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MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM

Forms of Religious Life in Western
Europe in the Middle Ages

Fifth Edition

C. H. Lawrence and Janet Burton

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

In this edition I have endeavoured to give fresh emphasis to the theme of monastic reform, which preoccupied the minds and writings of many religious leaders of the twelfth century, and directed so many efforts to seek institutional change and to experiment with new forms of religious life.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIFTH EDITION

Interest and active engagement with monastic studies remain as vibrant as ever, but the very use of the word 'studies' rather than 'history' indicates a considerable shift in scholarship over the last two decades since Lawrence's third edition of 2001 and even his fourth edition of 2015.¹ It seems appropriate to begin this essay with reference to Steven Vanderputten's remarks in a recent publication, *Medieval Monasticisms* – and we should note the use of the plural rather than the singular.² As he sets out, the history of monasticism in the medieval West has traditionally been seen as a series of waves: the rise of forms of monastic life, often centred around charismatic figures, a recurring sense of decline usually occurring as monasteries became successful or embedded in the world around them, and then renewal, as other groups sprang up also to claim, or reclaim, apostolic or monastic purity. Vanderputten, however, urges us to look beyond the 'straightforward narrative logic' of traditional accounts of the phenomenon of monasticism and instead to recognise that its history is not to be seen as 'a sequence of dominant models or monastic "cycles" ... [fitted] into a narrative cycle of charismatic origins, blossoming and decline'. Rather, we should understand that many of the ideals that defined or characterised monasticism were articulated at the same time and in many different ways as men and women strove to give expression to them. This type of questioning, as Vanderputten emphasises, has led to different approaches and the revisiting of traditional narratives. Albrecht Diem and Claudia Rapp, too, stress the replacement of linear approaches to early monasticism, the 'big names' and traditional turning points, by new paradigms such as gender, masculinity, normativity, identity, and sacred space.³ What follows is a brief synthesis of recent scholarship which outlines some of these new themes in the study of medieval monas-

the bottom-up, and notions of fluidity; the importance of recognising regional diversity; revisiting the narrative of decline; rethinking the place of women in the monastic and religious life; medieval rewriting of the past, that is, the retelling and reconceiving of mendicant and monastic narratives; and the role of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies in opening new lines of enquiry. The Introduction ends with a brief discussion of ways in which recent advances in monastic studies are being made accessible to a wider audience.

Fluidity and diversity, reform and renewal: top-down or bottom-up?

The approach of much of historical scholarship on monasticism has been centred on the notion of 'order', and this is largely a reflection of the dominance of authors who were themselves members of monastic and religious orders and who sought to explore the origins and development of their own congregations.⁴ Publications over the last twenty years or so have continued to produce studies of the various monastic and religious orders – Benedictine, Cluniac, Cistercian etc – updated to take account of newly published primary source material, recent archaeological evidence, or changes in the questions we ask and our approaches to them. However, scholarship is now also informed by a realisation that monastic movements may be characterised by fluidity and that traditional categorising or pigeon-holing by the order to which houses belonged might conceal complexities concerning identity and purpose. The issues that this new approach towards questions of monastic and canonical identities through their membership of a defined order or congregation have, for instance, informed recent scholarship on the reforms instituted by Emperor Charlemagne (800–814) and his son, Louis the Pious (814–40). The traditional picture of the intention of this reform, *reformatio*, and its effects, reads as follows. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the boundaries between communities of monks and those of clerics had become blurred. In a search for clarification and with the intention of establishing clear blue water between the nature of the callings of monks and canons, the reformers drew a line between the monastic life as lived by those who followed the Rule of St Benedict and the life of canons who might serve within major churches and cathedrals. The authors and editors of a collection of essays, *Monastic Communities and Canonical Clergy in the Carolingian World* (780–840): *Categorising the Church*,⁵ seek to question the view that by imposing these distinct categories on religious men and women, the Carolingian reforms successfully brought uniformity to disparate forms of religious life. They challenge the usefulness (or not) of labels and the ready definition of religious – men as monks or canons, women as nuns or canonesses. *Monastic Communities and Canonical Clergy* offers nuanced interpretations, based on new analyses of texts and the relationships between imperial and local per-

already introduces a theme in more recent approaches, the importance of balancing a top-down view of the monastic world (through the eyes, or intentions, of the elite, the reformers) and a bottom-up perspective, that is, what actually happened on the ground. There is a need to take into account both prescriptive texts and the evidence (which may be documentary, literary, hagiographical, archaeological, or material) from individual monasteries or regions.

In similar manner, Steven Vanderputten seeks to question these traditional narratives of reform, in particular that the rulings of the Council of Aachen (816–19) brought order to communities of religious women who were characterised as ill-defined and poorly regulated and that these reformative measures succeeded in bringing standardisation to female houses by ensuring adherence to the Rule of St Benedict, strict claustration, personal poverty, and a life of secluded prayer.⁷ A further development in this narrative is that this reform brought about the creation and definition of a second category of women religious: secular women religious, or canonesses. Thus, a seemingly neat pattern was identified and established in the historiography of monasticism. In stark contrast, Vanderputten argues that a range of archival, material, and liturgical evidence for how these women lived their lives and governed their houses suggests that compliance with these changes was not uniform and that the implementation of clarification, definition, and uniformity was in some quarters met with opposition. Women's houses, indeed, continued to be marked by diversity and to retain 'elements of a former identity'.⁸ Indeed, Vanderputten has further argued that the Aachen decrees were intended less to be prescriptive than to allow for experimentation.⁹ It is traditional historiographical interpretation that has seen in these decrees a significant new beginning – a new 'wave' of monastic life.

Reform was a term also applied to the tenth and early eleventh centuries, with the appearance of 'centres of reform' such as Gorze and Cluny. Traditionally, the dynamic behind their emergence has been seen as a desire for change – from the top-down by the ecclesiastical elite – in particular with agenda such as the eradication of lay influence within the context of political instability and the tendency of lay lords to appropriate monastic assets for their own use. Lay influence was, traditionally, seen as a byword for decay and decay.¹⁰ However, it is also possible to see these powerhouses at the centre of a network of monasteries as products of local politics and patronage, in which lay rulers (who were not always after their own interests), local structures of politics and economies, historical legacies, and the personal visions of abbots, all played their part.¹¹ For instance, close analysis of the evidence for seven monasteries in Flanders which were part of the 'Lotharingian' reform movement from c. 900 to c. 1100 brings to light that there was potential for conflict between the objectives of the reformers and those with rooted interests.¹² In other words, the intentions did not always match the realities, and we need to keep sight of

of the notion of reform as changing all that went before; reform was not always a reaction to decline, for successive waves of reformers might be admirers of the past and respecters of tradition.

