

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S
WRITING

*Edited by Carolyn Dinshaw
and David Wallace*

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CHRONOLOGY

Date	
c. 425	Anglo-Saxon incursions into England begin.
476	Romulus Augustulus, considered the last of the Roman emperors of Western Europe, is deposed by the German general, Odoacer.
c. 481	Clovis the Frank establishes his hegemony as ruler of northern Gaul (parts of France and Germany). Under the influence of his Christian wife, Clotilda, Clovis converts to Christianity some time between 496 and 508.
512	Caesarius, Bishop of Arles (France), writes a rule, <i>Regula virginum</i> , for his sister Caesaria's convent.
523	In prison, Italian philosopher and theologian Boethius writes <i>De consolazione philosophiae</i> , treating classical literary and philosophical ideas from a Christian perspective. It becomes a widely known text.
c. 525–87	Frankish Queen Radegund (518–87) establishes a convent in Poitiers with herself as its first abbess. Radegund's circle includes the poet, later Bishop of Poitiers, Venantius Fortunatus. Fortunatus and Baudonivia, a sister of the convent, both write lives of Radegund.
529	Benedict of Nursia founds a monastery at Monte Cassino (Italy). Benedict's programme for the community, including regular periods of prayer, work, and study, becomes the model for European monastic communities.
547	Gildas, <i>Liber querulus de excidio Britanniae</i> .
565	Irish monk Columba founds a monastery on the island of Iona (off Scotland) after founding others at Derry (546), Durrow (c. 556), and probably Kells.
590–604	Pope Gregory I establishes the basic institutions of the Roman papacy.

- 591 Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*.
- 597 Pope Gregory dispatches Augustine to England. With the support of King Aethelbert of Kent's Christian wife, Bertha (Clotilda's great-granddaughter), Augustine converts Aethelbert to Christianity.
- 622 Mohammed's *hegira* from Mecca to Medina, starting date of the Islamic calendar.
- c. 630–50 The Irish author known as Pseudo-Cyprian epitomizes the *femina sine pudicitia*, 'the woman without modesty', in *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, a text that becomes well known in medieval Europe.
- 636 Publication of Isidore of Seville's influential encyclopaedia, the *Etymologiae*.
- 664 At Whitby, in a double monastery headed by Abbess Hilda, the Northumbrian King Oswy convenes a synod to determine whether English Christians will follow the Roman Catholic or Celtic Christian calendar for observing Easter.
- 665–75 Barking Abbey founded, with Aethelburg as first abbess. First Anglo-Latin author, Aldhelm, writes *De virginitate* for the nuns and their second abbess, Hildelith.
- 710 Muslims from North Africa invade the Spanish peninsula.
- 716–57 English monk Boniface (born Wynfrith) corresponds with nuns Bucge and Eangyth, Ecgburg, Eadburg, and Leoba during his mission to Germany.
- 731 Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.
- 732 Charles Martel checks the Muslim advance north of the Pyrenees at Tours.
- 744 Foundation of the Benedictine abbey of Fulda by Boniface.
- 761–74 Paul the Deacon writes his *Historia Romana* for Adelpurga, Duchess of Benevento.
- 768–814 Charlemagne's reign; c. 781–2, Charlemagne assembles a group of scholars, including Alcuin of York, at his court at Aachen. Charlemagne's sister Gisele, Abbess of Chelles, is one of Alcuin's most enthusiastic correspondents.
- 800 Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in Rome.
- c. 830 Einhard writes his biography of Charlemagne, *Vita Karoli Magni*.
- c. 840–3 Carolingian noblewoman, Dhuoda, writes the *Liber manualis* for her son, William.

