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The Birgittine Experience

PAPERS FROM
THE BIRGITTA CONFERENCE
IN STOCKHOLM 2011

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& Roger Andersson

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ABSTRACT

The volume The Birgittine Experience contains a broad overview of recent scholarship on Saint Birgitta and the Birgittine Order. The nineteen papers were originally presented at an international conference in Stockholm in October 2011. The conference and the book are interdisciplinary, gathering scholars that specialise in various fields, for instance Art History, Literature, Scandinavian Languages and History. The authors represent ten countries – Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany, England, Poland, Estonia, the United States and Israel. Three major themes were envisaged for the conference: Birgittine art and culture, vernacular texts and literature, and Birgittine activities outside Vadstena. Although a few papers could easily have been placed in more than one group, these themes also form the structure of the printed book.

Key words
Saint Birgitta, Vadstena Abbey, Birgittine Order, medieval history, medieval literature, medieval manuscripts, medieval art, medieval religion, Old Swedish, Middle English

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The Birgittine Experience
A Preface

In October 2011 a large number of medievalists and Birgittine scholars gathered in Stockholm for The Birgitta Conference 2011 – A Marcus Wallenberg Symposium. During three days, speakers from many different countries presented and discussed aspects of recent Birgittine research. The event was arranged by the Birgitta Foundation (Birgittastiftelsen) and generously sponsored by the Marcus Wallenberg Foundation for International Cooperation in Science. The arrangements were hosted by the Swedish National Archives, the Diplomatarium Suecanum and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien).

Several themes had been marked out for the conference: Birgittine art, vernacular texts and literature, and Birgittine activities outside Vadstena. These themes are reflected also in the printed contributions. Nineteen of the conference papers have been included in this volume.

A first section deals with Birgittine traces in Finland, England, Sweden and Estonia. In the two first papers, we learn more about the fragment collections: Ville Walta studies the remnants of the monastery library of Naantali (Nådendal) in Finland, while Anna Wolodarski in her contribution concentrates on fragments from volumes once belonging to Vadstena Abbey. Turning to the Birgittines in England, Veronica O’Mara gives a thorough survey of various vernacular versions of Birgitta’s Life. Stuart Forbes demonstrates that it is possible to name individual persons in a medieval burial site. He has based his paper on a comparison between written evidence and the findings from recent excavations in London. Kersti Markus’s contribution discusses the extraordinary circumstances that led to the foundation of the Birgittine monastery Pirita in Tallinn.

The second section is focused on new research on Birgittine art. The first contribution is by Elina Räsänen who presents her conclusions on a preserved
embroidery work, an altar frontlet used at Naantali. Furthermore, Angela Kappeler discusses the linen crown seen in a number of Birgittine pictorial works and gives a survey of parallels from other monastic orders, especially in Germany. The question of how Saint Birgitta was portrayed in Florentine art is the topic of Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby’s paper. Among other things, she sees Dominican and Franciscan influence behind the presence of Birgittine images in the city, where the Birgittine monastery of Paradiso was established. In a paper connecting the worlds of texts and images, Maria Husabø Oen explores the sometimes contradictory notions of visions and visionary experience found in Birgittine textual sources. Søren Kaspersen has analyzed some medieval Scandinavian wall-paintings. After a close reading of these images and of the text of the Revelations, he discusses their possible place within a Birgittine context and their relation to Vadstena Abbey.

This paper is followed by Emilia Żochowska’s looking into the concept of imagination in a study on the ‘imagined images’ used by Magister Mathias of Linköping and his confessant, Saint Birgitta. In two papers, rituals and manuscripts emanating from the German monastery of Maria Mai in Maihingen demand our attention. In the first of these studies, Corine Schleif, discusses processions and daily walking in a Birgittine closed environment, using the letters written by the Maihingen nun Katarina Lemmel as a main source. The author of the second paper, Volker Schier, analyzes three Processionals preserved from the convent and finds differences from the Vadstena use. Saint Birgitta’s use of examples is the subject of Eva-Marie Letzter’s contribution, where she compares these exempla to those found in Swedish sermon collections. Leena Enqvist uses a normative text – the Additions to the Rule belonging to Syon Abbey – for a discussion about life and social relations in a Birgittine monastery.

The last section contains papers dealing with vernacular texts and manuscripts. Using palaeographical evidence, Nils Dverstorp analyzes the Vadstena provenance of two fifteenth-century manuscripts and draws conclusions about commercial book trade at Vadstena. Furthermore, Roger Andersson discusses editorial issues and presents his preparations for the publication of a new, modern edition of the Swedish version of Birgitta’s Revelations. The ‘Lucidarium’, the customary for the Birgittine sisters, is at the centre of Ingela Hedström’s paper. She looks into the transmission of this little studied text in various manuscripts and gives an overview of the known versions. The last paper deals with language mixture. Using statistical methods, Jonathan Adams analyzes the linguistic variants in a well-known manuscript of Birgitta’s Revelations written in a peculiar mixture of Swedish and Norwegian.
In addition to these nineteen contributors, several other scholars presented papers at the conference. Among them were Stephan Borgehammar, who opened the conference with a key-note lecture (‘Saint Birgitta as a Pilgrim’), Unn Falkeid (‘A Ladder fixed on Earth. Revelation and Resistance in Birgitta’s Liber Questionum’), Mia Åkestam (‘The Art of Mastering Desire: Pictorial Language in Birgitta’s Revelations’), Sissel Plathe (‘The Virgin Mary or Saint Birgitta of Vadstena? A Close Look at the Oldest Painting on Canvas in Scandinavia’), Eva Ahl-Waris (‘The Use of History in Naantali and the Creation of the Commemorative Anatomy of the Monastery’s Memory Landscape’), Ruth Rajamaa (‘The Birgittine Monastery Marienthal near Reval in Medieval Livonia’), Anne Sofie Sifvert (‘The Spanish Birgittines of Azcoitia: Consequences of the French Revolution’), Thomas W. Lassen (‘The “Arma Christi” of Maribo’). One session was devoted to a presentation of some rare, original Birgittine manuscripts in the collections of the National Archives. The animated discussions at the end of each session and at the end of the conference brought forward a large number of important issues. Some remarks in these discussions have found their way into the printed versions of the papers.

The editors would like to express their gratitude to everyone who contributed to the conference and to the publication of this volume, and especially to Dr Suzanne Paul, Cambridge, who checked the English of the printed contributions. We would also like to thank the staff of the Diplomatarium Suecanum and our colleagues at the Centre for Medieval Studies at Stockholm University for fruitful cooperation during the conference. Last but not least we are grateful to the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities for accepting this volume in their conference series and for financing the printing.

Stockholm, January 2013

Claes Gejrot Mia Åkestam Roger Andersson
Fig. 1: Many leaves have suffered smoke or other damage. In the lower margin of this Birgitteine missal a camerale headline can still be seen. Helsinki. National Library of Finland, f.m. I.281, fol. 17v. Photo: The National Library of Finland.
Ville Walta

Birgittine Fragments in Finland
Reconstructing Naantali Abbey’s Library

Acquisition of Manuscripts by Naantali Abbey

The Birgittine double monastery of Naantali was founded in 1438 and quickly rose to a prominent position within the diocese of Turku. At the end of the fifteenth century its prosperity declined due to war and pestilence, and before the monastery could recover, the Reformation came. Like Vadstena, Naantali Abbey was allowed to continue its existence until 1591, when its last inhabitant died.1 During its relatively short lifespan the monastery became one of the leading centres of literacy within the diocese. The purpose of this article is to examine Birgittine manuscript fragments from the National Library of Finland and to discuss how some of them can be connected to Naantali Abbey.2 I will also ask what these fragments can tell us about the monastery’s library and present some problems that occur when using manuscript fragments as source material.

Relatively little information is available on the acquisition of books by the monastery. A number of liturgical books were necessary from the very beginning in order to perform the daily services. These books would have included mass books, breviaries, graduals, antiphonaries and possibly also other books such as psalters or priests’ manuals. Since the sisters had their own weekly services, copies of the Cantus sororum would also have been necessary.3 Some liturgical books may have been included in the earliest recorded donation; on the 12 April

1. For the history of the monastery, see Leinberg 1890; Malin 1928; Maliniemi 1943; Suvanto 1976; Klockars 1979; Lamberg 2007.
2. This article is largely based on two previous studies published in Finnish: Walta 2010a, Walta 2010b.
3. For a discussion of the books necessary in order to conduct the daily services, see Hélander 1991, p. 195; Brunius 1991, pp. 457–458; For the diocese of Turku, see Keskiaho 2008a, pp. 212–219.
1442 the bishop and chapter of the diocese of Turku forwarded to Naantali Abbey goods reserved for a planned Dominican female convent. This donation included books, but unfortunately the charter does not mention which books or how many. From a receipt written in 1448 we know that Naantali had received, bought and borrowed books from Vadstena. This time two books to be returned are mentioned: a manuscript with sermons by Johannes Petri and a collection of exempla. These works were obviously meant to be copied in Naantali and then shipped back to Vadstena.

It is not possible to date the donation from Vadstena precisely. One possibility, however, would be 16 May 1442. At this time brother Laurentius Haquini returned to Finland after having spent a year and a half in Vadstena. Laurentius most likely brought with him one of the surviving Naantali manuscripts, Nådendals closterbok. The manuscript contains various Swedish texts, some of which were apparently written in Naantali. The use of the vernacular as well as the presence of a list of abbreviations suggest that the codex was destined for an audience not that accustomed to reading, probably to the sisters residing in Naantali.

Two surviving letters also testify to the importance of Vadstena as a place for acquiring books. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Naantali’s general confessor, Petrus, wrote to Vadstena thanking them, among other things, for loaning a manuscript of Liber usuum, a collection of rules for the brothers. Interestingly Petrus also complained that the exemplar sent seemed to be deficient and asked Vadstena to send the missing chapters. Individual initiative in acquiring books was shown by sister Kristina Magnusdotter, who, around the year 1515, reported to her uncle Paulus Scheel, dean of the cathedral of Turku, that she had bought some books from Vadstena.

4. FMU 2455. See also Maliniemi 1943, pp. 72–73.
5. FMU 6652; Malin 1928, pp. 43–44. Vadstena lent books to its daughter monasteries on other occasions as well; Malin 1928, pp. 15, 54.
6. Stockholm, National Library, MS A 49; Klemming 1860, p. XXVI. A brief marginal notation on fol. 109r (‘Nadhendals closterbok medh brodher lauris hacvini’) has not only given the manuscript its name but also led scholars to believe that Laurentius was responsible for bringing the manuscript to Naantali. The manuscript might at some point have been in three different parts; Henning 1960, p. 152 n. 221. This is also suggested by two further marginalia which state that the manuscript belongs to the monastery on fol. 170r: ‘Nadhendals closters book’, and fol. 239r: ‘Nadhendals closter bok’.
9. FMU 5852. The letter has been dated to 1515 or 1516, see Klockars 1979, p. 165.
Texts not only moved from Vadstena to Naantali, but also in the other direction. In 1469 brother Jöns Budde, the only Naantali author known by name, worked in Vadstena translating the *Liber Specialis Gratiae* of Saint Mechtild into Swedish. Jöns worked on several other texts as well, and his translations achieved such popularity that Vadstena’s abbess Margareta Klausdotter (1473–1486) had some of them copied and sent from Naantali to Vadstena. One of Budde’s autograph works (the so-called *Jöns Buddes book*) survives. Further textual exchanges between the two monasteries are suggested by certain liturgical similarities. Books surviving in the Naantali Church Archives show that Naantali Abbey also had some second-hand and printed books in its collection.

**MANUSCRIPT FRAGMENTS IN HELSINKI**

Only a few more or less complete codices remain from the monastic library of Naantali, and previous scholars have often concentrated on them when describ-

10. Jöns Budde described the translation process in the colophon of a manuscript lost in a fire at Turku in 1827. The colophon was transcribed by the Finnish scholar Porthan (1867, pp. 143–145).

11. Stockholm, National Library, MS A 58. The manuscript has been described and edited by Hultman 1895. For another description, see Carlquist 2002, pp. 84–87. For a Finnish translation of the texts, see Lamberg 2007, pp. 26–206. The manuscript was found by a Danish scholar, Jakob Langebek, in the cathedral of Turku in 1754. Since it is not mentioned in the inventory of the cathedral from 1651, it probably found its way there between these years. Where the manuscript was located before this is unclear. Langebek took it to Stockholm where it ended up in the Royal Library in 1785; Hultman 1895, p. XVII. The manuscript contains various texts (for example, lives of saints and tales clarifying Catholic doctrine) which have mostly been dated to the years 1487 and 1491. The most problematic part of the manuscript is the last booklet, which contains the legend of Saint Birgitta’s daughter, Katarina. It differs from the rest of the manuscript in both script and orthography. The first and last leaves of the text are missing and thus possible notes from the author are also lost. A debate has raged between scholars on whether or not this booklet is also written by Budde. Nowadays most scholars consider it to be in Budde’s hand. See Lamberg 2007, pp. 269–270.

12. Vadstena’s cult of Saint Henrik, the patron saint of Finland, was probably influenced by texts from Naantali; Heikkilä 2009, pp. 81–82, 144–146; see also Maliniemi 1942, pp. 4–12.

13. Naantali Church Archives, Breviarium III e:1; probably from the early fourteenth century. The manuscript is connected to Naantali through a marginal addition on fol. 426v: ‘B.K. Nådendal 1501’. Naantali Church Archives, Psalterium I b:1, was printed by Bartholomeus Ghotan in Lübeck, no earlier than 1485; GW M36149. The psalter contains texts on the patron saints of Naantali’s monastery, added by hand. Another copy of the same book, also originating from Naantali is in Helsinki National Museum, object 2034:2. On these books, as well as on an inventory of the books found in Naantali’s church in 1628, see Walta 2010b, pp. 40–41.
ing the monastery’s literary activities. In addition to these, manuscript fragments can be found within the collection of parchment fragments preserved in the National Library of Finland and in the Swedish fragment collections, the most important being that of the National Archives in Stockholm. The collection was formed when King Gustav’s bailiffs began reusing valuable parchment leaves from Catholic codices that had become obsolete after the Reformation. One of the most important uses was as covers for bailiffs’ accounts. These accounts were carefully preserved, and thus the parchment leaves used as wrappers survived. The entire bailiffs’ accounts collection was originally stored in Stockholm, but most of the Finnish accounts were shipped to Finland after the treaty of 1809. In Finland the manuscript fragments were removed from the accounts and organized according to their contents. Thus the Finnish fragment collection (fragmenta membranea = f.m.) was formed, which consists of over 9,000 parchment leaves deriving from c. 1500 manuscripts. A large part of the material is liturgical, but hagiographical, juridical, and theological texts are represented as well.

The fragments form an interesting, if not easy, source group. A fragment in the Helsinki collection generally consists of one or several bifolia (Helsinki fragments connected with Naantali have 2–36 leaves). Removed from their original contexts and often badly damaged, they present a challenge to anyone trying to determine where they were written or used. Important pieces of information often written on the flyleaves or covers of a codex (one needs only to think of

14. Some Nordic fragments ended up in London through the donation of George Stephens (see Lehtinen 1994).
17. It should be noted that in connection with the collection in Helsinki I use the term ‘fragment’ to describe all the leaves belonging to a certain manuscript. In Stockholm’s collection several fragments may belong to a single codex. This difference is due to the fact that in Helsinki the parchment wrappers have been removed from the accounts and leaves belonging to the same manuscript have been assembled under a single shelfmark; this has not been possible in Stockholm, where the leaves are still usually wrapped around the accounts.
the shelfmarks and other information preserved in the Vadstena manuscripts) are usually lost with the bindings. Other information, such as a colophons, or scribal identifications are preserved only by chance. It is therefore often necessary to turn to other methods for the localization of a manuscript fragment. In these cases the contents, cameral headlines,\(^{18}\) and the stylistic features of a manuscript can often prove helpful in connecting it to a certain institution. When working with this material, it should be kept in mind that the fragments stored in Sweden, and at the National Library of Finland, are actually a part of the same collection. Several manuscripts have to be patched together from folios located partly in the Swedish collections and partly in Helsinki.\(^{19}\) In addition, a Birgittine manuscript fragment found in the Helsinki collection, or with a cameral headline pointing towards Finland, does not necessarily stem from Naantali.\(^{20}\) Nor can a Birgittine manuscript fragment kept at the Swedish National Archives automatically, and without additional evidence, be connected to Vadstena. In some cases many questions concerning the origin or even provenance of a Birgittine fragment must be left unanswered.

Contents usually provide the most reliable evidence to define the origins and provenance of manuscript fragments. This is especially the case with liturgical fragments. Birgittine sisters had their own text, *Cantus sororum*, for their weekly services. The brothers, on the other hand, used the local rite; in the case of the diocese of Turku a Dominican one. To this rite certain Birgittine additions were made.\(^{21}\) When a liturgical manuscript fragment contains traits pointing both towards the diocese of Turku and towards the Birgittines, it in all likelihood was used, and possibly also written, at Naantali Abbey. A good example is

\(^{18}\) ’Cameral headlines’ refer to the rubrics written on the parchment wrappers after they were bound to the accounts. The rubrics usually contain information on the tax, where it was taken and by whom.

\(^{19}\) The explanation for this can be found in the way the bailiffs were using the manuscripts as binding material, which will be discussed below.

\(^{20}\) For example, I am not convinced that Psalter 12 (Stockholm, National Library, A 103 [fr 27983, 27984] was ever in Naantali, even though one of its cameral headlines points towards Finland; cf. Sandgren 2010, p. 145.

\(^{21}\) The following additional Birgittine feasts are known: Saint Birgitta’s translation (28 May), the feast of Saint Birgitta (23 July), octave for Saint Birgitta’s canonization (14 October), the feasts of Saint Anne (26 July, 9 or 10 September), Saint Joseph (15 January), Saint Joachim (16 December), *commemoratio benefactorum* (14 March), *commemoratio fratum et sororum defunctorum* (23 October) and the feasts of Saint Birgitta’s daughter, Saint Katarina; Malin 1925, pp. 228, 250. For feasts common to the diocese of Turku, see Haapanen 1922, pp. XXVII–XXXI; Malin 1925, *passim.*
missal I.281;\textsuperscript{22} it has some feasts celebrated in the diocese of Turku: Saint Anne (15 December), Saint Henrik (20 January), and the feast of the reliquaries of the cathedral in September. In this same fragment are also included feasts for the octave of Saint Birgitta (14 October) and of Saint Anne on the 26 July. These feasts point towards a Birgittine influence and, together with the feasts typical for Turku, suggest Naantali as the place of origin. Breviary III.122 + VII.13 may serve as another example.\textsuperscript{23} The calendar contains several feasts pointing to the diocese of Turku;\textsuperscript{24} in addition to these there are feasts for the octave of Saint Birgitta (14 October), and for the commemoration of benefactors (14 March) and for deceased brothers and sisters (23 October). This latter feast clearly must have been celebrated at a double monastery; this leaves Naantali as the only possibility in the diocese of Turku. There are six other manuscript fragments that can be connected to Naantali based on their contents.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. I.281; Haapanen 1922, pp. 138–140; Malin 1925, pp. 100–102. A part of this fragment is preserved in Stockholm, National Archives, fr 10364 (Finska cameralia 46:7 1557), this fragment is the outermost bifolium of the fragmentary Helsinki quire, fols. 19–24. The text of the fragment continues straight on from fr 10364 fol. iv to f.m. I.281 fol. 19r and from f.m. I.281 fol. 24v to fr 10364 fol. 2r.

\textsuperscript{23} Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.122; VII.13. See Haapanen 1932, p. 55; Malin 1925, pp. 95–97. F.m. VII.13 was previously catalogued by Malin (1925) as Kal. Vall. Grat. 1; it has since been re-catalogued and renamed. Fragments f.m. III.122 and VII.13 have been connected on the basis of their palaeography and matching binding marks; Keskiaho 2008b, p. 345.

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Malin 1925, pp. 95–97.

\textsuperscript{25} These include the following fragments: Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. I.276, where the feasts of Saint Anne (15 December), Saint Simeon (9 February) and Saint Knut (7 January) indicate a Turku provenance. A Birgittine influence is suggested through the masses for Saints Joachim and Joseph; Haapanen 1922, pp. 135–136; Malin 1925, pp. 97–100. Stockholm, National Archives, fr 27590 (Fogdarnas restantieräkenskaper 8:9 1557) also belongs to this fragment; it should be placed between fol. 25–26 and fol. 27–28. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. I.344 includes the offices of Saints Anne, Joseph and Katarina, most likely indicating a Naantali provenance; Haapanen 1922, p. 176; Malin 1925, p. 228 n. 1. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. I.356 has sequences for Saint Joachim and Saint Joseph suggesting a Birgittine origin. It is connected to the diocese of Turku through sequences for Saint Henrik and Saint Simeon; Haapanen 1922, p. 183; Malin 1925, p. 99. The gradual, Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. II.117 includes the feast of reliquaries used in Turku and the feast of Saint Birgitta’s translation common to the Birgittines. The feast of Saint Anne in July also points towards a Birgittine origin; Haapanen 1925, pp. 67–69; Malin 1925, pp. 102–103. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.125 contains Saint Henrik’s translation feast (18 June), only celebrated in the diocese of Turku, and the feast of Saint Anne in July indicating a Birgittine monastery; Haapanen 1932,
Fig. 2: Leaf from a calendar showing feast for Birgitta’s canonization and its octave. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. VII.13, fol. 2r. Photo: The National Library of Finland.
When the calendar or *de sanctis* part of a liturgical manuscript has not survived, localizing manuscripts becomes considerably more difficult. The same goes for other generally Birgittine texts, such as the *Cantus sororum*, or the Birgittine rules, where no differences related to diocese or monasteries can be detected. In these cases it may prove useful to take a look at the information left on the fragments either by the royal chamber or the bailiffs. As the parchment leaves were used as covers for accounts, headlines containing the year, the name of the tax levied, and the area where it was taken were written on the fragments. This information may help in determining where a certain manuscript was used. Studies have suggested that the manuscripts could have been used as binding material, either locally by bailiffs or centrally by a tax chamber in Stockholm or another centre. If a fragment contains many folios with cameral headlines from the same place and over a long period of time, this suggests that the manuscript was taken apart and used locally. If, on the other hand, the cameral headlines are from several different areas and cover a short period of time, this may suggest that the fragment was used centrally. This is a logical consequence of the fact that a centrally organized tax chamber would process several accounts from different areas using the folia as binding material more quickly and in a more organized manner than a bailiff working locally, who might work in a single area for a long time, producing only a certain number of yearly accounts.26 Folia bound centrally could also originate from the diocese of Turku – especially at a time when the diocese had its own tax chamber.27 In addition to the cameral headlines, audit markings also provide important evidence. If the accounts were audited by a scribe known to have worked at the tax chamber in Turku, it is reasonable to assume that the accounts were also bound within the diocese. It has also been suggested that leaves with deficient cameral headlines, lacking, for example, the year, the name of the bailiff, or the place where the accounts are from, were more likely to have been used locally by the bailiffs themselves.28

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28. Haapanen 1922, pp. XXIV–XXVI.
Even though this sounds logical, the hypothesis does not seem to stand up under careful scrutiny.  

Fragment III.189 is a Birgittine breviary based on a weekly cycle and does not contain the helpful de sanctis parts or other information that could help to localize it. The fragment consists of eleven large folia, ten of which have a cameral headline. Nine of these accounts stem from the district of Ostrobothnia (Pohjanmaa) and fall between the years 1591 and 1609. This concentration of the accounts to a small geographical area, as well as the long period of time during which the same manuscript was used as wrapping material, suggests that it was bound locally; this conclusion is supported by the fact that its folia were used by two different bailiffs working in the area. This means that the manuscript, or at least parts of it, were probably passed from one bailiff to another, and were most likely acquired from the diocese of Turku. Its Birgittine contents make Naantali Abbey a likely origin. Antiphonarium IV.69 contains a part of the Birgittine Cantus sororum. The fragment has only four folia and two cameral headlines, so no conclusions can be drawn based upon geographical or chronological usage. On fol. 2r there is, however, a mark indicating that the account was audited at Turku. This makes it likely that the fragment was also bound into the accounts within the diocese. On the basis of the Birgittine contents, a likely provenance would again be the monastery of Naantali. Some further fragments can be connected to the monastery’s library in a similar way.

30. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.189; Haapanen 1932, pp. 84–85.
31. Folia of the manuscript were used to bind the accounts of Tomas Jöransson and Augustin Larsson. The first was bailiff of Pohjanmaa in 1585–1595 and the second in 1598–1601; Almquist 1922–1923, IV, pp. 22, 228.
32. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. IV.69; Taitto 2001, pp. 95–96.
33. The marking is by Lars Trulsson (Lasse Trulinpoika). He is known to have audited accounts in Turku in 1601–1602; Lehtinen 1961, p. 129.
34. A rule book for the Birgittine sisters (Lucidarum; cf. Hedström in this volume) can be connected to the monastery in the same way. It contains a note by Thomas Henriksson who worked as an auditor in the tax chamber of prince John; Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 128, fol. 5r. The shelfmark of the fragment has been changed during the cataloguing; I have previously (Walta 2010a, 2010b) referred to this fragment under its old shelfmark (TH AA 129). For a brief description and an edition of the fragment, see Elmgren 1868. On Thomas Henriksson, see Kiuasmaa 1962, p. 593 (1071). It is very likely that the antiphonary Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. IV.132 was also kept in the monastery. It contains parts of the Cantus sororum; on fol. 9r we find a note: ‘Gabriell Benssons Egen hand’. This connects the fragment to a bailiff who worked in Masku 1609–1610; Almquist 1922–1923, IV, p. 59; Taitto 2001, pp. 141–142.
Layout, script and decoration can help to connect additional manuscripts to the ones already connected to the monastery through their contents or other means. At this point it is possible to identify two groups of fragments that share striking similarities especially when it comes to the initials in the noted sections of the manuscripts. The first group contains up to nineteen manuscripts and can be linked to the monastery through a gradual that contains both the feast for the relics of Turku Cathedral and the translation feast for Birgitta. The second group contains only four manuscripts and is connected to the monastery by antiphonary IV.69, which was discussed above. Antiphonary IV.69 can be determined as generally Birgittine. Since one of the other manuscripts contains a feast particular to the diocese of Turku, and since the whole group is written by a single scribe, it seems likely that all the manuscripts originate from Naantali.

The smaller of these groups was written by a single scribe, who possibly also worked as the decorator. In the larger group at least three or four different hands can be seen; this suggests an organized production process. The group consists mainly of graduals and antiphonaries. Since only one (or possibly two) manuscripts in the group can be connected with Naantali Abbey, it remains uncertain whether the manuscripts were actually written there; production could also have taken place outside the monastery. Some of the group’s fragments can be dated to the 1460s or 1470s. Maybe the manuscripts in question were produced as the liturgical library was being built, possibly in connection with the consecration of the monastery which took place in 1462. Until further evidence is found, we can only speculate.

35. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. II.117; Haapanen 1925, pp. 67–69; Malin 1925, pp. 102–103. Other fragments connected to the group are: Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. II.90, II.115, II.118, II.120, II.121, IV.138, IV.156, IV.157, IV.160, IV.170, IV.173, VII.132 + III.180, VII.65, VII.78; Stockholm, National Archives, fr 7836 (Kammararkivet, Varuhus och handlingar 57:2) + fr 8259 (Kammararkivet, Fin­ ska Cameralia, Baltiska fogderäkenskaper F.390:111:4); Helsinki, National Library of Finland, MS Aö II 55 (Graduale Ilmolense), and possibly Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.122 + VII.13. There are several fragments in the Swedish National Archives that can be connected with the Finnish fragments; for details and a thorough analysis of the whole group, see Keskiaho 2008b. Since that article was published, additional fragments have been added to the group, see Keskiaho 2010, pp. 418–419.

36. In addition to Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. IV.69, this group contains the fragments Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. I.148, I.201, and I.238. I.238, a missal, has Saint Anne’s feast on 15 December, as is typical for the diocese of Turku. This group is more closely analyzed in Walta 2011. See also Walta 2010b, pp. 46–50.
LOCALIZATION PROBLEMS

In addition to the fragments presented above, there are several others that can be broadly defined as Birgittine but have not yet been connected to any specific monastery through their contents, cameral headlines or style. Among these are, for example, Birgittine breviaries and antiphonaries, such as f.m. III.127. This manuscript contains no clear evidence of the place where it was used. German rubrics added on the last folio of the fragment by a later hand indicate that one of its users was familiar with the language. Since German was commonly used at least in Swedish cities and among burghers, these rubrics do not necessarily mean that the manuscript was not housed at Vadstena or Naantali. As an example of a Birgittine manuscript with a clearly foreign origin, a calendar fragment with contents suggesting usage in Denmark or Estonia can be cited.

In the collection there are also some fragments containing texts that had a special importance in Birgittine monasteries, such as Birgitta’s *Revelations*, which was, however, also well-known outside the order. The provenance of most texts relating to the *Revelations* is often equally difficult to decide.

37. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.127, fol. 6v, Haapanen 1932, pp. 57–58. Stockholm, National Archives fr 25034 (Cantor 2) probably belongs to the same manuscript; it also contains German words written above the text. Other unlocalized Birgittine fragments are: Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.128, Haapanen 1932, p. 58; Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. III.165, Haapanen 1932, pp. 163–164, and Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. IV.128; Taitto 2001, p. 139.

38. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. VII.11. The combination of feasts for Gotthard episcopus (5 May), Bonifatius (5 June), and Oswald (5 August, shared with Dominicus) indicates German or Danish provenance (note also Magnus 19 August and Alexius 17 July). A Birgittine house is suggested by the presence of Birgitta’s translation (28 May) that is celebrated as *totum duplex*. This feast for Saint Birgitta may be a later addition, but it still indicates at least a Birgittine usage.

39. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 108; see Lehtinen 1988, pp. 163–164, where the fragment is given an incorrect shelfmark, TH AA 15. There are additional leaves to this fragment in the Swedish collection. They indicate a possible Vadstena origin (cf. Wolodarski in this volume). A text containing the index attached to the end of the *Revelations* could possibly originate from Naantali; Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 109; Lehtinen 1988, p. 163. On the manuscripts of the *Revelations*, see Undhagen in Birgitta, Rev. I.

40. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 86 contains Birgitta’s *Sermo angelicus*. The fragment was bound into the same account book as a gradual (Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. II.11); see Haapanen 1925, p. 8. The encyclopaedia of the most important biblical terms, written by Birgitta’s first confessor Mathias Övddddsson (Magister Mathias) probably comes from Vadstena; many leaves are found in the Swedish National Archives (Theol AA 144, containing several fragments); Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 115, see Lehtinen 1988, pp. 163–164; Collijn 1914, pp. 60–62.
A fragment containing the vows taken by a new member of the order is likely to originate from a Birgittine monastery.\(^4\) It is written in a large and clear script that suggests it might actually have been in use at the initiation ceremony. Whether or not it was written, or even used, in Naantali remains uncertain.

When we take into consideration some of the fragments found in the Swedish collection, further leaves connected to some of these generally Birgittine fragments are found. This is the case with a register of Birgitta’s *Revelations* consisting of six folios in Helsinki and ten folios in Stockholm.\(^4\) Such a text would have primarily interested the Birgittines and is likely to have originated in Vadstena or Naantali, but it is difficult to tell which one.\(^4\) Working with two separate collections, it is necessary to take both of them into account simultaneously; if this is not done, relevant information may be neglected: there are two leaves from a sequentiary in Helsinki and a four further leaves in Stockholm.\(^4\) The Finnish fragment had not been identified as Birgittine,\(^4\) while, based on a specifically Birgittine sequence, one of the Swedish ones has.\(^4\) To recognize the Finnish fragment as Birgittine, a scholar needs to be aware of the additional leaves in the Swedish archives.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Fragments form a significant addition to the manuscripts that have previously been connected with Naantali Abbey. Counting only the fragments that can be connected specifically with Naantali either through contents, cameral headlines or style, the number rises to c. 30.\(^4\) If the manuscripts and printed materials

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41. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 129; Elmgren 1868, pp. 111–114. The shelfmark of this manuscript has been changed; in previous articles (Walta 2010a, 2010b) I have cited this manuscript under its old shelfmark (TH AA 130).  
42. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 109; Stockholm, National Archives, codex 1378 (including fr 7927, 9624, 9654, 10815, and 11251).  
43. Comparing the cameral headlines provides no new information: the leaves kept in Stockholm were used as binding material in the 1560s, while the Finnish leaves were used in 1570 and 1593.  
44. Helsinki, National Library of Finland, f.m. II.58; Stockholm, National Archives, fr 28121 (Finska cameralia, Extrakt och maculatorium 1578–1579 70:5); Stockholm, National Library, fr 28119 (A 103).  
46. Stockholm, National Library, fr 28119 contains the sequence ‘Tota pulchra es, amica’, which was plausibly written by Petrus Olavi and appears only in Birgittine contexts; Moberg 1927, p. 72 n. 2.  
47. It is still somewhat debatable how many fragments actually belong to the larger group of stylistically connected fragments.
FIG. 3: Vows taken by the brethren entering the order; from Naantali or Vadstena? Helsinki, National Library of Finland, TH AA 129, fol. 1r. Photo: The National Library of Finland.
that have survived in other collections are taken into account as well, we can add a further seven books to the library. To this number more manuscripts can still be added by taking into account the works, now lost, but mentioned in the documents or known to have been written by Jöns Budde.48 Some observations should be made about the nature of these manuscripts: most of the fragments mentioned here are liturgical, not only because liturgical material forms a large part of the fragment collection, but because their contents often make it possible to draw conclusions about their origins.49 Since these liturgical manuscripts were probably not kept in the library, but rather in the sacristy of the church or at the altars, they only tell us about a small part of the collection. We lack almost all evidence of, for example, the Naantali brothers’ activity in preaching.50 The situation is equally difficult for manuscripts without Birgittine contents – for example, theological manuscripts – that were sent or brought to the monastery; identifying them from the fragment material is practically impossible.

The sisters’ convent is represented in the collection by the Cantus sororum fragments. Some further information about the texts read there can be gained through the two vernacular manuscripts, Jöns Buddes book and Nådendals closterbok.51 Texts included in these manuscripts also appear in some fragments of the Helsinki collection.52 Whether or not these manuscripts were in fact a part

48. These have been collected in Walta 2010b, pp. 58–59.
49. It should be kept in mind that a manuscript with contents indicating Naantali was not necessarily written there. Certainty concerning a manuscript’s origin can be gained for example from Jöns Buddes bok, where the fact is explicitly stated in several colophons; for example Stockholm, National Library, MS A 58, fol. 66v: ‘Thet sextern utthydde broder Jones Räk eller budde I nadendall closter Anno domini mcdxci’.
50. Some Vadstena texts concerning Saint Henrik could have originated from Naantali; Heikkilä 2009, pp. 135–136. There are also several sermon collections in the Helsinki collection (in the TH AA section). Comparing these with some of the Vadstena sermons might prove fruitful.
52. I name especially Helsinki, National Library of Finland, Suec. 1 and Suec. 4, which, judging by their script and layout, seem to originate from the same manuscript. Of these, Suec. 1 contains a part of a translation of Bernard of Clairvaux’s Meditations which is also present in Jöns Buddes book (Stockholm, National Library, MS A 58), and in Stockholm, National Library, MS A 9 and A 27 (from Vadstena). Suec. 4 contains a translation of Heinrich Suso’s work Horologium aeternae sapientiae (Gudeliga snilles väckare) that is also known from Naantali’s closterbok (Stockholm, National Library, MS A 49) and from Stockholm, National Library, MS A 4 and A 27; see Bergström 1868–1870, p. IX. It is not altogether impossible that other vernacular texts could have belonged to the library as well: Helsinki, National Library of Finland, Suec. 9 contains a fragment of the Järtecksbocken, known from a Vadstena codex (Stockholm,
of the monastery’s collection is uncertain. No clear evidence suggesting that the Naantali sisters worked as scribes survives. Given the activity of the Vadstena sisters in book production and the fact that some of them spent time in Naantali as well, it does, however, seem plausible.53

Apart from the two groups discussed above, I have not been able to identify individual scribes who worked on more than one Birgittine manuscript in the Helsinki collection. There is also considerable variation in the decoration and codicology of the manuscript fragments. It would seem that, apart from the larger manuscript group presented above, no clear Naantali style can be detected. This is not unexpected, since even in Vadstena a uniform style can only be detected in the sisters’ convent from the end of the fifteenth century.54 In Naantali new books were most likely written when the need arose, and by whoever was capable of the task. Even so, the wealth of fragment material associated with the monastery clearly confirms that Naantali was among the most important centres of literacy in the medieval diocese of Turku.

National Library, MS A 110); Helsinki, National Library of Finland, Suec. 2–3 contain vernacular versions of Bernard of Clairvaux’s texts; Helsinki, National Library of Finland, Suec. 5, on the other hand, is rather similar in outlook to Suec. 1 and Suec. 4 (though not from the same manuscript).

53. On Vadstena sisters as scribes, see Hedström 2009. Elisabeth (Elseby) Gjordsdotter and Birgitta Andersson both had books written, and both spent time in Naantali in the beginning of the sixteenth century; Lamberg 2007, p. 302. Keskiaho (2008b, pp. 343–344) suggests that the larger group of manuscripts from Naantali might have been written by the sisters, who probably had learned writing at the monastery, and therefore were more likely to have written in similar hands and to have produced similar decorations.

54. See especially Hedström 2009.
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The Vadstena Library
Making New Discoveries

The Vadstena Library in the widest sense of the word comprised mainly three clusters of books: the library books of the brethren, the books used by the sisters for public or private reading, and the liturgical books. Of these, the service books were particularly badly damaged during the Reformation, and although some remnants have been identified in the fragment collection of The National Archives of Sweden (Riksarkivet), it is still possible to make new discoveries among these fragments.

The Vadstena Books During the Reformation

The dissolution of Vadstena Abbey in 1595 was the last act in the long process of the suppression of the Birgittine order in Sweden. The abbey’s book collection did not escape this drama, although it is badly attested in the written sources. The Vadstena Memorial Book (Diarium Vadstenense) relates how a large number of books, together with many other precious objects, were removed from the convent in 1543,¹ and the last entry from 1545 describes the destruction of part of the convent’s wall by Vadstena citizens.² This gives us a palpable feeling of the decline and defenceless state of the abbey. Thefts are recorded, and it is known that the abbess was urged in 1580 by the papal legate Antonio Possevino to transfer books from the sacristy to the house of the sisters as several items had disappeared.³

¹. Gejrot 1988, no. 1190.
². Gejrot 1988, no. 1197.
King Johan III, a protector of the abbey, seems to have taken away part of the collection to Stockholm, and it is known that the king’s son Sigismund owned, when prince, several incunabula from the convent’s library.  

After the dissolution parts of the holdings were removed to Vadstena castle, and another part left in the House. It appears that a number of the books at the castle were inserted under the bases of cannons to lessen their recoil, one of many ways of ‘recycling’ medieval parchment books. Some books seem to have been taken by the sisters into exile in Poland, and two manuscripts now in German libraries provide evidence of this.  

The books were not safe anywhere. The *Codex Kalmarnensis* and the *Codex Berghmanianus*, two important Latin manuscripts of the *Revelations* now in Lund University Library, were probably separated from the collection after the dissolution. An inventory from 1598 records books missing and removed from the church, and another from 1635 records the songbooks being used in the wind system of the pipe organ, and other books removed to the chamber of Johan, Duke of Östergötland, (d. 1618).  

The last record draws attention to an important factor in the devastation of the Vadstena book collection – the binding practices of the royal administration. Thousands of manuscripts and printed books, once in ecclesiastical ownership, were dismembered and their leaves reused as wrappers for a variety of account books by the administration from the 1530s for about one hundred years. These wrappers were usually double leaves from parchment books in folio – the material most suitable for wrappers. As a result, few complete parchment books in folio with a medieval Swedish provenance have survived, although many

4. Walde 1931, pp. 60 f. 
5. Gödel 1916, pp. 127 f., based on information from Johannes Messenius in *Scandia illustrata*. 
7. The *Codex Kalmarnensis* was possibly taken to Kalmar after the dissolution of the convent, see the online manuscript catalogue available at http://laurentius.ub.lu.se/volumes/Dep_1/detailed/#Deposition%201 Acquisition; *Codex Berghmanianus* was according to notes on the old binding which was removed in 1803, owned by Colonel Johan Clausson Uggla (d. 1645), a member of a noble family in Västergötland, see http://laurentius.ub.lu.se/volumes/Mh_20/detailed/. He might have acquired the manuscript not long after the dissolution or he might have inherited it from his father Claes Arvidsson, who supported King Sigismund III and participated in the Swedish royal assembly in Vadstena in 1598. 
fragments, still covering account books, are preserved in the National Archives.9

Some of these fragments are apparently the remains of Vadstena books. One such example is a fragment of the famous biblical concordance by Magister Mathias. According to a list of Mathias’s works, this concordance was originally contained in three volumes, but only 159 leaves or part-leaves have survived from a total of about seven hundred.10 It seems that the last two volumes were confiscated in 1543, for leaves from them were reused as wrappers in Stockholm in the 1550s. The first volume went elsewhere after the dissolution, because its leaves were reused after 1600 for accounts from Östergötland.11

**THE VADSTENA BOOKS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**

The fate of the largest medieval book collection in Scandinavia was investigated thoroughly by the historian Vilhelm Gödel. He described how the remnants of the Vadstena book collection were removed to Stockholm in 1619, probably on the initiative of Johan Bureus, the first Director of the National Archives and the Royal Library. When it arrived in the capital in the following year, it was deposited in the former convent of the Friars Minor on Gråmunkeholmen. In 1621 King Gustavus Adolphus donated the Latin manuscripts and printed books


The fragments kept in the National Archives of Sweden have been described in two different catalogues: CCM (Catalogus Codicum Mutilorum), which is the old card catalogue, and MPO (Medeltida PergamentOmslag), which is a later catalogue in the form of a database. Each entry in the CCM catalogue records one manuscript which can consist of one or several fragments with shelfmarks (Mi, Br, Ant, Theol AA etc.) that indicate the text category of the manuscript. The CCM catalogue has now been incorporated into the MPO database. In the database are three kinds of shelfmarks: Fr + numeral for each single fragment both in the CCM (Fr 20000 – . . . . .) and MPO catalogues (Fr 1 – . . . . . .); Codex + numeral, for two or more fragments that belong to the same MS in the MPO catalogue (the number of the Codex is not definite and can be changed when more manuscripts are reconstructed in the future); and, finally, CCM shelfmarks Mi, Br, Ant, Theol AA etc. + numeral (see above). If any MPO-fragments belong to the same manuscript as one already identified in the CCM catalogue, they have the CCM shelfmark.

to Uppsala University, but the items in Swedish were regarded as of particular importance for national history, and these were transported to the Government Offices of the King, and then to the National Archives.12 Numerous annotations in the manuscripts show that they were frequently studied by scholars.13

In 1667 the collection was delivered to Uppsala University to the newly established department (*Antikvitetskollegiet*) responsible for collecting evidence of the Swedish past, and later it passed to its successor in Stockholm (*Antikvitetsarkivet*). During this period several Vadstena manuscripts were lost. Some were taken away for their bindings; several were borrowed by antiquarians and never returned; and others passed to private owners.14 Eventually, in 1780, the manuscripts and printed books were acquired by the Royal Library, and the documentary material by the National Archives.15

Despite its losses, the medieval Vadstena book collection has survived the Reformation better than any other Swedish collection. Of about 1500 manuscripts and printed books from the library of the brethren, almost a quarter have survived. Most of these are small in size and on paper, many containing sermons, including thirty-nine incunabula.16

**FRAGMENTS OF VADSTENA BOOKS AT THE SWEDISH NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

To these should be added at least eleven fragmentary codices at the National Archives. Most of them contain texts essential for the Birgittine order and this, combined with their archival provenance, appears to point to a Vadstena origin.17

16. I owe gratitude to Håkan Hallberg who gave me access to his unprinted table of the library of brethren, as well as to Wolfgang Undorf who gave me information on Vadstena incunabula in Swedish libraries. According to Hallberg’s table, about 364 items, including both manuscripts and printed books, have survived.
17. One breviary (Br 658), one calendar (Kal 5), three *Cantus sororum* (Cant sor 1, Cant sor 5, Cant sor 6), one missal (Mi 378), one ordinal (Ord 2), one processional (Proc 3), one psalter (Ps 12), two sequentiaries (Sequ 16 from the same manuscript as Cant
Besides the biblical concordance of Master Mathias mentioned earlier, there are two fifteenth-century manuscripts of Mathias’s commentary on the Book of Revelation, the *Summa de Apocalypsim.* Only one leaf survives of one, but nineteen of the other.¹⁸ A bailiff at Vadstena castle, who must have had access to Vadstena books, used the leaves of the latter copy to bind accounts after 1595.¹⁹ Both manuscripts were written by different scribes, but neither of them seems to be the scribe Petrus Olavi who is recorded in the Memorial Book as a scribe of the *Summa* and whose hand is known from some manuscripts at Uppsala.²⁰

There are also three fragment copies of Birgitta’s *Revelationes* in Latin from the same century. The first copy has thirty-eight leaves, all used for Vadstena castle accounts between 1582 and 1593, a strong indication of a Vadstena origin.²¹ Twenty-four leaves have survived from the second. All but one were used in the 1550s for accounts from different tax regions, probably indicating Stockholm as the place of binding. The copy was probably confiscated in 1543, like the first volume of Mathias’s concordance, and its leaves reused ten years later. Moreover, it includes pen-flourished initials characteristic of several manuscripts with a secure Vadstena provenance.²² Only three leaves survive of the third codex, all on accounts from the Vadstena region in 1627. Their script is very distinctive and has obvious similarities to that of the other manuscripts, suggesting a Vadstena origin.²³

The *Revelations* in Old Swedish are represented by five fragments from three different manuscripts. Although their origin cannot be determined, all probably come from Vadstena, perhaps from the book collection of the sisters.²⁴

Two more mutilated manuscripts should be mentioned. One is a *Speculum historiale* – one of three parts of a very popular medieval encyclopaedia by Vin-
cent of Beauvais.25 It is from the fourteenth century, perhaps acquired in Paris at the beginning of the fifteenth century by two Vadstena brothers, Thoririus Andree and Johannes Hildebrandi, who, according to a list, bought twenty books there, including the *Speculum*. Its archival provenance seems to confirm a Vadstena provenance. Other titles on the list are also to be found in the fragment collection, but it is much more difficult to assess their provenance.26 The second is a recently discovered fragment in the Regional Archives (Landsarkivet) in Vadstena of the *Summa aurea* of Henricus of Segusio, usually called Hostiensis, a standard work of medieval canon law. It is almost certainly a Vadstena book as it was used for binding local accounts. The fragment includes the illustrated diagram for *arbor bigamiae*, illustrating the marriage impediments of bigamy, a rarity among the fragmentary codices of canon law in Sweden.27

There are remnants of seven incunabula probably owned by Vadstena in the fragment collection. The interest of the Birgittines in printed books is well known, and as Vadstena was the wealthiest monastic institution in Sweden, it had the economic resources to acquire them. They include the Gutenberg Bible (Fig. 1), and four other remarkable Mainz incunables: a 1457 *Psalter* (Fig. 2), Johannes Balbus, *Catholicicon* (1460), Thomas Aquinas *Commentary on Peter Lombard’s Sentences* (1469), and *Liber sextus Decretalium* with the gloss of Johannes Andreae (1465), as well as first edition of Birgitta’s *Revelationes* (1492), and, possibly, the *Sermons* of Johannes Herolt (1476). The fragments of the Gutenberg Bible, Psalter, Catholicicon, Thomas Aquinas and Revelations are today divided between the National Archives and the National Library.28

27. Vadstena Landsarkiv, shelfmark unknown to me. Only three miniatures have been found in the law fragment collection at the National Archives. The fragment in the Vadstena Landsarkiv may be from the same manuscript as nine fragments of eighteen leaves in the National Archives, Fr 216 etc. = Codex 31.
28. Collijn 1914, s. 27, Collijn 1917, s. 361. Gutenberg Bible GW 4201 = National Archives, Inc 15 and National Library, Coll (S) 200; Mainz Psalter GW M36179 = Fr 338 etc. (Codex 592) + Inc 2 and National Library, Coll (S) 907; Catholicicon GW 3182 = Inc 10 and National Library, Coll (S) 137; Thomas Aquinas GW M46386 = Inc 7. All fragments were used in the bindings of accounts from the Vadstena region; *Liber sextus* GW 4857 = Inc 12; Birgitta, *Revelationes* GW 4391 = Inc 11 and National Library, F 1700 Fol. 40b; Johannes Herolt GW 12341 = Fr 10054. The fifty-eight surviving leaves from the Gutenberg Bible are certainly from a single copy, as are the forty-five leaves of Birgitta’s *Revelationes* (1492). For the Vadstena copy of the Gutenberg Bible, see White 2010, pp. 29–30. The sixty-eight surviving leaves from the Mainz Psalter are from three different copies, viz. from 1. a short edition with Gothic notation, 2. a short edition with square notation,
FIG. 1: Gutenberg Bible, fol. I 307r, National Archives, Fr 548 (= Inc. 15). Photo: Emre Ölgün, National Archives.
FIG. 2: Mainz Psalter, 1457 (long version), fol. 52r, National Archives, Fr 4347. Photo: Emre Olgun, National Archives.
The number of books that belonged to the sisters is unknown. Today between seventy-five and eighty-five are extant, many with ownership inscriptions. There are service books such as *Cantus sororum*, the weekly office of Birgittines, prayer books in Swedish, several with Latin additions, as well as pastoral and devotional texts in the vernacular for the daily reading at table.\(^9\)

The liturgical books used by the brethren have survived very badly and it is unknown how many there were originally. Fifteen volumes are in Uppsala University Library, but all are informally-made small books, and all but four are on paper.\(^{10}\) Some of the books contain pressmarks and thus testify to the system of shelfmarks, but it is impossible to reconstruct a whole corpus.\(^{31}\) According to the Rule of Birgitta, the convent should have only the liturgical books that were needed. Nevertheless, each altar had to have a set of the necessary books.\(^{32}\)

No complete folio choir book has survived. When the brethren left the convent in 1550, their service books were considered useless in an increasingly hostile Protestant environment. The religious needs of sisters were neglected, and for long periods they were unable to participate in the Catholic mass.\(^{33}\)

The remnants of twelve mutilated liturgical manuscripts with a Vadstena provenance have been identified in the National Archives. Eleven have been identified through textual evidence and one by its decoration. They comprise one each of a missal, breviary, ordinal, psalter and processional, as well as two sequentiaries, two calendars and three *Cantus sororum*.\(^{34}\) This tiny number of codices attributed to Vadstena indicates, on the one hand the general difficulties of assessing the textual evidence in fragmentary liturgical material, and, on the other hand, the particular problem connected with the liturgy of the Birgittine

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\(^{9}\) Hedlund 2003, p. 40; Hedström 2009, p. 194.


