

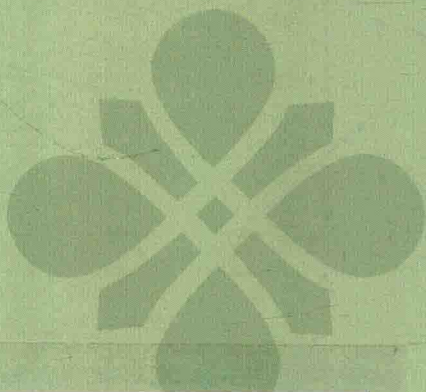


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Series editor: Jane Chance

Late-Medieval German Women's Poetry

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS SONGS



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Late-Medieval German Women's Poetry: Secular and Religious Songs

**Translated from the German
with Introduction, Notes and Interpretive Essay**

Albrecht Classen
University of Arizona

D. S. BREWER

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Introduction

Contrary to common opinion, during the Middle Ages and the early-modern age a substantial number of aristocratic and other women were actively involved in composing literary texts. On the one hand, we know that some major female writers treated primarily worldly matters, particularly in the French-speaking area, examples being the *troubairitz* (courtly love poets), Marie de France, and Christine de Pizan. On the other, women such as Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, Bridget of Sweden, Caterina of Siena, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe expressed themselves in writing and gained public recognition through mysticism. This religious phenomenon was not limited to one specific country, though the majority of mystical writers seem to have emerged in Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Nevertheless, despite these promising indications of a flourishing literature by women, throughout Europe, the world of the courts allowed little, if any room for women poets, except for Marie de France and Christine de Pizan. In particular, the history of medieval German literature is almost entirely dominated by male writers, as the female mystics were practically the only ones who came forward as writers, were mostly recognized publicly, and had their visions recorded and so preserved for posterity. Perhaps these are the reasons why currently it seems as if research on medieval and early-modern German women writers has come almost to a standstill as no new names have been noted, and no new texts have been explored for several decades. Scholarship reports of no female courtly poets who composed erotic love poetry (*Minnesang*), courtly romances, or didactic texts, and the currently available evidence suggests that active women were essentially limited to the religious area.¹

¹ To remedy this deplorable situation, I have collected and translated most of the relevant texts from that period in *Frauen in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Die ersten 800 Jahre*, *Women in German Literature*, 4 (New York: Lang, 2000); amazingly, when a woman identifies herself in a didactic text, such as the Winsbeckin, even feminist scholars tend to discard her contribution to German literature because of the poet's traditional, almost patriarchal attitudes about gender relations, reconfirming the norms of male society: see Ann Marie Rasmussen, *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 136–59. For an example representative of the

Traditionally, two responses existed to deal with this situation: either to accept the current assessment of the absent woman's voice during the German Middle Ages, except the mystical writers, or to begin a new search in the literary archives. To provide weight to the second, often neglected option, this book will offer English translations of a vast corpus of women's heretofore ignored poetic texts from the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century.²

It is disappointing that currently few noteworthy efforts in German literary scholarship have expanded our current perspectives on secular medieval women writers. Consequently, the purpose of the present volume is to provide new stimulation for renewed efforts in this direction. The theoretical, practical, and political reasons are manifold: after decades of intensive critical struggles to win recognition for a few outstanding historical figures, most closely connected with the Church, modern scholarship has adopted a small but important group of primarily mystical women writers who occupy their own niche, albeit to some extent marginal, and yet, as we have recently recognized, also central to medieval culture.³ The literary texts by these female poets span the period from the tenth through to the fifteenth century, the traditional time frame of the Middle Ages.⁴ The discovery of these historical

little progress and lack of innovative perspective in the exploration of medieval German women's literature, see *Schwierige Frauen—schwierige Männer in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Alois M. Haas and Ingrid Kasten (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999). Kerstin Merkel and Heide Wunder, eds., *Deutsche Frauen der Frühen Neuzeit. Dichterinnen, Malerinnen, Mäzeninnen* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000), include chapters on such well-known figures as Caritas Pirckheimer (Ursula Hess), Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg (Lynne Tatlock), Anna Ovena Hoyers (Cornelia Niekus Moore), and Elisabeth von der Pfalz (Christine van den Heuvel); but the editors also invited several contributors to discuss outstanding women painters, architects, and art collectors—all of whom lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at a time when the situation for women had improved considerably anyway.

