as a family mausoleum, materially and spiritually exalting their status in the community and with God. Founding a small monastery presented the lower gentry with new opportunities to interact with society and religion. Such an institution afforded them authority which they could utilise internally through related prioresses and externally through gifts. These monasteries were never intended to become large or wealthy. They were practical establishments for local communities.

This is not to discredit their dedication to Christianity or relevant discursive religiosity. Often these small nunneries were founded within the principles of continental reform movements, sometimes accidentally. Minor landowners in less arable parts of England would often endow nunneries with small parcels of undesirable land and keep the better pieces for themselves, creating – purposefully or no – a desert-like experience for the religious women encouraged by the likes of the Cistercians. Whereas male monasteries often

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<sup>455</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 48.

had a choice of land from a patron and influence on the site of the foundation, women did not.<sup>456</sup> Nunneries were usually found in fenlands, moors, marshes, and flood plains outside of villages or town walls. These locations isolated female monasteries physically and financially.<sup>457</sup> If their lands did not provide for the needs of the nunnery, women religious were forced to rely on monetary income for goods and foodstuffs. They were separated yet dependent on the lay world as other, larger monasteries were not.

The small nunnery of Wykeham<sup>458</sup> is an example of one such monastery. It was founded c. 1153 by Pain Fitz Osbert de Wykeham at the bottom of small river valley in North Yorkshire, near Scarborough. There is not much known about the founding of the nunnery other than its principal patron and location. John Butler details various other patrons in his 1758 *Monasticon Eboracense* but fails to provide the appendix which contain references for many of his citations and does not date the information listed.<sup>459</sup> Nonetheless, using Butler it is possible to narrow the window for the majority of donations to between the nunnery's founding in the mid-twelfth century and the first half of the fourteenth century when John de Wycham gave land to the current prioress, Isabel, who occurs in 1321 and 1337. Based on patterns Gilchrist has observed with other smaller nunneries, it is likely most of the larger donations were made in close proximity to the monastery's initial founding; later donations, if any, would be small and/or insignificant.<sup>460</sup> A rather large parcel of land, three oxgangs (about forty-five acres) given by John Wycham in 1321 or 1337, is likely support in relation to the devastating fire the monastery experienced around that time. The nuns lost their

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<sup>456</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 67

<sup>457</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 65-69, 90-91.

<sup>458</sup> Historical spellings also include: 'wicham', 'wycham', or later 'wikham'.

<sup>459</sup> Burton, *Monasticon Eboracense*, pp. 255-6.

<sup>460</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 73.

buildings along with vestments, books, and wealth and resulted in Edward III relieving them of an annual payment to the crown for twenty years in 1327.<sup>461</sup>

Wykeham nunnery was never large nor rich. Its income of £20-£25 did not change from the late thirteenth century to 1535. It was isolated due to its location, both in Yorkshire and in England. It was wholly dependent on the patronage of their founder and other local families. Yet, it was popular. The monastery held twenty nuns in the thirteenth century, even as there were a relatively large number of local nunneries available locally. Its numbers decreased following the Black Death, but it fared better than others, with fourteen nuns in 1381 and fourteen nuns, including the prioress, at its dissolution.<sup>462</sup> No books survive from Wykeham that have been identified; their lack of surviving manuscripts is likely exacerbated by the fourteenth-century fire, which destroyed all books they possessed at the time.

The nunnery at Wykeham is but one of a large number of female monasteries that existed in Yorkshire founded by the lower gentry in the mid- to late-twelfth century.<sup>463</sup> At the dissolution, none possessed incomes over £100.<sup>464</sup> Though their initial endowments were small, none of the nunneries attracted more patronage and so they remained small and increasingly poor in the centuries that followed. This was due to a number of factors, including the social status of their founders, isolation from urban or town centres, and increasing dependence on external persons for administration. The spaces that religious women occupied, both in relation to the church and society, were not only isolated, but shrinking.

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<sup>461</sup> Burton, *Monasticon Eboracense*, p. 255.

<sup>462</sup> Some monasteries lost up to 80 per cent of their population from the Black Death.

<sup>463</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>464</sup> Swine was the closest, with £82. This is attributed to its status as a 'quasi-double' house.

Even within the spaces afforded to them, nuns continued to be marginalised. With the imposition of strict enclosure enacted *circa* 1300, nuns could not leave their monastery nor others enter it. Interaction with the lay world became extremely limited, even more so than it had already been. Though limited enclosure is a feature of female monasticism throughout its lifespan in medieval England, isolation and dependence increasingly becomes a primary characteristic of nunneries and feminine spirituality in the later thirteenth century through to the Dissolution. The ideal female monastic space was contained and inaccessible, with its femininity kept out of the way and behind high stone walls. Based on the income it received from its lands, temporalities, and patrons, Wykeham could not support its community at its height (likely in the early thirteenth century), nor even at its lowest numbers. The ability for a female monastery to support itself using its lands was apparently not a determining factor in its foundation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though it is tenet of the *Regula Benedicti*.<sup>465</sup>

Another small nunnery, Thetford, was founded in *circa* 1060 at a site originally established for a cell of monks attached to Bury St Edmunds.<sup>466</sup> It was abandoned by the two remaining monks<sup>467</sup> as it was deemed unsuitable for their use as a monastic space. The abbot of Bury moved in nuns from Ling (Norfolk) to the site following the monks' departure, deeming it suitable enough space for feminine worship. Like Wykeham, the foundation could not support itself. From the time of their initial occupation, the nuns received a weekly delivery of bread, beer, and occasionally meat or other provisions from Bury St Edmunds,

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<sup>465</sup> Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*.

<sup>466</sup> Knowles and Haddock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 220 and 78.

<sup>467</sup> History, naturally, records the names of these men.

twelve miles away.<sup>468</sup> At some point in the thirteenth century it was recorded that thirty-five loaves of bread and ninety-six gallons of beer were sent to the nuns in a week's delivery.<sup>469</sup> Regular deliveries such as this were inefficient and costly, especially as wagons were often attacked along the journey and their foodstuffs stolen. The virtue of the nun's location kept them poor and dependent, of which the abbot of Bury St Edmunds was aware. The site that could not support two monks in 1160 was supporting approximately twenty-six nuns in 1291.<sup>470</sup>

Compared to male monasteries, nunneries were poor. Even the richest pre-Conquest royal nunneries did not possess anywhere near the wealth of their male counterparts; Shaftesbury was no Glastonbury.<sup>471</sup> Even when comparing them one-to-one in terms of population and possessions, male houses are determined to be wealthier.<sup>472</sup> This is related to the type of patronage male and female houses received initially, as well as their ambitions to gain a higher monetary status. The spirituality of nuns both informed and was informed by this disparity of wealth. Their physical isolation in the landscape was often a result of their lower-ranking patron, but also reflected asceticism adopted to combat the ideas of feminine excess. Often located on a high point in a flooded field away from a large populace, the nunnery was an island unto itself with its evident separateness recognized in both space and time.<sup>473</sup> If the landscape can be studied as a communal use of space invested with social meaning, as Gilchrist suggests it is, the nunnery is a figure in the margin, a space enclosed

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<sup>468</sup> Page, 'The nunnery of St George, Thetford', p. 355.

<sup>469</sup> Page, 'The nunnery of St George, Thetford', p. 355.

<sup>470</sup> Knowles and Haddock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 220 and 78.

<sup>471</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>472</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 44.

<sup>473</sup> This situation was common for nunneries founded in the twelfth century. This occurs at Godstow, Yedingham, Lyminster and Kington, St. Michael. See Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 66.

unto itself shrinking away from view.<sup>474</sup> This physical marginalisation – and the consequences of such isolation – continually informs the discourse of feminine spirituality even as it is augmented by existing discourse. Remaining impoverished, whether purposefully or due to circumstance, reinforced a nunnery's asceticism and marginality.

If masculine discourse wished to erase the visible excess of the feminine monastic spirituality, limiting the movement of religious women to their own restrictive and isolated space is the culmination of that wish. Confining women to a feminine space neutralised the threat to the primacy of the masculine. Female religious were no longer allowed to interact with male religious or augment the spiritual discourse. Instead, they exist solely at the mercy of the male religious and powerful churchmen. The space for the feminine continually shrinks and move inwards, into inaccessible spaces of the monastery, the body, and the mind, until it is fully isolated and impenetrable. Written material from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries reflects this notion of femininity spirituality occupying a marginalised space, textual counterparts to isolation enacted within the physical landscape.

At the same 'A Woman's Prayer' was written down, John Godard, first abbot of Newham, composed a treatise on the mortification of the senses to M, abbess of Tarrant Keynsham.<sup>475</sup> Abbess M is most likely Matilda or Maud de Brione, who held the abbacy at the time of Godard's writing, from 1240 to *c.* 1252.<sup>476</sup> Following the patristic tradition, Godard has addressed Matilda but is also writing to the monastic community at large. His specifies a female monastic community through his chosen addressee, but the content is

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<sup>474</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 63

<sup>475</sup> For the Latin edition of Godard's treatise see C.H. Talbot, 'Two Opusculum of John Godard, First Abbot of Newenham' (1954). The treatise was edited and translated by Elizabeth Freeman in 2010, 'A Cistercian Monk Writing to a Cistercian Nun: John Godard's Treatise to the Abbess of Tarrant, England c. 1250'.