- 871-99 Reign of Alfred the Great of England. Alfred may have initiated the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which began during his reign.
- 889 Marriage of Alfred's daughter Aethelflaed to Aethelraed of Mercia, marking the reconciliation of Wessex and Mercia.
- c. 900 *Beowulf*.
- 911 Aethelflaed, 'the Lady of the Mercians', assumes rule of Mercia from her husband's death until her own in 918. Her brother Edward ousts her daughter Aelfwynn and merges Mercia with Wessex after Aethelflaed's death.
- 960s Hrotswith of Gandersheim, author of dramas, poems, biographies, and histories.
- 960-90 'The Wife's Lament', 'Wulf and Eadwacer'.
- 983-91 Empress Theophanu regent for Otto III.
- c. 1000 Sei Shonagon, *Makura no Soshi* [The Pillow Book].
- c. 1010 Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji Monogatari*.
- 1022 Trial of Jacoba Felicie in Paris for practising medicine.
- c. 1050-C. 1300 Period of growth in population, agricultural production, trade, and urbanization in Europe.
- 1065-7 *Vita Aedwardi* dedicated to Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor (reigned 1042-66).
- 1066 William the Conqueror's Normans invade England.
- Late 1060s-mid 1090s The Bayeux Tapestry depicting the events of the Norman Conquest is designed and executed.
- 1072-85 Pontificate of reform-minded Gregory VII; objectives include stricter enforcement of clerical celibacy.
- c. 1082 Goscelin of St Bertin writes his *Liber confortatorius* for Eve of Angers.
- 1086-7 *Domesday Book*, compiled by the order of William the Conqueror, provides a detailed picture of England at the time of the survey.
- 1095 At the Council of Clermont, Urban II calls for an offensive to recapture Christian holy sites from the Muslims.
- 1096 Robert d'Arbrissel establishes a monastery for women and men at Fontevrault.
- 1097-8 Robert d'Arbrissel establishes a monastery at Cîteaux.
- 1100 (11 November) Edith of Scotland marries Henry I of England. As Queen Matilda she acts as regent for Henry when he is in Normandy.
- 1106 Hildegard of Bingen, aged eight, joins recluse Jutta of Sponheim at the monastery of St Disibod.

- 1109-26 Urraca Queen Regnant of Castile.
- 1116-17 Correspondence between Peter Abelard and his student, then lover, Heloise. In 1118-19, Heloise takes vows and becomes prioress at Argenteuil.
- 1122 Abelard, *Sic et non* [Yes and No].
- 1125 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*.
- 1126 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo deo*.
- 1129 King Baldwin II of Jerusalem's daughter, Melisende, marries Fulk V, Count of Anjou. After Fulk's death in 1143, Melisende rules as regent and then jointly with her son, Baldwin III, until 1161.
- 1129-34 Evicted from Argenteuil, Heloise, in collaboration with Abelard, establishes a new community at the Paraclete.
- 1131 Gilbert of Sempringham founds a Cistercian community that includes a women's house, although Bernard of Clairvaux refuses to admit them to the Cistercian order.
- 1135 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae*.
- 1137 Marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis VII of France (annulled 1152).
- 1138-48 Civil war in England, 'the Anarchy', as Henry I's daughter, Matilda, and her cousin, Stephen of Blois, contest succession after Henry I's death in 1135. Stephen wins militarily, but Matilda's son, Henry, succeeds Stephen as king in 1154.
- c. 1140 Gratian, a Bolognese monk, produces the *Concordance of Discordant Canons*, or *Decretum*, which becomes the basic textbook of canon (Church) law. The survival of Roman and customary law provides grounds for ongoing competition for authority, especially between the Church, which claims supremacy, and secular rulers.
- c. 1140-1240 Period of *trobairitz* writing in the Occitan language of the south of France. There is historical evidence for the Countess of Die, Castelloza, Azalais de Porcairagues, and Clara d'Anduza.
- 1141 Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*.
- 1144 Capture of Edessa by the Muslims leads Eugene III to call a new crusade.
- c. 1145 Construction of a priory at Markyate headed by Christina of Markyate (c. 1096-1165).