² For previous attempts in this direction, see Albrecht Classen, ed., *Women as Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 528 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991); *ibid.* and Peter Dinzelbacher, "Weltliche Literatur von Frauen des Mittelalters," *Mediaevistik* 8 (1995): 55–73. For the Middle Ages in general, see Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages. A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); *The Writings of Medieval Women. An Anthology*, 2nd ed., translations and introductions by Marcelle Thiébaux, The Garland Library of Medieval Literature (New York and London: Garland, 1994).

³ Albrecht Classen, "Worldly Love—Spiritual Love. The Dialectics of Courtly Love in the Middle Ages," *Studies in Spirituality* 11 (2001): 166–86; for a historical perspective, see Peter Dinzelbacher, "Religiöse Frauenbewegung und städtisches Leben im Mittelalter," *Frauen in der Stadt*, ed. Günther Hödl, Fritz Mayrhofer, and Ferdinand Opll (Lin: Österreichischer Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 2003), 229–64.

⁴ Spanish Germanists have also begun to explore the literary contributions by medieval German women writers: see Eva Parra Membrives, *Mundos femeninos emancipados*.

personalities and critical analyses of their works have satisfied the modern interest in medieval women's voices, for feminist literary historians can now claim a stake in the history of medieval German literature, rather than deferring to the canon of male writings, as was mostly done until the 1960s and 1970s.

To establish a basis for subsequent investigations and translations, let us briefly review contributions by those medieval women writers from the Middle Ages who have left a noticeable impact and have often been included in the literary canon. I will also sketch an outline of the current status of German literary research on women's contributions during that time to understand more clearly the context of the women's songs introduced here.

The Abbess Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (935–after 973) composed remarkable Latin religious narratives, dramas, and short epics. Her dramas especially continue to appeal to a modern sense of what truly constitutes literature and offer a considerable degree of entertainment—surprisingly refreshing for convent literature. In addition to their obvious religious messages, they are filled with violent actions, comic features, obscene allusions, and intriguing highly self-conscious and independently minded women characters.⁵ Although her dramas seem to have found a wider readership in other convents throughout Germany, her texts were nevertheless soon forgotten until 1497 when the famous Humanist Conrad Celtis rediscovered them in the St. Emmeram monastery in Regensburg.

Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) authored powerful visionary texts, political letters, scientific treatises on herbal medicine, gynecology, human sexuality, and also religious poems, all in Latin. In addition, she created a considerable corpus of liturgical songs. Hildegard was highly praised as the “Sibyl of the Rhine” and generally esteemed as a major figure during what Charles Haskins coined the “Twelfth-Century Renaissance” in 1927.⁶ She personally addressed

Reconstrucción teóretico-empírica de una propuesta literaria femenina en la Edad Media alemana, *Textos de Filología*, 5 (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1998).

⁵ See the excellent selection and translation by Katharina Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of her Works*, trans. with Introduction, Interpretive Essay and Notes, *Library of Medieval Women* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998).