<sup>476</sup> Freeman, 'John Godard's Treatise', p. 342.

generalised enough to relate to foundations of either sex. Godard writes at length on the temptation of the senses and the fragility of human will in relation to the failings of the body, but his theme is made clear early in the letter: ‘The enemies are the exterior, but they infiltrate the interior.’<sup>477</sup> He uses metaphors of fine clothing, foods, and sights to support his idea. Shining jewellery, sumptuous veils, and sweet perfumes are but traps of the feminine and will tempt one away from the truth path to heaven – to Christ the Heavenly Groom. To indulge in these trappings would be gluttonous and vain, but more sinful is purpose behind such indulgences: to be seen by others.

Godard fully endorses enclosure of women religious, keeping them away from the sights of others, but especially secular men, though they rely on the work and connections to the secular world to ensure their own survival. Women religious were not permitted to perform manual labour outside, lest they be tempted or position themselves as temptress. Instead, they should ‘stay in the bridal chamber in which groom and bridegroom are united and sweetly delight in each other.’<sup>478</sup> To maximise their sanctity, Godard is advising ascetic confinement for female religious: remove her body from view, isolate herself, remove any adornments, mistrust the senses. He condenses the available female monastic space to a single room and even then, it is too much. The space in which the bridegroom may delight in her lover should not be exterior to her own soul.

Though the tradition of male correspondents to female religious in England dates back to the monastic era before the major Viking incursions, such correspondence was never so one-sided. With Aldhelm and the Barking Abbey nuns, there was an exchange of ideas and

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<sup>477</sup> Freeman, ‘John Godard’s Treatise’, p. 332.

<sup>478</sup> Freeman, ‘John Godard’s Treatise’, p. 337. Talbot, p. 240: ‘*habita in thalamo, in quo sponsus et sponsa confederantur et dulciter delectantur*’.

spiritual advice, from one powerful leader to another. He writes to Hildelith of the letter he received from her previously and sumptuously praises her ‘mellifluous studies of the Holy Scriptures ... manifest in the extremely subtle sequence of [her] discourse.’<sup>479</sup> Boniface acknowledges the spiritual and scribal (and potentially authorial) capabilities of the nuns at Minster-in-Thamet when he requests a fine copy of the gospels and asks for their prayers. He writes to her in *c.* 735: ‘He will repay you ... for all the kindnesses you have shown me, the solace of books and the comfort of the garments with which you have relieved my distress.’<sup>480</sup> Books decorated with gold and sturdy garments – and the charity that accompanies them – are items that will aid the nuns’ passage into heaven, not inhibit it as Godard claims. Even as late as the period of the Conquest, Goseclin, writing to and for Eve says, ‘My parchments and tablets frequently brought Christ to you; and chaste letters from you were not slow in coming.’<sup>481</sup> In the twelfth century Osbert, Prior of Westminster, enjoyed active correspondence with Barking Abbey, writing to Abbess Adelidis and his two nieces, Margaret and Cecilia, who were both nuns there.<sup>482</sup> He uses the dimension of space as a metaphor, promoting the idea of interiority and a sheltered, contemplative life, but not strict enclosure when he writes: ‘you may learn that your dwelling place is fixed among the flowers of modesty, and in internal quiet learn to join your conversation with the messengers from

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<sup>479</sup> Lapidge and Herrin, p. 59, *PL* 89.104c: ‘*verum etiam melliflua divinarum studia Scripturaum agacissima sermonum serie patuerunt.*’

<sup>480</sup> Boniface, epistle 35. *MGH*, trans. Emerton, pp. 42-3. ‘*Deum omnipotentem, retributorem et remuneratorem omnium bonorum operum, deprecor, ut tibi in caelestibus mansionibus et in aeternis tabernaculis omnium beneficiorum tuorum, quae mihi prestitisti, aeternalem mercedem et in superna curia beatorum angelorum restituat, quia sepe sive solamine librorum sive vestimentorum adiuvamine pietas tua tristitiam meam consolata est.*’

<sup>481</sup> Otter, *Liber Confortatorius*, p. 25.

<sup>482</sup> See Vera Morton, *Guidance for Women*, Letters 21, 22, and 42 for Osbert of Clare. Also, see below.

above.’<sup>483</sup> While the concept of interiority, specifically bodily interiority, remains vital for a rich spiritual life involving Christ, their femininity is not yet a fully realised evil.

By the time of Godard’s and the *ancele*’s writing in the mid-thirteenth century, masculine spiritual discourse has adopted the body as form of feminine excess that needed to be overwritten. Female spirituality was pushed further inwards, both bodily and spatially, in terms of a relationship with Christ; the body, any exteriority, became an evil. Soon after beginning her prayer, the *ancele* begs the Lord to ‘release me from the bonds of sin, whereby I am so restrained that I cannot even move without your help,’ implying throughout the prayer that such heavy bonds are those of the flesh.<sup>484</sup> Only the mortal trappings of the flesh could provide such avenues for sinfulness; it is those mortal sins of humanity that Christ sacrificed himself for, as the *ancele* reminds us. She writes, ‘let me be able to enclose your sweet love in my hear that nothing may henceforth soothe it except you.’<sup>485</sup> The discursive spirituality of the female monastic in the thirteenth century does not allow for Christ to inhabit *any* body, as it represents a frail and easily penetrable exterior. Only a guarded, interior space, such as the heart and/or soul of a chaste woman, is available for accepting and knowing him. Keeping her body free from sin and her soul unblemished was matter of managing temptation. Managing such temptation was easier and more sanctified, as Godard argues, if the monastic feminine, with its ‘natural’ excess, is kept apart and away.

The most drastic form of female religious enclosure is that of the anchoress enclosed in her cell. Again, the idea of the anchoress or anchorite of either sex was not new in the late

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<sup>483</sup> Morton, *Guidance for Women*, Letter 22, p. 115.

<sup>484</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, pp. 264-265: ‘*Pur la sue amur vus pri ke vus desliez des liens de pecché dunt jo sui tant destreinte, ke jo ne ne pus sanz la vostre aie neis moveir.*’

<sup>485</sup> Hunt, ‘Women’s Prayer’, pp. 268-269: ‘*E ke jo puisse la vostre duce amur si enclore en mun quor ke ren ne m’enducisse desore fors vus.*’

thirteenth century. Goscelin’s eleventh-century letter, as mentioned above, is to Eve, a Wilton nun who decides to pursue the anchoritic religious life on the continent. The idea of eremitic monasticism became popular in England the twelfth century and anchorages appeared all over the country. Often cells were located in cemeteries or on the north side of a church, liminal spaces the represented a symbolic death as it was understood that an anchorite’s cell also became their tomb.<sup>486</sup> While men and women both pursued an eremitic religious life, the recluse trend had become decidedly female and peaked in the thirteenth century.<sup>487</sup>

Century	Sex			Totals	Sites <sup>2</sup>
	Female	Male	Indeterminate		
Twelfth	48	30	18	96	77
Thirteenth	123	37	38	198	175
Fourteenth	96	41	77	214	171
Fifteenth	110	66	28	204	129
Sixteenth (to 1539)	37	27	4	68	49

Figure 8: Number of Anchorites and Sites post-Conquest.<sup>488</sup>

Female monastic spirituality, initially occupying the space of a large double monastery in the seventh and eighth centuries had been discursively reduced to reside in an enclosed cell within a liminal place by the fourteenth; female monasticism became isolated and dependent rather than centres of learning and influential.

Though anchoritism is separate from the ideal of communal monasticism, each was influential on the other. The anonymous ‘rule’ for anchorites, *ancrene wisse*, became an

<sup>486</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 177.

<sup>487</sup> Warren, *Medieval English Anchorites*, p. 20. Also see Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 177.

<sup>488</sup> Ann Williams, p. 20.

extremely popular text in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>489</sup> Originally composed in the early thirteenth century, it was adopted by anchorites across England and translated into Latin and ANF. It survives from at least three nunneries and is the most popular surviving text from women religious apart from psalters based on my database.<sup>490</sup> One extant copy of the *ancrene wisse*, also known as the *ancrene riwle*, comes from Tarrant Keynston, another the recipient of Godard's letters.<sup>491</sup> It was written in the early fourteenth century in Latin by the Bishop of Salisbury, Simon of Ghent, for his sisters residing at Tarrant as recluses. Following their deaths, the nunnery likely kept the manuscript as there is scribal evidence it later was adapted for use within a communal female setting. The nature of the rule is one of interiority, shunning the senses and external world for a stronger, purer relationship with Christ.

