Introduction

The Sensual Environment

Kathrin Brümsin was a novice in the Dominican monastery of St. Katharinenthal on the **1** southern banks of the Rhine River near Diessenhofen, Switzerland. In the seemingly eternal dilemma of many students, she had trouble with her studies. In this particular case, she was trying to learn the Latin liturgy that would be her life's work once she successfully became a nun. She struggled, and in a last ditch attempt to conquer the complexities of the liturgy, she offered up prayers to John the Evangelist, imploring him for assistance. That night Kathrin had a dream:

> She was in the choir of the church in her choirstall and an archbishop came and wanted to sing Mass. And it was asked who the bishop was. It was said that he was Saint John the Evangelist. And then the convent was happy beyond measure and received him with great joy. The bishop came in with great authority and went over to the altar and began *In medio ecclesie*. And the convent sang wonderfully. And when it came to the sacrifice, the entire convent went up to receive it. And when it was the novice's [Kathrin's] turn, she took the novice-mistress with her. And when she came to the altar, Saint John said to her, "My child, why do you not pray to me?" She said, "Lord, I can not. I would like it to be otherwise with all my heart." Then he took her by the hand and placed her next to him and opened a book in which was written in golden letters his sequence *Verbum dei deo natum* and said to her, "This you should pray to me." And so she read the sequence completely in his presence, all twenty-four verses. And then she awoke and quickly arose and went to her sister and said, "Sister, I know Saint John's sequence in its entirety." The sister replied, "You can not learn anything at all. How can you say that you know it by heart?" [Kathrin answered,] "Saint John taught it to me." And she recited it all, so that not one word was lacking.[1]

In the elements of Kathrin's dream we can find much that tells us about her spirituality and the connection between that and her environment. The place in which her dream transpired, the sequence she learned, the dream book she learned it from, and the saint who taught it to her, all these come together in her vita to illustrate the complex web of relationships between belief and religious practice on the one hand, and environment on the other. For medieval Christians, spirituality was culturally constructed, influenced by their understanding of their surroundings and the items around them, expressed physically within the spaces they inhabited, coached in the language of their everyday experiences, and tied to their senses, especially those of sight and sound.

The Sensual Environment and Spirituality

This study explores the connections between the spirituality of medieval religious women and the environment in which they lived. A traditional environmental history that examined monastic women would look for the intersections between the women and nature. Such a traditional environmental history might consider the geography of women's monasteries, their influence upon the local landscape through agriculture and building projects, and how their lives were influenced by their place in that landscape. The impact of their sanitation systems, or lack thereof, upon the regional plant growth or water purity might be explored. I, however, propose a different kind of environmental history. It is a history of the sensual environment. The term environment is used here in its broadest sense to denote the entire surrounding in which these women were immersed, incorporating the architecture in which they dwelt, the objects that decorated those spaces, the books they read, and the sounds and silences which they created, heard, and observed. I label this the sensual environment because it was through their senses that these medieval religious women accessed and utilized their environment. I am concerned in many ways with the perception of environment by religious women. How did they experience their environment? How did they affect their environment? Did they manipulate it, promote it, interpret it? How did their environment influence and regulate them? The remnants of their environment can be found in the material culture that survives in word, image, and structure. This project is interdisciplinary in nature. In addition to history, it draws upon art history, manuscript studies, literature, theology, and occasionally archeology and musicology to convey the complex and holistic spiritual culture of medieval religious women.

2

A history of the sensual environment of monasteries allows one to study, for the times, well-documented, and fairly self-contained communities. Monasteries did not exist in a vacuum, but had distinguishable perimeters and boundaries which set them apart in a way that was more recognizable than most in a period that saw the growth of transient populations moving from the countryside to new, expanding urban settlements. As such, monasteries are environmental units that provide an ideal example for exploring the elements that went into composing such an environment. Since I am concerned with the ways in which religious women encountered their environment in relation to their spirituality, a division of the environment according to the senses sheds the most light on this interaction. To better understand the reciprocal and complex links between the spiritual and material environment, I have approached the issue through interrelated areas associated with the sense-experience of the women: the spatial environment, in which the women moved and which held all of the other environments; the visual environment, which encompassed what the women saw; the acoustic environment, which held all the various sounds and silences of the monastery; and

3

the textual environment, which combined aspects of the visual and acoustic environment. The women experienced the environment through their senses, and their spirituality was heavily reliant upon their senses as well, so such a division is the most practical.

The medieval understanding of the senses was based on classical science and philosophy, as well as medieval theology. It synthesized Aristotle's ancient Greek natural philosophy with the Roman medical work of the physician Galen and the writings of the early church fathers such as Tertullian, Jerome, and most importantly Augustine. By the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteen centuries it was added to by monastic and scholastic authors who were concerned with issues of perception and knowledge acquisition as well as different ways of knowing, of which the human senses were seen as the first stage of such activity.

4

Augustine's almost monolithic influence on medieval intellectual development cannot be overstated. His theological legacy pervades the early Middle Ages to the exception of almost everyone else. After the introduction of Aristotelian works in the twelfth century, Augustine's influence can still be found among medieval intellectuals.[2] But I am not concerned with how medieval scholastics understood the senses; rather I want to use the senses as a way to get at the holistic experiences of medieval religious women, because it is at the intersection of the senses (particularly seeing, hearing, and touching) and spirituality that the extent and variety of female monastic religious beliefs and practices is revealed.

5

"As a style of response, spirituality is individually patterned yet culturally shaped."[3] Each woman may have had a unique expression of her spirituality, but women living closely together in a community like a monastery would eventually have come to share some behaviors in common. Moreover, some forms of religious practice were imposed upon them. And as religious women, whose function in society was to carry out ritualized and individualized prayer for themselves and other Christians, spirituality was a common denominator among them all.

6

The study of spirituality is "the study of how basic religious attitudes and values are conditioned by the society within which they occur."[4] This cultural construction of spirituality can be vividly seen in the monasteries of medieval Europe, where one of the shaping elements of spirituality was the environment. Spirituality infused all aspects of the monastic environment. At its core, spirituality was an inner, interior phenomenon, one that took place or found fulfillment in the environment of the soul. But this interior environment was influenced by the outer environment in which the body it inhabited dwelt and interacted. Exterior acts and rituals were looked upon as a sign of interior religiosity and devotion. How a religious woman may have interacted with her visual environment, perhaps her prostration beneath a crucifix, was viewed as a reflection of her spiritual devotions and interior meditations. Acoustic aspects of the environment, such as prayers and the liturgy, informed the language with which the women comprehended and communicated their interior

7

experiences. While this study is not the first to investigate these ideas, it may be the first to examine the monastic environment in its totality, instead of focusing on only one area of it. Most work on the connection between spirituality and the environment has explored the visual elements in the lives of religious women. And even when scholars have explored multiple connections, they rarely analyze them at any length.[5]

Dominican Women and Religious Movements in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Of all the religious women in the Middle Ages, Dominican women in particular offer an excellent opportunity to explore relationships between the environment and spirituality. In the thirteenth century, there was a wide-ranging and diverse transformation in European spirituality. Three trends fed into this change. The first was the growing popularity of, and anxiety about, heresy—non-orthodox religious belief not sanctioned by the Christian church. This contributed to the creation of the mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans, who formed to combat the spread of such ideas through their manner of life and the preaching of orthodox beliefs. Mendicancy was a form of religious, itinerant begging that allowed its adherents to interact with the populace, placing them at the centers of medieval life in the newly burgeoning cities. The second trend was a popularization of the concept of apostolic poverty, both among orthodox and heretical Christians, and found at the root of the Dominicans. This concept was based on the idea that the apostles in the New Testament had renounced all their worldly possessions to follow Christ. A large part of the impetus for this reaction to and renunciation of wealth at this time can be found in the growing urban and mercantile centers of Europe, where money and a profit economy had only recently supplanted earlier forms of economic transactions. The growth of the middle class, flourishing in the cities and handling money, provoked some anxiety even among that developing class itself.[6]