⁶ Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1972); see also Heinrich Fichtenau, *Heretics and Scholars in the High Middle Ages, 1000–1200*, trans. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, orig. 1992); C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels. Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200*, *Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance. Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999).

popes and emperors, and traveled throughout Germany preaching to the masses, although women were usually excluded from such pastoral activities.⁷ The inclusa (hermit) Lady Ava (d. 1127) from the area of Melk, Austria, was the first woman writer to resort to Middle High German when she paraphrased large sections of the New Testament in poetic form. Her texts are not only religious in content, and repeatedly she addresses her audience as well and briefly reflects upon her own life.⁸ Her near contemporary Abbess Herrad of Hohenburg in Alsace (d. 1195), and her teacher Abbess Relindis (d. 1169), wrote a famous Latin encyclopedical *Hortus Deliciarum* (The Garden of Delights), a collection of text excerpts from classical (ancient) authors including about sixty poems from renowned twelfth-century male writers. Elisabeth of Schönau (1129–1164), a Benedictine nun in the convent of Schönau near Trier, was strongly influenced by Hildegard of Bingen with whom she corresponded intensively. Her mystical visions, edited and copied down by her brother Ekbert, have come down to us in a large number of manuscripts, which were mostly written in Latin, reflecting widespread interest in her experiences and writings. They were translated into Middle High German in later centuries.⁹

The true heyday of medieval German women's literature, however, did not begin until the thirteenth century, when mystical writers such as Gertrud the Great (1256–1301/02),¹⁰ Mechthild of Hackeborn (1241/1242–1299),¹¹ and Mechthild of Magdeburg (ca. 1208–1282/

⁷ Beverly Sian Rapp, "A Woman Speaks: Language and Self-Representation in Hildegard's Letters," *Hildegard of Bingen. A Book of Essays*, ed. Maud Burnett McInerney, Garland Medieval Casebooks (New York and London: Garland, 1998), 3–24; see also Alain Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*, trans. (from the French) by Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 195–202.

⁸ Ernst Ralf Hintze, *Learning and Persuasion in the German Middle Ages*, Garland Studies in Medieval Literature, 15 (New York and London: Garland, 1997); *Ava's New Testament Narratives. "When the Old Law Passed Away"*, Introduction, Translation, and Notes by James A. Rushing, Jr., Medieval German Texts in Bilingual Editions, II (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003).

⁹ Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. A Twelfth-Century Visionary*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Ekbert emphasizes: "I . . . have written down all these things and others which are gathered from her revelations in such a way that where the words of the angel were Latin I left them unchanged, but where they were in German, I translated them into Latin, as clearly as I could, adding nothing from my own presumption . . ." (52).

¹⁰ See, for example, Gertrud von Helfta, *Exercitia spiritualia. Geistliche Übungen. Lateinisch und deutsch*, ed., trans. and with commentary by Siegfried Ringler (Elberfeld: Humbert, 2001).

¹¹ Margarete Hubrath, *Schreiben und Erinnern. Zur "memoria" im Liber Specialis Gratiae Mechthilds von Hackeborn* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, and Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996).

1297)¹²—all nuns in the cloister of Helfta near Eisleben (today in Sachsen-Anhalt)—emerged as major writers of visionary accounts, the former two in Latin, the latter in Middle Low German. Many other nuns followed their examples, particularly in Southwest Germany where whole convents strove to experience mystical visions, leading to the creation of so-called “Sister-Books”: large collections of mystical accounts by most members of the respective convents.¹³ Other women writers, such as Margarethe Ebner in Medingen (near Dillingen), Christine Ebner and Adelheid Langmann in Engelthal, Sister Irmgard in Kirchberg, and Elsbeth of Oye (Oetenbach), produced significant “autobiographical” writings enriched with many poems, prayers, meditations, letters and responses from their friends.¹⁴

When we turn to the fifteenth century, three major female figures, who strongly deviated from the religious tradition, deserve our attention: Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken (after 1393–1456), Eleonore of Austria (ca. 1433–1480), and Helene Kottanner(in) (ca. 1400–after 1470).¹⁵ The first two, from the upper echelons of the aristocracy, are well-known for their translations of French courtly romances into German, whereas the latter produced the first personal memoirs in the history of German literature, recounting her personal experiences as a

¹² Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. and introduced by Frank Tobin, Preface by Margot Schmidt (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998).

