

THE USE OF BOOKS OWNED BY MEDIEVAL WOMEN

A CONTRIBUTION TO A STUDY OF MEDIEVAL NUNS' READING IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

by

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SYNOPSIS

There have been a number of recent studies of medieval women's reading, particularly in respect of female book-ownership. The present thesis, owing much to these preceding studies, especially the list of books owned by medieval nuns compiled by David Bell, will explore what has not yet been adequately investigated: actual 'use' of the book by and for nuns in England. The main procedure of this research is to examine additions made in later hands in manuscripts and early printed books. The main argument of 'book use' will be developed in chapter three, analyzing many examples dating from the twelfth century till the dissolution, whereas the preceding chapters one and two will examine contents of books owned by nuns in the historical context and consider methodological problems in interpreting evidence. In particular, we will be reminded that 'reading' and 'writing' in the Middle Ages involve several levels of literacy, which require a different definition from our modern terminology. Even such a cautious assessment of evidence, however, will lead us to conclude that books had a variety of use and 'reading' was not uniform even in the nunneries.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EETS Early English Text Society

o.s / e.s. / s.s original series / extra series / supplementary series

N & Q *Notes and Queries*

n.s. new series

ODS *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. by David Hugh Farmer, 4th edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

STC *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, and of English Book Printed abroad 1475–1640*, first compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd edn, revised by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, with a chronological index by Philip R. Rider, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–1991)

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INTRODUCTION

Within a few decades the study of women as readers has been rapidly developed and revealed various aspects of women's relation with books such as patronage and book ownership.¹ Much has been written about medieval women's reading, but our knowledge is not yet complete. One aspect which has not been investigated fully is to explore the actual 'use' of books: it seems significant to raise this question which makes us recognize that book ownership does not necessarily prove that the book was 'read' or actually 'used' by the owner. The present thesis aims, therefore, to consider aspects of 'book-use' by medieval women. My research is based on David Bell's study of nuns' reading; this book has presented an extensive argument for medieval nuns' literacy and learning as well as a list of books owned by them.² Detailed examination of the contents of the books themselves, however, has not been attempted yet and therefore the present thesis aims to examine the books owned by medieval nuns as 'expressive forms'³ and to argue the 'use' of the books by analyzing additions in later

¹ Among the items which I have read, the following scholars' articles, whose precise references can be obtained in 'Works Cited' at the end of this thesis, are inevitable as preliminary reading for this particular aspect of study: Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners'; Boffey, 'Lydgate's Lyrics'; Dutton, 'Passing the Book'; Edwards, '*Legendys of Hooly Wummen*'; Erler, 'Exchange of Books'; Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage'; Meale, 'Laywomen and their Books'; and each article of Ford, Erler, and Meale and Boffey, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, III: 1400–1557.

² David N. *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series, CLVIII (Kalamazoo, MI; Spencer, MA: Cistercian, 1995).

³ D. F. McKenzie, 'Books as Expressive Forms', in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*

hands. This procedure entails several methodological difficulties which should be discussed beforehand; otherwise it may not be possible to present a full account of nuns' reading. It would be illustrated, however, that reading in Middle Ages was carried out in different ways from our own day and books were in the centre of the nunneries and used on various occasions both secular as well as religious.

It has been held that devotional literature especially the Book of Hours was the main reading for medieval women; this theory still holds true, but recent studies of female book ownership have begun to investigate other possibilities and suggest that 'women's reading habits and tastes were in practice more eclectic than is often supposed'.⁴ Moreover, book circulation among women in Medieval England has been established which indicates both that women shared their reading simultaneously and that they did so over an extended period of time.⁵ This tendency can be seen especially from the fifteenth century at the time when literacy was in general considered to have increased rapidly; this was probably accelerated by the introduction of printing.⁶

Such studies of women's readership as exist have been evolved from the

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 9–30.

⁴ Carol M. Meale and Julia Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 526–40 (p. 537).

⁵ For example, Meale and Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading'; Mary C. Erler, 'Exchange of Books between Nuns and Laywomen: Three Surviving Examples', in *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. by Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 360–73, and her 'Devotional Literature', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 495–525.

⁶ Meale and Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', pp. 534–35.

investigation of book ownership. We have obtained much important information from ownership studies for assessing women's reading, but we have to remember that ownership does not necessarily lead to readership, which is illustratively expressed in a contemporary poet Eustache Deschamps's satire on women and the book:

A Book of Hours too must be mine
 Where subtle workmanship will shine
 of gold and azure, rich and smart
 Arranged and painted with great art
 Covered with fine brocade of gold,
 and there must be, so as to hold
 the pages closed, two golden clasps.⁷

Medieval women's view of books as *objets d'art* is expressed here, which can also be surmised from what medieval wills tell: the majority of books which medieval women possessed appear to have been devotional books particularly Books of Hours or primers, which might have been partly because women preferred to bequeath books of great value. As Carol Meale has demonstrated, therefore, wills cannot give a full account of female ownership of books or literary interests so that we should not rely too much on only single evidence.⁸

It seems more likely than has been considered, on the other hand, that some medieval women enjoyed assorted reading including secular literature which the

⁷ Translated in Erwyn Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), I, 68.

⁸ Carol M. Meale, "'... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch': Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 128–58 (pp.130–32).

contemporary male did not recommend;⁹ but the religious reading still seems to have been dominant, and needless to say, especially among women religious as far as book ownership has shown. Book ownership studies have mainly been advanced from N. R. Ker's monumental catalogue and its supplement by Andrew Watson;¹⁰ one of the recent major accomplishments indebted to them is David Bell's study of books and libraries in medieval nunneries in England. In Part I Bell evolves the argument of medieval nuns' literacy and reading, which is based on his database presented in Part II where he lists the books possessed by medieval nuns or nunneries, some of which were not included in Ker's catalogue.

The recent studies of ownership and readership including Bell's have presented many important aspects of medieval women's interests in learning and reading which have not fully been investigated before. It should be admitted, however, that we do not know from these studies alone if the books were actually 'read'. We may wonder if the books free from scribbles except for ownership inscription were, as Deschamps caricatured, kept untouched and regarded as aesthetic objects. Yet there are fortunately a number of books which contain later additions in the texts; then what, if any, can these additional writings tell us?

To raise this question was the starting point of my research. I have started investigating additions made in the volumes which were owned by medieval nuns or

⁹ Meale and Boffey, 'Gentlwomen's Reading', p. 535.

¹⁰ N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd edn, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, III (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964); Andrew G. Watson, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books: Supplement to the Second Edition*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, XV (London: Royal Historical Society; University of London, 1987).

present in nunneries and attempted to categorize them into several classifications. My research is much indebted to Bell's study, in particular, his list of volumes owned by medieval nuns. Within the short period which I was allowed for my preliminary research, utilizing Bell's accomplishment, I limited myself researching volumes in the present possession of the following major libraries in England: London, British Library; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Corpus Christi College Library, Magdalen College Library, St John's College Library; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, University Library, St John's College Library, Pepys Library in Magdalene College, and Trinity College Library. I have examined almost all the relevant volumes that these libraries possess, but sometimes I have not been able to look at some of them for reasons outside my control. In total, nevertheless, almost two-thirds of the books listed in Bell's list have been examined by the present writer. The books examined in my research are all included in appendices following conclusion of this thesis.

Here I would like to give some explanations of procedures taken in my project. First, I have examined all additions in each book and included those that were presumably made before the dissolution. Next, I classified them into some categories and exclude those which are not so relevant to my argument and do not fall into any category noted in appendix two. I also exclude volumes which contain only ownership inscriptions; the reason is apparent from my research purpose as is explained above, but these books are listed in appendix three. In addition, sources of the ownership inscriptions and contents of the volumes can be obtained in Part II of Bell's book, many of which I have utilized in compiling my appendix one. There seem to be some manuscripts, however, which David Bell does not include in his list, but other scholars have regarded as having been possessed by nuns. I have included one manuscript in my

appendices. Consequently, the dates of manuscripts and printed books included in my thesis range from the twelfth to early sixteenth centuries: fourteen manuscripts are before the fifteenth century, while thirty-one volumes (including three printed books) date after the fifteenth century. These books are presented in alphabetical order of the provenance (i.e. nunneries) in appendix one, which lists additions in sequential order as one can easily find them when consulting the book; then appendix two classified additions, while appendix three consists of the other manuscripts and printed books which were consulted, but do not give particularly significant sources to my present study.

For exploring actual ‘book-use’ by examining these additions, it is necessary to have some introductory arguments which chapters one and two aim to give. Chapter one will give an overview of what has been revealed about nuns’ ‘reading’ and ‘literacy’ and at the same time point to the difficulty of generalization of it; especially we need to remember that Syon Abbey always stands exceptional. This chapter also alludes to some factors which make our argument complicated, and the following chapter will investigate these points, in more detail. As has been stated, in problems implicated in ownership studies, there are some intricate points hard to disentangle when assessing books as evidence. When looking at a book containing annotations in a later hand in our modern period, it seems natural to consider that the owner made them for his or her own use. This is because people now usually possess the ability both of reading and writing. In the Middle Ages, however, the literacy of reading and writing was not always complementary, and further involved complicated stages; because of this we cannot simplify and argue that the additions in a book were necessarily made by or for the owner. Chapter two will present, therefore, several difficulties of which we need to

be conscious in assessing evidence.

Then chapter three, which is central in this thesis, will explore the actual ‘use’ of books owned by medieval nuns by examining evidence on the basis of the arguments which previous chapters have developed. I will focus first on liturgical texts,¹¹ which is more than half of the surviving volumes, and then move to English works mostly devotional. A number of volumes contain religious or spiritual additions which suggest that they were used for their devotional lives, whereas some are for recording information, such as obits or documents of the nunnery’s business; additionally, we can find some personal comments, though not relevant to the texts, among them. The examples presented in chapter three will illustrate that the books functioned for various purposes in medieval nunneries.

Throughout chapters two and three, a number of manuscripts are referred to and readers will find references in footnotes such as ‘Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Barking 2)’. This indicates the number allotted to the books appearing in Part II of Bell’s study, ‘List of Manuscripts and Printed Books Owned in Medieval Nunneries’; this reference will facilitate readers for further consultation of detailed description of each manuscript. Bibliographical studies have rapidly established a database of books owned by medieval women, on the basis of which this thesis will present an aspect for advancing our study of women and the book.

¹¹ For the definition of this word, see chapter one, p. 9.

MEDIEVAL NUNS' READING AND LITERACY

Medieval male authors sometimes derided nuns for holding Latin books upside down. We wonder to what extent they were able to read at all. This question is naturally not easy to answer, partly because of our lack of knowledge about medieval women's education and literary activities. Recent studies, however, have begun to explore medieval nuns' book ownership and we have come to know more about their reading. The present thesis aims to explore the actual 'use' of the books owned by nuns and chapter three will develop the argument with many examples. Before such a detailed examination, we first need to consider the relation of nuns to books in a broader view. The present chapter will, therefore, examine the contents of the books owned by nuns and the significance of 'reading' to medieval nuns. It should be accepted that we are not to draw too hasty generalizations of nuns' reading, for there are various factors such as literacy of which the extent varies case by case. In particular, although nuns are regarded as lacking in Latin 'literacy', the large portion of liturgical texts cannot be dismissed; for interpreting this, we have to realize that there are several levels of 'literacy', which thus require a new definition from that of our modern term.

There are as many as one hundred and forty-four surviving manuscripts and seventeen printed books that have been traced to have been in the possession of nuns or at nunneries.¹ According to David Bell's database, as far as the contents are concerned,

¹ David N. Bell, 'Part II: A List of Manuscripts and Printed Books from English Nunneries', in *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies

fifty-three percent of the surviving volumes (excluding printed books) are primarily liturgical.² These include bibles and biblical books (two in Latin, two in French, and two in English), breviaries, calendars, *horae*, hymnals, mortuary rolls, obituaries, the Office of the Dead, ordinals, various *ordines*, private collections of prayers, processional, and psalters.³ Of the non-liturgical books that have survived, about twenty-three percent of them are in Latin, ten percent in French, and no fewer than sixty-seven percent in English. The dates of these books are very interesting, for whereas the majority of the manuscripts in English date after 1400, about two-thirds of Latin manuscripts were written before the fifteenth century.⁴ This may indicate that nuns' Latin literacy declined; and Latin was limited to liturgical texts for them.

One factor contributing to this phenomenon seems to be lack of education for women. It has generally been accepted that standards of women's learning and literacy fell relatively as time passed in the Middle Ages. Before the rise of universities, there was no great difference between the education of noblewomen and noblemen in households in England, for men were educated to become knights (*milites*), not intellectuals (*clerici*)⁵; girls and boys probably shared a private education by a tutor or a domestic chaplain, by whom or by dictate of the children's parents, the limit of such a

Series, CLVIII (Kalamazoo, MI; Spencer, MA: Cistercian, 1995), pp. 97–217. There are some manuscripts, however, which David Bell does not include in his list, which other scholars have regarded as having been possessed by nuns. I have included one manuscript in my appendices, but I am now following the database of Bell, which does not make a serious difference to my argument.

² Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 34.

³ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 34, 49 (n. 11), and all the volumes are listed in his Index IV.

⁴ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 36–37.

⁵ Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 188.

private education was determined.⁶ From the thirteenth century, however, the establishment of universities changed this situation. The education of men, both lay and clerical, improved with the rise of the universities, which became a necessary route to high office as did the growing practical importance in legal and business matters of literacy. The possibilities for women, however, were limited: it became more difficult for them to gain learning in the academy or to acquire a higher education as men did.

There seem to have been a few options for women to be educated: privately, or in one of the very few public elementary schools, or in nunneries.⁷ First, noblewomen could be educated at home or in another noble household probably by the family chaplain⁸ or by the mother through reading Books of Hours.⁹ Also, a small number might have attended, sometimes together with boys, one of the public elementary schools and received instructions by schoolmasters, or in fewer occasions, by schoolmistresses,¹⁰ but this was a very rare case. For the majority of women of the

⁶ Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066–1530* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 160–61.

⁷ It should be noted, however, that there were almost no opportunities for the lower classes to acquire such learning in the Middle Ages.

⁸ Alexandra Barratt, 'Introduction', in *Women's Writing in Middle English* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 1–23 (pp. 2–3).

⁹ Susan Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 149–87 (pp. 162–63); For a case study, Patricia Cullum and Jeremy Goldberg, 'How Margaret Blackburn Taught her Daughters: Reading Devotional Instruction in a Book of Hours', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchison, Carol M. Meale and Lesley Johnson, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, III (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 217–36.

¹⁰ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973), pp. 54–55, where Orme gives some examples for each schoolmaster/mistress. For instance, an elderly priest, William Barbour at a school in London between 1504 and 1515 was teaching the *pasternoster*, *ave*, and *credo* 'with further learning' to thirty young children. Also, Orme mentions three schoolmistresses in fifteenth-century England, but he says that the presence of schoolmistresses is less notable than that of the contemporary continent.

upper and wealthy middle classes, nunneries were the place where they could receive an education. In this respect, we may say that medieval nuns' literacy had a great influence on the education of children, but it seems that the education which they could generally provide was mainly concerned with manners and morals and the study of letters was probably elementary and restricted to reading English. As Eileen Power once pointed out, this may reflect the limitation in what nuns could have acquired in their learning,¹¹ though we must not accept this too generalized notion which now requires some revision.

Another aspect which greatly influenced nuns' as well as other women's reading is a change of dominant languages in Medieval England — Latin, French, and English.¹² French in both the forms of the spoken and written language which existed at first in England is known today as Anglo-Norman; this was the aristocratic vernacular used in England and employed in literary works, official documents and religious writings. During the early thirteenth century, this gave way to Anglo-French, a foreign language which had to be acquired for administrative affairs. English continued to be used at the spoken level outside the court; it occurred in written texts only sporadically at first, but it gradually supplanted French and Latin. First, during the fourteenth century, English writings became more frequent in the form of translations from French or Latin, often for providing instructions for those who were not able to appreciate languages other than the vernacular. At the same time, we see a massive increase in literary productions

¹¹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 262.

¹² For this paragraph I owe much to Norman Blake's 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, 6 vols, ed. by Richard M. Hogg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–), II: 1066–1476 (1992), ed. by Norman Blake, pp. 1–22 (pp. 5–9).

written in English in the course of this century, which indicates that the status of English improved. By the fifteenth century English was becoming the dominant language so that a large number of letters and records written in English around this period can be found.

On the other hand, Latin was always the learned and ecclesiastical language and remained the official language of the Church throughout the Middle Ages. The communications addressed by a bishop to monks were always in Latin and until about 1300 bishops sent their notices of visitation, mandates and injunctions even to nunneries usually in Latin.¹³ The need for English texts was, however, increasing even in nunneries from about the fifteenth century. Although we know some literate nuns who were extremely fluent in Latin, most of them belonged to the twelfth century.¹⁴ There was a growth in the number of English translations from Latin made for nuns who perhaps could not understand Latin. For example, a northern metrical version of the rule of St Benet composed in the early fifteenth century tells us that nuns rarely learned Latin so that this translation was made:

Monkes and als all leryd menn
In latyn may it lyghtly ken,
And wytt tharby how they sall wyrk
To sarue god and haly kyrk.
Bott tyll women to make it couth,
That leris no latyn in thar outh,
In ingles is it ordand here,
*So that thay may it lyghtly lere.*¹⁵

(Abbreviations expanded; ll. 9–16)

¹³ Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 246.

¹⁴ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 63–64.

¹⁵ *Three Middle English Versions of the Rule of St Benet and Two Contemporary Rituals for the Ordination of Nuns*, ed. by Ernst A. Kock, EETS o.s., 120 (London: Kegan Paul, 1902), p.

As is expressed here, the literary activity of vernacular translation was becoming common in the late Middle Ages. While numbers of religious houses required works of spiritual instructions or consolation, most of those available were in Latin, the language which most nuns and anchoresses were not able to read. The number of such works translated from Latin or even from French into vernacular was rapidly increasing throughout the fifteenth century, and often we come across the writer's preface which emphasized that they *did it for unlettered sisters*.¹⁶

The spread of the vernacular texts may, on the one hand, indicate the nuns' sparse knowledge of Latin; this phenomenon, on the other, reflects that nuns were keen on learning. The writer who translated the cartulary at Godstow, for example, states in his preface that the Abbess of Godstow commissioned a translation to be made from the Latin register which contains all the charters of her abbey so that the English translation would enable the nuns to 'haue bettyr knowlyge of her munymentys'.¹⁷ In general the increasing book production of works in English is very noticeable in the fifteenth century, along with the growth in demand for and availability of books. This tendency is also noted in the shift of the number of books which were possessed by nuns or nunneries. Within the range of the period from the ninth till the sixteenth centuries, David Bell's database has shown that almost half the *manuscripts date from the*

48.

¹⁶ H. S. Bennett, 'The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century', *Library*, 5th ser., 1 (1946-47), 167-78 (p. 170). Needless to say, it is also important to note women's contribution to the development of the vernacular literature in the earlier periods; see, for example, Bella Millett, 'Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 86-103.

¹⁷ *English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford, Written about 1450*, ed. by Andrew

fifteenth century; and if we include manuscripts dating from late fourteenth/early fifteenth century as well as seventeen printed books, almost two-thirds of all surviving books date from after c. 1400.¹⁸ This is naturally influenced by the growth and change in book production and we should not reach too hasty and general a conclusion. Part of his study has suggested that nuns' literary concerns were increasing especially from the fifteenth-century; and English was dominant in non-liturgical texts and printed books.

All the titles of these works can be obtained from Bell's study, so there is no need to list them all here, but I will give its outline.¹⁹ Of surviving non-liturgical texts, sixteen are in Latin including works by authors such as Ambrose, Boethius, Honorius Augustodunensis,²⁰ while seven volumes are in French and date between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries; they include metrical versions of biblical books, lives of saints, a French translation of Boccaccio's *De la ruine des nobles hommes et femmes* and so on. In contrast to the small number of Latin and French volumes, there are eighty-four English volumes and the contents are diverse. Some of the major works including translations are, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux, Jerome, Heinrich Suso, John Capgrave, Walter Hilton, Nicholas Love, John Lydgate and many anonymous works such as the *Craft of Dying*.²¹

About a third of the English volumes are from Syon Abbey, which may not be so surprising if one remembers that the foundation was in the fifteenth century when English became dominant, and that its inmates had particular interests in English

Clark, EETS o.s., 129 (London: Kegan Paul, 1905), p. 25.