8

The third trend feeding into the transformation of European spirituality was the growth of what is commonly referred to as the women's religious movement. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a growing number of women embraced a religious way of life, joining already established monastic houses, creating their own quasi-monastic communities, or living by themselves or with a small group of like-minded women as recluses. From these women arose a new type of religious woman, the beguine.[7] These women took temporary vows of chastity, while embracing apostolic poverty and a life of prayer combined with service. The beguines were most prevalent in the Low Countries and along the Rhine River in Germany, but women with similar lifestyles could be found throughout Europe by the thirteenth century. Connected to this movement was a marked increase in the amount of literature directed at religious women by male supervisors, and, most importantly, a sharp

9

increase in the number of texts written by women themselves describing their own spirituality and religious experiences.[8] Among this literature were texts composed by Dominican women. These changes in European spirituality allowed Dominican women to flourish.

Of all the new forms of religious life that developed in response to the popular desire for apostolic emulation and reform during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the mendicant orders had perhaps the most lasting impact, although in the beginning there was little that essentially differentiated these groups from other contemporary movements. Their interest in preaching, embracing apostolic poverty, living among the urban poor, and combating heresy were not new. The idea of living a mixed religious life, one which combined the active and contemplative forms and devoted one's energy to the service of others, had been first articulated by regular canons in the early twelfth century, and then given various experimental forms by the quasi-heterodox Humiliati and Waldensians, and also by the *mulieres sanctae* of the Low Countries.[9] However, what distinguished the mendicant orders from these earlier groups was that they were approved by the papacy.[10]

10

Like many previous religious movements that were started by men, the Dominicans quickly gained a following among women, who saw the ideal of apostolic poverty as a means of salvation for themselves and fellow Christians. The men of the Order did not see women as mendicants, but felt that the nature of religious women was to be enclosed in a stable environment—to be monastic. The first community founded by Dominic in 1207 had been a house of women in Prouille.[11] While men could preach and celebrate Mass, women were not allowed to do so by the Church. This meant that Dominican women could not partake in one of the primary missions of the Dominican Order—preaching. Additionally, in medieval society unaccompanied and unsupervised women were seen as dangerous, to both themselves and others; so Dominican women were also denied the mendicancy that the men of the Order practiced.[12] To have espoused any other attitude would have been viewed as unnatural. However, what religious women could offer were prayers, for themselves, other Christians, and especially for the male Dominicans who by virtue of their active lives had no time to pray for themselves.

11

12

The Dominican Order was especially popular with women in the German-speaking countries. There are few official numbers for the first half of the thirteenth century when the Order was still organizing itself. But some statistics survive from the latter part of the thirteenth century. In 1277, the Order claimed 404 houses scattered throughout Europe, 14 percent of which were female. In the Order's German province 43 percent of the communities were female. Ten years later, in 1287, the number of women's houses in that province had almost doubled. In 1303, the province was divided into two parts, Germany and Saxony. In the now smaller Germany,

women's houses in 1303 outnumbered men's, representing 57 percent of the total number of houses there.[13] In the whole of Europe in that year (1303) there were a total of 149 female houses. The German female communities constituted nearly half (44%) of the Order's female foundations at the beginning of the fourteenth century, attesting to the popularity of the Order among religious women and their supporters in that region.[14] Half a century later no new German women's houses had been founded or incorporated, although sixteen monasteries had been established elsewhere in Europe.[15]

Many of the German Dominican houses began as beguinages or beguine-like communities, created under the influence of the women's religious movement of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[16] The female Dominicans were the offspring of this women's religious movement and the new male mendicants, cultivated in the rich diversity of thirteenth-century religious life. As Grundmann points out:

13

> The women's movement shared with the religious movement in general the goal of a Christian way of life in the sense of the Gospels, which they believed could be achieved through voluntary poverty and chastity. This women's piety distinguished itself from the heretical piety movement primarily through its renunciation of apostolic activity as well as its dropping of the demand that the clergy and Church fulfill apostolic norms in order to administer their ecclesiastical offices legitimately. . . . The frequently expressed opinion that the religious women's movement of the thirteenth century can be explained entirely in terms of the economic and social distress of women in lower, poorer social levels, that it originated with women who could not marry due to a shortage of men and hence had to seek other "means of support," not only contradicts all the sources, but utterly misunderstands them and their sense of religiosity.[17]

It is in this religiosity, this spirituality, that we can find the essence of female Dominican life and monastic identity. The monastery was not a last resort for many of these women. It was a voluntary association actually sought by women who chose religious life sometimes in direct contradiction of familial wishes.[18] In other cases, familial membership in one of Germany's Dominican convents was wholeheartedly supported by other family members.

This study of Dominican women begins with the first Dominican women in Germany, around 1230, and closes in the 1370s, before the first wave of reform starts to build in Colmar and Freiburg. This was the beginning of the Observant movement that attempted to return Dominicans to a purer form of religious observance, but which in the end clamped down on the individual piety of religious women that had so marked the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century. 1370 is an arbitrary date, although it does hold significance in the Dominican liturgy as the year in which the feast of the translation of Thomas Aquinas was incorporated into the Order's calendars. The last of the Sister-Books, one of my chief sources

14

concerning the religious behavior of Dominican women, was composed sometime around 1360, so after this date we begin to lose sight of the ideals and beliefs of Dominican women as captured in their own words.

Because of their unmistakable presence on the religious scene of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Germany, Dominican women make an excellent choice for the exploration of the connections between environment and spirituality among religious women. Moreover, the evidence concerning the spiritual beliefs, religious behavior, and material culture of these women is particularly rich, especially in comparison to that of other medieval religious women.

15

Dominican Women and Mysticism

One aspect of female Dominican life that lends itself particularly well to a study of spirituality is the asceticism and mysticism documented in the writings of these women. There are certain characteristics or patterns that differentiate medieval women's spirituality and mysticism from that of men's.

16

> Mysticism was more central in female religiosity and in female claims to sanctity than in men's, and paramystical phenomena (trances, levitation, stigmata, miraculous *inedia*, etc.) were far more common in women's mysticism. Women's reputations for holiness were more often based on supernatural, charismatic authority, especially visions and supernatural signs. Women's devotion was more marked by penitential asceticism, particularly self-inflicted suffering, extreme fasting and illness borne with patience. Women's writing was, in general, more affective, although male writing too brims over with tears and sensibility; erotic, nuptial themes, which were first articulated by men, were most fully elaborated in women's poetry. And certain devotional emphases, particularly devotion to Christ's suffering humanity and to the Eucharist (although not, as is often said, to the Virgin) were characteristics of women's practices and women's words.[19]

In the study of German mysticism, disproportionate emphasis has been given to the influence of three male Dominican mystics / preachers upon the spirituality of Dominican nuns. All three German men—Meister Eckhart, Henry Suso, and Johannes Tauler—had contact with cloistered Dominican women, often as preachers, spiritual advisors, or in an official capacity as visitors.[20] Certainly they disseminated some of their ideas to the women, but the exchange did not go merely in one direction. Scholars, however, tend to hold these men up as the epitome of the medieval German mystical experience. As Bernard McGinn has noted,