\(^{31}\) Collijn 1917, p. 359.

\(^{32}\) Birgitta, Rev. VI:46, § 13–14.


\(^{34}\) See n. 18.
order. As is well-known, the services performed by the men and women of the Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris were different from each other except for the daily mass. The sisters’ liturgy was unique and distinctive, but that of the brethren followed the use of the Linköping diocese, in which the house was situated, making it difficult to identify their service books.

A fragment of a Cantus sororum is conjoint with a leaf of a calendar with four months, September to December, and there are two other fragments with the remaining months. The calendar was written possibly at the beginning of the fifteenth century, originally for Linköping, but in the 1520s it was adapted for Vadstena, as the feasts appropriate for the order attest. All four leaves were used by a bailiff in the Vadstena region in 1604 and 1605.35

Because textual evidence is often wanting, other criteria such as script, notation and decoration are important, and must be considered. When several leaves or more from the same manuscript have survived, these criteria may be combined with their post-dissolution archival provenance. Even if an association between archival and medieval provenances is not straightforward – accounts could be bound locally or in Stockholm – it may be suggestive.36

Large liturgical manuscripts in Sweden from the thirteenth century onwards are usually written in a formal Gothic hand called northern textualis formata, a script used during the high Gothic period mainly in countries north of the Mediterranean area. Albert Derolez has thoroughly examined this kind of script and its four categories, distinguished from one another by the treatment of minims at the headline and baseline.37 Even the small Latin service books of the Birgittine sisters were usually written in textualis. It was also used for writing the Latin parts in books of private devotion. Textualis in the sister books is of varying calligraphic quality, but similarities suggest that the scribes were trained according to fixed models. The script in the prayer books has been studied by Ingela Hedström, one of very few scholars to examine the textualis written by the sisters.38

Relatively little research has been conducted on the decoration of Vadstena manuscripts, long regarded as minor and even insignificant. Eva Lindqvist Sandgren has studied the decorated manuscripts produced in the late fifteenth

35. National Archives, Kal 37, 2 leaves, contains January–August, and Cant sor 6, one leaf, contains September–December. The manuscript was first discovered and described by Collijn 1914, pp. 48–49. See also Helander 1957, p. 95, n. 6.
century, and her focus was on the secondary type of decoration. She has examined initials, both illuminated and pen-flourished, that is, decorated by lines made with a pen, either added to the body of the initial or placed in its counter-space, as well as decorated borders and so on. She found penwork that is distinctive in style, and this could serve as an additional clue pointing to a Vadstena origin. It is particularly important as the convent’s own productions often used hand-coloured woodcuts for major pictures.

Lindqvist Sandgren has drawn attention to two distinctive kinds of penwork. One consists of bunches of ascending and descending antennae of different length, ending with curled tips or tails with two horizontal and one curled short strokes, the body of the letters with a series of added small pearls and short tails. Another type consisting of antennae shaped in $M$-curves. These two types of penwork do occur in manuscripts produced elsewhere. $M$-shaped curves, for example, are also found in a mid-fifteenth century breviary from Klosterneuburg and in an Uppsala manuscript containing theological texts that was probably written in Konstanz in 1417, but, together with other distinctive features, they are suggestive. The last manuscript is of particular interest because it was acquired by the Vadstena brothers during the synod in Konstanz.

NEWLY-IDENTIFIED LITURGICAL BOOKS

A group of three fifteenth-century fragments written in northern textualis and attributable to Vadstena on textual evidence will now be discussed, together with other manuscripts that can be linked to them by their script and initials. The first is a mutilated ordinal containing regulations for the performance of the Birgittine office (Fig. 3). Six leaves have survived as the wrappers on accounts from after 1600. They are from a large book (42 x 29 cm), with the leaf-edges coloured red, a characteristic of some Vadstena liturgical manuscripts.

The manuscript was written with great care in the most calligraphic form of textualis, textualis formata, in black, deep blue and red inks. The capitals are touched in yellow. The general aspect is narrow, vertical and rather square.

The script belongs to one of the four categories of textualis, textus quadratus,

39. See n. 22.
40. Penwork with $M$-shaped curves is to be found in several manuscripts from German-speaking countries, for example Klosterneuburg, Stb CCI 61, f. 83v http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/images/AT/5000/AT5000-61/AT5000-61_83v.jpg. For UUB C 161, see MHUU 2, pp. 201–202; a pen-flourished initial on fol. 35v is reproduced in Hedlund 1977–1980, vol. 2, pl. 70.
41. National Archives, Ord 2, for the manuscript, see Björkvall 2004, pp. 161–163.
Fig. 3: National Archives, Fr 838, fol. 1r = Ord 2. Photo: MPO, National Archives.
distinguished by the manner of treating the minims. (Minims are the short vertical strokes running from headline to baseline.) Here they have a diamond-shaped quadrangle at the headline and baseline, but not in a regular way. The tops of ascenders are bifurcated with a sloping top and a sloping hairline to the left. The base of descenders was often given an extension to the right.

Individual letters of interest are the a with a double-bow, the upper bow closed by a hairline; the g with a slightly bowed straight back; the final round s is mostly in its cursive form but sometimes in its round form; x is crossed and formed with three strokes, a diagonal made like a minim, a hook stroke at the top right and a diagonal hair stroke at the bottom left; the i is irregularly stroked, and the y is neither dotted nor stroked. With regard to the abbreviations: the Tironian et has a small stroke on the left hand side of the vertical minim stroke; the ending -ur is in the form of a superscript figure 3, the conjunction -que is written as q followed by a figure 3; and the hook of the r is in the form of a diamond. The hyphen is in the form of a double stroke. The initials are plain in red or deep blue.

The second fragment is five leaves of a sequentiary that were used to bind

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**FIG. 4:** National Archives, Fol. 28169, fol. 1ra = Sequ 40. Photo: MPO, National Archives.
FIG. 5: National Archives, Fr 25039 = Cant sor 6.
Photo: MPO, National Archives.
A sequentiary is a liturgical book containing the poetic verses sung during the mass after an alleluia and before a Gospel lection. The evidence of two distinctive sequences, *Gaude mater Iesu* and *Recensemus in hac die*, as well as the sequences for the weekdays, points to Vadstena. The careful script may support the textual evidence. It is less compressed than that of the ordinal because it had to match the musical notation, but the individual letterforms and abbreviations are virtually identical. Ascenders are bifurcated in the same way, descenders are extended to the right; the letters *a*, *g*, *s*, and *x* as well as Tironian *et* have the same form; *i* is stroked; and the use of the same deep blue ink for initials is notable. These two manuscripts may have been written by the same scribe.

The general aspect of the script of the third fragment containing *Cantus sororum* and a calendar is close to that of the two other manuscripts, but it is less formal and more compressed (Fig. 5). The use of hairlines is more frequent and there are some differences in the details. The ascenders are bifurcated in the same way, but the descenders lack extensions; *a* has the usual form, as do *x* and Tironian *et*, the last with an attached hairline to the end of the cross-stroke; the straight back of the *g* is slightly bowed, but less than that in the ordinal; and only round *s* finished with a hairline going downwards occurs; *i* is stroked. The hymn *O lux beata trinitas* at the end of the right column was, however, written by another scribe. The plain initials are in red or the characteristic deep blue.

This group of three manuscripts may be linked to two mutilated large missals. Neither contains any texts unique to Vadstena, but the liturgical use of one of them is that of Linköping. Twenty-one fragments of the first missal have survived as part of accounts after 1600 produced by bailiffs in Vadstena and the regions of Östergötland and Västergötland (Fig. 6). The thirty-six extant leaves are probably from twelve quires of the original volume. The leaves are foliated in the middle of the top margins by means of letters on the verso side and Roman figures on the recto, and the leaf-edges are coloured red. Twenty-eight leaves contain part of the *temporale*, the section providing material for services celebrated during the regular church year, mostly for the time of Lent. Four

42. National Archives, Sequ 40.
43. I owe this information to Gunilla Björkwall.
44. My suspicion that Sequ 40 is written truly by the same scribe as Ord 2 was confirmed by Michael Gullick.
45. National Archives, Cant sor 6 and Kal 37, see n. 35.
46. National Archives, Fr 704 + Fr 714 + Fr 727 + Fr 762 + Codex 272 (Fr 1752 + Fr 1775 + Fr 1815 + Fr 1841 + Fr 1856 + Fr 1901 + Fr 1982) + Fr 10297 + Mi 263 + Mi 354.
FIG. 6: National Archives, Fr 714, fol. 1r.
Photo: National Archives.
FIG. 7: National Archives, Fr 1982, fol. 2r. 
Photo: MPO, National Archives.
leaves are from the *sanctorale* with texts for the feasts of the saints celebrated at the end of September and beginning of October.\(^47\)

The occurrence of the octave of Saint Birgitta links the manuscript to the use of Linköping, as does a rubric relating to the alleluia song for the mass for Saints Remigius, Germanus and Vedastus stating that the song should be performed according to the rite of Linköping: *Alleluia secundum Linchopensis* (…).\(^48\) Other leaves are from the *commune sanctorum* giving the texts for celebrations of the feasts of saints who had no specific texts.\(^49\) Some of the votive masses, as well as a part of the *Ordo missae*, the only part of the book with musical notation, have also been found.\(^50\) The prayer after communion is called *complenda*, not *postcommunio*, the term used in most missals.

\(^{47}\) National Archives, Fr 26967 = Mi 354 and Fr 26973 = Mi 354.
\(^{48}\) National Archives, Fr 26967 = Mi 354.
\(^{49}\) National Archives, Fr 1982 + Fr 762.
\(^{50}\) National Archives, Fr 740 = Mi 354 + Fr 26740 = Mi 263 and Fr 10297.
The manuscript was written and rubricated by a single scribe; the general aspect of the hand is very close to that of the scribe of the ordinal and sequentiary discussed above, and their details are strikingly similar. The ascenders, descend- ers, letter forms of the a, g, x, cursive and round s as well as the Tironian et are very alike; the y is undotted, the i is only sporadically stroked and the hyphen is in the form of a double stroke. Capitals A and S are very close, as are other majuscules. However the conjunction -que has the form of a vertical zigzag line, different to that in the two manuscripts discussed above.

The initials are pen-flourished in red, blue and deep-red, and parti-coloured (3-lines tall) (Fig. 7). This distinctive penwork is also used, for example, in a Birgittine book of hours written at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Fig. 8).51 The deep-red colour has a correspondence in a fragment of a missal, and its penwork resembles that in the counter-spaces of the initials in another fragmentary missal.52

The second missal is extant in only five fragments reused by a Vadstena bailiff, comprising no more than ten leaves, but, unfortunately, their content is not distinctive.53 However, this second missal is foliated just like the missal discussed above. The general aspect and appearance of the script, as well as the letter-forms are close to it, but some details differ. As in the first missal, the word Complenda is used for the prayer after communion. All these features may indicate a Vadstena origin.

Of special interest is a missal, extant in one leaf, and four leaves of a psalter, both from the second half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 9).54 They are written in a script which closely resembles that used in the previous manuscript, and the pen-flourished initial in the missal points to Vadstena. Due to its decorated initials, the psalter was attributed to Vadstena by Lindqvist Sandgren.55 There are parallels between these initials and those in a copy of Cantus sororum in Uppsala and a prayer book in the holdings of the National Library.56 Lindqvist Sandgren has also suggested that the psalter could have been written by the same Vadstena scribe as two Uppsala manuscripts of Directoria chori, a service book for the nuns. The close similarity between the scripts used in the psalter and

51. Uppsala University Library, UUB C 433, fol. 17r.
52. National Archives, Fr 1982, fol. 2r, Fr 1836, fol. 1v.
53. National Archives, Mi 357. One fragment is from the temporale, one from the commune sanctorum and three other contain the votive masses.
54. National Archives, Fr 9322; Ps 12.
56. Uppsala University Library, UUB C 432, fol. 3r; and National Library, A 43, fol. 159v.
the manuscripts discussed above might indicate that they too were written and decorated by the Vadstena sisters. If this were the case, there is reason to regard them as good scribes, indeed, who could be entrusted to write ‘large volumes, missals and others’, and could be referred to individually as ‘good scribe’ such as Bothild Petersdotter, recorded in the Memorial Book of 1477.57

Twenty-six new books with certain or probable Vadstena provenances may be now added to the collection of the abbey. And we should not be surprised if yet further discoveries are made in the large fragment collection of the National Archives.

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VERONICA O’MARA

Saint Birgitta of Sweden’s Life in a Middle English Context

From the early fifteenth century Saint Birgitta of Sweden had a noteworthy, albeit patchy and at times elitist, presence in England.¹

In general terms, knowledge of her is obvious from the various copies of the Revelations and other Birgittine material that exist,² from the presence of Birgitta in the work of notable fifteenth-century writers such as John Audelay or Thomas Hoccleve,³ from the reputation of Syon,⁴ and from the influence

1. There is, for example, virtually no evidence in Middle English sermons for the knowledge of Birgitta or her Revelations. Out of the 1,480 extant sermons there are only three obvious mentions of her or her works. Two not unexpected examples are a Syon Pardon sermon (London, British Library, MS Harley 2321) and a sermon for the feast of the Assumption that is based on Birgittine sources (Cambridge, University Library, MS Hh.1.11). Apart from these understandable examples, the only other one is found in a sermon for the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene in London, British Library, MS Harley 2268; the supposed author of this sermon (preached in 1414 or 1416) was Thomas Spofford, the abbot of St Mary’s Benedictine abbey in York, who moved in international circles (such as the Council of Constance) where knowledge of Birgitta was common. Details of all these texts may be found in O’Mara and Paul 2007, I, pp. 33–35; II, pp. 1216–1219, and 1323–1327; see also the editions in O’Mara 1994 and 2002, and for the Harley 2321 sermon, see Swanson 2007, pp. 336–345, and a forthcoming essay by Kari Anne Rand.

2. The most extensive description of Birgittine manuscripts and particularly excerpted and related material in Latin and English may be found in Ellis 1982.

3. The medieval English poets John Audelay and Thomas Hoccleve are notable for their early recognition of Saint Birgitta. Hoccleve’s paraphrase of Chapter 105, Book IV of the Revelations in his Regiment of Princes is from c. 1411 and Audelay’s manuscript containing his salutation in honour of Birgitta dates from c. 1426–1431. For Audelay see Fein 2009, pp. 159–164, for Hoccleve, see Blyth 1999, p. 198, ll. 5384–5397, and pp. 251–252, and for a discussion of Audelay’s salutation, see Driver 2009.

4. This reputation manifested itself in various ways, not least in the attention given nationally to the Syon Pardon, see Swanson 2007, pp. 336–345, and references to Syon passim.
that she exerted on mystics-in-the-making like the laywoman Margery Kempe from East Anglia. Above all, however, it is the incidental references that are so useful; for instance, we know that a bookseller in Beverley, a few miles from Hull in the historic East Riding of Yorkshire, sold a copy of the \textit{Revelations} in 1415. Birgitta and her \textit{Revelations} were thus absorbed into England at an early stage. Indeed, as shown by the easy familiarity of Margery Kempe with the anglicised ‘Bride’, it is not always clear that the English did not realise that Birgitta in fact was not one of them. An excellent example of this confusion is provided in a rubric in London, University College, MS Latin 17, fol. 137r, where Birgitta is described as being ‘ex nobilibus parentibus in Scotia’, Scotland and Sweden being quite interchangeable, it would appear. Yet, in truth, even with all the evidence available, it is difficult to give an accurate representation of the full extent to which Birgitta and/or her works were known throughout medieval England at various levels and at different times, and there is a sort of tension in the extant literature between Birgitta as the international prophetic outsider used to bolster the English cause against France, as seen in the likes of Thomas Hoccleve, and Birgitta as the naturalised homely insider who acted as a role model for the likes of Margery Kempe and, as we shall see, other potential devout women in late medieval England.

In the sixteenth century Birgitta’s reputation lived on in what was probably the best-known book after the Bible in Reformation England, John Foxe’s \textit{Acts and Monuments}, popularly called the \textit{Book of Martyrs}. First published in 1563, and again in 1570, 1576, 1583, 1589, 1596, 1597, 1610, 1632, 1641, and 1684, Foxe’s book was an important part – perhaps the most important part – of the process of rescuing medieval writers for the Protestant cause. In the list of writers mentioned who were champions for reform of the Catholic Church – John Wyclif being most pre-eminent among them – Birgitta, alongside Caterina of Siena, is singled out for her criticism of the medieval Church. Amongst other things, Birgitta is cited as a ‘great rebuker of the pope, and of his filthie clergie’.

5. For the most useful discussion of this, see the edition by Windeatt 2000, pp. 12–13.
6. For full details, see Morris and O’Mara 2000, p. ix.
7. ‘From noble parents in Scotland’; see Gejrot 1994, p. 52, n. 38, for this and another example of similar confusion.
8. Part of the evidence for the understanding of Birgitta derives from a careful sifting of the way Birgittine manuscripts were used in English circles, as discussed in Ellis 1982.
9. For a discussion of these editions, see King 2006.
10. The reference to Birgitta appears first in the 1583 edition; I quote here from the copy in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, of the abridged edition of 1589 put together by Timothy Bright, p. 268.
whereas Foxe, clearly for purposes of his own, saw Birgitta as the great prophet upbraiding Catholicism at its centre, in medieval England Birgitta’s reforming zeal was only part of the story. In reality, in the Middle English biographical texts that exist the emphasis is increasingly on Birgitta as maiden, mother, and widow, which co-incidentally reflects the first line of Audelay’s poem.11 As presented in these texts she becomes increasingly, in effect, the domesticated saint rather than the politicised visionary.

There are two Middle English texts of the life of Birgitta, as well as one short note.12 Two are in fifteenth-century manuscripts; the third is an early sixteenth-century print (very brief summaries of these texts in numbered sections are provided in the appendices; these numbers are used in the course of the discussion below).13 The manuscript lives, when compared with the history of the printed version, are entirely straightforward. One of the lives occurs in each of the two manuscripts containing the only full translation of the Revelations of Birgitta into Middle English: London, British Library, Cotton Julius F.ii. and Cotton Claudius B.i. In the Julius manuscript at the end of the translation of Birgitta’s Revelations, and following the only extant Middle English translation of the Epistola solitarii, there is an interlinked description of Birgitta’s writings, death, and canonisation (fol. 254r), concluded by two Latin prayers (fol. 254v).14 As may be seen from the summary in Appendix 1, this ‘life’ is so slight as hardly to merit the name. The writer must clearly be writing for an audience who already knows the narrative of the early life and so he merely makes a comment

11. ‘Hayle, maydyn and wyfe, hayle, wedow Brygytt’ (‘Hail! maiden and wife; hail! widow Bridget’) as quoted in Fein 2009, p. 159, l. 1.
12. In this study I have deliberately restricted my focus to the lives produced in Middle English, albeit being aware that these derive in part from generally known Latin sources. I have not considered the complexities of the Latin/Swedish tradition (a helpful insight into this is provided by Wollin 2000). Neither have I considered the Latin lives produced in England because in this essay I am primarily concerned with how Birgitta’s life was presented to the ‘ordinary’ medieval English public rather than to the Latinate clergy. A very useful overview of the Latin lives produced in England is available in Johnston 1985, but there is much work to be done in this area.
13. To make these summaries easier to follow, they have been divided into numbered sections. In the Julius manuscript and the printed text, both of which are only partially edited or transcribed in old and inadequate editions, each numbered section represents a development in the narrative; in the Claudius text the numbered sections are linked to paragraphs in the Ellis 1987 edition. Together with Ann Hutchison I am currently preparing an edition of the printed life.
14. For a transcription of the Middle English Epistola solitarii, see Voaden 1993 and for a discussion of this abridged translation, see Voaden 2000.
on the composition of her works at the beginning and end, 1 and 5; highlights Birgitta’s particular superiority over other such female visionaries in 2; and is then concerned with her death and translation in 3 to 4, with a brief comment made about the *Sermo angelicus* in the middle of this. Apart from one reference to Birgitta as a reformer in 1, the writer’s main aim is to get the factual detail correct: the number of books in the *Revelations*; how long she lay in the grave uncorrupted; the sites of her burial and translation; the dates of her translation and canonisation; and the identity of the compiler. With such a skeletal framework it seems impossible to get any idea of what source or sources he was using for his jottings; it reads almost as if what he is saying is simply common knowledge. This, of course, opens up speculation about the intended audience for the Julius text.¹⁵

The second manuscript life, found in the other main translation of the *Revelations*, London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.i, is far more extensive, as may be seen in Appendix 1. The text provides the essentials of Birgitta’s life, albeit with one major omission as her children are only dealt with cursorily; it opens imperfectly with her choice of confessors and finishes imperfectly just before her death. In broad outline paragraphs 1 to 6 review Birgitta’s life before her husband’s death; paragraphs 7 to 10 describe her life after Ulf’s death; and paragraph 11, the longest section by far, describes her life in Rome and during the rest of her travels, before paragraph 12 signals the end of her life. In his edition Ellis says that this text is based on Birger Gregersson’s *Birgitta-Officium*.¹⁶ Basically the Claudius text is an abbreviation of Lectio V, section 7 to Lectio IX, section 18, though the correspondence varies, owing to the Claudius writer’s tendency to abbreviate less or more severely.¹⁷ Parts are quite close; for example, paragraph 5 which describes how Birgitta taught her husband Ulf the Hours of the Virgin, how they went to Compostela, how Ulf was ill in France and was saved by Saint Denis, how they made a pact of chastity, and how he died at Alvastra, is all contained (with only a little expansion) in Lectio VI, sections 5 to 14.¹⁸ Other parts of this life are understandably also found elsewhere in the Birgittine corpus, for instance, the general substance of paragraphs 1 to 6

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¹⁵. In her explication of the abridged translation Voaden 2000, pp. 172–175, suggests that the manuscript may have been destined for a female audience. In fact, this ‘life’ is related to other Latin versions of this note and prayers, see Undhagen 1960, p. 39, n. 4.
¹⁷. For the correspondences with Birger’s *Officium*, see Undhagen 1960, pp. 200–221.
are all found together in the *Processus vita*,\(^9\) and other parts crop up again and again in different texts, for example, paragraph 9, which tells the story of how Birgitta let five drops of hot wax burn her in honour of the five wounds, is found, for instance, in the *Processus vita*, the *Vita abbreviata*, and Boniface’s Bull of Canonisation, the three other main sources of Birgitta’s life.\(^{20}\) In essence, the writer of this life appears to want to narrate the familiar story of Birgitta, making sure that he provides the highlights, though without dwelling on anything in any great detail. It is particularly noticeable that he omits much mention of the children, apart from an implicit reference in paragraph 3 to Birgitta’s danger while in labour with her last child Cecilia and the subsequent intervention of Mary; and the reference to her despair over Karl in paragraph 4. Neither child is mentioned by name so either the writer does not want to get sidetracked by such detail, thinks it is uninteresting or, like the Julius writer, is perhaps writing for an audience who already knows the life story of Birgitta and so can fill in the detail for itself, something that the readers of the printed text need not do as they are presented with as much detail as they might want, albeit that here too there is a certain degree of abbreviation and perhaps even censorship.

The history of the printed text is very complicated because of the strange annexation or indeed absorption of the story of Birgitta into a collection of native English saints’ lives that began as a manuscript text. In the second half of the fourteenth century John of Tynemouth (*fl. 1366*) compiled the *Sanctilogium Angliae, Walliae, Scotiae et Hiberniae*, featuring some 156 Latin legends; these were re-ordered alphabetically in the fifteenth century before being revised, supplemented, and printed first as the Latin *Nova legenda anglie* and then in an abbreviated form in the English *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande*, which were both printed in 1516.\(^{21}\) Significantly, the Birgitta life only appears in the English abbreviated text, *The Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande*, and not in the Latin printed original, the *Nova legenda anglie*. We do not know who was responsible for the addition of the Birgitta life, though we may speculate that Syon may have had some influence.\(^{22}\) Who the author was is also unknown,

\(^{19}\) Collijn 1924–1931, pp. 77–81, translated in Harris Tjäder 1990, pp. 74–79, sections 14 to 29.

\(^{20}\) For these see respectively Collijn 1924–1931, p. 99, translated in Harris Tjäder, p. 96, section 83; Kruse 1892, p. 25, paragraph 58, and the *Acta sanctorum* 1868, p. 470, paragraph 421. A particularly useful comment on the much-debated relationship between the *Processus vita* and the *Vita abbreviata* is available in Wollin 2000, p. 55 and n. 4.

\(^{21}\) The *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande* is edited in Görlach 1994, who also provides a most comprehensive introduction to the textual complexities on pp. 7–16.

\(^{22}\) The initials of Elizabeth Gibbs, abbess of Syon from 1497 to 1518, are included in the woodcut before the Birgitta life.
though it was not Thomas Gascoigne, the vice-chancellor of Oxford (d. 1458), who had great devotion to Birgitta, who said that he had written a life of Birgitta, and to whom this life has been attributed.  

There are twelve extant copies of this *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englande*: three in the British Library in London; two in Cambridge University Library; and one each in King’s College, Cambridge; Ushaw College, Durham; John Rylands University Library, Manchester; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; the Library of Congress, Washington; and one in private hands, in the collection of Toshiyuki Takamiya in Tokyo. The text begins with a lengthy prologue, which is based on John of Tynemouth’s original. This includes a very brief history of the christianisation of England before the writer proceeds in a nationalistic vein with the observation that the Irish have Saint Patrick, the Scots have Saint Ninian, and the Welsh have Saint David, but that few in England have devotion to the saints who have laboured on their behalf in the past. This is followed by a discussion of the efficacy of the saints and the argument that English people will please their patron, Saint George, if they honour the other saints. It is rounded off with an explanation of the title of the work; the writer tells us that because the text encompasses the saints of the whole region, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, it is going to be called the ‘Kalender of the Newe Legende of Englonde’. There then follow 168 short lives of saints set out in alphabetical order beginning with Saint Adrian and preceded by a tabula.

23. For Gascoigne’s references to Saint Birgitta, see Rogers 1881, pp. 53, 122, 124, 139, 156, 165, and 169. There are two pieces of evidence showing that Gascoigne could not have been responsible for the printed life. In Pronger 1938, p. 625, it is noted that Gascoigne included in his (non-extant) vernacular life of Birgitta the story of Robert Tenant who was freed from devils through her intervention; this story does not occur in the printed 1516 life. Additionally, Gejrot 2010, p. 223, states that Thomas Gascoigne’s certificate appended to the Latin Syon Martiloge in London, British Library, MS Additional 22285 gets the date of the transportation of Saint Birgitta’s relics to Vadstena incorrect, setting it on 7 October 1391, the official canonisation date, rather than 4 July 1374, the first translation date; this mistake is not made in the printed 1516 text.

24. These are all listed in Görlach 1994, p. 6, apart from the copy in King’s College, Cambridge, and described on pp. 16–20; there is a thirteenth copy of the edition in the Chapin Library, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, but this is now very imperfect and only contains the final work, by Hilton (see below). In the English Short Title Catalogue (http://estc.bl.uk) copies of the Latin text are recorded in twenty-nine repositories.

Following the opening prologue, there is an additional paragraph justifying the inclusion of two further works, the life of Birgitta of Sweden and the mystical writer Walter Hilton’s *Mixed Life*. The section about Birgitta reads as follows:

Moreover next after the said kalender the life of Saint Bridget follows, shortly abridged, a holy and blessed widow, whose life is very appropriate for every sort of person to look upon, particularly those who live in matrimony or in the estate of widowhood, so that they may see what grace and virtue were in this blessed woman who lived in the same degree as they do, and so [that they] be the more encouraged to desire to have similar grace and virtue.¹⁶

Various factors are noteworthy here. Given that the writer has spent so long speaking of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, it is not inconceivable that he is being slightly economical with the truth when he just mentions the name ‘Byrget’. While as a widow she clearly cannot be the Irish Brigit (or Brigid), who in any case will be included in the main text, it is odd that there is no mention of Sweden here and one wonders if there is some intention to deceive: if some naive readers wish to think initially that this is the Irish saint, they are not going to be disabused of the fact.²⁷ Conversely, and more convincingly, it would appear that there is some sort of ‘naturalisation’ process going on.²⁸ Effectively the life of Birgitta is absorbed physically into the collection of native saints’ lives so that anyone looking at the tabula would see Adrian as the first in the list and Birgitta as the last. Clearly this somewhat destroys the alphabetical order but this had already been ruined by the earlier addition of Edgar at the very end. Effectively Birgitta has become an ‘English’ saint, fit reading for any English person, most especially the married or the widowed (and here there is no doubt that the married or widowed woman is the implied reader). Yet despite all the apparent attempts of the translator to pass off Birgitta as just another saint in

¹⁶. ‘Moreover next after the sayde kalendre foloweth the lyfe of Seynt Byrget shortlye abrygged, a holy and blessyd wydowe, which lyfe is ryght expedyent for euery maner of person to loke vpon, moost in especiall for them that lyue in matrymony or in the estate of wydowhod, þat they may se what grace and vertue was in this blessyd woman which lyued in the same degre as they do, and the rather to be encouraged to desyre to haue lyke grace and vertue’, in Görlach 1994, p. 46.
²⁷. For a useful overview of the lives of the Irish saint, see Sharpe 1991, who provides a helpful index to all references to her in the book on p. 417.
²⁸. The argument about the ‘naturalisation’ of Birgitta independently arrived at here is also found in Johnston 1985, p. 81, when he notes that ‘it seems that she had become English by adoption’, though he confuses matters by then quoting from the Latin *Nova legenda anglie*, which does not have the Birgitta life.
the collection, her life has its own distinctively Birgittine woodcut, as well as Latin prayers to her at the end, none of which occurs in any of the other lives. She is then both integrated and separate, English and Swedish, one might say.

As may be seen in Appendix 2, this is a much fuller life than that in the Claudius manuscript just discussed. Effectively it may be divided as follows: 1 to 9: Birgitta’s early maidenly life; 10 to 20: Birgitta’s life as a mother; 21 to 36: Birgitta’s life as a widow; and 37 to 45: Birgitta’s afterlife. This sort of division clearly reflects the readership alluded to in the prologue: the married and the widowed. As with the Claudius life, I can decipher no steady correspondence with any of the Latin sources. In an unpublished paper Roger Ellis lists the main sources as the *Vita abbreviata*, Boniface’s Bull of Canonisation, and chapter 3 of the Prologue to the *Epistola solitarii*.\(^9\) Sure enough, links with all these works can be found. For instance, if we take just the first ten items: Boniface’s Bull contains items 1, Birgitta’s parentage; 3, Birgitta’s mother being ship-wrecked; 4, the priest’s vision of a virgin in a cloud; 5, Birgitta’s speaking fluently; and 10, Birgitta’s marriage. All of these items are found in the *Vita abbreviata*, in addition to items 2, the nun’s vision of Birgitta’s birth; 6, Birgitta’s vision of Mary on an altar; 7, Birgitta hearing a sermon about the passion; 8, Birgitta being beaten by her aunt; and 9, Birgitta’s vision of the devil with a hundred hands and feet.\(^10\)

In turn, of course, all of these items, from 1 to 10, are found in the *Processus vita*.\(^11\) Links to chapter 3 of the prologue to the *Epistola solitarii* are less obvious but are here nonetheless, for instance: items 23, about the confessor teaching Birgitta and Katarina grammar; 26, about Birgitta’s pattern of confession and communion; and 30, about the translation of the *Revelations* into ‘her natural tongue’ as it is phrased here.\(^12\)

But overall what is most noticeable, as far as I can see, is that there is a large section, from 10 to 20, devoted to Birgitta’s children that is not in any of these sources, although her children and even her grandchildren figure extensively in the chronicle by Margareta Clausdotter, abbess of Vadstena (d. 1486); in truth, the text here is closely dependent on another source highlighted by Ellis in his

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\(^9\) See respectively Kruse 1892, pp. 10–28, *Acta sanctorum* 1868, pp. 467–472, and Jönsson 1989, pp. 128–134. I owe this information originally to Ann Hutchison; I am grateful to her and to Roger Ellis for permission to cite the reference here.

\(^10\) For parts or all of these ten sections (sometimes with added material), see respectively *Acta sanctorum* 1868, p. 469, paragraphs 418–419, and Kruse 1892, pp. 10–13, paragraphs 1–13.

\(^11\) For the first ten sections (with extra material), see Collijn 1924–31, pp. 74–77, translated in Harris Tjäder 1999, pp. 71–75, paragraph 2–14.

\(^12\) Jönsson 1989, pp. 130–131, sections 19, 22, and 17.
unpublished paper, a printed life attached to the Ghotan edition of 1492. It would seem that our translator is clearly going out of his way to include material that presents Birgitta as a mother, even if she is not exactly a role model from our perspective (no mother should take her cue from Birgitta in item 12 where she severely reprimands her grandson for his behaviour by telling him that with more application he could have been bishop of Linköping). In the text the children are introduced in item 10 and, as often happens in the analogous texts, they are not in the right order. The usual stories are told, for example, item 11 about the death of Charles or Karl in Jerusalem and item 14 concerning the birdsong heard at the death of the child Bengt or Benedictus; the popular story of Birgitta’s reaction to the death of her daughter, the nun Ingeborg, in item 18; of the Virgin Mary’s helping Birgitta during the birth of Cecilia in item 19. Many of these stories recur throughout the Birgittine corpus, for instance, that of Cecilia in the Acta and Ingeborg in chapter 98 of the Revelations extravagantes, and the tale of the death of Karl, as the author acknowledges, in Book 7, chapters 13 and 14 of the Revelations. What is unusual here is that the actual account in Book 7 is an exceptionally dramatic debate between an angel and a devil over the fate of Karl’s soul but our author glosses over this completely, as he does over any controversy. It is very striking, for instance, that not only is nothing made of Birgitta’s trip to Naples but closer to home the whole biography of Märta is completely expunged from the record. The compiler simply includes Märta’s name at the beginning in item 10 and then either forgets about her or, more likely, deliberately omits the memorable story of the way in which Birgitta objects to Märta’s marriage to Sigvid Ribbing and the associated dramatic consequences whereby her unborn child, Cecilia, cries out against Birgitta. This excision, of course, saves the author the trouble of having to explain Birgitta’s opposition to

33. I owe this reference to the kindness of Ingela Hedström; for the (Swedish) chronicle, see Annerstedt 1876, pp. 207–216. This anonymous life occurs at the end of Ghotan’s edition [1492] on sig. C.vj. verso col. a to sig. C.x. recto col. b; the children are dealt with on sig. C.vij. verso col. a to sig. C.vii. verso col. b. The correspondences with the Ghotan life will be explored in the new edition of the 1516 life (see n. 13 above).

34. See Morris 1999, pp. 46–52, for a discussion of the children in a convincing order (following that proposed by Birgit Klockars).

35. See respectively Collijn 1924–1931, p. 79, for Cecilia (translated in Harris Tjäder 1990, p. 76, paragraph 20); Birgitta, Rev. Extr.: (Hollman 1956), pp. 219–220 for Ingeborg; and Ellis 1987, p. 477, l. 11–p. 479, l. 21 for Karl.

36. Also excluded is Gudmar, but this may simply have been because there was little or nothing to say about him, see Morris 1999, p. 49, who notes that, according to later sources, he died in Stockholm as a schoolboy, and that nothing more is known about him.
the marriage of her first daughter and her apparent unseemly treatment of her unborn last daughter.\textsuperscript{37} It allows him instead to include more positive material, such as the story of Katarina’s golden sleeves as she reaches for the grapes or of her holding back the waters of the Tiber in items 16 and 17, found too in Ulf Birgersson’s \textit{Vita sancte Katerine} (which may also help to demonstrate the eclectic mix of sources in this life).\textsuperscript{38}

In sum, what we have then in all these lives is a Birgitta who appears to be known to her public and where uncomfortable detail can either be suppressed or glossed over. In the short note in the Julius manuscript all that concerns the author are the facts of the case. Effectively we learn nothing much about Birgitta apart from the details that support her hagiographical status; her personal life is not laid open for examination. All that matters are her \textit{Revelations}, her sanctity, and her order. In the Claudius text there is an attempt to provide a more rounded picture: a life in microcosm though without being cluttered by too much unwarranted detail, such as information about offspring. It is not until we get to the printed text that there is a surfeit of detail about her home life, though not surprisingly everything that is told is meant to reflect well on Birgitta. Above all, this Birgitta, who had knees like a ‘Camel’ from kneeling too much, is someone whose life is deemed as perfect reading material for English women. In this anonymous early sixteenth-century printed life this Swedish saint is presented as an exemplary figure who lived ‘in the same degree’ as the married and the widowed English women for whom it was intended. If Birgitta was not quite English, she was perhaps the next best thing.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Morris 1999, p. 47 and n. 40, quotes the well-known passage in the \textit{Diarium Vadstenense} where the unborn Cecilia cries out ‘mater, noli me interficere’ [‘mother, do not kill me’]. As Morris notes, it would seem that the cry of the unborn suggests that Birgitta ‘may have been starving herself or suffering depression or anger at the prospect of the match’.

\textsuperscript{38} For details of Katarina’s life as described particularly in the \textit{vita} by Ulf Birgersson, a confessor general at Vadstena (d. 1433), see Morris 1999, pp. 109–113.

\textsuperscript{39} I am very grateful to Jonathan Adams, Ann Hutchison, and Bridget Morris for their helpful comments on this article.
APPENDIX I
MANUSCRIPT VERSIONS OF THE LIFE OF
SAINT BIRGITTA IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius F. ii., fol. 254r–v
(transcribed in Aungier 1840, pp. 19–20, and n. 4)

1 [fol. 254r] God made her noble with all virtues, showed her heavenly things, which are gathered together in one volume divided into books and chapters for the reformation of the Church.
2 Many holy daughters wrote many profitable things yet in these revelations God expressed his judgements more clearly.
3 Her body was buried at St Laurence’s in Rome; when the grave was opened after five weeks, though the flesh had reverted to its natural state, there was only a sweet odour.
4 She was translated to Sweden and borne to Vadstena, whose rule Christ had given to her. These nuns also had the special lessons about the excellence of Mary revealed by the angel’s words. The feast of the translation is the fifth kalends of June and her canonisation is on 7 October, 1391, during the time of Boniface the Ninth. [fol. 254v]
5 The solitary man who compiled the epistle to prove the celestial books of Birgitta was ‘lord Elfons’ [‘Alphonse’], who afterwards left his bishopric and became a hermit.

Two very short Latin prayers follow.

London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudiaus B. i., fols 1ra–3vb
(paragraphs linked to Ellis 1987, pp. 1–5)

1 p. 1, ll. 1–12 [imperfect, fol. 1r]: Birgitta only associated with honest people; she chose a confessor who was a master of divinity and she was often shriven; when her husband was away, she stayed awake in prayer.
2 p. 1, ll. 13–24: Mary appeared to her, granting her request for a prayer about the passion; Birgitta often fasted, gave alms, had a house for the poor; translated the Bible into her mother tongue.
3 p. 1, ll. 25–30: In despair in childbirth, Birgitta was visited by a lady in white silk, revealed afterwards as Mary. [fol. 1v]
Birgitta ordained a master to teach her children; she wept when her son would not fast on John the Baptist’s vigils; John the Baptist said he would help her son.

Birgitta made her husband learn the Hours of the Virgin and visit Saint James [of Compostela]; her husband became ill in France; Saint Denis saved him; Birgitta foresaw her visits to Rome and Jerusalem; the couple made a pact of chastity; her husband died at Alvastra.

Mary appeared to Birgitta three years before her husband died and told her that she would see Christ; four years before her husband’s death, St ‘Bot[ui]d’ appeared and said that he and others had gained the grace for her to see many spiritual things.

After her husband’s death, Christ appeared to her in a white cloud; for twenty-eight years she only went where the spirit of God impelled her; she was commanded to obey the master of divinity and show him her revelations.

After her husband’s death, Birgitta divided her goods among her children and poor people; she changed her way of life and people reproofed her; for thirty years she wore no linen but often wore a hair shirt; she had a mat before her bed; lay on a cushion under a mantle; and said, when asked, that she had a great heat within; she kneeled and often kept vigil.

Every Friday she made five hot drops from a burning taper fall on her skin in honour of the five wounds; if they healed before the next Friday, she would tear her skin; she had hard cords about her body; and every Friday she put gentian in her mouth in memory of the gall, and also every day when she said an idle word.

Birgitta wept, fearing that her son’s prolonged sickness had been due to her sin; the devil appeared to her; Christ appeared and said that he who was ‘Benet’ would now be blessed and called the son of tears and prayers; on the fifth day a song was heard between the child’s bed and the wall, and then he died.

After two years, Christ commanded Birgitta to go to Rome, in 1367, to urge reform of the Church; Saint Agnes taught her grammar so that she learnt to speak Latin well; she spoke little and looked at few directly; if she liked anything she saw or spoke any ill word, she confessed; if any spoke an idle world, she smelt a stink like brimstone; she gave away all she had; afterwards she was bidden to go to Sicily and Naples to visit shrines, especially that of Thomas the apostle; she was ill
but Christ told her that he would sustain her; she revealed a vision showing the sins of Naples; she returned to Rome like a bee to the hive; one man said that he saw Birgitta between St John’s and ‘Campum Florum’ lifted up with a shining face like Ezechiel; Christ appeared to her and told her to go to Jerusalem; she began to excuse herself; Christ said that he would sustain her; she had many revelations there about the nativity and passion, the state of the two kingdoms, and the conversion of the pagans; Christ told her that after her death his words would endure.

12 p. 5, ll. 25–26: Twelve months after she had returned to Rome, she became [ill] [imperfect].

APPENDIX 2
PRINTED MIDDLE ENGLISH LIFE OF SAINT BIRGITTA

The Kalendre of the Newe Legende of Englane printed in 1516 by Richard Pynson (transcribed in Blunt 1873, pp. xlvii–lix)

1 Birgitta’s father was ‘Byrgerus’ and her mother ‘Sighryd’ [a mistake].
2 Birgitta’s grandmother was despised by a nun [fol. 120v] for her pride; the nun had a vision which foretold Birgitta’s birth.
3 Birgitta’s mother was on a ship where several drowned; her mother had a vision telling her that she had been saved on account of Birgitta.
4 A priest saw a virgin in a cloud with a book; a voice told him that ‘Byrgerus’ had a daughter.
5 Up to the age of three, Birgitta did not speak but later spoke fluently. [fol. 121r]
6 Aged seven, Birgitta saw Mary in bright clothing sitting on an altar; Mary offered her a crown.
7 Aged ten, Birgitta heard a sermon about the passion; that same night Christ appeared as if newly crucified.
8 Aged twelve, Birgitta was found naked out of bed; when beaten by her aunt, the rod broke; [fol. 121v] Birgitta explained that she was honouring Christ; her ‘moder in lawe’ [step-mother] then loved her more fervently.
9 The devil with a hundred hands and feet appeared to Birgitta while she was playing with her friends; Birgitta committed herself to the crucifix and the devil had no power.
Aged thirteen, Birgitta married, although she intended to remain a virgin (her husband was also a virgin); they lived virginally for two years and then it pleased God that they had children: ‘Charles’, ‘Birgerus’, ‘Benedictus’, and ‘Gudmarus’; ‘Merita’ [Märta], ‘Katerina’, ‘Ingeburgys’, and ‘Cecilia’.

Karl went with Birgitta [fol. 122r] to Jerusalem and died on 12 March; his soul ascended to heaven on the feast of the Ascension, as it is told in Book 7, chapters 13 and 14 of the *Revelations*.

Karl had a son, another Karl; he abandoned his study and took a wife; Birgitta appeared to him after her death and told him that, had he been obedient to God, he could have been bishop of Linköping; he died shortly afterwards and is buried in Vadstena.

Birgerus went with Birgitta to Jerusalem and to Rome; when Birgitta was dead, he and Katarina conveyed her relics [fol. 122v] to Vadstena; after many labours in Vadstena, he died.

Birgitta wept for Benedictus’s sickness; the devil said that this was in vain but Christ appeared and said that he would end his suffering; music like birdsong was heard and then he died.

Katarina lived with her husband as a virgin and then after his death as a widow.

Katarina was an example to those in Rome [fol. 123r]; when walking with some Roman matrons, she reached for some grapes, it looked as if her arms were clothed in gold, whereas she had patched sleeves.

On account of Katarina the waters of the flooded Tiber were kept back.

Ingeborg became a nun [fol. 123v] at ‘Rysaburga’, and died shortly afterwards for which Birgitta was pleased; Birgitta wept; Christ appeared and Birgitta said that she wept not because her daughter was dead but because she had been negligent in correcting her.

Cecilia had a special grace because [fol. 124r] Mary came to help Birgitta when she was in great difficulty while in labour with Cecilia.

Afterwards Birgitta ‘induced’ her husband to live in continence for many years.

Returning from pilgrimage, ‘Ulpho’ died on 12 February 1344; Birgitta gave all her lands and goods to the poor.

Birgitta went to Rome in 1346 when she was forty-two.

Birgitta had two confessors with her, one of whom taught her and Katarina ‘grammer’.

Birgitta wore a cord of hemp and rough woollen cloth next to her skin; she fasted four times in the week. [fol. 125r]
25 After her husband’s death, she slept on a carpet; she lived on bread and water on Fridays; she let candlewax fall on her skin; she held gentian in her mouth; she did the stations in Rome; her knees were like those of a ‘Camel’ from kneeling; she mixed with the poor in Rome; she repaired hospitals in Sweden; [fol. 125v] she suffered all adversities patiently.

26 Before her husband’s death, she confessed every Friday; after his death, she confessed daily; every Sunday she and Katarina received communion.

27 When the king of Sweden wanted to charge the commons, she offered her two sons as pledges for his creditors.

28 A knight brought many to damnation; [fol. 126r] he got someone else to speak shameful words to Birgitta; he rebuked her for her deprivations; she accepted the criticism; he repented and came to Rome.

29 Christ choose Birgitta as a spouse; in these Revelations are the mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation, et cetera. [fol. 126v]

30 Birgitta wrote the Revelations in her ‘naturall tonge’; the prior of Alvastra then translated them into Latin and divided them into eight books, plus the ‘Legende’ for the sisters, the rule, the four chapters with prayers, and the ‘extraugantes’; she would have kept things secret, but Christ told her to speak to the pope, and so forth.

31 Birgitta was often seen lifted from the ground when in prayer.

32 [fol. 127r] An angel came and said how Mary was mistress of the apostles, comforter of martyrs, teacher of confessors, a shining glass to virgins, helper of widows, and adviser to the wedded; he detailed Mary’s teaching to each. [fol. 127v]

33 Birgitta’s husband appeared after her death and said that he had been insufficiently repentant for five things [enumerated]; Birgitta asked what had or would profit him and he said six things [enumerated] [fol. 128r]. He asked that for a year masses of Mary, et cetera, be sung for him, [fol. 128v] that vessels be delivered to the poor, and that chalices be donated.

34 Birgitta visited the places where Mary was greeted by Gabriel, where Jesus was baptised, et cetera, and she went to France, Italy, Spain, Naples, and many other places.

35 Christ appeared five days before she died and told her that she would be clothed [fol. 129r] as a nun; he said that she would not only be his spouse but a mother at Vadstena; and that her body would be left in Rome until a place was prepared for it, and it was carried to Vadstena.

36 Birgitta called people round her; told Birgerus and Katarina to do good works; said ‘In manus tuas …’ [fol. 129v]; Birgitta died on 23 July 1373 aged
seventy; she was taken to St Laurence’s but could not be buried owing to the crowds.

37 A woman called Agnes had her throat healed by binding it with a girdle that had touched Birgitta’s hand.

38 A sick nun came to the bier and lay there all night [fol. 130r] and was healthier than before.

39 Birgitta was buried on 26 July and her relics were brought back to Vadstena on the fourth nones of July by Birgerus and Katarina.

40 Birgitta was canonised in 1391.

41 A woman was delivered of a dead child, but the child was restored to life by virtue of Birgitta.

42 People from ‘gothlande’ [fol. 130v] were stranded at sea; they drew lots about which of them was to be eaten; the one chosen was saved by Birgitta because food was found.

43 The same man was taken prisoner but, having prayed to Birgitta, he was released.

44 A painter called Henry was told by one of the doctors to cease speaking of Birgitta, ‘that olde matrone’ [fol. 131r]; when cited to appear before a judge, he went to a clerk who said that he and ‘John Torto’ would pray for him; by Birgitta’s prayers that simple lay man defended himself from the charge of heresy.

45 The man’s persecutor was stricken with the falling sickness; his body rotted so much that only those used [fol. 131v] to cleaning privies could be hired to bear his body to the grave.

This is followed by Latin prayers (with English rubrics) to Birgitta.
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STUART FORBES

The Birgittine Abbey of Syon
The Burials of the Sisters and Brothers
in the Abbey Church

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

It is reassuring for an archaeologist and historian when excavation and text are mutually supportive. A particular example of this is provided by the evidence for the burials of the brothers and sisters within the church of the former English Birgittine Abbey of Syon. The aim of this paper is to show that the written records of death and burial once kept by the monastic community are in accordance with the archaeological findings.