In addition to the rise of the anchoritic model, monastic architecture reflects the discursive trend for the erasure of the feminine and the continuous movement inwards of female monastic spirituality. Gilchrist demonstrated the levels of access to various parts of a female monastery compared to a male foundation using Hillier and Hanson's theory of access-analysis. She found that nunnery cloisters were the least accessible areas within the overall monastery precinct, with the nuns' dormitories being the least accessible overall.<sup>492</sup> 'Shallower' spaces in nunneries, those with greater permeability, included sacristies and church naves. In contrast, dormitories in male monasteries often occupied a shallower space within the overall precinct and their sacristies were usually found at the deepest level of

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<sup>489</sup> As did other thirteen-century Middle English texts that form what is now known as the *Katherine* group: *Hali Meidhad*, *Sawles Warde*, *Seinte Juliene* (of Nicomedia), *Seinte Margarete* (of Antioch), and *Seinte Katherine* (of Alexandria). See Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality* for an edition of these texts.

<sup>490</sup> See the Appendix.

<sup>491</sup> Oxford, Magdalen College MS Lat 67.

<sup>492</sup> Gilchrist, 'Gender, Ideology and material Culture', and *GMC*, p. 166.

access. Additionally, while the sacristies may be located at a shallow level of access from the entrance to the nunnery precinct, they are kept entirely separate from the nuns' cloisters.

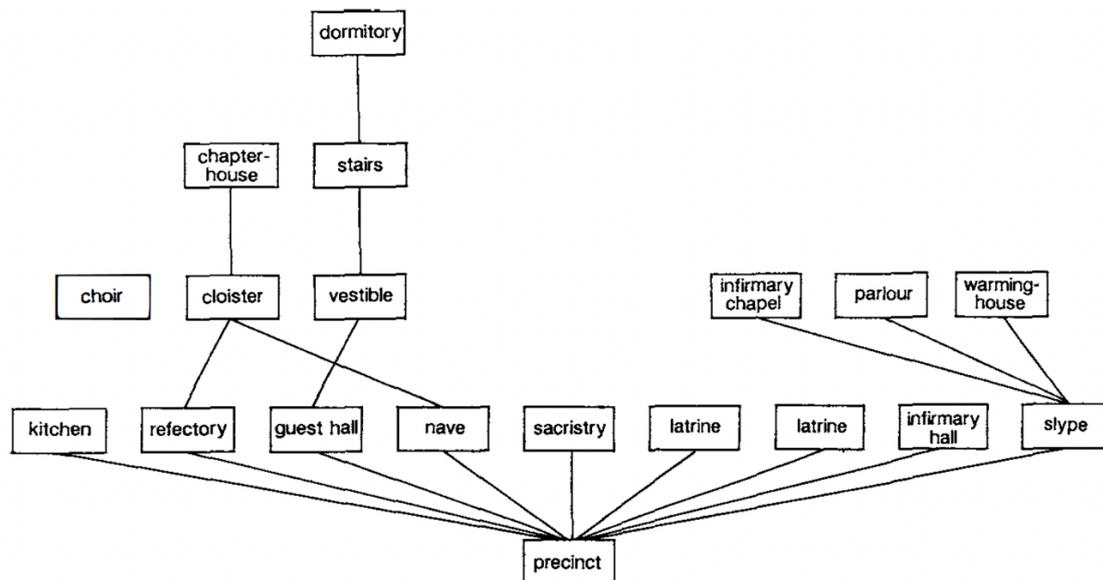


Figure 9: Formal Spatial Analysis of Burnham Nunnery.<sup>493</sup>

Within the monastery, religious women faced a high level of physical enclosure that correlated with the discursive ideology of feminine spirituality. Access to nuns was continually restricted, as was their access to others outside the space deemed appropriate for them. Their bodies were kept at the deepest level of the nunnery, isolated and away from shallow places like the kitchen or gatehouse. This reinforced the notions of feminine interiority. Even within the church they were separated from the general nave in a screened choir. The sacristy, a place of masculine spirituality, was isolated within the nunnery as a place for priests, not nuns. The spiritual strength in exteriority, being the penetrator instead of the penetrated, was, in terms of a nunnery, decidedly a male domain; the female religious were to practice inside the monastery, inside their bodies, denying themselves those physical spaces until they were freed from their earthly shackles.

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<sup>493</sup> Gilchrist, *GMC*, p. 165.

Though highly encouraged, enclosure of female monasteries did not become an enforced law until 1298, when Pope Boniface VIII decreed the bull *Periculoso*. Religious women were not to leave the nunnery precinct without express permission of the bishop, nor was any lay person allowed within the nunnery buildings without express permission.<sup>494</sup> Whereas there was some freedom of movement before, now nuns faced certain punishment, even excommunication, if they disobeyed the bull.

Enforcement of enclosure reached England soon after the decree was published in Boniface's *Liber Sextus*.<sup>495</sup> One year after its dissemination, Simon of Ghent sent it to the nuns at Tarrant Keyston. Also in 1299 Robert Winchelsey, archbishop of Canterbury, sent injunctions to the female houses of Malling and Sheppey quoting *Periculoso* at length and demanding its recognition.<sup>496</sup> The next year, a group of bishops tasked with the consecration of John Dalderby, bishop of Lincoln added the discussion of the enforcement of *Periculoso* in England to their agenda.<sup>497</sup> It was unanimously agreed upon. Bishop Dalderby became one of the decree's most enthusiastic supporters; it is not known if he was an advocate for the strict enclosure of nuns before, or if his interest resulted from the discussion during his consecration.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Makowski, *English Nuns and the Law*, pp. 11- 28; Brundage and Makowski, 'Enclosure of Nuns'; Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*, pp. 101-121. Boniface VIII, *Liber Sextus*, ed. Friedberg. See note below for details of specific enactment.

<sup>495</sup> Boniface VIII, *Liber Sextus*, ed. Friedberg.

<sup>496</sup> See the *Registrum Roberti Winchesley Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi 1294-1313*, vol. 2, pp. 833-37 and 846-48.

<sup>497</sup> *Councils and Synods*, part 2, pp. 1204-5: 'Consensum etiam extitit similiter quod ad clausuram monialium procederetur, prout dictus dominus archiepiscopus asservit se fecisse, precipue quia dictum fuit quod quidam errant in veniendo de curia Romana ad explorandum qualiter statutum de clausura preducta et alia per nunc papam edita fuerint observata.'

<sup>498</sup> Bishop Dalderby of Lincoln was very excited about *Periculoso* and decided to visit the major houses in his diocese in 1300, only two years after it was issued. In 1314, the local archbishop visited Wykeham and Yedingham and issued a set of almost identical injunctions to the two nunneries that included barring all lay people from the house, and especially any going through the cloister to the kitchen (this applied only to lay servants, presumably). Additionally, he instructed the prioress make sure the nuns' girdles were less

Some female religious, already acting under an informal enclosure, did not object to the formalisation of the statute.<sup>499</sup> Others were not as accepting. Following the reading of the papal decree, four nuns of Markyate proceeded to hurl their copy of the law at the back of their bishop as he was leaving and declared their refusal of it. His register relates that even the prioress seemed to approve of these nuns' actions, for which they were later punished.<sup>500</sup> While the effectiveness of *Periculoso* in England has been much debated, it served to bolster male discourse on feminine spirituality until the dissolution of the monasteries.<sup>501</sup> Religious women faced further marginalisation within the space of the church, maligned for their innate femininity and judged solely on masculine parameters. However, as their spirituality continued to move inwards, in terms of both buildings, bodies, and books, women religious were able to claim a space for themselves, coalescing and constituting a spirituality separate from the masculine, though operating within it. Such marginalised religious femininity became visible. Nunneries cannot be analysed on the same parameters of male monasteries, nor should the spirituality of women religious be. They must be looked for in the margins of societies, in the blank spaces of books, and within their own minds in order to be made visible.

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conspicuous. See *VCH York*, 'Priory of Wykeham'. The bishop's injunctions are noted in *Register of William Greenfield, Lord Archbishop of York, 1306-1315*, vol. II, f.101b. I could not locate the Wykeham and Yedingham injunctions in edition by W. Brown and A.H. Thompson (1931). However, there are similar notices for two other Yorkshire nunneries, Sinningthwaite and Arthington, so keeping lay persons out of nunneries was seemingly a common enough problem, pp. 204-6, 227-8.

<sup>499</sup> For more information on early enclosure of nunneries, see Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities.'

<sup>500</sup> See Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*, pp. 114-5, for the episode from the Episcopal Register of Bishop Dalderby of Lincolnshire, as well as other examples of zealot churchmen of *Periculoso*.

<sup>501</sup> See Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women* for a relatively complete study on the canon debates of *Periculoso* as well as its transmission.

## Conclusion

This thesis was written out of a desire to know more about the women who dedicated their lives to Christ in the Middle Ages who had seemingly been ignored by researchers for much of the twentieth century. Only with pioneering work of scholars such as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Michelle Brown, Sarah Foot, Robert Gilchrist, Veronica O'Mara, Jane Schulenberg, Pauline Stafford, and Sally Thompson, among others, beginning in 1970s, had their histories started to become visible through the fragments of material culture they left behind. The problem of their academic and historical absence seemed to be connected their gender, and indeed the primary mechanics behind traditionally writing history, in both medieval and modern times, were biased towards a masculine point of view. As the scholars above soon realised, difference processes of investigation would be necessary to uncover and analyse the contributions of women – both lay and religious – to their own life stories. This mantle was taken up by research scholars such as Diane Watt, Katie Bugyis, Stephanie Hollis, and Katherine Weikert, who are publishing innovative work on women religious using new techniques on familiar sources. It is to the tradition of these scholars my project hopes to contribute in its own way.