- c. 1148 Anna Komnena's *Alexiad*, a history of her father Alexius I Komnenus's reign.
- 1151 Hildegard of Bingen completes her *Scivias* and moves to a new monastery at Rupertsburg.
- 1152 Marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry of Anjou (future Henry II of England).
Elisabeth of Schönau (1129–65) begins to have her visions recorded by her brother and secretary Ekbert in three *Libri visionum* [Books of Visions]: *Liber viarum Dei* (1157), *Revelatio* (Ursula and the 1100 virgins), and *Visio de resurrectione Beate Virginis Maria* (1159).
- 1155 Wace, *Roman de Brut*.
- 1158 Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber vite meritorum*.
- 1160 Aelred of Rievaulx writes *De institutione inclusarum* for his sister.
- 1160–1215 Marie de France, *Lais*, *Fables*, and *Espurgatoire seint Patriz*.
- 1167–95 Abbess Herrad of Landsberg directs production of the *Hortus deliciarum*.
- c. 1170 Nun of Barking, *Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur*.
- c. 1170–8 Chrétien de Troyes's romances, including *Erec et Enide*, *Cliges*, *Yvain*, *Lancelot*, written at Marie of Champagne's court.
- 1173 Waldo, merchant in Lyons (France), having given up his worldly wealth to minister to the poor, has the Gospels translated into Provençal. Waldo and his followers, the Waldensians, receive papal approval for their vows of poverty. The Waldensians also preach, an activity forbidden to the laity, and in 1184 their beliefs are declared heretical.
Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber divinorum operum*.
- c. 1175 Clemence of Barking, *Life of St Katherine*.
- c. 1180 Andreas Capellanus, *De arte honeste amandi*, on courtly love.
- 1187 Third Crusade.
- 1198–1204 Fourth Crusade. Crusaders divert to Constantinople, which the French and Italians capture and loot.
- 1199–1216 Reign of King John. In March 1215, the English barons force him to confirm their feudal rights in Magna Carta.
- c. 1200 *Nibelungenlied*, German epic.

- 1201 Roger of Howden, *Chronica majora*.
- 1207 Giovanni Bernardone of Assisi vows himself to poverty and, as Francis of Assisi, asks for papal sanction, in 1211, of a rule of absolute poverty for himself and his followers.
Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *Conquête de Constantinople*.
- 1208 Pope Innocent III proclaims a crusade against the Cathar movement centred in southern France near Albi – the Albigensian Crusade.
- c. 1210 Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isolde*.
Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*.
- 1214 Women followers of Francis of Assisi receive a rule for a cloistered order from Francis, with Clare of Assisi as first Abbess of the Poor Clares.
- 1215 Recognition of the association, *universitas*, of Parisian teachers that evolves into the University of Paris. The future University of Oxford is in a similar state of development. The University of Cambridge originates with scholars who left Oxford. In Bologna, groups of students form associations to make agreements with teachers, primarily of law. The emergence of universities, which are not open to women, as the new educational centres of medieval Europe bar women from participation in the intellectual life and emerging professions in Europe.
The Fourth Lateran Council makes annual confession and communion obligatory. It also requires declarations of mutual consent to make a marriage valid. The requirement for confession leads to the production of guides for priests to hearing confessions and assigning penances.
Jacques de Vitry, *Vita Mariae Oignianensis* (biography of beguine Mary of Oignies). He obtains Pope Honorius III's permission for beguines to live in common.
- 1216 Pope Honorius III recognizes the Order of Preachers (Dominican friars).
- c. 1220 *Ancrene Wisse* (*Ancrene Riwe*), manual for anchoresses.
- c. 1220–40 Active period of Flemish beguine poet and mystic Hadewijch.
- 1223–6 Blanche of Castile regent for Louis IX of France.
- c. 1225 The 'Wooing Group', *Wohung of ure Lauerde*, *On Lofsong of ure Lauerde*, *On Ureison of ure Lauerde*, and