¹³ Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, for Women, about Women. The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany*, Studies and Texts, 125 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1996); Rebecca L. R. Garber, *Feminine Figureae. Representations of Gender in Religious Texts by Medieval German Women Writers, 1100–1375*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture, 10 (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁴ A fairly large number of medieval German women’s songs have also come down to us, but they were primarily, if not entirely, written by male poets who used the female voice to enrich their poetic repertoire: see *Frauenlieder des Mittelalters*, bilingual, trans. and ed. Ingrid Kasten (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990); see also Hubert Heinen, “The Woman’s Songs of Hartmann von Aue,” *Vox Feminae. Studies in Medieval Women’s Songs*, ed. John F. Plummer (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1981), 95–110; *The Voice of the Trobairitz. Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); *New Images of Medieval Women. Essays toward a Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Edelgard DuBruck, Mediaeval Studies, 1 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989); see also Anne L. Klinck and Ann Marie Rasmussen, eds., *Medieval Woman’s Song: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Ursula Liebertz-Grün, “Höfische Autorinnen. Von der karolingischen Kulturreform bis zum Humanismus,” *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, Vol. 1: *Vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Munich: Beck, 1988), 40–64; for brief introductions and modern German translations, see Albrecht Classen, *Frauen in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Die ersten 800 Jahre*, Women in German Literature, 4 (New York: Lang, 2000). See also Maya Bijvoet Williamson, *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner (1439–1440)*, trans. from the German with Introduction, Interpretative Essay and Notes (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998).

chamber maid for the German Empress Elizabeth, wife of Albrecht II. In particular, she reports that after Elizabeth had been widowed, she asked Helene to secure the Hungarian crown for her yet unborn son and hence for the Hapsburg family. The author describes in astonishing detail and in lively manner how she managed to steal (!) the crown from the Hungarian nobles and secretly transport it to her lady just in time for the delivery of her son. Consequently this male heir to the throne meant that Elizabeth did not have to marry the Polish King Wladislaus III, selected by the Hungarian nobles for her.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, this short catalogue of names already represents a remarkable collection of female voices in medieval Germany, but none composed any significant courtly romances or secular love poetry, as far as we can tell today. There are two exceptions, fifteenth-century writers Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken and Eleonore of Austria. But both worked primarily as translators rendering French verse romances into late-medieval German prose, which led scholars to disregard them as authentic poets.¹⁷ However, most medieval literature could be categorized as 'translation' as only very few texts are truly original and are not based on any sources, such as Wolfram of Eschenbach's unique though fragmentary *Titarel*. Medieval aesthetics held that rewriting and remodeling older traditions were more valuable than creating original narratives.¹⁸

To date we know of no German woman writer who could be compared with the tenth- and eleventh-century Old Norse Skáldonur and to the twelfth-century Old Occitan *troubairitz* poets; we also seek in vain for a

¹⁶ *Die Denkwürdigkeiten der Helene Kottannerin (1439–1440)*, Wiener Neudrucke, 2 (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1971).

¹⁷ Reinhold Hahn, *Von frantzosischer zungen in teütsch: das literarische Leben am Innsbrucker Hof des späteren 15. Jahrhunderts und der Prosaroman Pontus und Sidonia* (A), Mikrokosmos, 27 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1990); remarkably, only seven years later he had changed his opinion entirely and now unequivocally acknowledges Eleonore's authorship as if there were no doubt or question: Eleonore von Österreich, *Pontus und Sidonia*, ed. Reinhard Hahn, *Texte des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, 38 (Berlin: Schmidt, 1997), 12.