"[d]espite Eckhart's preaching and teaching in many Dominican convents, 'Rhineland mysticism, ' as it has been called, did not have a major impact on the mysticism of most later Dominican women, even in Germany."[21]

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1327) was known for his speculative theology and apophatic mysticism.[22] These ideas brought him into conflict with the Church and some of his teachings were condemned by papal bull in 1329. Of Eckhart's two famous followers, the mystical experiences of Henry Suso (c. 1300–1366) are more similar to those of Dominican women and other female mystics.[23] His mysticism is marked by affective piety and images that can be found in the visions of many female mystics.[24] Of the three, his writings found the greatest circulation among Dominican women, especially excerpts from his *Exemplar*. The sermons of Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361) enjoyed some interest in female Dominican houses.[25] At least one community of nuns copied them for its own use. Like Eckhart, Tauler was a proponent of apophatic spirituality, but he paired this with an interest in the active life.[26] Usually, the mysticism of these three men is seen by scholars as the proper way, the only way, to practice mysticism in Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth century. It takes its place in the scholastic canon of learned and literate religiosity, heavily imbued with the philosophical ideas of neoplatonism, Augustine, and Aristotle, wrapped up in the scholastic Latin of the schools and universities. In contrast, mysticism as practiced by Dominican nuns is seen as a debasement of the ideas of the great male mystics; women's mysticism is seen as a degeneration, a distortion, or more generously, as a misunderstanding. In the eyes of the historians of spirituality and theology, women's deviation from the learned philosophical tradition of mysticism makes their mysticism an aberration.

17

Alongside this interpretation of female Dominican mysticism stands another parallel type of analysis of its religious practices. These women's "penitential asceticism, particularly self-inflicted suffering, extreme fasting and illness borne with patience" along with their "devotion to Christ's suffering humanity" has been regarded by some scholars as signs of pathological behavior, indications that the women suffered from psychological traumas, and as such, were not wholly rational but "hysterical." While this attitude was most marked in the early part of the twentieth century when historians and theologians embraced the ideas of Freud, it can still be found in recent scholarship.[27]

18

What lies at the core of such evaluations of the female mystical experience is a misreading of the mystical literature documenting women's experiences, as well as the privileging of male mystical experience as the norm. Much of the evidence cited for the pathological label attached to the ascetic behavior of these women comes from a too literal reading of the women's writings, which are then compared to the standard of male writings. In most cases one is comparing apples and oranges, for the "[nuns'] mode of literary expression is naturally not in the form of sermons and treatises, which were the specific means of the care of souls

19

and thereby continued to be the reserve of the males of the order. The nuns were strictly cloistered and therefore used literary forms that were more biographical or, indeed, autobiographical in character."[28] Women did not have the opportunity for education in the provincial *studia* of the Order, and were denied university education. Their audience and their purpose for writing differed vastly from that of their male counterparts:

> The form and purpose of these writings—that is, they are edifying accounts to be read aloud during meals—show that the writings must be interpreted as legendary literature. When the literary type and its original context are not taken into consideration, the texts will be completely misinterpreted as psychologically "interesting material" concerning individuals. A "saintly life story" (*hailger wandel*) is defined precisely by its extraordinariness and so cannot be judged by standards of "normal" behavior.[29]

The events that these works record are not meant to be true biography or autobiography; rather, they portray spiritual endeavors, feats of holy athleticism, and situations and behaviors intended to be extraordinary—all characteristics of legendary literature. The writings have almost nothing to do with daily existence and just about everything to do with sanctity. Their purpose and context is often ignored by those scholars who see the activities described in these texts as the nadir of uncontrolled female emotionalism.[30]

The second failing of many scholars of medieval mysticism is their blind acceptance of the male mystical experience as normative. If the norm represents the majority, then during the High and Late Middle Ages, it is women's experience that should be held up as the measure of all other mystical experience, for many more women were mystics than men. It has been noted that, "[t]he work of traditional medievalists, . . . has tended in fact to use male religiosity as a model. When studying women, it has tended to look simply for women's answers to the questions we have always asked about men—questions that were generated in the first place by observing male religiosity."[31] Such approaches assume that medieval religious women and men had the same attitudes, wants, needs, and desires in their religious experiences. We need new and different questions for women, and different approaches to the sources. While the ever-present goal of the medieval monastic person, female or male, was to strive toward a union with God, the journey may have been different for those of different sexes, especially in a culture that saw the two sexes as inherently different, in fact opposing.[32] The differences in the routes traveled does not make one set of experiences less valid than any other. Many religious women adapted this journey to fit the vocabulary of their everyday religious existence. Enclosed within the cloister walls, the material environment surrounding the women became the language in which to practice and articulate their spiritual activities.

20

Dominican Women and Modern Scholarship

The scholarly literature on Dominican women is minimal when compared to that devoted to Benedictine or even Franciscan religious women. Herbert Grundmann was one of the first to forefront religious women, especially Beguines and mendicant nuns, in the narrative of the transformation of European spirituality in the High Middle Ages. However, until recently his work was only accessible to those who read German.[33] Only in the last few decades have English-speaking scholars turned to Dominican women. Among the more recent works have been a number of microstudies of individual communities in various countries.[34] Other new scholarship has concentrated on one particular theme such as literacy and manuscripts or the use of images in devotional practice.[35] Histories of the Dominican Order written by members of the Order focus almost exclusively on the men. When the role of Dominican women is mentioned at all, it is relegated to a digressionary chapter, afterword, appendix, or footnote.[36] Except in Germany, little scholarship within the Order has directly addressed its female branch.[37]

21

The one place to find innovative and complete discussions of Dominican women is in the literature on mysticism. Among English-speaking scholars of mysticism, the focus has tended to be on the great women: Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, or Margery Kempe, none of whom were affiliated with the Dominican Order. Gertrude Jaron Lewis and Rosemary Hale are the only North American scholars to concern themselves extensively with the women who are the focus of this study.[38] However, if we turn to German scholarship, we find a much different story.

22

German historiography has always been very nationalistic, directed at the sources of the nation's past.[39] Hence the rich sources on German female mysticism attracted the attention of scholars, first for their German-ness, particularly because they were often written in the vernacular, and later for their uniqueness. German scholarship on medieval mysticism has been quite extensive. The lead here has been taken by literary scholars, like Walter Blank, Siegfried Ringler, and Ursula Peters, as well as other types of scholars like Peter Dinzelbacher.[40]

23

Dominican Women and Their Sources

The core of this study consists of six female Dominican monasteries founded between the 1230s and the 1290s, located in three different areas of the Upper Rhine. These houses are as follows: Unterlinden in Colmar, France; Adelhausen, St. Agnes, St. Katharina and the Penitents of St. Maria Magdalena in Freiburg, Germany; and St. Katharinenthal near

24

Diessenhofen, Switzerland. The majority of evidence presented comes from the extant materials from these houses. However, it is supplemented by evidence from other German female Dominican monasteries and other monastic institutions in the region.