In this project I have analysed the fragmentary material remains of the lives and writings of religious women in England between *c.*800-*c.*1300. My approach acknowledged and integrated the impact of masculine discourse in both the medieval and modern period, extracting the understanding of the monastic feminine through a theoretical historical analysis of three principal manuscripts. These manuscripts, the Book of Nunnaminster, the *vies* saints Edward the Confessor and Katherine of Alexandria, and lesser-known women's prayer, were

subjected to thematic explorations in the search for monastic feminine spirituality through textual, bodily, and physical spaces. The investigative framework for these explorations was built from the work of post-modern gender and space theorists, primarily Butler, Irigaray, Grosz, and Hiller and Hanson, to detangle the complex relationship between gender, space, monasticism, and spirituality. By redeploing academic considerations of material evidence within this framework and establishing the relevant discourse on medieval conceptions of gender and sex, fragments of female participation in their own spirituality became visible.

Within the textual space, manuscripts were examined for the mark of the ‘excessive’ feminine, which escaped the boundaries of the unequal gender binary to make themselves visible. These marks, scribal additions or slips of feminised Latin words such as ‘*peccatrix*’ or ‘*famulae*’, within the Book of Nunnaminster and other prayerbook members of the *Tiberius* group allowed for insight into personalised prayers taken from the liturgy, possible from specially made pamphlets, for pious women in Mercia which then made their way to Wessex and the nuns of Winchester. The Nunnaminster women then wrote in their own additions on the flyleaves: confessional prayers and the nunnery’s claim to the land Queen *Aehlswith* left them within the city. They engaged in what Irigaray later described as ‘mimicry’, recognising their own lack of representation, and writing themselves into the text where masculine words once were. Such feminine ‘corrections’ were done in the interlinear space or added sporadically throughout. Larger textual additions, such as feminine prayers or claims of ownership, are often relegated to the flyleaves of such manuscripts; with the first quire of folios lost from Harley 2965, it is impossible to know what else they might have left us.

Even as early as the eighth century, monastic women were occupied with concerns of the body – though the body was not necessarily theirs. The prevailing theme of the Book of

Nunnaminster is the *passio Christi*, with relevant extracts copied from each gospel and prayers centred on various parts of Christ's body as he makes his way to his crucifixion. The addition of the *Lordica of Laidenn* and a charm *contra venum* reflect an anxiety about the bodily intactness that runs throughout the manuscript. Within contemporary discourse the body of Christ was regarded as allegorical, as his *ecclesia*, instead of actual flesh; any prayers for bodily intactness is read as participation in *communio sanctorum*. While the masculine interpretation of the Book of Nunnaminster upholds this discourse and denies the flesh in favour of the allegorical body, a feminine reading embraces the literal *with* the allegorical through aspects of mysticism. Even pre-Anselm women are connected to Christ through their physicality, as Mary contributed flesh to God's earthly person. Yet, the mysteries of Christ's divine body reject the instinct of literal interpretation, especially with the influence of Irish Christianity. To reconcile their own physicality in reference to Christ, women united the literal and allegorical through mysticism, using the supernatural to explain the unexplainable.

A predominantly masculine and allegorical discourse did not afford the excessiveness of feminine physicality much space within monasticism, in neither texts nor buildings. Of the three monasteries in Winchester, Nunnaminster receives the least amount of attention and land from its royal patrons in its initial foundation in *c.* 900, its 'refoundation' later that century, and its final transformation as St Mary's Abbey post-Conquest. Nunnaminster was the sole female monastery in Winchester and competed against two male foundations, Old and New Minster, for space and money in the city. Its initial land grant through Æhlswith – likely her dowery – facilitated its creation, carving out a piece of feminine space within the city walls and ensuring *in perpetuum* (or until 1539) the nuns had a space of their own. There is evidence of interaction between the three monasteries, especially through the sharing of books. Nonetheless, Nunnaminster remained isolated from its brother foundations,

particularly after Edgar's decree of enclosure in the late tenth century. Whereas the New and Old Minster precincts remained connected to each other and the royal palace, the Nunnaminster precinct stood alone to the east, bound by walls and waterways. Isolated as such, the nuns' practice of spirituality was circumscribed by its space.

Clemence and the anonymous Nun of Barking advocated for the intellectual reputation and relevance of their monastery through their Anglo-Norman translations of two Latin hagiographical texts, the lives of Edward the Confessor and Katherine of Alexandria. Both authors engaged with the dominant ideological scripts of twelfth-century monasticism that renewed the emphasis on the feminine body, inserting themselves textually into the religio-academic conversation from which they were excluded at male-only universities. Their high-quality *vies* undertook the challenge of interacting with the ideas of prominent theologians, such as Anselm and Honorius of Auten, while maintaining a reading experience that was also instructive for the spirituality of women. This was accomplished through an adaptation of the monastic tenet of *lectio divina* that, through the process of reading past a literal interpretation, produced a lived experience of the text for religious women. Instead of denying their bodies, they embraced their feminine physicality to connect with the text, creating an interior, psychical bond to Christ and the divine.

The bodies of religious women had become increasingly relevant following the grounding of Christ within his humanity through promulgation of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo* and the enforced chastity of clerics in the twelfth century. Conceptions of the flesh were increasingly realised in a literal, and usually negative, way. However, the intermeshing of the chaste ideal from Bernard of Clairvaux and monastic thought from Hugh of St Victor allowed for religious women to recognise their flesh simultaneously as the site of their sin *and* the site of their redemption through roles as brides of Christ. The possession of such physicality

nominated women for the role of *sponsae*; the preservation of chastity enabled their union with the divine. The feminine spiritual experience of living the text locates the female body as the conduit for noetic communion. This strong identification with their bodies for the spiritual needs also allow religious women to participate in *imitatio Christi*, with Clemence and the Nun casting Katherine and Edward as such. The interior of the feminine body, the heart specifically, became the primary space for the expression of female spirituality, as the reformer discourse surrounding chastity increasingly focused on elements of enclosure and intactness.

As a nunnery, Barking held a somewhat unique position in the English landscape: it claimed an unbroken history since its founding in 666. While this is not *entirely* true, its legendary continuity through the period of Viking incursions and the Norman Conquest held political value. In choosing Barking as residence immediately following his successful invasion, William I signalled his intentions in England to bridge the old and the new, creating a similar kind of lasting continuity for the Norman reign in his new country. The result of the post-Conquest rebuilt of Barking is indicative of its high status as a female monastery in an era of actively evolving discourse. It possessed a costly dual-drainage system for its latrine, a rarity in nunneries in England, and a cloister built to the north of the church. These two pieces of information inform us of Barking's wealth, but also of gender of its inhabitants because, as Roberta Gilchrist has shown, northern cloisters were a unique phenomenon to female houses in England, given no other location-based restrictions. Cloisters were usually built to the south of a church to capture the most amount of sun and heat, but the renewed association of women with their bodies, determined to be wet and cold according to the prevailing Galenic model of medicine, led to building practices that underlined female physiology in its construction of space.

Having gone unnoticed within the leaves of a relatively insignificant manuscript for an unknown number of centuries, it could be argued the imperfect prayer of a thirteenth-century *ancele pecheresse* does not possess any textual space. However, its subsequent discovery, edition, and translation by Tony Hunt and Jane Bliss contradicts any such argument. Within the original space of five folios, the unknown female author uses all the linguistic tools at her disposal to plead her case of confession to God, writing with the intensity and cognizance of a Greek tragedy. Her supposed sins are inextricably bound to her body, which is then contrast against that of Christ in gory detail as she recounts moments of the Passion. The author further deepens the lived experience of the text by using the first-person point of view throughout her prayer. The affective performance reinforces the bond of the text to the body, and she fully internalises her spirituality. The feminine textual space only exists in relation to the bodily space, which, in turn, must relate to the body of Christ.

The body became the only legitimate space for the spirituality of religious women to exist as their participation within monasticism was reduced through discourse to their physicality as the thirteenth century progressed. The anonymous author of the affective prayer is acutely aware of this and uses it to her advantage; her flesh is her bargaining chip with God. The pain described in the prayer is only too real for women, religious and lay, whose existence within their bodies is inherently painful. As opposed to suffering experienced by men, which must be sought out and is therefore external, female pain exists within. To relate such feminine physicality with the divine, the prayer's author conflates her own flesh with that of Christ, creating focal points of intense physical suffering to demonstrate the lengths she will go to maintain her chastity. Her body, in its sinfulness, only increases her connection to the divine, as she, like Christ, must be punished for the transgressions of the flesh.