¹⁸ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 33–34.

¹⁹ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, in particular, his Indexes I to III.

²⁰ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 36.

²¹ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 74–75.

spiritual writings and prolific publications of them. Especially in the first four decades of the sixteenth century, Syon stood prominent among monasteries in producing a number of texts by monks who had academic backgrounds, some of which were for female religious. There were for example Richard Whitford, who probably entered Syon about 1507, and had been a fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge; John Fewterer and William Bonde were fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge as well as university preachers.²² Whitford made a new translation at the request of some nuns 'to amende and reforme the englysshe', since previous translations were 'olde, scabrouse, rough and not of the Englysshe comynly used in these partyes.'²³ His next publication *Martyrology* (1525) was of the Sarum use adapted for Syon, with additions, in whose preface Whitford says that he made this translation for the edification of unlearned religious people who did not understand the martyrology in Latin. Another Syon monk William Bonde's work *Pilgrimage of Perfection* was printed in 1531, which Bonde originally started to write in Latin but was persuaded to draw it into English so that the text could be more acceptable to people who were ignorant of Latin.²⁴ Some of these works by Syon monks as well as other English devotional works were in the possession of some nuns at Syon,²⁵ which will more fully be discussed in chapter three.

In addition to the prominent vernacularity of the collection, the nuns at Syon had a great number of printed books: ten of seventeen printed vernacular books are confirmed

²² Norman Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde: The Later Years', *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1972), 128–38 (pp. 133–34).

²³ Richard Whitford, *The Rule of St Augustine* (STC 25417), sig. A1^v.

²⁴ J. T. Rhodes, 'Syon Abbey's Religious Publications in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44 (1993) 11–27 (p.21).

²⁵ For example, Whitford's *The Pype, or Tun, of the Life of Perfection*; Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.37).

to have belonged to them.²⁶ This may be partly because Syon had to some extent close relationship with early printers, especially Wynkyn de Worde, a foreman and successor of William Caxton; for example, the works by Whitford and Bonde were available in printed books before the dissolution. The publication of a book entitled *The Image of Love*, which was translated by John Gough and published by de Worde in 1515, is also suggestive of such a connection. When both Gough and de Worde were summoned before the diocesan court to answer the charge of publishing this heretical book, de Worde admitted that he had sent sixty copies of the book to the nuns of Syon and had sold as many more.²⁷ Judging from the number distributed to the nuns of Syon, it was perhaps intended that every nun could have her own copy, for Syon comprised sixty nuns and twenty-five male members at most. *The Orchard of Syon* is also an interesting example: this work is a fifteenth-century translation of Raymond of Capua's Latin version of *Il Dialogo*, written by St Catherine of Siena, and was prepared by an anonymous cleric and his assistant 'Dane James' specially for the nuns of Syon: The prologue is explicitly addressed to the '[r]elygyous moder and deuoute sustren [. . .] at the house of Syon'²⁸ and the colophon tells an episode about this publication between

²⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 33. In contrast, the brothers' interests, Roger Lovatt points out, 'lay in a predominantly latinate spiritual literature, often written more recently and invariably the work of Continental authors,' in 'The Library of John Blacman and Contemporary Carthusian Spirituality', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992), 195–230 (p. 226). Indeed, while a number of continental printers' names notably appear in the catalogue (for example, ninety-one books printed in Cologne and eighty-seven in Paris), the scarceness of English printed books in the brother's library is obvious: only 7 come from London and 2 from Oxford; Mary Bateson, *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery Isleworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xxviii. Yet, this high proportion of printed books displays that both the monks and nuns of Syon appreciated the advantage of new technology from the very beginning.

²⁷ A. W. Reed, 'The Regulation of the Book Trade before the Proclamation of 1538', *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 15 (1918), 163–66; Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde: The Later Years', pp. 133–34.

²⁸ *The Orchard of Syon* (STC 4815), sig. π 3^r.

de Worde and Richard Sutton, the latter of whom found the manuscript and brought it to the former:

Rycharde Sutton esquier / stewarde of the holy monastery of Syon fyndynge
this ghostely tresure these dyologes and reuelacyons of [. . .] seynt
Katheryne of Sene / in a corner by it selfe / wyllynge of his great charyte it
sholde come to lyghte / that many relygyous and deuoute soules myght be
releued and comferte therby / he hathe caused at his greate coste [. . .].²⁹

Although this colophon does not indicate this explicitly, Sutton might have distributed the books among the nuns at Syon; a surviving copy of this work now in the New York Public Library, which is the only one as far as nuns' ownership is concerned, bears the ownership inscription of a nun at Syon.³⁰ This phenomenon of Syon's prominence is also notable in non-liturgical Latin works; the majority of the Latin works are from aristocratic and wealthy nunneries — seven of them from Syon, four from Barking, and three from Dartford, which were credited with a long tradition of learning and reading, as the following paragraphs will illustrate.

Barking Abbey, a Benedictine house famous for its emphasis on private reading, had a tradition of an annual distribution of books for the nuns, according to an *Ordinale* which was composed about 1440. This distribution was held on Monday in the first week in Lent, and each nun brought into the chapter house the book she had received the preceding year. If she finished reading the book by the time, she was supplied with a longer book, while if not able to finish it, she would receive her penance and a shorter book than the previous one. Moreover, some instructions for the proper treatment of

²⁹ *The Orchard of Syon*, sig. B3^v.

³⁰ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A. 32).

books by nuns and children are given, for example, forbidding them to scribble in books or to lend them outside the monastery, or advising them to keep the condition of books as they were, which seems to imply that there were some who made annotations in copies deposited at the nunnery. These directions were given both in Latin and French, and the *Ordinale* tells us that there was a female librarian at the abbey.³¹ There are at least six English versions of such an *Ordinale* produced for the Benedictine houses, of which the contents are naturally quite similar. Library of Congress MS 4 dating after 1415, for instance, is an English translation from the Benedictine Rule in French and was made probably by a female named Crane from the alien Benedictine priory of Lyminster.³² In its colophon it is asked that the books should be handled with great care.³³

Such an ordinance for a library was also issued at Syon Abbey, the double-house, which was no doubt concerned about reading and keeping its collections.³⁴ Although there is no surviving catalogue of nuns' library, unlike that of the monks',³⁵ the

³¹ P. Gambier, 'Lending Books in a Medieval Nunnery', *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, 5 (1927), 188–90.

³² Jeanne Krochalis, 'The Benedictine Rule for Nuns: Library of Congress, MS 4', *Manuscripta*, 30 (1986), 21–34.

³³ Part of the colophon is quoted in Josephine Koster Tavers's "'Thys ys my mystrys boke'": English Women as Readers and Writers in Late Medieval England', in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. by Charlotte C. Morse, Penelope B. Doob, and Marjorie C. Woods, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, XXXI (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992), pp. 305–27 (p. 310).

³⁴ Robert Jowitt Whitwell, 'An Ordinance for Syon Library, 1482', *English Historical Review*, 25 (1910), 121–23.

³⁵ Bateson, ed., *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery Isleworth*. For the most recent study of the library at Syon, Vincent Gillespie, 'The Book and the Brotherhood: Reflections on the Lost Library of Syon Abbey', in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. by A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie and Ralph Hanna (London: British Library, 2000), pp. 185–208.

Martyrology of Syon indicates that there existed two quite separate libraries with two librarians at Syon Abbey.³⁶ In addition, Mary C. Erler's careful analysis of sacristan's account rolls has revealed that people at Syon Abbey paid constant attention to the maintenance of its huge collection.³⁷ Such systematic care shown to their collections as well as their *great interests in contemporary vernacular literature will be further fleshed out in examination of the books in chapter three.*³⁸

The Myroure of oure Ladye also provides an important witness to the special value put on spiritual reading of the nuns.³⁹ This text was composed by a member of the Order in the early fifteenth century for Syon nuns mainly to provide an English supplement to a liturgy and it includes a treatise on the nuns' devotion as well as a translation of the Bridgettine Breviary. The whole volume is divided into three parts and in the second part containing services of a week the author begins with a treatise on 'how ye [nuns] shall be gouerned in redyng of this Boke and all other bokes' (p. 65). First, the author emphasises that '[d]evoute reading of holy Bokes, ys called one of the partes of contemplacyon' (p. 65), and gives five essential things to follow in reading. First, the choice of texts is important and reading should be only for ghostly edification, while secular books are not suitable for nuns; second, nuns should make reverence and devotion to words to be read or heard. Third, nuns should endeavour to understand what

³⁶ Christopher De Hamel, 'The Library: The Medieval Manuscripts of Syon Abbey, and their Dispersal', in *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Peregrinations after the Reformation*, ed. by Christopher De Hamel (London: Roxburghe Club, 1991), pp. 48–158 (p. 54).

³⁷ Mary C. Erler, 'Syon Abbey's Care for Books: Its Sacristan's Account Rolls 1506/7–1535/6', *Scriptorium*, 39 (1985), 293–307.

³⁸ See chapter three, pp. 61–69.

³⁹ *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, ed. by John Henry Blunt, EETS e.s., 19 (London: Trüber, 1873).

is read, and therefore they need read over the same passage repeatedly till they can understand it; the person in charge of reading aloud for others should look over the text beforehand. Fourth, it should be remembered that reading is for self-improvement, not to appear clever; then fifth, it is necessary to have ‘discretion’ to choose a proper book and to adjust themselves to respond appropriately according to the nature of the text.⁴⁰

As for the first point, it may be interesting to note that there were nuns at Syon who possessed works other than devotional texts. Margaret Windsor owned a printed book of Boccaccio’s *De la ruine des nobles hommes et femmes*, while Anne Colville and Clemencia Thraseborough had a miscellaneous manuscript of such works as Peter Idley’s *Instructions to his Son*, John Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Parliament of Fowls*.⁴¹ As for the latter, however, the nun might have possessed only part of the manuscript which consists of English devotional texts, and the present volume made its form after they were passed to another owner.⁴² As can be surmised from the list of books owned by nuns presented by Bell,⁴³ nuns generally seem to have confined their reading to spiritual edification, but *The Myroure* illustrates that the sisters were accustomed to spend some of their time on reading; and it must have required a high literary ability to follow instructions as the author gives in this text, which implies that nuns did profit from reading. Actual use of books will be examined in chapter three.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of this text, see Ann M. Hutchison, ‘Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household’, in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 215–27 (pp. 219–223).

⁴¹ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A. 31) and (Syon A. 35).

⁴² See also chapter three, p. 64.

⁴³ Bell, ‘Part II’, in *What Nuns Read*.

The Myroure of oure Ladye provides another crucial glimpse into nuns' understanding of Latin and English in reading. The author concludes the section of 'Of Redynge' by explaining how the following parts II and III in *The Myroure of oure Ladye* are organized both in Latin and English to be used:

[T]he fyrste worde of eche Antempne. and of eche hymphne. and of eche responce. and verse. & so forthe of all other, is writen in latyn with Romeyne letter that ye may know therby where yt begynneth. And the selfe englyshe of all the same latyn folowynge. is imprynted wyth a smaller letter. And that ys the exposycyon of the latyn. And by this dyfference ye may knowe which ys the bare englysshe of the latyn, and whyche ys putte therto for to expounde yt.⁴⁴

This exposition will enable it, the author claims, that 'they that se this boke and red yt may better vnderstande yt then they that here yt, and se yt not'. The author's intention of this work is ostensibly expressed here: this book was intended to be 'used' so that it would help nuns formulate their thoughts as they read or say the familiar Latin passages with the help of the following English. This clearly suggests the nuns' need for English in reading liturgical texts even at Syon. In some nunneries the study and use of Latin might have continued into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and 'certainly at Syon and possibly at Barking, even later',⁴⁵ but the number of nuns who received such education must have been small.

This does not mean, however, that we can dismiss Latin texts as insignificant. On the one hand, it is very sensible to say, as Bell has pointed out, that we cannot confidently conclude that the large portion of liturgical volumes which have survived

⁴⁴ *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, p. 70.

⁴⁵ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 65.

from nunneries indicates that their collections consisted mainly of such works.⁴⁶ For a number of reasons, vernacular manuscripts have a poorer survival rate than Latin liturgical manuscripts. Indeed, as we have seen in the increasing demand for vernacular and in the articulation of *The Myroure*'s author, English was dominant especially from the fifteenth century in nuns' reading. The large number of English texts in surviving non-liturgical texts is, as has been maintained, most noticeable and there is little doubt such vernacular works were dominant reading for nuns. On the other hand, when we consider actual 'book-use', we cannot ignore Latin liturgical texts, for the presence of these texts was always constant at nunneries and essential for daily life in the cloister. Some of the manuscripts contain later additions in Latin which were presumably made at nunneries and examples will be given in chapter three. The question we have to ask here is, therefore, to what extent nuns could have acquired literacy especially of Latin which was declining in the late Middle Ages as was explained above. Before exploring this specific aspect of nuns' literacy, we need to consider what 'literacy' generally meant.

It should first be accepted that it is more problematic to produce a technical definition for 'literacy' in the Middle Ages than it may at first appear, for it is not same as our modern concept and involves several differences. In the Middle Ages the Latin term *litteratus*, from which English 'literacy' or 'literate' derives, was applied only to those who possessed reasonable knowledge of Latin. According to M. T. Clanchy, whose work assesses medieval literacy in the period from the latter half of the thirteenth century till the beginning of the fourteenth century,⁴⁷ by 1300 the privileges of the

⁴⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford:

clerici and *litterati* who possessed the supreme knowledge and learning of Latin were challenged both by the emergence of vernacular writings and by anti-clericalism;⁴⁸ *litteratus* was then reduced 'from meaning a person of erudition to meaning a person with a minimal ability to read, albeit in Latin'.⁴⁹ The range where the term 'literacy' was applicable varied or became wider in the late Middle Ages even within the scope of men's literacy. And therefore it becomes more complex when we talk about 'literacy' of medieval women whose ability of reading and writing has rarely been described, especially in the late Middle Ages. Clanchy states that the issue of laywomen's literacy is very intricate and needs another approach. When it comes to medieval nuns and anchoresses, however, Clanchy asserts that 'nuns can be classified either as honorary males or as of neuter gender like all clergy' because their rules and way of life were modelled on male monasticism.⁵⁰ In the period he has covered it may be a reasonable deduction that nuns had a similar 'literate mentality' as clerics did.⁵¹ For the present study, however, it is essential to acknowledge that there were different levels in literary activities of nuns as well as other women.⁵²

It is necessary for us to make clear distinctions of types of 'literacy' that nuns could possess; for this purpose, Malcom Parkes's taxonomy of 'literacy' may provide

Blackwell, 1993; repr. 1999).

⁴⁸ For the meaning and detailed discussion of *clerici* and *litterati*, see his *From Memory to Written Record*, in particular, pp. 225–52.

⁴⁹ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 234.

⁵⁰ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 251–52.

⁵¹ Power articulates, however, that after the beginning of the fourteenth century (perhaps even during the last half of the thirteenth century) nuns' learning was presumably similar to that of contemporary laymen of their class, rather than that of monks, in *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 247.

⁵² Of course, Clanchy himself did not miss this point when speaking of the Latin literacy of men.

some preliminary analysis. Parkes divides it into three groups: 'cultivated', 'pragmatic', and 'professional' literacy.⁵³ The first category 'the cultivated reader' was initially the domain of noble audiences who read for recreation and moral instruction, while emerging trading and working classes acquired 'pragmatic' literacy, which enabled them to participate in commercial transactions and in the administration of noble estates. The third 'professional' one involves a more specialized field, within which people could become scribes and administrators. Anne Clark Bartlett, utilizing this terminology, has demonstrated that '[m]edieval women variously — and often simultaneously — exercised all three types of reading according to their vocations or social circumstances'; for nuns were involved in the administration of a convent, while laywomen pursued commercial interests, both of which require pragmatic and professional literacy;⁵⁴ at the same time women would have needed to employ a literacy at the level of cultivated readers when they exercised religious instructions or educated children.⁵⁵ As recent studies have revealed more about women's literary involvement in the Middle Ages, we have come to learn that it was more active and eclectic than has been assumed,⁵⁶ in which context Bartlett may be right to say that '[a]s women

⁵³ M. B. Parkes, 'The Literacy of Laity', in *Literature and Western Civilization: The Medieval World*, ed. by David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London: Aldus, 1973), pp. 555–77 (pp. 556–58).

⁵⁴ Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 17. Power however, reported: 'the official business of convents, their annual accounts and any certificates which they might have to draw up, were done by professional clerks, or sometimes by their chaplains. Payment to the clerk who made the account occurs regularly in their account rolls [. . .]'; *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 245.

⁵⁵ Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Carol M. Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

achieved these types of literacy during the late Middle Ages, their social visibility and power must have also increased'.⁵⁷

What are we to say of the 'literacy' of women who were not able to exercise any literacy in these three categories? There might have been few who did not possess any of them even among nuns; it is likely that they would be at least 'cultivated readers'. Yet, we still need to be cautious since 'literacy' itself involves several different stages. Regarding reading texts written in Latin, for example, one person might have been able to read and construe a patristic work in Latin, while others merely repeated Latin prayers without understanding the meaning of each word or knowing any grammar. The latter may not belong to 'cultivated readers', but it is a level of 'literacy' that we may not dismiss in discussing the relation of women to books. Also, we are to deal with three languages, French, English and Latin; women may have been able to read these languages with varying fluency. A further distinction in levels of literacy is that of the language used. The declining literacy of the clergy is only one aspect of the changing status of the various languages used.

Moreover, we have to remember that it took a long time before 'silent reading' became dominant as in our own period. In the liturgy of the western Church before 1300, Paul Saenger has argued, silent prayer did not exist and it was not until the mid-fourteenth century that clerics offered the pious a clear alternative between oral and silent prayers.⁵⁸ One reading ability is, according to Saenger, 'phonetic literacy' — the

⁵⁷ Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, p. 17.

⁵⁸ Paul Saenger, 'Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages', in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 141–73 (p. 143); for oral as well as silent reading, see his 'Silent Reading: Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator*, 13 (1982), 367–414, and *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford

ability to decode texts syllable by syllable and to pronounce them orally; the readers do not necessarily comprehend its precise grammatical meaning or syntax. The other ability termed by Saenger is ‘comprehension literacy’ — the ability ‘to decode a written text silently, word by word, and to understand it fully in the very act of gazing upon it’.⁵⁹

How are we to apply these levels of ‘literacy’ to nuns’ reading? For proceeding to the next stage of our argument of actual ‘reading’ or ‘book-use’, it really matters to ask at which levels nuns could possess this ability, if any; especially we must ask about the level of their understanding Latin or commanding Latin. Many nuns probably had ‘phonetic literacy’, while it seems that there were still some who had ‘comprehension literacy’. One could have read and understood a common liturgical text, while the other could have reached a further level which involves reading and understanding non-liturgical texts or less common texts than the liturgy.⁶⁰ Thus the preponderance of liturgical texts as well as theological works in Latin raises questions about the level of latinity required to follow such texts. As for English and French texts, it may appear that we do not require such categories in literacy of reading as we have made in Latin, but we need to remember that in the culture of oral reading there might have been somebody else (such as a chaplain) that read aloud for nuns; in addition when it comes to the literacy of ‘writing’ of whichever language may be concerned the problem becomes more complex at the time when reading and writing were taught separately. As I am intending to evolve the argument of actual reading and book-use from assessing

University Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ Saenger, ‘Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages’, p. 142.

⁶⁰ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 60–61.

evidence mainly of additional writings, these notions and classifications of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ in the Middle Ages will be crucial as the following chapters will argue.

The present chapter has shown that nuns’ reading had spiritual importance in their lives and that learning in some affluent nunneries such as Barking and Syon was far more advanced in comparison to the others. This idiosyncrasy particularly of Syon should be always remembered when examining books themselves, as chapter three will exemplify. In late Medieval England as vernacular texts became dominant in nuns’ reading, nuns had limitations in their ability especially in Latin reading, but nonetheless, we should not think too little of the significance of Latin texts for them. What is important to note here is that there are several categories of ‘literacy’ when discussing reading, writing and book-use, which involves several stages and our notion of the levels of literacy and a variety of ways of reading in the Middle Ages will be indispensable. The following chapter will, therefore, investigate difficulties in assessing evidence such as differentiation in levels of ‘literacy’ which this chapter has not fully examined.