- the 'Katherine Group', *Hali Meishad*, *Sawles Ward*, *vitae* of St Juliana, St Margaret, and St Katherine.
- 1227-9 Fifth Crusade led by Frederick II, Emperor of Germany and King of Sicily.
- c. 1230 Guillaume de Lorris begins the *Roman de la Rose* as a courtly romance.
- Roger of Wendover, *Flores historiarum*.
- c. 1241 Circle of devout lay women forms around Douceline de Digne (1215/16-74) in Hyères. Around 1250, Douceline establishes a second community in Marseilles.
- 1244 Albigensian Crusade ends with the massacre at Montsegur.
- 1254 Louis IX expels Jews from his domain; expulsion repeated by Philip IV in 1306.
- 1259 Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*.
- c. 1265 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* [The Golden Legend] (collection of saints' lives).
- c. 1270 Jean de Meun completes the *Roman de la Rose*, abandoning the courtly romance and taking a misogynistic turn that draws criticism from Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century.
- 1274 Death of Thomas Aquinas, leaving his *Summa theologiae* incomplete.
- c. 1280 Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Das fliessende Lichte der Gottheit*.
- 1289 The Benedictine nun, Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *Legatus memorialis abundantiae divinae pietatis* (only Book 2 written by Gertrud; Books 3-5 probably partially dictated, and with introductory Book 1 added posthumously).
- 1290 Edward I expels Jews from England.
- 1291-8 *Liber spiritualis* (or *Specialis gratiae*), revelations of Mechthild of Hackeborn written down by Gertrud the Great.
- 1290s Period of cold, wet weather in Europe leading to poor harvests and the Great Famine.
- 1303 Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne*.
- c. 1304 Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*.
- 1305 College of Navarre, University of Paris, created by a bequest from Jeanne of Navarre.

- 1309 Jean de Joinville, *Mémoires; ou histoire de chronique du très chrétien roi St Louis*.
- 1310 Marguerite Porete burned as a heretic in Paris.
- 1311 Council of Vienne orders the suppression of beguines and beguards.
- c. 1315 *Li vida de la benaurada sancta Doucelina*, biography of Douceline de Digne, in Provençal, possibly by Philippine Porcellet.
- 1321 Death of Dante Alighieri.
- 1328 Marriage to Edward III of Philippa of Hainault, patron of the chronicler Froissart and future founder of Queen's College, Oxford.
- 1330 Edward III assumes personal rule of England after his mother, Isabella, and her lover, Roger de Mortimer, have ruled for him since his accession in 1327.
- 1336–8 Elizabeth de Clare (Lady de Burgh) founds Clare College, Cambridge.
- 1337 Beginning of the Hundred Years' War between France and England.
- 1346 Battle of Crécy.
- 1347–9 Bubonic plague, the Black Death, spreads westward from Constantinople, reaching England by 1349. Mortality rates range from a quarter to a half, with the highest rates in urban populations. Plague returns in 1358, 1361, 1368–9, and 1374–5. In the wake of the plague, measures such as the Statute of Labourers, enacted in England in 1351, attempt to regulate wages and prices.
- 1348–51 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*.
- 1352 Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon* (a history of the world).
- 1356 Bridget of Sweden (1302/3–73) founds the Brigittine Order in Vadstena, Sweden. Bridget canonized in 1391.
- c. 1361–2 Giovanni Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, for Andrea Acciaiuoli, Countess of Altavilla.
- Late 1360s William Langland's first version of *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman*.
- 1369 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*.
- c. 1370 Bridget of Sweden, *Liber celestis*.
- 1373 Julian of Norwich experiences visionary episodes; she is an anchoress by 1393 and writes into the fifteenth century.