The convent’s own historical records of death and burial are examined after a résumé of Syon’s brief existence. The archaeology will then be considered, starting with background information before leading on to the detail of the burial vaults and their occupants and the identification of some of the skeletal remains. In closing, ancillary but related points of interest that emerged during these investigations will be reviewed.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MONASTERY

Syon Abbey lies within the grounds of the present Syon House, a London home of the Duke of Northumberland, on the north bank of the River Thames opposite Kew gardens. It was the only monastery in England in the Birgittine tradition, and was originally founded by Henry V in 1415 as a double house with a complement of 60 sisters and 25 men. After the initial location proved unsuitable, building started on the current site in 1426 and five years later enough of the buildings were complete for the order to be enclosed. The foundation’s life was brief because in 1539 it was interrupted by the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII. Syon had a brief revival under the Roman Catholic

1. Aungier 1840, p. 21.
2. Ibid. pp. 51–52.
Queen Mary between 1557–1558 but was suppressed again in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The sisters moved from Syon to Flanders, then to France and Portugal before eventually returning to England in 1861, where a small community survived until recently in Devon. It is the only English monastic foundation to have an unbroken tradition lasting for almost 600 years, although of the former home at Syon there is no visible trace above ground.

**HISTORICAL RECORDS OF DEATH AND BURIAL**

One original reminder of Syon that has survived from the mediaeval monastery is the brothers’ copy of the Syon *Martiloge*. This remarkable book is preserved in the British Library\(^3\) and has long been familiar to historians. It is in two parts, comprising brief accounts of the lives of the saints and martyrs according to their memorial days, with a calendar showing the dates of decease of members of the community so that prayers for their souls could be offered on the anniversary of their deaths. It also includes various annotations, and those at the end of the volume are telling for the archaeologist. These comprise lists of names in pairs, one list for sisters and one for brothers (Appendices 1–3). One column of each pair is headed burials ‘juxta gerras’, or ‘next to the grille’, and the other column of the pair is headed burials ‘prope murem’, or ‘near the wall’.

These pages illustrate three important points. First, the burials are arranged in groups of 15 pairs, and there is an expanded comment across the page under the fifteenth pair with the explanation that at that point the burials restart by using the first grave (Appendices 1, 2). The result is that when all the burials are taken into account some of the sisters’ vaults were used three times, and some of the brothers’ twice. The lists also confirm the relative numbers of brothers and sisters buried in the 54 years up to 1539, the date of dissolution. Altogether there were burials of 48 brothers and 84 sisters.

Secondly, by referring to the calendar of deaths in the earlier part of the *Martiloge* it is possible to put dates of death to the names in the two lists (Appendices 3, 6). Once this has been done, it is clear the lists were written in chronological order as the religious were buried.

Thirdly, the first recorded burial in the brothers’ list is for the priest William Asplyon who died on 3 April 1485. The point is made repeatedly in the *Martiloge*\(^4\) that he is buried in the first place in the church (Appendix 4). Surviving building accounts for the years shortly before this date refer to work on the ‘new

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4. British Library, MS Add. 22285, ff. 33r, 21r & 189r.
church’. It seems possible therefore, that this either refers to a major refurbishment or to a drive to complete the buildings as more funds became available. In any event, the consecration of the monastery is recorded in the Martiloge on 20 October 1488.5

These burials are referred to in the history of the Birgittine order which was meticulously compiled for the English sisters by the Roman Catholic priest and historian, Canon John Rory Fletcher, in the years up to his death in 1944. This history is preserved in manuscript notebooks now held by Exeter University Library. In a marginal reference in one of the books he sketches what he believes to have been the location of these grave vaults within the abbey church.6 Fletcher was quite specific that the sisters were buried on the north side of the church and the brothers to the south ‘as at Vadstena’. Further, in his illustration he shows the burials commencing chronologically from the east end, where the Mary Altar was placed, rather than from the west. How he could have deduced this purely from his reading of the Martiloge, without any knowledge of the physical layout of the church, is not clear. It does appear, however, from the archaeological record that Fletcher was correct in his assumptions.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

Syon Abbey was completely destroyed in the years following the 1539 dissolution. Unfortunately no drawings, sketches or plans of the abbey in its heyday have survived. All that remains, apart from some possible vestiges, is what is buried below ground. An archaeological investigation of the site was started in 2003 by the UK television series Time Team. With the permission of the Duke of Northumberland this was continued in subsequent years by Birkbeck, University of London under the direction of Harvey Sheldon. When the buildings were excavated it was found that all the stone from the walls had been removed. For example, all that now remains of the church, with few exceptions, is the demolition rubble that was used to refill the trenches after the stone of the foundations had been removed. It is this rubble that delineates accurately the northern, southern and eastern walls of the church.7

The church was of a similar width to the abbey church in Vadstena. This was wide for an English abbey church, and because of this it was initially thought that the building would be proportionally long and of a size equalling Westminster Abbey. Similarly, following the usual English pattern, it was assumed

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5. Ibid., fol. 60r.
the nuns’ cloister would lie to the south of the church, especially when excavations there revealed a range of buildings, some burials and a large brick-built rere-dorter or latrine. Later excavation, however, has revealed the remains of significant buildings to the north, and these have now been identified as the sisters’ convent. In the event it has not been possible to determine the length of the church since the west end of it disappears under the present Syon House. It now seems likely, however, that the church had similar dimensions to Vadstena and that there were similarities in design also to the monasteries at Maribo, Gnadenberg and Mariager. Of the church itself, the outline of the walls and external buttresses are clear (Appendix 5). Remains of nave pillars delineate the central nave and equally spaced side aisles. Extra pillars at the east end of the church show the position of the elevated sisters’ choir, a feature found in other Birgittine churches. Several burial vaults were also found within the building.

**THE BURIAL VAULTS AND THEIR OCCUPANTS**

These burial vaults form a significant brick feature running in pairs along the inside of the north and south walls.
Although not all the church was excavated, thirty-nine out of sixty grave vaults to the north and south were exposed to show that there were indeed fifteen pairs on each side, thus reflecting the lists in the Martiloge. If it were possible to orientate the Martiloge lists with the physical grave vaults and to establish the accuracy of Fletcher’s sketch, it would be possible to identify the graves of the brothers and sisters and to associate dates of death with the burials.

Again, much of the brick from these vaults was robbed away, and generally only the last two or three courses of brickwork are left. In only seven of the paired grave vaults were there skeletal remains (Appendix 5). Four were sufficiently complete to identify that one male and one possible male had been buried on the south side of the church and one female and one possible female on the north side. This supported the view that the sisters’ conventual buildings and cloister were on the north side of the church, as at Vadstena and other Birgitine mediaeval monasteries. The Martiloge paired lists could now be allocated to specific sides of the church. What was not clear, however, was whether Fletcher was correct in assuming that the burials started at the east rather than the west end of the building. Although the Martiloge did not specifically address this question, there was a clue. Folio 21 recto (Appendix 4) describes how the first four burials of the brothers were located beneath the first and second windows and that the pattern for the sisters was the same.

What was meant by the first and second windows? As nothing of the original church walls survived it was not possible to see the remains of the window frames. Several buttresses, however, were revealed in the excavations and the windows would have been placed between them. Interestingly, the eastern halves of the bays at the east end of the church to both north and south have in their corners foundations of what look like staircases, and these may show the stairway up to the Mary Altar from the brothers’ ambulatory (Appendix 5). The space between these foundations and the second buttress was occupied by four paired burial vaults on both sides of the church. The paired vaults then ran up to halfway between the fourth and fifth buttress to the west. As there was at least one more bay to the church the windows would have continued beyond the most western grave vaults. The first four graves, positioned beneath the first and second windows, must therefore have been at the east end. With this confirmation of Fletcher’s sketch it is possible to draw up a plan of burial locations showing the identity the occupants of the grave vaults and their dates of death (Appendix 6).
THE HUMAN REMAINS

The treatment of human remains is a sensitive issue and is the subject of much discussion in archaeological and museum communities. It is accepted that bones should be treated with respect. Unfortunately this was not the case with the religious of Syon. During the excavations disarticulated bone from the graves was found in and around the church, testifying to the disregard with which the destroyers of the abbey and the subsequent gardeners treated the human remains. Three small, separate charnel pits were discovered to the south of the church, and these are presumed to have been used for depositing bones as garden work proceeded.8

On the whole the burial vaults were empty. Some contained the odd, disarticulated bone, but of the thirty-nine paired grave vaults excavated, only seven contained skeletons9 (Appendix 5).

Of the skeletal remains it is possible to identify two sisters and five brothers. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of death</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria West</td>
<td>12 July 1533</td>
<td>[1234]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Reynold</td>
<td>28 June 1538</td>
<td>[847]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Green</td>
<td>30 April 1508</td>
<td>[221]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Barnard</td>
<td>25 October 1517</td>
<td>[219]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Kirkhawley</td>
<td>5 July 1523</td>
<td>[2016]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Butler</td>
<td>22 March 1524</td>
<td>[2020]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Breerton</td>
<td>31 January 1523</td>
<td>[2019]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the excavations three other grave vaults were found in the body of the church towards the east end, and it is probable these would have contained the burials of patrons and senior members of the convent. It is possible that there were more graves of this kind that have been completely robbed away. The dates of deaths of patrons, abbesses, prioresses and confessor-generals are recorded in the Martiloge, but their burial places are not identified. The two exceptions are a prioress, Helena Eton (died on 15 December 1492) and John Trowel, a confessor-general (died on 23 April 1523), both of whom were buried in the paired vaults.

8. Cowie 2011, p. 64.
**Fig. 2:** One of the three excavated charnel pits. Photo: Excavation Archive.

**Fig. 3:** Maria West. Photo: Excavation Archive.
Fig. 4: John Green. Photo: Sue Trackman.

Fig. 5: William Barnard. Photo: Excavation Archive.

Fig. 6: Edith Reynold. Photo: Excavation Archive.
FIG. 7: Thomas Kirkhawley. Photo: Excavation Archive.
There were also a further seventeen burials found in a north-south row to the south of the church (Appendix 5). These were of both men and women, and included a child. This was an area where there were the remains of more buildings, but how these related to the community at Syon is unclear. A male was also buried outside the church close to the east wall. No identification of these people has been possible. Where interments were made before 3 April 1485 is not known, and it is possible that there is another cemetery or cemeteries with interments made in the first 54 years of the abbey’s life, and also for the remains of the religious moved from the church to make room for later burials.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

Finally, five ancillary but related points of interest emerge. First, the Martiloge records eleven deaths between January and October 1488. June 1488 was the month with the worst mortality with seven deaths within three weeks, because Thomas Westhawe, the third confessor-general died on the 1st, Robert Derham died on the 4th, Robert Hall died on the 7th, Robert Frynge and Alice Hutton died on the 10th, Isabella Lamborn died on the 15th and Katherine Dimmock died on the 17th. Although the circumstances of the deaths are not recorded, Fletcher suggests their cause was the ‘sweating sickness’, a virulent and mysterious disease which caused rapid death, and which was prevalent in England between 1485 and 1551. The sequence of deaths gives rise to the speculation that the illness was introduced first to the brothers’ monastery before crossing to the sisters’ side, where the first death occurred nine days after that of the confessor-general.

Secondly, the return of the ‘sweating sickness’ to Syon may also account for the four deaths recorded between March and August 1508. One was a lay brother, John Green, who died on 30 April 1508 (Fig. 4). The other three were sisters, who were not buried in the rows of graves in the church, but were interred next to the sisters’ door (Appendix 3). The burials of three other sisters are also recorded in this location, one in 1505 and two in 1509. It is not known why these sisters were not buried as a continuation of the paired grave sequence. It may have been because it would have meant re-using the graves of the sisters who had died in the ‘sweating sickness’ epidemic between June and October 1488, and it was thought too soon to remove the remains in case of possible infection. The burial sequence in the paired grave vaults did not start again until April 1510. The burial place of the six sisters in graves by ‘their door’ was not recorded more precisely, but it was likely to be just outside the door in their cloister. The ‘door’ in question was probably that described by Saint Birgitta as the ‘porta gratiae
et gloriae’. At Vadstena it was located in the fourth bay from the east end of the church and connected the sisters’ north aisle ambulatory with their convent at ground level. The door was kept locked and was only passed through twice by a sister. The first occasion was after her profession in church when she was admitted to the convent, and the second was when after her death she passed from the convent to the church for burial. On all other occasions the sisters entered the church at first floor level, going straight into their choir from the convent buildings. The archaeology along the north side of the church disclosed neither the door nor the six burials.

Thirdly, there are two brothers whose deaths are recorded in the Martiloge, but whose grave locations are not known. They are John Boyly who died on 7 March 1515.\(^\text{10}\) He is described as a ‘focarius’ (i.e. a kitchen servant), perhaps a married lay brother who was buried elsewhere in a grave with family connections. The term for lay brother usually found in the Martiloge is ‘frater laicus’ and they were buried in the paired vaults on the brothers’ side to the south of the church. The other brother is the priest Nicholas Edwards whose death is recorded on 25 August 1490.\(^\text{11}\) It is possible he died while travelling and was buried elsewhere.

Fourthly, the contents of William Barnard’s grave are problematic (Fig. 5). Although the monastery was first enclosed on its present site in 1431 it was not until 1485, just before the consecration of the ‘new church’, that the paired burial vaults came into use. The problem of where burials occurred in the previous 54 years remains unanswered, although the Martiloge does record the dates of death of brothers and sisters during those years. There is one puzzling point where archaeology and history appear to conflict, but which on closer inspection may shed some light on the question of the missing burials.

It was seen that William Barnard died on 25 October 1517 and was buried in the westernmost grave against the wall on the south side of the church. In the same vault, however, were found extra bones, indicating there had been at least two earlier burials in the grave.\(^\text{12}\) Yet if the Martiloge’s lists are accurate, only one interment occurred at this spot. It could be that these grave vaults were being used for burials before 1485. This infers that the ‘new church’ was indeed a reordered existing building, and that brothers’ and sisters’ burials prior to 1485 were taking place there in a similar manner to that described in the Martiloge. It does seem odd, however, that if the grave had been used twice before, in clearing

11. British Library, MS Add. 22285, fol. 52r.
12. Cowie 2011, p. 3.
it out for later burial, thigh bones, as the photos show, were twice left behind, seemingly unnoticed. These extra bones might be intrusive from other burials, but it is unclear how this could have happened.

Finally, four deaths of sisters (Appendix 3) are recorded in 1557 after the Marian return, although that for Maria Nevel is shown as occurring in 1558 on fol. 192r of the Martiloge and on 17 October 1557 in the calendar on fol. 60r. It is presumed that 1557 is the correct year. These burials are described as being ‘prope muru[m]’ and ‘prope gerras’ in the same way as the pre-Dissolution interments, so it would seem that sisters continued to be buried in the abbey church, or at least what was left of it. There is no way of telling exactly where these burials took place. In the burial plan in Appendix 6 they have been placed in locations 21 to 24 on the assumption they followed on in sequence after the last of the pre-Dissolution interments.

Thus, the marrying of history and archaeology has provided a unique insight into the dates of deaths and final resting places of some of the brothers and sisters at Syon Abbey. Inevitably both the history and archaeology of these burials have concentrated on death. But these brothers and sisters were living people. Many were revered for their piety and learning. Some came from wealthy families with strong social and political connections. The unique life-story of each religious remains to be told, but that is better done by the historian than the archaeologist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology is a collaborative discipline, and my thanks are due to all those who have helped with this paper. Among them are: Harvey Sheldon, Robin Densem, Bob Cowie, Sue Trackman, Virginia Bainbridge and my colleagues at Syon Abbey Research Associates, namely John Adams, Laurie Elvin, Richard Farrant and Sigrid Padel.
**APPENDIX I**

**BROTHERS’ BURIALS**

Transcription of fol. 189r from the British Library copy of the Martiloge (MS Add. 22285) listing burials of the brothers in the abbey church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sepultura fratru[m] iuxta gerras</th>
<th>Sepultura fratru[m] [pro]pe muru[m]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Hic iterum incipitur Sepultura Fratru[m]


The brothers’ names end here.
APPENDIX 2
SISTERS’ BURIALS

Transcription of fol. 191r from the British Library copy of the the Martiloge (MS Add. 22285) listing burials of the sisters in the abbey church.

Sepultura Sororum iuxta gerras

1. Gracia Wyrysdayle Sor[or]
2. Elyzabeth Langthorn[æ] Sor[or]
3. Johanna phyllyppe Sor[or]
4. Alicia Hutton Sor[or]
5. Isabella Lamborn Sor[or]
6. Kat[r]ina Dymmok Sor[or]
7. Mariona Crosse Sor[or]
8. Katerina Fogge Soror
9. Margareta Whyte Sor[or]
10. Alicia Arthoure Sor[or]
11. Juliana Sayle Soro[r]
12. Alicia Langton Sor[or]
13. Johanna Burell Soror
14. Helena Eton Soror
15. Elisabeth Harthyll Sor[or]
16. Elizabeh Hunytngton Sor[or]
17. Agnes Rathby Soror
18. Alicia Bukley Sor[or]
19. Isabella marchall Soror
20. Amea herde Soror
21. Magdalena lassellis Sor[or]
22. Johan[na] Shefelde Soror
23. Agnes Alen Soror
24. Katerina Bulde Soror
25. Margareta Wellys Soror
26. Elyzabeth Stokton
27. Margareta Urswyk Sor[or]
28. Anna Pole p[ri]orissa
29. Birgitta Hendok Sor[or]
30. Xr[ist]ina Symon Sor[or]

Hic iterum incipitur Sepultura Sororum um

1. Elyzabeth Odam Sor[or]
2. Alicia Duke Soror
3. Alicia Perette Sor[or]
4. Agnes Betson Sor[or]
6. Margareta Clay Sor[or]
5. Joh[ann]a Swynsto Soror
7. Alicia Messyngh[æ]m Sor[or]
8. Elizabeth Davers
9. Anna Drewry Sor[or]
10. Alicia Swynsto Sor[or]
11. Margareta Vaus Soror
12. Joh[ann]a Rose Soror
13. Elizabeth Drew Soror
14. Cristina Wayte Sor[or]
15. Margaret Edward Soror
16. Johanna Stek Sor[or]
17. Elizabeth Remys Soror
18. Elienora Scrope Sor[or]
19. Margareta Campyon Sor[or]
20. Joh[ann]a Rogers Soror
21. Alicia Hokar Soror
22. Elizabeth Woodford Sor[or]
23. Agnes Regent Soror
24. Johanna Bee Soror
25. Elizabeth Ursewyk Sor[or]
26. Agnes Michel Soror
27. Alicia Hastynges Soror
28. Agnes Wryothesley Soror
29. Anna Walshe Soror
30. Katerina Bell Soror
APPENDIX 3
SISTERS’ BURIALS

Transcriptions from the British Library copy of the Martiloge (MS Add. 22285).

**Sepultura Sororum iuxta**

1. Alicia Rade Soror
2. Juliana Banester Sor.
3. Anna Covell Soror
4. Alienora halle Sor.
5. Joanna Sewell Sor.
6. Joanna Bukley Sor.
7. Maria West Soror
8. Anna Wye Soror
9. Anna Amersh[a]m Sor.
10. Katerina Portland Sor.
11. Emma Oke Soror
12. Maria Drury Sor.
13. Joanna Spycer Sor.
14. Maria Nudygate Sor.
15. Editha Morpath Sor.
16. Clementia Charysbrugh Sor.
17. Editha Raynold Sor.
18. Elizabeth Rade Sor.
19. Magdalena Boeria So.
20. Jana perient Sor.

Fol. 191v continues the list of sisters’ burials in the abbey church.

**Sepultura sororum iuxta ianuam earum**

1. Margareta Cryspyn Sor[or] [died 23 April 1505]
2. Isabella Mosley [died 14 May 1508]
3. Alicia Conwey [died 18 August 1508]
4. Agnes Helperby [died 15 Mar 1508]
5. Elizabeth Mortemare [died 23 June 1509]
6. Katherina Wey [died 5 August 1509]

Fol. 190v lists the ‘burials of sisters next to their door’. This was presumably the ‘porta gratiae et gloriae’ leading from the church to the sisters’ cloister.
APPENDIX 4
LOCATION OF GRAVES

Fol. 21r of the Syon Martiloge (British Library, MS Add. 22285) describes the location of the first four graves in the church on the brothers’ and sisters’ sides in 1485.

Transcription:

De iacentibus in ambitibus fratrum et sororum ab anno domini 1485.

1. In ambitibus fratrwm loco primo qui est prope fenestram primam iacet magister William Asplyon ut patet in praesenti martilogio in festo Sancti Ricardi iii die Apri.
2. loco 2° infra dictam fenestram prope pariete Magister Richard Green.
3. loco 3° prope fenestram secundam Ricardus Weste.
4. Loco 4° infra dictam fenestram prope pariete Robertus Brydde. Idem intelligendum e ceteris ibide iacentibus aut in ambitibus sororum de quibus patet apertus in martilogio sequenti cum diebus quibus dormierunt [sic]

Translation:

About the burials in the ambulatories of the brothers and sisters from AD 1485.

1. In the ambulatory of the brothers in the first place which is by the first window lies master William Asplyon as appears in the present Martiloge on the feast of Saint Richard on the third of April.
2. In second place beneath the said window by the wall Master Richard Green.
3. In third place by the second window Richard West.
4. In fourth place beneath the said window by the wall Robert Bird. The same is understood about the others buried in a similar place but in the ambulatory of the sisters as is made evident in the following Martiloge with the days on which they died.
Plan of the abbey church showing the excavated areas in darker fill and the excavated grave vaults in heavy outline. Those containing skeletal remains are also shown. The bases to putative staircases are shown at the northeast and southeast corners respectively. The present Syon House lies to the west.
APPENDIX 6  SCHEMATIC PLAN OF THE INTERMENTS IN THE

NAVE OF THE CHURCH

Graves near the wall

Graves next to the grille

Graves next to the grille

Graves near the wall
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When the Swedish Chief Antiquarian Sigurd Curman was crossing the Gulf of Finland on a small steamer on an August day in 1929, the first thing he saw was the western gable of the Birgittine convent church glittering in the sun. This seemed to him an enormously inviting sign, helping a strange vessel to find its way to the harbour. He realised only later that this was a church.¹

In Books I and III of the Revelations, Birgitta clearly implies how she feels about large and elaborate churches that ‘do not smell of humility’.² An abbess, permitting the construction of such a church, has, in her opinion committed a sin equal to violently robbing the poor of their food and clothing.³ How did it become possible that during the first decades of the fifteenth century such an enormous convent church, disregarding Saint Birgitta’s rules, was built on the coast of the bay of Tallinn, impossible for the townspeople to ignore?

In comparison with other Birgittine convents the following stands out in the establishment of the Pirita (Mariendal) convent: a wide circle of founders and the convent’s headstrong approach to relations with the local authorities and the mother house in Vadstena.⁴ The fundamental question arises as to why a Birgittine convent was established in the vicinity of Tallinn. According to the Vadstena Diary, the mother house knew nothing about the events in Tallinn. An entry made on 5 May 1407 reveals the arrival of two trusty men in Vadstena in order to outline plans for the founding of a convent near Tallinn. These two, together with an additional ten men, had resolved to establish and construct a

¹. Curman 1936, p. 15.
FIG. 1: The western gable of the Pirita convent church. Photo: Peeter Säre.
convent of the Order of the Holy Saviour. The Livonian Master of the Teutonic Order had granted his permission and given the land. Sixteen virgins were ready to join the convent and six priests had already been recruited. The men came to Vadstena to receive certain privileges and some relics of Saint Birgitta, as well as a copy of the *Cantus sororum*. In September the two brothers set off from Vadstena to Tallinn, where construction was already underway.

The aforementioned entry seems rather peculiar in comparison with the commentaries usually provided by the writers of the Diary on the establishment of new convents. Usually people turned to Vadstena Abbey for help concerning the founding of a new convent. Six months earlier a similar proposition was presented at the convent by an envoy of the English king, Henry IV. The visit took place in connection with the wedding of Erik of Pomerania to Princess Philippa. The brothers from Tallinn, however, seemed to be knowledgeable about everything. They merely wanted the relics as well as the notes and texts for the Song of the Sisters. From where did their knowledge of Birgittine convents derive?

In his Livonian Chronicles Balthasar Russow states that the initiators of the building of the Birgittine convent in Mariendal were three prosperous merchants Hinrich Swalberch (Hinrik Swalbart), Hinrich Huxer and Gerlach Kruse. They joined the convent as brothers and donated their entire wealth to pay for its construction. Hinrik Swalbart was the building master of the convent for 29 years.

Ruth Rajamaa has established Gerlach Kruse’s Swedish origin. His father Hildebrand was a citizen of Söderköping; his brother Hans Hildebrandson a canon of the Linköping diocese from 1406 onwards and a brother in the Birgittine convent in Vadstena from 1415. It is highly likely that it was Gerlach’s Swedish origins and his brother’s status as a canon that made the men trustworthy in the eyes of the writer of the Vadstena Diary. There is no reason to assume, however, that Gerlach would have had personal contacts in Vadstena in 1407, as the men from Tallinn remained anonymous in the Diary.

In reality, the man who constructed the convent was Hinrik Swalbart, whose origin is unknown, but who became a member of the Great Guild in Tallinn in 1406. The organisation mostly united the elite of the local merchants,
although some foreign merchants were also members. Following the records of Swalbart’s actions in historical sources, one gains an impression of him as a very hardworking and headstrong person who saw the construction of the convent as his life’s work. He is referred to as an architect, building master and the brother responsible for the assets of the convent.\textsuperscript{11} This would mean, in essence, the role of master builder, equivalent to the German \textit{Bauherr}. A surprising fact arises from the documents – in one critical situation he does not listen to the advice of Vadstena Abbey, but rather turns to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, the latter always taking decisions in favour of the convent.\textsuperscript{12}

Coming back to the Diary, it is striking that it does not mention the founding of the Birgittine convent in Gdańsk. The founding of the Gdańsk convent, however, immediately preceded the establishment of the convent in Reval (Tallinn).

We know from the research of Tore Nyberg that the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Konrad von Jungingen, was behind the establishment of the Gdańsk convent. The impetus for the founding of the convent could possibly have come from the visit of a Swedish Birgittine brother, Magnus Peterson, to Gdańsk on his way to Italy in 1394. A more important role, however, was played by the revelations of a Prussian peasant named Dorothea. She came from the village of Montau near the castle of Malbork – the administrative centre of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. Dorothea had had revelations in her childhood, yet the presence of the body of Saint Birgitta in Gdańsk in 1374, on its journey from Italy to Vadstena, inspired Dorothea to follow the example set by her.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite his high position, Konrad von Jungingen was an extremely pious man who had the highest respect for Dorothea and did his utmost in Rome in 1404 and afterwards to have her canonized.\textsuperscript{14} The procurators of the Teutonic Order in Rome supported the founding of the Birgittine convent and a letter of papal confirmation was received in June 1397. The abbess of Vadstena was informed, however, only after the letter of confirmation from Rome had been granted for the establishment of the convent. On the feast of Saint Margaret (13 July)\textsuperscript{15}, Saint Birgitta’s relics arrived in Gdańsk and were carried in procession

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Russow 1584, p. 29; LUB I/V, n. 2055; LUB I/VII, n. 281.
\item \textsuperscript{12} LUB I/V, n. 2055; Nyberg 1965, pp. 98–99.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Nyberg 1991, p. 223.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Jähnig 1998, p. 104; Voigt 1834, pp. 379–388.
\item \textsuperscript{15} The Greek Orthodox Church honors Saint Margaret on 13 July, the Roman Catholic Church on 20 July. It is not clear which of the two days is referred to here. The peace treaty of Gdańsk in 1397 between the Teutonic Order and their opponents in Livonia gives the answer: one of the agreements was settled on Saint Margaret’s day, 13th July. LUB I/IV, nr. 1455, 1456.
\end{itemize}
through the streets.\textsuperscript{16} This date suggests that the dispatch of the relics could have been the initiative of Queen Margaret.

In the same summer, the three Nordic countries were united into one kingdom, the so-called Kalmar Union. The Assertion of Loyalty, produced as the result of the Kalmar assembly, was issued on 13 July. This was more than three weeks after the coronation of Erik of Pomerania, the first king of the Union.\textsuperscript{17} The delay may indicate that it was a compromise deal that followed long drawn-out negotiations between the Danish queen and the magnates. However, another explanation is possible: the day could have been deliberately chosen, as July 13 was the feast of Saint Margaret.

The fact that such events took place simultaneously in Gdańsk and Kalmar demonstrates Konrad’s and Margaret’s diplomatic skills. Moreover their relationships to the Birgittines bear certain close resemblances. The Grand Master’s close emotional ties with the Birgittine order were evoked and mediated by Dorothea. As a child the future queen Margaret was brought up by a daughter of Saint Birgitta. Queen Margaret often visited Vadstena Abbey on her travels, and the Abbess Ingegerd, a granddaughter of Birgitta and a close friend to Margaret, had promised to fully support to her political ambitions.\textsuperscript{18}

This poses a question as to who really was behind the establishment of the Pirita convent, as a few enthusiastic merchants would not have founded a convent on their own.

When the Danish king sold the North Estonian territories to the Teutonic Order in 1346, the Tallinn Commander of the Livonian branch of the order settled in the Dome Hill Castle. Though the Livonian Master was the main partner for Tallinn in issues of governance, the city nevertheless regarded the Grand Master in Prussia as the highest power.\textsuperscript{19} This also explains the frequent visits of the burgomasters to Malbork. Dome Hill and the town were two separate judicial units, separated by a wall. The magistrate did not enjoy full power in the town. The king of Denmark had been the patron of Saint Michael’s, the Cistercian convent, and after the change of power the Teutonic Order assumed this role.\textsuperscript{20} The Dominican Saint Catherine’s convent was independent, but maintained excellent relations with the magistrate. There was at least one member of the magistracy among the wardens of the convent church, responsi-

\textsuperscript{16} Nyberg 1991, p. 197–198.
\textsuperscript{17} Lönnroth 1997, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{18} Etting 1997, pp. 251–252.
\textsuperscript{19} Kreem 2002, pp. 47–51.
\textsuperscript{20} See more in Raam 1995, pp. 81–100.
ble for overseeing construction work. The cathedral was located on Dome Hill, next to the castle of the order. When the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order began to govern North Estonia, the bishops were elected from among the clergy of the order, or, they were pressured to join the order.

An event occurred at the end of the fourteenth century that had a major impact on the history of Tallinn as well as the whole of North Estonia. On 24 June 1397 negotiations between the Teutonic Order and their opponents started in Gdańsk. The objective of the meeting was to end the war in Livonia. The war was started by the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order attempting to subject the dioceses to their power. Success was achieved in Riga and the Ösel-Wiek region (now the Saare, Hiiu and Lääne counties of Estonia), but not in Tartu in south-east Estonia where the former secretary of Emperor Karl IV, Dietrich Damerow, was bishop. Damerow initiated widespread opposition to the order, ending in a war between him and the Livonian Master. By the end of 1396 the diocese of Tartu had been conquered. In this issue, the town of Tallinn sided with the order and the burgomaster Gerhard Witte acted as a mediator between the two sides. By midsummer of 1397 the Grand Master invited both parties to Gdańsk. After two weeks, they reached several agreements. All of them were settled between 12 and 15 July. Thus, the Livonian negotiators participated in the arrival of Saint Birgitta’s relics. As a result of the peace treaty of Gdańsk, the Archbishop of Riga was subjected to the Livonian Master, however, the North Estonian vassals living in the former Danish territories received great privileges. It is, therefore, possible to say that even though the territories of North Estonia together with Tallinn formally belonged to the Livonian Master, the real power lay with the Grand Master in Prussia.

Against the background of these political events, we should also pay attention to what was happening in architecture. During the time of Konrad von Jungingen, the reconstruction of the palace of the Grand Master was completed, including the main hall, one of the best examples of fourteenth-century secular architecture. A few years later, the construction of a new town hall started in

21. See LUB 1/IV, n. 1448.
27. LUB 1/IV, n. 1459.
28. LUB 1/IV, n. 1455, 1456.
FIG. 2: Map of 1689 from Reval/Tallinn and its surroundings; fragment. Estonian Historical Archives.
Tallinn and it was finished in 1404. Despite the rather heavy rustication dominating the entire construction of the town hall, the double-naved hall seems to be part of an entirely different world. Two slender octagonal pillars support the high cross vaults. The overall impression is surprisingly elegant and light. This presents a completely new spatial form in Tallinn with the primary visual parallels found in the castle of the Grand Master in Malbork. The link between the two seems to be the order castle on the Dome Hill. During the construction of the town hall the aforementioned Gerhard Witte, who took part in the negotiations in Gdańsk on the side of the order, served as the burgomaster of Tallinn. Before the negotiations Witte was looking for a master mason in Gdańsk for the convent church of the Dominicans. His task was to build a gable and spire for the church. The Dominican convent church served as a direct model for the one in Pirita, with regard to both size and architectural style.

Tallinn had, therefore, close contacts with both Gdańsk and Malbork. The determining factor in the context of the establishment of the Pirita convent was, however, the appointment of the new bishop, Johannes III Ochmann (Aken) in 1405. He had worked as chaplain and chancellor to the Grand Master of the order, who secured his election as bishop. The position of chaplain was the highest among the brothers of the order. He accompanied the Grand Master on his travels and was his counsel in religious and ecclesiastical matters. Due to the chaplain’s constant presence in the company of the Grand Master, he also had a profound influence on him. Johannes, therefore, arrived in Tallinn from this environment, dominated by the cult of Dorothea and, through her, also of Birgitta, where special attention was paid to pious life and taking care of the poor and where the foundation of churches and convents, as well as the donation of works of art to them, was especially generously sponsored. As the Birgittine convents were under the control of the local bishop, it is highly likely that the idea for the establishment of the Pirita convent originated from the court of the Grand Master. Such an idea is also supported by the fact that Hinrik Swalbart was involved in the establishment of the convent from 1405 onwards. This becomes obvious in a later letter from the procurator of the order to the Grand Master.

31. LUB I/IV, n. 1448, 1451.
34. LUB I/V, n. 2055.
We can only speculate about whether the delegation from Tallinn would have arrived in Vadstena in May, if Konrad von Jungingen had not unexpectedly passed away in March 1407. It is likely that they would, instead, have sought to obtain a papal letter of confirmation and only then turned to the mother house, the sequence of events following that in Gdańsk. In this case the letter of confirmation only arrived in 1411.35

On 8 July 1410 the confessor, accompanied by three brothers, travelled from Vadstena to Tallinn with the goal of visiting the convent. The following entry from the Diary makes it especially interesting, ‘… that it was highly necessary, was the opinion of the brothers and sisters, as well as the bishop of Linköping and the chapter’.36 As a result of this visit the Livonian Master and Bishop Johannes sent a letter to the procurator of the Teutonic Order at the papal curia, asking the latter to pass on to the Pope an application to approve the establishment of the Pirita convent.37 In May 1411 the Pope confirmed the guidelines for

35. LUB 1/VI, n. 2987.
37. The letter is lost, but mentioned in procurator’s letter to the Grand Master on 13 February 1416: LUB 1/V, n. 2055.
the convent and its privileges. Ruth Rajamaa has drawn attention to the last paragraph of the letter of confirmation, in which the Pope gives his permission for two sisters and two brothers to transfer from Vadstena Abbey to Pirita. Comparing this information to later documents, Rajamaa discerns in this an ambition by Vadstena Abbey to maintain control over the Pirita convent.\(^{38}\) This notion is further supported by the abovementioned Diary entry and the rather painful reaction of the town of Reval to the location of the convent.

The convent was at the mouth of the river Pirita, on the site of an old harbour. In the letters of complaint the town stresses that the Pirita Convent is managed by the Swedes, making the town fear the entrance into their territory of enemy forces. In the town’s opinion, the convent was too close to the coast and could easily turn into a pirate den and endanger the harbour.\(^{39}\)

The first time the town initiated a protest against the location of the convent was in 1408,\(^{40}\) but in 1413 a petition was sent through a Gdańsk magistrate to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, asking for the convent to be removed to a more inland location.\(^{41}\) Why did the town become so sensitive about the location of the convent during these years?

In 1408 Denmark regained Gotland and Erik of Pomerania next wished to claim back the territories in North Estonia. The fact that the Danish king Waldemar IV had sold Estonia to the Teutonic Order no longer seemed of importance. On 17 May in 1413 Erik of Pomerania visited Vadstena Abbey for the first time as king. (Queen Margaret had died in October the previous year.) He demonstrated special respect towards the convent by walking all the way from the town of Skänninge to the convent. Erik promised the brothers and sisters that the construction of the Vadstena convent church would be completed and the Maribo convent in Lolland would also be built.\(^{42}\) The letter of complaint of the Tallinn magistrate to the Grand Master of the Order is dated 1 August.\(^{43}\) A letter of 5 September reveals that the Grand Master promised to discuss the questions raised by the Tallinn magistrate at the chapter meeting of the order.\(^{44}\) In September or October 1413 a high-level delegation from Denmark met the Grand Master, demanding back the rights of the king of Denmark with respect

\(^{38}\) Rajamaa 2007, p. 79.
\(^{39}\) LUB 1/IV, n. 1946.
\(^{40}\) LUB 1/V, n. 2094.
\(^{41}\) LUB 1/IV, n. 1945, 1946.
\(^{42}\) Gejrot 1996, p. 137 (n. 218, 221).
\(^{43}\) LUB 1/IV, n. 1945.
\(^{44}\) LUB 1/IV, n. 1947.
to the Estonian territories. The reaction of the Tallinn magistrate was, therefore, directly connected to the homage paid to the Birgittine convents by Erik of Pomerania.

Swalbart seems to have been able to manoeuvre skilfully between the different political powers. Nevertheless, he clearly demonstrated his own convictions. Since the magistrates would not abandon their claims, the representatives of Vadstena Abbey urged Swalbart to turn to the pope. Swalbart, however, turned to the Grand Master. In 1416 he personally met Grand Master Michael Küchmeister von Sternberg, who promised to resolve the matter. In August 1416 the Livonian Master decided that the convent should remain in its original location.

How does the complicated course of history reflect in the appearance of the convent church in Pirita? The construction of the stone buildings was started in 1417, and the convents of brothers and sisters were consecrated in 1431 around Midsummer Day. The assertive architectural solution applied to the design of the church turned out to be quite different from other Birgittine convent churches. Since the landscape required the placement of the main portal in the west, the eastern end had to accommodate the nuns’ gallery with the altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as well as the high altar with twelve side altars. The task was completed in an extremely clever way – the Virgin Mary’s altar was placed above the high altar.

In its form the church is a long wide hall, yet, when construction started, there was a plan to build a basilica. The mother house imposed its will upon the Pirita convent in this issue. Shortly before the construction of the church in Pirita, the hall church of the Dominicans, covering an area of 1219 square metres, had become the largest ecclesiastical building in the town. The church of the Birgittines covered 1360 square metres. The sermons of the Dominicans were meant for the townspeople, but it is not quite clear to whom the Birgittine brothers preached: local peasants, knights, and merchants? In any case, the church was designed for a large number of people.

46. LUB 1/V, n. 2055; Nyberg 1965, pp. 98–99.
47. LUB 1/V, n. 2094.
48. LUB 1/V, n. 2109.
52. Raam 1993, p. 269.
The gable, decorated with five lancet-arched shallow niches, which are indented by circles, trefoils and small openings, is especially eye-catching. After the construction of the church in 1436 this feature was reflected on the gables of the dwellings of the town. Although official relations between the town and the Pirita convent remained cold, it seems that the Birgittine order enjoyed an ever-growing popularity among the townspeople. The fears of the magistrates were grounded: donations started pouring out of the town, especially after the consecration of the convent and towards the end of the fifteenth century.\footnote{Allik 1995, p. 67.} The inhabitants of the convent also included the representatives of prominent patrician families.\footnote{Johansen 1939, p. 9–10.}

However, the most significant support came to the convent from the Teutonic Order and the nobility of North Estonia. The buildings of the convent were erected on lands belonging to the order located at the mouth of the Pirita River, close to a harbour and an international trading site. The riverside lands belonged to the local aristocracy who used the harbour as a loading place throughout the
The Birgittines also seem to have won the favour of the peasants. According to Balthasar Russow’s Chronicle of Livonia, the peasants continued to attend divine services in Pirita even after the Reformation. Later, a peasant cemetery was founded in front of the church where the churchyard of the convent had probably been located.

Alf Härdelin has said that Birgittine convents were not places of refuge for the outcasts of society, but rather centrepieces of society, its ‘life-giving hearts’. The convent presented a miniature picture of society. This is certainly the case for the Pirita convent and is visually apparent even today.

59. LUB 1/V, n. 2549; Rebas 1976, p. 56.
60. LUB 1/X, n. 17.
61. LUB 1/X, n. 517; LUB 1/IX, n. 742, 796.
62. Russow 1584, p. 43.
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SFSS = *Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet.*


The Vallis gratiae Altar Frontlet
Object, Imagery, and Deconstruction of the ‘Artist’

In the year 1943 an anthology was published that celebrated the quincen­
tennial anniversary of the Birgittine convent of Vallis gratiae in Naantali
(Näidendal), Finland. One of the articles in this anthology was a survey of
the extant textiles and embroideries connected with the convent. It was written
by one of the leading medievalists of his time in Finland, the then State Archae­
ologist, Carl Axel Nordman. Highlighted among the textiles examined was,
understandably, the finest Birgittine embroidery in a Finnish collection: an altar
frontlet, today exhibited in the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki (Fig.
1a–e). In his contribution Nordman briefly listed the motifs depicted on the
frontlet, but instead of concentrating on the iconography or thematic analysis,
he focused on questions concerning its creator and dating. Nordman reached
a conclusion regarding the former and wrote: ‘Hypothesis becomes certainty: I
think there can be no doubt that Birgitta Anundsdotter made the altar frontlet
for the church of her home parish. She is, then, our first female textile artist
known by name.’

1. This essay is an extended version of the paper presented at the Birgitta conference in
Stockholm. I am grateful for the comments I received from the conference participants
and the editors of this volume. In addition, I have benefited from the advice and in­
sightful remarks of Ville Walta, Markus Hiekkanen, Leena Svinhufvud, Aki Arponen,
and Päivi Salmesvuori.
3. Inv. no 2372:3. The item in this article is referred to as either the Naantali or Vallis
gratiae embroidery/altar frontlet. In Finland it is generally known as the ‘altar cloth of
Huittinen’ (Huittisten altariliina).
4. Nordman 1943, p. 170. The article was published in Finnish but republished in Swed­
ish, in the journal Finskt Museum (Nordman 1944): ‘Antagandet blir visshet: det tyckes
mig icke finnas det minsta tvivel om, att Birgitta Anundsdotter förfärdigat brunet för
Nordman’s reference to an earlier hypothesis (that he now believed to have been proven correct) was not pointing to his own research, but to the contributions by the Swedish scholars Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom. In their seminal work on medieval textiles in Sweden from the late 1920s, they described the *Vallis gratiae* embroidery very briefly. The two embroidered letters near the upper edge of the cloth, one at each end, gained their special attention: they suggested these letters are *b* and *a*, and that they refer to the initials of the nun whose hands had made the embroidery, perhaps Birgitta Anundsdotter whose

sin hemsockens kyrka. I henne ha vi således vår första till namnet kända textilkonstnärinna.’ Translation into English by the author.

name is to be found in documents concerning the convent (Fig. 3 a–b). This attribution of the embroidery to an individual, namely Birgitta Anundsdotter, has been repeated in almost every scholarly contribution that mentions the object; in the absence of more recent research – Nordman’s thesis was reiterated in a posthumous publication in 1980 – it is unswervingly repeated. Likewise, the concept ‘first female textile artist in Finland’, coined by Nordman, has lived its own life in the literature.

This essay continues the discussion about authorship by deconstructing the
role of Birgitta Anundsdotter as the maker of the embroidery. In addition, it highlights this fairly little-known piece of art; apart from Nordman’s relatively limited contribution in the 1940s, no research has been published on it. Therefore, I am offering a description of this work in two ways: first to meet a general art historical interest and second, following Michael Baxandall’s conceptual modification, to submit a representation of my thinking. For Baxandall sees a description of an art object as ‘less a representation of the picture, or even a representation of seeing the picture, than a representation of thinking about

8. Surveys of Birgittine textiles in Sweden are, generally speaking, very cursory when dealing with those that survive in Finland.
having seen the picture’. Baxandall’s mid-1980s form of expression somewhat conveys the discursive distance from ‘reality’ that was then emphasized; instead of speaking of the ‘real’ object, the scholar was considered to mediate his or her personalized ‘image’ of the work in question. Although I am stressing the importance of the material, real presence of the studied object, I find Baxandall’s wording inspirational: my description does not cover all the details nor seek to reveal the full materiality of the work, but rather verbalizes my thinking. The rich imagery of the altar frontlet cannot be examined here as thoroughly as it deserves, but I hope to provide some perceptions for further research.

What follows, then, is an analysis of the imagery of the embroidery with some remarks on its materiality and present condition, after which I will proceed to questions concerning the supposed authorial role of Birgitta Anundsdotter as well as the provenance of the work. From here I will move to the use of initials

within the artistic products of convents in general and discuss the reciprocity of textual and visual spheres. Finally, I will briefly compare certain Birgittine embroideries remaining today in Sweden with the one in Helsinki. My thesis is that these works are even more related than has previously been realised and, consequently, the most likely origin for the *Vallis gratiae* embroidery is in Vadstena.

**THINKING ABOUT THE *Vallis gratiae* EMBROIDERY AS AN OBJECT: A DESCRIPTION**

The *Vallis gratiae* embroidery is a narrow band that surrounded the upper part of the altar, called *aurifrisium* in Latin; its width is 217 centimetres and height c. 16.5 centimetres. It depicts fourteen images in a row, separated from one an-
other by fifteen decorative columns or pillars; each pictorial scene is sheltered by a rounded arch. To these images I shall soon return. Beads or pearls were attached to the top of each column, but today none of these survive.10 The spaces between the arches are adorned with arboreal ornaments resembling mostly oak leaves as well as images of angels with musical instruments. There is, however, no systematic order in how the nine leaf ornaments and six angels are placed.

The main materials are linen and silk: the linen cloth is embroidered with silk and couched in silver-gilt, silver thread, and wire.11 The red background for the figures is embroidered in split stitch with fine silken thread filling in almost geometric spaces. This technique is used in many other Birgittine embroideries.12 The cloth is damaged, particularly in the centre of its upper edge as well as at the

11. Ibid.
12. The expert on Birgittine textiles, Inger Estham, describes this technique as creating a ‘prism-like’ pattern, see Estham 1991, p. 11.
end. It was mended in 1949 with uncoloured shappe silk which is distinctly visible, for example, in the face areas of the figures in the last two pictorial scenes. A thicker red thread is also visible, which may be evidence of earlier repairs.

13. The pictures in the archives documenting the conservation process were taken in 1949 and this was probably also the year when the conservation was done. Main Record of the Historical Collection; an undated and unsigned note in the archives of the Conservation Laboratory, National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki. E-mail from conservator Aki Arponen (National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki), 7.2.2012. No recent conservation has been carried out on the textile. During my research I have had no direct access to the archives of the Conservation Laboratory of the National Board of Antiquities due to their move to temporary premises, but conservator Aki Arponen has been a great help in searching their archival material for me.

**FIG. 1d:** *Vallis gratiae* Altar Frontlet: Crucifixion, Resurrection, Pentecost. Photo: National Museum of Finland.
Merged with the images, the embroidery offers textual communication, too. Altogether eight bands with inscriptions are included in the pictorial spaces; these are either held by angels or represent the words of characters in the narrative. The letters are very faded and worn, but most of them are still somewhat legible. The texts have not hitherto been published. The inscriptions are embroidered with goldish yellow or blue threads, colours also generally used in the pictorial scenes, except for couple of single letters in red or green. The letters $b$ and $a$, already mentioned (Fig. 3a–b), are the only separate letters outside the inscription bands.

14. The palaeographer Ville Walta offered his generous help in deciphering the worn inscriptions. My remarks on them are greatly indebted to his assessments, but any possible misinterpretations are naturally mine. I hope that future research in a laboratory environment will reveal their meanings in more detail than has been possible for us now.
The embroidery tells the story of the Virgin, which is intermingled with that of Christ and the overall salvation narrative of Christianity. The story begins with the prehistory of the Virgin Mary and winds up with her unification with her son in heaven. The twelve narrative motifs are the following: Meeting at the Golden Gate, Birth of the Virgin, Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, the three Magi, Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Pentecost, and Coronation of the Virgin. The two ends of the frontlet are, however, given to two pairs of saints distinct from the narrative: the female saints Birgitta and her daughter Katarina of Vadstena start the cycle, and it ends with two male saints, suggested tentatively.

**FIG. 10: **Vallis gratiae Altar Frontlet: Coronation of the Virgin, two male saints. Photo: National Museum of Finland.
to be Saints Dominic and Francis. Both of the latter are carrying books as well as holding crosiers with sudaria, or panniselli. This detail marks them as abbots, which, of course, Dominic and Francis were not, although they each founded a religious order. Typically, these two saints are not depicted with crosiers, but it may be that the suggested identification is still valid if the pictorial programme of the embroidery was aimed at emphasizing the juxtaposition of these figures with the founders of the Birgittine order, namely Birgitta and Katarina at the other end of the band. Saint Birgitta is holding her attribute, a book, in her right hand and lifts up a large cross in the other. The cross is juxtaposed with the large white virginal lilies in Katarina’s right hand. With her left hand Katarina is graciously supporting her cloak. Katarina’s common attribute, the deer, jumps towards her, tame as a puppy.