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS RECONSIDERED

There are a hundred and forty-four manuscripts and seventeen printed books which seem to have been in the possession of nunneries or nuns in medieval England, judging mainly from inscriptions or the contents of texts such as *Bridgettine Breviary*,¹ and also including those mentioned in miscellaneous sources. The small number of books owned by nuns in comparison to that of books which belonged to male religious is not so surprising. There is no surviving catalogue or account of libraries of nunneries, while there are seven records (apart from fragmentary items) of the library holdings of monastic houses.² As David Bell has recently suggested, however, nuns' libraries may not always have been such small and inconsequential collections as have been assumed.³ Such knowledge of the existence of private or communal collections will give us many clues to explore nuns' reading. It does not necessarily, however, tell us about the actual 'use'. One possible procedure to establish an argument about 'book-use' seems to be to reconstruct it from the evidence which can be obtained from books themselves. Books often contain several indications of 'use', for example, in the

¹ David N. Bell, 'Part II: A List of Manuscripts and Printed Books from English Nunneries', in *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series, CLVIII (Kalamazoo, MI; Spencer, MA: Cistercian, 1995), pp. 97–217.

² David N. Bell, 'Monastic Libraries: 1400–1557', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 229–54 (pp. 230–31).

³ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 79.

marginalia or in additions to the calendar. Yet, the evidence cannot necessarily prove that the books in consideration were used by medieval nuns themselves and there are boundaries beyond which we cannot pass.

There are several crucial factors in the examination of 'book-use'. One essential point is the evidence for provenance and ownership; without identifying the owner it is impossible to start our argument for 'use' by medieval nuns. The first question to ask is for whom the manuscript is produced.⁴ The most direct information to establish the provenance of a manuscript is from an *ex-libris* inscription in it. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322, for example, has at the front an engrossed contemporary inscription indicating that the volume was intended as a gift from William Baron Esquire 'to remayne for euyr to the place and nonrye of Detforde, and specially to the vse of dame Pernelle Wrattisley, sister of the same place', who was a 'nece' of the donor.⁵ This manuscript covered with a purple cloth contains various English devotional materials which seem suitable for female religious reading. London, British Library, MS Cotton App. xiv, a manuscript of approximately a hand-size, has several beautifully illuminated and decorated pages with ample margins. The *ex-libris* inscription written by a scribe (fol. 56^v) states that 'for [Elizabeth's] vse thy[sic] boke was made' at the commission of John and Margaret Edward. Elizabeth was a daughter of John and Margaret and became a nun of Syon. Both examples clearly suggest that the

⁴ As far as the provenance of book production is concerned, printed books will be excluded: although there are several cases where printers issued volumes at the request of or especially for their customers, it seems reasonable to consider that the publication of printed books is aimed at a wider audience. Generally speaking, however, manuscripts may be regarded as being produced not for such public but for more private use, if not always personal.

⁵ For the more detailed provenance, A. I. Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and

manuscripts were produced for the 'vse' of these particular women.

It is not always the case, however, that such an explicit provenance is noted in a manuscript, but other evidence such as a characteristic text or visual representations can also be of great help for our understanding. From the prayers to abbesses of Barking, St Ethelburga (d. 675) and St Hildelitha (d. c. 712), together with feminine grammatical forms, for example, it has been determined that Nijmegen University Library MS 194 has a Barking provenance.⁶ In another case, the provenance of liturgical manuscripts from Syon is more discernible, for Syon was the only Bridgettine house in England and liturgy for the nuns was distinctive. Additionally, one of the manuscripts owned by Margaret Windsor — a nun of Syon — contains two historiated initials of portraits of her, in one of which she is saying her own name.⁷ There seems little doubt that this manuscript was produced for Margaret.

It should be noted that such evidence cannot be always taken at its face value and there is some danger in drawing a conclusion from a single kind of evidence. When the evidence is somewhat ambiguous in implication, therefore, it is to be interpreted in the light of all the relevant facts and possibilities. In other words, it is often difficult to determine only from evidence which suggests the provenance if the manuscript was actually possessed by the person for whom the *ex-libris* indicates it was made. Moreover, frequently the manuscript was possessed by several different people during a certain period. Anne Colville, a nun of Syon whose death is recorded in the

Barking Abbey', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, n.s., 25 (1955–60), 222–43.

⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Barking 9).

⁷ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.33). The other books owned by Margaret will be dealt in chapter three, but this particular manuscript has not been consulted by the present writer.

Martyrology (fol. 61^v) on 30 October 1516 seems to have owned an English devotional volume (British Library, MS Harley 993). The inscription indicating ownership appears twice; on the other hand, the colophon indicates that the book was originally one of the common-profit manuscripts, but does not specifically tell it was made for Syon.⁸ We do not know when and how this manuscript came to the possession of Anne. It is often the case that scholars have established a circulation of books among laywomen and nuns, interpreting ownership inscriptions together with other relevant facts.⁹ Yet, sometimes little information about book-use can be deduced from indications of private ownership (or possibly possession) and it is difficult to discern when each person of the inscriptions owned the manuscripts. As a matter of fact, this ambiguity becomes even more complex when we investigate additions by later hands.

As is mentioned above, some manuscripts clearly record that they were produced or bequeathed for a particular person's 'use', but this does not prove that the book was actually used by that person. The position or repetition of inscriptions, however, may sometimes illustrate that the book might have been read or used with some interest. One interesting example is found in the John Rylands copy of St Jerome's *Vitas patrum* (STC 14507), which William Caxton translated and Wynkyn de Worde published in 1495. Mary Erler identified three inscriptions in the copy which indicate a shared reading by elderly ladies.¹⁰ The first note by Joan Regent, widow of a Bristol mayor

⁸ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.25).

⁹ For example, Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey'; Mary C. Erler, 'Exchange of Books between Nuns and Laywomen: Three Surviving Examples', in *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. by Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 360–73.

¹⁰ Mary C. Erler, 'Devotional Literature', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7

reads ‘mi owne gud ladi pole pray for my your ione regent & dam agnes mi doter of sion i prai you for god sake’. Joan Regent’s daughter Agnes and her friend, Katherine Pole (a granddaughter of Cecil Neville, Duchess of York) also left their names in this copy. What is more interesting is that Joan Regent’s inscription appears next to Jerome’s story of Paula, the widow related to Roman noble families and the mother of the saintly virgin Eustochium; thus the reader’s response to the text is noticeable here.¹¹

London, British Library, MS Harley 1706 also has at least three women’s names—Elizabeth Beumont, Elisabeth Oxford and Margaret Oswald[?]¹²—which appear more than once throughout the volume. The first two names are identical, for Elizabeth married firstly Beumont and then Vere, the Count of Oxford. Her writing style interestingly varies: one inscription of ‘Elysabeth Beumont’ on fol. 216^r is seemingly written by a very clumsy hand, while another on fol. 11^r is more elegant. She might have mastered the practice of writing during the due course or had the latter written out for her, perhaps by a professional clerk in her household. Although either explanation appears plausible and evidence of women’s book ownership is a valuable source, the actual use is still problematic. It should also be remembered that not all women could exercise or acquire the ability to write or had access to trained scribes.¹²

vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 495–525 (pp. 522–23).

¹¹ Erler, ‘Devotional Literature’, pp. 522–23.

¹² For the problems to be considered in dealing with the ownership issue and for limitations inherent in the use of documents such as wills as evidence, see Carol M. Meale’s argument, ‘“... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch”: Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England’, in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 128–58 (especially, pp. 130–36); Anne M. Dutton, ‘Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350–1500’, in

At this point it is necessary to observe that assessing the evidence for 'book-use' in the Middle Ages is further complicated by the different roles played by 'reading' and 'writing'. As appendices one and two of this thesis show, a number of manuscripts contain various additional writings: some of them are quite relevant to the contents, while it is often not easy to determine when or by whom these additional writings were made. Especially when the handwriting of additions is different from that of the inscription, though quite contemporary, it is open to doubt whether the owner in question added the material or another owner did so. Moreover, it should be noted it could be probable that a person other than the owner was responsible for the writings in the volumes. In the Middle Ages 'writing' was not always compatible with 'composing' and even those who could 'write' in this narrow sense frequently employed other people to write for them. We are going to argue 'book-use' from additional writings, but those who lack what Julia Boffey calls 'orthographic capabilities' are not necessarily precluded from such book-use.¹³ When the two skills of 'reading' and 'writing' did not necessarily go together, 'writing' requires a different notion from the modern one.

In the Middle Ages the physical act of 'writing' is quite distinct from the process of composition. There were at least three nuns, for example, who wrote or translated saints' lives from French: Clemence of Barking who 'wrote' a *Life of St Catherine of Alexandria* and another, a translator of the *Life of St Edmund the Confessor*, are from

Women, the Book and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference, 1993, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge, Brewer, 1995), pp. 41–54 (pp. 43–44).

¹³ Julia Boffey, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 159–82 (p. 162).

Barking; a nun named Marie seems to have translated Thomas of Ely's Latin *Life of St Etheldreda of Ely*.¹⁴ We do not know, however, if they 'wrote down' or asked somebody to record their texts. This is true not only of female but also of male authors who might have possessed both abilities, as Geoffrey Chaucer's complaint to his Adam scribe illustrates,¹⁵ and even Church Fathers rarely wrote their own works themselves, but dictated them. In the case of anonymous texts it is far harder to locate female involvement in copying or writing.¹⁶ It is almost impossible, therefore, to conclude that female authors were responsible for the actual compositions of the text in the form as they stand, as the works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe will exemplify. It may be true that Julian's work shows that she acquired a comprehensive literacy and rhetorical techniques as a listener, but it is still doubtful if Julian could have achieved 'orthographic capabilities'.¹⁷ It was not so common for medieval women to acquire 'orthographic capabilities', as is explicitly expressed in *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* where the author specifically forbids his daughters from writing, while allowing them to read books for their edification.¹⁸ In addition, it is not exaggerating to say that

¹⁴ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 69.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, his owne Scriveyn', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 650.

¹⁶ For argument about deciding the gender of the author of anonymous works, see Alexandra Barratt, "'The Flower and the Leaf' and 'The Assembly of Ladies': Is there a (Sexual) Difference?", *Philological Quarterly*, 66 (1987), 1-24; Boffey, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', pp. 166-72.

¹⁷ Boffey, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', p.162.

¹⁸ *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, EETS s.s., 2, trans. by William Caxton, ed. by M. Y. Offord (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.122.

in the Middle Ages many people who could read fluently — not only women but also men — possessed a writing literacy at the level of merely writing down one's name.

Although David Bell hinted at some possibilities of scribal activities by the medieval nuns of Barking, of Ickleton and of Chester, whose ownership inscriptions are preserved in each volume, at the same time he admitted that none of them is incontrovertible because there is no explicit evidence to prove it,¹⁹ which indicates difficulties in assessing the evidence for female involvement in book production. Part of the difficulty in discerning writing ability comes from the general impossibility of deducing the gender of a scribe from the appearance of a hand. There is a twelfth-century manuscript produced at St Mary's Abbey, Winchester known as Nunnaminster, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 451 (S.C. 2401), which contains a copy of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel's *Diadema monachorum* and a collection in Latin of an anonymous moral treatise and miscellaneous sermons.²⁰ The colophon of this manuscript indicates that this was written by an anonymous *scriptrix* and P. R. Robinson, analysing this manuscript, has recently argued that the existence of female scribes in the twelfth century appears more flourishing than has been assumed.²¹ It is very likely that we have other female figures that were able to write a text, but we are not sure yet of the plausibility of such evidence at this stage. The scribe's handwriting of this manuscript displays no difference in duct from that of the contemporary male

¹⁹ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 66–67.

²⁰ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Winchester 4).

²¹ P. R. Robinson, 'A Twelfth-Century *Scriptrix* from Nunnaminster', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers: Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. by P. R. Robinson and Rivkah Zim (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 73–93.

scribes and it would be impossible to determine this scribe's gender from script alone.²²

This is true of female scribal activities in English, as has recently been suggested, some examples of which are from the surviving manuscripts that belonged to nunneries. London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 546, which is a collection of devotional material by a number of late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century hands, a unique text labelled the *Lambeth Devotion* by Hope Emily Allen, bears the name of 'Sister EW' (fol. 56r). This manuscript has recently been identified as having been written by a female scribe, but the supportive evidence is again not from the hand but from the colophon in which the scribe refers herself as 'wreched syster'.²³ Also, it has recently been suggested that Cambridge, University Library, MS Hh. 1.11 seems to have belonged to a convent of nuns, possibly the Franciscans at Bruisyard and presumably was written by the nuns;²⁴ but this is merely a presumption. In addition, London, British Library, MS Harley 494 contains a prayer to the Sacrament written in the late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century in an ill-formed and shaky hand. While it was once suggested that this was an autograph prayer written by Anne Bulkeley, together with her inscription,²⁵ it is now doubted whether this is the hand of Anne Bulkeley herself; in fact we cannot tell if it is

²² Robinson, 'A Twelfth-Century *Scriptrix* from Nunnaminster', p. 79.

²³ Veronica O'Mara, 'A Middle English Text Written by a Female Scribe', *N & Q*, 235 (1990), 396–98 (p. 397).

²⁴ Alexandra Barratt, 'Books for Nuns, Cambridge University Library MS Additional 3242', *N & Q*, 44 (1997), 310–19.

²⁵ Josephine Koster Tavers, "'Thys ys my mystrys boke": English Women as Readers and Writers in Late Medieval England', in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. by Charlotte C. Morse, Penelope B. Doob and Marjorie C. Woods, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, XXXI (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992), pp. 305–27 (p. 317).

or not.²⁶

If one cannot claim with certainty that scribal activities recorded in the book were performed by the nuns in question, how are we to establish the actual use of books owned by medieval nuns? Are there no ways to interpret the evidence for book-use by medieval nuns from additional writings unless there are obvious sources of female scribal activities? Is there any possible way to argue or presume the use of books without such evidence? At this point, it seems very important to remember that the practice of 'reading' in the Middle Ages was also different from what modern readers understand by reading. The notion of a variety of ways of reading in the Middle Ages will lead us to realize that books were 'used' not only by those who had acquired 'orthographic literacy'.

As we have seen in chapter one, in the Middle Ages some levels of literacy of reading existed such as 'phonetic literacy' and 'comprehension literacy'. This is especially important when Latin texts are concerned, for most women did not necessarily read liturgical texts in the same way as we regard as reading in our modern sense. Some were able to decipher the syntax or content of the text, while others might have read or followed a text largely known by rote and repeated orally without understanding the meaning word by word. The concept of 'reading' at the period under consideration, therefore, requires a different notion from that of the modern period when silent reading is dominant. The differentiation of these levels of reading literacy is especially indispensable when considering reading performed in private by the owner of the book. On the other hand, 'reading' could be oral/silent or public/private even in

²⁶ Veronica O'Mara, 'Female Scribal Ability and Scribal Activity in Late Medieval England: The Evidence?', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 27 (1996), 87-130 (pp. 101-02).

English as well as in Latin and French. For example, Margery Kempe was apparently lacking in ‘orthographic abilities’ and probably did not have the ability to ‘read’ texts in the modern sense. Nonetheless, Margery’s autobiographical text reveals that she was familiar with various texts such as the *Revelations* of St Bridget of Sweden, Hilton’s book, Bonaventura’s *Stimulus Amoris* (*The Prick of Love*), and *Incendium Amoris* (Richard Rolle’s *The Fire of Love*, though often attributed to Bonaventura), all of which, she says, were read aloud by her priest.²⁷ Margery would be described as ‘illiterate’ in modern terminology, but the practice of books being read out loud was common even among a higher literary milieu. Cecily, Duchess of York (1415–95) tells us that she heard works read, remembered them and passed them on to her companions. This is, following Felicity Riddy’s words, ‘a textuality of the spoken as well as the written word’; it begins in the book, probably read aloud by a clerk, but was transmitted among women through mouths.²⁸ This oral reading continued even into the era of print culture, which is ostensibly expressed in early printers’ statements in epilogues or prologues where they appealed to the ‘hearer’ as well as ‘reader’.²⁹

A visual representation, though produced slightly later than the period in consideration, also illustrates that reading could be a communal activity. The plate one in the last page of this chapter is from *The Ordenarye for All Faythfull Chrystians*,

²⁷ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 280.

²⁸ Felicity Riddy, “‘Women talking about the things of God’: A Late Medieval Sub-culture”, *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XVII, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 104–27 (p. 111).

²⁹ Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, XXVI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 210–18.

translated from the second part and most of the third part of C. van der Heyden's *Corte instructie* (printed by J. Lambrecht in 1545) and published by Anthony Scolcker in 1548.³⁰ This is a moral instruction consisting of biblical passages for 'all degrees' of Christians and part of the text is addressed to both married and unmarried women as well as widows. This illustration, attached to the section 'Of the state of vyrgyns', illustrates that the woman with a nimbus in the centre, probably representing Virgin Mary, is reading or teaching to an infant (Jesus Christ); women doing typical female domestic works such as spinning or cutting a cloth encircle both figures, probably listening to Mary's reading.³¹ This image presents that it is necessary to interpret reading in its broadest sense in an age when a reading could be a communal activity; and henceforth when we explore aspects of 'book-use', we must include 'hearing' people as well as those 'handling' and 'reading' texts in the category of readers of the book.

Among the surviving volumes owned by medieval nuns, there are actually some which have traces of communal use. Two manuscripts from a priory at Campsey (Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 7220 and British Library, MS Additional 40675), for example, have press-marks — O.E.94 and d.d.141 — which suggest that the nuns catalogued books belonging to the nunnery.³² In addition, both books have the same description 'Cest liuere est a covent de Campisse', which appears in both manuscripts on different folios from those of press-marks. Another manuscript

³⁰ *STC* (5199.7) notes that the woodcuts of Scolcker's edition are from the same blocks the Dutch edition.

³¹ The text accompanied with this image, however, is not specifically related to women reading. This woodcut was perhaps introduced for the appearance of the Virgin Mary.

from Campsey (London, British Library, MS Additional 70513), a collection of saints' lives, indicates that the book was used at meal times ('Ce liure deviseie a la priorie de Kampseie de lire a mengier'). These books were seemingly not personal possessions but belonged to the convent. Of the surviving volumes owned by nuns, there is only one other manuscript bearing a press-mark, which comes from Barking. Though the number is small, these volumes are fascinating examples which may suggest systemisation for constant use by nuns. We have seen in the previous chapter that the Benedictine order had an annual distribution of books to promote nuns' private reading; in addition, its *Ordinale* records that there was a book-cupboard and a female librarian at the abbey. Considering all the evidence, it seems probable that these volumes were kept at the nunneries as communal property. Of course, the actual use of these books is again difficult to confirm as being only from here and the books might have been kept on bookshelves hardly touched and covered with dust.

There is another significant factor in women's use of spiritual texts. Margery Kempe describes that she went to her chaplain, by whom books were often read aloud. Similarly, there must have been a clerk acting as chaplain or confessor to a convent of nuns (and to a noblewoman in a secular household as well). On the one hand, the consideration of such a person makes the issue more complicated. In two manuscripts preserved in the Essex Record Office are copies of the will and probate inventory of William Pownsett of Eastcheap, who was a steward of the estates of Barking just before the dissolution. The inventory includes a list of books which are mentioned as 'Pownsett's books left in the abbey of Barking at his death'. Bell has argued that some

³² Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 40–41.

of these books might have belonged to the nunnery, but more likely to the steward, taken into account that most of the books are Latin.³³ On the other hand, the role such chaplains played in ‘reading’ for nuns probably had a great significance, in particular for Latin texts. Otherwise, if most nuns could not have the level of literacy to construe Latin texts, we may ask why there are quite a few Latin volumes (twenty-three percent of the surviving books). We must accept, therefore, that using books was at times a communal activity, at times one shared between a woman and her chaplain; secondly, that those who frequently heard texts read could have a sophisticated involvement in book culture. This provides us with more evidence to use but it also makes the task of assessing female ‘use’ of books more difficult. Even when we can be confident that the annotation in a book was made by a cleric, that annotation may well reflect the use of the book by the woman or women who owned it.