Historical scholarship has afforded pride of place to Cluny as the most famous centre of reform in the tenth and eleventh centuries, with its freedom from dependence on lay patrons and lords, its special relationship with the papacy, its accumulation of a wide congregation following its unique customs, and its presence as a beacon of beauty in a dark world. More recent research has demonstrated that this is very much a view generated by the institution itself. Seen through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary lenses, *ecclesia Cluniacensis*, the Cluniac congregation, appears much more diverse, much more prone to regional variation, than once thought.¹³ The idea of institutional innovation, it has been argued, is a creation of the development of a Cluniac identity in the twelfth century rather than a representation of what was, in the previous two centuries, a movement marked by lack of cohesion. We are now urged to see the history of each reformed monastery as a case in its own right rather than part of a coherent programme of reform.

Perhaps the most radical rethinking has taken place in relation to the Cistercian Order, traditionally seen as one of – indeed the most significant of – the manifestations of reform and renewal of the twelfth century. Using the documentary/literary evidence of the foundation narratives of the order, the *Exordium parvum* and the *Exordium Cistercii*, historians have tended to assume a straightforward narrative for the foundation of Cîteaux. In 1098, a group of monks from the Benedictine monastery of Molesme, led by their abbot, Robert, stood before a papal legate, the archbishop of Lyons, denouncing the laxity of their monastery for its failure to adhere to the Rule of St Benedict (*Exordium parvum*) or for its wealth (*Exordium Cistercii*). Given licence to leave, they sought a wilderness site where they settled. The monks of what was first known as the *Novum Monasterium*, the New Monastery, drew up rules that were to define their experimental life but nearly faltered for lack of recruits. Saved by a sudden influx of men seeking to be novices, the house prospered. The New Monastery was able to send out groups of monks to create daughter houses, and from 1118, these began to give birth to their own progeny. On the basis of the number of foundations suggested in the last chapter of the *Exordium parvum*, a date in the early 1120s has been posited for its composition.¹⁴

While historians have always acknowledged inherent difficulties in these undated and anonymous narratives and the early statutes of the General Chapter, the neat pattern of the emergence of the Cistercian Order was by and large accepted: the need for reform at Molesme, the renewal of monastic life at the New Monastery, and the steady growth through the foundation of new monasteries by monks from mother houses under strict guidelines concerning location and preliminary preparation. The order grew by what has become

(the ruling body of the order), which issued rules and regulations which in turn were reinforced by annual visitation of a daughter house by the father abbot.

In 2000, at roughly the same time as there appeared the monumental editions, with English translation, by Chrysogonus Waddell of key Cistercian texts,¹⁶ Constance Berman threw down a challenge by arguing that these crucial documents were later than had been supposed, that the privileges were spurious or later reworkings, and that the full structure of the Cistercian Order did not emerge until the second half of the twelfth century.¹⁷ While Berman's arguments have not all been accepted,¹⁸ *The Cistercian Revolution* stimulated further research and led to a reconsideration of the received narrative, as well as nuancing the idea of the foundation of the order as event, encouraging historians to see it more as process. There is no evidence in the early documents for the notion of 'apostolic gestation'; incorporation is ignored, and the lines of affiliation were a product of the late twelfth century. Thus, it is possible to see the growth of the Cistercian Order as less self-determined than before. The early history of the Welsh monastery of Whitland supports this interpretation. Although traditionally counted as a daughter house of Clairvaux which, officially, it came to be, it is clear that another Cistercian house, Vaucelles, also played a significant part in its early years.¹⁹ Another outcome of *The Cistercian Revolution* and other of Berman's publications have been welcome contributions to debates about women and the Cistercian Order, which are discussed below.

Regional diversity

Berman's work and the books and articles that have appeared since 2000 have revisited many aspects of Cistercian life. A major contribution of this recent scholarship has been to stress regional diversity and variation. In other words (as with the Cluniac congregation) to approach the matter from the perspective of the General Chapter but from the ground up, from the Cistercian abbeys in such diverse locations as France, the Empire, Britain, Scandinavia, the newly Christianised lands east of the Elbe, Byzantine Greece, and Christian Spain. Cistercian monasteries were not just located in diverse geographical sites but also in very different political, social, cultural, and economic environments. This diversity might necessitate adaptation to regional or local conditions.

Many historians have been tempted to dismiss any divergence from the 'norm' – Cistercian life as viewed through the rulings of the General Chapter – as decline. The idea of a golden age of Cistercian monasticism (the twelfth century), followed by a spiral of decline, is implicit in the title of Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality*.²⁰ Although Lekai saw the real beginning of decay within the Cistercian Order in conditions that prevailed around the beginning of the fourteenth century, with falling numbers of Cistercian foundations and severe financial difficulties, his picture of a fall from the high-minded ideals of

For some time, Lekai's dichotomy has been seen as too neat, as having produced, in Bruun's and Jamrozak's words, 'a fragmented understanding of Cistercian history and culture'.²¹ As with any monastic order or indeed individual monastery, there might always be a tension between withdrawal from the world and engagement with it. This was as true of the hermits of the Egyptian desert who were visited by those seeking to benefit from their wisdom as it was of the imperial abbey of Germany and Italy or the royal abbey of England. Moreover, with the recognition, articulated in the Rule of St Benedict, that hospitality was not an optional requirement for monks, how could it be otherwise? Cistercian legislation, however, took the notion of withdrawal from the world an ideological step further. Foundation narratives, both that of Cîteaux (*Exordium parvum*) and those of local Cistercian monasteries (the foundation narrative of Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire, for example), reinforce the topos of the desert, wilderness, or solitude, the 'place of horror and howling waste' of Deuteronomy 32.10, that Cistercians were by their own rules required to seek. Solitude, however, was not always easy to find nor was it always sought. The White Monks might have to content themselves with a site and lands that a founder was prepared to give, which, if not 'ideal', would still allow them to create a psychological desert. To quote Bruun and Jamrozak again, through history and text the Cistercians were able to imagine 'a written world', that is, through textual sources that stressed isolation and the desert.

Recent research has stressed the importance of regional diversity through investigation of how Cistercians adapted to local conditions, thus diluting the charge of decline. The significance of the selection of Cistercian sites did not just lie in whether or not they were deemed to adhere to Cistercian requirements of solitude and avoidance of contact with the world: in many geographical areas, this would never be achieved. Moreover, many houses were existing monasteries that were incorporated into the order: their sites were already firmly established. Founders had a range of reasons for the foundation of a Cistercian house, and the choice of site could be as consequential as the decision to establish a Cistercian house rather than one of another order. Those who founded abbey perceived different roles for them, and this could determine their location. They might – as in Ireland, Poland, and Scotland – be closely associated with church reform, whether founded by kings or bishops.²² They might be markers of newly acquired territories or of political ambition. On the fringes of Christian Europe, political ambition and mission went hand in hand, and on the north and north-eastern frontiers along the Baltic coast, for instance, the nature of Cistercian expansion owed more to these factors than the rulings of the General Chapter.