The second pictorial and first narrative scene depicts the meeting of Saint Anne and her husband Joachim at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem. Angels accompany the couple, which I see as a visual allusion to previous events in the story, the Annunciation of Anne and the encounter between Joachim and the angel in the desert. The angel appearing from the clouds above Saint Anne is holding a text band which curls over Joachim’s head; the inscription probably contains the angel’s announcement of a great joy that has entered the world. Although commonly appearing in connection with the Nativity, this message is also a good fit for the occasion that marks the conception of the Virgin. Angels appear frequently in the Birgittine liturgy, and in fact, Birgittine devotion has been identified as one factor introducing the cult of the guardian angel in Eng-

15. No explanation for the identification of the male saints is offered, see Branting and Lindblom 1928–1929 I, p. 93; Nordman 1943, p. 168.
16. The letters io vo(bis) ga may be detected, which, then, offers the possibility of reading it as nuntio vobis gaudium.
land. Numerous angel-like figures in the embroidery may also be understood almost as maids, suitable attendants to accompany high-ranking persons like the members of the holy family. The spouses hold each other’s hands. Joachim rests his other hand on his chest as a sign of caring and love whereas Saint Anne’s other hand is in an upright position, similar to Birgitta’s in the previous scene. Therefore, the images of these two holy women are linked: they are dressed alike and their poses are uniform. This is no surprise, since in Nordic late medieval art Saints Anne and Birgitta are often visually very similar in their married woman’s outfits. Here, for instance, they both wear a wimple whereas Katarina’s neck is uncovered.

The Birth of the Virgin shows Saint Anne sitting on a sumptuous bed, covered by striped counterpane, and attended by couple of chamber maids (Fig. 2). An angel hovering over the bed is waving a banner inscribed in blue: *ave regina*. Little Mary is all dressed up, and actually comes across as a miniature version not only of herself as the adult Virgin, but also of her mother Anne in the previous scene. This doubling of the mother and daughter, two holy mothers, visually attests the matrilineal lineage of Christ. This approach is especially recognizable in the next setting, that is, the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. Mary is walking up the stairs under the eyes of her parents. She is only half the size of Saint Anne, but the identical characterization of daughter and mother is perfect – except that the Virgin’s youth is expressed by the skilful embroidery of her hair in tiny golden curls, whereas Saint Anne’s hair is covered by a veil.

Following the usual order of the holy cycle, the next episodes underscore Mary’s pregnancy. The Annunciation illustrates the angel’s greeting to the Virgin, who has turned away from her reading stand to receive the message. The angel is holding a decorative banner, as well as an inscription winding over the Virgin which says, *ave maria gracia plena*. The celebration proper of pregnancy, the Visitation, displays the two soon-to-be-mothers, Mary and Elisabeth, accompanied by two small maids. Looking closely, the beholder may have noticed the curves of their bellies, and, therefore, meditated on the first meeting of Christ and John the Baptist. The blue inscription above the Virgin is the beginning of the Canticle of Mary (Luke 1:46–55), the word *magnificat* starting with a red letter *m*, and, after a red punctuation mark, comes the word *anima*. In the

inscription connected to Elisabeth one may read blessings for the Virgin and the fruit of her womb for the word *benedicta* is readable (Luke 1:42).

The image of the Nativity is quite badly damaged, and the Child is not visible anymore. In the late 1940s the seventeenth century (?) gilt silver lace attached to the lower edge was removed, as well as a golden stripe sewn onto the clothing of the Virgin Mary.20 This stripe as well as a tiny ‘cover’ on the infant Jesus can still be seen in photographs of the embroidery printed in Branting and Lindblom’s *magnum opus*.21 Despite the damage, we see how the composition follows the vision of Birgitta and shows the Virgin kneeling before the infant Christ. Joseph, who appears here for the only time, is behind Mary’s back wearing a large head covering, similar to Joachim’s in the fourth scene. After the birth, Mary receives the three Magi in a queen-like manner, sitting on an elaborately decorated seat.

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or the Purification of the Virgin, shows Mary in the company of two women before the head priest, while the Christ child stands fully clothed on the altar. The cycle then proceeds to the Passion imagery. Christ’s suffering on the cross is underlined by sewing the pouring blood with thick wire. In true Birgittine style, the Crucifixion depicts Mary’s passion, too, by letting the sword pierce her heart. The Resurrection scene also gives space to Mary: she is witnessing how her son, wrapped in a cloak, displays his wounds in front of the empty tomb. The inscription curving between the figures reads as *salve sancta parens* (‘hail, holy mother’). Pentecost is depicted following the medieval pictorial tradition which, unlike the Bible, places the Virgin Mary as the focal figure, flanked by the apostles. Lastly, the Coronation of the Virgin shows the Virgin and Christ sitting on a decorative bench, embroidered in the same manner as the Virgin’s seat in the scene of the Epiphany.

The detailed treatment of the text bands is palpable: sometimes the ends are curved as if revealing the back of the bands, and thus emphasizing their free movement in space. This accords with a wider aim to manipulate and enrich the one-dimensional pictorial surface; for instance, in the Presentation of the Virgin, the stairs of the temple are adeptly executed so that the stairs are alternately blue and white, alluding to three-dimensional space and grand architecture.

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20. Main Record of the Historical Collection; an undated and unsigned note in the archives of the Conservation Laboratory, National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki.
21. See the photos in plate 50 in Branting and Lindblom 1928–1929, I.
What do we know of Birgitta Anundsdotter, the assumed creator of the embroidery, then? She was ordained in the Vallis gratiae convent in 1449, as can be deduced from a letter of donation composed on 3 August that year by Birgitta’s mother, the widow Rikissa Olofsdotter. The document testifies to the transfer of the estate of Karhiniemi, Rikissa’s inherited landed property, for her daughter’s provent.22 Already couple of days earlier Birgitta’s brother (or half-brother), Olaf Kusta, had donated a property which was part of his inheritance from his father, a field in Lietsala, Raisio (Reso) for the same purpose.23 Olaf was a priest in Turku Cathedral, a prebendary of the altar of Saint John the Baptist.24 These two documents are the only ones relating to Birgitta Anundsdotter, but they are enough to confirm that she belonged to a wealthy burgher family; Birgit Klockars has suggested that Birgitta’s father and Rikissa’s late husband, Anund Niklisson, might have been the same man who in another document is mentioned as mayor of the town of Ulvila (Ulfsby).25

23. FMU 2807.
How could Birgitta have made the embroidery for the church of her home parish, as Nordman suggested? Who gave money for the expensive threads? Who would have donated the expensive item which had taken her hours and hours of work inside the convent? Undoubtedly Birgitta, like most of the other sisters, did handiwork in Naantali and in so doing they were following Saint Birgitta’s explicit orders. As has been pointed out, some sisters in Vadstena are even mentioned as especially skilled in embroidery or sewing. There is material evidence for sewing too; recent archaeological excavations around Naantali church have revealed items such as a crochet hook, a bronze needle, scissors, spindles and thimbles. However, it is likely that the ordinary sisters would not have considered their work to be theirs, but belonging to the convent. This must particularly have applied to items meant for the altars. The Regula Salvatoris explicitly forbids private ownership, as well as touching gold or silver except in embroidery, and even then it must be supervised by the abbess.

Nordman’s determination to identify ‘the first female textile artist in Finland’ needs to be historicized. He seems to have been content to find a female counterpart to those then-numerous constructed master-names given to male woodcarvers. He himself had been active in this pursuit when doing his long-term, and in many ways invaluable, research on medieval wood sculpture in Finland. He had identified such ‘masters’ as the ‘master of Kaarina’, ‘master of Ulvila’, ‘master of Sääksmäki’ and so forth. In recent decades assumptions concerning certain masters have been drastically challenged and several made-up personalities have been deconstructed. From one angle it might be said that Nordman’s declaration was sympathetic; it definitely preceded the first feminist wave in art history which searched for the forgotten female artists of the past. Textile art was a convenient field for giving credit to women, too, as it was a branch of the arts that was at the time, in the 1940s, considered to be mainly women’s arena – though this was not the case in pre-modern times. In Finland, during the decades before the Second World War, a good number of female textile designers and weavers emerged. Moreover, amid the art historical

27. Väisänen 2011.
28. Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 2. See also Lundén 1959, p. 16; Carlquist 2007, p. 63. On nuns’ handiwork, its restrictions as well as the purchasing of materials for art production in Benedictine and Dominican convents, see Hamburger 1997, pp. 177–211.
29. See Nordman 1965.
30. See, for example, Kempff 1994; von Bonsdorff 1999.
contextualization of Nordman’s claim, the acute historical circumstances should not be dismissed. He was writing in the midst of the war when men were fighting the enemy on the front and women doing their share at home.

THE CONVENT AND THE HUITTINEN PARISH

As mentioned earlier, it was Branting and Lindblom who originally presented the idea of linking Birgitta Anundsdotter with the embroidery due to the letters \( b \) and \( a \). Nordman continued the research: he did not settle for the evidence offered by the embroidery itself, but searched for written documents and archives to support the case. Branting and Lindblom had not known the provenance of the work, but Nordman learned from the archives that it was donated to the Finnish Antiquarian Society in October 1885 from Huittinen (Vittis).\(^{32}\) As the documents made clear, the Karhiniemi estate, Rikissa Olafsdotter’s landed property and Birgitta’s provenance, was situated in the parish of Huittinen; even today one of the local villages is called Karhiniemi. The name of the donor of the embroidery in the records is E. J. K. Grönroos, and he is to be identified with the assistant vicar of the parish of Huittinen, Ernst Johan Konstantin Luoma, who ‘Finnicized’ his family name following the Fennoman ideals of the time.\(^{33}\) This young priest had studied in Helsinki and perhaps already had connections with the Antiquarian Society. The collection of the Society later became part of the collections of the National Museum of Finland.

The altar frontlet was, at the latest, removed from the altar when the whole church, including the interior, went through a major renovation during the years 1877–1878.\(^{34}\) At the time a new altarpiece was acquired to meet the demand that it should be ‘up to date’.\(^{35}\) This could indicate the old-fashioned character of the then-present altar arrangement, containing the altarpiece from 1753\(^{36}\) and perhaps also the medieval altar frontlet. Several medieval wooden sculptures, including images of Saint Henrik, Saint George and the Virgin, had probably already been lost in a fire in 1783.\(^{37}\) When the church was again being renovated in the late 1890s, a medieval textile fragment was found among some rubbish:

\(^{32}\) Main Record of the Historical Collection, National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki. (Vittis: in earlier literature written ‘Hvittis’.)
\(^{33}\) On the history of Huittinen parish, see Viikki 1989, p. 395.
\(^{34}\) The whole interior was demolished and replaced with benches, altarpiece, lecterns, pulpit etc. designed by the county architect C. J. von Heideken. See the detailed analysis of the restoration works in Huittinen parish church in Valkeapää 2000, passim.
\(^{35}\) Valkeapää 2000, p. 58, n. 30 and p. 61.
\(^{36}\) The dating of the old altarpiece from Hiekkanen 2007, pp. 222–223.
a cross detached from a chasuble bearing an image of the Virgin standing on a crescent moon, but it does not, in stylistic terms, bear any indications of Birgittine origin.38

Regardless of the later fate of the Naantali embroidery, we cannot confirm it was in Huittinen at all in the Middle Ages. It is possible that it was sold after the Reformation when the Naantali convent ran out of money. We know that Vadstena abbey had to trade its textiles,39 and without doubt this also happened in the daughter-convent. The list of the possessions of the convent from 1530 includes very few textiles: it only mentions two chasubles and four copes,40 which might not, however, be all they had. What is more, we cannot maintain that Huittinen was Birgitta’s ‘home parish’, as Nordman put it. The land was her mother’s property, and it was not common that a couple, in this case Rikissa Olafsdotter and Anund Niklisson, would have decided to live on the wife’s inherited land. On the contrary, this land was considered as an investment property which was easy to sell, deposit, or exchange if needed.41 And indeed this was what happened when the estate was traded for Birgitta’s livelihood inside the convent. Furthermore, other parts of the same estate were used in a similar way when roughly a year later Rikissa’s sister, Kristina Olafsdotter with her husband Sven Spinke exchanged Kristina’s share of the property with certain land located in Ulvila.42

The link to Huittinen parish was, however, developed even further by Nordman. Drawing on the construction history of the church, and following the paradigm of the era, he believed that the stone church was rebuilt in the mid-1490s and, therefore, suggested that the embroidery was donated on the same occasion.43 Nordman was willing to stand with the attribution although Birgitta Anundsdotter would then have already been in her seventies and dating the embroidery as late as the 1490s made him a little uncomfortable.44 According

38. Gröhn 2000, p. 93. Gröhn connects it with the style of Danzig. The item (inv. no. NM 32008) was not donated to the National Museum until 1932. Main Record of the Historical Collection, National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki.
41. See, for example, Lahtinen 2004.
42. FMU 2850. See Klockars 1979, p. 53. Lahtinen (2000, pp. 49–50) uses this transaction as an example of understanding the wife’s land as the property of both spouses, even if it is mentioned as her inherited property.
43. Nordman 1943, p. 171.
44. Ibid.
to current research, the stone church of Huittinen was not built before c. 1500. This, of course, would not theoretically preclude the donation of the embroidery to the prior, wooden churches of the parish, but it does weaken Nordman’s assumption. It is evident that the construction of the stone church has no relevance to the dating of the embroidery.

**The Author’s Initials, and the Interaction of Image-Making and Literacy**

Let us look for a moment at the important letters b and a. It is not rare to find the ‘signature’ of a sister working as a scribe in the form of her initials in Birgittine manuscripts. The initials – also of those sisters who owned the book – are either placed very noticeably, for instance at the head of the page, or they are somewhat hidden in other decorative elements such as the hooks of marginal stems. The manifold connections between Birgittine manuscript illuminations and textiles have not gone unnoticed; for instance, some manuscripts contain textile ‘curtains’ or have been mended with threads. Moreover, illuminations have been brought forward as the foremost examples for the forms and styles used in the embroideries. And vice versa: in the past, male scholars claimed that the manuscript illuminations executed by the sisters were too ‘embroidery-like’ due to their disparaging attitudes towards embroidery as female activity. But it is not only the illuminations that were tied to the embroideries, but the textual tradition practised as a whole. This is best manifested in the form of the inscription bands in the images, as we have seen. Indeed, because of the tight connection between the production of manuscripts and textiles, Jonas Carlquist sees the art of embroidery as a literate endeavour, and conceptually includes it in the field of his study, the textual world of the Birgittine sisters. We do talk about ‘reading’ images, too, but looking from another angle, that of visuality, we could argue that various mental and pictorial images as well as the prevailing visual culture in general greatly affected the selection and usage of words. Textual and pictorial forms of representation, both very much determined by the concept of material culture, worked interactively in convent life – and in the human mind.

46. See, for example, Sandgren 2006; 2010; Carlquist 2007.
47. See the examples by, for instance, the scribe Christina Hansdotter Brask presented in Sandgren 2010.
48. Ibid., especially p. 144.
50. For details, see Sandgren 2006, p. 117.
51. Carlquist 2007, p. 64.
In this respect, it is useful to pay attention to the completely worn inscription in the Crucifixion scene of the Naantali embroidery, for we can now see the blackish forms of letters onto which the threads were later sewn. The scribes might have carried out some of the preparatory work for those sisters who had the expertise in embroidery by sketching patterns – and letters – onto the cloth. That is if they were separate persons in the first place. At the very least they probably worked in the same premises. The question arises: if the patterns for the designs were copied from manuscripts, was the manner of adding one’s initials too?

In general, initials or other ‘signatures’ were not much used in female convents; Jeffrey Hamburger presents only one single surviving drawing, Nonnenarbeit, with a name of the malerin. However, an example of a nun indicating her craftsmanship in a textile is to be found in a frontal band from the early 1300s, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This band contains an inscription in gold: *In hora mortis succurre nobis Domine* (“In the hour of our death, help us, Lord”), but on the linen lining at the back side there was another inscription (now only readable via the holes of the stitches): *DOMNA IOHANNA BEVERLAI MONACA ME FECIT*. Thus, it informs us that sister Joan of Beverly made it. Nonetheless, this example is geographically as well as chronologically removed from the Birgittine circles of the late fifteenth century; it is also in several other ways very different from the one focused in this article. First, in the Naantali embroidery the letters are on the front of the band, not hidden on the back; second, they are pictorially connected to the other forms in the embroidery and thus the nun would have, symbolically, placed herself inside the holy happenings. Although common in the images of rich and powerful donors and their coats of arms, intermingling publicly and personally with holy figures would be an unlikely pattern of behaviour for an ordinary sister. In the case of the Naantali embroidery, the initials are not even side by side but actually would have begun and closed the cycle, as if framing the whole sacred history.

The Birgittine manuscripts containing female scribes’ initials were not for everyone to see, and many of them are to be found in personal prayer books. On the contrary, the Naantali altar frontlet was not a personal item, but embel-
lished the altar. Unfortunately it is now impossible to determine how visible the frontlet was for different groups of the community or for ordinary visitors to the convent church. Very little is known about the medieval altars in Naantali, and nothing of their measurements, so one cannot compare the length of the cloth to any measurements of existing or even known structures. It would, then, be more justified to see the letters referring to the devotional context of the work, say, a referring to Saint Anne and b to Saint Birgitta. In fact, the letters A and B on another Birgittine textile, the Lokalahti embroidery were connected by Nordman to these holy figures. In turn, the letters on the yet another fragmentary Birgittine silk embroidery were suggested by Nordman to be the initials of a noble lady, Lucia Olofsdotter. Branting and Lindblom also present several suggestions for nuns’ initials on various textiles, and according to Lindblom, ‘it is highly interesting that the sisters more than seldom signed their work’. Even obvious references to the Virgin Mary, like the letters IA, have been interpreted to indicate the sister Ingrid Ambjörnsdotter. All in all, the older literature appears to be somewhat hazardous when it comes to interpreting the letters as devotional or personalized, but it must be remembered that each artefact has its own visual appearance and functional purpose. Interpretations deriving from liturgical texts, prayers, or from the names of the holy figures have nonetheless been more prominently proposed for the letters in Birgittine embroideries.

**DISCURSIVE EMBROIDERIES**

The dating of the Naantali embroidery remains unspecified. The two similar narrow altar frontlets from Vadstena Abbey with the narrative cycle and saints are generally dated only vaguely to the fifteenth century. At this point, without radiocarbon analysis, it is not possible to give a more precise dating, but based on stylistic and historical judgment it may be asserted that they belong approximately to the middle of the fifteenth century.

58. Lindblom 1944, p. 294.
59. Ibid., pp. 293–94. In this Vadstena altar frontlet (the one with the Apocalyptic Mary in the centre, c. 1500) the letters are mixed with floral ornamentation so even if the textile is meant for the altar, the letters do not stand out, but instead – and unlike in the Naantali frontlet – they resemble the placing of initials in the prayer books.
60. Estham 1984, pp. 34–35.
The resemblance of the *Vallis gratiae* embroidery to the Birgittine altar frontlet extant in Vadstena has long been noticed.62 Branting and Lindblom considered the one in Helsinki to be less fine than the one today exhibited in the Sancta Birgitta Klostermuseum in Vadstena; they commented, ‘style is heavier and the forms rougher’.63 It is quite true that the one in Vadstena is more elaborate, but the statement may also reflect their view on what they thought was a product of the periphery. In fact, when it comes to delicateness vs. ‘simplicity’ the Naantali altar frontlet may be situated in the middle of a continuum between the work in Vadstena and the Birgittine altar frontlet now in the collections of the Statens Historiska Museum in Stockholm.64 There are also fragmentary embroideries which are considered to belong more or less to this same stylistic group and which were thought to have been attached to an alb, or other liturgical vestment.65 ‘These are four pieces of linen with two images – devotional and narrative subjects under arches – on each piece. This set and the three altar frontals are far from identical in their imagery and details, but they have many interesting similarities.

The embroidery on display in Vadstena consists of twelve pictorial scenes under round-arched arcades. The spandrels have arboreal motifs, but no angels as in the Naantali frontlet. The Christian narrative begins in the very first image showing Joachim meeting the angel in the desert, and in the following, the lamenting Anne greets the angel in her garden. As was earlier argued, the *Vallis gratiae* embroidery only alluded to these events in the scene depicting the Meeting of Saint Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate. Instead of having a pair of saints on each end of the frontlet, the Vadstena work has two pairs at the right end.

The embroidery now in Stockholm is likewise a narrow strip containing pictorial scenes (originally twelve) under arches. In this work the Nativity scene shows the infant Christ surrounded by beads, and without doubt this was the case in the *Vallis gratiae* embroidery too. As mentioned, the figure of the Christ child is now completely lost, but the extraordinarily bad condition of that area may indeed be explained by the missing beads that were around the figure. The

62. See, for example, Branting and Lindblom 1928–1929, I, p. 93, xii; Geijer 1936, p. 12; Nordman 1943, p. 170, Estham 2003, p. 344.
Fig. 4: Vadstena Altar Frontlet, detail. Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. Photo: Elina Räsänen.
beads, of course, would have been valuable items and thus they were detached from the fabric at some point. The third comparative work, the decorations for the alb, has four images that do not exist in the frontlets, namely the Throne of Grace, Pietà, the Apocalyptic Mary, and a depiction of the two other Marys, the daughters of Saint Anne, with their offspring. The devotional image which is depicted in the two frontlets in Sweden, Saint Anne with the Virgin and Child (Anna självtrędje), is not included in this, or in the Vallis gratiae frontlet.

The embroideries are, in fact, almost discursive, as if they add to and comment the varied pictorial decisions in each one of them. One is tempted to see the variations, such as ‘switching’ the characters in the motifs, almost as deliberate. For instance, the embroidery in Vadstena shows Saint Anne alone escorting her daughter to the Temple, and the ‘missing’ male character Joachim is there ‘replaced’ by another male, the head priest receiving the Virgin in the Temple who, again, is not portrayed in the Naantali work (Fig. 4). Accordingly, the Birth of the Virgin in the Vadstena frontlet has only one maid instead of the two that are present in the Naantali work, but here Joachim has entered the chamber. I am suggesting, then, that the Naantali frontlet was in fact either made in Vadstena, and that the sisters who came to Vallis gratiae convent brought it along – or, it was embroidered in Finland based on knowledge and models of the then extant embroideries in Vadstena.

Considering the placement of the letters b and a at the two ends, and on the visible side of the Naantali altar frontlet, as well as its function as an altar decoration we should be cautious of linking the letters to any individual, such as Birgitta Anundsdotter. Rather, it is likely that these letters are semantic representations of the same holy figures that we can see as visual representations in the embroidery. This emphasizes the intertwined, reciprocal relationship between images and words, visual and textual/verbal traditions. Finally, the ‘certainty’ which C.A. Nordman articulated when he published the new information testifying for Birgitta Anundsdotter’s authorship some seventy years ago twists back into a hypothesis, again.
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Sfss: *Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet.*

SkS: *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia.*

Smya: *Suomen Muinaismuistohdytystyksen Aikakauskirja – Finlands Fornminnesförenings Tidskrift.*

Slf: *Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.*


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ANGELA KAPPELER

The Birgittine Linen Crown

INTRODUCTION

Birgitta received her vision instructing her to found the Birgittine order during her five-year stay in the guesthouse of the Cistercian monastery at Alvastra. She had settled there in 1344 after the death of her husband Ulf, who had died in Alvastra one year after entering the monastery.¹ In the vision Birgitta received, Christ revealed to her the rule of the order she was to establish. Petrus Olavi, the prior of Alvastra, revised the rule, which is known as the Regula Salvatoris, translated it into Latin and divided it into 31 chapters.²

In 1349, Birgitta travelled to Rome to obtain pontifical approbation for the rule of her new order. She was unsuccessful. But her daughter Katarina, who presented Pope Urban VI with a modified version of the rule organised into 24 chapters, obtained on 3 December 1378 the approbation for the Regula Salvatoris. To this day it serves as a fundamental constitution in Birgittine convents alongside the Augustinian rule.³

In the fourth chapter of the Regula Salvatoris Christ outlines the habit, which is in line with the monastic ideal of poverty,⁴ and has to be worn by the Birgittine sisters: a white underskirt, a skirt and a frock with a hood made of grey loden, a simple kerchief, which covers the head and frames the forehead and cheeks, over it a black veil and the white linen crown.⁵ This linen crown should be worn over the veil and fastened to it with a needle. Christ describes the linen crown’s design in great detail. Five small, drop-shaped pieces are to be cut out of red linen cloth

3. Nyberg 1965, p. 2. Within the Revelationes coelestes the Regula Salvatoris is located after the eighth book. Here, the edition by Petrus Olavi is used, see Nyberg 1965, p. 1.
and fastened to the crown. The first piece is to be placed on the forehead, the second in the back of the neck, the third and fourth over the ears and the fifth centrally on the crown, so that the linen crown might resemble a cross.\(^6\) For the Birgittine order the five drops, arranged in a cross pattern, symbolise Christ’s five wounds in the hands, feet and the side.\(^7\)

The fabric crown was not a unique feature of the Birgittine order, as the art historians Alfred Stange, Rune Norberg and Renate Kroos have observed. There are a number of late medieval depictions from Northern and Middle Germany of Cistercian, Benedictine and Premonstratensian sisters wearing a fabric crown.\(^8\) This finding is confirmed by newly discovered image examples from Germany and can be extended to contemporary Poland.\(^9\) Kroos also noted written sources, which provide information about the fabric crown in Cistercian, Benedictine and Augustinian convents in Northern Germany.\(^10\) When Stange, Norberg and Kroos compared the image examples and written sources in which the fabric crown occurs, they did not differentiate the crowns worn by sisters of different monastic orders and numerous convents. They named all fabric crowns simply nuns’ ‘crowns’.\(^11\)

Comparing the Birgittine linen crown with the nuns’ crowns worn by sisters of other orders, it becomes obvious that the linen crown forms a separate group within the taxonomy of monastic headdresses. As a consequence the linen crown will be distinguished from other nuns’ crowns in the following. The main interest of this article will focus on the Birgittine linen crown, because the *Regula Salvatoris* is the only monastic constitution which predetermines the crown’s shape and texture. It will investigate whether the linen crown has specific characteristics and what it is that makes it a Birgittine headdress. Therefore depictions of Birgitta (39), her daughter Katarina (6) and sisters (8) wearing a Birgittine habit, will be discussed.

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7. See ‘The habit’ in http://www.birgittaskloster.se.
9. For my dissertation I have analyzed the stock of the image database sanctabirgitta.com (806 images; 31.12.2011), the image examples mentioned by Kroos 1973, pp. 122–123, and the results of my own wide-ranging image research. Not all of these images will be considered in this article, also excluded are seals, pilgrim badges and works of art dating after 1900.
To identify the linen crown’s specific features, all types of nuns’ crowns will need to be investigated in detail. So for the first time, in the course of this article nuns’ crowns from different orders and nunneries will be divided into groups on the basis of their design and material and their differences elaborated. Furthermore the occurrence and development of the nun’s crown from the tenth to the nineteenth century in Northern and Middle Germany, as well as contemporary Poland, will be reconstructed. The existing image examples (35) and written sources will be analysed and put in chronological order. Not all depictions of Birgitta, Katarina and the nuns can be cited in this article. Therefore only the most indicative image examples and those most pertinent to the present argument will be discussed.

Eva Schlotheuber investigated the usage of the nun’s crown in her habilitation thesis published in 2004, with a focus on the Benedictine convent in Lüne.\textsuperscript{12} In 2010 she described the usage, shape and material of several nuns’ crowns in German nunneries from the tenth to the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{13} Thereby the Birgittine linen crown remained unconsidered, although the \textit{Regula Salvatoris} is the only monastic constitution which specifies, alongside shape and material, the use of this headdress. Therefore, attempts will be made to define what makes the Birgittine linen crown distinctive.

\textbf{The Usage of the Birgittine Linen Crown}

The ceremony of the virgin’s consecration, the origins of which lie in secular late antique wedding rituals, symbolises the marriage between a nun and her groom Christ.\textsuperscript{14} In 494 Pope Gelasius I prohibited the virgin’s consecration ceremony for widows.\textsuperscript{15} This papal interdiction implies that previously widows as well as virgins were consecrated and crowned by the bishop in the course of this religious act. But after the pope’s prohibition, only virgins could be consecrated and the ceremony represented the official approval of their virginity by the church.\textsuperscript{16} Awareness of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Schlotheuber 2004, pp. 156–174. A summary of the main theses can be found in Schlotheuber 2007, pp. 43–55.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Schlotheuber 2010, pp. 146–147.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 158. For the origins of the virgin’s consecration, see Schlotheuber 2004, p. 157, n. 177.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Thiel 1868, Epist. 14, 13, pp. 369–370: ‘Viduas autem velare pontificum nullus attentet, quoniam quod nec auctoritas divina delegat, nec canonum forma praestituit, non est penitus usurpandum; eisque sic ecclesiastica sunt serenda praesidia, ut nihil committatur illicitum.’ Schlotheuber 2004, p. 158, n. 180, refers to the Pope’s prohibition.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Schlotheuber 2004, pp. 156–166.
\end{itemize}
papal prohibition remained since it was integrated in the Corpus Iuris Canonici.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Pontificale Romano-Germanicum}, from the second half of the tenth century, reports on the procedure of the virgin's coronation.\textsuperscript{18} According to this, the presiding bishop would place a crown on the head of the nun-to-be with the words, ‘Accept the sign of Christ upon your head, so that you may be made his wife, and if you adhere to him to the end, you will be crowned in perpetuity.’\textsuperscript{19} This act was accompanied by a sung antiphon which described how Christ adorns his bride with a crown.\textsuperscript{20}

The virgin’s consecration was one part of the rites of entering a convent or an order.\textsuperscript{21} But the consecration of the habit, the act of clothing and the profession took place prior to the virgin’s consecration, because they are constitutive acts while the latter is not.\textsuperscript{22} Because it was not an essential element of the rites of entry, the virgin’s consecration was unusual and can be evidenced only in specific regions, especially in nunneries in Northern and Middle Germany.\textsuperscript{23} It is important to emphasize that in these convents only virgin nuns wore the nun’s crown.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{17.} \textit{Decretum Gratiani}, c. 27, q. 1, c. VIII: ‘Viduas autem uelare pontificum nullus at temptet prout statatum est in decretis Gelassii Papae capitulo XIII., quod nec auctoritas duina, nec canonum forma prestituit. Quod si propria fuerit uoluntate continentiam professa, in eiusdem Gelassii capitulo XXI. legitur, eius intentio pro se reddat rationem Deo, quia, sicut secundum Apostolum, si se continere non poterat, nullatenus nubere uetabatur, sic secum habita deliberacione promissam fidem pudicitiae Deo debet custodire. Nos autem auctoritate Patrum suffulti in hoc sancto concilio sancimus et libere iudicamus, si sponte uelamen quamuis non consecratum sibi inposuerit, et in ecclesia inter uelatas Deo oblationem obtulerit, uelit nolit, sanctimoniae habitum ulterius habere debet, licet sacramento confirmare uelit, eo tenore et ratione sibi uelamen inposuisse, ut iterum posset deponere.’

\textsuperscript{18.} Gussone 2007, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{19.} Schlotheuber 2010, p. 147; Gussone 2007, p. 40: ‘Accipe signum Christi in capite, ut uxor eius efficaris et si in eo permanseris, in perpetuum coroneris.’

\textsuperscript{20.} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{21.} The chronology of the act of clothing and the profession depends on the \textit{consuetudines} of the particular convent. Schlotheuber 2004, pp. 156–166.

\textsuperscript{22.} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 159–160.

\textsuperscript{23.} \textsuperscript{24.} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 160, wrote that the fabric crown would have been part of the Benedictine and Cistercian nun’s habit, because several sisters are depicted with this special headdress. But in my opinion this assumption requires that the wearer of the nun’s crown is a virgin and has been consecrated and crowned by the bishop. As Schlotheuber 2004, p. 158, pointed out, virginity is a requirement of the virgin’s consecration. All nuns who lost their virginity before they entered a convent, for example, widows, were not allowed to be consecrated and crowned – following Pope Gelasius's
According to chapter 4 of the *Regula Salvatoris*, all nuns of the Birgittine order, widows as well as virgins, were to wear the linen crown. This Birgittine constitution is not contrary to the canonical prohibition, according to which widows were not to be consecrated and crowned. The *Regula Salvatoris* cleverly works around the interdiction, so that all Birgittine nuns could be consecrated as brides of Christ and affiliated widows could be crowned and wear the significant headdress normally only given to virgin nuns. In fact, in the Birgittine order there is no ritual for the consecration of virgins. Instead the act, in which the bishop hands over a consecrated ring to the nun, is reinforced and the nun’s coronation by the bishop is accompanied by words which differ completely from the blessing spoken during the consecration of virgins.

If a virgin or a widow decided to enter a Birgittine convent, the *Regula Salvatoris* defined the sequence of events. After a year, during which the candidate reflects on and achieves certainty regarding her entry into the monastery, her future habit is made and laid out ready for the robing. Before the ceremony starts, the nun-to-be has to confirm her wish to enter the convent in front of the bishop. Therefore a predefined inquiry-response cycle has to be passed through. Afterwards the novice is allowed to enter the church. The bishop then consecrates a ring, which he places on the finger of the nun-to-be with the words: ‘I consecrate you to be God’s bride and his possession, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’ This blessing can be seen as a substitute for the virgin’s consecration, because both acts celebrate the nun’s dedication to her groom Christ, who is one with God. As Schlotheuber pointed out, the ring is a symbol of the nun’s marriage with Christ. But in contrast to the Birgittine constitution, the Benedictine and Cistercian nuns did not understand the presentation of the ring by the bishop as an act of consecration.

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29. Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 11 (p. 114): ‘Benedico te in sponsam Dei et in perpetuam eius possessionem. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.’ In the following all translations are my own.
In the course of the following ceremony the bishop consecrates the habit. Afterwards the nun lays down her ordinary clothing before the altar and steps forward in her undergarments. The act of clothing follows. Successively the bishop hands the nun her skirt, frock, cloak, wimple and veil. After that the bishop continues with holy mass and when he arrives at the moment where a nuptial mass might be celebrated, he asks the nun to step forward to the altar. He then crowns the nun with the linen crown speaking the words: ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ will confirm in you his sign, which I am donning onto your head, and he will direct your will in all things, which you have now pledged, so that you may be firm and steady; he shall crown you with his benign will with the crown of joy, so that your soul will be unified with him inseparably, who is one God in three persons. […]’ After this the bishop fastens the crown on the nun’s veil with a needle and says: ‘Jesus Christ shall unify your heart and your soul with his love, so that they need not fear the stings of any temptation. […]’

The procedure of the Birgittine coronation is reminiscent of the virgin’s consecration. In both acts the bishop crowns the nun with a fabric crown. But the words spoken by the bishop differ and focus on different aspects. During the virgin’s consecration, the nun’s marriage with Christ and her virginity are emphasized. In the course of the Birgittine coronation, the bishop speaks of the crown as the ‘crown of joy’ – an innocuous and broadly defined verbalisation. This disengagement of the nun’s crown from the virgin’s consecration enables all Birgittine nuns to be crowned by the bishop and to wear the linen crown – as Christ says himself, as a symbol of their temperance and chastity.

Why these opportunities were developed in the Birgittine order seems perfectly clear. As a widow and mother of eight children, Birgitta wanted the widowed nuns in her monastic order to be equal to virgin nuns. Also the vision, in which Christ revealed to Birgitta, that he would prefer humble widows to proud virgins, seems to emphasize Birgitta’s intimate wish.

34. Birgitta, Rev. Extr. 21: ‘Si vero virgo talis in congregacione non fuerit, que officium
The linen crown and its artistic realisation

The works of art representing Birgitta (39), Katarina (6) and the Birgittines (8) testify to a broad variation regarding the artistic realisation of the linen crown.35

Amongst the 38 coloured works of art considered here, there are five different types of headpieces:36 a white linen crown (2), a white linen crown with red dots (23), a golden crown with red dots (1), a red crown (4) and a frontal cross (8).

The white linen crown with the five red dots corresponds to the design and coloration described in the *Regula Salvatoris*. The 23 works of art showing this faithful reproduction of the linen crown nearly all originate from Birgittine convents and their surroundings (18) or were produced after 1600 (5).37

It seems consistent that the works of art produced in Birgittine convents show the linen crown according to the statutes. Obviously external artists who were commissioned by a Birgittine convent followed these guidelines as well. One example is the frontispiece of a gradual rendered by Lippo d’Andrea di Lippo from 1435 for the Birgittine convent of Il Paradiso in Florence.38 The full-page illumination consists of two scenes, arranged one above the other: an annunciation and a choir scene with Birgitta and nine Birgittines. The latter are singing the divine office in front of a lectern, while one of the nuns is turning a page of a large choirbook. The nuns’ grey habit corresponds in every detail to the requirements in the *Regula Salvatoris*.

virginis matris mee implere potuerit, non displicet michi, si onus humilitatis et prelature assumat humilis et probate vite vidua, quia accepcior est michi humilis vidua quam virgo superba.'

35. Several depictions show Birgitta and Katarina together or Birgitta among Birgittine nuns. For that reason the appearances of Birgitta, Katarina and the nuns are counted and not the number of depictions. Furthermore identical prints are counted as one. For depictions of Birgitta wearing the crown, see http://sanctabirgitta.com, nos. 4, 29, 34, 59, 110, 183, 191, 209, 232, 239, 258, 277, 278, 284, 298, 299, 300, 369, 409, 670, 671, 680, 685, 686, 687, 688, 715, 732, 740, 741, 748, 749, 764, 768, 773, 777, 786, 790, 796. For depictions of Katarina, see nos. 171, 203, 616, 618, 764 and the wallpainting in Edebo (see below, n. 40). For depictions of Birgittine nuns, see nos. 183, 491, 494, 733, 738, 761, 792 and Lippo d’Andrea di Lippo’s frontispiece of a Birgittine gradual (see below, n. 38).

36. Works of art without colour or where no colour reproduction exists are not considered within this survey.

37. For Birgittine convents and their surrounding see http://sanctabirgitta.com, nos. 4, 171, 183, 203, 239, 278, 284, 491, 494, 572, 616, 670, 741, 761, 764, 777, 792 and Lippo d’Andrea di Lippo’s frontispiece of a Birgittine gradual (see below, n. 38). For works of art produced after 1600, see nos. 298, 299, 300, 671, 773.

38. Åkestam 2009, p. 203, describes the manuscript as a gradual. The gradual is in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Collection Dr. B. H. Breslauer. See illustration in Thomas 2003, p. 181.
Works of art produced after 1600 also depict the details of the crown accurately. By then the Birgittine order had been established for over two hundred years and had numerous settlements in Europe.\textsuperscript{39} It seems as though the Birgittine headpiece had simply become well-known as part of the iconography of the order.

It is only Birgitta who is depicted wearing the red crown.\textsuperscript{40} The four known image examples can all be dated between 1475 and 1515 and originate from Sweden, with the exception of the Birgittine breviary in the New York Public Library, the origin of which is unknown, and the Årsunda altarpiece, which was imported from the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{41} All these works show Birgitta as a prophet with writing utensils and, apart from the wall painting in Skönberga (province of Östergötland), with a book. Birgitta’s red crowns have no ornaments, apart from a single golden dot, which adorns the crown in the New York breviary. A common feature of all five images is that none of the crowns possesses a ribbon running from ear to ear. This is very clear in the altarpiece in Årsunda (province of Gästrikland), where the outer sides of the altar wings show Birgitta in three-quarter profile. The red crown covers the saint’s veiled head and only a thin ribbon can be seen, running from the forehead to the nape of her neck. The transverse ribbon is also not visible in the depiction of Birgitta in the Linköping panel, where she wears the golden crown with red dots, and the Nuremberg Topler Epitaph, where she has a white crown with red dots on, although in this case the red dots of the linen crown do indicate the transverse ribbon.\textsuperscript{42} The optical divergence of the red crown from the Regula Salvatoris could indicate that the images were produced in a non-monastic environment. Maybe these artists had no knowledge of the characteristic features of the Birgittine habit either in real life or literature.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Nyberg 1998, pp. 13–36.

\textsuperscript{40} The wall painting in Edebo shows Birgitta and also her daughter Katarina. Birgitta wears the red linen crown. In contrast Katarina is depicted with a white linen crown, outlined in red to distinguish the crown from the white kerchief. See http://medeltidbild.historiska.se, no. 940905M1.

\textsuperscript{41} See http://www.sanctabirgitta.com, no. 59 (wall painting in the church of Edebo), 191 (front side of the Årsunda altarpiece), 409 (wall painting in the church of Skönberga), 796 (Birgittine Breviary, New York, Public Library, Spencer Collection, MS 63).

\textsuperscript{42} See http://www.sanctabirgitta.com, no. 29 (panel painting, previously Linköping church (Östergötland province), now in Östergötlands Länsmuseum, Linköping), 777 (epitaph, previously Saint Katarina in Nuremberg, now in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg).

\textsuperscript{43} The plain white linen crown appears twice: worn by Katarina in the wallpainting in Edebo (see above, n. 40) and worn by Birgitta in the wallpainting in Tolfta (see...
A completely different perspective on the red crown is offered by Martino di Bartolomeo di Biagio’s altarpiece created between 1389 and 1434 originally for the convent church of San Domenico in Pisa. Birgitta is depicted in the altarpiece’s left image field and the five predella paintings. One of the predella paintings offers a particularly good view of the saint’s head (Fig. 1). Birgitta is sitting on the right side of the picture and listening to the angel, whose words she is writing down in the book in her lap. She is wearing black widow’s garb and a white kerchief. A red cross adorns her head, the arms of which run from one ear to the other and from her forehead to the neck. A cross of this kind can only be found in the altarpiece in Pisa. Its meaning can be explained with the help of a panel by Turino Vanni, painted around 1400, showing Birgitta’s vision

http://www.sanctabirgitta.com, no. 110). Conceivably the artist had no knowledge about the red dots on the Birgittine linen crown and therefore painted the headdress plain white.

of Christ’s birth. On the panel, Birgitta is also wearing the widow’s dress and a red cross adorns her head. But this cross does not embrace the entire head, as in the predella painting; it reaches only from the forehead to the top of the head. A divine ray of light, emanating from God the Father in heaven, illuminates the cross on Birgitta’s forehead. It seems as if He has traced the cross with his own hand on the head of His chosen prophet. It is used here as a symbol representing Birgitta’s prophetic mission from God.

Two Swedish images also exist of Birgitta with a red cross on her head. The altarpieces from Fjällsjö (province of Ångermanland) and Sättna (province of Medelpad), which are dated between 1500 and 1510, were both produced in Haaken Gulleson’s workshop. On the Sättna altarpiece, Birgitta, whose forehead is decorated with a vibrant red cross, holds a pen in her left hand and presents an open book with her right hand – the Revelations. The Fjällsjö Birgitta also holds a book and even though it is closed, the beholder may still note the importance of the document, which presumably contains the Revelations, because Birgitta points to it with the index finger of her left hand. On the saint’s forehead a red cross gleams. Both images testify to the fact that the red cross was also known in Sweden as a symbol of Birgitta’s connection with God and her prophetic gift. Birgitta is also depicted as a prophet in the Årsunda altarpiece, the wall paintings in Skönberga and Edebo (Uppland province) and in the New York breviary. Therefore one may surmise that the red crown carries the same meaning as the red cross: both point out to the beholder Birgitta’s gift from God, her talent for prophecy.

45. See http://www.sanctabirgitta.com, no. 715 (panel painting, Museo Civico, Pisa, no. 1633).
47. A similar interpretation can be offered of an altarpiece from Västerås (Västmanland province). It shows Birgitta having a vision and writing down the words, which are revealed to her by the crucified Christ floating in front of her. A red cross, a miniature and simplified mirror image of the crucifix, floats before Birgitta’s forehead. Together with the white headband, which Birgitta is wearing above her black veil, the red cross is reminiscent of the red linen crown. See http://www.sanctabirgitta.com, no. 258.
The Pontificale Romano-Germanicum reports, in the chapter regarding the consecration of virgins, on the corona design. The crown, the signum Christi, is described as a corona or as a torques, which allows us to draw some conclusion regarding the appearance of the headdress. A torques is a collar made of metal, which was used in Byzantium and late antique Rome to crown the emperor. Sometimes the term may also have been used to describe a floral wreath. Both versions differ from the Birgittine linen crown in the choice of material and design. Furthermore a metallic crown signifies wealth, which is at odds with the affordable, undyed linen crown used by the Birgittines. A corona made of flowers would signify that the headpiece was only worn during the act of the coronation of the virgins and not constantly, as the linen crown was worn in the Birgittine order.

The usage of nuns’ crowns made of woven fabric is attested already in the eleventh century. Abelard (1079–1142) reports in his ‘Rule for Heloise’ on a headpiece decorated with cruces. And Tenxwind of Andernach (d. 1152/1153) wrote in a letter of unusual events in the convent of Rupertsberg which was led by Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179). She reports that, on feast days, the nuns would wear white dresses made of silk and fabric crowns worked in gold over their unbound hair. These precious headpieces would be decorated with crosses and a frontal lamb or with the image of the Lamb of God on the forehead, and images of angels on the sides and the back of the head.

50. Gussone 2007, p. 35.
51. Gussone 2007, p. 35.
54. Haverkamp 1984, p. 544: ‘coronas etiam auro contextas capitis earum desuper impo­sitas et his utraque parte et retro cruces insertas, in fronte autem agni figuram decenter
the crown described by Tenxwind of Andernach are similar to the Birgittine linen crown. Both headpieces are made of cloth and decorated with motifs on the forehead, the sides and the back of the head. However there are differences in the choice of material and the design. The Rupertsberg crown is a precious headpiece which represents the wealth of the nuns, and during the feast days the nuns wearing the crown and white silk dress were revealed as the brides of Christ. By contrast, the Birgittine nuns wear the linen crown constantly, not only during feast days, and with its five red drops it is a symbol of poverty and humility. Such a symbol recalls, with its simple circular shape, the wounds of Christ and does not need decorative and laboriously manufactured lamb and angel motifs with iconographical meaning.  

**The Nun’s Crown in Middle and Northern Germany and Poland**

The oldest image of a nun’s crown from Northern Germany is located in the Cistercian convent of Wienhausen in Lower Saxony, which was founded in 1221. There, in the nuns’ choir, the ceilings and walls of which are completely covered with frescoes, abbess Eveza is depicted (Fig. 2), next to the founders, Palgrave Heinrich (1173/74–1227) and his wife Agnes of Meissen (1192/93–1266). Eveza, clothed in white garments, is wearing a nun’s crown over her chin-length black veil. The white crown is decorated with a red cross in the front.

The depiction of Eveza cannot be used for this study, because the extent to which the vaulted frescoes that remain show the original condition from 1335 is debatable, since the nuns’ choir underwent restoration in the fifteenth century. The oldest extant nun’s crown as one preserved in the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg (inv. no. 5257). The headdress originates presumably from France and was manufactured in the twelfth century. It is made out of precious material, silk bands, with medallions embroidered with golden threads showing the Lamb of God, a cherub, an angel and a king raising his hands.

On the Linköping panel painting, which originates from the last quarter of the fifteenth century and is now in the Östergötlands Länsmuseum, Birgitta wears a precious habit with golden ornaments and a golden crown with red dots. Obviously the painter did not respect the Birgittine ideal of poverty and used gold to express wealth.

For the foundation date of the convent, see Appuhn 1986, pp. 7–11.

Michler 1967, p. 189, first identified the donors and Kroos 1973, p. 122, named the depicted nun Eveza, after the first abbess of Wienhausen.
and nineteenth centuries. As the Wienhausen chronicle reports, in 1488 three sisters named Gertrud took it upon themselves to paint the nuns’ choir anew. It is assumed that the nuns were not well-schooled in the art of painting and therefore confined themselves to the surviving remains. Scientific judgement regarding the restoration by Heinrich Ludger Schröer in the nineteenth century has complicated the matter further. Citing several examples, Wiebke Michler determines that Schröer not only concealed the original layer of paint under

58. For the dating of the wall paintings, see Bauch 1968, p. 145; Appuhn 1986, p. 12; Maier 1970, p. 84.
**FIG. 3**: Cistercian convent of Wienhausen, upper cloister, southern wing, third window towards west, stained-glass window. The Anointing of Christ’s dead body. By permission of the Corpus Vitrearum Deutschland, Freiburg im Breisgau. Photo: Raffael Toussaint.
his own reconstruction, but also attempted, with all the good intentions of the nineteenth century, to improve the composition.\textsuperscript{62} For this reason there is justifiable suspicion that the frescoes have been distorted.\textsuperscript{63} And therefore, no well-founded statement regarding Eveza’s habit can be made.

In the second bay in the upper hallway of the west wing, which must have been passed by every nun daily on their way from the choir to the refectory, a wall painting is situated which dates from around 1308.\textsuperscript{64} The painting shows Abbess Margaretha II of Schönningen (term in office 1302–1317) and Provost Dietrich of Pome (term in office 1307–1316), who present Mary and the Christ child with a miniature of the Wienhausen convent.\textsuperscript{65} Despite the abrasion of the colour, Margaretha’s headpiece is recognizable. Above her wimple she is wearing a kerchief, but not a nun’s crown.

However, in a square stained-glass window (Fig. 3) in the upper cloister in the convent of Wienhausen, the depiction of a nun wearing a crown is preserved.\textsuperscript{66} The window belongs to a passion cycle, of which seven windowpanes have survived, and shows the rare motif of the anointing of Christ’s dead body.\textsuperscript{67} In front of the stone, on which the corpse of Christ rests, a nun kneels, wearing a plain white crown. The building’s architectural history leads to a definite dating of the stained-glass window after 1330.\textsuperscript{68}

Obviously, at the beginning of the fourteenth century the Cistercians in Wienhausen did not wear crowns made of cloth over their veils. The headpiece is not attested in the convent until after 1330.\textsuperscript{69} The frescoe’s problematic restoration by Schröer, from an art historical point of view, prevents us from determining when the red frontal cross first decorated the Wienhausen crown.