Among the most interesting and unique sources for German Dominican women are the Sister-Books of the fourteenth century.[41] There are nine surviving texts of this genre, all from Dominican monasteries in the Order's province of Germany. All were composed in the first half of the fourteenth century, between 1310 and 1360, by female members of these religious communities. These texts, which survive today in Latin and dialects of Middle High German, constitute collective biographies with many hagiographic elements. The Sister-Books record the spiritual, mystical, and devotional lives of individual women within Dominican communities in passages of varying lengths which were collected into texts that contain between six and sixty such lives (vitae). The collective nature of the texts provides a broader view of the female religious experience than most other mystical works because they do not focus exclusively on the experiences of a single mystic. McGinn has noted, these books "can be described as a form of 'community biography,' legends whose intent is to demonstrate God's approval of the monastery through the recording of virtues, asceticism, and especially the mystical graces granted to the convents' members."[42] Moreover, unlike most other examples of visionary or mystical literature authored by women in the High and Late Middle Ages, the Sister-Books do not appear to have been edited by men.[43] Thus these sources describe the behavior and beliefs of female monastics in their own words, unfiltered by the reworkings of male advisors. Combining monastic historiography, hagiography and mysticism, these texts chronicle the religious behavior of Dominican women, from their practice of virtues, silence, and observance of the Rule of their Order to the miraculous events and visions which they witnessed or experienced. As such, they:

> may be understood as a body of literature whose language is deliberately simple, whose structure follows the *Vitae fratrum,* and whose narrative, by using legendary patterns, conveys spiritual teaching, and, above all, whose every page celebrates the saintliness of sisters and of women's communities. These features combined with the exclusive feminine perspective make the Sister-Books unique.[44]

Three of the monasteries included in this study, Adelhausen, Unterlinden, and St. Katharinenthal, produced Sister-Books.[45]

Each Sister-Book may have originally contained a chronicle of the monastery's foundation and history in addition to the collection of individual vitae.[46] However, few of the texts exist in their original fourteenth-century format. Some Sister-Books survive in only one copy, while others are extant in several versions, some complete, others fragmentary, often originating from different centuries. As a result, it is difficult to exactly date the composition of the texts.

The history of the transmission of the Sister-Books is quite complicated. Manuscripts circulated among Dominican houses and other religious communities, where they were copied by interested readers. Lives were occasionally excerpted from one manuscript and combined with lives from other Sister-Books, creating new collections for pious audiences.[47] The original creation of each monastery's Sister-Book also differed. All of the lives in a community's texts may not have been authored by a single woman. Some texts have identifiable authors, while some appear to be the result of a more communal effort. Some authors wrote their own material, others, functioning as compilers and editors, recycled what appear to be already composed lives written by others.

The Adelhausen Sister-Book is perhaps the oldest of the nine texts, written in Latin sometime in the second decade of the fourteenth century. The author of the text names herself as Anna of Munzingen in an *explicit* (closing statement) at the end of the vitae.[48] The scribe at the end of the earliest surviving copy (a Middle High German version from 1345 to 1350) dates the text to 1318 and also identifies Anna of Munzingen as the author. The text, often called the *Chronik*, is extant in four different manuscripts, all Middle High German translations of the lost Latin original. Two of the four manuscripts preserve the text almost in its entirety, while the remaining copies are only fragmentary.[49] The Chronik contains a short chronicle of Adelhausen and about thirty lives of its members.

27

The Unterlinden Sister-Book was probably the second to be written, sometime around 1320. At the end of the text the author states, "I, sister Catherine, who as a young girl was reared in this monastery, have written this work."[50] The exact identity of Catherine is unknown, other than that she was a member of the Unterlinden community since a young age. Catherine discusses her composition of the text frequently in her prologue. She begins the entire work with the declaration, "[t]his little book . . . which I have written out with much diligence and labor . . . composed indeed with a crude and unskilled pen, but completed in most firm truth, I freely offer with greatest affection to all the sisters beloved by God of this monastery. . . . The first text of this work I wrote in wax and put together as I was growing old, with my own hands and blearing eyes, fearful indeed and blushing a great deal that my lack of skill must ever reach your ears."[51] Catherine was both the writer and compiler of the lives in her community's Sister-Book. She claims that in the interest of brevity she has only sketched out the lives of the sisters, not given them in fullest detail.[52] Despite her claims, the text is not short; in fact, it is the longest of the Sister-Books. It is speculated that some of the material may have come from an earlier source. Three major vitae in the Unterlinden Sister-Book form the core of the text to which Catherine added new lives for the remaining women. In her prologue, she claims that her information comes from the stories that come down to her from the older sisters.[53] The original sisters had revealed their revelations to these women and Catherine found their testimonies to be "most believable."[54] She needed no greater authority to confirm the truth of these testimonies and revelations than the fact that they are related to

28

her by trustworthy sisters, for "the truth of the deeds furnishes authority without which authority has no validity."[55] The Unterlinden text survives in three forms: a complete Latin copy from the fifteenth century (made in the monastery); a later summary version in Latin; and a late fifteenth-century Middle High German translation by the Unterlinden prioress, Elisabeth Kempfin. The text consists of a prologue, an introduction in eight chapters, the lives of forty-one women in thirty-nine chapters, and finally a chapter addressed to all the sisters. After this is the author's explicit, which is followed by several lives that were added at a later date, including one of Elisabeth Kempfin.

Very little is known of the Sister-Book of Gotteszell, which is the next text chronologically.[56] There is no identifiable author and until the 1970s the text was thought to be a continuation of the Sister-Book of Kirchberg, because they were preserved in the same manuscripts with no break between the texts.[57] The text survives in two fifteenth-century manuscript copies of the original Middle High German. The text contains about twelve lives and one long vita of a single woman, which appears to have been separately authored.

29

The Engelthal Sister-Book was written between 1328 and 1340 by Christine Ebner.[58] Only two later manuscripts of the text survive, both in the original Middle High German. Both manuscripts identify the author, one in a very brief self-reference, the other in the post script: "Kristein Ebnerin made a little book about the divine graces granted by our Lord to the sisters in her monastery," a line written several decades after the manuscript copy was finished.[59] This latter manuscript is the oldest surviving manuscript of a Sister-Book, dating to the mid-fourteenth century. It was copied at Engelthal.[60] The text is commonly referred to as *Der Nonne von Engeltal Büchlein von der Gnaden Überlast* (The Nun of Engelthal's Little Book of the Overwhelming Burden of Graces). It consists of a chronicle of the monastery's history and the brief lives of some forty women, in addition to long vitae of Alheit of Trochau and Diemut Ebnerin, both of which may have different authorships.

30

The community of Kirchberg in Sulz on the Neckar in Württemberg produced its Sister-Book sometime between 1320 and 1340.[61] The author has been identified as Elisabeth of Kirchberg and she has been linked to another manuscript that contains the single vita of a Kirchberg nun. That second manuscript contains the identification, "I ask all those who read or hear it read that they, for the love of God, remember me. I am called Sister Elisabeth by God's grace, whom God has taken from the Jews."[62] The Kirchberg text survives in five manuscripts, only one entirely complete.

31

The Sister-Book of Töss has usually been attributed to Elsbet Stagel, correspondent and spiritual follower of Henry Suso.[63] It was composed sometime before 1340 and Elsbet Stagel was certainly one of the text's authors for she is identified as such in a passage in one of the vita, "[t]he blessed sister Elsbet Staglin who wrote all this."[64] But Elsbet was probably not the

32

only author of the Töss text.[65] There are four complete manuscripts as well as at least three fragments or incomplete copies of the Sister-Book (one of which may have been copied at St. Katharinenthal).[66] The full Sister-Book contains a chronicle and about forty lives, six of which are extensive and may have existed previous to the composition of the main body of the text and been integrated into it.

The Oetenbach Sister-Book is the shortest of the Sister-Books and is extant in only one fifteenth-century copy.[67] The original text, written in a Zurich dialect of Middle High German, was finished after 1340. It contains a lengthy and detailed monastic chronicle along with a total of six lives, three quite long and three rather short. The author remains unknown.