- 1374 The *Devotio moderna* [Modern Devotion] begins with Geert Grote in Deventer (Netherlands). Houses of Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life observe a religious life but members do not take formal religious vows. Books of Sisters from the late fifteenth century record short biographies of inhabitants to serve as examples and inspiration.
- 1376–8 John Wyclif, *De civili dominio* and *De potestate papae*. Wyclif contests the need for clerical mediation in worship and in biblical interpretation. Wyclif attracts followers, known as Lollards, including many women who take an active role.
- 1378 Catherine of Siena, *Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza*.
Beginning of the Great Schism in the papacy. From Rome and Avignon (France), rival claimants dispute each other's legitimacy until 1417, when Martin V is elected at the Council of Constance.
- 1379 John Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*.
- 1382 (20 January) Marriage of Anne of Bohemia and Richard II. She and her entourage bring contemporary French and Italian cultural influences with them to England.
- c. 1382 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowls*.
- c. 1383 John Gower, *Vox clamantis*.
- c. 1385 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*; Thomas Usk, *The Testament of Love*.
- 1387–1400 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*.
- c. 1390 John Gower, *Confessio amantis*.
Archbishop Arundel reportedly allows Queen Anne (d. 1394) to use an English Bible.
- 1390s British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.x, containing *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, *Patience*, *Cleaness*.
- c. 1396 Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ostensibly composed for a woman recluse.
- 1399 (30 September) Henry Bolingbroke deposes Richard II and becomes the first Lancastrian king of England.
- 1400 John Lydgate, *The Damage and Dystruccyon of Realmes*.
- 1400–1 Christine de Pizan, *Epistre Othea*.
- 1404 Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des faicts et bonnes meurs du sage roi Charles* (Charles V of France).
- 1405 Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, *Le Livre de trois vertus*, and *L'Avison-Christine*.

- 1412 Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de paix*.
- 1413 John Hus, *De ecclesia*. Bohemian scholars take Wyclif's ideas back from Oxford. Hus disseminates them among the Czechs in Bohemia until the Council of Constance has him burned as a heretic.
- 1415 Battle of Agincourt.
Henry V founds Syon, the only English house of Bridget of Sweden's Order of the Holy Saviour (Bridgettines).
- c. 1415-30 John Lydgate, author of *The Siege of Thebes*, *Troy Book*, and *The Fall of Princes*, addresses several of his other works, including *The Life of St Margaret*, *An Invocation to St Anne*, *The Fifteen Joys of Our Lady*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *The Virtues of the Mass*, to the women who commissioned them.
- 1418 Christine de Pizan addresses her *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* to Marie, Duchess of Bourbon, whose father was killed at Agincourt.
- 1422 (30 August) Accession of Henry VI. After Henry becomes insane in 1453, his wife Margaret of Anjou fights to protect his position and their son Edward's succession.
- c. 1425 Thomas à Kempis, *De imitatione Christi*.
- 1429 Christine de Pizan, 'Ditié en l'honneur de Jeanne d'Arc'.
- 1431 (30 May) Execution of Joan of Arc.
- c. 1436 Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*.
- 1445 Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*.
- 1446 Margaret of Anjou (wife of Henry VI) and Elizabeth Woodville (wife of Edward IV) found Queens' College, Cambridge.
- 1451 Isotta Nogarola, *De pari aut impari Evae atque Adae peccato* (dialogue on the relative fault of Adam and Eve).
- 1453 Sultan Mohamedd II's forces seize Constantinople.
The Hundred Years' War ends.
- 1455 Beginning of the Wars of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York in England following the mental collapse of Henry VI.
- 1456 Johann Gutenberg completes printing his 42-line Bible.
- c. 1459-84 Most of the Paston letters exchanged between Margaret Paston, her husband John, and sons John II and John III.
- 1470 Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*.
- 1474 William Caxton prints *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* in Bruges.

- 1476 Caxton begins printing in England, at Westminster, with *The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres* (1477) followed by Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Parliament of Fowls* and Boethius' *De consolacione philosophiae* (1478). Lady Margaret Beaufort is a patron of Caxton and Wynken de Worde.
- 1485 (August) Henry Tudor becomes King Henry VII of England after defeating Richard III at Bosworth Field, ending the Wars of the Roses.
- 1492 With the patronage of Queen Isabella of Spain, Christopher Columbus sets off for Asia and finds the Americas in his path.
- 1505 Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, endows Christ's College, Cambridge. In 1511, she founds St John's College, Cambridge. She also endows theology lectureships at both Cambridge and Oxford.

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
<i>MED</i>	Middle English Dictionary
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary
OS	Original Series
SS	Special Series

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