The convent of Ebstorf in Lower Saxony has belonged to Benedictine nuns since 1200,\textsuperscript{70} and their habit is documented in several works of art. In the cloister’s western wing a corbel (Fig. 4) is located, on which two busts of Benedictine

\textsuperscript{62} Michler 1967, pp. 30, 36, 42.
\textsuperscript{63} Michler 1967, pp. 21–22.
\textsuperscript{64} Appuhn 1986, pp. 14, 22.
\textsuperscript{65} Appuhn 1986, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{67} Kroos 1973, p. 122, identified the motif falsely as the lamentation of Christ; Becksmann and Korn 1992, pp. 215, 226.
\textsuperscript{68} Becksmann and Korn 1992, pp. 221, 227.
\textsuperscript{69} I follow the dating by Becksmann and Korn 1992, pp. 221, 227, because they have integrated the stained-glass window into the comprehensive results of the Corpus vitrearum medii aevi.
\textsuperscript{70} Hucker 1993, pp. 177–180.
Fig. 4: Benedictine convent of Ebstorf, cloister, west wing, corbel with two busts of Benedictine nuns. By permission of the Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Hannover.

Fig. 5: Benedictine convent of Walsrode, choir, east wall, right side, stained-glass window. Saint Scholastica. By permission of the Corpus Vitrearum Deutschland, Freiburg im Breisgau. Photo: Rainer Wöhlrabe.
nuns are depicted. Over the veil, the nuns wear a ribbon, on which there are three crosses. One cross lies over the forehead, the other two are placed at the level of the ears. An identical headdress is worn by Saint Scholastica, as well as a nun facing her in a stained-glass window (Fig. 5) in the nearby Benedictine convent of Walsrode, founded in 986. The white headband is ornamented with small crosses above the brow and ears. Based on its stylistic features, the stained-glass window must date to around 1500. The memorial plaque for Barbara Antoni (Fig. 6), the abbess of the Cistercian convent of Isenhagen in Lower

71. Becksmann and Korn 1992, p. 202. The figure of Scholastica, the lower third of the left figure and parts of the coat of arms belongs to the original stained-glass window. I do not agree with the identification of the left figure as Saint Benedict because of typical female habit. Regarding the foundation, see Oldermann 2004, pp. 22–29.

Saxony, which was founded in 1243, dates from 1510.73 On the stone plaque, the deceased is shown kneeling in front of Mary and the Christ child. She too wears a headband with three crosses, although the cross above her left ear is not visible because she is depicted in three-quarter profile. Despite the headband’s identical design, the corbel in Ebstorf, produced shortly after 1350, is significantly older than the stained-glass window in Walsrode or the Isenhagen memorial plaque.74

Although the headband was still being worn in Walsrode and Isenhagen around 1500, in Ebstorf it appears to have undergone some changes. The Ebstorf collection contains illuminations dating from between 1467 and 1500, which were used for musical education. In these illuminations the nuns are depicted wearing a new headpiece.75 Over their dark veil, the nuns wear a white fabric crown ornamented with four red crosses, which are located over the forehead, ears and neck.76

The convent of Lüne in Lower Saxony, founded in 1171,77 accepted the Benedictine Rule in the middle of the fourteenth century. The earliest visual evidence of the nun’s crown in Lüne is a large painting in the chapter house. It shows the vision of the cross of the nearly thirteen-year-old future Abbess Dorothea of Medingen (1549–1634) in 1562.78 The painting, dating from around 1623,79 offers to the beholder a view of the convent’s inner courtyard, where a group of virgins has gathered. Some women are praying, while the others look up with astonishment at the vision of Christ floating in the sky above them. Only two of the Benedictine nuns are wearing a dark veil over their wimple, from which the white nun’s crown can be distinguished. Although the crowns in the painting of the vision do not have crosses, they were in fact worn in Lüne with four red silken crosses applied to them from 1510 onwards, as written sources prove.80 But the crosses did not decorate the crown from the beginning; first the maidens wore a plain crown and sewed crosses onto them at a later date. The prioress of Lüne gave the crosses to the virgins on special occasions.81 When exactly the

75.  Ebstorf, Klosterbibliothek, Ms. V3, fol. 200v, 201r.
76.  Borchling 1905, pp. 396, 410, quotes a report, written in 1487, which describes the nun’s crown with the words: ‘In corona sunt quatuor cruces rubee.’
78.  Knauf 1974, p. 44; for illustration, see p. 89.
The wearing of the nun’s crown was established in Lüne cannot be determined, because there are no written sources describing, or images showing, the habit of the sisters in Lüne before 1510.

The monastic reformer Johannes Busch (1399–1479/1480) reports in his *Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* of the custom of the nun’s crown in convents in Northern Germany. The reforms implemented by Busch in the Augustinian convents of Heiningen, Marienberg/Helmstedt, Marienborn, Stendal and Erfurt affected not only the regulations regarding enclosure and eating habits, but also the design of the nuns’ habit. To preserve the uniformity of the habit, Busch eliminated the prevalent peculiarities regarding the habit’s design. This especially affected the nun’s crown. Between 1450 and 1470 the reformer prescribed that the virgin’s consecration should remain part of the profession in the convents. The nun’s crown, passed by the bishop to the virgins during the ceremony, could still be worn afterwards, but only underneath the veil.

The concession to wear the crown indicates that in the middle of the fifteenth century the crown was an integral component of monastic life in Erfurt, Marienberg/Helmstedt, Heiningen, Marienborn and Stendal. Presumably, it had already been worn in the convents for decades.

Busch also described the design of the fabric crowns in his reports. He dwelled, in detail, on the headdress worn by the nuns in Heiningen. Their fabric crown was ornamented by four golden crosses made of silk and a golden rose or lamb in the centre. Unfortunately, Busch does not mention the design of the crown worn by nuns in the Holy Cross Convent in Erfurt. However, he does report that before he implemented the reform, the sisters in Marienberg/Helmstedt, Marienborn and Stendal had been wearing crowns adorned with....

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82. Grube 1886, pp. 488, 603, 611.
83. Grube 1886, p. 603: ‘Coronam tamen virginitatis, quam episcopus eis imponit, deferrent subtus velum nigrum, quod ego illis impono.’
84. Kroos 1973, p. 124, thought that the crown had been worn in these convents at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It seems untenable to assert that nuns’ crowns were being worn that early, based only on Busch’s reports from the second half of the fifteenth century.
85. Grube 1886, p. 603: ‘coronam habentem in quatuor angulis circuitus quatuor cruces aureas et desuper in medio rosam auream; coronam … id est crucem habentem capitis et in quatuor angulis quatuor cruces aureas seu sericas et in vertice crucis rotundum agnum Dei opera polimito paratum.’
86. Grube 1886, p. 611: ‘Ego autem disposui, ut nigra linea cappa cum manicis deposita in solo subtili albo nostro de cetero incederent, et nigrum velum in missa per me in choro earum celebrate capitibus earum super omnia pepla et coronas earum imposui.’
crosses over their veils.\textsuperscript{87} The use of cross, rose and lamb motifs and the decoration with golden silk places the nun’s crown described by Busch in the tradition of the nun’s crown as it was worn in Rupertsberg in the eleventh century and differs completely from the Birgittine linen crown.

In the Lüneburg convents, which were not reformed by Busch in the fifteenth century, the practice of wearing the nun’s crown over the veil was preserved. Furthermore, written rules regarding the act of coronation emerged, such as the widely known ones from the Benedictine convent of Lüne.\textsuperscript{88} The rituals described therein stand in contrast to the Birgittine ones. There, the linen crown was handed over to the nuns during the act of clothing, whereas in Lüne, the novices were already wearing the fabric crown. They later received the red silken crosses, which were to be fastened to the white ribbon, on special occasions from the prioress. The red crosses had a special meaning for the novices; they symbolised Christ’s stigmata.\textsuperscript{89} The five red linen drops on the Birgittine crown have the same signification. The novices in Lüne removed their crown shortly before the profession began. The vows followed, then the act of clothing and after that the coronation performed by the bishop. After this act, the nun was allowed to wear the fabric crown at all times.\textsuperscript{90} It was considered a sign of her virginity.\textsuperscript{91} The Birgittine linen crown does not carry this meaning, as it was worn by widows as well as virgins.

The portraits of abbesses in the Cistercian convent in Trebnitz in Poland, founded 1202,\textsuperscript{92} testify that the sisters still wore the nun’s crown in the eighteenth century. A close observation of the abbesses’ headpieces reveals that they differ greatly with regards to design and colour. Prince-Abbess Dominika I de Gillern (term in office 1789–1810) wears a crown with black crosses applied to it. The white crown of Abbess Bernada Paczinsky (term in office 1747–1789) is decorated similarly with delicate black crosses. But Abbess Sophie Anna Korczynska (d. 1741) wears a fabric crown with bold golden crosses.\textsuperscript{93} In contrast abbess Benedicta Marianna von Biernatzky (term in office 1718–1726) chose a simple white headband with black crosses.

\textsuperscript{87} Grube 1886, p. 488: ‘coronam sive circulum capitis cum crucibus’.
\textsuperscript{88} The title of the coronation rule is ‘De virginum consecracione, quibus diebus benedicuntur et qui significant, que in earum benedictione agentur’; see Schlotheuber 2004, pp. 156–174.
\textsuperscript{89} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{90} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{91} Schlotheuber 2004, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{92} Seydak 1999, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{93} The portraits are discussed by Zyzik 1998.
FIG. 7: Cistercian convent of Lüne, cloister, northern wing, fourth window from the east, fragment of a stained-glass window. Saint Scholastica.
By permission of the Corpus Vitrearum Deutschland, Freiburg im Breisgau.
Photo: Rüdiger Becksmann.
In tracing back the history of the nun’s crown in Trebnitz, the Hedwig Co-dex from around 1353 is of significance. The numerous illustrations in the manuscript show Hedwig of Silesia, her daughter Gertrud, the second abbess of the convent, and ordinary nuns. They all wear the same headdress: a simple white cross, which decorates the black veil at the level of the forehead.

The frontal cross can be found repeatedly in convents in which, at a later date, the nun’s crown was worn, which suggests a strong connection between the frontal cross and the nun’s crown. In the case of Birgitta of Sweden the cross above the brow indicates her nearness to God and her prophetic gift. But the frontal cross, as the example in Trebnitz testifies, was worn by all nuns – not only the prophetically talented ones. In the same way, the Cistercian nuns in the Holy Cross Convent in Rostock wore a cross over their forehead. This was directly applied to the nun’s veil. A report by Peter Wilhelm Behrends from 1824 bears witness to the long tradition of the frontal cross. According to him, the Cistercians in Althaldensleben in Saxony-Anhalt wore a black veil and a rose-coloured cross on their forehead.

The symbolism of the frontal cross can presumably be traced back to a particular representation of Mary. Already in the early Middle Ages, Mary was depicted with a cross on her forehead. It is likely that the nuns, identifying themselves as brides of Christ, adopted the symbol from Mary, who is the bride as well as the mother of Christ. When this transfer occurred must remain unanswered in the context of this study.

However, it is important to note that the frontal cross and the nun’s crown were interchangeable in the fifteenth century because they carried the same symbolic meaning. This is documented by the fragment of a windowpane (Fig. 7), located in the cloister in the convent in Lüne, which dates back to 1410/1420, and the Erfurt unicorn hunt (Fig. 8). The fragment shows Saint Scholastica wearing a habit and a frontal cross on her veil. The unicorn hunt is the central panel of a triptych in Erfurt Cathedral, which is dated between 1426 and

95. In the Holy Cross Convent fifty gravestones are preserved. On thirteen of the stones, twenty Cistercian nuns are depicted with frontal crosses. See Wagner 2007, nos. 7, 9, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32 and 33. The oldest gravestone mentions Prioress Gertrud of Jork who died in 1348 (no. 26).
96. Behrends 1824, p. 316.
97. As an example, see the ivory front cover of the Codex Aureus Laureshamensis, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (no. 138:1 to 6 – 1866).
In the centre of the *Hortus conclusus* the Virgin Mary is depicted with a unicorn sitting in her lap. They are surrounded by angels making music and numerous saints. The unknown donor is shown kneeling in front of the sealed gate to the garden. He is accompanied by Saint Augustine and three nuns. Saints Scholastica and Clare are positioned on the left and right outside the *Hortus conclusus*. Both are wearing black frocks embellished with golden ears and stars respectively, a white kerchief and a black fabric crown. The garments are reminiscent of a habit and serve to set Scholastica and Clare apart from

other saints and identify them as founders of monastic orders. But the design of their frocks has a more pervasive symbolism; however here, only Scholastica’s garments will be analysed. The golden ears on her dress refer to the representation of the Madonna of Ears, which represents Mary’s virginity and chastity. The nun’s crown on Scholastica’s head also symbolises chastity and is therefore in accordance with the meaning of the dress decorated with ears. On the glass fragment from Lüne, Scholastica is also wearing a monastic garment, which points to her function as the founder of an order. But there is no crown on her head to indicate her status as a virgin bride of Christ; instead her forehead is decorated with a cross, as was worn by Mary, the virginal mother and chaste bride of Christ. The frontal cross and the nun’s crown therefore carry identical meanings and thus became interchangeable at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

In the Premonstratensian convent of Altenberg in Hesse, founded around 1170, two representations of nuns also document the shift from the frontal cross to the nun’s crown. The first is the memorial tomb of Gertrud of Altenberg (Fig. 9), the daughter of Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia who was abbess of the convent from 1248 to 1297. The memorial was erected in the convent’s church at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It shows Gertrud clothed in the habit of the order. Over the wimple, which covers her throat and forehead, Gertrud wears a cross applied to a round pad, which is fastened about her head with a ribbon – a frontal cross.

In the Altenberg altarpiece, on the inside of the right wing, Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia’s miracle of the cloak is depicted (Fig. 10). Behind the landgravine

101. Scholastica is regarded as the founder of the female Benedictine order. Clare founded the order of Poor Clares which forms part of the tradition of the Franciscan order.
107. In the Cistercian convent of Medingen in Lower Saxony the nuns wore a special headdress during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Lipphardt 1974, p. 24, identified it as a nun’s crown with a red frontal cross, based on the images in Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Thott 120 8° lat., fol. 50v, 51r, and in Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. in. Scrin. 149, fol. 10r. But after detailed consideration it becomes obvious that the nuns are not wearing crowns but a white fabric circle decorated with a red cross which is attached to the front part of the nun’s veil – identical with Gertrud’s headpiece.
the small image of a kneeling nun can be seen. She is wearing a dark veil and a fabric crown with five red crosses. Until 2003 art historical research identified this nun as Gertrud of Altenberg. The *Antiquitates Monasterii Aldenburgensis*, written by the prior Petrus Diederich in the years 1653 and between 1656 and 1665, were decisive evidence for this interpretation. At the centre of his writing is Gertrud of Altenberg and the worship of her cult, which he alleges began as early as the fourteenth century. Diederich reports that Pope Clement VI beatified Gertrud in the year 1348, only a few decades after her death. As proof, Diederich cites a document issued by Pope Clement VI. In 2003 Thomas Doepner studied the history of the monastery of Altenberg and scrutinized the authenticity of the documents to which Diederich had referred. In doing so, he exposed Diederich as a forger of countless documents. These forgeries include the document of the supposed beatification of Gertrud of Altenberg. The official approbation of Gertrud never happened. And finally Harald Winkel investigated the question of why Diederich invented Gertrud’s beatification and committed several forgeries. He recognized that Diederich had not only adapted historical facts to his own ideas, but had also compiled material uncritically and allowed his fantasy free rein. Diedrich’s aim was to revive Altenberg’s reputation and importance, after the monastery had been ravaged during the Thirty Years’ War. For this reason Diederich imagined a prosperous late medieval cult of Gertrud in Altenberg. Pilgrims were attracted to Altenberg and a blessed Gertrud, increasing the monastery’s earnings.

Doepner, who revealed Gertrud’s beatification as a forgery, consequently counselled against identifying her with the depiction on the Altenberg altar-

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108. Kroos 1973, p. 122, already noted that the nun’s habit on the Altenberg altarpiece and in the Codex Gisle, Osnabrück, Bistumsarchiv, Ms. 101, are identical. But she did not mention that she was referring only to the depiction of Gisle and the other nuns on p. 26. On p. 139, in contrast, Gisle is wearing a black kerchief and a white crown without any crosses and on p. 157 there is an illumination of two sisters wearing a white kerchief and white plain fabric crown. Regarding these striking differences in the design of the nun’s crown, it is impossible to say what the original headdress in the monastery where the Codex Gisle comes from looked like. Therefore the Codex Gisle is not referred to in this article. For details regarding the Codex Gisle, see Oliver 2007.

110. Summarised by Doepner 1999, p. 72, n. 73.
111. Sollerius 1737, pp. 142–143.
Fig. 9: Premonstratensian convent of Altenberg, choir. Memorial tomb of Gertrud of Altenberg, detail showing Gertrud wearing a frontal cross. By permission of the Deutsches Dokumentationszentrum für Kunstgeschichte – Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.
**FIG. 10:** Master of the Altenberg altarpiece, Altenberg altarpiece, right wing, inner side, depiction on the lower right side. Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia with a beggar and a kneeling nun. By permission of the Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.
piece. This implies that between the establishment of Gertrud of Altenberg’s monument at the beginning of the fourteenth century and the painting of the Altenberg altarpiece, a change in the usage of headdresses occurred – from the frontal cross to the nun’s crown. In order to determine when the nun’s crown replaced the frontal cross in Altenberg, the altarpieces’ wings have to be dated.

This however, is a highly controversial topic in art historical discussion. Most recently Stefan Kemperdick dated the altar wings around 1330. He cited an inventory report by Johann Just Winckelmann from 1697 of the Altenberg shrine. Along with numerous relics, Winckelmann mentions a coat of arms showing the star of the count of Ziegenhain and the name Mechthild, countess of Ziegenhain, written on it. Kemperdick concluded that the Altenberg altar might have been donated by countess Mechthild, who died in 1332. Her coat of arms would not have been on the altar shrine in the seventeenth century without reason.

But there is one weighty argument against identifying Mechthild of Ziegenhain as the benefactor: no remnants of either a painted or an attached coat of arms have been found on the Altenberg altarpiece. Therefore the coat of arms

115. Richter 2001, no. 17, also identifies a sculpture fragment with the nun’s crown in the collection of the Hessian Landesmuseum in Kassel as Gertrud of Altenberg. But because of the revelations concerning Diederich’s imagined cult of Gertrud, this identification has to be disputed.
117. The suggested date around 1330 is only dependent on stylistic features to a limited extent. Kemperdick 2002, p. 31, emphasizes that the Altenberg panel paintings follow Cologne paintings in motifs and iconography, but not in style. As Stange 1934, p. 87 already mentioned, the paintings lack the ‘Formkultur kölnischer Malerei’. Additionally Kemperdick instances merely ‘punktuelle Ähnlichkeiten’ with the wallpainting in the nearby cathedral of Wetzlar, which originate from 1336, and the Marienstätter panel paintings in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, which were painted in 1324.
119. Kemperdick 2002, p. 31. But Winckelmann 1697–1754, p. 164 mentions explicitly that he found the coats of arms on the inside (!) of the altarpiece. The transcription of the Antiquitates Monasterii Aldenburgensis by Kemperdick 2002, p. 23–24, is problematic, too. In his opinion the coats of arms were attached ‘am hohen Altar in der kirchen’. But Zimmer 1990, p. 128, transcribed the same text passage as follows: ‘Im hohen Altar in der kirchen seint dry gräfliche wapen’. According to this, the coats of arms were fixed on the walls of the church choir. But in his manuscript Diederich asks, after the description of the coats of arms, if the three nuns, whose sculptures were situated above the escutcheons, the ‘hochen altar renoviren haben lassen’. This renovation alludes to the painting of the church choir in white. Therefore Zimmer’s transcription seems more accurate.
described by Winckelmann seems to have been on the inside of the altar shrine in the seventeenth century by chance and actually, a passage in Diederich’s manuscript about the church choir confirms this. The prior reports that there were three coats of arms, which would most likely have been attached to the choir wall, above which were mounted three wooden sculptures representing white clothed maidens.\textsuperscript{120} After the ravages of the Thirty Years’ War, the coats of arms and the sculptures were no longer mounted on the choir wall. Presumably, they were torn down and destroyed. It is likely that only countess Mechthild of Ziegenhain’s coat of arms survived and was placed in the altar shrine for safe keeping. It follows that the coat of arms was never connected to the Altenberg altarpiece and therefore it should not be taken as evidence for identifying a possible donor. For this reason, the creation of the Altenberg altar wings should be fixed around the middle of the fourteenth century, as Gast and Wolf have suggested.\textsuperscript{121} This would mean that in Altenberg the frontal cross was exchanged for the nun’s crown in the first half of the fourteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The Birgittine linen crown is a novelty of the fourteenth century, because it is a sign of poverty and humility due to its use of modest material, because it is worn by all Birgittine sisters and because it symbolizes the chastity of widows as well as the purity of virgins. In tenth and eleventh century Germany, nuns did wear crowns, but only in the context of the virgin’s coronation and during mass. Furthermore these nuns’ crowns were not made of linen, but of precious materials such as gold and silk and they were not decorated with simple round patches of cloth, but with elaborate iconographical motifs like crosses, angels and the Lamb of God.

The nuns’ crowns which were worn in the Benedictine convents of Ebstorf and Lüne, the Cistercian nunneries of Wienhausen and Trebnitz, the Augustinian convents of Heiningen, Marienberg/Helmstedt, Marienborn, Stendal, Erfurt and the Premonstratensian nunnery of Altenberg, are in line with the tradition of the crowns of the tenth and eleventh centuries and diverge in all points mentioned above from the Birgittine linen crown. Golden silk appliques in the shape of crosses, roses and the Lamb of God ornament the nuns’ crowns in the same fashion, as do red and black coloured crosses. Furthermore these nuns’ crowns did not belong to the nuns’ habit. They were used in the corona-

\textsuperscript{120} Summarised by Zimmer 1990, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{121} Gast 1998, p. 72; Wolf 2002, p. 129.
tion of novices, which follows in the tradition of the virgins’ coronation, thereby symbolising the virginity of their wearers. It becomes clear that the Birgittine linen crown is unique in its visual appearance, its material, its symbolism, in being an integral part of the habit and therefore in its related monastic use.

In several illustrations, a simple cross adorns Birgitta’s head and not the linen crown. As the images examined above show, the frontal cross on Birgitta always occurs in connection with a book and writing tools. This enabled us to identify Birgitta as a prophet and the cross as a sign of her proximity to God and her prophetic mission.

The frontal cross was also found in the Cistercian convents of Althaldensleben, Meiningen, Rostock and Trebnitz as well as in the Premonstratensian nunnery of Altenberg. Based on Saint Scholastica’s depiction on the fragment of a stained-glass pane in Lüne and the Erfurt unicorn hunt, it is clear that the frontal cross and the nun’s crown held identical symbolic meaning. In both cases the cross symbolises the virginity of its wearer and points to her status as a bride of Christ. In the convent of Althaldensleben the sisters retained the frontal cross until the nineteenth century, but in Altenberg and Trebnitz the nuns exchanged the cross for a crown. In Altenberg, the shift from one type of adornment to the other can even be narrowed down to the first half of the fourteenth century. In Ebstorf the nun’s crown was implemented in the second half of the fifteenth century. Before that, around 1350, the Ebstorf sisters wore a headband with three crosses, as did the Benedictine sisters in Walsrode and the Cistercian nuns in Isenhagen in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

Birgitta’s vision of the foundation of the Birgittine order and the description of the linen crown in the middle of the fourteenth century coincide with the visual examples from Wienhausen and Altenberg. Because there are no convincing handwritten or pictorial sources regarding the nun’s crown in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, it seems apparent that the tradition of the corona was revived in numerous convents around 1350. From then on, the use of the nun’s crown spread further and adopted a wide variety of shapes.
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The main focus of this article is the representations of Saint Birgitta in Florentine art. Birgitta had some powerful friends in the city, among them members of the Acciaiuoli family. For example, Niccolò, who built the Certosa del Galluzzo (a former monastery of the Carthusian order now inhabited by Cistercian monks and located at the entrance to the city) between 1341–1365, was a close friend of Birgitta, as was his sister, Lapa Buondelmonti Acciaiuoli, and another brother, Angelo Acciaiuoli, a Dominican friar at Santa Maria Novella. Birgitta might have visited the city herself for short periods although we have no conclusive evidence regarding this. In the Certosa there is still a relief made by Andrea della Robbia showing Saint Birgitta with her Pilgrim Cross and Book of Revelations. The explanation for the appearance of Birgittine images in the city lies in the presence of Birgitta’s supporters in Florence and in the attempts of both Dominicans and Franciscans to establish her cult. There was also a Birgittine institution in Florence, a double monastery called Paradiso, which was the only house in Tuscany to be founded by the order, and only the third anywhere outside Sweden. This paper explores the

1. On the connections between Birgitta and Florence, see Holloway 1992, Introduction. I intend to return to this question in the future
2. There is a letter in the Florentine archive describing how in December 1373, following Birgitta’s death in her house in Rome, Francesca Papazzuri wrote to Lapa Buondelmonte Acciaiuoli about commissioning a painting for her room which had now become a chapel, ‘quod faciatis mihi istam charitatem, quod pro vobis ego possem habere unam tabulum pro illa capella et altari posita in illa camera, in qua ipsa domina Brigida emisit spiritum ad Christum, Et in predicta tabula sint depinti, videlicet Christus crocefixus cum mater sua angosata et beato evangelista Johanne, sancto Jacobo et sancta Catherine et Magdalena. Item sanctus Petro cum sancto Paulo se invicemamplexando, sancta Agnete et Johanne Baptista’. Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Carte Strozziane, Serie Prima, CCCLII; Collijn 1929, pp. 9–20.
images of Saint Birgitta of Sweden in Florence and suggests the reasons behind
the selection of scenes from her life and writings. Some explanation is also given
regarding the Dominicans’ veneration of the saint.3

Saint Birgitta of Sweden has drawn a lot of scholarly attention in recent years,
with extensive monographs and editions of her Revelations being published,4 and
she features in many books on mystics and on female spirituality in the Middle
Ages.5 Her influence on northern art has long been recognised. Some scholars
have written about the image of the saint herself.6 Others have noted the influ­
ence of her visions on manuscript illumination7 and on representations of the
Nativity, and on a motif connected with Christ’s sexuality.8 Others have written
on her activities in Italy.9 Ann M. Roberts has discussed the link between the
patronage of the Dominican prioress Chiara Gambacorta and the artworks
depicting Saint Birgitta and her visions commissioned for the San Domenico
convent in Pisa in the early fifteenth century. Roberts has highlighted the devo­
tion of the Dominican Observants (Osservanza) to Saint Birgitta, in particular
that of the prioress, and her efforts to establish the Birgittine cult in Pisa.10

The Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella had begun to assume its
present form by the thirteenth century and, from 1311, a studium, a school for
monastic higher education, was established in the friary.11 The earliest represen­
tation of Saint Birgitta in this church, and in Florentine art, appears in Andrea
da Firenze’s series of frescoes in the church’s chapter house, also known as the
Guidalotti Chapel, painted in 1367 and later called Cappellone degli Spagnoli (the
Spanish Chapel). The latter appellation came about after Cosimo I assigned it to
his wife Eleanor of Toledo and her Spanish retinue. It was the funerary chapel of
the patron and his wife, Buonamico di Lapo Guidalotti, a friend of Fra Jacopo
Passavanti (1300–1357), the Dominican writer and preacher sometimes credited
with chief responsibility for the iconographic programme of the frescoes, as

3. Debby 2004, pp. 509–518. Much of my discussion is connected with this earlier article,
which offers a preliminary introduction to images of Birgitta in Santa Maria Novella.
Here I have added additional works of Florentine art depicting Saint Birgitta.
well as a chapter house for the Dominicans friars of Santa Maria Novella. The chapter house served various purposes in the life of the friars; it was where the community met on a daily basis, where the Dominicans conducted their official ceremonies, where the prior was chosen and important visitors were received. Thus the frescoes were seen by the friars on a daily basis, and they were also shown to distinguished guests on special occasions. 12

The central theme of the series is twofold: first, to commemorate Christ’s death on the Cross and his subsequent resurrection and ascension to heaven; second, to glorify the Dominican order, mark its key activities, and celebrate saints such as Peter Martyr. Accordingly, one of the entrance walls has scenes from the Life of Saint Peter Martyr, with the Road to Calvary, the Crucifixion and the Descent into Limbo opposite. Within the chapter house, the Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas appears on the left and on the right the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, known together as the Via Veritatis. Scenes of Pentecost, the Navicella, the Resurrection and the Ascension decorate the vault. 13

The most celebrated fresco in the cycle and the one that contains the portrait of Saint Birgitta is the Via Veritatis. In the lower part of the fresco, we see the black and white dogs, the domini canes, racing to the right, urged on by Saint Dominic, who represents the zeal of the Inquisition. In another group, twelve heretics are having their errors spelled out by Saint Peter Martyr, who counts them, point by point, on his fingers. Examining the other side of the Via Veritatis fresco, the part depicting the Church Militant, we find, on a raised platform at the centre, the representatives of power: the pope, cardinal, bishop, emperor, king and duke. Below them are two groups: the laity and the clergy. Some scholars, Anthony Luttrell in particular, have argued that many of the figures in the fresco represent leading figures in Roman and Florentine society of the period (Fig. 1). The argument goes that this part of the Via Veritatis fresco is a kind of Renaissance photojournalistic record of a major ecclesiastical-imperial event of the period, the meeting in Rome of the pope and the emperor. Eve Borsook concurs: ‘It may be that this section of the mural alludes to the reunion of the Papacy and the Empire, which occurred in 1367 after a century of dissension.’ Scholars have differed in their identification of the major figures. Luttrell claims that the central figures represent the reigning pontiff, Urban V, with Emperor Charles IV, who was in Tuscany in 1368, to his left. Romano, however, believes that the pope is Innocent VI. 14

Among the laity is a curious group of four women: the first three are young; one, golden-haired and wearing a gold crown is kneeling; the second is an elaborately dressed noblewoman and the third is shabbily attired. The fourth woman is elderly and wears a white-collared nun’s habit. According to Vasari,15 the four women represent Dante’s Beatrice, Boccaccio’s Fiammetta, Petrarch’s Laura, and the Blessed Villana delle Botti. Luttrell, in a footnote, raises the possibility that this elderly figure is Saint Birgitta, who was in Rome in 1368 urging Urban to remain there and is thus connected with the ecclesiastical-political event depicted in this part of the fresco (Fig. 2).16 According to Luttrell, the four women represent: the kneeling figures of a queen, Queen Joan of Naples, with golden hair and a golden crown; a beautiful young woman shabbily dressed as a pilgrim and an aged widow, these being daughter and mother and recognizably Katarina and Birgitta of Sweden; and Lapa Buonelmonte Acciaiuoli, sister to Niccolò Acciaiuoli, and friend to both Birgitta’s household and to Queen Joan. It is in any case interesting to note that the elderly woman dressed as a nun appears as part of the laity and not of the clergy. Romano, remarking on this, suggests that the nun exemplifies a tertiary, that is, a member of the third order, a laywoman who did not take a religious vow but participated in the good works of the order and was allowed to wear at least some elements of the order’s habit. If this woman is indeed Birgitta, it is no surprise to find her among the laity, since Birgitta herself never professed monastic vows.17

Moving into the main church, the most important image showing Saint Birgitta is a fresco presently attributed to the little-known artist Pietro di Miniato and dated to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century; it is located near the main entrance to the church. This depicts the saint in the context of her famous vision of the Nativity.18 The Nativity was the most influential of Birgitta’s visions. In this vision, experienced during a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, Birgitta saw the Virgin dressed in a gown of white, having cast off her outer garment and shoes, in an attitude of adoration of the newborn Christ, who lies naked on the ground, shining and aglow. Birgitta’s vision of the miraculous birth introduced a new version of the Nativity to art. Instead of the swaddled infant, lying in a

16. See Luttrell 1972, n. 15. We have no conclusive evidence for the identification of this group.
FIG. 2: Andrea di Firenze, *Via Veritatis*, detail, Saint Birgitta, Spanish chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1370. Photo: Alinari.
manger beside his reclining mother, Birgitta envisioned Mary’s childbirth as painless and instantaneous, with the Madonna adoring the miraculously born infant. The Birgittine vision was considered a more emotional and mystical interpretation of the birth, one that focused on the spiritual experience rather than one taking place in naturalistic setting. The image of the radiant, nude infant became immediately popular in art. 19

The fresco presents the *Annunciation* as its central theme, with three small depictions located below it: the *Nativity* with the *Adoration of the Child with the Annunciation to the Shepherds* in the background, the *Adoration of the Magi*, and the *Baptism of Christ*. The attribution of this fresco to Pietro di Miniato is based not on documentary evidence, but on stylistic grounds (Fig. 3). The Pietro di Miniato fresco depicts, in its lower part, the Nativity of Christ exactly as Birgitta experienced it, with Birgitta represented, in the lower right corner, as a middle-aged nun dressed in black with a halo around her head. This Birgittine Nativity scene shows Mary and Joseph, kneeling symmetrically on either side of the child, who thereby becomes the focal point of their adoration. A shining light radiates from the Virgin and from the child. Other conventional Nativity details appear as well: the ox and the ass, the adoring angels, the announcement to the shepherds in the distance. And the whole scene is depicted as taking place in a grotto (Fig. 4).

Some of the motifs in this fresco appear to have influenced other artworks located nearby, in particular, the Nativity with the Adoration of the Child appearing on the second panel of the marble pulpit designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, with the panels created by Andrea Bugiano between 1443 and 1448. Whereas the earlier depictions of the Birgittine Nativity include the presence of Saint Birgitta herself, as in the Pietro di Miniato fresco, in later works, as on the pulpit, the saint herself does not appear, only her vision. The pulpit in Santa Maria Novella is a cylindrical structure of gilded white marble, adorned with four rectangular reliefs depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Assumption. Perhaps the influence of Pietro di Miniato’s fresco might be seen in the general arrangement of the pulpit’s scene of the Adoration of the Child with the Virgin on the left, the child on the ground in the centre, and Joseph on the right, although there are differences in Joseph’s posture; on the pulpit he is seated, with his hands clasped in prayer, whereas in the fresco he is standing, with his arms crossed over his chest, in a gesture of humility or submission. The two adoring

angels in the pulpit, one of them surrounded by rays of light are similar in their posture, their gestures, and the emphasis on light, to the two angels appearing in the fresco. A further example of a Birgittine Nativity in the church of Santa Maria Novella is Botticelli’s fresco of the Nativity located close to both the pulpit and the Pietro di Miniato fresco. But there are differences. Here, again, is Mary in a posture of adoration, however the Christ child is no longer naked as in the Pietro di Miniato fresco but partly covered by a cloth as in the pulpit, and he is lying on a blanket, not on the bare ground. It is interesting to note that all these images of a Birgittine Nativity appear in one area of the church, around the pulpit in close proximity to the church’s main entrance.

Pietro di Miniato’s fresco is but one example of a Birgittine Nativity in Tuscan art. Others are Martino di Bartolomeo’s, which forms part of the predella of the altarpiece of San Domenico in Pisa, and Saint Birgitta’s Vision of the Nativity, attributed to Turino Vanni, now found in the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo in Pisa (Fig. 5). Another example is Niccolò da Tommaso’s painting in the Pinacoteca Vaticana from 1372 that exists in two other versions in Yale and in Philadelphia.

A later example of a Birgittine Adoration scene in Florentine art is a fresco of the Nativity depicted by Fra Angelico in 1440 in one of the private cells of the Dominican convent of San Marco. Here the human figures all kneel to the naked child, who is the source of the light that illuminates the scene. The child appears in the moment just after his birth which was itself an experience of luminosity: Saint Birgitta says the emergence of the child was as if a great light had shone through Mary’s body. Other details also follow the vision. Mary’s hands are clasped and her head bowed, and the angels and saints adopt the same posture. In Fra Angelico’s fresco, the cross on the baby’s halo is not from Birgitta, nor is it common in Nativities, but it is fully consistent with the liturgical, Eucharistic meaning of the nativity event. It has been suggested that the kneeling figure beside the Virgin holding her hands in a posture of prayer is Saint Birgitta who is looking towards the Virgin Mary and who is standing diagonally parallel to and opposite Peter Martyr. Here she is represented as a young woman wearing a crown. However, it is more likely that this figure represents Saint Catherine of Alexandria rather than Saint Birgitta. In another interesting example, Giovanni di Paolo depicted a version of a Birgittine Nativity in which the Madonna is shown surrounded by light and kneeling before a

radiating Christ full of light; although Saint Birgitta is not present in the scene, a direct citation from her *Revelations* appear in the words ‘ipsum quem genuit adoravit’ coming out of the Virgin’s mouth.23

Some of the early images depicting Saint Birgitta might be explained by the activities of a circle of Dominican Observants and lay supporters working together to promote the cult of Birgitta and secure the wellbeing of the Paradiso institution in Florence. This network consisted of the Alberti family, Ser Lapo Mazzei who was the lawyer for the Florentine hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, the Pratese merchant Francesco Datini, the preacher and Observant leader Giovanni Dominici and the Dominican prioress Chiara Gambacorta of Pisa.24 Chiara Gambacorta da Pisa (d. 1419) knew Birgitta’s confessor and commissioned preaching and works of art in her honour. She maintained such a close relationship with the Birgittines in Florence that it was said she considered joining them. A century later, another female lay supporter of the Dominican order, Domenica da Paradiso (d. 1553) found a model for imitation in Saint Birgitta of Sweden; Domenica had spent some time in the convent of Paradiso and preached in her honour.25

Giovanni Dominici, the leader and spiritual mentor of this group, and the most dominant member of the community of Santa Maria Novella at the time, was very close to Chiara Gambacorta who was working to establish the cult of the saint in Pisa. Chiara had expressed her admiration for his sermons and there were close contacts between Corpus Domini, the convent Dominici founded in Venice, and the Pisan convent of San Domenico. Dominici was also a friend to Francesco Datini, whom he served as a spiritual advisor, and to his friend Lapo Mazzei; he appears many times in their correspondence, and both greatly admired his sermons. Completing this circle was Bartolomea degli Alberti, the widow of Antonio degli Alberti. She was the spiritual daughter of Dominici, who in fact dedicated three of his spiritual treatises to her. Dominici was directly involved with the Paradiso; he was active in the institutional organisation of the convent, working together with Francesco Datini to establish its reputation.

Birgitta of Sweden was highly venerated by the members of this circle. Their correspondence contains many examples of their admiration for the saint. She is idealised, for example, in the letters of Lapo Mazzei to Francesco Datini. In one of these letters, he discussed Saint Birgitta at great length and with the greatest enthusiasm. He wrote about the Paradiso monastery, with which Antonio

Alberti had endowed all his property, and about other Birgittine monasteries founded throughout the length and breadth of Europe. He called her ‘Santa Brisida’, especially stressing her prophecies and her *Revelations*, and speaking of her as ‘that ambassador that Christ has sent us’. It is interesting to note that in another letter that Lapo Mazzei wrote to his friend Francesco Datini, about the preaching of Dominici in Florence, he drew a direct parallel between the preacher and Saint Birgitta:

I tell you that I have never heard such a sermon nor was one like it ever preached before. It is certain that the friends of God are beginning to rise to extinguish the life of lazy clergymen and laymen. He will preach here at Lent and he is coming from Venice where everyone was behind him. You’ll think that you are hearing a disciple of Saint Francis reborn again. And we all either wept or stood stupefied by the clear truth he showed us, the same way as Saint Birgitta does.

Predominant among those striving to spread the cult of Saint Birgitta was the Dominican preacher and Observant leader Giovanni Dominici who was a devoted disciple of another female saint, Saint Catherine of Siena (1347–1380). He expressed his admiration for Catherine in various sermons and letters in which he praised her greatness. Dominici’s devotion to Catherine could be interpreted as part of the Dominican effort to secure her canonization which took place later, in 1460. Saint Birgitta was the other female saint whose cult he advocated.

Dominici was a prolific writer; the many works he has left us include letters, mystical treatises, poems, a treatise on the household and education called *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, a polemical treatise against humanism entitled *Lucula Noctis* and various sermons. Throughout his life, Dominici was interested in the fine arts. In the convents under his jurisdiction in Venice and Pisa, he taught the nuns to illuminate manuscripts, and he might have practised painting himself. He also patronised the decoration of the cells in Corpus Domini, a convent for nuns that he re-established in Venice in 1393. Dominici’s activities as a reformer of the Observants are also thought to be responsible for a renewed interest in the arts and in artistic creativity in the convent of San

27. Mazzei 1880, pp. 227–228: ‘E dicovi che si fatto sermone non udi’ mai, nè si fatta predica. E di certo gli amici di Dio pare ricomincino a montar su, a ispegnere questa vita de’ poltroni cherici e laici. E dee predicar qui la quaresima; e viene da Vinegia, che tutto ’l mondo gli andava drieto. Pensate vi parrà udire uno de’ discepoli di san Francesco e rinascere. Tutti o piagnavamo o stavamo stupefatti alla chiara verità che mostra altrui, come fa santa Brisida.’
Marco in Florence, particularly in connection with the works of Fra Angelico.\(^{29}\)

Dominici’s treatises were influenced by Saint Birgitta and her visions. In line with his sensitivity to children, Dominici was very interested in Christ as a child, and the theme of the Nativity occupied a prominent place in his writings. His interest in the Nativity is expressed through three different media: poems, sermons and letters. In them, Dominici frequently alludes to the painless birth of Christ and to scenes of the adoration of the Christ child, echoing the Birgittine conception of the Nativity, which developed the emotional conception of the Nativity derived from the mystical writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Yet it is only with the Birgittine Nativity that an emphasis was put on the painlessness of the birth process and the motif of adoration. Dominici’s most noted poem was a *laude* dedicated to the Nativity, considered by some to be the most important religious poem of the fifteenth century:

Sweet Mary, say, how great was thy delight in gazing on thy son I can imagine that first scene: the Child – A child who at his birth brought grace not pain – is loved, then lifted by his mother’s hands so tenderly, to nestle in the crib, where in his few, thin, swaddling clothes he lies warmed by the joy, I sense, that lights thy face. How much thy joy was then, how much delight was thine, when he was close within those arms! May I some gift of understanding share, And know, sweet Mary, thy content as mine, When at the moment of a mother’s kiss I hear thee whisper softly, ‘Oh my Son’.\(^{30}\)

This panegyric emphasising the painless birth and illuminating the mother’s ardent adoration of her child reflects the Birgittine vision. On the whole, then, it appears that the artworks depicting Saint Birgitta and her visions in Florence were created during a period of efforts to secure her canonization, confirm the indulgences granted to her order, and establish and strengthen the Birgittine establishment in Florence.

Images of Saint Birgitta appear in Florence in other contexts. The Florentine Franciscan tradition sometimes associates the figure of Birgitta of Sweden with Franciscan female saints, most prominently with Saint Clare of Assisi. An intriguing painting from Florence *The Virgin of the Apocalypse with Saints and Angels* by Giovanni del Biondo, dated to 1391, depicts Saint Birgitta in profile standing among a group of four female saints. This panel was commissioned for

\(^{29}\) Hood 1993, pp. 23–26.

\(^{30}\) Bruni 1956, pp. 17–24: Dì, Maria dolce, con quanto disìo / Miravi il tuo figliuol, Christo mio Dio / Quando tu il partoristi senza pena / La prima cosa, credo, che facesti / Tu l’adorasti, o di grazia piena / Poi sopra il fien nel presepio il ponesti; / Con pochi e pover panni lo involgesti, / Maravigliando e godendo, cred’io …
the funerary chapel of a member of the third order of the Franciscans, whose family coat of arms is visible on the shields. In the central image of the panel, the Virgin is represented as a queen standing on a raised platform. On either side of the Virgin are four male and four female saints. On her right are Saint Francis of Assisi, who has radiating stigmata on his hands; Saint Laurence, with a palm and the grill; Saint Anthony Abbot, with a pilgrim’s staff; and finally Saint Stephen, with a crusader’s banner. On the Virgin’s left are the female saints: Saint Clare of Assisi with the lily; one with a burning heart in her hand, a beautiful and young noblewoman representing Saint Birgitta of Sweden. Next to her is Saint Catherine of Alexandria, with the crown and the wheel, followed by Saint Mary Magdalene, who is covered in her long blond hair and kneeling in a penitential pose. The position of Saint Birgitta next to Saint Clare of Assisi is indicative of the similarities in the iconography of the two saints in later works.

A new characteristic of Saint Clare of Assisi appearing in the second half of the fifteenth century is her role as visionary. The most typical vision experienced by Saint Clare is connected with Nativity images; in the Adoration of the Child iconography, Saint Clare sometimes appears as a witness to the divine revelation, kneeling beside the Madonna in a posture of adoration. This perception of Clare is connected with a vision described by the nuns in the canonization process that ‘on the night of the Lord’s Nativity, she also saw the manger of our Lord Jesus Christ’. The same episode appearing in the Legend of Saint Clare shows how the Lord had pity upon her in her illness, and emphasizes that she was worthy of seeing the crib of the infant Jesus.31 One visual example of this vision from 1492 made by an anonymous Italian painter shows Saint Clare kneeling in front of the baby Christ radiant with light besides the Virgin and below Saint Francis. This representation of Clare in adoration scenes highlights her devotion and is similar to the Nativity images of Saint Birgitta; in fifteenth century Italian art, Saint Clare sometimes takes the place of Birgitta as a witness to the adoration of the child.

It is significant that Saint Birgitta’s *Revelations* were translated into the Italian vernacular, and manuscripts containing all or part of the text are to be found in the Tuscan archives. For example, Nordenfalk mentions a manuscript in the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena that contains an Italian translation of the *Revelations* and the *Sermo angelicus*, the latter written in 1398 at the command of the Sienese clerk Ser Christofano di Gano Guidini, known to be a friend of Saint Catherine of Siena. It contains two miniatures representing Saint Birgitta

in the act of writing her *Revelations* and a third representation of the saint receiving a scroll from an angel. The illustrator seems to be a Sienese follower of Lippo Vanni. Another manuscript that shows that the writings of Saint Birgitta enjoyed popularity in Italian circles is a copy of the *Liber celestis imperatoris ad reges* in Italian, now in the University Library of Oslo. The illustrations in this manuscript appear to be of Florentine workmanship. Two more Italian manuscripts with representations of Saint Birgitta are a copy of the *Revelations* in the Ambrosian Library at Milan and another prayer book that was originally in the Benedictine abbey of Murate at Florence.32

Another curious example is a sculpted panel made by the Florentine master Agostino di Duccio intended for an altar dedicated to Saint Laurence in San Domenico in Perugia. The altar was to be a large architectural structure with cornices and garlanded decorations; it had to include statues of the Virgin and Child, John the Baptist, Saint Laurence, Saint Peter Martyr and Saint Birgitta of Sweden, all patron saints of the deceased’s family. The relief showing Saint Birgitta is in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. In this symbolic scene, the young Christ presents the Rule of Birgitta’s order to her in the form of a scroll; she is given the attribute of a sphinx. The relief has been identified as having been commissioned in 1459 for the predella of the altar of Saint Laurence which was dismantled by 1482.33

As noted earlier, Florence was home to the only Birgittine house in Tuscany, a double monastery called the Paradiso. It was set up at Santa Maria del Paradiso in the Pian di Ripoli with an endowment from the Alberti family, in particular through the donations of Antonio degli Alberti who even brought nuns from Sweden for this purpose. The founding of a monastery was proposed in 1392, but it was opposed by the bishop of Florence, who disapproved of double monasteries. On 3 December 1397, the Birgittines won approval from the Florentine Republic to establish the monastery, yet they had to leave the premises a few years later with the exile from Florence of their patron Antonio degli Alberti and the confiscation of his property, including the land and buildings of the Paradiso. The monastery was re-established, however, in 1401 and significantly expanded between 1404 and 1408 under the protection of the Florentine Republic and the Guelf party, quickly becoming one of the principal houses of the order. In 1432, under the abbacy of Suor Tommasa di Filippo da Diacceto, it was decided to construct a new monastery and chapel for the Birgittine order within the city

33. Santi 1961, pp. 162–173. The attribution is made in the Metropolitan Museum online catalogue. This is an exceptional example that requires further research.
walls, alongside the church of San Pier Gattolino near the Boboli Gardens. The cornerstone of the new monastery, to be called Santa Maria del Popolo, was laid in 1435, and though the building was never completed, over two thousand florins were spent on its construction and furnishings.  

There are several extant artworks that are connected with the Paradiso in Florence. Principal among them is a manuscript illustration by Lippo d’Andrea di Lippo which has the Annunciation as the upper scene while the lower scene which is set in the nave of the church shows Saint Birgitta dressed in a dark grey habit with a white headdress and veil holding a processional cross typical of the Birgittine convent of Santa Maria del Paradiso and a long unlettered scroll. Nine Birgittine nuns are wearing light grey habits, white and black veils and headpieces with five red dots symbolizing the wounds of Christ; they are shown chanting the Divine office. This page was formerly the frontispiece to a Birgittine gradual written presumably after 1401 for the convent of the Paradiso.  

Another example, created by Paolo Uccello, is a small devotional panel that includes the depiction of a nun of the Birgittine order at the foot of the cross. An inscription identifies her as Sister Felicity and it was probably for her private devotions in her cell at Santa Maria del Paradiso that the triptych was painted. There is a notice of a Felicità di Francesco Casavecchia joining the order in January 1455 and the painting seems, in fact, to date from about this time. The central panel shows the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist standing below the crucified Christ, with Mary Magdalene kneeling at the foot of the cross next to the diminutive figure of a Birgittine nun, identified as Sister Felicity. The lateral panels have in their upper section the angel and the Virgin of the Annunciation. Below is shown Saint Birgitta dripping hot wax on her bare arms and the Virgin holding the Christ child. This last painting might be related to another triptych made in 1462 by Neri di Bicci also for the nuns of Santa Maria del Paradiso in Florence. A later painting by the Florentine master Ansano Ciampanti from the beginning of the sixteenth century is Sacra Conversatione, now conserved in the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon. Here Saint Birgitta appears with a black and white headdress holding a book and a red processional cross characteristic of the Paradiso.