33

The majority of St. Katharinenthal Sister-Book was written between 1318 and 1343. None of the authors are identifiable. The text includes three long vitae written by one person, certain passages written by a second person, and additional lives written by at least one other person. All of these were combined into a text of Middle High German lives. The text survives in four manuscripts with an additional eight fragmentary copies or partial texts. Of all the Sister-Books it may have been the most widely circulated. The text consists of a chronicle and about sixty lives, with additional vitae added after its fourteenth-century composition.

34

The last Sister-Book to be composed was most likely that of Weiler, a monastery that was probably founded before many of those mentioned above.[68] The year 1350 is referred to at the end of the text. The Sister-Book has at least two authors, both unknown. The Weiler text has no chronicle, but contains twenty-seven vitae, with the Middle High German text surviving in three manuscripts from the fifteenth century.

35

The insights that the Sister-Books can give into the spirituality of Dominican women are extremely valuable; however, the hagiographic nature of these lives means that they must be approached with some care.[69] The lives of these women were intended to be didactic, instructing nuns about proper female Dominican behavior and belief, as well as celebrating the feats of the early sisters of the monastery. The literary aspect of their composition means that they are not always true records of actual events. Rather, they are reworkings of women's lives that can tell us much about the ideals and aspirations of cloistered Dominican women. The women's piety and sanctity is stressed by the authors of the lives as they present their audience with the often miraculous and always worthy events and visions of the houses' members. Many of the lives address the women as saintly sisters, blessed sisters, or holy sisters, stressing that these are the lives of holy women, who just happen to be members of Dominican communities. Such attitudes can prove useful in exploring what was considered proper and holy in the realm of female Dominican spiritual expression.

36

The other way in which the Sister-Books are useful, although not as much as in their descriptions of religious behavior and spirituality, is in the area of "unintentional evidence."[70] In their intense focus on the holy lives of Dominican women, the authors' include information that they might have considered tangential to their story, but which is relevant to the modern historian. For instance, the fact that a nun had a vision might be the emphasis of one woman's life. The fact that the vision occurred in the dormitory is only mentioned in passing and is not of particular interest to the author. But to us it reveals a connection between the place and the vision, a connection about which the nuns themselves may have been unaware.

37

In addition to the Sister-Books, other sources contribute to our understanding of German female Dominican life in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Dominican friars and nuns followed— and still follow today—the Rule of St. Augustine. Since the Rule did not give much practical advice on how to live a monastic life, it was supplemented by various orders with customaries, statutes, institutions, and constitutions which set forth in detail the various arrangements for living daily life in a religious community. Among the Dominicans their constitutions provided such guidance. The male and female branch of the Dominican Order each had its own constitutions that developed over the course of the thirteenth century.[71] The earliest Dominican women's house at Prouille had its own constitution, which does not survive. However, women from that house founded the community of St. Sixtus in Rome. From that house we have a version of the constitutions dated to 1221.[72] It served as the basis for the Constitutions of St. Mark (Markus or Marx) in Strasbourg, founded in 1225. The Constitutions of St. Mark were the ones given to all German houses as they adopted Dominican practices. However, there were other versions of the constitutions in circulation. These included at least one that was popular in French-speaking areas: the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Monastery of St. Dominic of Montargis in the west of France, composed in 1250.[73] In the 1250s, the Dominican Master General, Humbert of Romans, recognized that if the Order was going to accept the incorporation of all the female houses that were knocking on its doors, he had to create a common constitution for them, and he believed it appropriate that it be one that enforced uniform practices throughout Europe. Earlier the women had been using various forms of these early constitutions or none at all. So Humbert promulgated the official constitutions for Dominican nuns at the 1259 Dominican General Chapter at Valenciennes.[74] All women's houses were to follow these new constitutions, based on those of Montargis, or risk losing their affiliation with the Order.[75]

38

Additional legislation [Acta] regulating life within the Dominican Order was issued by the Order's General and Provincial Chapters. In these acts, the constitutions were modified and disputes among the Order's houses were settled. Local chronicles and letters from confessors and ecclesiastical officials also provide information about Dominican women.[76] Whereas the primary purpose of Dominican nuns was to pray, that of the Dominican friars was to preach to all Christians (and non-Christians), including Dominican women. Many of the sermons

39

preached by male members of the Order have survived, and when it is possible to identify nuns as the audience of particular sermons, they serve as a rich source of information on the spiritual direction received by the Dominican sisters.

From the houses' economic documents—charters, wills, anniversary books, and cadastral registers—we can gain insight into the women's economic situation as well as the networks of patronage and support that linked them to the larger community outside the cloister walls. A wealthy house could generate a lavish material culture, while a poor house might only be survived by a few poorly made artifacts or none at all. Thus economics plays a role in our study of the monastic environment and has to be carefully considered, for the wealth of the material environment affected the spirituality practiced within it.

40

Most of the surviving manuscripts from the monasteries are liturgical in nature. These texts were used for the performance of Mass and the Divine Office, including the celebration of saints' feast days. They include graduals, antiphonals, diurnals, collectars, and psalters.[77] Some of these texts are decorated with elaborate pictorial elements and others are purely utilitarian. Although not as abundant as the liturgical manuscripts, extant are also non-liturgical texts, probably from monastic libraries. Many contained devotional subject matter, making them edifying reading for the members of a monastic community.

41

The physical remains of the monasteries themselves give us information about the cloistered environment. In some cases, as at Unterlinden, portions of the original architecture survive. In other cases, archaeology provides insight into the physical and spatial environment of the monasteries. Also available or surviving from many of these houses are the artwork and artifacts that decorated the buildings. Objects that fall into this category include sculptures, wall hangings, paintings, liturgical furnishings, reliquaries, and stained glass. Some pieces remain *in situ*, while others have since found their way into museums. Although now out of physical context, such art allows us to assess some of the visual elements of monastic life, and in certain cases, builds our understanding of the place of art and images in the women's spiritual activities.

42

This study begins with an analysis of the female Dominican spatial environment, describing the architecture of the houses to determine how the physical and spatial environment influenced its inhabitants and their spirituality, and how the nuns themselves influenced this aspect of their environment. The second chapter explores the sense of sight, detailing the visual environment to which the women had access. This includes a survey of the artwork from the nuns' houses while considering how images may have been employed in devotional activities. Chapter Three examines the sense of hearing, what I call the acoustical environment. It looks first at the monastic virtue of silence and then continues with the songs, words, and sounds that infused the monastic environment, focusing on how Dominican women made meaning of sound and silence. Chapter Four brings the two senses (sight and

43

sound) together to explore the idea of a textual environment, examining the manuscripts that existed in the monasteries and how these tied into the women's spiritual beliefs and practices. In the end we will return to the story of Kathrin Brümsin, the novice from St. Katharinenthal, and reassess the connections between sensual environment and spirituality that her life illumines.