The spirituality of religious women was increasingly enclosed, both within their own bodies and the spaces amongst the English landscape. Nunneries were more often founded on the outskirts of settlements than male monasteries in fenlands, flood plains, moors, and marshes, which isolated nuns physically and financially. Their home farms were often not profitable and religious women were increasingly kept from any manual labour that involved arable tasks. Where once local saints' cults could provide income from pilgrims, new trends of Eucharistic and Marian devotion in conjunction with an increasingly strict beatification process in Rome precluded this once bustling business venture. Instead, female monasteries became dependent upon the income from endowed lands which they managed. Gifts of land and income usually only occurred at the initial foundation and did not continue into a nunnery's lifespan, unlike the trend of steady gifts found at male monasteries. Due to their isolated locale and poor patronage, nunneries in England after *c.* 1200 suffered. Their main complaint was poverty, as the demand for spaces within a nunnery did not decrease even as the female monastic ability to gather income did. When *Periculoso* was disseminated by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298, nunneries in England found their spaces actively enclosed, as discourse dictated their chaste bodies should be: no one in, no one out, except the Lord.

Though perhaps it is obvious to say it now, but religious women interacted differently with their spirituality in monasticism than religious men. While their books may look the same, how they read them differed based on conceptions of gender. The process of detangling gender discourse from monastic spirituality is a complex one and in order to do so this project has embraced an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating aspects of book history, material culture, literary analysis, palaeography, archaeology, and sociology. It is my belief that making the lives of religious women, who have previously been marginalised in

medieval and modern history, visible involves utilising all the tools available to a researcher, not just those prescribed on the basis of academic discipline.

It is apparent through this research that while the pre-Conquest period of monasticism can no longer be considered a 'golden age' for monastic women, their spirituality during this time was less tied to conceptions of their physicality, which afforded them more freedom and creativity in their monastic spiritual participation. Such association between the feminine and the flesh was still prominent, however, and influenced a religious woman's interactions with her vocation, especially her relationship with Christ. As the relations between femininity, physicality, and sinfulness increased within cultural discourse, religious women found themselves unable to deny their flesh, instead embracing it as means of entering the theological conversation. Yet, such acceptance and promotion of a chaste, physical, and monialic relationship with monasticism also limited conceptualisations of spirituality to the feminine, despite female authors' best efforts to the contrary. By the end of the thirteenth century, religious women found themselves and their spirituality enclosed bodily and physically, as masculine discursive conceptions of female spirituality pushed them inwards to create an ideal and theoretically impenetrable space. The feminine textual space was incorporated into the feminine bodily space, which was physically realised in the built spaces of the actively enclosed nunnery as decreed in *Periculoso*.

Yet *Periculoso*, while financially damaging to English female monasticism, offered religious women a space of their own to undertake a new kind of understanding of their spirituality. Actively enclosed, they could, as Irigaray posits, 'keep themselves apart from men long enough to learn to defend their desire, especially through speech, to discover the love of other women while sheltered from men's imperious choices that put them in the position of rival commodities, to forge for themselves a social status that compels

recognition.<sup>502</sup> We see this blossoming of feminine spirituality post-*Periculoso* in growth of mystic writings emerging from women's communities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and in the works of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. While there is not enough time to fully explore the impact of active enclosure on female monastic spirituality in this project, it is another topic that deserves a new kind of historical examination. Hopefully through the continued use of new kinds of interdisciplinary historical analysis that focus specifically on female and feminine experiences, the lives of medieval religious woman are further unveiled to the world at large.

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<sup>502</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 33.

## Appendix: Database of English Nunnery Books, c. 600- c. 1540, Abridged

NUNNERY	BOOK	DATE	LOCATION	LIBRARY	SHELFMARK
Amesbury	Four Folios of a Breviary	s.xiii in - xiv	Windsor Castle	Jackson Collection	3
Amesbury	Psalter, "Amesbury Psalter"	s.xiii	Oxford	All Souls College	6
Amesbury	Couplet on the Death of Abbess Matilda of Caen MR	s.xii in (1113)	-	-	-
Amesbury	De regimine principum	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 18632
Amesbury	Seige of Thebes	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 18632
Amesbury	Exhortation addressed to "My deare susterys Mary and Anne"	s.xv ex	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Add. A.42
Amesbury	Life of St Melor	s.xiv	Aberyswyth	National Library of Wales	Bettisfield 19
Amesbury	Hours of the Virgin (Horae B.V.M.)	s.xiv	Cambridge	University Library	Ee.6.16
Amesbury	Psalterium, etc	s.xiii in - xiv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Liturg. Misc. 407
Amesbury	Four folios of a breviary	s.xiv	London	Private Collection	N/A
Ankerwyke	Life and Martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria	s.xv	Cambridge	Goneville & Caius College	390
Ankerwyke	Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom	s.xv	Cambridge	Goneville & Caius College	390
Ankerwyke	Psalteria (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Arthington	Prik of conscience (Lost)	s.xv (1448?)	?	?	?
Barking	Life of St David	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Life of St Ebrulfus	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Life of St Edith	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Life of St Edward the Martyr	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Life of St Ethelburga	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Life of St Hildelitha	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Metrical Life of St Mary of Egypt	s.xii in - x.iii	Cardiff	Public Library	1.381
Barking	Brief anonymous theological tracts	s.xiii ex	Cardiff	Public Library	3.833
Barking	Scintillarium	s.xiii ex	Cardiff	Public Library	3.833

Barking	Summa de ecclesiasticis officiiis	s.xiii ex	Cardiff	Public Library	3.833
Barking	Summa de vitiis et virtutibus	s.xiii ex	Cardiff	Public Library	3.833
Barking	Ordinale	s.xiv/xv	Oxford	Univerity College	169
Barking	Collection of Prayers and Devotional Material	s.xv	Nijmegen	University Library	194
Barking	Vitas patrum	s.xv (1496)	London	Lambeth Palace	1495.4
Barking	Libellus: history of the community (Lost)	s.viii	?	?	?
Barking	Life of Wulfhild (Lost)	s.x	?	?	?
Barking	Goscelin's dossier from Ælfifu: vita Æthelburh, Matins Hildelith, vita/translation Wulfhild, translations of first three abbesses (Lost)	s.xi	?	?	?
Barking	Missal (Lost)	s.xi 1	?	?	?
Barking	Bones of St Germanus wrapped in texts by Abbess Ælfifu (Lost)	s.xi/xii	?	?	?
Barking	Hymns to Etheldreda; Anselm De Custodia; various florilegia	s.xiii-xv	Cambridge	Trinity College	1133 (O.2.29)
Barking	Hymnary	s.xv	Cambridge	Trinity College	1226 (O.3.54)
Barking	A Vision about their translation	s.xi/xii	Dublin	Trinity College	176 (E 5.28)
Barking	Life and Miracles of St Ethelburga	s.xi/xii	Dublin	Trinity College	176 (E 5.28)
Barking	Life and Miracles of St Wulfhilda	s.xi/xii	Dublin	Trinity College	176 (E 5.28)
Barking	Translation of Saints Ethelburga, Hildelitha, and Wulfhilda, longer	s.xi/xii	Dublin	Trinity College	176 (E 5.28)
Barking	Translation of Saints Ethelburga, Hildelitha, and Wulfhilda, shorter	s.xi/xii	Dublin	Trinity College	176 (E 5.28)
Barking	Anonymous and unprinted "deuout meditacioun"	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Book of Susanna	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Book of Tobit	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Magnificat and Benedictus	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Prayers (unprinted)	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Two pages of Prayers to St Ethelburga	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 10596
Barking	Gracial	s.xiii med	London	British Library	Add. 38664
Barking	Evangelia	s.x/xi	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 155
Barking	clensyng of mannes soule	s.xiv ex	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 923

Barking	De remediis contra temptationes	s.xv in	Maldon	Beeleigh Abbey	-
Barking	Mirror of the Life of Christ	s.xv in	Maldon	Beeleigh Abbey	-
Barking	Charthe Longynge of the Celleress	s.xv	London	British Library	Cotton Julius D.viii
Barking	Kalendarium	s.xiv ex	London	British Library	Cotton Otho A.v
Barking	Accounts of Ethelburga and Wulfhilda; Translatio S. Vulfhildis; Vita Alfredi	s.x	London	British Library	Cotton Otho A.xii
Barking	L'assomption de Notre Dame	s.xiii/xi v	Paris	Bibliotheque Nationale	Fr. 1038
Barking	L'Histoire de Barlaam et Josaphat	s.xiii/xi v	Paris	Bibliotheque Nationale	Fr. 1038
Barking	La degende de l'Antechrist	s.xiii/xi v	Paris	Bibliotheque Nationale	Fr. 1038
Barking	Les voyages de saint Antoine	s.xiii/xi v	Paris	Bibliotheque Nationale	Fr. 1038
Barking	Vies des saints peres	s.xiii/xi v	Paris	Bibliotheque Nationale	Fr. 1038
Barking	Acrostic verses by Augustin Bongenou	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Aucuns bons enseignemens	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Ce sont les vij. Choses	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Cest cy endroit lordenance de madame la contetsse Dalensson	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Cest la devise de la messe, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Cest la fin du bon roy saint Loys	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Cest lordenance comment on se doit confessor, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Ci apres sensuit comment on doit Dieu amer, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Ci apres sensuit lordenance du char Helye le prophete, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Comment iij pechiex mortelz	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Comment on se doit garder contre aucunes temptacions, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Comment saint Bernart repret et chastie	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	De la age Adam	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	De la demande que fist la mere sain jehan...	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Grant plente de bons proverbs	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	La meditacion de la mort	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	La voie par quoy nous devons aler en paradis, inc	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41