¹⁸ Albrecht Classen, "Women in 15th-Century Literature: Protagonists (Melusine), Poets (Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken), and Patrons (Mechthild von Österreich)," *"Der Buchstab tödt – der Geist macht lebendig". Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Hans-Gert Roloff*, ed. James Hardin and Jörg Jungmayr, vol. 1 (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt a.M., et al.: Lang, 1992), 431–58; for the medieval concept of the poet as translator, see Carl Lofmark, "Der höfische Dichter als Übersetzer," *Probleme mittelhochdeutscher Erzählformen*, ed. Peter F. Ganz and Werner Schröder (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1972), 40–62; Albrecht Classen, "Deutsch-französische Literaturbeziehungen im 15. Jahrhundert: 'Volksbücher' als Übersetzungen oder authentische Werke?," *New Texts, Methodologies, and Interpretations in Medieval German Literature (Kalamazoo Papers 1992–1995)*, ed. Sibylle Jefferis, *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik*, 670 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1999), 173–207.

female writer of Middle High German literature comparable to the famous Anglo-Norman Marie de France (ca. 1170–1200) or the outspoken French “feminist” Christine de Pizan (1364–1429?).¹⁹ Disappointingly, at present it is impossible even to locate major secular and vernacular female authors throughout the entire Middle Ages. Perhaps we simply do not know of them because their texts might be lost today, or perhaps women were indeed not empowered to participate in the public discourse on courtly love. To put it differently, our quest for the female voice in the Middle Ages has, with a few exceptions, not yet succeeded despite intriguing indicators such as the enormous literary output of mystical visionaries. Perhaps more women have created literary texts than modern literary histories have acknowledged.²⁰

In other words, apart from the unique history of medieval French literature in which we know of at least two major female writers,²¹ medieval European women did not emerge as significant authors of courtly romances and poetry. Suggestions that a large number of anonymously preserved texts which could have been composed by female writers, or that some male names of courtly love poetry represent pseudonyms for female poets need investigation. To date we only know that women indeed did not write such texts, as we can only observe that no such texts have come down to us as far as archival research has confirmed. Nevertheless, as the subsequent translation of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century German women’s poetry will demonstrate, results depend very much on research methods, investigative and

¹⁹ See also the thirteenth-century Florentine poet La Compiuta Donzella, from whom three sonnets have survived, “A la stagion che il mondo foglia e fiora,” “Lasciar voria lo mondo e Dio servire,” and “Ornato di gran pregio e di valenza,” see Neda Jeni, “La Compiuta Donzella,” *An Encyclopedia of Continental Women Writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson, vol. 1 (New York and London: Garland, 1991), 327–28; for an edition, see *Poeti del duecento. Poesia cortese toscana e settentrionale, Tomo secondo: A cura di Gianfranco Contini* (1960; Milano and Napoli: Giulio Einaudi, 1976), 248–52; the most recent study seems to be by Paola Malpezzi Price, “Uncovering Women’s Writings: Two Early Italian Women Poets,” *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 9 (1988): 1–15.

²⁰ Bea Lundt, ed., *Auf der Suche nach der Frau im Mittelalter. Fragen, Quellen, Antworten* (Munich: Fink, 1991); for a current status report, see Birgit Kochskämper, “Die germanistische Mediävistik und das Geschlechtsverhältnis. Forschungen und Perspektiven,” *Germanistische Mediävistik*, ed. Volker Honemann and Tomas Tomasek, 2nd rev. ed. (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2000), 309–52; Susan Boynton, “Women’s Performance of the Lyric before 1500,” *Medieval Woman’s Song*, 47–65.

²¹ Angelika Rieger, *Trobairitz. Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik. Edition des Gesamtkorpus, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 233 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991); Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. Alfred Ewert with an Introduction and Bibliography by Glyn S. Burgess, French Texts Series (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1995); Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan. Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984).

selection criteria, and perception of what constitutes, in the first place, women's literature. To quote Edward Hallett Carr who wisely ruminated about the historian's role, which can be well adapted here for our own purposes: literary history "is a continuous process of interaction between the [literary] historian and his [her] facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past."²²

Because previous decades were less interested in women's writing, scholars did not seek them out, whereas today, Feminism, by now transformed into Gender Studies, and influenced by poststructuralist thinking, has fundamentally changed our view of women in the premodern era. Again in Carr's terms: "The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past."²³ In other words, modern realization of the significant roles that women have always played in any society leads us to re-examine what we really know about women's lives and specifically their literary contributions during the (German) Middle Ages.