We have considered so far the learning and literacy of medieval nuns, limiting ourselves to the written word. Medieval women, however, played another noteworthy role in developing the importance of the relation of images to texts, as we know from a great number of surviving Books of Hours which contain numerous magnificent images. Most of them were especially produced for female readers. As Sandra Penketh observes, various portraits of owners in Books of Hours, often in devotion, are accompanied by texts and illustrations which emphasize the qualities of motherhood and of humility; and they are the very qualities that women were expected to cultivate according to the medieval Church. Images of those at prayer, Penketh claims, promote the idea of intimate communication before the Virgin, and consequently God. This would demand

³³ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 116–120.

the reader's ability to imagine a manifestation of her prayer and to visualize the content of the texts.³⁴ Indeed, when contemplating in the atmosphere of such intensive religious devotion, medieval women exercised another literacy: to interpret images through their forms or symbols of divine revelation.³⁵ It is worth mentioning, on the one hand, that a number of aspects of book production are involved to produce such a manuscript: commissioner, scribe, rubricator, and illuminator. As we shall see in the following chapter, on the other hand, there are some cases in which nuns themselves pasted images in manuscripts to aid their devotion. So, the 'literacy' for reading images is also necessary when considering medieval nuns' 'reading'.

In conclusion, the available evidence yields chiefly glimpses of particular cases from which it would be rash to reach very general answers until a great deal research is done. Indeed, it seems very difficult to argue the 'use of books by medieval nuns'. Yet if we broaden our argument to the 'use of books owned by medieval nuns', we will be able to draw some tentative conclusions of nuns 'reading'.

³⁴ Sandra Penketh, 'Women and Books of Hours', in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (London: British Library, 1997), pp. 266–80 (pp. 274–75).

³⁵ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993; repr. 1999), pp. 194–95. For more extensive argument of images and lay readers, see Martha W. Driver, 'Pictures in Print: Late Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century English Religious Books for Lay Readers', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 229–44.

Plate 1: *The Ordenarye for All Faythfull Chrystians* (STC 5199), sig. C4^v

Cor. vii. I say to them that are unmarried / and
to widowers (saith. S. Paule) It is
good for them that they abyde also as I
do. But if they can not absteyne / let them
marry / for it is better to marry thē to burne
than to be consumed. As concerning virgins / I have no cō-
mandement of the lord / ne theles I
saye my good meaninge / as I have obtey-
ned mercy of the lord to be faithfull. I sup-
pose it is good for the present necessity / for
it is good for a mā so to be. Art thou bou-
de unto a wyfe / seeke not to be lousyd, Art-

ASPECTS OF BOOK-USE

FROM RELIGIOUS TO SECULAR

Some of the books which once belonged to nuns have clear indications that they were produced or bequeathed for a particular woman's 'use'. How they were actually used is still far from being obvious, as has been argued in the previous chapter, but it is noteworthy that quite a few volumes bear such inscriptions. London, British Library, MS Royal 7 E. iii, for example, has a long Latin inscription indicating that Abbess Cecily de Chanvill of Elstow commissioned the volume for the instruction and advancement of her convent and of other nuns who would consult it.¹ If this manuscript was really made so that nuns could consult it, it is possible to assume that there might have been some nuns at Elstow 'who could have profited from its use'.² The next stage that we would like to pursue may be to explore their actual use of the book: if the book was actually used, how are we to reconstruct this 'reading' and further interpret the significance of such reading in the nuns' lives?

One possible procedure for starting such an argument seems to examine the books themselves with great care. The present chapter aims to explore, therefore, aspects of book-use by analyzing additional materials added by later hands in manuscripts and

¹ 'Scriptus est liber [. . .] quem scribere fecit C. de Chanuill, bone memorie abbatissa beate Marie de Helenesow, in eruditionem et profectum conventus sui et ceterorum inspicientium' (fol. 196^v). David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series, CLVIII (Kalamazoo, MI; Spencer, MA: Cistercian, 1995), p. 137; (Elstow 1).

² Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 63.

printed books which once belonged to nuns in the Middle Ages. In the previous chapter it has been remembered that in the Middle Ages ‘reading’ and ‘book-use’ cover a variety of activities, from private and silent reading to hearing books read aloud and to the use of material for communal liturgical usage; any reconstruction of the forms of book-use must be made cautiously. Furthermore, such reconstruction of reading — readers’ responses to texts in other words — can only be deduced from sparse and often idiosyncratic annotation and commentary, and it is again hard to establish by whom such scribal activities were performed. The question of ‘book-use’ becomes entangled with such factors as have been considered, which preclude definitive statements about reading in the Middle Ages, as is cautioned by some scholars.³ However, it is sometimes possible to deduce the use of books by or for nuns or nunneries from such idiosyncratic evidence, even if not conclusively.

More than half of the volumes which have been consulted in the present project are roughly speaking liturgical texts,⁴ while others are mostly religious texts in English. It seems appropriate to develop our argument of book-use according to the content and I would like to start with that of liturgical texts. Most liturgical texts include a calendar, a fundamental text for a religious life. Entries in the Calendar are usually written in different coloured inks, which have a functional purpose. Important Church festivals and the feast days of apostles and major saints are generally written in gold or red, while the lesser festivals and saints’ days in black. Local saints especially those who

³ Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, ‘Literary Texts’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 555–75 (p. 556).

⁴ For the classification, see chapter one, p. 9.

evangelized a district in early Christian times also appear in distinguished colours, which is the same for anniversaries of the consecration of churches, the translation of relics and the obits or commemorations of notable deceased people deeply connected with the church.⁵ The inclusion of particular saints is often crucial in suggesting the provenance of a manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Liturgical misc. 407 (S.C. 29071), for example, has a calendar in which the name of St Mellor (Mylor), martyr, titular of Amesbury appears; the calendrical and liturgical evidence may suggest that this manuscript was associated with Amesbury, a priory and later abbey of BVM and St Mellor.⁶ The appearance of the names of St Bernard, St Augustine and St Cyriac, the patron of Lacock church in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud lat. 114 may also indicate that this manuscript was once at Lacock (abbey of BVM and St Bernard).⁷

Calendars often received a number of additions; these were often in black ink which were probably made by professional scribes or clerics and they can be categorized into several groups. First, one would note that calendars often received later additions of female saints. As far as identifiable saints are concerned, the Calendar of the manuscript from Amesbury mentioned above, for example, contains Emerentiana (virgin and martyr), Martha (sister of Lazarus and Mary Magdalen), Susanna (martyr) and Clare (virgin). More than half the calendars consulted have female saints added. A famous instance, though this volume has not been examined by the present writer, may

⁵ John Harthan, *Books of Hours and their Owners, with 89 Illustrations 72 in Colour* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977; repr. 1978), pp. 15–16.

⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Amesbury 5).

⁷ In this manuscript a figure of a nun kneeling and praying with a book appears beside an historiated initial of two monks with a dove. It could be this nun who commissioned the manuscript.

be that of *St Albans Psalter*, which was possessed by Christina, recluse and then foundress and prioress of Markyate. The calendar contains additional entries of eight women saints; half of these are not found in the St Albans calendars, which implies that the additions reflect interests of Markyate or Christina's own.⁸ In particular, half of them, like Christina herself, rejected suitors and chose to remain virgin; this use of the calendar seems to exhibit Christina's potential identification with these saints.⁹ The manuscript from Bruisyard, now London, British Library, MS Sloane 2400 includes the names of queens or noble ladies such as Prisca, Bathild (wife of Clovis II), Edith of Wilton, Etheldreda (queen and foundress and abbess of Ely). It is also of interest to find in the Calendar of Lacock the names of martyrs in the relation of mother and son, though they might be original: Felicitas and Perpetua (a young married woman and her son), and Julitta and Cyricus (a widow of Iconium, who took her son to Tarsus to escape persecution). Unlike Christina's case, it is difficult to prove that these are from personal predilections, but it seems, on the whole, that these additional entries of women saints are likely to reflect female devotion to women saints.

Another clear group consists of English or Anglo-Saxon saints: almost half of the calendars with additions listed in the appendices contain such additions. One of the most notable examples is that of British Library, Sloane 2400 mentioned above; entries are Edward the Confessor, Felix of Dunwich, Edward the Martyr, Cuthbert (his translation as well), Alphege (Archbishop of Canterbury), Augustine of Canterbury and

⁸ F. Wormald, 'Preface and Description of the Manuscript', in *The St Alban's Psalter*, ed. by Otto Pächt, Studies of the Warburg Institute, XXV (London: Warburg Institute, 1960), pp. 1–45 (p. 26).

⁹ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Saints' Lives and the Female Reader', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 27 (1991), 314–32 (p. 316).

translations of Edmund, Thomas of Hereford, Wulstan (Benedictine monk, bishop of Worcester) and so on. The additional inclusion of saints related to the house is also worth mentioning. In the calendar of Amesbury, the Benedictine house, is added the feast of Remigius, whose translation was celebrated by most English Benedictine monasteries; Gilbert of Sempringham, though a lesser direct connection with the Benedictine house, is also added on the 4th of February.¹⁰ A more obvious example can be found in a Syon manuscript, Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 11: in addition to some female and English saints, several feasts of St Bridget of Sweden, foundress of the mother house of Syon at Vadstena, are added in red in the calendar, which ostensibly reflects the Bridgettine use.¹¹

While the entries which have been examined serve the original function of the calendar, calendars were frequently appropriated for secular uses: for example, registration of obits. The Calendar of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D.4.7 (S.C. 1961), whose contents of a Bridgettine Breviary, a Sarum Calendar with Bridgettine additions and a prayer with feminine grammatical forms indicate its Syon provenance, has obits of Thomas Fishbourne, the order's first confessor-general (13th of September),¹² and of Elizabeth Fetyplace (21st of May), who was a nun at Amesbury, with the year of 155[?8]. Bell suggests that this manuscript was a personal belonging of Eleanor Fetyplace, who was Elizabeth's sister and one of nine Syon nuns who found

¹⁰ He founded of the Gilbertine Order and made a church and a rule for a group of devote young women, which is based on the Rule of St Benedict; *ODS*, pp. 209–10.

¹¹ They are 'Translation of St Bridget' (28th of May), 'Natal of St Bridget (23rd of July)' and 'Canonisation of St Bridget' (7th of October).

¹² His obit is also added in Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 12.

refuge at Buckland after their exile from Syon in 1539;¹³ if it is the case, this presents a personal use of the volume. The obituary added in a calendar of London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius D. iii, on the other hand, may indicate a communal use. This manuscript contains the Wintney version of the *Rule of St Benedict* and the Wintney Obituary Calendar, whose additions commemorate a number of bishops, abbots, priors and prioresses of Wintney. It is very likely, therefore, the volume was a communal custody and functioned as a record of the nunnery. The Calendar of a fifteenth-century Book of Hours which Elizabeth Hull, Abbess of the Conventual Church of Malling bequeathed to her god-child, Margaret Neville (Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery MS 091.21040) is also of interest.¹⁴ it records Margaret's and her family's life — her two marriages, the birth of her children, her own death and so on, which clearly shows that the volume was used as the family record.

There are some other additional writings which suggest the volume in question was used by the nun or in the nunnery that owned it. The evidence which most explicitly exemplifies such a form of use can be obtained from additional specific prayers addressed to a foundress or a saint of the nunnery. British Library, Sloane 2400 was probably in the possession of Anne Felbrygge, the daughter of Sir Simon Felbrygge, standard-bearer to Richard II, and his wife Margaret, daughter of the Duke of Silesia.¹⁵ The content of this manuscript is a Psalter preceded by a Calendar and contains several Latin prayers as well as other liturgical texts. The Calendar has obits of Margaret (fol.

¹³ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.34).

¹⁴ This manuscript has not been consulted by the present writer, but the entries are reproduced in F. J. Furnivall, 'The Neville and Southwell Families of Mereworth in Kent, A.D. 1520–1575', *N & Q*, 4th ser., 2 (1868), 577–78.

5^v) and Simon (fol. 7^v), which indicates Anne's personal use of this manuscript. The inscription tells, however, that this manuscript was bequeathed after Anne's death to Minoreesses at the convent of Bruisyard. At the end of the volume (fols 165^v–166^v) are additions of Latin prayers by a later hand (c. 16c), one of which is for benefactors and the repose of their souls, while another is addressed to Blessed Virgin Mary and the other is a prayer for clerics. It seems more reasonable to assume that these prayers were added when this manuscript was transferred to the convent than at the time when Anne Felbrygge possessed it; and it can be conceivable that at least someone at Bruisyard used or valued the prayer.

Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 12 is a Bridgettine Breviary with a Psalter, whose contents leave no doubt that it was made for the Syon nuns. This manuscript was seemingly produced in the fifteenth century and has several additions. Two of them appear at the end of the volume (fols 147^v and 148^v) written by a very clumsy hand of the late fifteenth- or the early sixteenth-century: the one is the Office of St Anne, the other is 'Prayers at disciplyne tyme', a Latin text with English rubrics. In addition, a filling of *memoria* of St Catherine of Sweden (1331–81), the fourth of eight children of Bridget of Sweden and Ulf of Godmarsson, is written by a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand (fol. 118^v); the connections with Syon nuns are obvious. Catherine played a very important role in the Bridgettine Order: she obtained papal approval for the Order in 1376 and achieved the canonization of Bridget in 1381, but the approval of her own cult was as late as 1484.¹⁶ Taken all together, it is possible that

¹⁵ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Bruisyard 1).

¹⁶ ODS, p. 94.

the *memoria* was added at Syon to commemorate the approval of her cult.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 451, which has been identified as being produced by a female scribe at St Mary at Winchester (also called Nunnaminster),¹⁷ contains three additional entries at the beginning and the end which show close connections with the convent. The supply leaf (fol. 118^r), written in a larger, less regular hand than that of the main scribe replaces a leaf removed in the last quire; the content is fifty-eight lines of the final sermon.¹⁸ The addition made on the endleaf (fol. 120^r) is in a large, clumsy hand, and contains an account of miracle of St Edburga of Winchester (d. 960) from a lost life of the saint.¹⁹ P. R. Robinson has suggested that the hand of the former can be dated on paleographical grounds to the first half of the twelfth century, while that of the latter is somewhat later; both of them were likely to have been made by nuns other than the main female scribe.²⁰ In addition, there is another note written in Latin on fol. ii^r, which refers to St Edburga and indicates the year of the writing (1150). Such additions indicate local devotional practice which the nuns at Winchester would appreciate.

London, British Library, MS Harley 1706, whose first part is regarded as being substantially a duplicate of the whole of Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322, which was

¹⁷ See also above, p. 35.

¹⁸ P. R. Robinson, 'A Twelfth-Century *Scriptrix* from Nunnaminster', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers: Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. by P. R. Robinson and Rivkah Zim (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 73–93 (p. 90).

¹⁹ St Edburga of Winchester was a daughter of Edward the Elder, king of Wessex (900–25), and his third wife Eadgifu. She was educated in the abbey of Nunnaminster, founded by her father. There was a considerable cult both before and after the Norman Conquest in the monasteries of Winchester and Wessex in those founded by Ethelwold. *ODS*, p.149.

²⁰ Robinson, 'A Twelfth-Century *Scriptrix* from Nunnaminster', p. 90.

bequeathed by William Baron for the personal use of a nun at Dartford,²¹ contains Latin suffrages to St Ethelburga (d. 675) added by a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand.²² St Ethelburga was an abbess of Barking and quite likely the owner as well as the ruler of Barking.²³ British Library, MS Harley 1706, like Bodleian Library, Douce 322, was later owned by Elizabeth de Vere, who was apparently lay pious. These fillings were probably made by a clerk acting as chaplain or confessor, as Doyle suggests, either to the nuns of Barking or to Elizabeth de Vere:²⁴ the former seems more probable, but neither of the possibilities should be dismissed.

A later addition which shows a more explicit connection with a Benedictine Abbey at Wilton is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G23. This manuscript consists of a Dominican Psalter, preceded by a Calendar (with several later additions including obits) and followed by liturgical texts such as Canticles and Hours of Virgin. The text by a main scribe ends at the line 10 on fol. 171^r and the rest of the page is filled up with a Litany, which was composed for use by the women's house dedicated to St Mary and St Edith — i.e. Wilton,²⁵ written by a later hand only in black ink, without decorated initials.

It seems also possible to suppose that additions which praise St Ethelburga in a manuscript, British Library, MS Additional 10596, were made by or for nuns at Barking. Two inscriptions appear on fol. 82^r in a fifteenth-century hand: one is 'Iste liber constat

²¹ See also chapter two, p. 29.

²² A. I. Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, n.s., 25 (1955–60), 222–43 (p. 233).

²³ ODS, p. 168.

²⁴ Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey', p. 233.

Matilde Hayle de Berkinyge' written in red, and underneath is in black 'Iste liber constat S. Marie hastynges. De berkynge'. This small volume in a hand size consists of two parts by different fifteenth-century hands and is worth describing because of the unique English contents. The first part is a copy of the *Craft of Dying* bearing an initial picture of a death-bed scene now badly rubbed and indistinct. The latter part is in a more commonplace bookhand and contains a devout meditation and prayers in English to the persons of the Trinity and various classes of saints, preceded by the book of Tobit and the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, and followed by the book of Susanna, all of which are the revised Lollard Bible. On the following leaves continue the additions of two commemorations for St Ethelburga, probably written in the early sixteenth-century hand. Bell has not taken into account the section of the *Craft of Dying*,²⁶ but Doyle maintains that the two parts of this manuscript were put together by the middle of the sixteenth century at Barking — the date of the present binding — about which time the suffrages were presumably added as well.²⁷ It is very interesting that these prayers are written in Latin, while the main texts are in English — the Wycliff translations and English prayers: this may be because these Latin suffrages were so conventional to the nuns at Barking that there was no need to be written in English. Again these additions reveal a local devotional practice. It has been held that English texts were for a private use, while those in Latin were for a communal usage at medieval nunneries. If this

²⁵ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Wilton 3).

²⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Barking 5).

²⁷ Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey', pp. 233, 242; Doyle adds that the *Craft of Dying* section may have been the handiwork of a Dominican judging from the inclusion of a cleric in black and white in the miniature, but may have been indented for Barking as well as the second part (p. 242).

manuscript mainly written in English was used personally, the owner must have been keen on learning and could have acquired the ability to comprehend Latin liturgical texts.

Oxford, St John's College MS 187 contains fascinating additions which illustratively present the fact that this manuscript was intended for female readers. This manuscript produced for Syon Abbey contains several liturgical texts and from fol. 103^r follow 'Prayers to be seyde for euery brothir or sister that is en elid[sic] ix dayes continuely'.²⁸ Underneath the last prayer written by a main scribe (fol. 124^v) continue a prayer to St Dorothy (virgin and martyr) in a different hand from the main text and a short prayer by a rather shaky hand, the latter of which continues to fol. 125^f. Then is followed by a prayer to eleven thousands virgin and BVM with a red initial in a professional but different hand from the main one; then it ends on fol. 125^v with a prayer to Jesus as bridegroom of virgins, which asks for salvation. The contents of these added prayers may imply female use, but it is very hard to determine if such additional prayers were made for private or communal use, especially when they were written in Latin.