Barking	Le dit des philosophes dalixandre quant il fu mort	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Le livre de la misere de lomme	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Le livre maistre Hugues de St. Victor	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Le livre qui est appele Je vois morir	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les contemplacions St Augustin	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les dis et proverbs does sages	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les enseignemens a Philippe	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les enseignments a Isabelle	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les lamentations saint bernart	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les meditaciones saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les meditacions sain Bernart	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Les tribulacions	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Memorandum of Elizabeth Ver, Countess of Oxford	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Pater noster in French	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Un preschement de notre seigneur	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Une oroison de saint Augustin a Dieu	s.xv	Oxford	Magdalen College	lat 41
Barking	Cantica canticorum, with gloss	s.xii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Laud. Lat. 19 [b.3]
Barking	Lamentations, with gloss	s.xii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Laud. Lat. 19 [b.3]
Barking?	Le Roman des Romans	s.xiii in	London	British Library	Egerton 612
Barking?	Romance of Pope Gregory, La vie du Pape Saint Gregoire (ff. 75v-96)	s.xiii in	London	British Library	Egerton 612
Barking?	Miracles of the Virgin in verse, imperfect	s.xiii in	London	British Library	Egerton 612
Barking?	Prose and Verse Miscellany	s.xiii-v	London	British Library	Egerton 613
Blackborough	Cartulary	s.xiv ex	London	British Library	Egerton 3137
Brewood Black Ladies	Church Masboke (Lost)	s.xvi (1538?)	?	?	?
Broadholme	Ordinale (Lost)	s.xiv (1374?)	?	?	?
Broadholme	Psalterium (Lost)	s.xiv (1374?)	?	?	?
Bruisyard	Le doctrine of the herte (Lost)	s.xv (1481?)	?	?	?
Bruisyard	Golden Legend (Lost)	s.xvi (1501?)	?	?	?

Bruisyard	Psalterium, etc	s.xiii	London	British Library	Sloane 2400
Bruisyard	Royal Book	s.xvi (1507)	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Tanner 191
Buckland Michin	Psalterium	s.xiii	London	Society of Antiquaries	713
Burnham	Portiforium (Lost)	s.xiv (1392)	?	?	?
Campsey	Comfortable Treatise to Strengthen and Comfort Creatures in the Faith	s.xv	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	268
Campsey	Ladder of Perfection, book I	s.xv	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	268
Campsey	Ladder of Perfection, book II	s.xv	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	268
Campsey	Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom	s.xv	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	268
Campsey	An older masse bok (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Campsey	Chastysing of Goddes Chyldren	s.xv (1493)	?	?	?
Campsey	Hours of St John the Baptist	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Hours of St Mary Magdalene	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Hymnary	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Metrical Psalters of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Cross	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Prayer in French (partial verse)	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Psalterium	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 40675
Campsey	Life of Audrey (= Etheldreda)	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of Richard of Chichester	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Catherine of Alexandria	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Edmund of Canterbury	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Edward the Confessor	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Elizabeth of Hungary	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Foi	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Modwenna	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Osyth/Osgitha	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Paphnutius	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Life of St Paul the Hermit	s.xiii/xi v	London	British Library	Add. 70513

Campsey	Life of St Thomas Becket of Canterbury	s.xiii/xiv	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Romance of St Mary Magdalen	s.xiii/xiv	London	British Library	Add. 70513
Campsey	Psalterium	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	University Library	Add. 7220
Campsey	Interpretacio misse	s.xv	London	British Library	Arundel 396
Campsey	Life of St Catherine	s.xv	London	British Library	Arundel 396
Campsey	Paschal table	s.xv	London	British Library	Arundel 396
Canonsleigh	Ancrene Riwe	s.xiii in	London	British Library	Cotton Cleopatra C.vi
Carrow	Psalterium	s.xiii	Baltimore	Walters Art Gallery	90
Carrow	Psalter fragment 1	s.xiv	Reykjavik	National Museum	4678
Carrow	Psalterium	s.xiii	Madrid	Bibliotheca Nazionale	6422
Carrow	Psalter fragment 2	s.xiv	Reykjavik	National Library	IB 363 8vo
Carrow	Psalter fragment 3	s.xiv	Reykjavik	National Library	Lbs frag 51
Castle Hedingham	Books of parchment (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Castle Hedingham	Masse books - iis (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Castle Hedingham	Mortuary Roll of Lucy, first prioress	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2849
Cheshunt	bookes, X, lyinge in the Quayre (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Cheshunt	Deeds in Ladys Chamber (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Cheshunt	Masse booke in parchment (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Chester	Processional	s.xv/xvi	San Marino	Huntington Library	EL 34 B.7
Chicksand	Psalter with calendar	s.xiv in	London	British Library	Arundel 83
Chicksand	Origen, Homilies on the Old Testament	s.xii ex	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Auct. E Inf. 4
Crabhouse	Cartulary and Foundation Story (Coment la Mesun de Crabhus comencerunt)	s.xiii-xv	London	British Library	Add. 4733 [Vol I]
Dartford	Brut Chronicle	s.xv 2	Dublin	Trinity College	490
Dartford	Office of the Dead	s.xv	London	Society of Antiquaries	717
Dartford	Penitential Psalms, Litany, memoria of St Christina	s.xv	London	Society of Antiquaries	717
Dartford	Processional Offices	s.xv	London	Society of Antiquaries	717
Dartford	Brief devotional piece	s.xv 2		Downside Abbey	26542
Dartford	Extract from Speculum spiritualium	s.xv 2		Downside Abbey	26542
Dartford	Poor Caitiff	s.xv 2		Downside Abbey	26542
Dartford	Pricking of Love	s.xv 2		Downside Abbey	26542
Dartford	Rentale of the priory of Dartford	s.xvi	London	British Library	Arundel 61

Dartford	Commentary on Rule of St Augustine	s.xv/xvi	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 255
Dartford	Hours of the Virgin (Dominican), Sarum Calendar, prayers, litany, Office of the Dead, Commednatio animarum, psalms	s.xv	Taunton	Somerset County Record Office	DD/SAS C/1993 / 68
Dartford	Book of the Craft of Dying	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Calendar and two anonymous poems	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Charter from Poor Caitiff	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Confession of St Brendan	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Death's warning to the world	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Extract from Somme le roi in English	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Ladder of Four Rungs	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Little Short Treatise	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Meditations of St Augustine	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Mending of Life	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Petty Job and two anonymous poems	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Treatise of Ghostly Battle	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Twelve Profits of Tribulations	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
Dartford	Mixed Life	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2254
Dartford	Pricking of Love	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2254
Dartford	Disticha Catonis	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Rawl. G. 59
Denney	librum de Frensshe' (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Denney	Northern Homily Cycle in English Verse	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Add. 8335
Denney	Speculum Vitae	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Hatton 18
Derby	Anglo-Norman verse paraphrase of the Bible	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Gospel of Nichodemus	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Grant mal fist Adam	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	L'Assomption de Notre Dame	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	La passion du Christ	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Le sermun de secle	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Lord's Prayer	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Passion of St Lawrence	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710

Derby	Three Passions of John, Peter & Paul, and Bartholomew	s.xiii	London	British Library	Egerton 2710
Derby	Vies des saints peres	s.xiii/iv	Manchester	John Rylands Library	French 6
Easebourne	Antiphonaria (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Biblia gallicana (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Chastising of Goddes childern (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Collectane (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Legenda grossa (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Librum euangelii (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Martirologium (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Missalia (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Ordinalia (ij) in gallico (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Portiforium (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	primarium copertum (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Psalteria (viiij) (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Easebourne	Troparium (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Elstow	Allegoriae in Vetus Testamentum	s.xii ex (1191-2)	London	British Library	Royal 7 F.iii
Elstow	Historia Scholastica	s.xii ex (1191-2)	London	British Library	Royal 7 F.iii
Esholt	Chastising of goddeschildern (Lost)	s.xv (1448?)	?	?	?
Flixton	Second Volume of Bible (Lost)	s.xv	?	?	?
Flixton	First Volume of Bible	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ee.3.52
Godstow	Psalter, Canticles, Litanies, Hours of the Virgin (Sarum), hymns, etc	s.xv	Manchester	Chetham's Library	6717 (Mun.A.6.74)
Godstow	Cartulary of Godstow	s.xv	London	National Archives	E164/20
Godstow	Cartulary of Godstow	s.xv (1467)	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Rawl. B.408
Goring	Psalter, Calender, Canticles, Litany	s.xiii	Cambridge	Trinity College	244 (B.11.5)
Greenfield	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Hampole	Glossed Psalter of Richard Rolle (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Hampole	Hymns, Hours of the Passion, Short Office of the Cross, Hours of the Virgin, Psalter of Jerome, Calendar	s.xiv 2	San Marino	Huntington Library	EL 9 H.17
Hampole	Psalter, ferial Canticles, litany, office of the dead	s.xiv 2	San Marino	Huntington Library	EL 9 H.17