The Cistercians are just one manifestation of the tendency now more broadly recognised of religious institutions to become what Vanderputten terms the *nebula* of a congregation or order. We have seen this already in relation to the changes intended by the Aachen reforms under which the adoption of the Rule of St Benedict did not necessarily obliterate local customs and identities.

houses themselves, or from founders, and was not always successful – witness Gilbert of Sempringham's attempts to bring his communities under the oversight of Cîteaux – but Savigny and Obazine succeeded where Gilbert failed.²³ It might also come from patrons or as a result of contact with influential abbots: the visit of the abbot of Cluny to the ancient abbey of Moissac, for instance, resulted in the adoption of Cluniac custom. The monastic landscape could not always be planned or manipulated. It was applied as much to the selection of sites as it did to the variety of economic activities undertaken by the White Monks. They were rooted in different physical environments in which diverse economic activities were possible. The 'myth of pioneers' – Cistercians clearing and draining new lands and pushing back the boundaries of the cultivated world – has been replaced by a more nuanced view of Cistercians adapting to local and regional conditions.

The mendicants present us with a similar pattern. Despite the development of legislative frameworks by the orders, scholars have been aware of their growth and development in different regional contexts and how these might have shaped mendicant experiences and the roles which were expected of them. The English Dominican Province initially comprised all areas of the British Isles. However, from as early as 1242, the Irish sought to establish a separate province, and although this was confirmed by the General Chapter of the order in 1378, political circumstances prevented its implementation and it was not realised for some decades. The Scottish Dominicans achieved independent status in 1481. The fortunes of the Friars Preacher in all these areas were greatly affected by the level of patronage of different rulers. Moreover, as Giraud and Linde have argued, there were divergences within and between the British Isles. For instance, the Observant movement which so heavily influenced the continental Dominicans from 1399 had little impact on the English Province until the early sixteenth century, although there were some attempts at reform in Scotland in the second half of the fifteenth century at the same time as a number of observant houses were founded there. Moreover, there was only one female Dominican house in England.²⁴ All over Europe, the activities of mendicants were shaped by local conditions. In the Iberian Peninsula, the Franciscans and Dominicans in particular transformed urban life and the hierarchy of the church and spread the Word of God by preaching to Muslims on the borders; they were also instrumental in the establishment of the Inquisition in Aragon.²⁵ In another geographical region, Anna Welch finds in manuscript production in Umbria a microcosm of the liturgical practices of the Friars Minor.²⁶

Decay and decline?

As we have seen, the 'myth of decline' in the Cistercian Order begins to disappear if we recognise issues such as regional diversity, pressure from patrons, and

as in the cloister. Martha Newman has argued convincingly that the political activity evident in Cistercian life from the election of the first bishop drawn from the order in 1126 was not inconsistent with their desire to withdraw 'to the desert' but fundamental to how they viewed their role in society. They withdrew not to 'avoid all social entanglements' as much as to differentiate themselves from lay people.²⁷ Far from being an early sign of decay or divergence, the fifty Cistercian bishops, ten cardinals, and one pope who held office before 1160 were signs that Cistercians engaged in the struggle for a moral society and sought to balance these 'conflicting impulses' of engagement and withdrawal.

Scholarship is now also taking far more notice than before of chronologies of change in the once neglected later Middle Ages, when the world was a very different place. James Clark has pointed out that historians 'have always associated the later Middle Ages with the downfall of the monastic order' and demonstrates that this 'view originated with the very first narratives of the European Reformation which necessarily regarded the failure of the monastic tradition as a principal prerequisite for religious change'.²⁸ It was also sustained by historians who either continued this Protestant historiography or, monastics themselves, lamented the fall from purity. With a breadth of knowledge, Clark and others have demonstrated how members of the monastic and religious orders rose to the challenges of change from the thirteenth century onwards, with, in many areas, new foundations and rising recruitment, engagement with the universities and the foundation of houses of study, and the adoption of a corporate structure introduced by the creation of provincial chapters. There were, naturally, setbacks – another reminder that there was more than one narrative – such as the Black Death and the challenges of urbanisation and changes in culture and spiritual practices. Some monasteries bowed under the pressure, but others – as witnessed by the study of individual houses – tell a different story.²⁹ There was rebuilding of churches and cloisters among the Benedictines in England and in Poland, for instance, and a flowering of learning, with intellectual interests leading to an engagement with reform, in England, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. This is not to argue for a wholesale resurgence among monastic houses, but it does suggest the myth of decline has been tempered by recent research, informed by revisiting and reassessing the sources and close study of individual monasteries, their regions, and their networks.³⁰

Emilia Jamrozak and others have found similar cause to question the so-called decline in the Cistercian Order in the later Middle Ages. The centuries since the emergence of the order had brought many changes – social, political, economic, ecclesiastical, and cultural, and the Cistercians changed with and adapted to new conditions.³¹ For one thing, the whole idea of the international structure of the order, cutting as it did across political boundaries, came under pressure and the model of the early centuries became unsustainable. This was

located in different polities were forced to follow the national line. Like all monasteries of whatever order, Cistercians felt the demands of the universities, leading them to new intellectual horizons. This was a development encouraged by the order itself and by the papal bull *Benedictina* (1352). Monasteries began to establish houses of study: Valmagne Abbey at the University of Montpellier in 1265 and Grandseigne at Toulouse in 1280. There were further developments in the fourteenth century, with a Cistercian presence at Prague, Vienna, and Heidelberg. This engagement in higher education led in turn to internal reform – though reform is not a corollary of decadence. Moreover, the materiality of everyday life within the cloisters also changed (as did society), with greater expectations about privacy, diet, property, and the status of abbots. All these changes were, in Jamrozak's words, 'a natural reflection of the changes occurring in society as a whole'.³²

Monastic women: women religious

The last decades have seen a surge of revisionist scholarship on women in the monastic and religious life. Although scholarship had long recognised the existence, in the early and central Middle Ages, of powerful women as heads of female communities – St Hild, abbess of Whitby (d. 680) or the abbesses of Merovingian France (St Gertrudis of Nivelles, d. 653) and imperial Germany (St Matilda, daughter of Otto the Great, abbess of Quedlinburg, d. 999), for instance – the picture that dominated female monastic life was a fairly negative one. Lawrence was only one historian to point out that the decline in the role of women in the monastic life after the tenth century was to argue that female houses were largely the retreat of unmarried daughters and widows of the aristocracy and that patrons, on the whole, considered female houses a less worthy investment than houses for men.³³ As mentioned above in relation to the decrees of the councils of Aachen, it can be argued that both before and after the attempts to categorise women either as *sacratrices* (nuns, following the Rule of St Benedict) or secular women/canonesses, in reality much of the diversity remained – and it was not uncommon to see such diversity as a manifestation of lack of regulation and therefore lack of discipline.