It is much harder to unravel the truth, when the content does not give any specifications of its relation with the nunnery, but some evidence may give clues to explore personal responses to the text. A Psalter (British Library, MS Additional 27866)

²⁸ Bell suggest this provenance, pointing to feminine grammatical forms in prayers and commemorations for the soul of Henry V, founder of this house (Syon A.41); see also Christopher De Hamel, 'The Library: The Medieval Manuscripts of Syon Abbey, and their Dispersal', in *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Peregrinations after the Reformation*, ed. by Christopher De Hamel (London: Roxburghe Club, 1991), pp. 48–158 (pp. 67–8).

includes various fascinating additional writings which suggest the texts of this volume were privately read with great attention. First, a number of prayers are included: in the margin on fol. 135^r appears a prayer for forgiveness, while several other prayers fill up the rest of the blank page. Second, an additional liturgical text is followed by annotations which give sources of the material on the previous pages (fols 145–46). Furthermore, cross-references for the Canticles are added in the margin from fol. 136^r onwards, while an index in alphabetical order is written down at the end of the volume which facilitates the readers' consultation of the text, and permits non-sequential reading. A similar apparatus is noted in Bodleian Library, Douce 322, 'in whome is contente dyuers deuote tretis, and specyally the tretis that is callied *Ars moriendi*' (fol. 1^r). This manuscript contains a table of contents,²⁹ presumably by the same hand as a donation note telling that this manuscript was presented to Pernelle Wrattisley a nun at the Dominican priory at Dartford.³⁰ This list of contents may have been added to the volume after the rest had been copied and before it was given to Pernelle,³¹ so that it would allow her easier access to this collection of English devotional works, or it may have been added in the convent. British Library, Add. 27866, mentioned above, is a very tiny and beautifully decorated manuscript and the Calendar especially has attractive

²⁹ MS Harley 1706 (linked with Barking Abbey), a sister manuscript of MS Douce 322 also gathers a list of contents, but at the end of the volume.

³⁰ The text of the *Craft of Dying* of this manuscript was utilized by Frances M. Comper, in *The Book of the Craft of Dying and other Early English Tracts Concerning Death: Taken from Manuscripts and Printed Books in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries* (New York: Longman, 1917).

³¹ Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1745*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 317–44 (p. 330).

illuminations. These physical features may suggest that this volume was made for female use as in the case of MS Douce 322. The inscription on fol. 131^v actually indicates that Johan Stretford at Wherwell (the Benedictine Nuns) owned this volume, but this name is written over the erasure of another name. The Calendar has a lot of additional entries by later hands, some of which are female saints or obits, interestingly, by a shaky hand. It is tempting to say that these were added by Johan, or the other fillings as well as the index at the end were made for the use of Johan. This is just speculation, though it is almost certain that somebody, if not Johan herself, profited from this small beautiful manuscript.

Bodleian Library, Liturgical misc. 407, the particularity of whose calendar has been mentioned above,³² has several long additions: one is a scriptural quotation in Latin from Habakkuk (Ch. 3, verses 8–16) of the Old Testament; this chapter is a ‘plea to Yahweh for deliverance’ and the verses quoted here describe God’s anger and human fear and faith in him. At the end of the volume (fols 223–50) is a Hymnary with French rubrics included. The calendar of this manuscript contains some instructions as well as additional entries, both of which are written in French. It has been pointed out that the Hymnary was added in the second half of the fourteenth century and by the time additions in the calendar were made;³³ it appears to me that both additional writings from the Bible and the Hymnary were written by the same hand. If the manuscript remained in the priory at Amesbury by the time these texts were added, it is conceivable, if not conclusive, that this manuscript was used for some people in the convent who

³² See above, p. 46.

³³ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Amesbury 5); but Bell did not recognize the Habakkuk quotation.

were interested in the scriptural passage and familiar with French. Another French volume of a bible may also suggest that there was a nun (or person staying in the convent) who comprehended French texts without difficulty even in the fifteenth century. Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.3.52 is a fifteenth-century manuscript of the first volume of a bible in French, containing the books from Genesis to Job, including Tobit. The inscription on the flyleaf says that this volume was together with the second volume at the Augustine priory at Flixton, and some incipits in French are added in the margins.

Similarly, the commentary notes to the main texts seem to offer some clear glimpses into aspects of private reading. British Library, Harley 1706, discussed earlier, has two annotations in the margins (fols 18^r and 116^v). They correspond to the main text in English and are quotations from earlier theologians, which imply religious learning and interests. A hasty generalized conclusion should not be drawn, but judging from the circumstances of the production and the transmission of this manuscript, it seems most probable that these additions were written by a chaplain either for the nuns of Barking or for Elizabeth de Vere, like additional prayers.³⁴ Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.6.16, containing both Latin and French prayers and hymns, has been considered to have belonged to one of the dependencies of the abbey of Fontevrault (in southern France) — presumably Amesbury — from the internal evidence such as a prayer addressed to the founder.³⁵ This manuscript has a number of annotations in the margin,

³⁴ See above, p. 52; Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey', p. 233.

³⁵ M. R. James, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1856–67), III, 262.

especially in the section of Hours of the Virgin, which summarize the contents of the text. The problem occurs here again, however, that we will never know if these comments were added to promote nuns' understanding of the text or if the manuscript was in a different person's possession when it received the additions.

Henceforth, we always need to remember that such annotations designed to make use of the text easier do not always indicate clear connections with the owner of the book, but nevertheless it may be suggestive of a private use rather than an oral reading for a public audience. Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 13 is a beautifully written manuscript of an extensive collection of prayers and theological materials in English and Latin, which was made in 1518 originally for Jasper Fyloll, a London Dominican, but seems to have been passed to Elisabeth Crychley of Syon by 1521, if the inscription tells the truth. This manuscript has numerous additions in Latin,³⁶ of which those such as indications of sources, scriptural and theological annotations exemplify the reader's concern to achieve a scholarly reading, though it is more likely to have been done by Jasper than a lay-sister Elisabeth.³⁷

More notable examples indicative of actual use can perhaps be found in instructions for using texts added by later hands. Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 12, for example, has a Latin instruction how to use the calendar written in red (fol. 118^v); Bodleian Library, Rawl. G23 from Wilton has also instructions in Latin for using the calendar underneath the calendrical text of January (fol. 5^v). Moreover, Bodleian

³⁶ The additions and annotations are commented in M. R. James, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the College Library of Magdalen College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), pp. 24–33.

³⁷ George James Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery, the Parish of Isleworth, and the Chapelry of Hounslow* (London: Nichols, 1840), p. 92.

Library, MS Lyell 23, which seems to have been at Tarrant Keinston, contains a description in Latin how to establish the date of Easter on the preceding page of the calendar (fol. 11^r), but probably the same hand responsible for the Calendar. MS Lyell 23 presents several difficulties in assessing the texts written by more than one scribe. This volume consists of several sections written by at least three different scribes. As Bell points out, certain materials have seemingly been added at the end (fols 186^r–215^r), including the *Fifteen Oes of St Bridget* (fols 188^v–96^r), a prayer to BVM (fols 197^r–99^r), the Passion of St Margaret (fols 200^r–213^v), a short Litany for peace (fols 214^v–15^r).³⁸ At first sight, it seems that these additions were made at several stages (at least twice), for the hand responsible for fols 214^v–15^r, for example, appears different from that of the preceding prayers, but identical with that of the instruction for using the calendar of fol. 11^r. It should be noted, however, that the main body of the volume (fols 1^r–10^r; fols 12^r–185^v) is written by two scribes and the hand responsible for additional prayers of fols 188^v–213^v might be (at least to my eyes) the same as that of the first ten quires. A minute examination of the composition of this manuscript (what P. R. Robinson terms ‘booklet’) is beyond the range of this paper,³⁹ but a further scrutinizing of the volume will be worth doing so as to make it clear what is original and what is additionally written; or these materials might have been bound together at a certain time.

As has been described in chapter one, the largest number of extant manuscripts in Latin were from Syon Abbey, whose great interest in learning and reading is

³⁸ Bell *What Nuns Read* (Tarrant 2).

³⁹ P. R. Robinson, ‘The “Booklet”: A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts’, *Codicologica*, 3 (1980), 46–69.

remarkable.⁴⁰ In particular, it is important to note that the Bridgettine nuns had their own liturgical rite; since Syon was only a single house of the Bridgettine Order in England, any extant service-book with a Bridgettine text can be assumed to have been at Syon.⁴¹ In addition, the services performed by men and women at Syon were different, and therefore we can reasonably distinguish the manuscripts which they used.⁴²

It has been established, for example, that there is a very homogeneous group of four surviving manuscripts of Processionals which were written for Syon with music throughout the fifteenth century,⁴³ whose exemplar may have been Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 8885, which was produced probably a decade earlier.⁴⁴ The general idea of Processions at Syon which were performed on certain days of the year is summarized by De Hamel:

[P]rocessions were led by a sister in front with the holy water stoup followed by the cross-bearer, flanked by two sisters with lighted tapers, and then by a sister carrying an image of the Virgin. Then the whole convent of sisters followed, in pairs, side by side, the abbess and the prioress together and the chantress and the sub-chantress together, but all others in pairs in the order of their profession. *Presumably they could share manuscripts, one between*

⁴⁰ Chapter one, pp. 15–17, 18–19.

⁴¹ De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 50.

⁴² De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 53.

⁴³ They are Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland, 505a; Cambridge, St John's College MS 139; Oxford, St John's College MS 167; and South Brent, Syon Abbey, MS1.

⁴⁴ De Hamel, 'The Library', p.85; the scribe of this volume is considered to be identical with the one who was responsible for the first half of South Brent, Syon MS 6, a Bridgettine Lectionary; De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 68. Additionally, in this Cambridge manuscript the Office of St Augustine was added at the end of the volume by a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth century hand.

two.⁴⁵

(Emphasis added)

Interestingly, two of the five Processional manuscripts which seem to have been at Syon preserve actual inscriptions of more than one nun. The Processional in Cambridge, University Library, Add. 8885 contains two inscriptions written in red in the same hand: Anne Dygne, whose name is recorded in the *Martyrology* on 13 February 1517, and Anne Amarsham, a nun of Syon in 1518 and died in 1533.⁴⁶ Likewise, we find at the beginning of Oxford, St John's College MS 167 the names of nuns 'Syster Mary Neucl' (d.1557/8) and 'Sister Tomysyn Grove' (d. 1566), and 'Brother James Stock' whose death is recorded on 27 October 1566 in the *Martyrology*.⁴⁷ It may be conceivable, as has been suggested, that the appearance of more than one name in the same form in the Processional is not incidental, but indicates that the nuns walked together in procession and shared the same volume.⁴⁸

There are several other examples of careful provision for books and texts made at Syon. First, anyone who consults manuscripts owned by medieval nuns will not fail to realize that a number of Syon manuscripts are provided with horizontal tabs — some are of vellum, others of silk or cloth — which were pasted so that they project from the edges of the pages. Among the manuscripts which seem to have belonged to the nuns, examples are Cambridge, St John's College MS 139; Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 11; British Library, Arundel 146 (*The Additions to the Rule of Saint Savior*); British

⁴⁵ De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 86.

⁴⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.6).

⁴⁷ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.40).

⁴⁸ De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 86.

Library, MS Cotton Appendix xiv; and British Library, MS Harley 487. In MS 167 in St John's College, Oxford, the tabs are marked alphabetically 'A' to 'L', with additional sections marked 'a' and 'e', which correspond to added side-notes beside the hymnary with a musical note. In the margin on fol. 3^v, for example, underneath '*Sancta et immaculata*' it is noted in English in a later hand that 'In þ^e ende of þ^e boke. at the m^eke of þ^{is} letter. . a.' (see plate 2 at the end of this chapter); the response is actually to be found at the end of the book as is indicated. Such making-up of books was probably done in the Abbey, and this illustratively shows that much attention was drawn to books of Syon so that they would be functional for the readers to find their place easily.⁴⁹ Such a systematic provision for book-users, however, was not so clearly established in nunneries other than Syon.

Moreover, we can find another great concern for books in Syon manuscripts: updating and correcting of texts, which is explicitly reflected in MS 167 in St John's College, Oxford.⁵⁰ For example, the Hymnary with a musical note is scraped, corrected and added throughout the volume (eg. fols 26^r, 118^v). The Litanies are also brought up to date, by a good many erasures and added slips indicating 'A', 'b', and so on, to show where to be inserted. The name of St Catherine of Sweden (whose cult was approved in 1484) and those of Anne and Joachim (whose cult increased in the fifteenth century) are notably inserted in several places. De Hamel argues that they are written in a very fine formal calligraphic gothic liturgical hand, and presumably the same hand that wrote

⁴⁹ For other examples and a more detailed discussion, De Hamel, 'The Library', pp. 103–06.

⁵⁰ According to De Hamel, almost every one of the forty liturgical books of Syon, including those of men, has additions or cancellations and replacements; for other examples, his 'The Library', pp. 107–08.

down the name of sister Mary Nevil on the flyleaf. Furthermore, the same hand updated Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 62 with Bridgettine prayers and again made the two book-markers suspended on tapes in the Syon Martyrology, British Library, MSS Additional 2285.⁵¹ It was the duty of the Chantress of Syon to check the liturgical books were kept up-to-date and corrected, and de Hamel supposes that the hand responsible for these corrections is presumably Mary Nevil's. 'If the hand is indeed that of Mary Nevil herself', he continues, 'then she must surely have been Chantress, responsible for updating liturgical books in the chapel "and also to correct the reders" (the Rules say) in the refectory and chapter'.⁵² If this is so, another interesting addition in St John's College MS 167 conveys a more important meaning. At the back of the front cover, a 'tonic sol-fa' is described to show how to read the musical notes and the same is repeated beneath the inscriptions of Mary Nevil and others. This might have been arranged for Mary Nevil and her partner 'Sister Tomysyn Grove' so that they can read notes at the procession; or it may be more likely that Mary Nevil inscribed it by herself for her own use to lead the choir, or so that somebody else could practise it with the help of this instruction.

As for volumes in English, the number of vernacular volumes which belonged to Syon appears again far more evident than any other nunnery: fifteen of forty-eight English volumes which were owned by nuns or nunneries are from Syon. This phenomenon is not so difficult to explain when we remember their particular interests

⁵¹ De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 108.

⁵² De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 108.

in vernacular spirituality, as has been argued in chapter one.⁵³ Devotional works such as Walter Hilton's noticeably circulated among the nuns in manuscripts and printed books.⁵⁴ among the surviving volumes of Hilton's works, as many as six books including his translations were in the possession of the Syon nuns. Hilton's *Eight Chapters* and the *Discretion of Spirits*, for example, are bound together in a manuscript, British Library, MS Harley 993, whose second flyleaf indicates 'thys boke is ssuter Anne Colvyvyle' by a sixteenth-century hand.⁵⁵ Anne Colville was a nun of Syon in 1518 and died on 30 October 1531.⁵⁶ Her name occurs again together with 'Sustyr Clemens Tryburgh[?]', a nun who died in 1536, on the end pastedown of another interesting miscellaneous volume, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 416. The contents of this manuscript consist not only of religious books such as *Cursor Mundi* and commentary on the Ten Commandments and the seven deadly sins, but also of literary works such as John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and a fragment of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*. It would be really fascinating to explore the aspect that nuns might have enjoyed such secular works, but as Ann Hutchinson cautions that the whole volume might have achieved its present form after the dissolution.⁵⁷

⁵³ See, pp. 14–17.

⁵⁴ For the most recent remarks about production and circulation of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* among the religious and lay people, Mary C. Erler, 'Devotional Literature', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 495–525 (pp. 518–21).

⁵⁵ Her name also appears on fol. 39^v twice.

⁵⁶ Bell *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.25).

⁵⁷ Ann M. Hutchinson, 'Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 215–27 (p. 220, n. 67).

There are some books from Syon including another Hilton copy which suggest that a nun at Syon was a very intelligent reader. *The Ladder of Perfection*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1494 (STC 14042), now Inc. H491 in Philadelphia, Rosenbach Foundation, has an inscription of a Syon nun, Joan Sewell, and her monogram.⁵⁸ This manuscript was considered to have been presented to Joan by James Grenehalgh, a Carthusian at Sheen, who seems to have acted as unofficial spiritual director to her at the time of her profession at Syon in 1500. In addition to the printed book of Hilton, Grenehalgh sent her other manuscripts for her theological and spiritual edification, which can be surmised from the repeated appearance of 'J.S.' — Sewell's monogram, and 'J.G.S.' — a combined monogram of both people.⁵⁹ In these manuscripts, Bell says, 'Grenehalgh marked those passages to which he wished particularly to draw her attention with her monogram.'⁶⁰ It is not sure, however, if Sewell saw two of the manuscripts containing these monograms; and especially the hand in British Library, MS Additional 37790 may not be that of Grenehalgh so that the inclusion of the monogram by Grenehalgh is uncertain.⁶¹ Therefore, the monograms do not necessarily indicate the use of the book in question by or for Sewell, but they do suggest that the spiritual advisor had great influence on the nun's reading.

⁵⁸ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.43); this manuscript has not been examined.

⁵⁹ There are five books which contain these monograms: Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 35; London, British Library, MS Additional 24461; London, British Library, MS Additional 37790; London, British Library, MS Royal 5 A.v; and Philadelphia, Rosenbach Foundation, Inc. H491.

⁶⁰ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 173.

⁶¹ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 173. For a more detailed account of the relationship between Joan Sewell and James Grenehalgh, see Michael G. Sargent, *James Grenehalgh as Textual Critic*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, LXXV, 2 vols (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

It has recently been argued that early printers seem to have published devotional works designed to cultivate an awareness of the importance of such works among women readers.⁶² In particular, it seems that nuns as well as monks at Syon Abbey appreciated the advantage of the new technology from the very beginning. The possession of a greater number of printed books at Syon is far more evident than other nunneries: ten of seventeen printed books in vernacular are confirmed to have belonged to the nuns at Syon.⁶³ Among the volumes a noteworthy example may be a copy of Caxton's 1490 edition of *The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* (STC 3260), Nicholas Love's translation and adaptation of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*.⁶⁴ A copy now British Library, IB.55119 has the inscription of 'Susan purefeye' who was professed after 1518 and remained at Syon until her death in exile in 1570. This edition contains a short treatise and a prayer in English on the sacrament, which might have been added for her.

Universität Salzburg, 1984), I, 75–109.

⁶² A. S. G. Edwards and Carol M. Meale, 'The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England', *Library*, 6th ser., 15 (1993), 95–124 (p. 117); George R. Keiser, 'The Mystics and the Early English Printers: The Economics of Devotionalism', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV, Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 9–26; Carol M. Meale and Julia Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 526–40 (pp. 534–35); Susan Powell, 'Lady Margaret Beaufort and her Books', *Library*, 6th ser., 20 (1998), 197–240.

⁶³ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 33.

⁶⁴ For the readership and the ownership, see Carol M. Meale 'oft sibiis with grete deuotion I bought what I mi t do pleysyng to god': The Early Ownership and Readership of Love's *Mirror*, with Special Reference to its Female Audience', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference 20–22 July 1995*, ed. by Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 19–46.

Moreover, there are some books originally written for the nuns at Syon, as chapter one has exemplified, among which *The Orchard of Syon* (STC 4815)⁶⁵ and Richard Whitford's *The Pype or Tonne of the Lyfe of Perfection* (STC 25421) were once owned by two different Syon nuns.⁶⁶ The end leaf of the latter, which was printed by Robert Redman in 1532, has the name of Eleanor Fetyplace, who had also a volume of the *Bridgettine Breviary*.⁶⁷ The text is provided with many corrections and modernizations as well as comments on the text by a sixteenth-century hand through the volume. For example, in the margins of sig. BB2^r is written that 'Thys sentence was spokyn of hyly the pastir nost of sammuell. butt I suppose that saynt bernard named. Samuel bycause that first bok of the kyngth is called liber samuelis. that is the boke of samuel'. This shows apparently a professional reading of the text, though it is not sure if the hand of these commentaries is Eleanor's.

Dorothy Coderington, a nun of Syon at the time of its suppression in 1539 and a member of the house during the Marian revival, also owned another now annotated and corrected printed book of *A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & XII. Fruites of the Holy Goost*, issued by Michael Fawkes and Robert Copland in two parts in 1534 and 1535 (STC 13608), at present in Ampleforth Abbey.⁶⁸ Similarly, some sixteenth-century marginal emendations and notes in ink are scattered throughout another copy of the

⁶⁵ New York, Public Library, Spencer Collection, English 1519; Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.22); see chapter one, pp. 15–17.

⁶⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, 4° W.2 Th. Seld; Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.37).