Harrold	Psalter, Calendar, ferial Canticles, litany, prayers	s.xii ex	London	Private Collection	Private Collection
Heynings	Breviary for secular use	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Gemma animae	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Homiliary	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Li cumpoz	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Passio S. Edmundi	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Speculum ecclesiae	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Vita S. Rumuoldi	s.xii	Lincoln	Cathedral Chapter	199
Heynings	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Higham	Boke of gospelles couered with siluer and ouer gilt with stones of cristall (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Horton	Boethius Consolation of Philosophy	s.xi in	Madrid	El Escorial	e.ii.1
Ickleton	Litany, Commemorations, prayers, liturgical offices	s.xvi (1516)	Cambridge	St. John's College	506 and T.9.1
Inkberrow	Jerome's Commentary on Ecclesiastes	s.vi	Wurzburg	Universitätsbibliothek	M.p.th.q.2
Kilburn	Diverse books pertaining to the church of no value (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kilburn	Golden Legend (manuscript) (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kilburn	Legends, two, in parchment and paper (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kilburn	Masbook, old written (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kilburn	Processions, four, in parchment and paper (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kilburn	Golden Legend (printed)	s.xv	?	?	?
Kilburn	Masbook, print	s.xv	?	?	?
Kington St Michael	Book of the Craft of Dying	s.xv	Oxford	Corpus Christi College	220
Kington St Michael	Little Short Treatise	s.xv	Oxford	Corpus Christi College	220
Kington St Michael	Treatise of Ghostly Battle	s.xv	Oxford	Corpus Christi College	220
Kington St Michael	Twelve Profits of Tribulation	s.xv	Oxford	Corpus Christi College	220
Kington St Michael	Golden Legend, Boke of seynts lyves yn Englysshe (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kington St Michael	matyns boke (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Kington St Michael	olde masboke (Lost)	?	?	?	?

Kington St Michael	Brief list of English Kings and Burial sites	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Kington St Michael	Letter of Thomas Langton appointing Catherine Moleyns prioress	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Kington St Michael	Obituary Calendar of Kington	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Kington St Michael	Ordo 'to resseyve bothers and sister' into Kington	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Kington St Michael	Prayers to the Virgin, angels and saints	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Kington St Michael	Services for the sick, commendatio animarium, hours of virgin	s.xv ex	Cambridge	University Library	Dd.8.2
Lacock	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Lacock	Magna Carta	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 46144
Lacock	Foundation Charter	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. Charter 75578
Lacock	Cartulary Abbey Book (two volumes)	s.xiii mid	London	British Library	Add. 88973/4
Lacock	Book of Lacock	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Vitellius A.viii
Lacock	Book of Lacock (16th c copy)	s.xvi	London	British Library	Harley 5019
Lacock	Psalter, calendar, canticles, Athanasian creed, litany, prayers	s.xiii ex-xiv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Laud lat 114
Lacock	Dictionarium/Expositiōne s vocabulorum biblae	s.xiv-xv	Lacock	Lacock Abbey	Mrs. A.D. Burnett-Brown
Langley	Masse boks (ij) (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Leominster	Private devotion written by many hands	s.xi in	London	British Library	Cotton Nero A.ii, fols 3-13; Cotton Galba A.xiv
Lillechurch (Higham)	Mortuary Roll of Amphelisa, prioress of Lillechurch	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	St. John's College	N.31 (271)
Littlemore	Psalter, Calendar, Anselm Prayers	s.xii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Auct. D.2.6
London (Augustinian)	Golden Legend	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 322
London (Benedictine)	Portiforium (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Benedictine)	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Hours of the Virgin, etc	s.xv ex	Reigate, Parish Church	Cranston Library	2322
London (Franciscan)	Bible in two volumes with armes of France, in French (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Book of decretals in French (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Book of master history (Lost)	?	?	?	?

London (Franciscan)	Hours of the Virgin (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Hours of the Virgin (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Lives of the Fathers (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Poor Caitiff (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Prick of Conscience (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Private Devotions in roll form (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Psalter, etc with French gloss (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Psalter, etc with French gloss (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Regula Pastoralis of Gregory the Great (Lost)	?	?	?	?
London (Franciscan)	Doctrine of the Heart	s.xv in	Cambridge	Trinity College	301 (B.14.15)
London (Franciscan)	Rule for Enclosed Minoreess	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 585
London (Franciscan)	Commentary on Psalm 91	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2397
London (Franciscan)	Ladder of Perfection	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2397
London (Franciscan)	Mixed Life	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2397
London (Franciscan)	Psalter, etc	s.xv in	Wellington	Turnbull Library	N/A
Malling	Hours of the Virgin (Sarum), etc	s.xv in	Blackburn	Museum & Art Gallery	91.2104
Malling	Manuel de pechiez (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Marham	Mass book	?	?	?	?
Marham	Other books, xi	?	?	?	?
Markyate	Precessional Fragment, 1 leaf	s.xii in	Sürth bei Köln	Dr J. Lückger	Dr J. Lückger
Markyate	Psalter, etc (St Alban's Psalter)	s.xii in	Hildesheim	Schnutgen Museum	M694
Marrick	Dream of the Pilgrimage of the Soul	s.xv in	New York	Public Library	Spencer Collection, 19
Minster in Sheppey	Bokes, diverse other good books (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Bokes, 1, good and bad (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Bokes, old press full, no value (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Bokes, vij (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Books, ii, with two silver clasps (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Books, vi, with one silver clasp (Lost)	?	?	?	?

Minster in Sheppey	Golden Legend (Saints Lives book) (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Sheppey	Mase boke of parchment (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Minster in Thanet	Gospels of St Augustine (St Mildreth)	s.vi	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	286
Minster in Thanet	Acts of the Apostles (Jerome)	s.viii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Selden Supra 30
Newcastle Upon Tyne	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Appleton	Canticle (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Appleton	Missal (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Appleton	Portiforium (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Coton	See Swine, Harley 2409	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2409
Nun Coton	Cartulary	s.xiii-iv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Top. Lincs. D.1
Nun Monkton	Book of Offices (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	De mysterio passionis Domini (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	De visitatione beate Mariae (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	De vita Christi (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Life of Christ (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Life of Christ (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Meditatio passionis Dominis (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Missal (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Pater Noster in English (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Primarium optimum (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Psalter (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Psalter, etc (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Relevations of St Bridget (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nun Monkton	Vice and Vertues (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Nuneaton	Expugnatio hibernica	s.xiii-xiv	Douai	Bibliotheque Municipale	887
Nuneaton	Letter of Hugh of Reading from Thesaurus Anecdotorum Novissimus	s.xiii-xiv	Douai	Bibliotheque Municipale	887
Nuneaton	Topographia Hiberniae, Expugnatio Hibernica	s.xiii-xiv	Douai	Bibliotheque Municipale	887
Nuneaton	Two sermons by Alan of Tewkesbury and letter collection	s.xiii-xiv	Douai	Bibliotheque Municipale	887
Nuneaton	Various conciliar, papal decrees, and constitutions	s.xiii-xiv	Douai	Bibliotheque Municipale	887
Nuneaton	Apocalypse, rhymed, in Latin and French	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Bestiary	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123

Nuneaton	Chasteau d'amour	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Commentary on the Lord's Prayer in French	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Commentary on the Lord's Prayer in French, second copy	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Gospel of Nichodemus in French	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Officium beatae Mariae virginis, incomplete	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Oratio, Augustine adapted for female use with French rubric	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Nuneaton	Poema morale	s.xiii ex	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClellan 123
Polsloe	Liber gestorum Karoli, regis Francie (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Polsloe	Breuiarium seu Portforium ad Usus Insignis Ecclesie Sarisburiensis	s.xvi (1519)	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce BB 200
Redlingfield	Antiphonarie (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Redlingfield	Bokes, iij, of little work (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Redlingfield	Messe boke (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Romsey	Psalter, the "Wilton Psalter"	s.xiii	London	Royal College of Physicians	409
Romsey	Chronicle of English History from Hengist to Egbert	s.xiv in	London	British Library	Lansdowne 436
Romsey	Vitae of English Saints, 43	s.xiv in	London	British Library	Lansdowne 436
Saint Marie de Pre	-	-	-	-	-
Saint Mary de Pre/Sopwell	Rules for the priory	s.xiv	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus E.iv
Saint Mary de Pre/Sopwell	Rules for the priory	s.xiv	London	British Library	Cotton Nero D.i
Shaftesbury	Psalter, etc, "Audley Psalter"	s.xv in	London	Lambeth Palace	3285
Shaftesbury	Vita Ælfgifu (Lost)	s.x ex	?	?	?
Shaftesbury	Dream of the Pilgrimage of the Soul (Lost)	s.xv (?)	?	?	?
Shaftesbury	Psalter, "Salisbury Psalter"	s.x ex	Salisbury	Salisbury Cathedral	150
Shaftesbury	Hours of the Virgin, etc	s.xvi in	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	2--1957
Shaftesbury	Arms of Christ	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 11748
Shaftesbury	Ladder of Perfection	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 11748
Shaftesbury	Of the Virtue of the Holy Name of Jesus (Oleum Effusum)	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 11748
Shaftesbury	Rule of Life of Our Lady	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 11748
Shaftesbury	Vision of St John of the Sorrows of the Virgin, beginning	s.xv	London	British Library	Add. 11748