Reassessment and reappraisal of sources and indeed of our expectations suggest, however, that fluidity is not necessarily to be seen in the negative light it once implied. For Sarah Foot, writing of the period between the ninth and the mid- to late eleventh century in England, diversity was about women's ability to make decisions about their own ways of life.³⁴ This flexibility, she argues, is manifest in the variety of nouns used to describe women in the religious life. Indeed, historians are increasingly preferring to use the term 'woman religious' or 'religious woman' in place of 'nun' to reinforce the flexibility and diversity of the lives of women.³⁵ A fifth dimension is added

of religious observance at different stages of their lives. Beach and Cochelin cite the example of Jutta of Sponheim (d. 1136) who began as a 'house ascetic' (one living outside a religious community, in her own home) before becoming, with Hildegard of Bingen, a recluse within the precincts of the male monastery of Disibodenberg, from where Hildegard departed to found and become abbess of Rupertsberg.³⁶ This is a manifestation of another trend in current scholarship, which is to blur the boundaries between the religious experience of those living within monastic communities and those perceived to exist 'on the fringes'.³⁷

A dominant theme in traditional historical writing on religious women has been their dependence on men. In some ways, this was rooted in medieval conceptions of the role of women: the Gilbertine canon who, in the early thirteenth century, wrote the 'Life' of Gilbert of Sempringham, founder of the house and then the Order of Sempringham for women, explained Gilbert's decision to add *conversi* (lay brothers) to the nuns and *conversae* (lay sisters) of his communities like this: 'Now because women's efforts achieve little without help from men, he took on men, and put those he kept as servants about his house and on his land in charge of the nuns' external tasks'.³⁸ Gilbert also added regular canons to his communities in order to supply the nuns with pastoral care and administrative support.

It was always accepted that female communities of whatever order would have had need of men to perform priestly functions and that attempts to impose strict enclosure on women might bring with it the necessity for external business to devolve on to male bailiffs and stewards. However, historiographically, what grew from this was the notion that women were unable or unsuited to fulfil administrative and leadership roles or, when they did undertake them, were incompetent.³⁹ Recent publications have stressed female agency, whether at the venerable abbey of Sainte-Croix of Poitiers with its succession of powerful abbesses, or in an English context, with its diversity of female houses, large and small, or with the influential and aristocratic heads of Las Huelgas in Burgos, Spain, or the prioresses of Fontevraud, who ruled over their community of both men and women.⁴⁰ To be sure, Sainte-Croix and Las Huelgas were large and powerful abbeys, but a snapshot of the duties of the head of a small women's community is provided by the records of a case heard in 1306 in the consistory court of York. The prioress of Handale on the North Yorkshire Moors ventured out one day in autumn to ride, alone, across the moors on the business of her house, more specifically to recover her animals that had been impounded. She had no male assistance, and that alone might have encouraged three men who had impounded her animals to attack her with weapons. She survived the assault and brought the men to court, finding witnesses to testify on her behalf. She won her case.⁴¹

A further aspect of female agency in the determination of the identity of their communities has been their commissioning and production of hagiographies. Jitki Thibault has demonstrated how the 'Life' of Abbess Hahumoda of the Saxon monastery of Gandersheim was not, as once interpreted, written in order to rein-

St Benedict on monastic women but rather an attempt by the women to fashion a distinct identity for themselves.⁴² Women are emerging as patrons not just of hagiographical writings but of spiritual treatises and liturgical works.

In general, historians are more inclined now to view the relationship between religious men and religious women not as one of superiority and inferiority, or as a duty resented by men and only reluctantly accepted. Rather – as is the central position of works by such as Fiona Griffiths – men held religious women in high regard, and their interactions were marked by cooperation and respect.⁴³ There is an emphasis on informal relations rather than legal and institutional requirements.

Relations between religious men and religious women have also underpinned historical interpretations about how to fit the latter into the pattern of monastic organisations that were designed for men. This is most acutely obvious in the case of the Cistercian Order, which has traditionally been described as hostile to women religious to the extent that it denied the existence of Cistercian nuns. More recently, scholars have demonstrated that this view is misleading. Cistercian men – including the pioneers Stephen Harding and Bernard of Clairvaux – not only encouraged female vocation but also recognised sisters as Cistercian. As a result of the research of historians such as Constance Bereman, Anne Lester, Elizabeth Freeman, and Erin Jordan, their questioning of received narratives and reformulations of the question of whether women have reclaimed their place within the Cistercian Order and Cistercian history, not just as nuns but as founders and patrons.

Yet houses of Cistercian women appeared in diverse locations – France, Italy, Scandinavia, Spain, the Low Countries, and Britain, for instance – and it is important to recognise some divergence of practice.⁴⁴ Gerald of Wales, archdeacon of Wales, one-time admirer of the Cistercians, wrote of the small female house of Llanllŷr in Wales: 'the ruined and humble house of nuns had from the beginning ... received the outward practice and habit and also the internal constitution of the Cistercian Order as far as was possible for the female sex'.⁴⁵ This highlights some of the ambiguities of female Cistercian experience: for Gerald, the women of Llanllŷr looked like Cistercians (their outward appearance, that is, their habit), and their houses were run as Cistercian houses (their governance of their communities), but he also suggested that their adherence to Cistercian practices was somehow compromised by their gender. Was Gerald here thinking of the obligations of annual visitation and the General Chapter? Raising this question is not to deny that Llanllŷr was Cistercian or that it was not recognised as such but rather to highlight the more that notion of 'fluidity' which has appeared at several points in this essay. On the one hand, there were small Cistercian female houses in England whose foundations date mostly from the twelfth century, some of which have documentary sources as recognised as Cistercian, may also be referred to in contemporary sources as Benedictine or even Augustinian. On the other, more informal recognition was

Cistercian may have been affected by wealth, aristocratic founders and personnel, location, or date of establishment.

We have seen how the Cistercians packaged their history into foundation narratives that in many ways reflected the time of writing of the texts in the form in which they have come down to us. In these, the authors perceived no need to mention women – perhaps it was not with an intention to marginalise them but because they did not figure in the stories they wanted to tell. The way in which medieval religious men constructed their histories has profoundly affected our views of the relationship between men and women. In the case of the Cistercians, this was, effectively, to write women out of official histories. A different dynamic appears with the mendicants who wrote and rewrote their histories in relation to both men and women. A particular focus for revision in mendicant history has been the role of Clare of Assisi and the emergence and status of the Poor Clares. Alison More has demonstrated that unlike the Cistercians, the Franciscans sought to write women retrospectively into the history of their orders, portraying how ecclesiastical authorities slotted the fluid and informal groups of women of the early years of the order into their official structure.⁴⁶ She successfully disentangles fictive histories and highlights the dangers of labels and categories. Similar reassessment of written sources allows Catherine Mooney to revisit the standard narrative of Clare of Assisi and to offer new interpretations in the context of the complex relationship between Clare and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and of male constructs of female religious experience and the place of women within the Franciscan movement.⁴⁷ In general, there is, then, a trend towards shaking off the problematic institutional history of mendicant women and their formal affiliations.

Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary

A point that was made at the beginning of this introduction was that it is now common to speak of monastic studies rather than monastic history, and this marks a shift from a scholarly world dominated mainly by the written text to more open and often challenging approaches through interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, or multidisciplinary studies. Some of the most innovative projects have been those that allow historians, archaeologists, theologians, and scholars of visual and material culture to interrogate evidence through their own methodologies and generate critical debates in monastic studies. The following topics illustrate some of these approaches.

Archaeology and landscape archaeology

Archaeological approaches can encompass what we might call the traditional methods of excavation and analysis of finds and new techniques of less

broader interpretation of the landscapes in which monasteries were located. Recent advances have also seen cross-disciplinary studies, such as the examination of documentary and literary sources with the archaeology, which has put firmly to bed the notion of the superiority of the written word. A good example of this interdisciplinary approach is to be found in recent works on monastic communities in Egypt. Darlene L. Brooks and Hendrik Dey summarise how recent archaeological investigation of early monasteries has increased our appreciation of the diversity of monastic sites, and challenge the assumption – which itself was largely based on documentary and literary sources – that monastic and domestic or vernacular structures and locations could easily be recognised and distinguished.⁴⁸ This realisation has allowed some sites which had previously been dismissed as not monastic to be reincorporated into the canon. The reality of where monasteries were located was often at odds with the textual sources in another way: they were not always remote from settlement, and the development of the idea of the ‘desert’ was often a literary or psychological construction.

The density of the monastic landscape has in many ways proved to be surprising, and our knowledge has been enhanced by archaeological investigation. New interpretations of the fourth-century monastery at Kellia in the Nitrian Desert have resulted from the identification of several distinct areas, which were not enclosed, with over one thousand dwellings.⁴⁹ Archaeological and documentary sources have also thrown light on the monastic settlement associated with Shenoute (d. 465), who bequeathed a legacy of literature on the monastic life. The federation of his monasteries, on the edge of the desert about eight kilometres from Sohag in Upper Egypt, comprised communities of men (the White Monastery and the Red Monastery) and women (Atripe) as well as hermits – such was the diversity of lived experience within the umbrella of the term ‘desert monasticism’.⁵⁰ Recent advances have also challenged our assumptions about the monastic landscape of late Antique Egypt, through investigation of documentary sources, archaeology, landscape, and phenomenology, in order to ascertain what, if anything, distinguished monastic from vernacular space.⁵¹ In different ways, these have demonstrated the usefulness of combining techniques of spatial analysis, interpretations of the results of archaeological excavation, and the analysis of textual sources such as the writings of Shenoute on monastic life.

Landscape archaeology allows us to locate religious communities and women – again both individuals and communities – within the broader environment. Ross Balzaretti, for instance, demonstrates how the traditional scarcity of documentary material – in his case, charters – used with ‘material culture ... anthropology, gender, epigraphy, and archaeology, including the study of climate change and ecology’ can produce a detailed analysis of the transformation of the city of Milan and its hinterland by the monastery of St Ambrose.⁵² This is an example of monastic houses as catalysts in the landscape, but archaeology can also sug-

to the much longer *durée*, with antecedents and successors.⁵³ In antecedents, we may see reasons for the choice of particular sites for religious settlements and indications through the presence of earlier ecclesiastical sites – holy wells, or shrines – of places of deep cultural and spiritual meaning.⁵⁴ This allows for a traditional investigation not only of economic exploitation and manipulation of landscape features but also of how landscape was charged with memory. And memory and heritage live on in places names as well as landscape features.⁵⁵ Of Strata Florida, a Cistercian monastery in rural west Wales, on the fringes of the Cambrian Mountains, David Austin writes: 'After the Dissolution, the abbey's long history and its complex spiritual and cultural meanings survived and remain embedded within this sacred landscape'.⁵⁶

The influence of monastic communities on the development of landscapes and settlement patterns is investigated, for instance, in essays in *Monastic Europe: Medieval Communities, Landscapes and Settlement*. One contribution exemplifies a further area ripe for investigation, that of the relationship between monastic houses and political borders, in this case, on the frontiers of Finland.⁵⁷ On the same broad theme of border locations and their significance, Emilia Janrozak has discussed Holm Cultram, established by King David I of Scotland as a daughter house of his first Cistercian foundation in Melrose, Scotland. Holm Cultram was not, however, located in Scotland but in England, in Cumbria, which David had seized during the warfare of the reign of the English king, Stephen. The positioning of this religious house, linked through Cistercian affiliation to one within his realm, was surely intended to mark David's ambition to establish permanent rule there.⁵⁸ The Cistercians here occupied and made their mark on a contested landscape. Politics was only one factor in the placement of monasteries in the landscape. Discussion of themes of conflict and resolution across political borders, and of cultural interactions and acculturation – from Wales to Scandinavia, from Germany to Poland, and from Catalonia to Frankish Greece, have enriched our understanding of how crucial these locations were: 'the presence and success of Cistercians on the frontiers was a genuine historical phenomenon'.⁵⁹

There has been increasing interest in the study of monastic space and spaces – the definition of those places inhabited by men and women and how they were differentiated from the wider landscape in which they were located. The study of space can throw light on the identities of monastic communities, the roles of those individuals who inhabited them, and the relationship between different groups and individuals: Cistercian monks and *conversi*, Gilbertine men and women, mendicants and those to whom they preached, and religious and outsiders such as guests and patrons. How was space organised and differentiated? How was access controlled? Was space a gendered notion? Critical questions are if and how the use of space changed over time, whether parts of monasteries became more permeable, and what this might tell us of changing perceptions of

space sacred? Such questions are addressed by historians and archaeologists alike in relation to the fourth to the ninth centuries in *Western Monasticism Antae Litteram: The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*.⁶⁰ Moving forward to the thirteenth century and beyond, Nick Holder has deployed an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the medieval London friars – Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, Augustinian, Crossin, Sack, and Pied – taking advantage of the 'remarkable range of surviving documentation' from medieval London, archaeological evidence resulting from excavations, and historical map reconstruction (map regression) generated by computer technology.⁶¹ His researches enable the reader to investigate the friars and the people of London – residents and visitors – used friary spaces in their environs.