In conclusion, as this brief survey has shown, there were a variety of images depicting Saint Birgitta of Sweden in Florentine art related to her figure, her visions, her miracles and her vocation as a founder of an order of nuns. The cult
of Saint Birgitta was encouraged by the Dominicans, the Franciscans and by the local Birgittine community. The presence of Birgitta in Florence endured beyond her lifetime into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, illustrating her importance in Florentine culture.

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In a 2005 article, Barbara Newman demonstrated that there was a clash between different notions regarding agency in medieval visionary culture. Did revelations come to the visionary unexpectedly by means of an external agent, or could the visionary cultivate spiritual images through meditation, visualization techniques and the contemplation of material images? Whereas the transcendental vision within a monastic context emerges as an intrinsic part of meditational practices, most contemporary discussions surrounding late medieval female visionaries proceed from an underlying notion of visions as being caused by external spirits. The medieval inconsistency regarding the agency of visions is to some extent reflected in modern scholarly approaches to the phenomenon in the later Middle Ages. Given the many novel aspects of late medieval visionary culture, scholars coming from a variety of disciplines have devoted much attention to the study of visions and visionaries. Their research does, however, reveal a tendency to focus on a singular approach to visions, relating them either to monastic visual practices or to what we can call spiritual possession, despite strong indications in the sources pointing to the validity of both approaches. For instance, within art history, focus has been directed mainly towards the relationship between visual culture and the visionary in a devotional context, without taking into account the many contemporary references in which visions are described as the results of spiritual possession. Scholars from other historical disciplines have, on the contrary, given much attention to the social and political aspirations of female visionaries by approaching phenomena like visions and spiritual possession as rhetorical strategies employed in the promotion or silencing of ambitious women, but without going deeper into the contemporary practices giving meaning to this rhetoric.

The literary sources relating to the visionary experiences of Birgitta of Sweden, the *Revelations*, together with the sources pertaining to her canonization process, are permeated with contradictions and paradoxes regarding the nature of Birgitta’s visionary experiences. While there are several explicit references to spiritual possession and fear of demonic deception, there are also strong indications that Birgitta’s devotional practices were deeply influenced by monastic meditation. In the present article I set out to explore the notions of visions and the visionary experience as they emerge in the many paradoxical statements in the Birgittine textual sources. My aim is to trace what appear as contradictory concepts of visions back not only to certain discourses in which Birgitta was engaged, but also to practices giving meaning to these discourses.

**VISIONS AND VISIONARIES IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES**

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, medieval visionary culture changed profoundly with the emergence of the laywoman as an entirely new type of visionary. In a period characterized by the immense popularity of the *vita apostolica*, offering laypeople a set of ideals and an opportunity for a direct and active spiritual life independent of the ecclesiastical institution, women like Mary of Oignies, Margaret of Cortona, Clare of Montefalco, Angela of Foligno, and Dorothea of Montau claimed to have mystical visionary experiences. Furthermore, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the time of the Great Schism and the Hundred Years’ War, several of these female visionaries, among them Birgitta, Catherine of Siena, and Joan of Arc, made claims to prophetical authority, insisting they had received their messages directly from God.

In the sources related to late medieval laywomen, visions emerge as paranormal phenomena involving the agency of an external spirit. Since spirits could either be good or evil, establishing the nature of a given spirit was thus important for determining the authenticity of a visionary. This approach to visions has much in common with Augustine’s study of the phenomenon in his examination of Paul’s vision of the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–4) in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Here Augustine notes that spiritual visions involving the perception of images can come from a number of natural as well as supernatural causes, and that the

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cause is not only difficult to determine, but it is also not necessarily related to the authenticity of the vision. Nevertheless, he points out that when sound and healthy people are transported, either in body or in spirit, and experience visions, these can be attributed to the action of an external spirit. If this spirit is good in nature, then it can make the visionary a true prophet. If the spirit, however, is evil in nature, it can turn the visionary into a false prophet. Augustine's notion of being transported by the actions of spirits tends to imply a specific condition for the visionary in which she or he is alienated from the external senses. This condition, which he also refers to as *ecstasi* (from *ex stasi* meaning literally standing outside one's senses) thus emerges as a possible state in which humans can come into contact with God in the present life, and thereby avoid the problem of Moses and his people, that 'no man may see God and live'.

While Augustine's notion of transcendental visions as coming from the agency of spirits remained highly influential in theological approaches to the visionary experience throughout the Middle Ages, visions within monastic culture were approached in a fundamentally different way. Rather than treating visions as coming from external sources, monks were actively seeking to induce visionary experiences in meditation, involving the use of material images and inner visualizations. In her seminal research, Mary Carruthers has demonstrated that physical images, and even more importantly, self-generated inner images were used as devices for the purpose of structuring one's thoughts in meditation, while also functioning as vehicles for visionary experiences. Richard of St Victor's notion of the anagogical vision – an elaboration of Augustine's famous trichotomy – offers a theoretical articulation of the underlying conception of visions inherent in these meditational practices. In his analysis of the Apocalypse, Richard uses the exegetical concept of anagogy to connect the invisible and eternal to perceptions of visible earthly things. Material images, spiritual images, and divine intuition are thus directly connected in a neo-platonic hierarchy allowing the mind to ascend from lower material forms towards higher spiritual insight.

Returning to late medieval visionary culture, we see that while the monastic approach to visions appears at first glance to be completely absent in the tex-

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6. PL, vol. 34, cols. 464 and 476, LMG, pp. 194 and 216 respectively.
8. On the influence of Augustine and other approaches to visions as paranormal phenomena, see Newman 2005, pp. 6 ff.
tual sources pertaining to laywomen, the notion of spiritual agency is explicitly present. Laywomen claiming to have received spiritual visions were usually met with a demand to be tested in order to reveal if they were inspired by the Holy Spirit or by a demon; either way, the result would be crucial to the local communities’ evaluation of their conditions. As divinely inspired, visionaries would have their power and religious authorization directly from God, surpassing the hierarchical structures of the clergy. However, if they were influenced by demons, they would not only pose a threat towards themselves but also towards the whole society that partook in their supernatural experiences as believers.

The practice of discerning spirits, *discretio spirituum*, thus developed in tandem with the first lay female visionaries in the late twelfth century. By the late fourteenth century, treatises giving rules and instructions on discerning spirits even began circulating. The most famous of these, Jean Gerson’s *On the Testing of Spirits*, written in direct opposition to Birgitta in connection with the Council of Constance in 1415, epitomizes the theological response to the claims to prophetic authority coming from many divinely inspired laywomen. It has been noted several times that Gerson’s main concern was to establish ecclesiastical control over these charismatic visionary women who, like Birgitta, had become famous outside their local communities and also had attracted many clerical followers. By setting down certain rules for the appearance and behaviour of a true visionary, Gerson could make women and their followers comply with the normative structures of the ecclesiastical institution and re-establish the former unbalanced relationship between the laywoman and her confessor. Thus Gerson argued that the true visionary was recognized above all by her humbleness and submissiveness to clerical control, her lack of the excessive devotional behaviour generally associated with women, and, most importantly, that the contents of her visions were never in conflict with doctrine.

In light of treatises like Gerson’s, Rosalynn Voaden has argued that a female visionary’s success largely depended on her own and her spiritual directors’ knowledge and use of the discourse pertaining to *discretio spirituum*. Based on an analysis of the prologue in Book VIII of Birgitta’s *Revelations*, the *Epistola*

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12. On the relationship between charismatic visionary women and the confessors supporting them, see Coakley 2006.
13. Gerson was pointing to the very same devotional behaviour which Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated was typical for religious women; see Walker Bynum 1987.
solitarii ad reges written by the visionary’s confessor and editor Alfonso de Jaén, Voaden has argued that Alfonso succeeded in constructing a complex image of Birgitta as a visionary in perfect harmony with the conceptions of visions applied by the disciners of spirits. Without contesting this observation, it can be argued that Birgitta’s visionary experiences, as they emerge in Voaden’s analysis, appear to be reduced to rhetorical ornament in Birgitta and Alfonso’s religious and political literary corpus, without reflecting the practices and visual culture that would have given meaning and power to this rhetoric. The problem lies in Voaden’s approach to the *discretio spirituum*, and consequently to visions, first and foremost as a theological discourse rather than as an actual practice in the life of the visionary.

**SPIRITUAL SIGHT AND CORPOREAL POSSESSION**

Birgitta’s *Revelations* are permeated with descriptions of the visionary as being in spiritual rapture, alienated from the external senses, and in ecstasy when receiving a vision. These descriptions confirm the Augustinian notion of external agency whether we choose to interpret them as rhetorical ornaments complying with a theological discourse, or as descriptions reflecting a contemporary conception of what a visionary experience implied physically and mentally for the visionary. In the case of Birgitta, can we understand these descriptions of her being ‘taken in spirit’ (*in spiritu rapta fuit*) and in ‘ecstasy’ (*in extasi*) as something more than rhetorical compositions? And if that is all they are, what is it about Birgitta’s culture that invests such compositions with meaning and gives them validity?

Back in Sweden, long before the discussions relating to the visionary’s sainthood began, Birgitta was concerned that her recently occurred mystical experiences might possibly be induced by a demon. Her *vita* informs us that she had initially feared that her first visions might be demonic deceptions. In their hagiographical text, her two confessors Peter of Alvastra and Peter of Skänninge claimed that it was not before the voice in her very first vision assured her that it was divine and that Birgitta should go directly to her confessor Magister Matthias ‘who had experience in discerning the two types of spirits’, that the visionary was assured of the authenticity of her experience. Birgitta

16. A few of the many examples can be found in Birgitta, Rev. IV:127, 139; Rev. V: prologue; Rev. VI:103; Rev. VII:19; Rev. VIII:23.
17. AP, p. 618 f. Birgitta’s fear of demonic deception is not only found in the hagiographical texts but is also reflected in the *Revelations*, see for instance Rev. I:4, ‘Et cur cogitasti,
was also tested for demonic influence by a commission of theologians, abbots and bishops, probably in 1346, the year of her first vision. It was most likely in connection with this event that Matthias, the expert, wrote his defence of the divine nature of her experiences that was later to appear as a prologue to the first book in Alfonso’s edition of the *Revelations.* In her study of spiritual possession in the Middle Ages, Nancy Caciola has showed that the *discretio spirituum,* long before it appeared in the shape of theological treatises written to control and ultimately undermine the validity of female visionaries, rather denoted a practice that was mainly focused on women’s bodily behaviour as opposed to their moral behaviour and the correctness of their visions. Similarly, Dyan Elliott has demonstrated that the notion of being ‘taken in spirit’ was understood as implying certain consequences for the body of the visionary as if she was being spatially possessed by the spirit. Ecstasy, frenzies, levitation, uncontrolled crying, ‘speaking in tongues’, and similar extreme bodily behaviour were thus taken as evidence for spiritual possession understood in highly physical terms.

Determining if extreme bodily behaviour was caused by the presence of an evil or good spirit was not an easy matter. However, there were some notions about how a demon would mix and blend with the human body as opposed to a good spirit. For instance, the Dominican theologian Thomas of Cantimpré affirmed that demonic possession would cause harm to the external appearance of the possessed, making them thin and pale, as opposed to divine possession, which would cause a shining appearance. Similarly, the Parisian bishop William of Auvergne claimed that the demonically possessed would have a harsh voice, ‘since demons usurp the vocal chords through violence’, as opposed to the possession of angels ‘applying themselves softly to the vocal chords’.

Although we do not know what kind of testing Birgitta was subjected to in Sweden, there are a few indications pointing to a notion of spiritual presence as physical presence in her case. The most famous example is taken from Birgitta’s *Revelations* VI:88, which informs us that at one point the visionary felt something move and leap within her heart as if it was a living child. Birgitta, who had not been sure if she was the victim of an illusion, had revealed the

de quo spiritu essent, de bono an de malo?’ and in Rev. IV:110, Christ explains how she can recognize the evil from the good spirit. ‘Quomodo intelligendus est spiritus meus, cum duo sint, spiritus scilicet bonus et malus?’

18. There is a reference to this event in Birgitta, Rev. IV:78.
22. From Thomas’s *De Apibus* and William’s *De Universo,* both quoted in Elliott 1997, p. 155.
experience to her spiritual directors who, in turn, could confirm the physical movement by observing and touching her. According to Birgitta’s *vita*, physical manifestations like this continued to occur throughout her life. The particular passage from the *Revelations* referred to here has often been interpreted as a ‘mystical pregnancy’, and has further been compared with similar physical manifestations occurring in the bodies of other visionary women, such as the previously mentioned Dorothea of Montau. The phenomenon has, in turn, been explained as a form of the, often somatic, affective piety associated with late medieval women. While affective piety usually implies imitation as an act performed by the pious, I want to suggest that this phenomenon, in line with the contemporary notion of spiritual possession, could also be understood as a physical manifestation of the presence of the spirit that had seized the visionary and caused her visionary experiences. In Birgitta’s case, the explicit positive reaction connected with this physical experience, when she felt ‘a marvellous and great exultation of her heart’, served to confirm the benign nature of the spirit inside her. We are thus confronted with an indication in the Birgittine material of an understanding of the physical and spatial presence of a spirit in the body of the visionary which corresponds to what Caciola has demonstrated was the typical response to female visionaries in late medieval society.

**BIRGITTA’S IMAGERY**

If we leave the references to spiritual rapture or possession in the Birgittine texts for a moment, a careful reading of the descriptions of Birgitta’s visionary experiences in the *Revelations* reveal several passages which are diametrically opposed to the Augustinian notion of visions in which the visionary is assigned a passive role as medium. A paradox in the literature of Birgitta is the interlacing of descriptions of the visionary as being alienated from her senses, indicating passivity, with descriptions of the visionary being actively engaged in prayer during the same mystical events. Alfonso is the author of one of these ambiguous

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23. Birgitta, Rev. VI:88. Testimony of the authenticity of the physical movement was also given by Prior Peter of Alvastra during the canonization process (AP, p. 500), claiming that he himself and Magister Matthias had felt the movement in Birgitta’s heart through her clothes.
descriptions. In his prologue to the fifth book of the *Revelations*, the confessor claims that when Birgitta experienced her famous vision of the monk on the ladder, she was travelling towards Vadstena on horseback and ‘immediately she fell into a spiritual rapture’. 29 Alfonso further describes the visionary ‘as though somehow outside herself and separated from her bodily senses’, thereby indicating Birgitta’s passive role and the suddenness of the divine intervention, analogous to Augustine’s descriptions of spiritual visions. 30 However, in the phrase introducing the moment of Birgitta’s reception of the vision, immediately preceding the reference to her sudden spiritual rapture, Alfonso states that Birgitta ‘began to lift her mind up in prayer’, thereby strongly indicating her deliberate actions and leaving us in confusion about Birgitta’s agency regarding her own experiences. 31

On turning to another set of examples the sense of ambiguity regarding Birgitta’s role in her mystical experiences increases. In numerous passages in the *Revelations*, we can read that Birgitta received visions while she was visiting specific sites such as the shrine of a saint or significant places relating to the lives of Christ or the Virgin. The most famous examples are the visions Birgitta had of the birth and crucifixion of Christ during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In Bethlehem, in the Church of the Nativity, Birgitta mystically witnessed the birth of Christ and the events that took place afterwards (Rev. VII:21–24), and in Jerusalem, in the chapel of Mount Calvary, located in church of the Holy Sepulchre, she had an elaborate vision of the crucifixion (Rev. VII:15). The contents of several similar examples of visions occurring at specific sites on the Italian peninsula are clearly connected to the place. When travelling from Sweden to Rome in 1349, Birgitta had a vision of Saint Ambrose in Milan (Rev. III:6), and in Rome, on the feast day of Francis of Assisi, the saint appeared to her in the oldest Franciscan church in the city, San Francesco a Ripa (Rev. VII:3). Furthermore, when visiting the church of San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, where the relics of Saint Stephen were kept, she experienced a vision of the martyr saint (Rev. VI:108), and a similar incident occurred in Bari where she saw the relics of Saint Nicholas (Rev. VI:103). Finally, during the celebration of the feast of the Purification of Mary, in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Birgitta had a spiritual vision of old Simeon standing in a temple while the Virgin approached him with the Christ child in her arms (Rev. VII:2). She also saw a ‘multitude of angels’ and ‘various ranks of

29. ‘Que illico rapta fuit in spiritu’, Birgitta, Rev. V: prologue.
the saintly men of God’ celebrating the Virgin as queen of heaven (*Regina celi*).\(^{32}\)

These examples – a few among many – show that *what* Birgitta saw in her visions was modelled on the significance of the places, relics, material images, and liturgical celebrations to which she was exposed. For instance, the vision received in Santa Maria Maggiore bears a striking resemblance to the images at the central focal point in the church, namely the mosaics of Jacopo Torriti, dated to the end of the thirteenth century. In the apse conch, there is a representation of the Virgin being crowned as the queen of heaven by Christ, while surrounded by angels and saints forming two ranks, one on each side of the couple (Fig. 1). The vision of Simeon and the Virgin with the Christ child in the temple is mirrored by the mosaic panel from the cycle of scenes from the life of the Virgin, placed horizontally directly below the apse conch (Fig. 2). This image, showing the Presentation in the temple, also formed a visual reference to the liturgical feast being celebrated on the very same day that Birgitta experienced her vision.

Here, in the confrontation between material images and Birgitta’s visions we have come to the heart of the art historical evaluation of the visionary experience in the later Middle Ages. In their work on the relationship between the ‘visual and the visionary’, Jeffrey Hamburger and Sixten Ringbom have demonstrated that contemporary iconography had a decisive impact on visionary experiences of women in the later Middle Ages.\(^{33}\) This connection between material and inner images has been interpreted in light of the generally increased accessibility to images from the early thirteenth century onwards when the laity emerged as a new group of commissioners of religious images, and the development of the devotional image, or *Andachtsbild*, to be used in a private meditational context.\(^{34}\) Since most of the visionary literature stemming from this period refers to the mystical experiences of women, and male monastic meditational culture has traditionally been approached as ideally imageless, parallels between material pictures and spiritual inner images have come to be associated mainly with a typical female reception and use of art within the devotional context. There are, however, two problems with this analysis. First, as is clear from my earlier references to Mary Carruthers’ research on monastic visual practices together with Richard of St Victor’s approach to visions, the notion of devotion as ideally imageless within male monastic culture is not absolute. Second, the visions of late medieval women do not always correspond to existing iconography. For

\(^{32}\) Birgitta, Rev. VII:2, ‘multitudinem angelorum … diversorum ordinum sanctorum Dei’.


\(^{34}\) For more on this subject, see Belting 1981, 1994; see also Ringbom 1969, 1984.
FIG. 1: Jacopo Torriti, *Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1290, mosaic, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Photo: Author.

instance, Birgitta’s vision of the birth of Christ is generally acknowledged by art historians to be the iconographical source of the fundamentally new visual articulation of the Nativity of Christ in the late fourteenth century and beyond. Rather than seeing visions as an indication of women’s particular responsiveness to iconography, and the use of images in devotion as a typical female practice, it is more meaningful to see women’s visionary experiences and the use of images in a private devotional context as responses to laypeople’s adoption of monastic meditational practices.

The widespread dissemination among laypeople of the Franciscan, or pseudo-Bonaventuran, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, dated to the late thirteenth century, offers an illustrative aspect of the laity’s adoption of monastic meditation techniques. The *Meditations*, which has survived in numerous manuscripts in various vernacular languages, is a meditational manual encouraging its readers to use visualization techniques in order to place themselves as eyewitnesses to events in the lives of Christ and the Virgin. The author gives special significance to details which could serve as visual cues in meditation and enable the devotee to enter a specific emotional state in his or her meditation, similar to the monastic practices studied by Carruthers. The widely dispersed *Meditations*, which addresses a Poor Clare nun, may very well have been known to Birgitta who kept in close contact with the Poor Clares of San Lorenzo in Panisperna throughout her Roman life. Although it is not certain that Birgitta had a direct knowledge of the pseudo-Bonaventuran text, the use of visualization techniques was familiar to her from the *Mirror of Virgins*, which Prior Peter of Alvastra confirms that he read aloud to her at his Cistercian monastery. This text, which originated in a monastic context in the twelfth century, also encourages visualizing the topics discussed.

Visualization exercises, together with easier access to images in a private devotional context, led to an increased capacity to recognize, understand, and, perhaps most importantly, to generate images among laypeople. If we approach Birgitta’s vision of the birth of Christ in light of her visual competence and contemporary widespread meditational techniques, Birgitta’s highly original

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35. On Birgitta and the new iconography of the Nativity of Christ, see Cornell 1924; Svanberg 1997; Aili and Svanberg 2003 and Skaug 2004.
37. On Birgitta and the nuns at San Lorenzo in Panisperna, see Collijn 1929, pp. 65–92.
38. AP, p. 491. In the fifteenth century, however, the *Meditations* were well known at Vadstena and copies were held by the library. For an example of how the *Meditations* could be used in sermons, see Andersson 2011, pp. 199–202.
spiritual image presents itself as her personal solution to a problem which, in
the *Revelations*, appeared to have concerned her greatly, namely the question of
Christ’s virginal birth and, in extension, Mary’s exception from original sin.\(^{40}\)
Instead of presenting the Virgin as lying down, typical in contemporary picto-
rial representations of women who have just given birth, Birgitta placed Mary
on her knees in front of the Christ child, who had been born instantly while the
Virgin was praying.\(^{41}\) Except for the highly original aspect regarding Christ’s
birth in Birgitta’s spiritual image, the vision bears a strong resemblance to the
meditation based on visualizing described above. As such, the visionary text also
differs from most of Birgitta’s other visions by the direct use of the expression ‘I
saw’, (*vidi*) as opposed to the frequently appearing ‘It appeared to a person’ (*Vni
personae apparuit*), the exclusive focus on the visual aspect of the visionary image
as opposed the auditory message delivered by God or the Virgin, and, finally,
that Birgitta is describing an event in the lived life of Christ and the Virgin,
as opposed to a prophetic image concerning the future of her contemporaries.
It should also be mentioned that Birgitta, in her image of the Nativity, gives
special attention to details not corresponding to any biblical or apocryphal text,
such as the Virgin removing her shoes, her white coloured mantle, and her veil,
before kneeling down in prayer to give birth.\(^{42}\) These details, which seem of
little importance to the mystical event, can be interpreted as Birgitta’s personal
visual cues in her meditation. The Nativity vision thus appears as an exercise in
exactly the type of devotional meditation on the life of Christ promoted by the
*Meditations*. If we add to this the fact that Birgitta, when she experienced her
vision, was actually present at the site connected with the *topos* in her medita-
tion, the effect of this type of visualizing meditation may have been amplified to
the extent that it blurred out the distinction between intentional inner images
and divinely received visions, if, indeed, this distinction ever existed for the
visionary.

The increased visual competence of laypeople like Birgitta, allowing them
to create and possess their own private images, endangered the authority of the
ecclesiastical institution concerning the visible articulation of the invisible. In
the case of a visionary like Birgitta, whose inner image was also translated to a
material picture, thereby making it available to others, the church was presented
with a particular problem, reminding us of Gerson’s notion of true visions as

\(^{40}\) See, for instance, Birgitta, Rev. III:10.

\(^{41}\) Birgitta, Rev. VII:21.

\(^{42}\) Birgitta, Rev. VII:21.
always conforming to doctrine.\(^{43}\) For potential visionaries, this would imply that they should never spiritually see anything, which did not already exist in the correct doctrinal iconography displayed in the pictures found in churches. Although original in its iconography, Birgitta’s vision of the birth of Christ did not, however, enter a conflict with doctrine. The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary had been supported already by the Church Fathers, and was well-established by the early Middle Ages. However, there had never been any adequate visual solution to this doctrine, iconographically distinguishing the supernatural birth of Christ from that of, for instance, John the Baptist. Birgitta’s vision therefore offered a convenient solution to this problem, something that could also explain the immense dissemination of her Nativity image. Birgitta’s visions of the Purification of Mary, which, contrary to her vision of the Nativity of Christ, appear as ekphrastic descriptions of Torriti’s mosaics in Santa Maria Maggiore, could rather be approached as intentional quotations of official images. This form of quotation would not only give testimony to the correct doctrinal content of Birgitta’s visions, but also offer the recipients of her visions the necessary tools to identify the figures and events appearing in the visionary’s private images. In order to understand this mechanism, it is important to acknowledge the normative power inherent in traditional pictorial formulas. It was the appearance of holy figures as rendered in the standardized iconography used in Christian art which enabled people, both congregation and clergy, to describe and identify Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. For instance, this was how Catherine of Siena could convince her listeners that she had seen Saint Dominic in visions, because he had appeared to her ‘in that form in which she had seen him painted in the church’.\(^{44}\) Thus, there could be no doubt that Catherine had seen the founder of her order.

Whether we approach visions as mental subconscious events when experiences, memories, and visualizations spin around in the mind of the visionary who is temporarily suspended in a meditative trance, or as deliberately using the normative images of the surrounding visual culture, one cannot disregard the discourse on visions which treats such experiences as a paranormal phenomena induced by external spirits. How, then, can we evaluate the *Revelations*’ descriptions of Birgitta being actively engaged in prayer, visualization, and describing the ecclesiastical art known from her daily life, in relation to the descriptions

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\(^{43}\) See Gerson 1960; Boland 1959.

\(^{44}\) Catherine is quoted in Ringbom 1984, p. 18. Contrary to my present argument, Ringbom introduces Catherine’s words in order to demonstrate that she, as a visionary, was particularly responsive to what she saw in external images.
of the visionary being taken in spirit, alienated from her external senses and physically incorporated with something which did not belong to her body, but which was nevertheless allegedly perceivable with the external eye as moving within her body?

THE FEMALE BODY AS MEDIUM

Whether we understand the contradictory descriptions of Birgitta’s visionary experiences as giving us insights into concrete conceptions of spiritual possession and visionary trances existing in the late Middle Ages, or, on the contrary, as textually and visually oriented rhetorical strategies employed by a politically and socially ambitious woman and her entourage, it is necessary to explore the practices investing conceptions like spiritual sight, divine ecstasy, and spiritual possession with meaning within the cultural context in which they were employed. If we return to Augustine, we see that the notion of spiritual agency and the ecstatic condition in which the subject is not in control of his or her external senses already implies a physiological consequence for the body. This notion, of the reception of visions as connected with a physical condition, combined with the idea that visions had to come from external sources in order to yield prophetic information, as opposed to the imagination of the visionary, developed a longstanding notion of spiritual possession as having extensive physical implications for the visionary’s body. In their highly interesting approaches to this notion, based on sources pertaining to both theological and popular belief, Caciola and Elliott have shown that women were considered more apt to be inhabited by external spirits than men. By pointing to well-known contemporary assessments of the female body as softer, colder, easier to mould and penetrate than the male body, together with beliefs about women’s moral and intellectual deficiency and carnal inclinations, the two scholars have shown that women were more likely to be considered victims of demonic possession as well as spiritual inhabitation in the Middle Ages.45

Given their physical state, so wholly different from the male body, many theologians had asked themselves if women indeed could be a part of the word homo (human being), denoting that which is made in Imago Dei (God’s image). The critical implication of this question in the later Middle Ages was the matter of female ordination. Bonaventure, who was one of the prominent names in this debate together with Thomas Aquinas, claimed that only those who partook in the image of God could become priests, since the sacrament implied that the

priest became God and participated in His powers.\textsuperscript{46} In order to not exclude women from the image of God altogether, but nevertheless prevent the logical possibility of female priests, Thomas and Bonaventure had made a distinction between soul and body. Thus women could be included in God’s image only in soul, and not in body since they lacked physical similarity with Christ – the mediator between God and his image – required in order to signify a priest. If we leave aside the negative evaluation of the female body and its particular receptiveness to external possession, we can also see that women had far greater potential than men in claiming to be possessed by divine forces. Although unable to signify Christ, the female body could lend itself as a medium for Christ, either as an inner image – a vision – visible only to the visionary as medium, or as a pictorial medium in itself. In the latter case, although the visionary woman did not physically take part in God’s image herself, her body would nevertheless be the \textit{embodiment} of the image of God.

Hans Belting, in his exploration of the body as medium for mental images such as dreams, visions, and memories, has analysed Francis of Assisi’s reception of stigmata as a moment in which an inner image (vision) taking the body as its locus, and the body, which is an externally visible medium, became equal.\textsuperscript{47} Francis’s vision of Christ as a seraph thus became externally visible on his body. As a consequence, Belting argues, ‘Christ, who in turn had been born as a \textit{bodily} image of the \textit{bodiless} God, was re-embodied in a contemporary body’.\textsuperscript{48} Belting’s analysis of the meaning connected with the divine marks on Francis’s body becomes even more relevant in the discussion of female visionaries when we acknowledge Caroline Walker Bynum’s assertion that the reception of stigmata, except for the famous case of Francis, was a phenomenon associated mainly with female visionaries.\textsuperscript{49} Birgitta’s physical incorporation of Christ in her heart, what has been called mystical pregnancy, can similarly be approached as a case in which the visionary’s body was turned into a pictorial medium for her own inner images of Christ, thus making her visions externally perceivable to her confessors, and her body was lent as a medium for the embodiment of Christ.

In her research on the spirituality of late medieval women, Walker Bynum has shown that these women elaborated images of themselves which corresponded to the negative evaluation of their bodies as being more intimately connected with the material, the physical and the carnal. Instead of defining

\textsuperscript{46} See Minnis 1997, p. 115 f.
\textsuperscript{47} Belting 2010.
\textsuperscript{48} Belting 2010, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{49} Walker Bynum 1992a, p. 186 f.
their spirituality in opposition to such assessments, women’s devotional behaviour underlined their assigned physical roles by focusing on aspects such as food and illness. Similarly, visionary women turned their own bodies into media for divine images coming from external spirits because of the very deficiencies that made their bodies disadvantageous. As passive, empty vessels, women’s bodies could be turned into active visible images. Contemporary notions of female physiology thus provided women with an opportunity to present themselves as the unique divine channels and, indeed, even visible embodiments of God.

CONCLUSION
Our sources for Birgitta and the other visionary women do not yield any definitive clues to their own understanding of what they claimed to be visionary experiences. Did Birgitta believe herself to be chosen by God as a channel and that this had physical implications, such as her body being possessed by an external spirit? Or are references to spiritual rapture and physical movements in her heart, together with the notion of divine visions, to be taken as a rhetorical strategy and a conscious use of the visual culture surrounding her in order to succeed with a social and political agenda? While it is not possible to reach any decisive answer to these questions, what is clear, however, is that Birgitta’s visionary literature reflects different paradoxical notions of the origin of visions characteristic of medieval visionary culture. Although contradictory, these different notions should not be treated separately, but rather as two aspects of the same complex culture, which enabled laywomen like Birgitta to generate fundamentally new images, that had a profound political, religious, and social impact.

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SØREN KASPERSEN

‘Birgittine’ wall paintings?
A Reconsideration
of a Disputed Phenomenon

INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss one aspect of the importance of the Birgittine order and Birgittine movement for late medieval art in Scandinavia. It examines the relationship between Vadstena convent and a large group of wall paintings in the southern regions of Sweden, primarily from a period 1400–c. 1525. The notion of a school of different masters and workshops connected with the convent of Vadstena goes back at least to 1921 and was pursued through the following decades. It reached its most developed form in 1942 with an article by Carl R. af Ugglas and a book by Bengt G. Söderberg. For a long time the idea of a so-called Vadstena School was generally accepted, but has recently been challenged by such scholars as Jan von Bonsdorff and Margareta Kempff, Åke Nisbeth, and Mereth Lindgren.

1. Lindblom 1921 considers Master Amund as a pupil of the Risinge master.
2. See af Ugglas 1929 on the relationship between the Norra Fågelås shrine and the wall paintings in the nuns' refectory at Vadstena convent and on the idea of a Vadstena School. See also Söderberg 1933.
3. af Ugglas 1942.
6. von Bonsdorff and Kempff 1990, pp. 259–287, especially pp. 261–268, 285, where the conclusion is that the idea of a workshop for wall paintings attached to the convent can be dismissed.
7. Nisbeth 1995, pp. 194–208. He writes (p. 202), that 'no evidence, not even any probability, exists that a workshop of artists producing wall paintings and working also for other patrons than the convent was permanently attached to the convent.
8. Lindgren 1996, especially pp. 357 ff. She writes (p. 367) that the 'thought of a “Vadstena school” within middle-Swedish painting may be attractive, but the foundation to uphold this idea appears to be almost non-existent.'
The discussion has largely been focused on the question of whether the different workshops were part of the convent or independent establishments outside the walls, and indeed there is no clear evidence that the painters of these murals were monks. The painter Niels Håkansson who in 1459 signed a decoration in Ysane Church in Blekinge⁹ was most likely the same Niels Håkansson from Vadstena who in 1466 signed the lost murals in Skalunda Church in Västergötland,¹⁰ and it may also be his daughter Dorothy who in 1498 became a nun at Vadstena.¹¹ But the master is nowhere called frater. Furthermore, the Catholic humanist Olaus Magnus in his pioneering work on the Nordic people – *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (1555) – records the fresh memory of a certain painter Augustinus from Vadstena who died around 1500 and 'was renowned everywhere both for his piety and skill.'¹² But he does not describe him as a monk.

Andreas Lindblom has suggested that painters and sculptors working for the convent in Vadstena were to be found not among the eight lay brothers (*fratres conversi*) but among the brothers outside the convent, the so-called *familiares* or *fratres ab extra*.¹³ Yet, according to Saint Birgitta’s *Revelationes extravagan tes*, the four *familiares ab extra* were to take care of alms, negotiations and the like; working as craftsmen is not mentioned. On the other hand, Birgitta mentions groups of artisans and labourers working for the convent and some of these may have chosen to dedicate their lives to the same law and rules as the *familiares* and thereby have become *fratres ab extra*. One of the four *familiares* was to be their superintendent (*magister*) and guide these *fratres ab extra* according to the advice and directions of the abbess and the requirements of the confessor in spiritual matters.¹⁴

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⁹. Framing the chancel arch in Ysane Church is the inscription: Anno d(omi)ni Mi(lles) imo quadrirgentesimo q(u)ni(m)gesimo ix die assu(mp)ti(m)onis (sanc)tae marie v(ir) g(in)is haec pictura (com)pleta fuit p(er) manus nicholai haquini o(ra)te p(ro) ip(s)o.

¹⁰. According to Johan Hadorph, the seventeenth-century director-general of the Swedish Central Board of National Antiquities, there was a decoration with an inscription in Skalunda church in the vault above the altar: ‘Anno domini mcdlxvi hoc opus comple­ tum fuit per manus Nicholai Haquinii pictoris de vastenis.’ Cf. Hadorph 1901, p. 75.


¹⁴. Birgitta, Rev. Extr. 33, p. 148: ‘De istis quatuor, qui portant crucem, possunt vnus vel duo esse sacerdotes, ita tamen quod in omnibus obediant abbatisse et confessori. Si vero aliqui laboratorum vel artificum se regule isti subdere volunt, eadem lege et institutionibus gaudeant, excepto quod crucem non portent. Vnusque de illis quatuor
Unfortunately, the terminology in the different sources is not consistent. *Familiares* may not necessarily be *fratres ab extra* and the term itself may signify a large number of people attached to the convent in different ways. For example, the decisions made at the general chapter meeting in Vadstena in 1429 defined this group as *servitores et familiares.* The most reliable way to categorise the different groups is then according to their dress: those who were allowed to wear a habit with a red cross on the chest (the four *familiares/fratres ab extra*), those wearing the same dress but without a red cross (the other *fratres ab extra*), and those not allowed to wear the habit, like the last group mentioned in *Extravagantes* 33. In 1429 the second group of *fratres ab extra* was dissolved and only the four *familiares* were left as *fratres ab extra.* On the other hand, statutes from 1451 count both the four *familiares* and other *fratres ab extra* among the categories of people outside the walls of the convent.

In any case, discussion of the question ‘inside/outside’ the convent is too narrow. There is every reason to believe that the masters producing the wall paintings of the Vadstena School were craftsmen outside the convent, whether they were *fratres ab extra* or not. The main question concerns the character of their relations with the convent. Are they working for the convent as hinted by Saint Birgitta or are they painting their decorations independent of the convent? I find the first perspective the most attractive. Even if the masters were not *fratres ab extra,* but only *servitores et familiares* of the convent, as defined in 1429, they had promised to serve the convent faithfully and be resident in Vadstena (*stabilitas loci*), but with the possibility of travelling further afield.

Such a model is useful not only for understanding the so-called Vadstena School but also the general relationships between late medieval workshops of wall-painters and this or that religious authority. All sorts of relations between these workshops, their patrons and ecclesiastical consultants or supervisors can be imagined, but I find it most reasonable to suggest that the main structures of the programmes of the different workshops were determined by their relationship with a religious centre, most often a bishopric and its cathedral chapter, in other cases a convent.

*sit magister eorum, per quem dirigantur et instruantur iuxta consilium et preceptum abbatise et confessoris in spiritualibus.*

18. Höjer 1905, pp. 334, 336. While travelling, they were allowed to have confessors other than their usual one in Vadstena.
I will therefore reconsider the thesis from another angle, trying to throw light on the ‘Birgittine’ character of these paintings in three ways. First, by pointing to their specific groups of subjects, not least their Genesis cycles, and singling out some connections with the *Revelations* of Saint Birgitta. Secondly, by stressing the relationship between these wall paintings and some miniatures in a psalter written around 1450 in the Birgittine convent of Munkeliv at Bergen in Norway, and finally, through a discussion of some aspects of the general theology of these wall paintings compared to Saint Birgitta’s religious worldview. It would be impossible to discuss all the obvious and multi-faceted stylistic connections between these decorations within the limited frame of this article, but these have been treated comprehensively by the authors mentioned.²⁰

**GROUP OF SUBJECTS — CREATION AND ADAM AND EVE**

The Vadstena School suggested here comprises about eighty decorations. In many of them a large number of scenes are still preserved, often painted in medallions. But only in a few cases is the decoration complete or close to complete. Most often it is the paintings in the vaults that are best preserved, while those on the walls are fragmentary or completely destroyed. Still, it is a characteristic pattern of the decorations of the Vadstena School that they embrace the whole Christian era from alpha to omega, from the dawn of the world to the last judgement. They consist of Old Testament cycles – mostly Genesis series with the Creation and the story of Adam and Eve and their sons²¹ – together with scenes from the life of Christ, such as his Incarnation, Passion and Glorification, and his final appearance as Judge. Fine examples are the early paintings by the Risinge master in Risinge old church, Östergötland (no. 1),²² and the late, now lost decoration in Södra Råda church, signed by Master Amund in 1494 (nos. 2–4).²³

This scheme corresponds with Saint Birgitta’s conception of Christ as Creator, Redeemer and Judge of the world. As an inseparable part of the triune God he has shown his great love towards the human race through his creation and work of redemption, but in spite of that, man has turned away from God. In the first revelation of the first book Christ announces to his new bride:

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²⁰ Not least by Hernfjäll 1993, pp. 76–154.
²² Nisbeth 1986.
²³ Nisbeth 1963.
‘I am the Creator of heaven and earth, one in divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am he who spoke to the prophets and the patriarchs, the one whom they awaited.’ And I [Christ] ‘took flesh without sin … and I willed for my pure and sinless body to be wounded from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head for the sins of all men, and to be hung on the cross … I wanted my kingdom to be within the human person, and by right I should be king and lord over him, since I made him and redeemed him.’ But man ‘has violated and rejected the laws I set up for him.’

The same line of thought is evident in other revelations. In the second revelation the Creator defines himself further to the bride as ‘one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons but one in substance, the Creator of all but created by none, remaining unchangeable and almighty, without beginning or end.’ He stresses that he does not lose his divinity at any point during his work of redemption. Now he wants the bride to be a role model and love him ‘above all things and want nothing’ but him. As he notes: ‘I created all things for the sake of humankind and placed all things under them. And yet they love everything but me and hate nothing but me.’

Still, the created world is the obvious and easily understandable sign why human beings should love God. They just have to look at it in the right way:

‘In the same way as a visible thing can be discerned by the eyes of the body, so too can invisible things be discerned and believed by the eyes of faith. There are many simple souls in the church who do few works but are saved by means of their faith. Through it they believe me to be the Creator and redeemer of the universe. There is no one who cannot understand and come to the belief that I am God, if only he considers how the earth bears fruit and how the heavens give rain, how the trees grow green, how the animals subsist each in its own species, how the stars are of service to mankind, how things opposed to the will of man occur.’

Often Christ defines himself as creator of heaven and earth in the beginning of a revelation, and this definition may be the frame of his judgeship. For instance Rev. I:5, which deals with the question of the Lord being merciful or

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25. See for example, Birgitta, Rev. I:2, I:30 and I:44.
28. In addition to Birgitta, Rev. I:1; see also I:2, I:5, I:19, I:25, I:34 and II:3.
exercising righteous anger, opens with: ‘I am the Creator of all things. I am the King of glory and the Lord of angels. I built for myself a noble castle and placed my chosen ones in it. My enemies undermined its foundations and overpowered my friends.’ 30 Later he explains the parable to his bride: ‘The castle I spoke about is the Holy Church … Its foundation is faith, I mean, the belief that I am a just and merciful judge. The foundation has now been undermined because everybody believes and preaches that I am merciful but almost nobody believes me to be a just judge. They think of me as a wicked judge.’ 31

The Creator, then, and his creation indicate an important frame for Saint Birgitta’s comprehension of the Christian universe. 32 But of course the story of the Creation does not need a Birgittine justification to be painted. On the other hand, Old Testament series going back to the Creation are not as straightforward a phenomenon in the monumental art of the late medieval period as one might think. For example, in the fifteenth century wall paintings in Sweden (with Scania) such Genesis series are in fact limited to the Vadstena School and related decorations. 33 Furthermore, these series within the Vadstena School are distinguished by two characteristic features. They very often open with the Fall of the Rebel Angels (nos. 1 and 17) and one normally finds a representation of Adam kneeling in front of his Creator and adoring him, either as a single scene or as a second phase of Adam’s creation (nos. 1 and 9). 34

I will only comment on the Adam iconography here and return to the Fall of the Rebel Angels later. But the two episodes are closely related, because God, according to medieval thinking, created human beings to replace the fallen choir of angels in heaven. Saint Birgitta espouses this idea in some of her revelations, 35 and she lets God point out that just as he created the angels to praise him and give him glory, so he made Adam in order that the latter would honour him. 36 ‘I gave him a body to be a spiritual temple, and I placed in it a soul like a beautiful angel, for the human soul is of angelic virtue and strength. In that temple, I, his God and Creator, was the third companion. He was meant to

32. Cf. also Klockars 1966, pp. 70–71.
35. Cf. Birgitta, Rev. II:17 and VIII:48. ‘Verum postea deus videns in exercitu suo diminucionem creauit post presumpcionem demonum hominem ad obediendum preceptis suis et vt fructificaret, donec tot homines ascenderent celum, quot angeli de celo ceciderunt.’
enjoy me and find delight in me. Then I made him a similar temple out of his rib [Eve].

The figure of Adam turned towards his Creator in praise is therefore wholly concordant with a Birgittine theology, and since this iconography is rare elsewhere in contemporary Nordic wall paintings and likewise appears only very occasionally in the rest of Europe, it may serve as a sign pointing towards Vadstena. The idea of an Adam turned toward God in his paradisiac state is of course not limited to Saint Birgitta, but it is interesting that it is displayed in a paraphrase of the five books of Moses, perhaps written for Saint Birgitta in Swedish or copied for her, in any case related to Vadstena in its provenance.

As regards the story of Adam and Eve, the most conspicuous feature within the Vadstena School is the preference for depicting Adam and Eve Provided with Clothes and Tools after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In Risinge church the episode is preceded by Adam and Eve in grief or remorse (no. 5), while the two motives are combined in the late examples in Södra Råda and Säby (no. 6). In other decorations Adam and Eve’s regret and remorse are only expressed in connection with their expulsion (no. 14).

These motifs together with God Admonishing Adam and Eve in front of the Tree of Knowledge (nos. 5 and 20) invest the story of the Fall within the Vad-

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38. Cf. Kaspersen 1980, p. 218, n. 169. It is only in the large Everlöv-Braup-Elmelunde workshop, active in the decades around 1500, most likely with the Birgittine convent in Maribo as its centre, that variations of the iconography are normal.


40. Fem Moseböcker 1959, p. 72: ‘Vtan wi idnhom ther til mz myklo ærffuode æn hans hug-hir war swa rættir wp til gudh. at han wndirstod allaled gud gnorn huart thz thing han hugxade. oc loffuade iæmskøt sin skapara Oc för ty sciffwas at gudhi mz otalikom tingom.’


43. Again, both motifs are rare elsewhere in contemporary Nordic wall paintings with the exception of the Everlöv-Braup-Elmelunde group (see n. 38 above), where they are combined (cf. Kaspersen 1980, p. 218, n. 174 and 176).
Stena School with a semantic plenitude unusual in the Nordic material outside the school. At the same time Saint Birgitta reflects on the dramatic fall of Adam and Eve and its consequences. She compares the second fall with the first fall of Lucifer and stresses their different character. Adam and Eve were beguiled by the serpent, they ‘did not want to harm God, as willed the devil; neither willed they be above God, but they desired to be as wise as God. And they fell, but not as did the devil; for the devil had envy of God, and his wretchedness shall never end. Certainly, man willed other than God willed that he should will, and therefore he deserved and suffered justice, together with mercy.’

Furthermore, man did not, unlike Lucifer, end in hell because of his violation ‘since his soul, using reason, carefully examined what he had done and had contrition for his crime.’

Man then is in a position between justice and mercy. Obviously, the consequences of the Fall were fatal in different ways. If Adam and Eve had not turned away from God, humans would not have felt carnal lust and shame or hunger and thirst, women would have carried their children and given birth to them without pain and they ‘would forthwith have been born perfect like Adam’. But ‘after their act of disobedience, my angel came over them’, as God informs Birgitta, ‘and they were ashamed of their nakedness. At that very moment they experienced the concupiscence of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst.’ On the other hand, God did not, unlike the devil, rejoice over their perdition ‘since his soul, using reason, carefully examined what he had done and had contrition for his crime.’ He ‘clothed their nakedness and gave them bread

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45. Birgitta, Rev. II:17, p. 82; cf. Morris and Searby 2006, p. 218. ‘Propter hanc igitur inobedienciam non debebat esse in celo, quia contempsit Deum, nec eciam in inferno, quia anima, succurrente racione, considerabat diligenter, quid fecit et assumpsit sibi contricionem pro commisso.’

from the earth’; he ‘infused souls in their seed through [his] divine power’; and he ‘turned whatever [wickedness] the devil suggested to them entirely to their good’. These circumstances are reflected in the above-mentioned wall paintings. Adam and Eve are certainly expelled from a life of perfect delight, but they are also shown the mercy of God when provided with clothes and tools. This act does not take place in the Garden of Eden as in the Bible (Genesis 3:21) but after the expulsion; one would like to think as a result of at least Adam’s careful examination of what he had done and his – and Eve’s – contrition for their crime. In Risinge church it is followed by an episode where God addresses Adam and Eve standing beside each other, now clothed (no. 7). Adam obviously points at Eve, and most likely the talk concerns God telling Adam and Eve how to live and giving them permission to have licit intercourse. Saint Birgitta considers Adam to be a virtuous person, who ‘was of most honest life, in that he had

47. Genesis 4:1: ‘Adam vero cognovit uxorem suam Hevam, quae concepit et peperit Cain, dicens: Possedi hominem per Deum.’
50. See also Sermo angelicus, Chap. 7 (=Tuesday, First Reading): ‘Idcirco non iniustum fore dinoscitur, quod, sicut ira Dei super eum venit pro superbia, qua in sua felicitate Deum offenderat, ita et ipsi in miseria existenti magna daretur consolation, eo quod grauiissima penitutine et vera humilitate ingemuit, quod tam benignum creatorem ad iram prouocauerat.’ Cf. Birgitta, Opera minora, p. 94. There does not appear to be any close connection between this chronology and the legendary and popular tales of the life of Adam and Eve outside Paradise found in the many Adam Books and mystery plays with Adam’s story, even if Birgitta at first or second hand was most likely to have been influenced by such sources (see n. 48 above). For a survey of these sources, see von Erffa 1989–1995, pp. 248–334.
51. Nisbeth 1995 interprets the motif as God’s curse on Adam and Eve just after the fall (p. 116). But this is unconvincing for many reasons, and it is more obvious to understand it as another act of mercy.
no wife but Eve, nor other woman but her alone.’ And it is worth mentioning that in two of the decorations by the Vittskövle workshop in Scania, that is, in Norra Strö and Rinkaby churches, the life of Adam and Eve as diligent farmers is broadly depicted.

**THE INITIALS OF THE MUNKELIV PSALTER**

Together, I think, the above-mentioned features indicate a clear connection with the Birgittine theological environment, and the theory that the models for these painting had their source in Vadstena convent is further proven by the fact that the same models were also used for miniatures in a psalter made around 1450 in the Birgittine convent of Munkeliv outside Bergen in Norway. The psalter was written and signed by a nun: ‘Ego Birgitta filia sighfusi Soror conuentualis in monasterio munkalijff prope bergis scripsi hunc psalterium cum litteris capitalibus licet minus bene quam debui.’ The capital letters mentioned by Birgitta appear to be eleven decorated initials indicating the three major divisions of the 150 psalms (Psalm 1, 51 and 101), the eight liturgical divisions according to the first three psalms sung each day at matins together with the first of the psalms left over primarily for the vespers of the week (Psalm 1, 26, 38, 52, 68, 80, 97 and 109), and finally the first gradual psalm (Psalm 119), which is an unusual feature. Seven of these divisions are marked by historiated initials (Psalm 1, 26, 38, 52, 97, 109 and 119), while the remaining four initials are purely ornamental (Psalm 51, 68, 80 and 101). The first five of the historiated initials present scenes from the life of Adam and Eve (‘Creation’, ‘Admonishing’, ‘Fall’, ‘Expulsion’, and ‘Provided with Clothes’), while the two last show Christ enthroned and the Virgin and Child, enthroned and crowned.