⁶⁷ See above, pp. 47–48. For other books connected with the Fetyplace family, Margaret Lane Ford, 'Private Ownership of Printed Books', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–), III: 1400–1557 (1999), ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, pp. 205–228 (pp. 215–216).

same work (Cambridge, Trinity College C.7.12). It has been confirmed that the emendations in the Trinity College copy frequently agree with a manuscript now in British Library where the other manuscripts have different readings: this suggests, J. J. Vaissier has argued, 'the conclusion that the corrector used the London MS. itself or a manuscript closely related to it'.⁶⁹ As for the Ampleforth copy, Vaissier has further implied that 'the editor is inclined to believe that this lady of Syon [i.e. Dorothy Coderington] used the two books side by side, correcting the present Ampleforth printed copy from the manuscript now in the British Museum'.⁷⁰ Vaissier might have inferred this since the hand responsible for the inscription and corrections is identical in the Ampleforth copy. We have to be cautious, on the one hand, about such a definitive conclusion that the nun did collation by herself as Vaissier has drawn from rather ambiguous evidence; it is conceivable, on the other hand, that the nuns at Syon were concerned about the accuracy of texts, as they up-dated their liturgical texts.

It is also noteworthy that in the Cambridge copy of the *Tree & XII. Fruites of the Holy Goost* secular passion registers; on the reverse of the first flyleaf occurs the following English short lyric in ink running as follows:

Trvste ye to reyson
 Trve love ys gaeson
 The love of a boye
 Lastyth butt a seyson
 Trye or euer thowe trvste

⁶⁸ Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.3); this book has not been examined by the present writer.

⁶⁹ *A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & the XII. Frutes of the Holy Goost*, ed. by J. J. Vaissier (Groningen: Wolters, 1960), p. xxxiii.

⁷⁰ *A Deuout Treatyse*, p. xxxviii.

w^l syt askwans
 butt to trvste or eure thowe tarye
 may cause them repantance⁷¹

Underneath the text the name MAR Windesor Domina de Syon is found. Margaret Windsor was a prioress of Syon in 1518 and holder of the office at the time of the abbey's dissolution in 1539.⁷² Her name also occurs on the first page of a French translation of Boccaccio's *De la ruine des nobles hommes et femmes*, printed by Matthias Huss and Johann Schabeler in Lyon, in 1483.⁷³ This copy is regarded as having been presented by a certain Henry Parker, who originally owned it. It seems possible to assume that another inscription appearing on fol. 174^v 'Thys boke ys *myne*, Margaret' (emphasis added) was inscribed by Margaret Windsor herself; it will be worth, therefore, examining if the hand of her name in the Cambridge copy is identical with that of this copy of Boccaccio. In any case, however, it should be noted that the hand responsible for the personal sentiment quoted above is different from that of Margaret's name (see plate 3). It is tempting to imagine (and if it is so, very intriguing) that a nun wrote down her secret secular emotion in the front page of such a devotional text. Taking into account that Margaret Windsor was a Prioress around the time of the publication of this book, it will be more reasonable to suggest that this experiential voice was written by another female owner.

⁷¹ Vaissier also gives a transcription in his edition (p. xxxiii), but he is not accurate in several points.

⁷² Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.14); Meale and Boffey give account of the Windsor family and book-ownership, in 'Gentlewomen's Reading', pp. 527–30.

⁷³ New York, Pierpont Morgan, 600; Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Syon A.31). This copy has not been consulted.

Similarly, a copy of *Breuiarium seu Portiforium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesie Sarisburiensis*, printed in Paris by Francis Regnault and Francis Byrckman in 1519, has a short remark on love. The copy in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce BB200 preserves some erasures (eg. Thomas Archbishop) carried out under the dissolution, while on the last leaf of the volume is a list of Polsloe nuns, whose names except for the first one is listed in the 1538 Pension List. The 'dede' is added after the name of prioress Margaret Trow, who died in 1535, and this list had been updated until the surrender of the convent in 1538.⁷⁴ The list is preceded by a prayer in the same hand, and followed by two lines in Latin — one is an annotation describing two people, the other is a prayer for the Absolution; and other two lines in English continues in the same hand of the list: 'Kyng Harry of the england. Supreme heod of the churche of englande', beside which '1535' is noted by a much later hand; then a different hand writes: 'Love ys hade whyle Pylnor doth Laste whene Pylnor ys gone Love ys paste who no thyng kepeth ys ende more nede.' We do not know who this Pylnor was nor who wrote this moral distich. This appears to me to have been written by the same hand of the Absolution, which makes it more difficult to determine when this was written. Yet it seems most resonable to conclude that the volume came to a somebody outside the convent after the dissolution. This example may represent an aspect of the circulation of a book from religious to secular, bearing additions ranging from religious to secular.

Books were often provided with additional recording, as has been discussed in the section of calendars;⁷⁵ and such use is appropriate within the context which the book

⁷⁴ Bell lists all the names of nuns in *What Nuns Read* (Polsloe 1).

⁷⁵ See pp. 45–48 in this chapter.

originally aims to serve. It sometimes occurs, however, that books were used as documents for recording information which is far from relevant to the nature of the text. London, British Library, MS Cotton Faustina B.iii, now bound with other materials, contains on fols 199–280, the ‘Life of St Edith’ and the ‘Life of St Etheldreda of Ely’, whose association with Wilton is without doubt. On fol. 280^v of this manuscript is a short list of books, consisting of, for example, service-books and a number of unspecified books in English. All the books in this list is reproduced in the catalogue edited by R. Sharpe, who suggests that the ‘list would appear to refer to a small communal collection, though it cannot be assumed that this represents the sum of the library’.⁷⁶ As Sharpe points out, the list might represent part of collection, but it remains uncertain only from here if the books really belonged to Wilton. A manuscript of the four gospels in Latin, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 155 (S.C.1974), also records a list of lands which were held by Gilbert in Stifford, Essex, on the last leaf; and below it is a late twelfth-century copy of a Latin charter issued by Abbess Aelfgiva, recording the gift of a tithe of land to the abbey of Barking.⁷⁷ Apparently, the additions are not relevant to the Gospels, but such use of books as people made notes in them was not rare at the time when materials to write on were not so easy to obtain.

There is a noteworthy example indicating a secular use of a book. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B.408 is a Cartulary of Godstow written in English which began after 1467. The first folios of this manuscript contain an English rendering

⁷⁶ R. Sharpe, J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson and A. G. Watson eds, *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues* (London: British Library, 1996), pp. 645–46 (item B.111).

⁷⁷ N. R. Ker, ed., *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 357–58 (no. 303); Bell, *What Nuns Read* (Barking 10).

of part of Breviary, which seems to have been sent with the Register to the binder with a view to its preservation.⁷⁸ The Cartulary in English by a main scribe ends at fol. 222^v; and on the following page (fol. 223^r) continues a Latin document about Isabella Braynton a nun at Godstow's giving the rent to John in Recrer[?] of Daglyngworth[?] in 1509[?]. This is obviously written by a different scribe from that of the main text. The Cartulary itself was originally written for preserving a legal document in English so that *nuns at the Godstow could have much better knowledge of their own business*. This addition at the end, though this might have been done by a clerk rather than a nun, informs us that the volume was actually used for a legal purpose at the convent.

Finally, I would like to add that it was not only words but also pictures which owners added (or had added) to their own books. The manuscript which two Syon nuns might have shared at procession (Oxford, St John's College MS 164) is illustrated with an added woodcut on fol. 4^r (plate 4).⁷⁹ The rubric in English indicates '¶Versicle and orison as uppon cristemasse daye. ¶Vppon twelf dayeres. at procession Responde'. Such instructions are mostly written in English throughout the volume and they would have enabled the reader to identify with the contexts of the Processional. Beside the text, marginalia 'Nescient magister' (probably referring to the Magi who did not know at first where Jesus was born; the Matthew 1:2) and a metal cut image of the Holy family and the Magi is fittingly pasted on the margin. This illustration is furthermore embellished with colours and vividly illustrates the procession for the Epiphany.⁸⁰ It is

⁷⁸ 'Temporary Preface', in *English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford, Written about 1450*, ed. by Andrew Clark, EETS o.s., 129 (London: Kegan Paul, 1905), pp. v–viii (p. v).

⁷⁹ For other additions to this manuscript, see above, pp. 61–62.

⁸⁰ I have looked into some catalogues by F. W. H. Hollstein as well as Edward Hodnett, but

also worth noting that this is a Syon manuscript, for Syon Abbey has especially been renowned for their concern for images and visual representations.⁸¹

In such manuscripts containing added images, the moments chosen for the added illustrations usually relate to the content, which might have been a known discourse of images commonly accessible to the public imagination, as they saw in stained-glasses. The cross reading between the image and the text, however, will require a more intricate discourse of reading than merely following written words. Gazing at the pictures in the Middle Ages is, borrowing Mary Carruthers' words, a textual activity like reading, which is 'a complex activity involving both oral phase, that of *lectio*, and a silent one, of *mediation*, committing the substance of the text to memory, re-presenting it in order to make it one's own'.⁸² In order to profit from the picture, one must understand it as directly referential to a text so that picture will 'make present' as narrative in due course. By looking at images, therefore, readers endeavour to comprehend what they represent and convey, which involves repeated re-readings both of the text and the image. The pasted image as is found in MS 169 of St John's College, Oxford, shows that the image serves as a means of approaching the text in intricate ways to develop a private piety and the nuns especially at Syon were accustomed to

the identification of this cut has not been established yet.

⁸¹ Martha W. Driver, 'Nuns as Patrons, Artists, Readers: Bridgettine Woodcuts in Printed Books Produced for the English Market', in *Art into Life: Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposia*, ed. by Carol Garrett Fisher and Kathleen L. Scott (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1995), pp. 237–67; Mary C. Erler, 'Pasted-in Embellishments in English Manuscripts and Printed Books c. 1480–1533', *Library*, 6th ser., 14 (1992), 185–206 (pp. 194–202).

⁸² Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; repr. 1999), p. 222.

such a reading style for their devotion.⁸³

There are still some manuscripts and additions which have not been discussed, but examples which support our argument of 'book-use' have been presented fully in this chapter and appendix one will provide all the information. This study greatly depends on internal evidence which may be untrustworthy unless we are conscious of the difference between medieval literacy or literary activities and our modern concepts. Nevertheless, several aspects of 'book-use', I would maintain, have been revealed in this chapter, most of which had long been overlooked. Some additions indicate a local piety as has been seen in the additions of calendars or prayers. Books were also sometimes used for recording diverse things — it could be a business in a nunnery, a family history or a rather personal response. There are also additions to facilitate the reader's consulting the book such as cross-references or a table of contents. Some of the additions such as are noted in up-dated litanies and corrected or annotated texts indicate a professional 'reading' or 'book-use'. It may be almost impossible to discern who made these comments. It may seem more likely that male clerics penned them rather than the nuns themselves, but we cannot be sure. Moreover, the person who handled the book as well as the additions might have been a person other than the nuns, but this does not preclude nuns from 'using' or 'reading' the book. Nuns might have had these additions made sometime at their own request or the clerics or chaplains themselves may have made these annotations of their own volition; they might have been 'read' privately or communally. We may not be able to draw a general conclusion about the use of the books including these additions, but the aspects of 'book-use' which the

⁸³ For other examples of added images or decorations from Syon, De Hamel, 'The Library', p. 100.

present chapter has shown, I would argue, will lead us to realize again that nuns could have been engaged in a variety of 'reading'.

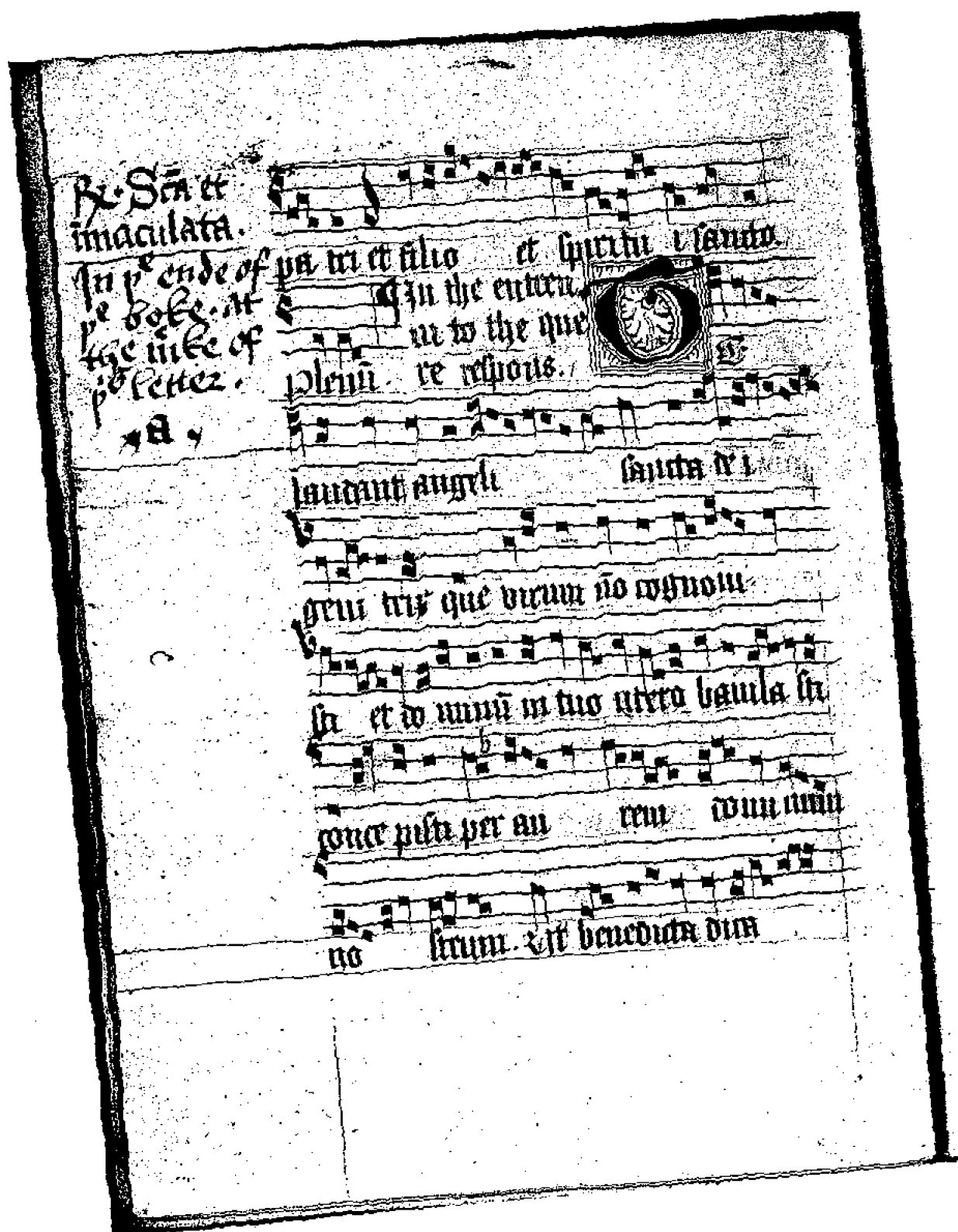


Plate 3: *A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & the XII. Frutes of the Holy Goost*
(STC 13608), flyleaf 1^v

I bste to be tresson. To be lode of gresson
 the lode of a bony lastyng butt a fonsen
 I am to be on bony lastyng butt a fonsen
 butt to lastyng or on bony lastyng may canse
 fonsen repentance
 J. R. Winderfor. Donna de Syon

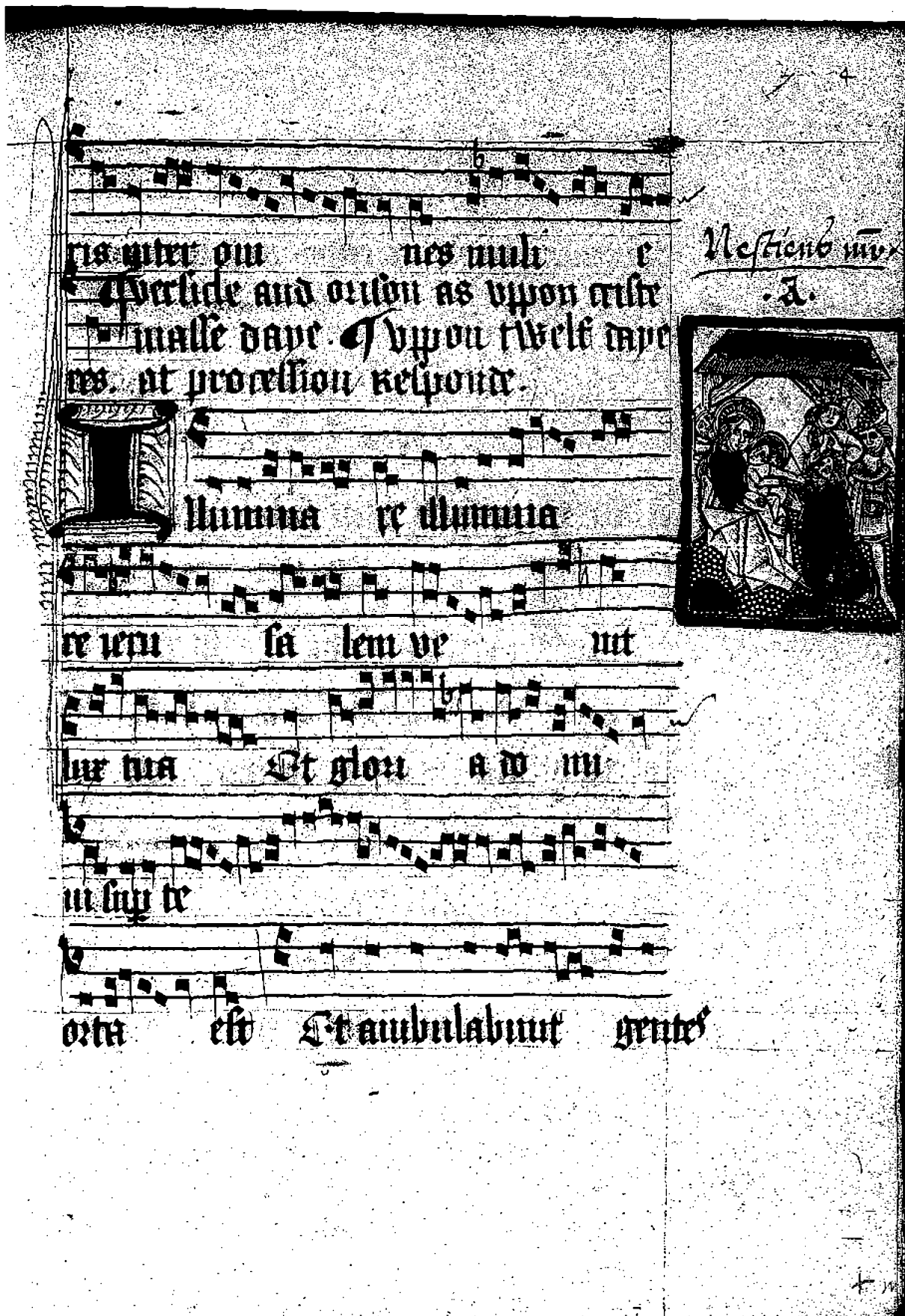
B. 4. 54

Plate 4: Oxford, St John's College MS 167, fol. 4^r

ris giter om nes muli e
 Overlode and oulson as vypon criste
 malle dave. Vypon twelf apoc
 res. at procelcion kelpoude.

Illumina re illumina
 re ieru sa lem ve nit
 lux tua Et glori a do mi
 ni sup te
 orta est Et ambulabunt gentes

Nestiens m.
 .a.



CONCLUSION

The present project has examined about two-thirds of the manuscripts and printed books which can be traced to have been in nunneries in Medieval England. Not all the volumes which have been consulted contain additions in a later hand, as the list of the manuscripts in appendix three shows, but the material in the appendices in this dissertation shows that a number of the books received additions for various occasions or purposes, many of which have been examined in chapter three. The present thesis cannot claim to be more than a pilot study and there are many areas where we can only speculate. We have to accept that many of the later additions are very idiosyncratic responses to the text. We cannot necessarily draw a definite conclusion, therefore, about 'book-use' of medieval nuns from the surviving evidence, but nevertheless, I would argue, a cautious assessment of evidence such as made in the present thesis has provided a possible new way to explore aspects of medieval women's 'book-use'.