Space can be defined in terms of the ways in which religious men and women, living either in communities or as individuals (hermits, anchorites), staked their claim and delineated their space, by their use of buildings, precincts, walls, watercourses, etc., as well as the locations in which they chose to live out their lives. Such features might also deny or limit access.⁶² A good example of this kind of research is the work of Sheila Boulton and Clark Maines on the French Augustinian house of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes, Soissons, where archaeological excavation, archival study, and the evidence of surviving buildings allow us to gain insight into how medieval visitors would have moved through the abbey and how they experienced space.⁶³ This last point is an important reminder – once again – that monastic communities did not exist in isolation from the world. They welcomed guests, patrons, pilgrims and other travellers on the road, for whom a religious house would have been an obvious place to stay, clerics and bishops, those seeking to become benefactors, and those requesting to enter into agreements of confraternity. They also fed the poor at their gates. These multi-faceted aspects of interactions between religious and laity continue to attract scholarly attention as does the changing nature of monastic patronage.⁶⁴

There has also been increased interest in the space inhabited by women religious and how this defined – and was defined by – their daily life and their identity. Tracy Collins, for instance, has investigated, through the evidence of archaeology, how women used the enclosed space of the houses in Ireland and how the regulation of space and time was intertwined.⁶⁵

Material culture and visual arts

Working across disciplinary boundaries, scholars now stress the importance of all forms of material culture in enhancing our understanding not only of the nature of the physical spaces inhabited by monks, canons, friars, and religious women but also in relation to themes such as identity, traditions, memory, and commemoration. A major research project that demonstrates the vitality of

Project. This aims to produce a full analysis of the corpus of surviving liturgical manuscripts from the Portuguese Cistercian monastery of Alcobaça.⁶⁶ Taking one manuscript as a case study, a team of researchers, drawn from different disciplines, deployed traditional methodologies of in-depth textual, liturgical, and iconographical analysis, along with digital techniques such as optical microscopy and fibre-optic reflectance spectroscopy to map changes over time and investigate the cultural significance of the artefact.⁶⁷ This innovative methodology has wider applications and in the context of Alcobaça has the potential to reconstruct the biographies of individual manuscripts. Some of these can be identified as products of the scriptorium of the Portuguese monastery and may suggest stylistic features in common with the mother house of Clairvaux. Some came into the possession of the Alcobaça monks by other means. Together they are suggestive of the interplay between the local and the global.⁶⁸

Investigation of manuscript production has revealed the part played by women, thus undermining a long-held conviction that, with notable exceptions, women had little part to play in intellectual activities, and has discussed their roles as both patrons and scribes. Fiona Griffiths has highlighted the importance of Abbess Herrad of the house of Augustinian canonesses of Hohenberg (Alsace) in her role of commissioning and overseeing the production of the *Horas deliciarum* (The Garden of Delights), which was likely copied by the women of the community.⁶⁹ That it is a handbook of scholastic theology speaks loudly of the intellectual milieu at Hohenberg and the ability of its women to engage in intellectual activity as well as – by some of them – active input into cultural production. In similar vein, Alison Beach discusses the scribal activities of women in Bavaria, while June Merchan found in six female houses in Lower Saxony evidence for the use of religious artwork, devotional manuscripts, and textiles in performative liturgical drama.⁷⁰ Jeffrey Hamburger has discussed the role of nuns as artists from his examination of a series of devotional drawings, which he dates to c. 1500, from the community of St Walburg near Eichstätt, Germany.⁷¹ This is not just a study of the drawings as artistic productions. It has an important lesson about how visual and material cultures can inform our understanding of the relationship of art within a monastic context to the liturgical, spiritual, and communal lives of monastic houses. It is also a timely reminder not to privilege the written word over the visual. However, engagement with intellectual, liturgical, and devotional pursuits is also about how women religious interacted with written texts of all kinds, and it is encouraging that scholarly endeavour has been brought to bear not only on the literacy of religious women but also the different levels of literacy.⁷²

Architecture

The magnificence of much of the built heritage of medieval monastic life has

to the early monastery of Skelling Michael off the coast of County Kerry, Ireland; from Cluniac Cuixà in the Pyrenees to Cistercian Fontfrons Abbey in Yorkshire; and from Mont St Michel (France) to Portuguese Alcobaça and Maulbronn (Germany). As discussed above, as spaces, these buildings have much to tell us of how the religious lived their lives, who was allowed where and on what occasions. Beyond the visual lies a host of people, individuals and communities, those who commissioned buildings, those who planned them, those who built them, and those who paid for them. The design, construction, and financing of buildings were often the result of a network of interaction, sometimes over a long period, often brought together in the word ‘patronage’ – which can be applied to all form of artistic endeavour. In a study of Benedictine houses in the west of England, Julian Luxford emphasises a paradigm for how we can understand what is meant by artistic patronage. This he describes as a complex series of phenomena, which might involve commissioning and financing of a building or a piece of art, the gift of materials, the provision of building materials, perhaps discussion as to the form or appearance, and the maintenance of a completed work, which ensured its sustainability.⁷³

The case of the Cistercians and their architecture have been the subject of much revisional thinking. In the past, historians and art historians could talk confidently of a Cistercian plan. Its development was based on the assumption that the Cistercians always built on sites that had previously been uninhabited – a notion that has now been dismissed – and reinforced by the occasional ruling of the General Chapter placing penalties on abbots who had built too large or too extravagantly. Cistercian monasteries were thus built to articulate the basics of their ideologies of isolation and poverty. It followed that any rebuilding that strayed beyond this initial purity was a manifestation of decline.

Important publications have allowed us to reconsider these propositions. Maximilian Sternberg argues that Cistercian buildings, as well as revealing the tensions between withdrawal from society and engagement with it, provide evidence of how these two seemingly opposing stances might be negotiated and reconciled. It is worth quoting him at length:

... the built environment contributed significantly to the Cistercians' representation of their reform. The physical setting of the monastery provided a stage not only for their liturgical, meditative and practical form of life, but also for communicating the meaning of this life to Christendom. In other words, it offered concrete spaces for the encounter between Cistercian reform and the surrounding society.⁷⁴

His approach is interdisciplinary, deploying as well as visual evidence, a range of literary, spiritual, and theological sources. This is a methodology also employed by Megan Cassidy-Welch in her study of the material and imagined spaces of

Michael Carter's work is also characterised by a cross-disciplinary approach, especially as he covers a range of visual media – manuscripts, painting, sculpture, seals, stained glass, and liturgical garments – along with buildings. His monograph is distinctive in taking a regional approach, in bringing nuns into the world of visual arts, and in concentrating on the later Middle Ages.⁷⁶ It is in the revaluation of the traditional narrative of late medieval Cistercian art and architecture as a manifestation of decline that the value of the book, and Carter's own extensive bibliography, lies. Material and visual cultures are seen in the monastic, ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and cultural environments of the later Middle Ages and are not to be judged in relation to early Cistercianism.