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53. In Norra Strö church the First Labour includes Eve spinning while Abel is sitting beside her with Seth in his lap, Adam digging while Cain chops branches off a tree, and Adam and Eve harvesting. After six episodes of the story of Cain, four scenes follow depicting the Death of Adam. In Rinkaby church the First Labour includes Eve spinning with Abel, Cain and Seth on a rock beside her, Adam ploughing, Adam and Eve harvesting, and Adam and Eve driving home the grain. See *A Catalogue of Wall-Paintings…* 1976–1982, III, pp. 12–13 and 41 & I, figs. 39, 40 and 42.


55. Ibid., p. 186.
As mentioned, the scenes with Adam and Eve clearly resemble the models used in the Vadstena School, showing the same significant features like Adam adoring the Lord at his creation (no. 8) and Adam and Eve provided with clothes after their expulsion (no. 15). At the same time Birgitta Sigfusdotter has seemingly aimed at correspondences between the motifs and the openings of the psalms. Thus Adam and Eve at their creation (no. 8) represent the ‘beatus vir’ of Psalm 1, ‘the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners’ but has his delight ‘in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night’ (v. 1–2).\textsuperscript{56} And the Lord is their light and salvation when he instructs them (no. 10): ‘the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’ (Psalm 26(27):1). Still, they did not ‘take heed to [their] ways’ when they fell (no. 11), and did not ‘keep [their] mouth with a bridle, while the wicked’ were before them but sinned with their tongue (Psalm 38(39):1). They ‘have done abominable iniquity’ and were expelled from Paradise (no. 13), corrupted in their hearts. ‘God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God’ (Psalm 52(53):1–2). Still, he is merciful and provides the sinners with clothes (and tools) (no. 15). He ‘hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel’ (Psalm 97(98):2–3).

All this fits well with the Birgittine understanding of Adam and Eve and their fall. Furthermore, the enthroned Christ with the globe in Psalm 109 looks more like the Creator approving his work than a ruler or judge crushing his enemies. He is the \textit{principium} borne by God before dawn (\textit{ante luciferum}) and this beginning will be with him in the day of his power (\textit{tecum principium in die virtutis tuae}, Psalm 109:3). He finally appears as the new born Child in the lap of the Virgin, as the Redeemer delivering the soul ‘from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue’ (Psalm 119(120):2). ‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills’, the Psalmist sings in the next gradual psalm, ‘from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth’ (Psalm 120(121):1–2).\textsuperscript{57}

The seven miniatures may then be seen as a chronological sequence and the chain of events may easily be read in the light of Saint Birgitta’s revelations, as a story about man and his condition, about God being just but also merciful with the sinners, not only providing Adam and Eve with clothes but also approving

\textsuperscript{56.} Citations quoted from the Authorized King James Version 1997.
\textsuperscript{57.} A closer examination of the use and meaning of the gradual psalms as a whole within the Birgittine tradition is needed.
the condition after the fall and showing great comfort to Adam, promising him ‘that God himself should deign to be born of his [Adam’s] race, in order to redeem by love and humility those souls that Adam himself had deprived of eternal life by his pride, perverted by the devil’s envy’.  

There is every reason to believe that Birgitta Sighfusdotter in her specific mention of the large initials indicates that she not only wrote the text of the Psalter but also made the illuminated letters. True enough, Åke Nisbeth has argued that the Psalter was perhaps made for a Vadstena monk who brought it home in an undecorated condition and let a local master outside the convent add the illuminated initials. But this is obviously a very hypothetical construction based on the assumption that it is very unlikely that Birgitta herself decorated the Psalter. The absence of similar illuminated manuscripts from the scriptorium of Vadstena or Munkeliv is not clear proof that Birgitta would not have been able to do the initials. In fact, the miniatures are not exceptional in their quality. I therefore find the theory of Ulla Sander Olsen far more convincing, namely that the Munkeliv Psalter on the one hand represents the peak of book illumination preserved from the Nordic Birgittine convents and as such may be a sign of a production now lost, but that on the other hand, it cannot compare with the contemporary art of illuminations in Dutch Birgittine convents like Marienwater in Rosmalen and Maria Troon in Dendermonde.  

Åke Nisbeth also suggests that the Psalter does not necessarily represent a specific Birgittine production. He calls attention to the fact, made evident by Isak Collijn, that even if Munkeliv was subordinated to the convent in Maribo, it was closely connected with Vadstena, and that the calendar of the Psalter like Vadstena calendars was based on the calendar of Linköping diocese. Birgitta

58. Birgitta, Rev. I:26, II:17, VIII:48 and Sermo angelicus, chapter 7, from where the citation [my own translation] is taken: ‘Maiorem autem consolacionem nequaquam potuisse Adam percipere, quam si certificaretur, quod Deus ex eius generatione nasci dignaretur ad animas illas humilitate et caritate redimendas, quas ipse Adam, Dyaboli inuidia deprauatus, per suam superbiam a vita perpetua deiecerat.’ Birgitta, Sermo angelicus, pp. 6–7.

59. This is also the opinion of Collijn 1926: ‘Die Schreiberin erwähnt hier besonders die schön ausgeführten, zum größten Teil mit Miniaturen verzierten Initialen, elf an Zahl, die den Codex schmücken’ (p. 82).


61. Nisbeth 1995 reads Birgitta’s sentence as if she has written the Psalter ‘with’ capitals and not ‘together with’ litteris capitalibus, but the psalter is written with litterae goticarum textura formata. Gjerlow 1970 also understands ‘cum’ as ‘together with’ (‘… skrevet dette psalter med samt de store initialene …’) (p. 135).

Sigfusdotter then, most likely used a model for her manuscript delivered by Vadstena which had its roots in Linköping diocese. But what conclusion can be drawn from this? First, it must be stated that the text of the Psalter as such could not indicate Birgittine origins in any specific way. Secondly the Swedish Birgittine calendar of the Psalter may just as well support the idea that the models for the miniatures also came from Vadstena convent. In the third place Åke Nisbeth does not address the rarity of Adam and Eve’s story being used for the initials of a Psalter and how to explain this phenomenon.

Lilli Gjerløw has suggested a possible connection with a Picardic group of psalters from the second half of the thirteenth century regarding initials with Adam and Eve scenes, and in fact a Fontevrault psalter from 1250–1300 connected with this group seems to demonstrate the closest parallel with the Munkeliv Psalter. Yet, in the fifteenth century it seems that only the use of a New Testament series in the initials in some cases, for example, in a Flemish-Dutch psalter from 1420–1430, can be offered for comparison. The choice of Adam and Eve’s story for the Munkeliv initials must therefore be considered as a very deliberate one, a choice most likely made in the Birgittine context of the manuscript, and not a somewhat random result of the Psalter being decorated elsewhere.

The Psalter, then, clearly strengthens the connection between the Vadstena convent and the wall paintings of the Vadstena School. Furthermore, this school, made up of masters and workshops following in each other’s footsteps for over a century, is in itself an extraordinary phenomenon. Where else do we have anything like it? It appears contemporary with the establishment of the Birgittine convent in Vadstena, and it demands a strong and consistent impetus from a centre. Cistercians, Franciscans and Dominicans had been in the region for a long time without creating schools of any tangible extent. Constructions which try to explain the Vadstena School as a result of different influences from these religious orders in this or that decoration therefore seem strange to me. Rather, one ought to acknowledge that such influences could well be part of a Birgittine world, since Saint Birgitta’s theology is deeply rooted in medieval traditions.

What is characteristic of Saint Birgitta’s theology and its relation to tradition is her Augustinian worldview. It is an aspect that cannot be fully discussed and analyzed here, but it concerns the idea of the *civitas Dei*, of the Chosen People on their pilgrimage in a world of sin, and it is related to Birgitta’s fight for church reform and also her views on the role of the Christian ruler. In one of her revelations God compares himself to ‘a powerful lord who built a city and named it after himself’. In this *civitas Dei*, which is the world created in and named ‘divine wisdom’, God constructed a palace, that is, the church, and he ‘was [originally] praised for his wisdom and wonderfully proclaimed by his creatures’.67 But now the church – and the world – is a *corpus mixtum*, many Christians are apostates and in fact attack the noble castle that God built for his chosen ones.68

The two roundels in Risinge church with a depiction of Adam and Eve sitting in grief after their expulsion and with a church-like castle as a representation of Paradise (no. 5) can be read in the light of this theology. The juxtaposition reflects the church as a *corpus mixtum* with sinners being both outside and inside the castle, dependent on their recognition of sin and their repentance. And it also reflects that the church’s foundation is faith, the belief that God is a just and merciful judge as Birgitta stresses,69 because in the next roundel God shows his mercy to Adam and Eve by providing them with clothes (no. 7).

For Saint Birgitta as for Augustine, the fundamental divide between Christians belonging to the *civitas Dei* and those who do not is between those who love God and those who love worldly things.70 From God’s perspective she talks about two treasuries (*gazophilacia*) signifying *amor meus* and *amor mundi* and about two different ways leading to these treasuries: ‘self-abasement and complete self-denial lead to my love, while carnal desire leads to the love of the

70. For example, Birgitta, Rev. I:15.
world’. The principal item here is that for Augustine this division between *civitas Dei* and *civitas diaboli* first appeared when God separated light and darkness, that is with the fall of the rebel angels. And this is the event with which the Genesis series of the Vadstena school normally begin. God is seen in Heaven, above the distended mouth of Hell showing precipitated and transformed angels (nos. 1 and 17). According to Augustine, the two cities also exist in the human world, where they are represented by Cain and Abel, the first a citizen of this world, the second a pilgrim. Likewise, the Genesis series of the Vadstena school almost always include the story of Cain and Abel (nos. 18 and 19), and often they end with the Sacrifice of Cain and Abel and Cain slaying Abel.

Taken together these observations indicate that an Augustinian worldview is behind these Genesis cycles and that they are talking about the two cities as the central issue of world history. It is not a lofty communication about more or less abstract concepts within the sphere of political theology, rather it is a preaching about the ordinary sinner of the *corpus mixtum* within the church, exemplified primarily by Adam and Eve and their children. They are protagonists of sin and remorse, of a normal, even virtuous, life – in Saint Birgitta’s perspective (see above) – but also of devilish acts. Still, God takes care of the sinners, not least the hard-working ones, providing them with clothes and tools. The first parents were admonished not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge (no. 20), but mankind has changed the name of God’s city from that of ‘divine wisdom’ to ‘human wisdom’. Human beings should rather consider the divine frame of their lives, that is the marvellous act of creation and their redemption through Christ, both clear evidences of God’s great love for mankind.

The preferences for the Genesis cycles in the Vadstena school, together with their iconographic characteristics, are thus easily adaptable to Saint Birgitta’s worldview and theology. This indicates a clear relation between these wall paintings and the monastery in Vadstena, and, together with the other aspects discussed here, strengthens the idea of a school of masters working for and in close connection with the monastery.

73. CCSL, XLVIII, pp. 453–454.
74. I have suggested that a similar Augustinian worldview comes through in the Genesis cycle on Master Bertram’s altarpiece to Saint Peter in Hamburg, which also lays stress on these motifs, see Kaspersen 1990.
75. Birgitta, Rev. I:55 as cited in n. 67.
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CHOOSING IMAGINATION AS A SUBJECT of historical research may appear to be a dangerous initiative. Imagination, dealing with the realm of subjectivity and emotions, is not easy to pinpoint and analyze. But if we approach a medieval text full of metaphors, complex images and mystical visions, the notion of imagination becomes a handy hermeneutical tool. In this paper, I try to shape this tool by defining imagination as a dimension of history and then I use it to analyze a certain aspect of a complex relationship between the texts authored by Magister Mathias of Linköping and by Saint Birgitta of Sweden, namely their methods of using imagined images and their sources.

Magister Mathias of Linköping (Mathias Lincopensis), educated in Paris as magister in sacra pagina, served as father confessor to Saint Birgitta, being also her spiritual advisor and friend before she left for Rome in 1349.¹ His works include: a commentary on the book of Apocalypse;² Homo conditus, which is a theological compendium for preachers;³ Copia exemplorum — an anthology of exempla useful in preaching;⁴ and Alphabetum distinctionum — a biblical encyclopaedia. The latter work is preserved only in fragments, as the manuscript was badly damaged (or rather cut into pieces and reused) in the sixteenth century.⁵ Mathias is also the author of Testa nucis and Poetria, two important works on the poetical art and the art of translation,⁶ based on both Aristotle’s Poetics

¹. Piltz 1974, p. 32.
⁵. Some of the fragments have been edited by Anders Piltz (1995). On the fragments, see Wolodarski’s chapter in this volume.
and Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *Poetria nova*. Most of his works were written with pastoral intentions so his style is not that of a scholastic professor, but rather of a highly educated preacher and priest. This style implies the use of a variety of images and exempla.

In this paper, I use the expressions ‘imagination’ and ‘imagined objects’ following Jacques Le Goff’s definition given in his classic book *The Medieval Imagination*. Le Goff was one of the first to study imagination as a dimension of history and his definition set the framework for further analysis of the subject. He defines imagination in contrast to three other categories: representation, symbolism and ideology. According to him, imagination differs from representation – since representation is any mental image of perceived reality, while imagined objects are created rather than reproduced from external objects. Unlike real objects represented in our memory as mental images, imagined objects never existed in reality and do not claim to belong to ‘normal’ reality perceived by the senses. Moreover, imagination is not the same as symbolism. According to Le Goff, a symbol may be any object referring to an underlying system of values; it is not necessarily a mental image, it could equally be a ‘real’ object, if it is given a symbolic meaning.

Imagination should also be contrasted with ideology, which tries to enforce a certain conception of the world or a system of values. For example, when medieval clerics used the image of the two swords, temporal and spiritual, they were not describing society but imposing upon it an image expressing an ideal structure of power and authority. In other words, they wanted this image to come true, while, as we said above, imagined objects do not claim to be true in any way.

Therefore, according to this definition, imagination is an ability to create and use imagined images. An imagined object is a mental image which is neither real nor is simply abstracted from reality nor does it claim to become real. This definition applies to imagined images as a subject of historical research and, according to Le Goff, ‘the images of interest to the historian are collective images as they are shaped, changed and transformed by the vicissitudes of history … They are expressed in words and themes.’

Le Goff presents the four notions (imagination, representation, symbolism and ideology) as exclusive, but in my opinion it would be more appropriate to describe their semantic fields as partially overlapping: imagined objects can in some cases be symbols (if given a symbolic value) or ideological images and they can be a special kind of representation (being mental images).

I would be inclined to suggest that Le Goff’s definition is built upon the medieval notion of imagination as one of the internal senses. According to Thomas Aquinas, imagination stores mental images (*phantasmas* or sensible species) abstracted from the information given by the five external senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) and processed in the common sense, which combines various impressions (for example, shape, colour, and sound) into a single image of the object perceived. Imagination is also capable of creating a new image by combining several images already stored, for example, an image of a woman plus an image of a fish can take shape of a mermaid. We can say that according to Le Goff’s definition, which will be very useful for our analysis of Birgitta’s and Mathias’s texts, only mermaids are imagined images in a proper sense, while images of women and fish are simply representations.

I have chosen to use the term ‘image’ to describe a complex visual metaphor, since it is not so weighted with contradictory meanings as ‘allegory’ (a term understood differently by medieval and contemporary authors, by literature specialists and philosophers) and not so general as ‘metaphor’ (which does not necessarily include a visual element). I use this definition to consider a number of images found in Magister Mathias’s *Homo conditus* (*HC*) and to compare them with a group of images from Birgitta’s *Revelations*. The first is found in the first chapter of *Homo conditus*, where Mathias describes how sin destroys the human soul. I have chosen this fragment to show various types of images which are also present in Birgitta’s text. In this chapter Mathias gives a short summary of human nature which was created as decent and enriched with various spiritual goods (‘*Homo conditus in omnibus bonis habundabat*’). Then follows an explanation of the general consequences of original sin. These are discussed in detail in the four sections of this chapter: section 1, ‘*quod peccatum naturam ledit et dona graciarum consumit*’, (‘sin hurts nature and destroys the gifts of grace’), section 2: ‘*confundit animam quasi furem, qui ducitur ad suspendium*’ (‘It disturbs the soul so that it becomes like a thief led to the gallows’), section 3: ‘*Confundit ut falsarium et proditorem castri Dei*’ (‘disturbs the soul so that

it becomes like a forger and traitor of the castle of God’), section 4: ‘Confundit eciam ut adulterum’ (‘disturbs the soul so that it becomes an adulterer’). Each of the three last sections presents images of a sinful soul: a thief, a forger and traitor, and an adulterous wife. We shall analyze each of these images and compare them to similar images used by Birgitta.

THIEF (fur)

Mathias starts by presenting the malicious soul as a thief. This image is constructed of two parts: in the last sentence of section 1 we read that that the soul of a sinner follows the devil: the thief who ‘cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy’ (John 10:10) and runs with him (Psalm 49:18). In this short phrase Mathias quotes two biblical verses and merges them so they form one rhetorical phrase bearing a cohesive theological meaning.

Then, in the next section, there follows an exemplum about a blind thief who comes into a royal treasury led by boys who want to deride him. The treasury is open so everyone can come and take as much gold as they need, but the thief wants more than he needs. The boys tell him that no one can see him, while the king and all his family sit inside the chamber and watch him stealing. When he leaves the room with some stolen goods, he is caught and put into prison with his arms bound behind his back (HC I, 14–15).

Mathias explains the meaning of this exemplum. The thief stands for a sinner, the king for God, his family for saints, angels and demons, while the nasty boys are ‘cruel desires’ (HC I, 16–17). He also refers to the Gospel of Matthew describing a sinner as a thief ‘cast into external darkness’ with his ‘hands and feet bound’ (Matthew 22:13).15

This exemplum is, in my opinion, an original work of Mathias, since I can find no direct parallel for the story in the biblical or homiletic literature he usually used as his sources. The story itself does not come from the Bible, but some elements of the image are biblical: deriding boys (2 Kings 2:23), a thief cast into prison with his arms bound (Matthew 22:13), God compared to a king (Revelation 17:14; 19:16), blindness as a metaphor for sin (Genesis 19:11; John 9:39–41). This parable is thus ‘made of Biblical material’ but with some original elements added. A link between blindness and theft seems to be a part of the typically medieval imagination of the author, since in medieval Europe theft was often punished by blinding.16 The scene is also reminiscent of the game of

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16. For example, The Farmer’s Law, 68 (Cave and Coulson 1965, p. 11).
blind man’s buff, where players tease their blindfolded counterpart, asking him to catch one of them or to guess who has hit him. This game of mock-violence appears in some medieval dramatic plays, performed both for entertainment and as a moral teaching (if staged as part of a Passion drama, when the soldiers tease Christ, cf. Luke 22:64).17 This or similar games are also reported to be part of Christmas celebrations in the Middle Ages.18 If Mathias was familiar with this kind of game, theatre or celebration, he could have used it as inspiration for this exemplum.

In Birgitta’s *Revelations*, we do not find a direct parallel to this image. She does however repeatedly describe sinners as thieves. In Book IV, chapter 133 she speaks about a particular category of sinners: sinful priests. She compares them to thieves who ‘walk in the darkness’ (Rev. IV:133, §14). She also mentions thieves breaking into the castle of God, which stand for the Christian church (Rev. I:5, §4). In another revelation she compares the devil to a thief stealing Christ’s sheep (Rev. III:17, §16–20). These elements of Birgitta’s images are also rooted directly in the Bible, but she does not quote the biblical text.

In fact almost all elements of Mathias’s image have their counterparts in Birgitta’s text: there is the image of a sinner as a thief who breaks into the property of God the king. There is a link between theft and darkness (which is relevant if we consider being blind as similar to ‘walking in the darkness’, which is the case, for example, in Matthew 6:23).

The two texts are also meant to impress the reader in a similar way: both Birgitta and Mathias depict a certain relationship between God and a sinner in order to warn the reader from wrongdoing. *Homo conditus* is a manual for preachers, so its general aim is pastoral. Most of its images and exempla, including this one, clearly reflect this aim. In case of Birgitta’s *Revelations*, the function of images is a bit more complex: Birgitta presents her revelations as an oration of Christ who complains to his friends about his priests (Rev. IV:133, §20–26). The function therefore is not directly pastoral, but we may expect that if priests were among the readers of this text (and we know that they were often targeted by Birgitta’s messages,)19 they would have understood it as a reproach.

Still, we cannot speak about a direct parallel between the two texts, since in the *Revelations* we do not find a single revelation that includes all the elements found in Mathias’s exemplum. They are dispersed between various revelations.

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19. On Birgitta as a woman prophet rebuking the clergy for their immorality, see Sahlin 2001, pp. 11–12 and 134–135.
Also the person of a sinner described by the image is slightly different in the two texts: Birgitta speaks about sinful priests, perhaps inspired by some actual individuals, while Mathias is very general in his diagnosis: he simply speaks about a sinful soul.

**FORGER** (*falsarius*)

In the next section, Mathias draws the image of a soul as a coin of God. He refers to the parable found in all three synoptic gospels in which the Pharisees asked Jesus if they should pay taxes to Caesar. He in turn asked them to show him a coin with an image of Caesar on it and asked whose image and inscription it was. Then he told them to ‘render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s’ (Matthew 22:21). Mathias discusses the image of a coin and its forger together with the image of the fortress of God and its traitor (analyzed below). First he introduces the two images (HC I, 22–24) and then he interprets them both (HC I, 25–28). In the first part he says that the coin stands for a soul, an image of Caesar for the image of God, and a forger for a sinner. Forgery destroys both the image of Caesar and the inscription (HC I, 21–22). In the next part (HC I, 28) he adds new details about the mechanism of sin described as forgery: he states that some Christians ‘remove the image of God from their minds’ and engrave in their souls the image of the devil. The image of God is ‘depicted with colours of wisdom and certain virtues’, while stupidity and vices create the image of the devil. It is thus not entirely clear if Mathias places the image of God in the human soul (*anima*) or in the mind (*mens*), since he uses both these terms here (HC I, 28). It is apparently not an important distinction for him in this case.

To some extent it is possible to trace Mathias’s non-biblical (or post-biblical) sources for this image. In his interpretation of Jesus’s parable, Mathias generally follows Saint Augustine, but he receives his ideas mediated through the works of medieval authors. In his two works, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Augustine interprets the coin as a man whose resemblance to God is destroyed by sin. Both Augustine and Mathias connect the parable with a verse from Psalm 4:7: ‘The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us.’ In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Augustine explains that God impressed his lucid image on the human soul and that he restores this image

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through salvation; those who are redeemed will be able to contemplate the image of God impressed in their own souls.\(^{22}\) Mathias also writes that the human soul is ‘created in the image of God and his name’.\(^{23}\) To support this statement he refers to the same Psalm verse.

He further mentions another feature of the coin: the inscription (‘Whose is this image and inscription?’, Mark 12:16). He says that ‘in the soul the image of God is inscribed, because it is created in his image, and his name, since all Christians get their name from Christ’ (HC I, 22). This last sentence allows us to place Mathias’s interpretation in line with medieval readings of Augustine. The Enarrationes in Psalmos are quoted in the Glossa ordinaria: ‘You should return to God … the soul adorned and sealed with the light of his countenance.’\(^ {24}\) There is however no mention of the inscription and its interpretation. This element is found in Peter Lombard’s Commentaria in Psalmos, which are themselves closely based on the Glossa ordinaria.\(^ {25}\) Peter quotes the Glossa or Augustine but he also puts some emphasis on the inscription and its meaning, as Mathias does. He also reminds his readers that ‘Christians get their name from Christ’.\(^ {26}\) However, Peter Lombard evokes Psalm 4:7 only indirectly (‘… et animam, lumine vultus ejus insignitam Deo exhibeat’), while Mathias quotes it directly, as the Glossa ordinaria does.

This brief analysis allows us to suggest that Mathias used both Peter Lombard’s commentary on the Psalms and the Glossa ordinaria. It is also possible that he had Augustine’s own texts in mind. Although he does not explicitly cite any of these sources, nevertheless, we may identify their influence on Mathias’s text here, since he follows the same interpretation of Christ’s parable and he uses the same additional biblical material to support his argument.

In my opinion, the most original part of Mathias’s image here is the person of the forger (falsarius). This element does not come from any of the theological

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\(^{22}\) Augustine, In Ioanni Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV, XL, 9 (Augustine 1954, p. 355).

\(^{23}\) ‘…in ipsa scilicet anima, est inscripta digitio Dei ymago eius, cum sit condita ad ymagine eiu et nomen eiu’, HC I, 22 (Magister Mathias 1984, p. 3).

\(^{24}\) ‘Redite… que sunt Dei Deo … animam lumine vultus eius illustratam. Unde: signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui etc.’ (Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria… tomus quintus 1603, p. 607).


\(^{26}\) ‘Inde est quod illis tribus solemnitatibus fidelis populus nummum offerat manuiali oblatione, interiorem significans. In nummo enim nomen est et imago regis. Quisque ergo spiritualiter nummum offerat, ut nomen regis, id est Christi in se habeat: a Christo dictus Christianus: et imaginem, id est animam, lumine vultus ejus insignitam Deo exhibeat.’ (Peter Lombard, Commentaria in Psalmos, Psalm 117:26, PL 191, p. 1040.)
works discussed above. Both Augustine and Peter Lombard simply state that the image of the king is ‘worn out’ by sin. They do not in fact mention forgery. Mathias could have been inspired by another author, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who states that the ‘image and likeness’ of God in men is like a seal that has been broken by the devil, the forger (falsarius). Bernard does not, however, connect this with the biblical parable about the coin and the image of Caesar.

It is particularly remarkable that among Birgitta’s revelations we find exactly the same biblical image of a coin with almost the same interpretation as in Homo conditus (Rev. IV:23, §11–26). She also compares the human soul to a coin and the image of God imprinted on the soul to the portrait of a king. She also puts some stress on the person of the ‘forger’. Unlike Mathias, she does, however, identify the person who mints coins with the devil himself, not with the sinner, who is presented as the forger’s servant, while his soul is the forged coin.

Birgitta’s metaphor is, however, much more detailed than Mathias’s. Mathias mentions virtues and vices, which are manifestations of God’s or the devil’s image in the human soul, only generally, whereas Birgitta enumerates them specifically and she compares them to various qualities of a coin: the authentic coin is golden, shiny and precious, while the false coin of the devil is heavy and it is made of copper or lead. Analyzing the qualities of a false coin gives Birgitta an opportunity to reflect upon the effects of sin on the human soul (Rev. IV:23, §16–21).

As usual, Birgitta does not cite any sources here, not even the biblical parable which is the obvious source of inspiration for her. It appears that all the basic elements of the image and its theological meaning are the same as in Homo conditus, but it is impossible to tell for certain that Mathias is her source of inspiration. It is, however, very tempting to suggest that these two images are somehow closely related.

**TRAITOR (proditor)**

Further in the same section, Mathias compares a sinner to a traitor surrendering the castle of God to the enemy, namely to the devil. The guard of the castle (reason), ought to watch the five gates to the castle (the five senses). According to Mathias, if one surrenders the castle with malice, and not because of negligence or fragility of mind, one commits treason against God the king (HC I, 23–27).

In Birgitta’s writings we do not find the soul described as a fortress (castrum).

She uses the metaphor of ‘castrum’ but with reference to the church. However, there is a revelation showing the soul as a princess living in a house (domus), which stands for the body. As we shall see below, this image is noticeably similar to what is found in *Homo conditus*. Given the intimate relation between the Latin and the Old Swedish texts of the *Revelations* we may suggest that it was Birgitta’s intention for the two images to be connected, since the Old Swedish word ‘hus’ may be translated as both domus and castrum.

This house containing the princess (the soul) is also under siege from her enemy (the devil). Again, the princess should be guarded by a custodian (reason). He should pay special attention to the gates of the house, which stand for the ‘necessities of the body’: eating, drinking or sleeping. Birgitta also mentions the senses, sight and hearing, but she describes them as roads to the house, not as gates. Again, Birgitta’s image is much more developed. It includes many more details (the outside and inside walls of the house as well as its foundations, cf. Rev. VII:5, §2–4) which are all allegorized to explain the mechanism of sinning (Rev. VII:5, §5–42).

We can thus see that Birgitta’s image differs in some details from that in *Homo conditus*, but the theological meaning is very similar in both cases: the two authors explain the way that sin affects and destroys the human soul using similar imagery. Birgitta, however, emphasizes different elements than Mathias: she does not mention treason in connection with the image of the besieged house. Her focus is on the house itself and its properties, not on the person of the trespasser. She identifies the enemies of the house with dark forces coming from outside: people who tempt others to sin (Rev. VII:5, §9–11) or the devil himself (Rev. VII:5, §17).

**THE ADULTEROUS WIFE (adulter)**

The last section of chapter I is a tightly woven tapestry of imagination and reality: in each paragraph Mathias talks simultaneously about the reality of sin and its imaginary representation.

He compares the sinner to a bride, who should love her legitimate husband, Christ, more than anyone else, and follow him even if he is poor and she is tempted by a rich seducer (the devil). If one loves Christ, one should not care about the worldly pleasures of honours, which are only the false trinkets of the seducer, not real jewels. The husband wants to share his inheritance with his wife. It is not possible for the wife to love both her husband and the seducer: if

a soul accepts temptation from the devil, Christ leaves that soul and the bed of her conscience (HC I, 34–43).30

When it comes to Birgitta’s *Revelations*, the metaphor of the bride and her husband is one of the most important in the whole body of Birgitta’s work. She often describes herself as ‘sponsa Christi’, the bride of Christ.31 In several revelations we find individual elements of the image drawn by Mathias in *Homo conditus*, but here we shall take a closer look at the first three chapters of the first book of the *Revelations*, where Birgitta describes her mission as a ‘bride of Christ’: her mystical wedding with Christ and her role as a prophet. All the essential elements of the discussed image are found here: Birgitta speaks about Christ as a husband and about herself32 (or about a soul in general)33 as his bride. Christ requires her to love him more than anything and anyone in the world and to imitate his humility.34 He warns souls against following the devil, the seducer (*adulter*).35 He promises to share his inheritance with his bride.36

It is perhaps worth noticing that these three revelations are followed by a *declaracio* by Alfonso de Jaén. There he introduces Magister Mathias as ‘a certain holy man’, who ‘glossed the whole Bible’ and wrote the introduction to the first book of *Revelations* (Rev. I:3, §8–11). However, none of the first three revelations mentions Magister Mathias. Why then is he introduced here simply by saying ‘He was a certain holy man, master of theology’ (‘Iste fuit quidam sanctus vir, magister in theologia’)? What does Alfonso mean by saying ‘Iste fuit’? This sentence does not have any obvious link to its direct context. Could it be an allusion to Mathias co-operating with Birgitta at the time when she experienced and announced the above three revelations?

**CONCLUSIONS**

Birgitta and Mathias use two different languages of imagination, but their languages have many words in common – they often create and use similar images. They also share some of the same sources. Images coming directly from the Bible play a very important role in both the *Revelations* and in *Homo conditus*. However, the two authors differ in their way of referring to the Bible. Mathias

31. See, for example, Birgitta, Rev. I:5, §6; II:2, §18; II:4, §1.
32. Birgitta, Rev. I:2, §3–12.
34. Birgitta, Rev. I:1, §9–10; I:2, §7.
quotes biblical books directly, while Birgitta alludes to them without quoting.

They both rely on images rooted in Christian tradition, namely the Fathers of the church and medieval authors such as Peter Lombard and Bernard of Clairvaux. Again, Mathias’s references to the body of Christian literature and theology are direct and effortless, while Birgitta hardly ever refers to any written sources even if it is evident that her imagination is shaped by Christian tradition. We have analyzed one of the images taken from Homo conditus to show how complex the relationship between Mathias’s text and his sources may be. We have shown that he probably used the Bible, Saint Augustine and at least two medieval sources to create a single image expressed in just a couple of sentences.

Having also compared depictions of mental images used in the Revelations and in chapter I of Homo conditus we notice that in all the cases analyzed, the theological and moral meaning of the images was identical or very similar. Based on this observation we may put forward a general thesis about their common theology, although more detailed study is needed.

We have noted that Mathias and Birgitta do not quote each other. It is, however, very likely that these two authors did influence each other, since parallels between their images are very close. It is however very difficult to say who influenced whom – was it Mathias who found inspiration for his preaching in Birgitta’s visionary experiences or was it Birgitta who found a way to express her visions through the language of images developed by Mathias? As we have seen, Birgitta often expresses herself through very complex and detailed images while Mathias’s images remain brief and concise. This could suggest that it was Birgitta who meditated and reflected upon homiletic material provided by Mathias. We know that in many cases visions experienced by medieval Christian devotees were inspired or even induced by an image or a text that they reflected upon;37 this could also be the case for Birgitta.38 On the other hand, the imagery of Homo conditus is not really comprehensive, since the book is a compendium meant to serve as a quick reference guide for a preacher, who was meant to give the images their fully developed rhetorical form according to his own taste and needs. We do not know what form these images might have taken in Mathias’s own sermons.

According to Bengt Strömberg, who analyzed similarities between Birgitta’s and Mathias’s imagery (as expressed in the Copia exemplorum rather than the Homo conditus), the two authors shared an important source of inspiration,

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38. See Maria Husabø Oen’s chapter in this volume.
namely medieval homiletic culture in general and mendicant preaching in particular.\textsuperscript{39} He does not consider Birgitta’s visions a possible influence on Mathias’s texts; in his opinion it was the mystic who became inspired by the preacher.\textsuperscript{40}

Still, the most reliable criterion to analyze Birgitta and Mathias’s mutual influence is a chronological one: if we find a parallel to Mathias’s text in a revelation of Birgitta’s written after 1350, it is quite natural to think that she was influenced by Mathias, since he probably died in 1350. As far as earlier texts are concerned, the question is a challenging one and in many cases must remain unsolved. It is however undeniable that the two authors shared common notions and that their mental images are developed and expressed within a common frame of reference.

\textsuperscript{39} Strömberg 1944, pp. 163–176.
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HOW DID LATE-MEDIEVAL BIRGITTINE NUNS experience their daily passages through the cloister? A newly published set of letters surviving from a no-longer-extant Birgittine foundation in southern Germany and its likewise no-longer-extant windows provide some clues. These prolegomena should pave the way toward a more detailed analysis of the ways women passed through time and space in (Birgittine) monasteries as increasing data – archaeological, liturgical, and archival – become accessible. I shall begin by relating the detailed story that has come down to us about the expansion and rebuilding of the cloister at Maria Mai in Maihingen during the second decade of the sixteenth century. To place these accounts within a Birgittine context I shall draw upon texts from the Revelations of Saint Birgitta, the Cantus sororum, the processional liturgy of the Birgittine nuns, and other normative writings of the order. Comparative considerations of the Birgittine men’s cloister will play a role. Where applicable I shall also open the discussion to considerations of the cloisters of other orders, particularly in women’s monasteries, as described, imaged and imagined.

THE MAIHINGEN SOURCES
An extremely informative and dramatic account of the building of a cloister and the donation of its pictorial programme surfaces sporadically within an archived correspondence of over sixty letters from Maria Mai during the early sixteenth century (Fig. 1). The letters were written by the confident and devout Katerina Lemmel of Nuremberg, who had grown up in the Imhoff Brothers’ international trading company as a daughter of patrician pedigree and had worked as a savvy and successful businesswoman. Once behind the monastery walls, Lemmel felt the new constraints of cloistered life that hampered her in communicating her
Fig. 1: Monastery of Maria Mai. Franciscan buildings from the seventeenth century. Photo: Volker Schier.
aims. She was forced to accomplish her goals using quill, ink, and paper, and the resulting correspondence was at the mercy of unreliable postal and courier services, requiring her to repeat the content of some missives. Of course, what for her were challenging disadvantages, are for us today a great boon in the form of knowledge nowhere else created, articulated and preserved.

Our story begins even earlier, in Nuremberg, as the newly widowed Katerina Lemmel makes preparations to leave her native city and profess as a Birgittine at Maria Mai in Maihingen, a village 90 kilometres away. In order to ensure that her new home would be endowed through the assets she had amassed as a patrician daughter and businesswoman, Lemmel makes extensive arrangements with her most trusted relatives. Among other measures, she relinquishes her control of land holdings that she had inherited from her mother and gives them over to her younger sister Margareta Tucher and Margareta’s family; she sells her parents’ home to her sister at a price far below market value, and she bequeaths other sources of income to the Tuchers. In return she expects regular ongoing financial support from them for Maria Mai for as long as she lives.¹

Then, much to her surprise and chagrin, almost as soon as Lemmel arrives in Maihingen, she receives word that her brother-in-law, Martin Tucher, has betrayed her trust. Taking matters into his own hands, Tucher has finagled his way out of the anticipated continuous funding for an indeterminate period of time, and, squeezing payment for old debts out of the peasants who occupied and farmed the land, he is able summarily to pay out to the monastery one nominal lump sum.²

During her intense correspondence with her cousin Hans V Imhoff, beginning with her move to Maihingen in 1516 and ending with his death in Nuremberg in 1522, Katerina Lemmel confides her feelings about the Tuchers. At first she voices her resentment against her brother-in-law Martin, as well as her disappointment with her sister Margareta. Then gradually over the course of the correspondence her moroseness gives way to hopeful enthusiasm as she develops an alternative strategy, to enlist the ‘Tuchers’ help with her campaign to rebuild and furnish the cloister at Maria Mai. Ingesting the morsels of information that entice us throughout the missives, we can satisfy our hunger for first-hand insights into the planning of a cloister, including its functional necessities and aesthetic goals as well as the construction, technology, delivery and installation of its furnishings. Even the anticipated reciprocal rewards and

1. Schleif and Schier 2009, pp. 1–82.
benefits for communities and individuals inside and outside of the monastery are articulated, and fund-raising strategies divulged. To my knowledge, no other sources offer these rich perspectives and exacting details.

By 1518, Lemmel has conceived of the project whereby Martin Tucher could make amends and become actively involved in promoting donations for her monastery. In January she writes to Hans Imhoff:

The compensation would be that he has a window made for us in our new cloister and … [she goes on to explain how Tucher should likewise solicit window donations from his closest relatives] … so that they [all the donors] make for themselves an eternal memorial. When the sisters process through the cloister with the holy relics, and on Friday when they sing the seven Psalms, and when they daily pass by at other times, on seeing the coats of arms they will pray all the more for them [i.e. the donors]. There are three windows on each side, and there are three sides. Two sides were made some years ago but they hadn’t yet become rich enough that they could glaze them. Now too the money will not be enough for everything, unless he has the memorial windows made in Nuremberg. I have left it up to him entirely. I should very much like to ask several good friends, if they would make memorials to themselves by making the other windows, as soon as I know who would like to do this and thus share in the intercession for eternity.3

In further overtures to other Nuremberg relatives, imploring them to donate stained glass windows, Katerina Lemmel incorporated the following rationale:

… when, on all holidays, the sisters process past them chanting songs of praise and continually, every day, they will commemorate the people whose coats of arms they see. For several years now we have not been able to process, as is prescribed in the Rule, without always being afraid that the old building would collapse. On the sides where the old cloister remains, there are pitiful tiny little holes for windows, so that the sisters say they cannot see what they are singing from their books – they sing from their books while processing. Here too we also want to have windows made in the same manner as the new ones. I do think that this will bring about much prayer and salvation for time everlasting, especially if in every window there is a modest image of the Passion of our Beloved Lord. It should neither be very expensive nor sumptuous. If only it is devotional and expressive, this is truly what we would prefer. … I think, if you cousins in Nuremberg should like to do this, the two cousins in Augsburg would also have windows made. I cannot have this done with our money. I am glad that otherwise the building could be made with it, especially since some other buildings in need of repair were also financed with it. I had not anticipated that the structure would cost so much. The memorials of my friends are more important to me than those of other people. … [She then elaborates on another potential donor family in Augsburg.] But you must do all that your love and desire will bear.4

Hans Imhoff and his wife Katharina were among the prospective donors. At the beginning of May, she explains that she cannot yet calculate the costs for the individual donors because some of the hardware has been made but not the window frames. She estimates, however, that the cost will not surpass that of a stained glass window that Hans has in his residence.\

Lemmel’s letter of 28 May 1518 gives a clear picture of the discursive consultative process through which the glazing of the cloister is taking shape. We read of the ideas of Katerina Lemmel, suggestions of input from other members of the community of Maria Mai, as well as the administrative efforts and decisions of the donors, not to mention, of course, the creative fashioning of the Hirsvogel workshop. She writes:

Dear Cousin, you have written to me … that you want to know how much one of the windows I had asked you for would be. Up to now we have not been able to estimate the cost. Now we have a stonemason who is putting mullions into the new windows and fixing all the things that had not been done right, before. Initially we wanted to have the windows made with wooden frames, but my brother-in-law Martin Tucher wrote to me saying we should not do this. Rather, we should have the windows put in the way church windows are commonly done. We should also have two small doors that open in every window made with iron frames, since these will last and will not rot at the places where rain and snow will strike them. These also look more appropriate and craftsmanlike. He has talked to Master Veit [Hirsvogel the Elder] about it, who told him that if he could have a look at it, he could give us his advice, and that he would be prepared to come out to us. It did not take long, and he came out with a cart, and he must have had the impression that he would certainly get the contract for the glass surrounds as well as for the images. When he heard that we wanted to have these things done ourselves and that we wanted to employ a local glazier, he did not like it very much, but he still gave us advice and said that it would be best to have small iron doors and that we should not make them as small as we had intended. The old windows need to be broken out to make them larger – that is what the craftsmen all say. And they also say that all my friends who would have windows made would be even more interested if they had an eternal usefulness as a source of light, with all the artfulness appropriate to it. They think that if a window costs a guilder more, this would be all right, because they ought to be made properly and be as functional as possible. They calculated that one window, without the image, would be about four guilders, which worries me; you might think this too expensive. You truly will make yourselves a great memorial, and I would rather you enjoy these benefits before we approach others, since Master Veit thinks that one can always find people who support such endeavours and who would want to make a memorial, but he did not foresee that any of you would refuse. Dear Cousin, if our dear Lord helps you all together, God willing, please ask the cousins on behalf of the Reverend

Mother, the convent, and me if all of you would be generous enough that each of you would have one made. I do hope that you will not decide on the images without having a look at the Passion of Our Dear Lord and the Sorrows of the Virgin Mary. If you should think this too expensive, we are prepared to have them made smaller, although the size is nothing in comparison with the windows that they have in the cloisters in Nuremberg or in Pillenreuth. The person who will give you this letter is the glazier, who will make them …

By August 17, Lemmel has commitments for seven windows, but wants eight more, for a total of fifteen on four sides. They are all sorely needed before winter sets in. By September 2, she has received assurances for the further donations, but Lemmel wants the actual cash in hand so that the abbess will not delay in commissioning the hardware. In the same letter Lemmel states that she has devised a plan to provide the necessary funding to complete her project: each donor couple is to pay for a glass panel with a narrative scene, the accompanying pair of arms in glass, and four guilders to cover the additional costs of installation and glass surrounds with lead cames. The workshop had already transported a shipment of these materials out to Maihingen.

By November 18, she needs to enlist support from the donors back in Nuremberg in encouraging the workshop to complete the commission more quickly. By this time the first narrative panels and pairs of arms have been delivered. She is not altogether satisfied and would like to improve the quality by changing the production techniques for the remaining panels. She laments:

Some of the lions are in fact pale and white in colour; they don’t look very good. But some are nicely yellow. He should also be sure to make the large coat of arms really yellowy yellow, and the red on the shield should be etched; otherwise it won’t last when it is exposed to the weather. But I directed him to do this when he was here …

By the end of November she has learned that the panels are about to be finished in Nuremberg and packed for shipment to Maihingen. Early the next year Abbess Ursula Gering acknowledges the gift in her New Year’s greeting to Hans Imhoff.

My dear and honourable Lord, I and the entire convent thank you especially, with great assiduousness, for all the good that you do for us daily, particularly for having decorated our cloister with beautiful images and glass, which is a heartfelt joy for all of us. May it please the Lord God to return it to you a hundredfold, here in time and with all his chosen ones in the enjoyment of the finest, best, and ultimate good, in never ending blessedness. I do believe that you have made a good investment, since you are going to have a great deal of intercession from us and our descendants. The devotional images will visit the sisters often, morning and evening, in the renewed memory of the bitter way that the Lord Jesus walked in his torment.11

It is well into February 1519 when the windows are mentioned again in Lemmel’s ongoing correspondence with Imhoff – an indication that they were not installed until this time. She then pens some surprisingly discerning allegations:

Dear Cousin, know that the windows please us very much, as do the images. But you should also know that they are not all made to arouse desire; that couldn’t be done. They always want to make them in a new strange way. One paints our dear Lord only with red and grey hair. I believe one does him little honour with this. All the figures of our dear Lord have just grey hair. You have certainly seen it – where our beloved Lord is crowned – he sits there like a fat priest! He should have painted him in a red mantle, all wounded and bloody. He could certainly have made many of the figures in such a way that the viewers’ desires would be more aroused and when he carries his cross he also does not arouse desire. I implored Master Veit, when he was here, to make them in such a way that they arouse viewers’ longing, since you are giving him so much money for them. For one and a quarter guilders he should have made them more diligently. And if we had known that the windows themselves were to be wider, then we should have had the images made a bit larger. It was just the money! I haven’t written anything about this to my brother-in-law. I should truly complain, but one cannot do anything about it.

Nonetheless Lemmel continues with a plea that Imhoff provide some additional panels with heraldic hybrid lions to mark the entire cloister as a gift of the Imhoff family. She pleads that he not share this addition with the other relatives:

I should like it so much if you could have two or three little lions made for me, but you should not say much about this. Or perhaps you have some old ones. There are a few window panes and leads left over. So we want to make another two or three little windows for the ends and set the coats of arms into them as a memorial. We have had a floor made. On one side of the cloister nothing has been done in 18 years. This we shall put on the bill of the Tuchers, the Füuers, and the others. There remains a little money left over from all of them, but not much. We shall do it with these funds. You have truly done a great deed and brought about much devotion, because this will, God willing, make you partakers of salvation.

Lemmel continues by reporting to Imhoff, how she has paired the allied arms of the donor couples with the narrative scenes:

We have placed the Coronation of the Virgin above the coat of arms of my dear departed cousin, and it appears to arouse desire and looks very devotional. After that we begin with Our Dear Lord Taking Leave [of his Mother] on Maundy Thursday. This will be reckoned to my cousin the elder Peter Imhoff; and to you, Our Dear Lord’s Evening Meal [the Last Supper]; and afterward, one after the other, the Seven Falls [of Christ]. And we thought we wanted to have all of your names written in large letters on the wall above them, in the order of your age, as I wrote it down, for a memorial also for all the others. Only now does it look like a monastery! Therefore you should not regret it!

With these words Lemmel’s discussions of the windows cease – except for a brief mention in 1521 of the fact that her cousin Hieronymus Imhoff in Augsburg must still have some heraldic panels made with the arms of himself and his wife, as well as of their son and daughter-in-law. It may be assumed these were still for the cloister.

Through these passages, we benefit from rare unmediated insights into Birgittine visuality and multisensory perception. The forms, functions, and meanings of the cloister and its glazing were not explained as separate issues but in complex interconnected ways. In fact Lemmel went so far as to draw into this discussion observations on the combined effects of what we today would consider the aesthetics of the windows, their affective impact, and their suitability for carrying forward the memory of the donors for all eternity. She quite astonishingly and astutely linked these abstract goals to material realities of stained glass when she critically compared the different processes and production techniques used by the Hirsvogel stained glass workshop at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

From the above passages it is clear that walking through the cloister occurred in various contexts. When writing to donors (potential and actual), Lemmel links all of these contexts to intercession for the souls of the donors via the memory to be maintained through the donated window panels.

REMODELING AND EXPANDING THE CLOISTER TO FINAL COMPLETION AND FULL FUNCTIONALITY

According to Lemmel, when she entered Maria Mai, the cloister consisted of only two arms with unglazed window openings she calls ‘pitiful little holes’, perhaps an indication of small oculi. This condition she attributes to a previous lack of funds. In her recent study of Cistercian women’s monasteries in Germany, Claudia Mohn notes that many cloisters were left with less than all four sides, but that this situation can almost always be traced back to limited resources or some unforeseen event that prohibited further construction. Many Cistercian cloisters were remodelled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Timber ceilings were frequently replaced by vaulting, and open arcades were supplanted by masonry walls with glazed window openings. 14

Together with the paving, remodelling, and completion of the cloister at Maria Mai, Lemmel rebuilt some of the nuns’ cells that had leaky roofs, as well as apparently some storage areas. We cannot know how extensive the new cloister was, whether it was two-storied, or which structures it connected. Since the Friday procession ended in the nuns’ choir, it is clear that the cloisterwalk provided access to this gallery. Before all four arms were erected, a procession around any garth or courtyard would not have been possible – causing one to wonder how the regular prescribed Birgittine procession had been performed during these years.