Recent scholarship

Literary histories of medieval German women writers published since around 1985 have provided a detailed outline of all those female authors known today. Subsequently, however, scholarship has contented itself with this canon of women authors outlined above, most members of religious convents, and only few closely connected with worldly, courtly society. Let us first consider the most significant example, *Frauen Literatur Geschichte*, edited by Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann (1985).²⁴ Gnüg and Möhrmann rightly claimed that their book represented the first attempt to provide a broad overview of German women's literary creativity throughout times. But they also warned about deceptive expectations as the history of women's writing was not characterized by continuity, regular growth, or a linear development, as might have been the case for the history of men's writing. According to Gnüg and Möhrmann, women's literature has regularly witnessed serious collapses and often could not rely on any solid long-term traditions, except, perhaps, mystical writings. Consequently, women have rarely been able to establish literary groups, circles, or schools of thought because they were mostly excluded from public life until at least the middle of the twentieth

²² Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 35.

²³ Carr, *What is History?*, 69.

²⁴ Gnüg, Hiltrud, Renate Möhrmann, eds., *Frauen, Literatur, Geschichte: schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd, completely revised and expanded, ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999; orig. 1985).

century. In other words, women's literature tends to be written by individuals who follow their own paths and do not imitate or copy each other.

Although many mystical writers have gained in respect through modern literary scholarship, no women writers have ever achieved acclaim comparable to that enjoyed by the monumental male figures of the classical period in the history of medieval German literature (ca. 1170–ca. 1220), such as Hartmann of Aue, Walther von der Vogelweide, Heinrich of Morungen, Wolfram of Eschenbach, and Gottfried of Strassburg. This also applies, alas, to the later centuries, if not to the entire period until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when finally women were accepted widely and slowly made their voices heard in public, gaining greater recognition. To illustrate this point more dramatically, we all know of Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram of Eschenbach, Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, Francis Petrarch, and Geoffrey Chaucer; but even outstanding women writers such as Hildegard of Bingen or Caterina da Siena do not seem comparable to them. Moreover, the latter two represent entirely different literary orientations, purposes, styles, and hence also public roles in comparison to their male contemporaries.

The first two chapters of *Frauen Literatur Geschichte* focus on the Middle Ages. In the first chapter, Margret Bäurle and Luzia Braun discuss German mystical writers Hildegard of Bingen and Mechthild of Magdeburg, offering brief comparison with Catherine of Genoa, Angela of Foligno, and Theresa of Avila. Ursula Liebertz-Grün contributes a chapter on women writers at the court, focusing, however, mostly on the Occitan troubairitz (writing in the South of France, Provence), the Anglo-Norman writer Marie de France, and Christine de Pizan. Although Liebertz-Grün remarks that women in medieval Germany were almost entirely mute, she briefly mentions two fifteenth-century translators, Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken and Eleonore of Austria, leaving the history of mystical literature to subsequent authors Christel Meier and Ursula Peters. The last paragraphs of Liebertz-Grün's examination present several other authors such as Helene Kottannerin who created the earliest memoirs in the history of German literature; from here the author surprisingly introduces three women writers from the early Reformation period, Katharina Zell, Ursula Weyden, and Argula of Grumbach. In the face of these and other similarly remarkable contributions Liebertz-Grün's claim that medieval German women had been almost entirely mute is strongly contradicted by her evidence for the history of sixteenth-century German literature.

In 1999, Gnüg and Möhrmann published a vastly expanded and completely revised second edition, but a careful comparison of both editions