Assessing evidence should always engage with those methodological difficulties which make our arguments more complicated, though it is not unpredictable as has been argued in chapter two. The complex notions of 'reading' and 'writing' applied in the Middle Ages make it difficult for us to interpret actual 'book-use'. It is problematic, for example, to establish 'who' made additions to the text: it could be nuns themselves or their chaplains who penned it for them. It is also hard to determine that the evidence really proves a personal or communal use by the owner herself. We cannot always argue

confidently that medieval nuns made additions and handled the books by themselves, but a closer examination of additions and deeper understanding of 'literacy' or 'reading' in a medieval sense, as we have seen in chapters one and two, seems to give us a glimpse into 'book-use' in medieval nunneries.

About half of the books examined in the present research contain later additions and the contents are really various. Even with the same text by an author, copies owned by several readers may have each distinctive addition: some preserve devotional religious reading, while the others are for secular annotations. Such additions can be categorized, though tentatively, as is attempted in appendix two. We may ask by or for whom they were added if the books received such additions in nunneries. Those that serve a practical use — additional entries of saints and obits or conventional prayers, for example, could have been added by nuns themselves. Though there is little evidence to prove such scribal activities, it is at least possible to assume that nuns employed somebody as a scribe to enable them to use of the book. In the case of Godstow's Cartulary the latter seems most probable when the legal document between a nun and a man was recorded,¹ whereas nuns at Nunnaminster presumably chose and literally 'wrote down' the additional materials as well as the main texts.²

Moreover, we have observed quite a few additions which indicate a spiritual 'reading' or edification — some were written in Latin — among the books owned by nuns. If they were really annotated for nuns, it is most likely that clerics or chaplains who had higher education did it for them. It is interesting to note, on the other hand,

¹ See above, p. 71.

² See above, pp. 50–51.

that the contemporary attitude to women's reading was not always to encourage it in every respect. As *The Myroure of oure Ladye* indicates in the section of the choice of books, the expectation of nuns' reading is limited.³ The anxiety about women's reading is also expressed, for example, in words of Richard Rolle, who wrote several Middle English devotional texts for women religious. In *The Form of Living*, he asserts: 'You should not desire greatly many books; just hold love in your heart and in your deeds, and you have all that we [clerics] may preach or write'.⁴ Unlike laywomen's reading, almost nothing is known about nuns' recreational reading.⁵ At least, however, we know certainly that some nuns possessed more than one volume and, despite Rolle's remarks, others apparently appreciated reading for spiritual ends. Some were probably done at a spiritual advisor's initiation as is the case of Joan Sewell and James Grenehalgh,⁶ while there might have been some nuns who made systematic use of books by themselves.

³ See above, p. 19

⁴ Richard Rolle, 'The Form of Living', in *The English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole*, ed. by Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 88.

⁵ Lee Patterson argued that reading of romance had a more practical or didactic effect and further suggested, examining additions and the ownership of Oxford, Jesus College MS 39, that the nuns of Syon read Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, on the basis of an added annotation 'of which poison if ye lust more to rede /seep þe storie of Troilus, Creseide & Dyomedes', which is a citation appearing in a three-line format in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 99; 'Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth-Century Reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, WI; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 115–53 (pp. 144–45). It has recently been rejected, however, that 'there is no evidence to connect Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* with Syon nuns'; see Ann M. Hutchison, 'Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 215–27 (p. 219, n. 65).

⁶ See chapter three, pp. 64–65.

This will be illustrated when we can recover the details of nuns' lives both collectively and individually. The examination of the books from Syon is a prominent example. The knowledge of the existence of their library and their librarian and their habit of book-provision which has recently been established makes it possible to learn more about 'book-use' at Syon. Indeed, the argument of 'book-use' has been constructed much from Syon, but the detailed examination of each volume may give a new starting point to explore reading in nunneries even with a small collection of books or in the case of individual nuns. Naturally, the extent to which such evidence can provide or be obtained differs according to individual nunneries and nuns and therefore it is difficult to make a generalization, but we have come to learn that reading had more significance in medieval nuns' lives than has been considered previously.

Examination of each volume is thus very crucial: whereas this dissertation has focused on exploring the actual 'book-use', further comprehensive analyses of contextual evidence, together with other elements such as social, historical and literary, will enable us to deepen our understanding of nuns, books and 'reading'. One possible way might occur from establishing a house style of writings in Medieval England. During several decades, more systematic knowledge of individual scribes has increased. Several hands which were engaged in monastic book production, for example, have been identified by A. I. Doyle.⁷ It is really conceivable that such methodical identification will lead us to identify the style of writings of each house as well as each scribe. 'To my mind', A. I. Doyle concludes, 'the identification of individual hands in

⁷ A. I. Doyle, 'Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England (c. 1375–1530): Assessing the Evidence', in *Medieval Book Production : Assessing the Evidence*, ed. by Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, 1990), pp. 1–19; 'Thomas Betson of Syon

writing and decoration is the most promising path for improving our assessment of the monastic share in book production.’⁸ There seems no harm to extend his last phrase ‘monastic share in book production’ into ‘nuns’ engagement in reading’. When we come to be able to determine when or where such additions or annotations as have been examined in this dissertation were made, the appreciation of books by nuns will be further fleshed out. Thus it is the ‘book’ itself, I would argue, that narrates its history in the end.

Abbey’, *Library*, 5th ser., 11 (1956), 115–18.

⁸ Doyle, ‘Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England’, p. 16.

APPENDIX 1

List of volumes containing additions and annotations

*Manuscripts and printed books which contain additions, annotations and inscriptions which seem relevant to the argument of 'book-use' are arranged in alphabetical order by provenance. All the numbered items of each book are listed in sequential order so that they can easily be found when referred to. It is helpful to consult this list alongside David Bell's 'Part II: A List of Manuscript and Printed Books from English Nunneries' in his *What Nuns Read*, for the description of each book is based on this; reference numbers are henceforth given to all the manuscripts found in Bell's list. I have also followed Bell in including a question mark for volumes for which provenance is not absolutely sure. Additions which are barely decipherable have a question mark.*

Amesbury (Wiltshire), Priory and later abbey of BVM and St Mellor (Cell of Fontevrault) (Benedictine Nuns)

?Cambridge, UL., Ec.6.16 s.xiv (Bell 1)

Hours of the Virgin (fols 17–127), prayers in French, etc.

1. Comments summarising the contents of the text (in Latin)

fols 17^r, 26^r 38^r, 43^r, etc.

?Oxford, Bod. Lib., Liturg. misc. 407 (S.C. 29071) sxiiith–xiv (Bell 5)

The earlier part of this manuscript contains a Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles.

1. Liturgical material

fol. 8^r

2. Scriptural addition

fol. 210^r–210^v

Habakkuk Chapter 3, verse 8–16

3. Hymnary with French rubrics (without music)

fols 223–50 [s.xiv^{ex}]

4. Additions in the Calendar

Barking (Essex), Abbey of BVM and St Ethelburga (Benedictine Nuns)**London, BL., Add. 10596 s.xv (Bell 5)**a (fol. 1) *The Book of the Craft of Dying*

b (fol 25) Wycliffite translation of the book of Tobit in the revision

c (fol. 47^v) *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*d (fol. 49) An anonymous 'Deuout mediacioun [. . .] on the godenes of oure
blessid lord'e (fol. 54^v) Prayers (unprinted) in English

f (fol. 77) Wycliffite translation of the book of Susanna in the revision

1. Two inscriptions

fol. 82^r [s.xv]

Iste liber constat Matilde Hayle de Berkyng (in red under the text.)

Iste liber constat S. Marie hastynges. De berkyng

2. In praise of mother Ethelburga, celebrated as a saint

fol 82^v

3. Two pages of prayers (in Latin) to mater Ethelburga, foundress of Barking

fols 82^v–83^r

4. Inscription of Ethelburga

fol. 83^r**London, BL., Harley 1706 (not in Bell)**

1. Comments on the text

fols 18^r and 116^v

2. Inscription

fol. 93^r etc.

Elysabeth Oxyford, Margaret Oswoll[?]

3. Suffrages to St Ethelburga

fol. 215^r

4. Pen trials

fol. 215^r

Oxford, Bod. Lib., Bodl. 155 (S.C. 1974) s.x/xi (Bell 10)

The four gospels etc.

1. List of lands (in Anglo-Saxon) [s.xi] and a copy of an attestation (in Latin) [a late s.xii]

fol. 196^v

Lands held by Gilebeard (=Gilbert) in Stifford, Essex and a late s.xii copy of an attestation, originally issued by Abbess Aelfgiva, recording the gift of a tithe of land to the abbey of Barking.

Cf. N. R. Ker, ed., *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 357–58

Oxford, Magdalen Coll., lat. 41 s.xv (Bell 13)

A large collection of devotional and moral works in French.

1. Pen trials

fols 39^v and 167^r

Bruisyard (Suffolk), Abbey of the Annunciation of BVM (Franciscan Nuns)

?London, BL., Sloane 2400 s.xiii (Bell 1)

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles, Athanasian Creed, a Litany, and six brief prayers (in Latin). The figure of the Annunciation and Crucifixion are curiously wrought with the needle on the cover [s.xiv].

1. Inscription

fol. 1*^v [s.xv]

ffelbrigg

2. Prayer

fol. 1^r [s.xvi]

3. Inscription

fol. 2^v [s.xv]

Iste liber est: Sororis Anne ffelbrygge ad terminum vite, post cuius decessum pertinebit conuentui Minorissarum de Bruszerde.

4. Prayer for benefactors and repose of soul [s.xvi]

fol. 165^v

5. Prayer for remission of sins

fol. 166^r

6. Prayer to be rescued from tribulation and given grace

fol. 166^r

7. Prayer to BVM and to clerics

fol. 166^v**Campsey (Suffolk), Priory of BVM (Augustinian Canonesses)****Cambridge, UL., Add. 7220 s.xiii¹ (Bell 1)**

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by a complete set of Canticles with the Athanasian Creed.

1. Inscription

fol. 2^r [s.xiv]

Cest liuere est a covent de Campisse

2. Additions in the Calendar

Many English saints

3. The s.xv pressmark 'O.E.94'

fol. 8^r**London, BL., Add. 40675 s.xiv (Bell 3)**

a (fol. 2) Psalter, preceded by the *Suscipere dignare* prayer adapted for female use, and followed by Canticles, Athanasian Creed, and the Office of the

Dead.b (fol. 35) *Hymnary*c (fol. 63) *Hours of St John the Baptist and (fol. 66) of St Mary Magdalene*d (fol. 69) *Metrical Psalters of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Cross*e (fol. 109) *A long prayer in French.***1. Two hymns**fols 33^v and 34^r (originally blank)**2. Inscription**fol. 34^r [s.xv]*Cest liuere est a couent de Campisse***3. The s.xv pressmark 'd.d.141'**fol. 35^r**4. The anathema**fol. 111^r*Qui librum furatur, per collum pendere datur.***5. Marginalia**fols 38^v, 39^r and 48^r (*Jesus amor meus.*)**Dartford (Kent), Priory of BVM and St Margaret (Dominican Nuns)****Oxford, Bod. Lib., Douce 322 (S.C.21896) s.xv (Bell 7)**a (fol. 2) *John Lydgate, Calendar, etc.*b (fol. 10) *Petty Job, etc.*c (fol. 19^v) *John Lucas, Death's Warning to the World*d. (fol. 20) *Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*e (fol. 25^v) *Extract from an English version of the Somme le roi*f (fol. 26^v) *Book of the Craft of Dying*g (fol. 39) *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle*h (fol. 52^v) *A Ladder of Four Rungs*i (fol. 62^v) *A Little Short Treatise*j (fol. 64) *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*

k (fol. 78) Richard Misyn, *The Mending of Life*

l (fol. 94) An English translation of the *ps.-Augustinian Meditatio Sancti Augustini*

m (fol. 98) *The Confession of St Brendan*

n (fol. 100) the *Charter from the Poor Catiff*, etc.

1. Inscription

fol. 1^r [s.xv]

These book, in whome is contente dyuers deuoute tretis, and specyally the tretis that is callied *Ars moriendi*, ys of the gifte of Wylliam Baron Esqueyer to remayne for euyr to the place and nonrye of Detforde, and specially to the use of dame Pernelle Wrattiseley, sister of the same place, by licence of her abbas, the whiche Pernell is nece to the for seyde gentylman William Baron.

2. Table of contents

fol. 1^v

Denny (Cambridgeshire), Abbey of St James and St Leonard (Franciscan Nuns)

Cambridge UL., Add. 8335 s.xv (Bell 1)

The Northern Homily Cycle in English verse

1. Inscription

p. 2 [s.xv]

Ister [liber] [. . .] sororum minorum s[anct]i Lenonar[di] Denay.

2. Pericope for each sermon

The lection (text)

pp. 196, 209, etc. (in the margin)

3. ?

p. 378

4. Inscription

p. 382 [s.xv]

Thomas Calbot (a merchant of Lynne)

Flixton (Suffolk), Priory of BVM and St Catherine (Augustinian Canonesses)

Cambridge, UL., Ee.3.52 s.xv (Bell 1)

The first volume of a bible in French, containing the books from Genesis to Job (including Tobit).

1. Inscription

fly-leaf i^r [s.xv]

Thomas uidelicet Croftys in conuentu monialium de Bungey, die mensis Ianuarii uicesima secunda, qui comunitati canonicarum de Flyxton contulit simul et donauit *Vetus Testamentum in duobus uoluminibus gallici ydyomatis*, ad singulare solacium priorisse sororumque suarum presencium et futurarum.

2. Incipits (in French)

fols 348^v, 354^v and 363^v (marginalia)

Godstow (Oxfordshire), Abbey of BVM and St John the Baptist (Benedictine Nuns)

Oxford, Bod. Lib., Rawl. B.408 s.xv (Bell 2)

Cartulary of Godstow (in English) after 1467

1. Inscription

Hilton de Godstow

fly-leaf ii^v

A leaf of the illustration of Godstow Nunnery (1666) is attached to this page.

2. Legal document for Godstow between Isabella Braynton, a nun at Godstow and John Wrskcokus of Daglyngworth

fol. 223^r

3. Record of the rent

fol. 224^r

Goring (Oxfordshire), Priory of BVM (Augustinian Canonesses)**Cambridge, Trinity Coll., 244 (B.11.5) s.xiii (Bell 1)**

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles and a Litany.

1. Inscription

fol. vii^v [s.xiii]Istum librum contulerunt Robertus Heryerd et Iohanna uxor eius priorisse et
conuentui ecclesie sancte Marie de Gorynges [. . .] .

2. Arguments to the first 41 Psalms Cantica ending with Litany

fol. 155^v [s.xvi^{ex}]

3. Psalms

fol. 140^r**Ickleton (Cambridgeshire), Priory of St Mary Magdalen (Benedictine Nuns)****Cambridge, St John's Coll., 506 and T.9.1 AD 1516 (Bell 1)**A composite volume, part manuscript (containing Litany and a series of
commemorations, etc.) and part printed book (*Psalterium cum Hymnis
secundum Usum et Consuetudinem Sarum et Eboracensis*, printed at Paris,
1516 [STC 16259]).1. English note on the seven archangels [s.xvi^{ex}]fol. 42^r (manuscript)

2. Inscription

end flyleaf of the manuscript part [s.xvi^l]Thys bowke belongs vnto Dame Elizabeth Trotter, prophessyd noyne in the
abbay of Ikelyngton in the dyocesse of Ely

3. Additions in the Calendar (manuscript)

4. Inscription

title page of the printed book

1516 Tho Bake coll: Io: socius eiectus

5. Instruction for saying a prayer

sig. a1^r etc. (printed book)

Kington St Michael (Wiltshire), Priory of BVM (Benedictine Nuns)**Oxford, Corpus Christi Coll. 220 s.xv (Bell 2)**

- a. (fol. 1) *A Little Short Treatise*
- b. (fol. 5^v) *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*
- c. (fol. 24^v) *Book of the Craft of Dying*
- d. (fol. 42) *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle*

1. Fragment of a roll of household accounts

fly-leaves (for binding)

2. Inscription

fol. 3^v [s.xvii]

This boke was appertaininge to Marye Dennis sometymes Ladie Abbessse of
a certen nunnery in Glocestershyre. [. . .]

3. Prayer

fol. 39^r (top margin)

4. Title

fol. 54^r (margin)

5. Pen trial

fol. 59^v (under the text)

Lacock Abbey (Wiltshire), Abbey of BVM and St Bernard (Augustinian Canonesses)**?Oxford, Bod. Lib., Laud lat. 114 s.xiii^{ex}-xv (Bell 2)**

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles, Athanasian Creed,
a Litany, and various prayers.

1. Additions in the calendar

eg. St Bernard (in red), and St Cyriac, the patron of Lacock church [s.xv]

London, Abbey of BVM and St Francis, without Aldgate (Franciscan Nunns)**Cambridge, Trinity Coll., 301 (B.14.15) s.xviⁿ (Bell 1)***The Doctrine of Heart*

1. Inscription

end fly-leaf [s.xviⁿ]

Hit ys to witt that dame Cristyne Seint Nicolas of the menoresse of London,
dowghtyr of Nicolas Seint Nycolas, squire, geff this boke aftyr hyr dysses to
the offyce of the [erasure] and to the offys of the abbessry perpetually[. . .]
m.cccc.l.v., the ix day of Marche [. . .].

2. Account of roll (deaneries and tithes)

first fly-leaf [s.xv]

London, BL., Harley 2397 s.xv (Bell 2)a (fol. 1) Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection*b (fol. 73) Hilton, *Mixed Life*c (fol. 85^v) Commentary (in English) on Psalm 91, possibly by Hilton

1. Liturgical material (with music)

The flyleaves (fols. 1*–4* and 95–98) [s.xii–s.xiii]

2. Practice of part of alphabet a to r.

fol. 2*^r

3. Inscription

fol. 94^v

Dame Elyzabeth Horwode, abbas of the Menoresse off London, to her gostle
comfforthe, bowght thys boke, hyt to remayne to the vse off the systerrs of
the sayde place, to pray for the yene and ffor the sowles off hyr ffader and
her moder, Thomas Horwode and Beatryxe, and the sowle off Mayster
Robert Alderton.

Thys bok longyth to *the* abbeyry[?]

Polsloe (Devon), Convent of Benedictine Nuns**Oxford, Bod. Lib., Douce BB 200 (printed book) (Bell 1)***Breuiarium seu Portiforium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesie Sarisburiensis*, printed at Paris by Francis Regnault and Francis Byrckman, 1519 (STC 15816)

1. Signature of the executor

sig. F4^r (the last leaf)

2. A list of Polsloe nuns

sig. F4^r

The first name is that of prioress Margaret Trow (a later hand has added *dede.*) With the exception of the first, all the names appear in the 1538 Pension List.

3. Prayer

sig. F4^r

4. Latin description of two persons annotation / describing two people

sig. F4^v

5. Prayer for the Absolution

sig. F4^v

6. 'Kyng Harry of england. Supreme heod of the churche of englande'

sig. F4^v

7. English verse tag (moral perception/distich.)

sig. F4^v**Shaftesbury (Dorset), Abbey of BVM and St Edward (Benedictine Nuns)****Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 2-1957 s.xviⁱⁿ (Bell 1)**

Hours of the Virgin, preceded by a Calendar and the liturgy for Prime, and followed by the *Salve regina*, various *memoriae*, etc.

1. Prayer

fol. 1^v

2. Prayer (in English)

fol. 10^v

2. Prayer

fol. 78^r

3. Versicles and Responses for the Penitential Psalms

fols 133–34

3. Inscription

Iste liber pertinet domine Alicie Champnys moniali monasterii Shastonie
[. . .].

Cambridge, UL., li.6.40 s.xv (Bell 2)a (fol. 5) *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*b (fol. 58^v) *An Information on the Contemplative Life and Active*c (fol. 75) *A Treatise of Perfect Love*d (fol. 76^v) *A Treatise of Tribulation*e (fol. 95) *The Pater Noster of Richard the Hermit*f (fol. 191) *The Charter from the Poor Caitiff*g (fol. 198) *Richard Rolle, Epistle on the Commandment of God*h (fol. 207^v) *A Devout Meditation of Richard Hampole*

1. Inscription

fols 2^r and 4^v [s.xv]

Iste liber constat domine Johanne Mourseleygh

2. ?

fol. 223^v**London, BL., Cotton Nero C.iv s.xii (Bell 4)**

Psalter in Latin and French, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles,
etc.