Notes

Note 1: "si in dem kor wëre in ir stül. Vnd seit man das ein ertzbyschoff kem vnd wölt mess singen. Also ward gefraget, wer der bischoff were. Do ward geseit, es were sant Johannes ewangelist. Do ward der couent an mass fro, vnd empfiengent in mit grosser fröd. Also kam der byschoff ingend mit grosser herschafft vnd gieng vber alter vnd vieng an >Jn medio ecclesie<.Vnd sang der couent gar wol. Vnd do es an das opffer kam, do hiess man den couent allen ze opffer gän. Vnd do es an die novicien kam, do nam si ir meistrin mit ir. Vnd do si zü dem alter kam, do sprach sant Johannes zü ir: >Kint mins, wa von bettost dvmir nit? <Do sprach si: >Herre, da enkan ich. Jch tët es anders von allem hertzen gern.< Do nam er si bi der hant vnd stalt si nebent sich vnd tett ein büch vff, dar an stünd geschriben mit guldinen büchstaben sin sequencie >Verbum dei deo natum<, vnd sprach zü ir: >Dis solt du mir betten.< Also las si die sequenci vor im vs, der sind vier vnd zweintzig vers. Vnd do erwachet si vnd stünd bald vff vnd gieng zü ir swester vnd sprach: >Swester, jch kan sant Johannes sequencie alle vssnan.< Do sprach si: >Dv kanst doch nút jnnan gelernen, sprichest du denn, das du si vssnan kunnest?< Do sprach si: >Sant Johannes het mich si gelert<, vnd las ir si alle vssnen, das ir eins wortes nit gebrast." Ruth Meyer, ed., *Das "St. Katharinentaler Schwesterbuch:" Untersuchung, Edition, Kommentar* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1995), 124 (hereafter cited in text as *KSB*).

Note 2: Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis: Books 7-12*, trans. J. H. Taylor, in vol. 42 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, ed. J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, and C. X. T. Lawler (New York: Newman Press, 1982). For a discussion of Augustine in relation to medieval visionaries, see Rosalynn Voaden and Stephanie Wolf, "Visions of My Youth: Representations of the Childhood of Medieval Visionaries," in *Gendering the Middle Ages*, ed. Pauline Stafford and Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 135-54.

Note 3: Anne Carr, "On feminist spirituality," in *Women's Spirituality*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 50.

Note 4: Caroline Walker Bynun, *Jesus as Mother: The Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 3.

Note 5: Most scholarly work dealing explicitly with women, environment, and spirituality has been in the form of short articles. Only Jeffrey Hamburger has dealt in depth with the topic, and most of his work has continued to focus on the visual environment. See bibliography for a list of his work.

Note 6: Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

Note 7: Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

Note 8: For literature written by men for women, see Ann Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Catherine M. Mooney, ed., *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their Interpreters* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) hereafter cited in the text as Mooney; and E. Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990). For the increase in religious women's writing, see Elizabeth A. Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Elizabeth A. Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Katharina M. Wilson, ed., *Medieval Women Writers* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Emile zum Brunn and Georgette Epiney-Burgard, *Women Mystics in Medieval Europe*, trans. Sheila Hughes (New York: Paragon House, 1989); and Laurie A. Finke, *Women's Writing in English: Medieval England* (New York: Longman, 1999) hereafter cited in the text as Finke.

Note 9: For the regular canons, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Spirituality of Regular Canons in the Twelfth Century," in *Jesus as Mother: The Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 22–58. For the Humiliati and Waldensians, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements of the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 32–52, 69–74 (hereafter cited in text as Grundmann). On the *mulieres sanctae*, the early beguines, and the beginnings of the women's religious movement, see Grundmann, 75–88, 139–52; and Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

Note 10: See Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500*, (New York: Alba House, 1966), hereafter cited in text as Hinnebusch; Malcolm D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210–1323* (London: SPCK, 1961); and John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

Note 11: A total of four female Dominican monasteries were founded during Dominic's lifetime: Prouille, Madrid, S. Sixtus in Rome, and S. Agnes in Bologne. These four often claimed special rights during the dissent that split the Order and the papacy over the *cura monialium*. They accorded that they could not be refused the supervision of the Order as they had been established by Dominic himself. See Grundmann, 94–96, 105–9, 119–28.

Note 12: On the enclosure of medieval religious women, see Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

Note 13: Grundmann, 135. To this sixty-five should most likely be added a further seven convents which seem to have existed, but which were not yet incorporated into the Order. This would bring the total of female communities in Germany up to seventy-two. An additional eight houses had been part of the Order, but left before the 1303-survey. Hence they were not counted in it. Grundmann, 343.

Note 14: Grundmann, 135.

Note 15: Hinnebusch, 377.

Note 16: Grundmann, 83. "The phenomenal growth of monasteries in Germany, compared with other provinces, can be explained partly by the way foundations originated. Elsewhere nuns' convents were established as new enterprises, usually by rich benefactors." Hinnebusch, 377.

Note 17: Grundmann, 82. Among those who continue to use the social and economic interpretations is Benedict M. Ashley, who espouses the "surplus-women-looking-for-escape" paradigm: "This rapid proliferation of communities of women can be partially explained by the condition of medieval women. Because of many wars there was a marked surplus of women over men. Women were expected to marry very early, with little or no formal education, and to husbands chosen by their parents largely for economic and political reasons. The one way to escape from oppressive domestic situations or loneliness and perhaps to obtain a little education and freedom of spirit was through religious life" from Benedict M. Ashley, *The Dominicans* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 45. Although Grundmann sought to dismiss these theories in 1935, many of them still unfortunately persist in current scholarship. Although the ratio of men to women in society, along with general population numbers, could affect attitudes about the removal of people from the "marriage market" (see Jane Cartwright, "The Desire to Corrupt: Convent and Community in Medieval Wales," in *Medieval Women in their Communities*, ed. Diane Watt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), the surplus of women in this period has never been adequately documented. In addition, studies that claim a surplus of unmarried women being social and economic in nature rarely consider how strong religious motivation could have been.

Note 18: An extreme and literary illustration of this attitude can be seen in the life of Countess Yolanda of Vianden. The modern English translation *Brother Hermann's Life of the Countess Yolanda of Vianden,* trans. Richard H. Lawson (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995) is problematic.

Note 19: Caroline Walker Bynum, "Religious Women in the Later Middle Ages," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation,* ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 131.

Note 20: For an introduction to the three men, see Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Meister Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics* (New York: Harper, 1957), and James M. Clark, *The Great German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949).

Note 21: Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200–1350* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1998), 297 (hereafter cited in the text as McGinn).

Note 22: Apophatic theology is "the belief that human categories are not capable of conceptualizing God, and is based on a theological inquiry into the knowledge of God that proceeds by negations or saying what God is not." Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 15. Editions of Eckhart's work can be found in *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart and Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1936-). English translations include those in the *Classics of Western Spirituality series:* Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), and Meister Eckhart, *Teacher and Preacher*, trans. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986). See also Meister Eckhart, *German Sermons and Treatises*, trans. and ed. M. O. C. Walshe, 2 vols (London: Watkins, 1979, 1981), and Meister Eckhart, *Parisian Questions and Prologues*, trans. Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974). Important studies include Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: Beck, 1985); Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986); and Otto Langer, *Mystische Erfahrung und spirituelle Theologie: Zu Meister Eckharts Auseinandersetzung mit der Frauenfrömmigkeit seiner Zeit* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1987).

Note 23: For editions of Suso's work, see Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1907) for the Middle High German writings and Heinrich Seuse, *Horologium sapientiae*, ed. Künzle, *Spicilegium Friburgense*, vol. 23 (Freiburg, Switz.: Universitätsverlag, 1977) for the Latin works. English translations include Henry Suso, *The Exemplar, with two German Sermons*, trans. and ed. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), and Henry Suso, *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom and Little Book of Truth,* trans. James M. Clark (London: Faber and Faber, 1953).

Note 24: See in particular two articles by Jeffery Hamburger: "The Use of Images in the Pastoral Care of Nuns: The Case of Henry Suso and the Dominicans," and "Medieval Self-Fashioning: Authorship, Authority, and Autobiography in Suso's *Exemplar*," in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998), 197–232 and 233–78, respectively.