The concept of change over time and the evolution of architectures as reflecting ideological change have been central to recent studies of the built environment of the mendicant orders. In investigating the buildings and material culture of two mendicant orders, Joan Barclay Lloyd discusses the development of seven churches in Rome, the pre-history of their sites, and their renewal by the friars.⁷⁷ She brings to bear on their surviving works of art new archaeological methods and digital technology which are less invasive than excavation. Caroline Bruzelius's investigation of the mendicant orders (Dominicans and Franciscans in Italy) and their built environments employs new approaches to the interpretation of the buildings of the mendicants, supplementing traditional art-historical methods with 'a more anthropological approach recognizing that buildings are intimately connected to the socio-economic conditions of their construction and their use'.⁷⁸

Identity, memory, and commemoration

Monastic and religious communities – whether of men or women – served to create and sustain memory. Memory was connected to the identity of their communities, and about commemorating for eternity, those with whom they were associated: their own members, past, present, and future, and those who had played prominent roles and were formative influences in their development and who sustained them: their founders, patrons, and special friends. Monastic houses commissioned histories and chronicles, works of art that shaped their liturgical practices, and designed and manipulated their spaces to give voice to their shared pasts. We have already noted the ways in which Cistercian and mendicant histories were refashioned to give prominence to particular narratives and how heads of monastic communities commissioned hagiographies to strengthen their links with saintly ancestors and patrons. Texts such as these created multi-layered identities, which could be forged by the order or congregation to which a house belonged, geographical location, networks of kin, and political and dynastic sympathies.⁷⁹ A monk of Strata Florida (Wales) set out, in the aftermath of the Edwardian Conquest of the last remaining territories of

bards of the Welsh princes, thus consciously preserving their legacy and linking it to his own community.⁸⁰

There were also visual markers of identity. Studies of tombs, which were a symbol of reciprocity between a community and its dynastic patrons, bring together stylistic features and representations with the use of space. The very siting of funerary monuments can be shown to hold significance. Where they were located, however, raises issues of access: how far would the expectation of a family to visit the tomb of one of its kin compromise monastic space? This might be more acute for female houses, where strict regulations about enclosure might apply. An ingenious solution was found at Pedrabales (Spain), where Queen Elisenda de Montcada was commemorated by a double-sided monument: on one side she was represented, crowned and in splendour, as queen of Aragon; on the cloister side where she would be seen by the community, she is presented as veiled and without her crown, as a tertiary or widow.⁸¹

Heritage and public perception

Recent research into the role of monastic and religious houses in the Middle Ages has been shaped by the discovery and more ready accessibility of source materials, which have been challenged and analysed anew, producing fresh interpretations. The traditional chronologies and arcs of genesis, growth, decline, reform, and renewal have been debated. Scholars recognise a more fluid and permeable picture, based both on regional variations and divergent ways in which monastic communities of men and of women viewed their existence – their identities – and how they presented themselves to the world outside the cloister. It is increasingly common to avoid the idea of a firm boundary between cloistered religious or mendicants and those who followed a religious life outside the traditional confines of an enclosed community, as anchorites, hermits, vowesses, beguines, and beghards. Interdisciplinary and the challenges and redefinitions it brings have added new dimensions, through archaeology, landscape studies, and material and visual cultures. At the same time, new technologies bring new questions and new ways of answering them.

Monastic studies, however, are no longer the prerogative solely of academic research. For the last two decades, scholars and heritage bodies have been facing challenges – particularly from funding bodies – to make their findings accessible to non-academic beneficiaries. This has been in both traditional forms and in ones that are generated and sustained by new technologies. Building on the new style of guidebooks developed by David Robinson for Cadw, English Heritage produces attractive and informative books that are easily understood without compromising academic credibility.⁸² Sites have been furnished with new interpretative materials, enabling the cultural tourist to appreciate the sites

New technologies and the creation of websites have made European monastic heritage more accessible, as at the World Heritage Site of Fontenay (<https://www.abbayedefontenay.com>). Data generated through funded projects is now available digitally, for example, that deriving from the Monastic Cemeteries AHRC-funded project (https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cemeteries_ahrb_2005/index.cfm). UNESCO has created a website on 'The Cultural Landscape of the Benedictine Settlements in Medieval Italy' (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/representativists/6107/>) while Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities's 'Germania Sacra' (www.germaniasacra.de) provides details of all ecclesiastical institutions in Germany and neighbouring regions of Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, and Poland.⁸³ The Medieval Academy of America's 'Medieval Digital Resources' database is a guide to digital materials on a broad range of medieval monastic topics. The website <https://femmodata.uni-goettingen.de/description.html> is just one of an ever-growing number of digital resources available for the study of religious women.⁸⁴

All these activities are broadening access to and appreciation of the sacred heritage of the monastic and religious landscape of the Middle Ages that has so informed the work of scholars such as Roberta Gilchrist. Her *Sacred Heritage*, cited above, is innovative in that it brings together academic archaeology and heritage practice, defining heritage as 'multiple meanings and connotation' of the material legacy of the past, and its 'contemporary use for social, economic and political agendas', and 'the use of the past to shape the present and the future'.⁸⁵ Gilchrist encourages us to see the ongoing use of sacred monuments such as monasteries as an aid to understanding the past in the present and these places and spaces as formative in understanding our own identities. Medieval monasteries do not belong in the past: large or small, wealthy or poor, in towns and villages, mountain tops and valleys, they are part of how we understand the past through use and reuse, memory and legacy, identity, and belonging.⁸⁶

Notes

1. This essay is perforce selective, and I am grateful to Dr Karen Stöber and Dr Michael Carter for reading a draft and offering helpful advice. A recent publication which gives insights into all manner of aspects of medieval monasticism is Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (eds), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), hereafter *CHMMLW*. It has only been possible to make specific reference here to a limited number of individual contributions.
2. Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticisms: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West*, Oidenbourg Outlines of History (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2020). My debt to this invaluable overview of scholarship will be clear.
3. Albrecht Diem and Claudia Rapp, 'The Monastic Laboratory: Perspectives of Research in Late Antique and Early Medieval Monasticism', in *CHMMLW*, I, pp. 19–39. Diem and Rapp also discuss the concept of monasticisms.
4. On historiography, see, for instance, the introduction by the editors to *CHMMLW*.