1. Additions in the Calendar

2. Latin prayer

fol. 141^r (margin)

London, BL, Lansdowne 383 s.xii (micro)

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar, a table of epacts, three folios of Latin prayers etc.

1. Fragment of a French metrical translation of Henry of Satrey's *Purgatorium S. Patricii*
fly-leaf (fol. 1)
2. Addition in the Calendar
St Elizabeth de nile
3. Latin prayer of confession
fol. 9^v
4. Prayer of Ave Maria
fols 144^v–145^r
5. Pen trial of alphabet
fol. 145^v
6. Prayer (Anima Cenisti sanctifica me)
fol. 165^r
7. Prayer
fol. 168^r

Syon (Middlesex), Abbey of St Saviour, BVM, and St Bridget (Bridgettine Nuns)**Cambridge, UL, Add. 8885 s.xv–xvi¹ (Bell 6; De Hamel no. 62)**

Processional (with music), with processional offices for twelve feasts including two of St Bridget, etc.

1. Office of St Augustine and other liturgical material (eg. feasts of names of Jesus)
at the end of volume [s.xv–xvi¹]

Cambridge, Magdalen Coll, 11 (F.4.11) s.xvth (Bell 8; De Hamel no. 20)

- a (fol. 1) Bridgettine Breviary (with English rubrics), beginning with a Calendar and followed by directions for the year, etc.

b. (fol. 109) Psalter, followed by Canticles and a Litany

1. Additions in the Calendar

Cambridge, Magdalen Coll., 12 (F.4.12) s.xv (Bell 9; De Hamel no. 13)

Bridgettine Breviary, followed by a Psalter.

1. Additions in the Calendar

2. Instruction on how to use the Calendar

fol. 118^v

3. Memoria of St Katherine of Sweden (daughter of St Brigitta)

fol. 118^v [s.xv, s.xvi^m]

4. Office of St Anne

fol. 147^v [s.xv–xvi]

5. ‘Prayers at disciplyne tyme’

fol. 148^v [s.xv–xvi]

Cambridge, Magdalen Coll., 13 (F.4.13) s.xvi^m (Bell 10; De Hamel no. 39)

An extensive collection of devotional material in Latin and English preceded by theological excerpts and a few verses in Latin and English.

1.?

fol. 4^v

2. ?

fol. 1^v

3. English verse

fol. 2^r

4. Rule to know the new moon

fol. 9^r (margin)

5. ?

fol. 10^r

6. Another rule and memoria technica for movable feasts

fol. 18^r

7. ?

fol. 18^v

8. Indication of scriptural sources

fols 19a, 19b and 19c

9. Medical receipts in English

fly-leaf

10. Inscription

fol. 1^v [s.xvi]

Jasper Fyoll of the Blacke Freers in Lodon oweth this booke. [. . .]

fly-leaf i^r [s.xvi¹]

Elizabeth Crychley off Syon 13 Jan. a[nn]o 1521.

Cambridge, St John's Coll., 139 (F.2.) s.xv (Bell 12; De Hamel no. 29)

Processional (with music), written for the sisters of Syon.

1. Office of St Catherine

fol. 108^r

2. Prayer (with a musical note)

fol. 108^r**Cambridge, Trinity Coll., C.7.12 (printed book) (Bell 14)**

A Deuout Treatyse Called the Tree & XII. Frutes of the Holy Goost, two parts, the first part printed by Robert Copland and the second part by Robert Copland and Michael Fawkes, London, 1534–35 (STC 13608)

1. Poem in English

fly-leaf i^v [s.xvi¹]

2. Inscription

fly-leaf i^v [s.xvi¹]

Mar[garet] Windesor, domina de Syon.

London, BL., Cotton App. xiv s.xv^{ex} (Bell 23; De Hamel no. 30)

Hours of the Holy Spirit, followed by the Penitential Psalms, Gradual Psalms, a Bridgettine Litany, etc.

1. Inscription

fol. 56^v [s.xv^{ex}]

Of your charite praye for the sowlys of John Edwarde and Margaret hys wyffe and for Elizabethe ther doughter, professed yn Syon, for whos vse thy[s] boke was made.

2. Indexing tabs

London, BL., Harley 487 s.xv (Bell 24; De Hamel no. 12)

Psalter, preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles, Athanasian Creed, a Litany, and (fol. 201) Hours of the Holy Spirit. The Nativity, Canonization and Translation of St Bridget are all classed as *maius duplex*.

1. Additions in the Calendar

2. Erasures and insertions in the Litany

fols 193^v–199^v

3. Two lines of the Creed and opening Psalm

fols 215^v–216^r

4. Musical note (only one and half notes)

fol. 218^r

5. Inscription

fol. 218^v

Suster Elyzabeth Ogull [s.xvi]

6. Indexing tabs

London, BL., IB. 55119

Nicholas Love, *The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Crist*, printed by William Caxton in 1490 (STC 3260).

1. Inscription

sig. a2^r

Susan Purefeye owethe thys booke.

2. Prayer (in English) on the sacrament

Oxford, Bod. Lib., Auct. D.4.7 (S.C.1961) s.xv¹ (Bell 34; De Hamel no. 25)

Bridgettine Breviary (with Latin rubrics), beginning with a Sarum Calendar (with Bridgetinne additions) and followed (fol. 73) by a Psalter, etc.

1. Additions in the Calendar

2. Prayer

fol. 69^v

3. Insertions in the Litany

fols 146–148

4. Correction

fol. 153^v

?Oxford, Bod. Lib. Rawl. C. 781 s.xv (Bell 36; De Hamel no. 53)

Breviary Offices (Bridgettine Use) with Latin rubrics, ending with directions for processions.

1. Two Prayers

fol. 79^v

2. Account

fol. 80

Oxford, Bod. Lib., 4°W.2 Th. Seld (printed book) (Bell 37)

Richard Whitford, *The Pype, or Tonne, of the Lyfe of Perfection*, printed by Robert Redman in 1532 (STC 25421).

1. corrections, comments and modernization

throughout the text

2. Inscription

end-leaf [s.xvi]

Elynore ffetyplace

Oxford, St John's Coll., 167 s.xv^{ex} (Bell 40; De Hamel no. 63)

Processional (with music), written for the sister of Syon with rubrics mainly in English.

1. Inscription

fly-leaf ii^r

Syster Mare Neule, Sister Tomysyn Grove, and Brother James Stock

2. Tonic sol-fa

back page of the cover and fly-leaf ii^r

3. Prayer to BVM

fol. 3^v

4. Cross-reference

fol. 3^v, 52^v, etc.

5. Pasted metalcut illustration of Epiphany

fol. 4^r

6. Additions of musical notes

fols 26^r and 52^r (*inserted strip of paper*)

7. Names of saints

eg. St Joachym and Joseph; St Anna, Katherine and Elizabeth
(on inserted stripes of paper)

8. Prayer

fols 92^r (*inserted strip of paper*) and 104^r

9. Hymn (with a musical note)

fol. 110^r

10. Correction of Psalm with a musical note

fol. 115^r

11. Instructions of time to sing

fols 118^v and 119^r

12. Psalm

fol. 121^r

13. Hymn

fols 121^v and 122^r

14. Tabs (for cross-references)

Oxford, St John's Coll., 187 s.xv (Bell 41; De Hamel no. 70)

Hours of the Holy Spirit, followed by the Penitential Psalms, Gradual Psalms, a Bridgettine Litany, various prayers, etc.

1. Prayer to St Dorothy

fol. 124^v

2. Prayer

fols. 124^v–125^r

3. Prayer to eleven thousand virgins & BVM

fol. 125^r

4. Prayer to Jesus as bridegroom of virgins

fol. 125^v**Tarrant Keynston (Dorset), Abbey of BVM (Cistercian Nuns)****Oxford, Bod. Lyell 23 s.xv (Bell 2)**

Psalter, preceded by the Office of the Holy Spirit and a Cistercian Calendar and followed by *Canticles* and the *Athanasian Creed*.

1. Extract from a liturgical document[?]

flyleaf

2. Additions in the Calendar

3. Filling the rest of the text [s.xvi^{ex}–xvii]

fol. 186

5. Prayer to God the Father

fol. 187

6. Prayer to Jesus

fol. 188^r

6. Fifteen Oes of St Bridget

fols. 188^v–196^r

7. Prayer to BVM

fols 197^r–199^r

8. Instruction

fol. 199^r

9. Passion of St Margaret.

fols 200^r–213^v

4. Prayers within liturgical setting

fols 214^v–215^r**Wherwell (Hampshire), Abbey of Holy Cross (Benedictine Nuns)****Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Mus., McClean 45 s.xiii–xiv (Bell 1)**

Psalter, preceded by a Sarum Calendar and Hours of the Virgin and followed by a Canticles and a brief Litany.

1. Inscription

flyleaf ii^v

2. Additions in the Calendar

3. Inscription

fol. 16^v

[. . .] monesterie Wherwelle

4. Prayer

fol. 87^v**London, BL., Add. 27866 s.xivⁱⁿ (Bell 4)**

Psalter (with music), preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles, etc.

1. Additions in the Calendar (sometimes by a clumsy hand)

2. Inscription

fol. 131^v [s.xv]

Iste liber constat domine monasterii Werwellensis sancti cruce.

3. Prayer (I will sing a new song.)
fol. 106^v
4. Prayer and liturgy
fol. 111^r
5. Prayer for forgiveness
fol. 135^r (margin)
6. Prayer (private)
fol. 135^v
7. Psalm 31.6 Quemadmodum
fol. 142^r
8. Indication of source for liturgy
fols 145–46
9. Prayers, including litany
fol. 146^v
10. Index of the contents in alphabetical content
fol. 148^r
11. Cross reference
fols 136^v–37^r

Wilton (Wiltshire), Abbey of BVM and St Edith

?London, BL., Cotton Faustina B.iii, fols 199–280 s.xvth (Bell 1)

- a (fol. 199) The Life of St Edith, followed by a list of the founders of Wilton priory
- b (fol. 265) The Life of St Etheldreda of Ely

1. Booklist (books belonging to the abbey[?])

fol. 280^v

Cf. R. Sharpe, J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson and A. G. Watson eds, *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues* (London: British Library,

1996), pp. 648–51 (item B.111).

Oxford, Bod. Lib., Rawl. G23 s.xiii/xiv (Bell 3)

Psalter (Dominican), preceded by a Calendar and followed by Canticles, Apostles' Creed, Athanasian Creed. etc.

1. Arabic numbers in the Calendar
2. Instructions for using the Calendar
fol. 5^v (margin)
3. Additions in the Calendar
4. Second Litany (a later addition)
fols 171^r–75^v
5. ?
fol. 174^r (margin)

Winchester (Hampshire), Abbey of BVM (Nunnaminster) (Benedictine Nuns)

?Oxford, Bod. Lib. Bod. 451 (S.C.2401) s.xii^m (Bell 4)

a (fol. ii^v) Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Diadema monachorum*

b (fol. 72) An anonymous moral

c (fol. 95) Fourteen *ps.*-Augustinian sermons

1. 58 lines of final sermon
fol. 118
2. Pen trial
fols 119^v and 120^v
3. ?
fol. 119^v
4. Miracle about St Edburga
fol. 120^r
5. Fragment of account [?]
fol. 121 (for binding)

6. A note in Latin, referring to St Edburga
fol. ii^r [in 1150]

Wintney (Hampshire), Priory of BVM (Cistercian Nuns)

London, BL., Cotton Claudius D.iii s.xiii (Bell 1)

- a (fol. 3) A fragment of a Latin martyrology
 - b (fol. 3^v) Simon of Waverley, Verses
 - c (fol. 6) Bede, *Martyrologium*, preceded by instructions (in French) on how to use it.
 - d (fol. 52) The Wintney version of the *Rule of St Benedict* in Latin and English
 - e (fol. 140^v) The Wintney Obituary Calendar
1. A brief inventory
fol. 3^v
Date 16 October 1420, of the refectory at Wintney.
 2. Instruction
fol. 18^r
Giving permission for prioress to make arrangements for celebrating mass.
 3. Giving an indulgence of one year
fol. 33^r
 4. Addition of obit
fol. 41^v
Willi de iedyndoun episcopi Wynroun benefactori domus de Wynteney
 5. Additions in the Calendar

APPENDIX 2

List of additional materials according to classification in alphabetical order

Accounts

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 451 (S.C.2401) / Winchester
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. C.781 / Syon
Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 220 / Kington St Michael
Cambridge, Trinity College, 301 (B.14.15) / London, Abbey of BVM and St Francis

Additions in the Calendar

Cambridge, University Library, Add. 7220 / Campsey
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean 45 / Wherwell
Cambridge, Magdalene College, 11 / Syon
Cambridge, Magdalene College, 12 / Syon
Cambridge, St John's College, 506 and T.9.1 / Ickleton
Cambridge, Trinity College, 244 (B.11.5) / Goring
London, British Library, Add. 27866 / Wherwell
London, British Library, Cotton Claudius D.iii / Wintney
London, British Library, Cotton Nero C.iv / Shaftesbury
London, British Library, Harley 487 / Syon
London, British Library, Lansdowne 383 / Shaftesbury
London, British Library, Sloane 2400 / Bruisyard
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. D.4.7 / Syon
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud lat. 114 / Lacock Abbey
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Liturg. misc. 407 (S.C. 29071) / Amesbury
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 23 / Tarrant Keynston
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. G23 / Wilton

Anathema

London, British Library, Add. 40675 / Campsey

Comments / notes concerning the contents

Cambridge, University Library, Ee.6.16 / Amesbury

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Cambridge, St John's College, 506 and T.9.1 AD 1516 / Ickleton

Cambridge, Trinity College, 244 / Goring

London, British Library, Harley 1706 / Barking

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 451 (S.C.2401) / Winchester

Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 220 / Kington St Michael

Correction etc.

London, British Library, Harley 487 / Syon

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. D.4.7 / Syon

Oxford, Bodleian Library, 4°W2. Th.Seld (STC 25421) / Syon

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Cross-reference

London, British Library, Add. 27886 / Wherwell

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Hymnary and musical notes

London, British Library, Add. 40675 / Campsey

London, British Library, Harley 487 / Syon

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Liturg. misc. 407 (S.C. 29071) / Amesbury

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Identification of sources

Cambridge, Magdalene College, 13 (F.4.13) / Syon

London, British Library, Add. 27866 / Wherwell

Illustration

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Incipits (in French)

Cambridge, University Library, Ee.3.52 / Flixton

Instructions for using prayers etc.

Cambridge, St John's College, 506 and T.9.1 AD 1516 / Ickleton

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Cambridge, Magdalene College, 13 / Syon

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 23 / Tarrant Keynston

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. G23 / Wilton

Inventory

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Cambridge, Magdalene College, 13 (F.4.13) / Syon

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. B.408 / Godstow

List of books

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List of lands

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 155 (S.C. 1974) / Barking

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Cambridge, Trinity College, C.7.12 / Syon
London, British Library, Lansdowne 383 / Shaftesbury
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce BB 200 / Polsloe

Liturgical material

Cambridge, University Library, Add. 8885 / Syon
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 2-1957 / Syon
Cambridge, Magdalene College, 12 (F.4.12) / Syon
Cambridge, St John's College, 139 / Syon
London, British Library, Harley 487 / Syon
London, British Library, Harley 2397 / London, Abbey of BVM and St Francis
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 45 / Winchester
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. G23 / Wilton

Pen trial

London, British Library, Harley 2397 / London, Abbey of BVM and St Francis
London, British Library, Lansdowne 383 / Shaftesbury
Oxford, Bodleian Library, 451 (S.C.2401) / Winchester
Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 220 / Kington St Michael
Oxford, Magdalen College, lat. 41 / Barking

Pericope for each sermon

Cambridge, University Library, Add. 8335 / Denny

Prayers (general)

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean 45 / Wherwell
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, 2-1957 / Shaftesbury
Cambridge, Magdalene College, 12 / Syon
Cambridge, St John's College, 139 (F.2.) / Syon
London, British Library, Add. 27866 / Wherwell
London, British Library, Cotton Nero C.iv / Shaftesbury

London, British Library, IB.55119 / Syon
London, British Library, Lansdowne 383 / Shaftesbury
London, British Library, Sloane 2400 / Bruisyard
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. D.4.7 / Syon
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce BB 200 / Polsloe
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 23 / Tarrant
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. C. 781 / Syon
Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 220 / Kington St Michael
Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon
Oxford, St John's College, 187 / Syon

Prayers to foundress / saints related to convents etc.

Cambridge, Magdalene College, 12 (F.4.12) / Syon
London, British Library, Add. 10596 / Barking
London, British Library, Harley 1706 / Barking
London, British Library, Sloane 2400 / Bruisyard
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 451 / Winchester
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell 23 / Tarran Keynston

Press-mark

Cambridge, University Library, Add. 7220 / Campsey
London, British Library, Add. 40675 / Campsey

Record of the rent

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. B.408 / Godstow

Scriptural addition

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, Liturg. misc. 407 (S.C. 29071) / Amesbury
Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 322 / Dartford

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London, British Library, Harley 487 / Syon

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

Tonic sol-fa

Oxford, St John's College, 167 / Syon

APPENDIX 3

List of volumes consulted but not included in the Appendices 1 and 2

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Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

McClean 123

Cambridge, University Library

Add. 7634

Dd.8.2

Mm.3.13

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College

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Cambridge, St John's College

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Cambridge, Magdalene College (Pepys Library)

23 (F.4.23)

Cambridge, Trinity College Library

1226 (O.3.54)

London, British Library

Add. 11748

Add. 18632

Add. 24661

Add. 70513

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Arundel 146

Arundel 396
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Cotton Julius D.viii
Cotton Galba A.xiv
Cotton Nero A.ii
Cotton Otho A.v
Egerton 2710
Egerton 2849
Harley 993
Harley 2254
Harley 2387
Harley 2409
Harley 2965
Lansdowne 436
Royal 7 F.iii

Oxford, Bodleian Library

Add. A.42
Auct. D.2.6
Bodl. 255
Bodl. 585
Bodl. 923
Hatton 18
Laud lat. 19
Laud misc. 416
Rawl. G.59

Oxford, University College Library

25

1.2. Early printed book

Oxford, Bodleian Library
Tanner 191

WORKS CITED

1. Primary Sources

1.1. Manuscripts

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

McClean 45

2-1957

Cambridge, University Library

Add. 7220

Add. 8335

Add. 8885

Ee.3.52

Ee.6.16

li.6.40

Cambridge, St John's College

139

506 and T.9.1

Cambridge, Magdalene College (Pepys Library)

11 (F.4.11)

12 (F.4.12)

13 (F.4.13)

Cambridge, Trinity College Library

244 (B.11.5)

301 (B.14.15)

London, British Library

Add. 10596

Add. 27866

Add. 40675

Cotton App.xiv

Cotton Claudius D.iii

Cotton Faustina B.iii

Cotton Nero C.iv

Harley 487

Harley 1706 (not in Bell)

Harley 2397

Lansdowne 383 (microfilm)

Sloane 2400

Oxford, Bodleian Library

Auct. D.4.7

Bodl. 155

Bodl. 451

Douce 322

Laud. lat. 114

Liturg. misc. 407

Lyell 23

Rawl. B.408

Rawl. C.781

Rawl. G.23

Oxford, Corpus Christi College

220

Oxford, Magdalen College Library

lat. 41

Oxford, St John's College Library

167

187

1.2. Early printed editions

Cambridge, Trinity College Library

C.7.12

London, British Library

IB.55119

Oxford, Bodleian Library

Douce BB 200

4° W.2 Th. Seld

1.3. STC microfilms

St Catharine of Siena, *The Orcharde of Syon* (London, 1519) STC 4815

The Ordenarye for All Faythfull Chrystians, trans. by A. Scolcker (London, 1548)
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1.4. Editions

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The Book of the Knight of the Tower, EETS s.s., 2, trans. by William Caxton, ed. by M. Y. Offord (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)

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