Shaftesbury	Psalter, etc, in Latin and French; "Winchester Psalter", "St Swithun's Psalter"	s.xii	London	British Library	Cotton Nero C.iv
Shaftesbury	Apocalypse, rhymed, in Anglo-Norman	s.xvi 1	Oxford	Bodleian Library	French e.22
Shaftesbury	Charter from Poor Caitiff	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God (Fervor amoris)	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Devout Meditation of Richard Hampole	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Epistle on the Commandment of God	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Information on the Contemplative Life and Active... St Bride	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Pater Noster of Richard the Hermit (Rolle)	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Prayers, in Latin	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Treatise of Perfect Love	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Treatise of Tribulation	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Ii.6.40
Shaftesbury	Psalter, etc, "Shaftesbury Psalter"	s.xii	London	British Library	Lansdowne 383
Shaftesbury	Verses on the Death of Abbess Matilda of Caen MR	s.xii in (1113)	-	-	-
Sinningthwaite	Mirror of the Life of Christ (Lost)	?	?	?	?
St Gallen	Vita Gregory the Great (composed at Whitby)	s.ix 1	St Gallen	Stiftsbibliothek	Cod. Sang. 567, ff. 75-110
Stamford	Rule of Seynt Benet	s.xvi (1517)	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Arch. A.d.15
Stixwould	Cartulary (Lost)	s.xiii	London	British Library	Add. 46701
Swine	De lapsu virginis, Ambrose, deploratio uirginitatis	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	King's College	18
Swine	De mysteriis	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	King's College	18
Swine	De Officiis ministrorum	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	King's College	18
Swine	De Sacrementis	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	King's College	18
Swine	Canonical Epistles (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	De bono mortis, Ambrose (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Etymologiae, Isidore (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Gospel of Mark, with gloss (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Historia Scholastica (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Liber de vita Katerinae (Lost)	?	?	?	?

Swine	Liber specialis gratiae (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Libri Sanctae Brigidae (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Mariale (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Oculus sacerdotis (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Revelationes of Birgitta of Sweden (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Sententiae, Isidore (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Sermones de tempore (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Unknown book (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Swine	Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God (Fervor amoris)	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2409
Swine	De remediis contra temptationes	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2409
Swine	Life of Saint Catherine of Siena	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2409
Swine	Nine Points of Virtue (Northern Version)	s.xv	London	British Library	Harley 2409
Syon	DISREGARDED FOR THIS PROJECT	-	-	-	-
Tamworth	Vitae Edith of Tamworth (Lost)	s.x ex	?	?	?
Tarrant Keynston	La Lumiere as lais	s.xiv	Dublin	Trinity College	209 (B.5.1)
Tarrant Keynston	Le livre de Sydrac/Sidrach	s.xiv	Dublin	Trinity College	209 (B.5.1)
Tarrant Keynston	Three folios of a Calendar	s.xiii 2	Clitheroe	Stonyhust College	9 (HMC 12)
Tarrant Keynston	Ancrene Wisse	s.xiv 1	Oxford	Magdalen College	Lat 67
Tarrant Keynston	Psalter, etc	s.xv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Lyell 23
Tarrant Keynston	Treatise from John Godard to M, Prioress of Tarrant	s.xiii med	Cambridge	University Library	Mm.6.4
Tarrant Keynston	Psalter, etc	s.xiii	Stockholm	National Museum	NMB 2010
Thetford	New Testament, Wycliffe transation	s.xiv	Alnwick Castle	Duke of Northumberland	449
Thetford	Revelations of St Bridget (Lost)	?	?	?	?
Unknown	Diurnal, Kalends, Special Offices for Dominican use	s.xv	Edinburgh	University Library Archive	30
Unknown	Treatise on Religious Life addressed to nun	s.xii/xiii	Cambridge	Pembroke College	112
Unknown	Ordo Servitii. Ordinale etc.	s.xi	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	163
Unknown	Regularis concordia	s.xi	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	201
Unknown	Ancrene Wisse	s.xiv 2	Cambridge	Gonville and Caius College	234/120

Unknown	Devotional Treatises; Prayers; Psalms	s.xv/vi	Cambridge	University Library	Add. 3042
Unknown	Psalter 'Golden Psalter'	s.xii med	London	British Library	Add. 81084
Unknown	Vitae Ss. Katherine, Margaret, and Julian. Hali Meithhad, Sawles Warde	s.xiii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 34
Unknown	Ancrene Wisse	s.xiv 1	Oxford	Merton College	C.i.5 (Coxe 44)
Unknown	Woong Group; Ancrene Wisse	s.xiii in	London	British Library	Cotton Nero A.xiv
Unknown	Ancrene Riwle; Sawles Warde; Hali Methhad; Wohung of ure Lauerd; Seinte Katerine	s.xiii 1	London	British Library	Cotton Titus D.xviii
Unknown	Rule of St Benedict, Wintney version	s.xv 1	London	British Library	Cotton Vespasian A.xxv
Unknown	Ancrene Riwle	s.xiv 1	London	British Library	Cotton Vitellius F.vii
Unknown	Women's Prayer	s.xiii	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Douce 282
Unknown	Ancrene Riwle	s.xiv 2	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Eng. Poet.a.1
Unknown	Harley Prayerbook	s.viii ex	London	British Library	Harley 7653
Unknown	Theological Tracts	s.xv	Cambridge	University Library	Hh.1.11
Unknown	Cerne Prayerbook	s.ix	Cambridge	University Library	Ll.1.10
Unknown	Ancrene Riwle	s.xiv 2	Cambridge	Magdalen College	Pepys 2498
Unknown	Sawles Warde; Lives of Ss Katherine, Margaret, Juliana; Oreison of Seinte Marie (Katherine Group)	s.xiii 1	London	British Library	Royal 17 A.xxvii
Unknown	Royal Prayerbook	s.ix	London	British Library	Royal 2 A.xx
Unknown	Ancrene Riwle	s.xv	London	British Library	Royal 8 C.i
Wherwell	Psalter, etc	s.xiv in	London	British Library	Add. 27866
Wherwell	Psalter, etc	s.xii	Cambridge	St. John's College	C.18 (68)
Wherwell	Cartulary and brief history of abbey	s.xiv	London	British Library	Egerton 2104a
Wherwell	Psalter, Sarum Calendar, etc	s.xiii- xiv	Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum	McClean 45
Wherwell	Calender, verses of the death of Matilda, abbess, and letter by E	s.xii	St Petersburg	Public Library	Q.v.I, 62
Wigmore	Ancrene Wisse, feminine	s.xiii 2	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	402
Wilton	Psalter, the "Wilton Psalter"	s.xiii	London	Royal Coll of Physicians	409
Wilton	Processional (Lost)	s.xiv	?	?	?
Wilton	Chronicle of Wilton	s.xv in	London	British Library	Cotton Faustina B.iii
Wilton	Life of St Edith	s.xv in	London	British Library	Cotton Faustina B.iii
Wilton	Life of St Etheldreda of Ely	s.xv in	London	British Library	Cotton Faustina B.iii

Wilton	Cartulary	s.xiii med	London	British Library	Harley 436
Wilton	Psalter, etc (Dominican)	s.xii/xiv	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Rawl. G.23
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Parker)	s.x 1	Cambridge	Corpus Christi College	173
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Vita Eadburg (Lost)	s.xi med	?	?	?
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Augustinian Sermons, 14	s.xii in	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 451
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Diadema monachorum, Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel	s.xii in	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 451
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Moral Tractate in 36 chapters, anon	s.xii in	Oxford	Bodleian Library	Bodl. 451
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Prayers and Private Devotions	s.xii	London	British Library	Cotton Titus D.xxvi
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Prayers and Private Devotions	s.xii	London	British Library	Cotton Titus D.xxvii
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Volume of prayers, hymn, and devotional material	s.ix	London	British Library	Harley 2965
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Ordo for consecration of nuns	s.xvi in	Cambridge	University Library	Mm.3.13
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Poems (3) on the Death of Abbess Matilda of Caen MR	s.xii in (1113)	-	-	-
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Psalter, "Royal Psalter"	s.xii	London	British Library	Royal 2 B V
Winchester (Nunnaminster)	Psalter, etc	s.xv in	Romsey	Parish Church	-
Wintney	Inventory of Refectory at Wintney	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii
Wintney	Martirologium, fragment	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii
Wintney	Martyrologium, Bede	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii
Wintney	Obituary Calendar of Wintney	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii
Wintney	Rule of St Benedict, Wintney version	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii
Wintney	Verses, Simon of Waverley	s.xiii	London	British Library	Cotton Claudinus D.iii

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