Note 25: For the edition of Tauler's Middle High German sermons, see *Die Predigten Taulers*, ed. Ferdinand Vetter, *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* XI (Berlin, 1910). For English translations, see Johannes Tauler, *Sermons*, trans. Maria Shrady (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), and Johannes Tauler, *Spiritual Conferences by John Tauler, O.P.,* trans. and ed. Edmund Colledge and M. Jane (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1978).

Note 26: "While Eckhart undoubtedly holds the central position in terms of innovative fundamental theology and comprehensive formulation of mystical concepts, Tauler and Seuse were responsible for propagating, and expanding on, a collection of religious insights that, because they has been adversely touched by the odor of heresy, were in danger of becoming obliterated and systematically expurgated,

or pushed into the sectarian underground by the persistent suspicions of the institutional Church. Seuse and Tauler were not simply testators of their master's legacy; they developed from the disciples into masters in their own right. Tauler's main merit lies in elucidating and transforming mystical concepts of the *vita contemplativa* into the domain of the *vita activa* and *publica*. Seuse, on the other hand, translated Eckhart's mysticism into devotional piety and practice" Tauler, *Sermons*, Introduction by Shrady, 1–2.

Note 27: See for example, Ute Stargardt, "The Beguines of Belgium, the Dominican Nuns of Germany, and Margery Kempe," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas Hefferman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1985), 277–313. Others cannot deny that many of the women were religious, but "today this style of spirituality seems to us somewhat too fanciful, too colored by unresolved neuroses, and lacking proper physical and mental hygiene." Ashley, 78.

Note 28: Alois Maria Haas, "Schools of Late Medieval Mysticism," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation,* ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 155–56.

Note 29: Haas, 156–58.

Note 30: Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, for Women, about Women. The Sister-Books of Fourteenth Century Germany* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1996), 69–75 (hereafter cited in the text as Lewis). On attitudes of scholars, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta," in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 171.

Note 31: Bynum, *Christian Spirituality,* 137.

Note 32: On the goal of union with God see Bynum, "Introduction," in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 16–17. On medieval perceptions of physical sex difference see, Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See Chapter 3 below for a short overview of concepts of gender in medieval culture and the association of medieval women with the physical and corporeal, an assumption which was commonplace in medieval theology and science. I can only begin to scratch the surface of the literature concerning the cultural construction of gender in the Middle Ages. An article which provides a nice overview of the medieval tradition dealing with gender, with special attention to the diversity of attitudes and the relationship of men and women within the marriage bond, is Jacqueline Murray, "Thinking about Gender: The Diversity of Medieval Perspectives," in *Power of the Weak*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 1–26.

Note 33: Published originally in 1935, the English translation of Grundmann appeared in 1995.

Note 34: Peter Linehan, *The Ladies of Zamora* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Paul Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001). There have been several German and Swiss dissertations as well as commemorative studies of individual female Dominican houses written, most in the last fifty years. Annelise Müller, "Studien zur Besitz- und Sozialgeschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters St. Katharinental bei Dießenhofen" (PhD diss., University of Tubingen, 1971); Annemarie Halter, *Geschichte des Dominikanerinnen-klosters Oetenbach in Zürich, 1234–1555* (Winterthur: P.G.Keller, 1956); Susanne Uhrle, *Das Dominikanerinnenkloster Weiler bei Esslingen (1230–1571/92)* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1968); Marie-Claire Däniker-Gysin, "Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters Töß, 1233–1525," Neujahrsblatt der Stadtbibliothek Winterthur 289 (1958); Alois Mitterwieser, *Das Dominikanerinnenkloster Altenhohenau am Inn (1235 bis heute)* (Augsburg: Benno Filser, 1926); Canisia Jedelhauser, *Geschichte des Klosters und der Hofmark Maria Medingen von den Anfängen im 13. Jahrhundert bis 1606*, QF 34 (1936); Marianne Popp, "Die Dominikanerinnen im Bistum Regensburg," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistum Regensburg*,

vol. 12 (Regensburg: Vereins für Regensburger Bistumsgeschichte, 1967), 259–308; *750 Jahre Dominikanerinnenkloster Heilig Kreuz Regensburg*, exhibition cat., Diözesanmuseum, Regensburg (Munich: Schnell & Steiner, 1983).

Note 35: On literacy and books see Luise-Marie Ehrenschwendter, "'Puellae litteratae': The Use of the Vernacular in the Domincan Convents of Southern Germany," in *Medieval Women and their Communities,* ed. Diane Watt (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1997), 49–71; Luise-Marie Ehrenschwendter, "A Library Collected by and for the Use of Nuns: St. Catherine's Convent, Nuremberg," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997), 123–32; Joan Naughton, "Books for a Dominican Nuns' Choir: Illustrated manuscripts at Saint-Louis de Poissy, c. 1330–1350," in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 67–110; John Stinson, "The Dominican Liturgy of the Assumption: Texts and Music for the Divine Office," in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 163–93. On the use of images and manuscript illuminations among Dominican women (and other medieval religious women), see the articles of Jeffrey F. Hamburger collected in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998), as well as my chapter on the visual environment.

Note 36: Hinnebusch devotes the final chapter of his book to the Second and Third Orders of Dominicans. The same is true of the Latin history of the Order in P. Angelus Walz, *Compendium Historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Rome, 1948). Out of almost 700 pages, the women receive only 20 pages in a section devoted to them at the end of the book.

Note 37: Among early studies on Dominican women in Germany by Dominican scholars is Hieronymus Wilms, *Das älteste Verzeichnis der deutschen Dominikanerinnenklöster*, QF 24 (1928); Otmar Decker, *Die Stellung des Predigerordens zu den Dominikanerinnen (1207–1267)*, QF 31 (1935); Angelus Walz, *Dominikaner und Dominikanerinnen in Süddeutschland (1225–1966)* (Freising: Kyrios, 1967). *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland*. Leipzig, 1907 ff.

Note 38: See Lewis; Rosemary Hale, "Imitatio Mariae: Motherhood Motifs in Devotional Memoirs," *Mystics Quarterly* 16 (1990): 193–203. Debra Stoudt has worked on another Dominican nun, Margaret Ebner, and Hindsley has studied the women of Engelthal in Leonard P. Hindsley, *The Mystics of Engelthal: Writings from a Medieval Monastery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Note 39: "Women's history has never been a central concern of the academic historians who have long dominated history-writing in Germany. Nevertheless, the traditions of historical scholarship established there in the nineteenth century have been indirectly responsible for some of the earliest and still among the best investigations into the lives of medieval women. . . . The renewed interest in women's history during the last twenty years in much of Europe and in the United States has not, however, been as widely shared in the German academy. Until very recently medievalists in Germany by and large pursued the same questions and methodologies that engaged their predecessors several generations ago. . . . They have tended to concentrate on painstaking analysis of primary sources, casting hardly a glance at the larger questions of gender, sexuality, socio-economic structure, ideology, and historical change that inform feminist historical scholarship elsewhere." Martha Howell, Suzanne Wemple, and Denise Kaiser, "A Documented Presence: Medieval Women in Germanic Historiography," in *Women in Medieval History and Historiography*, ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 101. Even though this article is over two decades old, many of its criticisms are still valid.

Note 40: Walter Blank, "Die Nonnenviten des 14. Jahrhunderts. Eine Studie zur hagiographischen Literatur des Mittelalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Visionen und ihrer Lichtphänomene" (PhD diss., Freiburg University, 1962); Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision- und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Hiersemnn, 1981); Siegfreid Ringler, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalter: Quellen und Studien*, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 72 (Munich: Artemis, 1980); Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum: Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1988).