5. Rurger Kramer, Emilie Kurdziel, and Graeme Ward (eds), *Monastic Communities and Canonical Clergy in the Carolingian World (780–840): Categorising the Church*, Medieval Monastic Studies, 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022).
6. See Introduction to *Monastic Communities and Canonical Clergy*, pp. 13–32.
7. Steven Vanderputten, 'Reform, Change, and Renewal: Women Religious in the Central Middle Ages, 800–1050', in Kimm Curran and Janet Burton (eds), *Medieval Women Religious c. 800–c. 1500: New Perspectives* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2023), pp. 22–42.
8. Vanderputten, 'Reform, Change, and Renewal', p. 39.
9. Steven Vanderputten, *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identities of Female Monasticism, 800–1050* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 9.
10. Isabelle Rosé, 'Interactions between Monks and Lay Nobility (from the Carolingian Era through the Eleventh Century)', in *CHMMLW*, I, pp. 579–98, where a corrective for this view is also offered.
11. Steven Vanderputten, 'Monastic Reform from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century', in *CHMMLW*, I, pp. 599–617.
12. Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013).
13. Scott G. Bruce and Steven Vanderputten (eds), *A Companion to the Abbey of Cluny in the Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), see especially the remarks in the Introduction (pp. 1–8). See also the essays therein: Isabelle Rosé, 'Tenth-Century Cluny', in *A Companion to the Abbey of Cluny*, pp. 11–33; Steven Vanderputten, 'The Resurgence of Ecclesiastical Clunienism', in *A Companion to the Abbey of Cluny*, pp. 34–49; and Christian Barret, 'Shaping Clunian Memory', in *A Companion to the Abbey of Cluny*, pp. 13–33.
14. This is a very literal reading, and the consensus is now that the *regula* was a composite narrative, and that both were reworked to suit different times and contexts.
15. This refers to the Cistercian requirement that new houses be colonised by twelve monks (the number of Christ's apostles) and an abbot. On the subject, see Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 41.
16. *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, ed. and trans. C. Waddell (Brecht: Commentaria Cisterciensia, 1999); *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter*, ed. and trans. C. Waddell (Brecht: Commentaria Cisterciensia, 2000).
17. Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*.
18. See, for instance, Christopher Holdsworth, 'The Affiliation of Savigny', in M. Burton, D. M. LaCorte, and P. Lockey (eds), *Truth as Gift: Studies in Honour of John R. Sommerfeldt*, Cistercian Studies Series, 204 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004), pp. 43–88.
19. This connection came to light in the foundation history of Vaucelles; Foulques de Cambrai, *La Fondation de l'Abbaye de Vaucelles*, ed. and trans. Benoît-Michel Tock (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016). For comment on the authorship, see Kathryn E. Salzer, *Vaucelles Abbey: Social, Political, and Ecclesiastical Relationships in the Borderland Region of the Cambrésis, 1131–1300*, Medieval Monastic Studies, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 19–20. On the Whitland connection: Janet Burton, 'The Cistercians in *Murethia Wallia* and *Pura Wallia*: Monasteries, Communities, and Identities', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 65 (2021), 109–31.
20. Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977). For further comment on the notion of decline, see above, pp. xix–xxi.
21. Mette Birkedal Bruun and Emilia Jamrozak, 'Introduction', in Mette Birkedal Bruun (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.
22. Emilia Jamrozak, 'Centres and Peripheries', in Bruun (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order*, pp. 65–79.
23. See Brian Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c. 1130–c. 1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905); Katharine Svoboda, *Inventing Gilbert of Sempringham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

24. Eleanor J. Giraud and J. Cornelia Linde (eds), *A Companion to the English Dominican Province from its Beginnings to the Reformation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), pp. 1–30. See also James Mixson and Bert Roest (eds), *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015).
25. Francisco García-Serrano (ed.), *The Friars and their Influence in Medieval Spain* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).
26. Anna Welch, *Living, Books, and Franciscan Identity in Medieval Umbria* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).
27. Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform, 1098–1180* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 2.
28. James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), p. 255.
29. Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 310.
30. James G. Clark, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries: A New History* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2021), pp. 192–98. On architectural flowering, see above, pp. xxviii–xxx.
31. Emilia Janmroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe 1090–1500* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 238–74. ‘Was there a Crisis in the Cistercian Order in the Later Middle Ages?’ The paragraph that follows draws heavily on this chapter. See also Bert Roest, ‘A Crisis of Late Medieval Monasticism’, in *CHMMMLW*, II, pp. 1171–90.
32. Janmroziak, *Cistercian Order*, p. 274.
33. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 199.
34. Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, vol. I, *The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, and vol. II, *Female Communities in England, 871–1066* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), I, pp. 2–26–30, 96–104.
35. For further comment on a range of nomenclature for religious women within and without monastic communities, see Eliana Magnani (trans. Lochin Brouillard), ‘Female House Acetics from the Fourth to the Twelfth Century’, in *CHMMMLW*.
36. Beach and Cochein, ‘Introduction’, in *CHMMMLW*, I, p. 8.
37. On liminality and marginal locations, real or perceived, of religious women, see, for instance, Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994). See also Cate Gunn, ‘On the Fringes: Anchorites’, in Curran and Burton (eds), *Medieval Women Religious*, pp. 76–89.
38. *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. and trans. Raymonde Foreville and Gillian Keir, Oxford Medieval Text (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 36–37.
39. A classic example can be found in Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275–1535* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922).
40. Jennifer Edwards, *Superior Women: Medieval Female Agency at Poitiers’ Abbey of Sainte-Croix* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Elizabeth A. LeFebvre, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Elizabeth A. LeFebvre, ‘Authority and Agency: Women as Heads of Religious Houses’, in Curran and Burton (eds), *Medieval Women Religious*, pp. 105–20; Valerie G. Speer, *Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2005).
41. Janet Burton, ‘The Convent and the Community: Cause Papers as a Source for Monastic History’, in Philippa Hoskin, Christopher Brooke, and Barrie Dobson (eds), *The Foundations of Medieval English Ecclesiastical History: Studies Presented to David Smith* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 64–76.
42. Jirki Tiitavirta, ‘Female Abbatial Leadership and the Shaping of a Communal Identity in Ninth-Century Saxony: The ‘Life’ of Hathumoda of Gandersheim’, *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 7 (2018), 21–45. On a similar theme, see Steven Vanderputten, ‘“Against the Custom”: Hagiographical Rewriting and Female Abbatial Leadership at Mid-Eleventh-Century Remiremont’, *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 10 (2021), 41–66.
43. Fiona J. Griffiths, *Nuns’ Tales: Men and Salvation in Medieval Women’s Monastic Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), see also Fiona J. Griffiths, and
44. The reader is here directed to the bibliography, section 6, and its sub-section *Women in the Cistercian Order*.
45. John S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner (eds), *Growth Cambrensis Opera Omnia* (Rolls Series, 1861–91), IV, 152.
46. Alison More, *Fictive Orders and Feminine Religious Identities, 1200–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); see also her ‘Change and Renewal: Mendicants and Tertiaries in Later Medieval Europe’, in Curran and Burton (eds), *Medieval Women Religious*, pp. 61–75, and ‘Institutionalizing Penitential Life in Later Medieval Europe’, *Church History*, 83 (2014), 297–323.
47. Catherine M. Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religion, Women, Rules, and Resistance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
48. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom and Henrik Dey, ‘The Archaeology of the Earliest Monasteries’, in *CHMMMLW*, I, pp. 73–96.
49. Nicola Aravecchia, ‘Hermitages and Spatial Analysis: Use of Space in Kellia’, in S. McNally (ed), *Shaping Community: The Art and Archaeology of Monasticism* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001), pp. 29–38.
50. Louise Blank, *An Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism: Settlement, Economy and Daily Life in the White Monastery of Shenoute* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2019); Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). For an interdisciplinary study of the Red Monastery, see Elizabeth Boland (ed), *The Red Monastery: Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).
51. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape in Late Antiquity: The Egypt. An Archaeological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
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