Note 41: German literary historians use the terms *Schwesternbücher* or *Nonnenbücher*. Some English-speaking authors refer to them as the Convent Chronicles or Lives of the Sisters. I follow Gertrud Jaron Lewis' lead in calling the texts "Sister-Books."

Note 42: McGinn, 298.

Note 43: The one exception to this is Johannes Meyer, who in the fifteenth century edited versions of the St. Katharinenthal and Töss texts. But there were no fourteenth- century male editors of whom I am aware. The only other thirteenth- and fourteenth-century female mystics who did not have male editors were some of the women of Helfta, namely Gertrude the Great and Mechtild of Hackeborn. On male editing of female texts in the later Middle Ages in general, see Finke, 132, 139; and Mooney, 6–15.

Note 44: Lewis, 56–57. The *Vitae Fratrum* was written in 1260 by Gerard of Frachet at the behest of the General Master Humbert of Romans and chronicles the lives of the early Dominicans, focusing especially on Dominic and Jordan of Saxony, but including also the miracles witnessed by many other friars. See Gerard of Frachet: *Lives of the Brethern of the Order of Preachers*, trans. Palcid Conway (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1924); and *Vitae fratrum ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. B. M. Reichert, MOPH 1 (1896).

Note 45: The other six Dominican monasteries which produced Sister-Books were Engelthal, Gotteszell, Kirchberg, Oetenbach, Töss, and Weiler.

Note 46: Lewis, 10. The following section on the Sister-Books is based on Lewis, 10–31 and 286–89, as well as the critical and diplomatic editions of the texts.

Note 47: This was what Johannes Meyer did with the St. Katharinenthal, Oetenbach, and Töss Sister-Books, compiling Nuremburg Stadtbibliothek, Cent. V 10a in 1454.

Note 48: Ed. J. König, "Die Chronik der Anna von Munzingen. Nach der ältesten Abschrift mit Einleitung und Beilagen," in *Freiburger Diözesan Archiv 13* (1880): 192. Hereafter cited in text as ASB (Adelhausen Sister-Book).

Note 49: Lewis, 11 and 286 for list of manuscripts.

Note 50: "Ego soror Katherina in eodem monasterio a puericia enutrita hoc opus exegi." Ed. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, "Les 'Vitae Sororum' d'Unterlinden. Édition critique du ms. 508 de la bibliothèque de Colmar," in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 5* (1930): 480. Hereafter cited in text as USB (Unterlinden Sister-Book).

Note 51: "Libellum . . . quem diligentia multa edidi et labore . . . rudi quidem stilo et imperito compositum, sed ueritate firmissima completum, uniuersis Deo dilectis sororibus istius monasterii gratis offero plurimo cum affectu. . . . Textum huius operis primum in cera iam senescens conscripsi, propriis manibus oculisque caligantibus et compegi, expauens quidem et multum erubescens, quod inpericia mea ad aures uestras unquam pertingere debet." USB, 335.

Note 52: USB, 336.

Note 53: USB, 335–36.

Note 54: "credibilia nimis." USB, 336.

Note 55: "cui auctoritatem prestat gestorum ueritas, sine qua nec ualet auctoritas." USB, 336.

Note 56: Gotteszell was located near Schwäbisch-Gmünd in Württemberg. It was founded by 1240 (and possibly as early as 1227) by two widows. Like many female Dominican houses in Germany it was incorporated into the Dominican Order in 1246.

Note 57: On the identification of the Gotteszell text, see Hans Peter Müller, "Das Schwesternbuch von Kloster Kirchberg (1237–1305)," *Der Sülchgau* 21/22 (1977/78): 42–56; Siegfried Ringler, *Viten und Offenbarungsliteratur*, esp, pp. 52 and 96; and Klaus Graf, "Nonnenviten aus Kloster Gotteszell bei Schwäbisch-Gmünd. Zum Entstehungsort des sogenannten 'Ulmer Schwesternbuchs,'" *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 3 (1984): 191–95.

Note 58: Engelthal began as a community of beguines and was incorporated into the Dominican Order in 1248. It was located in Franconia.

Note 59: Lewis, 19.

Note 60: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany, Hs. 1338. Hereafter cited in text as GNM (Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

Note 61: Kirchberg is first documented by a land sale in 1237. Like many other communities, it was incorporated into the Order in 1245. In 1247 it had thirty members, and by 1268, eighty women.

Note 62: As quoted in Lewis, 21. See also Ringler, *Viten und Offenbarungsliteratur* and Müller (see n. 35).

Note 63: Töss began as a beguinage in Winterthur, Switzerland. It was incorporated into the Order in 1245.

Note 64: Ed. Ferdinand Vetter, "Das Leben der Schwestern zu Töss beschrieben von Elsbet Stagel, samt der Vorrede des Johannes Meyer und dem Leben der Prinzessin Elisabet von Ungarn," in *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* 6 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1906), 93. Hereafter cited in text as TSB (Töss Sister-Book).

Note 65: Lewis, 24–25.

Note 66: Lewis, 288–89.

Note 67: Oetenbach began as a beguine-like community in 1231 in Zurich. At some point the women merged their community with a house of already established beguines. They were confirmed as Dominicans in 1239 by Pope Gregory IX and incorporated into the Order in 1245.

Note 68: Weiler was near Esslingen, Neckar, and was founded by beguines in 1230. In 1236, Pope Gregory IX confirmed them as Dominicans, and they were incorporated in 1245. In the early fourteenth century, the community supported over 130 women, until they were restricted to 70 members. Lewis, 30.

Note 69: On the use of hagiography as a historical source, see Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Saints' Lives as a Source for the History of Women, 500–1100," in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed. Joel T. Rosenthal (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 285–320.

Note 70: Schulenburg, 302-4.

Note 71: On the male constitutions see Heinrich Denifle, "Die Constitutionen des Prediger-Ordens vom Jahre 1228," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* I (1955): 165–227; and Raymond Creytens, "Les constitutions des frères Prêcheirs dans la rédaction de s. Raymond de Peñafort," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948): 5–68. Hereafter cited in text as AFP (Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum).

Note 72: "The Primitive Constitutions of the Monastery of San Sisto," in *Early Documents of the Dominican Sisters*, vol. 1 (Summit, NJ: Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, 1969), 7–22. This early constitution may have been related to the Constitutions of Gilbertine nuns. Hinnebusch, 380.

Note 73: Raymond Creytens, "Les Constitutions Primitives des soeurs dominicaines de Montargis (1250)," AFP 17 (1947): 41–84. Houses in various provinces also had Statutes that they followed. These as well varied from place to place. Hinnebusch, 380–81.

Note 74: The edition of this is found in Lat. Const. The English translation is found in Const. The Constitutions were used until 1930.

Note 75: Hinnebusch, 381.

Note 76: Several chronicles (*Annales Basileenses, Annales Colmarienses maiores, Annales Colmarienses minores* and *De rebus alsaticis ineuntis saeculi XIII*, all in Monumenta Germania Historica Scriptore 17) all mention Dominican women. Monumenta Germania Historica hereafter cited in text as MGH. Letters can be found in Heinrich Finke, ed., *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriefe des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Paderbom: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1891); and Wilhelm Oehl, ed., *Deutsche Mystikerbriefe des Mittelalters, 1100–1550* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1931).

Note 77: Graduals are the principle choir or singing book for the mass. Antiphonals contain the sung parts of the Divine Office. Diurnals contain the daytime offices for the Divine Office. Collectars contain the prayers for the canonical hours of the Divine Office. Psalters contain the 150 psalms, and when used for the Divine Office, often contained other relevant texts, like the Hours of the Virgin.