Both the Revelationes pertinentes and the Lucidarium underscore the cloister’s multiple functions and polysemic ambience. From the Lemmel letters cited above and these normative texts, we learn that every Friday the nuns sang the seven penitential psalms while processing through the cloister. The German translation of the Lucidarium clarified the details of this culminating weekly ritual, central to all of the Birgittines. It specified that one of the sacristans should carry the cross at the head of the procession. The convent of sisters should follow, walking two by two in a uniform manner, and each is to contemplate Christ’s path to his crucifixion on Good Friday in her heart. 15 As if walking up to Calvary, the nuns ended their Friday procession high in the nuns’ gallery, where the sisters knelt and read the litany. 16

Volker Schier has noted that in all three surviving processional manuscripts

15. Augsburg, University Library, MS Cod. III. 1.2° 40 [henceforth Joppel Manuscript], fol. 53r.
16. Joppel Manuscript, fol. 112r.
used in Maihingen, the penitential psalms were framed by three responsories.\textsuperscript{17} The source of these chants (texts with melodies) was the responsories of the liturgy for Friday matins, which the nuns sang on their platform once every week. The ultimate source of the texts was the \textit{Sermo angelicus}, the words Birgitta had received from an angel who dictated them while she was in Rome.\textsuperscript{18}

The first response sung in the cloister was \textit{Sicut spinarum}: ‘As the proximity of thorns does not diminish the fragrance of the blossoming rose, so, Mother of Christ, the great tribulations did not decrease the virtue of your strength, for you are redolent with the fragrance of all virtue.’ The second response iterated every Friday was \textit{Perenniter sit benedicta tua}: ‘Oh mother of endless joy, may your most innocent soul be endlessly blessed. When the sword of sorrows passed through you, you bore it patiently, so that the sword of endless death will not pass through our frail souls.’ The third response sung by the nuns framing their words of contrition in the penitential psalms was \textit{Palluerunt pie matris}: ‘The cheeks of the pious mother went pale when she saw the son of her maidenhood all red in his own blood. Seeing his hands and his feet nailed through, she soon began to swoon, as all her strength departed from her body. Hearing the doleful cry of so worthy a son in the agony of death, she was thrown to the ground by her sorrows as if she were dead.’\textsuperscript{19}

In certain cases the Friday cloister liturgy took on functions that were undoubtedly more individualized. Any nun who did penance and sought absolution openly was to be excluded from the nuns’ choir in the church for two days, during which she was to remain in the cloister while the others observed the canonical hours and sang the offices. On Friday, as she lay prostrate on the floor, the abbess was to approach her, help her to arise and lead her to the altar in the nuns’ choir, after which she was to resume her place in the community.\textsuperscript{20}

Another important ritual occurred in the cloister, although we are not informed about its frequency. The ceremony of foot washing is contained in two of the surviving processions from Maria Mai. In the more ornately produced book, today preserved in Augsburg, a decorated initial D containing two dragons introducing the antiphon \textit{Dominus Jesus} marks the importance of this

\textsuperscript{17} See his article in this volume. He has not found these chants in the processions surviving from Vadstena, now in Uppsala.

\textsuperscript{18} Birgitta, \textit{Sermo angelicus}, 16.

\textsuperscript{19} The three responsories for Friday matins are part of the processions from Maihingen: Stockholm, National Library, MS A 92a, fols. 42r–45r; Munich, University Library, MS 4° cod. Ms. 176, fols. 54v–57v; Augsburg, University Library, MS Cod. II 4° 68, fols. 75r–79v; Geete 1895, pp. 230–231.

\textsuperscript{20} Joppel Manuscript, fol. 17v.
ritual. Thus the passageway of the cloisterwalk was clearly understood as a liminal space – a space for passing through. The cloister served as a conduit to move from one activity in one room or building to another task in another location, to move from the thoughts of Mary before Christ’s birth to her experiences at his death; to move from sin to contrition and forgiveness; to move from soiled to clean.

In the above passages from her letters, Lemmel likewise mentions the festive processional contexts, that is, the feast days on which the women carried holy relics. According to the Revelationes pertinentes these processions were very frequent, taking place on Christological holidays: Palm Sunday, Easter, the Days of the Cross, Ascension, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi; Marian festivals: Conception of the Virgin, Birth of the Virgin, Presentation of the Virgin, and Annunciation; and saints’ days: Peter and Paul, Michael the archangel, and All Saints. Quite remarkably, the Maihingen processionals contain chants for three additional holidays: Saint Anne, Saint Peter in Chains, and church dedication. Two of the three surviving processionals also incorporate formulae for the Seven Maccabean Brothers.

The sisters filed through the cloister in hierarchical order, presumably with those who had joined the order last taking positions at the end of the line. After a description of the clothing ceremony, the Lucidarium indicates that the newest member of the community is to assume her place among ‘the last’ in the choir, thus supporting one subtle ideological function of the frequent processions, to enact, codify and preserve internal hierarchies; although mobility was built into the system. According to the translation of the Lucidarium used in Maihingen, the sacristan headed the procession carrying a crucifix. She also had the responsibility of assigning roles to the other nuns in procession. This festive parade that appealed to all the senses and filled this passageway likewise included torch bearers with candles, incense bearers with thuribles, and – if the monastery had any – holy relics, which were to be opulently decorated, a reference to costly

21. Stockholm, National Library, MS A 92a, fols. 54r–60v; Augsburg University Library, MS Cod. II 1 4° 68, fols. 102–104r. See the article by Volker Schier in this volume.
22. Stockholm, National Library, MS A 92a, fols. 54r–61r. This ceremony is also documented for the cloister in other orders. See Cassidy-Welch 2001, pp. 58–61 and Davril 2004.
23. See the article by Volker Schier in this volume.
We know from the House Book that many relics were on hand in Maihingen, as Lemmel was aware when she penned her letters. Indeed by 1499, the antiphon focusing on relics, *Preciosi sancti dei*, was incorporated into the processional liturgy on ten different feast days – thus sung more often than any other chant, and always as the culmination of the formula.

Processions transported sacred history into the *hic et nunc*, to borrow the words of Clifford Flanigan. In his recent analysis of processions, Christian Kiening has added the significance of repeatability and infinite reconstitutability, thus bringing history under the control of the participants – in this case, the Birgittine women.

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27. See the article by Volker Schier in this volume.
When the *Revelationes pertinentes* were compiled, it was important to stress that the ‘brothers’ were to process at the same time and in the same manner through their cloisterwalk within the church – both on Fridays and on holidays.30 Of course the cloisters were in no respect parallel, in either function, form, or location. The comparatively small number of thirteen secular clerics (usually called ‘fathers’ but in some sources ‘brothers’) who had professed as Birgittines, assumed positions that were much more exposed – even displayed – to the world. In their offices, as they conformed to the respective liturgical cycles of the diocese, they provided a bridge to the locality in which they served. The ambulatory within the church, elevated from the floor where the faithful gathered, yet separated by a railing or iron grate, facilitated the function of the fathers’ procession as a pious liturgical presentation for lay viewers (Fig. 2).

At one time scholars debated the placement of the women’s cloister, some contending that the women too processed within a grated ambulatory in the

church.\textsuperscript{31} Lemmel’s description of her building campaign to remodel and complete a functioning cloister furnished with stained glass windows must now definitively lay these debates to rest. From the descriptions of the prescribed processions that ended in the nuns’ choir high within the church it becomes clear that the Birgittine women lived through their rituals and in their ritual spaces in a very privileged manner. Tore Nyberg has long emphasized that the Birgittine monasteries were primarily for women.\textsuperscript{32} The importance of the women’s cloister, with no parallel provided for the small group of fathers who performed mass and attended to the pastoral care of the nuns, points up yet another manner in which these houses cannot be understood as double monasteries with parallel male and female convents. Alf Härdelin has stressed the importance of another group for Birgittine foundations – the laity.\textsuperscript{33} The two very different, separate but not equal, cloisters for the two convents must likewise point up the dissimilar ways in which the men and the women related to this additional group.

The third context in which Lemmel incorporates the viewing of the windows for their donors did not involve processions or any other kind of ritual, but rather simply walking through the cloister. Lemmel writes that the nuns will keep the pious memory of the donors when they ‘daily pass by at other times’. We are not informed about the more mundane activities occurring in the cloister at Maria Mai. In the very particular sources that have been collected about everyday activities in men’s monasteries of other orders, we find reports of tasks ranging from private reading and individual instruction, to hair cutting and shaving tonsures, to mending clothing and hanging it out to dry.\textsuperscript{34} We do know that in Maihingen, as elsewhere, these corridors provided the main thoroughfare for the enclosure and offered access into and out of all of the areas in which the nuns conducted their activities, both the work spaces and the sacred places, as they moved through their days in a more consciously pious and continuously meditative manner than possible for the faithful outside in ‘the world’. As in other women’s monasteries, the cloisterwalk at Maria Mai could also provide the final resting place for members of the community.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} For a summary of the debate, see Nyberg 1965, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{32} Nyberg 1965, pp. 23–32.
\textsuperscript{33} Härdelin 2002.
\textsuperscript{34} Meyvaert 1973; Davril 2004; McNeill 2006, pp. 11–13.
\textsuperscript{35} Joppel Manuscript, fol. 64r; Siart 2008, pp. 291–293.
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CLOISTER: MEDIATED VIEWING

The letters offer an unsurpassed opportunity to watch the steady development of both the programme for the windows and the expansion of their funding basis. Either Lemmel was initially reticent in divulging the extent of the cycles for fear of overtaxing the largesse of potential donors, or her campaign grew as she felt encouraged, seeing her ideas resonate with her relatives back home and her new family in the monastery. Perhaps it was a little of each.

Lemmel’s initial plan, voiced in January 1518, appears very modest – three windows on three sides making a total of nine. In April she adds that she wishes each window to contain a Christological scene. But already in May she refers to a programme encompassing the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Virgin. In August she counts the total number of necessary panels as fifteen, and they are to be installed on four sides. Finally in February 1519, when most of the window panels are delivered and she takes up the task of co-ordinating the scenes with the patrons’ arms, she lists: Christ Taking Leave of his Mother, the Last Supper, the Seven Falls, and the Assumption of the Virgin. With Christ Being Crowned with Thorns, discussed in her earlier critique, the number of narratives reaches eleven. It would appear she was still waiting for the delivery of the last four panels, perhaps even the commissioning of the last two. It must be noted that, on the one hand, these cycles extend beyond the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Virgin, but on the other hand, no complete series of the Sorrows of the Virgin is evident. In order to reach the number fifteen, other scenes would have been added from sequences of events considered to show the Sorrows of the Virgin, either those from the early life of Christ: the Prophecy of Simeon at the Presentation, Christ’s Circumcision, the Flight into Egypt, and the Twelve-Year-Old Jesus in the Temple; or from the end of his life: the Crucifixion, the Deposition, the Lamentation, and the Entombment.

Still, the Maihingen programme must have been modest by comparison with some other institutions. The no-longer extant Nuremberg Carmelite monastery was furnished with an extensive cycle of stained glass that adorned its cloister as well as an adjacent chapel. Likewise the result of donations by many individual donors and couples, these windows numbering more than 55, and completed in 1513, following designs by Hans Baldung and other leading artists, incorporated at least one of the Seven Falls within Christ’s Life and Passion and also included themes relating to the Virgin and Saint Anne.36

Very recently an exhibition was mounted showing that various printed representations were used as the designs for the wall paintings in the cloister at the Dominican women’s monastery in Töss in Switzerland. The appearance and history of these murals, originally encompassing over 79 images, has heretofore received little interest, perhaps because the paintings, dating from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, are also no longer extant. Recent research has been based on the study of pencil tracings and watercolours that record the appearance of the cloister murals in the nineteenth century. Here, as in Maihingen, the works were financed by a number of outside donors and emblazoned with their arms. Likewise, as in Maihingen, the sisters were instructed to pray for the souls of the benefactors in the vicinity of their benefactions – the images. Later in the sixteenth century, the Cistercian Monastery of Marienstern commissioned a cycle of murals showing the Seven Falls of Christ for their cloister.

In May 1518 Lemmel wrote that her prospective donors were to ‘look at’ the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Virgin before they decided whether to donate. In all likelihood, a representative from the Hirsvogel stained glass

workshop, who had been out to Maihingen to discuss the details of the project and to talk about the costs, is being sent back to Nuremberg with the prints that Lemmel wishes to have used as the designs for the series. We might speculate that nuns at Maria Mai may have actually used these woodcuts as a portable pictorial furnishing for their cloister before Lemmel joined them and initiated the remodelling project.

Working with the verbal descriptions in the Lemmel letters, some extant woodcuts, and remnants of stained glass cycles for cloisters from this time, it is possible to make some conjectures about the content and appearance of the images. A single impression of a woodcut showing the Seven Falls from c. 1490 survives in Vienna (Fig. 3). In it Christ falls seven times on his way from the Mount of Olives to his Crucifixion. Others, now dismembered, survive in New York and Stockholm. All incorporate Christ’s Passion with the Sorrows of the Virgin, hence these terms may have likewise referenced the Falls.39

As a bystander and viewer at close range, the Virgin exhibits her sorrow rather figuratively with a sword piercing her breast, thus giving visualization to the metaphor used by the aged Simeon in Luke 2 to foretell her future tribula-

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tions. Perhaps most emotionally compelling are those of Hans Baldung used by Ulrich Pinder as the illustrations for the *Speculum Passionis* published in Nuremberg in 1507 (Fig. 4).

Aspects of these images find verbal expression in the writings of Saint Birgitta, who, in her *Revelations*, hears the Virgin verbalize her feelings: 'The first lance was his shameful and blameworthy nakedness, for I saw my most chaste and mighty son stand naked at the pillar without any covering on him at all.'40 Thus Simeon’s sword has conveniently morphed into a lance, the weapon that pierced the side of Christ. Most interesting in Birgitta’s writings, in the prints and presumably in the windows of Maria Mai are the degrees of mediation. Saint Birgitta witnesses the Virgin who shows empathy and endures emotional duress as she watches Christ bear physical pain, torture, shame and humiliation. Thus Birgitta provides the perfect role model for pious viewing, which was never to be voyeuristic.41 Both the *Sermo angelicus* and the texts derived from it for the Friday matins liturgy incorporated notions of mediated experience. In the hymn *Relicti mundi frivolis* sung in the nuns’ gallery, the Birgittine sisters were directed to think on the Passion of Christ and the compassion of the Virgin.42 During the verses, antiphons and the above quoted responses, the last of which were likewise sung in the cloister during the Friday processions, the sisters reiterated Birgitta’s words received from the angel, describing the various stations in Mary’s life in which the Virgin had premonitions of her role bearing the Christ child, of her future witnessing of his passion, and of her horrifying experiences themselves. These many removes must have made the Birgittines very self-conscious of their own actions, never quite losing themselves in the Passion events. By extension, the nuns could also recognize their roles as mediators on behalf of their benefactors outside the monastery walls, who had less time and fewer opportunities for pious contemplative walking, viewing, and praying.

**ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CLOISTER: PILGRIMAGE**

Like Birgitta, they were pilgrims. In fact, perhaps in an effort to remind herself to emulate Birgitta, one of the choir sisters at Maria Mai pasted a woodcut of the saint with pilgrim’s hat, bag and walking stick, into the processional from which she sang in the cloister (Fig. 5).43 Günter Hägele has found another impression of this print in a book from Maria Mai and suggested that the block may have

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40. Birgitta, Rev. I: 27, §3.
41. Schleif 2012.
42. Birgitta, *Sermo angelicus*, 16; AH 48, no. 381; Geete 1895, p. 230.
43. Stockholm, National Library, MS A 92a, front pastedown.
originated in Maihingen. Walking was of paramount importance to Saint Birgitta. She instructs a certain priest in Rome to walk and contemplate the five wounds of Christ and the Sorrows of the Virgin. Birgitta reports that as she walked with Christ he introduced her to one secret after the other, and it was this vision received while walking that became the Rule of the Holy Saviour, to which all Birgittines subscribed. In Book V of her Revelations, she asks Christ why she has been given feet and learns that they are for walking away from the ways of the world and turning in the direction of love for the creator and redeemer. Birgitta sees Christ’s bloody footprints on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and she stresses the importance of literally walking where he did and following in his footsteps. This was important to all Jerusalem pilgrims and is reflected in countless medieval images of Christ’s ascension, in which he leaves his footprints behind.

44. Hägele 2011, p. 31: Augsburg, University Library, MS Cod. II.1.4° 23.
46. Harris Tjäder 1990, p. 32.
47. Birgitta, Rev. V: 1.
48. Birgitta, Rev. IV: 70, §3; IV: 114.
An instance of a manuscript-based micro-pilgrimage led by Saint Birgitta was recently studied by Kathryn Rudy as part of her larger investigation into what she terms ‘virtual pilgrimage’. In this book, written in middle Dutch, which was originally illustrated with a series of prints, Birgitta advises the reader to accompany the Virgin as she experiences the times and places of her son’s life and passion. The user of the prayer manual is to perform this pilgrimage following the canonical hours and employing the everyday markers of meal times, thus forming connections to saintly protagonists through shared meals, transporting the user to the holy sites and into sacred history. Interestingly Birgitta’s Rome pilgrimage is likewise superimposed upon her Jerusalem pilgrimage, and all is narrated in the present tense bringing these faraway times and places that Birgitta herself had experienced through travel and visions into the here and now for the devotee. Rudy asserts that such virtual pilgrimages were of great import to cloistered women because they could not travel. The clearest evidence of a pilgrimage within a women’s monastery is that for which the Dominican nuns of Saint Catherine’s in Augsburg could acquire an indulgence and for which Hans Burgkmair and Hans Holbein were commissioned to paint images of the churches in Rome.

For the nuns of Maria Mai, the implications of a pilgrimage through the cloister may have been less formal, simply traversing their cloister, walking in the footsteps of Mary and Christ just as Birgitta had done. Birgitta often stressed that spiritual truths could only be shown in bodily form. The core of the practice of pilgrimage is embodiment, and procession compresses pilgrimage into a compact repeatable form.

**AESTHETICS AND STAINED GLASS TECHNIQUES**

Saint Birgitta had prescribed windows containing no figural imagery and glass not exuding bright colours. These injunctions, which pertain to church windows, were available at Maria Mai in German. Lemmel’s outspoken expressions of her expectations and ultimately her disappointments betray that she, however, – at least in the context of the cloister – favoured an aesthetic that

51. Birgitta, Rev. IV:58.
52. Schleif and Schier 2009, pp. 252–253, 302. On colours in windows and other contexts, see Birgitta Rev. IV:77; IV:74; Birgitta, Rev. Extr. 28; Augsburg University Library, Cod. III. I. 2 17, fols. 34r–35v; Joppel Manuscript, fols. 54r–55v, 58r, 120r.
FIG. 6: Veit Hirsvogels workshop. Stained-glass panel showing Saint Christopher with the Fürer and Imhoff arms, Nuremberg, church of St. Lorenz, c. 1515. Photo: Volker Schier.
**Fig. 7:** Veit Hirsvogel the Younger, after a design by Hans Kulmbach. Stained-glass panel showing an angel holding the marshalled coat of arms of the Esler family and the Provostship of Saint Sebald, Nuremberg, St. Sebald rectory, 1517. Photo: Volker Schier.
Corine Schleif aroused the viewers and jarred their sensitivities, by enticing them to empathize with the Virgin and sympathize with the suffering Christ. These emotions were fed by depictions of the abject rather than the beautiful, the sweet, or the pleasant. Her predilections are reflected in her choice of vocabulary. In the passages above, she writes that the windows need not be ‘expensive or sumptuous’ but ‘emotional and expressive’. To describe the sought-after aesthetic affect of the windows, Lemmel chooses the word ‘sehnlich’, an adjective no longer in use, which meant, ‘to cause intense desire or longing’.

She implies that such attraction could be enhanced by the use of vibrant and durable colours, saturated reds achieved by using flashed glass that was then juxtaposed with bright yellow fashioned by applying silver stain to the areas in which the red has been etched away to expose clear glass (Fig. 6). One imagines that she might have been disappointed because she received monolithic panels with only paler duller colours and graphic effects that were produced using the newer and more economical methods of simply applying various vitreous paints – iron oxide, silver stain, and grisaille – to the surfaces of clear or pastel glass before the final firing (Fig. 7).

As if in free association, Lemmel then mentions her predilections for seeing Christ bloody and wounded. The colours were to heighten the impact; seeing was to augment the embodied sensations of hearing and feeling that were melded in the performance of the chanted texts described above. Lemmel here demonstrates that she has internalized Saint Birgitta’s words of advice about incorporating all of the senses.53 The result of the communal experiences in the cloister must have been a supercharged sensual rush of emotions.

Here too the nuns acted as emotional mediators. We might even speak of their conscious formation of an emotional community – to use Barbara Rosenwein’s term.54 Or we might go so far as to observe an economy of emotions. The nuns could feel for and on behalf of their lay benefactors.

**The Birgittine Chronotope**

Processional uses of cloisters, particularly on holidays, but also the Friday processional chanting of the penitential psalms during Lent is documented for some houses in other orders in the sixteenth century.55 Without further research

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53. Birgitta, Rev. IV:77.
55. Siart 2008, p. 288. The penitential psalms are included in a processional that survives from the women’s Dominican monastery in Bamberg (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MS 21430).
we cannot convincingly attribute these practices to the influence of Birgittine monasticism. Indeed Saint Birgitta herself, and those who followed her, including Katerina Lemmel, often adopted selected features of other women’s orders and developed, codified and infused them with meanings. For example, the Birgittines had taken on the crowns worn earlier by some Cistercians and the nuns’ galleries in use in many orders, both of which became prescribed and explicated in the Rule of Saint Birgitta and other normative writings. The *Cantus sororum* on the other hand was formulated as a uniquely Birgittine women’s liturgy repeated in a weekly cycle that culminated every Friday and included elaborate feast day ceremonies. At least in Maihingen, this liturgy spilled over to determine the sights and sounds, feelings and fragrances of the cloister.

The nuns must have experienced it like a chronotope – to use a concept introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin to explore rhetorical structures that conflate time and space. The road trip in novels and films often assumes this function. So too did the cloister for the Birgittines, who passed alongside its stained glass windows, as pilgrimage sites, as the stations in Christ’s life, as places in the Holy Land, as times within their daily or annual routines and as sanctified places in the monastery. At least some of the time the nuns must have been conscious of their own roles as viewers – contemplating the views of the Virgin with Saint Birgitta, observing the movements of light as the sunlight shone through the figures and danced on their habits or as the candlelight reflected on the refulgent window surfaces after dark. The scent and haze of the incense must have made them aware of their communal presence in this confined space (Fig. 8). And each must have been cognizant of her place within the community when hearing the chants echoing around the vaulting, the never quite synchronous footsteps on the pavement and the muffled acoustic effect of the many yards of heavy drapery that constituted the nuns’ attire. The chronotopic cloister furnished and filled with sensual experiences helped to create an emotional community.

Satisfied and grateful, Lemmel remarks at the conclusion of her project, ‘Only now does it look like a monastery!’ It is then no wonder that the peasants took issue with this pious mediation, a role into which the women following the Rule of Saint Birgitta had so successfully manoeuvred themselves. And in 1525, the peasants ruthlessly shattered these all-so-important sensual connections.57

**Fig. 8:** Monastery of Mariendal/Pirita, ruins of the only surviving Birgit­
tine cloister, interior. Photo: Volker Schier.
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A tightly knit system of rituals not only governed and controlled the daily routine of every Birgittine nun, it indeed determined most elements of her self-understanding for the rest of her life, once she entered the monastery on the day of her profession. The Rule with its various extensions allows insights into the ‘readerly’ (the adjective employed by Roland Barthes to characterize texts that treat readers as passive recipients) strategies of its author(s), compilers, and redactors to create ritualized forms of communication mainly within the community of nuns but also beyond.¹ According to Victor Turner, ritualized communication is capable of uniting the structures of the social organization – in our case the structure of the monastery as prescribed in the Rule – with the human emotions that are necessarily present in a community of nuns.² The normative texts make it clear that emotions are a double-edged sword: in most situations they are to be controlled, but when emotional behaviour is encouraged, even aroused, as in the imitatio Christi, the emotional responses are channelled and focused. The predominantly ‘readerly’ texts of the order that have come down to us suggest that the nuns’ performances within this ‘total institution’ (a term coined by the sociologist Erwing Goffmann) were the realization of a system that they could not control, and only partially form.³

This admittedly rather one-sided view is hard to correct since it is difficult and time consuming to cull ‘writerly’ (a distinction used by Roland Barthes to characterize texts that call for readers’ roles as active agents) additions from various texts. Even then, scholars are dependent on the chance survival of unmediated communication from behind monastery walls. The letters of Katerina

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Lemmel, nun at the monastery in Maihingen (located about halfway between the cities of Nuremberg and Augsburg), provide just such a stroke of luck. In order to raise funds for the glazing of the cloister, she writes about the ways in which an iconographic program appealed to all of the senses. 4

The liturgical functions of one place in particular within the monastery were less regulated by the all-encompassing framework of rules and thus opened possibilities for creative modifications. The Rule of Saint Birgitta and its exegesis connects the nuns’ cloister to one important ritual of the weekly liturgy: the Friday procession. This single event filled the space with a variety of meanings. In addition, the Revelationes pertinentes mandated processions in the cloister-walk accompanied by chants on the following days: Palm Sunday, Easter, the three feast days of the Commemoration of the Cross preceding Ascension Day, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, the five Marian feasts, Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Michael, and All Saints. With the exception of the prescriptions for the Friday procession, the Rule and its commentaries remain silent about the specifics of the rituals employed. The only other sources that we can consult in order to gain insights into the processional liturgy of the Birgittine nuns are processionals, manuscripts that contain the necessary chants in a portable format.

Two processionals associated with the use of Maihingen (Munich, University Library, MS 4° Cod. Ms 176; Stockholm, National Library, MS A 92a, formerly Oettingen-Wallerstein, MS II 1 4° 42) have been known to scholars for some time, but only recently a third Birgittine processional from south Germany has surfaced in a collection belonging to the former Oettingen-Wallerstein library now in the possession of the Bavarian state and deposited at the University Library of Augsburg (MS Cod. II 1 4° 68). Günter Hägele, the director of the manuscript department, brought this book to my attention when the collection was recently catalogued. 5

It seems probable that all three books were copied at or produced for the use of the monastery of Maria Mai in Maihingen in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The manuscripts housed today in Augsburg and Stockholm must have remained in the possession of the monastery until its dissolution at the end of the sixteenth century. We may assume that two of the books were then integrated into the collection of the new Franciscan monastery at Maihingen and later, in the wake of the secularization of 1802–1803, became part of the library of the princes of Oettingen-Wallerstein, which was at first located in the former

monastery buildings in Maihingen, later in the town of Oettingen and then in Harburg Castle. In 1934, when one of the manuscripts was put up for auction by the Oettingen family in order to pay inheritance taxes. It was purchased by the National Library in Stockholm. In the case of the book today in Munich, its path to the library of the Ludwig Maximilians Universität is unclear. Using the content of the processional in Stockholm and Munich, Isaak Collijn in 1945 and Dietmar von Hübner in 1973 addressed aspects of the Birgittine processional liturgy. Viveca Servatius also referred to these two manuscripts in her study of the Birgittine office antiphons in 1990.

Taking a look at the best-known of the three books, the processional in the National Library in Stockholm, we initially perceive no structure for its content. With the exception of a few later additions at the beginning and end of the book, the manuscript contains no rubrics for the feasts or for the chants. The only exception to this total lack of instructions is the seemingly enigmatic marginal note ‘contra turcas [sic]’ added by a later hand on folio 61r. Only with the aid of the seven-page index does the book become useable in performance. This appendix at the end of the manuscript, taking up folios 65r–68r, groups the chants into twenty-three feast formulas. It is preceded by instructions in German for the user:

Hereafter follows the index for this processional [that records] on which days the copied chants are performed together with a number [telling] on which leaf each responsory or antiphon is written with notation.

The main body of the book and the index were copied by the same practised hand in semi-cursive script, a form of writing more commonly associated with account books and literature than liturgical manuscripts, but not infrequently found in devotional books for personal use. Although the scribe employs square notation, typical for Birgittine chant manuscripts, the execution leaves something to be desired. Groups of notes that are sung on one syllable are sometimes broken into smaller units or written as single notes rather than using one ligature, the accepted practice of the day, without which coordination with the appropriate syllables must have been difficult. This obstacle for performances was in some instances remedied by the insertion of lines that connected syllables

6. Antiquariat Karl & Faber 1934, p. 16
8. ‘Ire nach volgt dz register über dicz processional an welchen tagen dz obgeschriben gesanck gehalten wirt mit sampt einer zal an welchem plat ein yeglich respons oder antiffen geschriben und notiert ist.’
Fig. 1: Antiphon ‘Domine Jesus postquam cenavit’ for the ceremony of foot washing. Augsburg, University Library, MS Cod. II 14°68, fol. 94v. Photo: Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg.
with their corresponding notes. One also notices that the copyist had difficulties arranging the spacing of the text in such a way as to reserve appropriate space for the insertion of notes. All of these features may indicate that the scribe was not accustomed to copying liturgical books. The same hand that wrote the texts also penned the short colophon following the index: ‘Completed on the day of Saint Felicity in the year 1499; pray to God on my behalf.’ The only perceivable anomaly in the book is the mistake in the ordering of folios 14 and 15, an error that most likely occurred during the binding process. The mistake must have been discovered immediately and was remedied by the insertion of marginal notes that enabled users to proceed appropriately, rather than by having the book rebound, which would have been a more expensive solution.

By comparison, the structure of the processions in Munich and Augsburg appears more complex. The main body of chants in these two manuscripts is in large part identical to the procession in Stockholm. However, the procession in Munich deviates in that two formulas were omitted: the formula for mandatum, the ceremony of foot washing (fols. 54r –61r), and a short formula that probably belonged to the feast of the Seven Maccabean Brothers (fols. 61r–62v). The Munich procession manifests higher scribal quality than that in Stockholm. But the Augsburg procession exhibits the highest quality of the three, since it was copied by a scribe trained to write textualis and with the ligatures of the square notation following accepted practice (Fig. 1). On the basis of the script and the decorated initials it seems likely that this manuscript was produced by a professional workshop, possibly in Nuremberg. Like the Stockholm book, the processions in Munich and Augsburg also contain indexes. In fact, the index in the procession in Munich is identical to the one in Stockholm, even the date of the attached colophon matches: ‘1499 pray to God for me with a Hail Mary.’ The index of the Augsburg book is no longer complete: several pages were removed at some point so that the text of the index

9. ‘Confinis in die felicitate anno 1499. Bit got auch fur mich.’ According to the diocesan calendar of Augsburg this was most likely the feast for the Roman martyr Felicity and her seven sons on 10 August, even though the feast for Felicity of Carthage and Perpetua on 7 March cannot be ruled out.


11. Two stamps used on the binding gives the clearest evidence of Nuremberg origins: Kyriss 117, Stempel 1, 5 (Einband-Datenbank, Zitiernummer 014007, 01403). See Hilg 2007, p. 435. It is likely that the manuscript was commissioned by the monastery of Gnadenberg and was later sent to Maihingen.

12. ‘1499 bit got auch fur mich mit ainem ave maria.’
now breaks off after the first page. Nonetheless, the remaining three formulas suffice to verify that all three processionals must have used identical formulas for the major feasts of the yearly Birgittine cycle. In all likelihood all three indexes were identical.

Perhaps most significant is the observation that whereas the index in the processional from Stockholm was written by the main scribe, the indexes in the Munich and Augsburg books must have been added at a later point since their hands differ from those of the main texts. Moreover, the most obvious difference between the two processionals in Augsburg and Munich and that in Stockholm is the additional occurrence of rubrics for feast days within the body of the manuscript: five rubrics in Augsburg and nineteen in Munich. Strangely, however, although one might expect the rubrics attached to the formulas and the information in the indexes to match, they do not. Already Dietmar von Hübner noticed these discrepancies in the Munich manuscript, but did not speculate as to the reason.13 Thus, to reiterate: Stockholm contains no rubrics, Munich and Augsburg contain rubrics but the indexes in these books do not correspond to the rubrics in the same volumes. I must conclude that the indexes served to re-order the chants in ways not dependent on the rubrics. In fact, closer examination reveals that they are in opposition to the rubrics. A comparison of the rubrics in the Munich and Augsburg manuscripts with the indexes reveals the creation of different formulas altogether, a change wrought by the indexes through a radical redistribution of all the chants that comprise the formulas. No formula under a rubric is identical to its counterpart as constituted through the index. Furthermore, the selection of saints’ days and other feasts was altered with the addition of the new indexes (see table overleaf).

This means that from a certain point on, most likely from the year 1499, the established annual processional liturgy at Maihingen was exchanged for a new liturgy which drew from the same corpus of chants but replaced the previous structure with a new one.

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<td>An sand annen tag</td>
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<td>De b[eata] maria virginis</td>
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<td>An unser frauen hymelfart tag</td>
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<td>Wo sant birgitta erhaben ist</td>
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<td>Liechtmess</td>
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<td>An unser frauen tag zu liechtmess</td>
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<td>De b[eata] maria v[irginis]</td>
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What might have spawned this radical change? We have several indications that may provide answers. One problem in the structure of the original compilation immediately becomes evident: the processionals from Maihningen contain one single lengthy formula for the feasts for Saint Birgitta, encompassing a total of eleven chants (R = Responsorium, V = Versus, A = Antiphona).

R Regnum mundi. V: Eructavit cor
R Hec sursum rapta. V: Lux venit in mundum
A Ministrans pauperibus
R Ardenti desiderio. V: Loquetur pacem
R Astans dei judiciis. V: Cum exarserit
R O facies moysaica. V: O femina mirifica
A Birgitta Christi famula
R Virtutis dei dextere. V: Soluta carnis onere
A Corona sponsa predita
R Qui maris fluctus. V: Sponsam numbe clarificans
R Herba surgit. V: Dum parens parit

Several of the responsories can be traced to the matins liturgy in the two rhymed offices for Saint Birgitta. The processional versions of two of these responsories, Herba surgit and O facies moysaica, show melodies that differ from those of the office chants, indicating at least the partial autonomy of the Birgittine processional liturgy.14

The Birgitta formula is positioned at the beginning of each manuscript, a very prominent place. In order to assign the chants to the various feasts of the saint, an initial selection would have been necessary. With the new compilation, specified formulas of five or six chants for the feasts of Saint Birgitta’s translation, death, and canonization were preselected. With this adjustment the performers were no longer at liberty to pick and choose arbitrarily from the eleven chants, but the processionals benefited from increased user friendliness.

Furthermore, a comparison of the index with the processions mandated by the Revelationes pertinentes confirms that the new liturgy is clearly built on a prescribed structure. The additional feasts listed in the index – Saint Anne, Saint Peter in Chains, and the dedication of a church – also found acceptance in the Birgittine order.15 Through this new structure the processional liturgy at Maihningen achieved a higher degree of conformity with the calendar of the

15. For the feast of Saint Peter in Chains and the ‘vincula’ indulgence granted by Pope Urban VI and endowing the monastery of Vadstena and other Birgittine houses with important privileges, see Birgitta Rev. IV:137; Höjer 1905, p. 98 and Nyberg 1972–1974,
order, a goal that might have prompted the redaction. As with most medieval ‘copies’ and ‘translations’ of liturgical practices, this aim was not easily achieved, perhaps it was never fully achievable. We are reminded of Charlemagne’s advisors attempting to import Roman chant into the Frankish realm, only to fashion something new.

The ‘imitatio’ of existing structures posed a multitude of problems, the least of which might have been geographical remoteness. As a first step the nuns had to decide what to copy. Was it an ‘imitatio vadstenensis,’ the practice of the oldest and most important of the Birgittine monasteries, or rather an ‘imitatio montis gratiae’ (of Gnadenberg), the monastery that had provided the basis for the liturgy at Maihingen? Here we perceive some of the difficulties within an order that functioned on the one hand according to all-encompassing written rules, handed down by the founding mother, but on the other hand maintained only loose ties between the individual houses. Vadstena was never able – nor did it seek – to achieve a status equivalent to Cîteaux or Cluny, mother houses that closely controlled the liturgy and many other aspects of the affiliated monasteries. This does not mean that there were no efforts within the Birgittine order towards greater homogeneity but, as we know from the outcome of the general chapters, these goals could not be achieved successfully due to a lack of administrative structure and limited exchange. This lack of ballast, on the other hand, facilitated the rapid spread of the order. The few surviving Birgittine chant sources indicate that even under these less than favourable conditions for the transmission of liturgical practices, the core of the Birgittine office liturgy seems to have achieved remarkable stability within the order. One cause was certainly the authoritative notion of direct heavenly inspiration in its creation, which made the melodies and texts sacrosanct and unalterable. According to the Revelationes extravagantes it was a heavenly wind that had transmitted the texts and melodies to Magister Peter of Skänninge. The characteristic gradual-antiphoners of the Birgittine nuns were passed on from one generation to the next within the monasteries and they were copied and sent to new foundations.

But what was the situation regarding the processional liturgy and the processionals? Was there an ‘Urprocessional’ that originated at Vadstena and was passed on from one monastery to the next, that would necessarily accrete variations and adaptations through the ongoing copying process, but would still preserve large parts of a core liturgy? An in-depth study of the processional

no 183; for the cult of Saint Anne, see Birgitta, Rev. VI:104; Nixon 2004, pp. 75–76; Räsänen 2009.
liturgy of the Birgittine order and its sources still needs to be undertaken, but an initial comparison of the south German manuscripts with several processions from Vadstena and one manuscript from Syon Abbey indicates a diversity that exceeds the slight variations in the transmission history of the Birgittine office liturgy. Most of the manuscripts attributed to the use of Vadstena from the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries transmit a common core of processional chants. Even at Vadstena, however, the structure of the processional liturgy was constantly reworked and adjusted, in all likelihood, to enhance ease of performance. The diversity within the sources of Vadstena speaks clearly against the philological ideal of one ‘Urhandschrift’ that originated in a ‘perfect’ form and was degraded in the transmission process through the introduction of mistakes. Comparing the Maihingen sources with one of several processions that have survived from Syon reveals a different processional liturgy, showing scarcely any parallels with the south German use of the order.

How do the three south German processions fit into this picture? A comparison reveals that important parts of the processional liturgy of Maihingen are based on templates that must have originated in Vadstena. Among the Vadstena sources the directorium chori (Uppsala, University Library, MS C 485) from the end of the fifteenth century comes closest to the initial formulas of the Maihingen processions. A remarkable correspondence is visible up to folio 40v. The formulas for Saint Birgitta, Easter, Annunciation of the Virgin, Ascension, Corpus Christi, Trinity, Saints Peter and Paul, All Saints, Nativity of Mary, and the ceremony of foot washing share many of the same chants. To a slightly lesser degree these parallels are also visible in the processions Uppsala, University Library, MS C 472 and MS C 482. The structure of the initial formulas in MS

17. Whereas in most cases these structural variations in Vadstena clearly do not intend to uproot the established practice, one manuscript deviates more than the others: the formulas in Uppsala University Library, MS C 506 are shortened to only one responsory and one antiphon (the latter bearing the remark that the chants were to be sung while returning to the choir), thus remarkably limiting the time assigned for processions. It is clear though that this reworking of the liturgy is based on previous Vadstena practice. At this point I do not want to speculate if the differences between MS C 506 and the other manuscripts attributed to the use of Vadstena in the C-collection of Uppsala University Library might indicate the need to discuss another provenance for this manuscript, since later Vadstena sources do not seem to further disseminate this revision.

C 472 and MS C 482 differs from the Maihingen processions. The liturgies of foot washing, on the other hand, correspond to a large extent. Even the slightly younger processional, Uppsala, University Library, MS C 506, from the first decade of the sixteenth century, the formulas of which seem to be the result of a large-scale revision and radical shortening of the previous Vadstena liturgy, has a few traits in common with the Maihingen manuscripts.\(^{21}\)

Remarkable discrepancies between the Maihingen and Vadstena processions become visible in the Marian formulas. Most of these chants in Maihingen (e.g. Stockholm processional, fols. 29v–36r) can be traced to the *Cantus sororum*, but the Maihingen formulas were not those used in the processional liturgy of Vadstena. It is unclear where these formulas were compiled. It is possible that they were assembled in the first south German monastery at Gnadenberg, the probable place of origin of the Maihingen processional that is today housed in Augsburg.

One group of chants that is not found in Vadstena processions is of particular interest, since the Maihingen sources connect them to the core of the Birgittine processional liturgy. The responsories *Sicut spinarum, Perhenniter sit*, and *Palluerunt pie matris* are grouped to form a separate formula. All three chants are original compositions of the *Cantus sororum*. Their festive melodies in the first, third, and sixth mode were the musical highlights of the matins liturgy on Friday. The rubric ‘freytag’ in the Munich processional (fol. 42r) informs us about their use as processional chants. The three responsories must have been performed twice every Friday, the first time as framing chants for the seven penitential psalms during the weekly procession and a second time to complement the reading from the *Sermo angelicus* at matins. Unfortunately we do not know if this practice was also followed in other monasteries or if it may have originated in Gnadenberg.

The liturgy of foot washing is followed by a peculiar unmarked formula in the processions in Stockholm (61r–62v) and Augsburg (92r–94r). The antiphon *Congregate sunt gentes* and the responsory *Congregati sunt inimici* are otherwise not documented in Birgittine manuscripts. In a small group of Franciscan antiphoners, primarily from Italy, the chants are part of the formula ‘de machabeis’, a feast celebrated on the first day of August in many orders and dioceses (including Augsburg and Linköping), along with Saint Peter in Chains.\(^{22}\) As Christoph Auffahrt has convincingly argued, the widespread cult

\(^{22}\) See Cantus database, cantusdatabase.org/id/205384: Assisi, Cattedrale San Rufino, MS 5; Assisi, Biblioteca comunale, MS 694; Napoli, Biblioteca nazionale Vittorio Emanuele, MS III, vi. E. 20; The Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat.
of the Seven Maccabean Brothers originated during the crusades. The book of II Maccabees in the Old Testament centres on the reclaiming of the temple in Jerusalem from the Syrians in 161 BCE. It tells the story of seven brothers who gave their lives in order to remain steadfast in their Jewish faith and practice. This narrative was appropriated since medieval crusaders needed hagiographic models to sacralize and historicize their endeavours, as they once again sought to recapture Jerusalem from the pagans and possibly face a martyr’s death. Only after the veneration of the Maccabees had been initiated on a popular level, did Bernard of Clairvaux and other theologians join in, promoting what he termed the brothers’ ‘joy in death’ and thus linking Israel in the Hebrew Bible to their own causes – the hegemony of European powers in the Levant. Also north of the Alps, particularly in the Rhineland, the Maccabean Brothers had become the focus of special veneration, when, in 1184, Archbishop Rainald von Dassel brought their relics to Cologne.

On which day and in which context these chants were used in the liturgy of Maihingen and possibly Gnadenberg is unclear, but the connection to the Maccabean Brothers must have been recognized. The formula might indicate ties between the south German Birgittines and Rhenish Birgittine monasteries, such as Marienforst near Bonn. In the processional in Stockholm a later hand added the marginal note ‘contra turcas’ (fol. 61r), suggesting that this formula was sung at times when the empire was threatened by Osman troops and the appropriation of the Maccabean Brothers seemed germane. A first attack on the territory of the Holy Roman Empire occurred in 1529 when a Turkish army besieged Vienna.

Unfortunately we will never know in which form and through which channels the various parts of the processional liturgy arrived in south Germany. Based on the better-documented transmission of the writings of Saint Birgitta among the three south German monasteries, we may assume that the monastery at Gnadenberg provided the initial templates that travelled with the founding sisters to Maihingen. The lack of a complete set of rubrics in the Augsburg processional, as well as the omission of some formulas, make it unlikely that this particular manuscript was the only source sent from Gnadenberg. Even less clear are the sources from which Gnadenberg obtained its processional liturgy.

8737; Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 24; Dubrovnik, Franjevacki Samostan, MS Cod. F; Fribourg, Bibliothèque des Cordeliers, MS 2; Munich, Franziskanerkloster St Anna, MS 120 Cmm 1.

Tore Nyberg analyzed the complex founding history of Gnadenberg, which involved many individuals and institutions.\textsuperscript{25} The initiator and co-founder of the monastery, Catherina of Pomerania-Stolp, wife to Count John Palatine of Neumarkt, sister of Erik of Pomerania, king of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and mother of Christopher of Bavaria, future monarch of the three Nordic kingdoms, had spent part of her youth in Vadstena. Throughout her lifetime she kept close contacts in the Nordic countries. However, the first fathers of Gnadenberg did not originate in the Nordic countries but probably in Italy. Based on historical sources it seems likely that in 1425, shortly after papal permission for the new monastery had been granted, a group of clerics was dispatched from the monastery of Paradiso near Florence. We may assume that the fathers brought their liturgical books with them, and, since the texts of the order also stipulate that the clerics should process in their ambulatory, it is likely that processions crossed the Alps. Unfortunately this initial foundation fell within one of the most threatening periods for the existence of the Birgittine order. In 1422 Pope Martin V had forbidden the founding of monasteries with male and female convents, thus bringing initial plans for establishing a monastery that followed the Rule of Saint Birgitta to a halt. Although some Birgittine monasteries, mainly in England and the Nordic countries, received exemptions, the situation for Gnadenberg did not change until the mid 1430s when the position of the order was strengthened at the council of Basel. Upon the death of Pope Martin V, his policy against double monasteries was finally revoked. In 1435, under the protection of Emperor Sigismund I, the monastery of Gnadenberg was founded a second time through a bull issued by Pope Eugene IV. This facilitated the addition of a nuns’ convent. It was not Paradiso but Maribo in Denmark that was asked to send the founding nuns. The enclosure of four Danish nuns was performed by the bishop of Eichstätt in the year 1438, thus finally completing a lengthy foundation process. For the following decades direct contacts between Gnadenberg and Vadstena are documented, as well as an interest in keeping up with changes in the liturgy of the order. In 1490 the confessor general of Gnadenberg, Willibald Marstaller, wrote to Vadstena inquiring about the liturgical veneration of Saint Katarina, the daughter of Saint Birgitta,\textsuperscript{26} and her relics. Katarina’s cult had been formally introduced to Vadstena the previous year. Thus it is clear that contact was ongoing and liturgical sources may have been sent from the mother house to Gnadenberg.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Nyberg 1965, pp. 136–145.
\textsuperscript{26} Nyberg 1972–1974, no. 187.
\textsuperscript{27} Nyberg 1965, pp. 136–137.
Based on these connections and interactions – which in reality must have been far more complex – a single source for the formation of a local liturgy does not seem likely. Unfortunately it is not possible to peel away the many liturgical layers that must have come together at Gnadenberg and that were united into the one processional that is believed to survive, which was subsequently used in Maihingen and is today in Augsburg. The comparison with Vadstena sources suggests that a redactor at Gnadenberg merged different templates and might have added specific Gnadenberg content.

This leads to another question: Who compiled the processional liturgy used at Maihingen? The manuscripts do not give us any indication about the original Gnadenberg redactors. What is more revealing in terms of agency though is the new Maihingen index. The redactor(s) obviously wanted to assemble formulas of comparable length, consisting of five or six chants. The only exceptions were the formula for Saint Anne with four chants and the formula for church dedication with a total of seven chants. The number of chants most likely indicated the importance of the feast within the monastery, since feasts for the *temporale* and for Mary and Saint Birgitta, comprised the highest number of chants.

We also note an additional element: the old processional liturgy at Maihingen did not incorporate the recurrence of chants. In the revised liturgy, the majority of the chants were again assigned to only one feast, with several notable exceptions. The antiphon *Preciosi sunt sancti*, a chant that most likely originated in Sweden and found use in formulas for feasts of the display of relics, provides the culmination for no less than ten formulas. Eight formulas contain the widely used antiphon *Salvator mundi*, which in other liturgical traditions is frequently part of vespers for All Saints; seven formulas feature the antiphon *Regina caeli letare*, which is often associated with Marian feasts; six formulas include the responsory *Beata mater anna*, an original composition for the Birgittine Wednesday matins liturgy. Could it be that this selection reflects the ‘top of the pops’ within the monastery, indicating that the most beloved chants were deliberately selected for wider use than before? Considering the complexity and length of some of these melodies, this assumption seems plausible. In the case of the rather short antiphon *Preciosi sunt sancti* an additional explanation is evident: the *Revelationes pertinentes* mandate that the nuns should carry any available relics while processing. It seems likely that the nuns at Maihingen knew about the original use of this chant and connected it to their collection of relics. These surely were their greatest treasures as we can see from the description of the arrival of relics of Saint Birgitta at the monastery. The nuns took them to their choir and had them rubbed over their
That the sisters took control of their relics can also be seen in the necrology entry of Appolonia Fugger of Augsburg in the house book of Maihingen. She is described as an intelligent woman of many talents, a capable painter and good at working with silk. Appolonia is particularly lauded for mounting or framing relics in two golden panels. Unfortunately no list of relics has survived from Maihingen, but we may assume that appropriate relics were present, not only for the feasts of Birgitta but also for the Virgin. Perhaps the antiphon was adopted whenever relics were carried in procession.

Taking all these observations into account, one may assume that primarily practical matters dominated the reworking of the processional liturgy at Maihingen: the roughly equal length of the formulas indicates that they could be fine-tuned to accommodate the specific spatial needs of the Maihingen cloister, thus creating a fixed and repeatable time-space **continuum** to which the sisters could adjust their pace. When processing at the same speed and controlling the movement of the group through their singing, the sisters could plan the timeframe for the procession and decide at which point they would ascend, still singing, to their choir to perform the closing litany. The redaction of the processional liturgy at Maihingen occurred before the planning and construction of the expanded cloister, which took place from 1516 to 1519. In one of her letters, Katerina Lemmel mentions that prior to her arrival, only two sides of the cloister had been erected. She likewise laments that prior to her rebuilding of the cloister, the sisters could not process without fear that the old structure would collapse. It is hard to tell how processions in a two-sided cloisterwalk would have been performed, but with the erection of the remodelled and completed cloister, the problem was solved.

All of the above observations speak for the nuns taking control of their cloister, moulding it so that they were able efficiently and piously to perform the processional liturgy. Within a space that was inaccessible to the confessor general and the other fathers, free artistic expression and creativity through administration and patronage were possible, as evidenced in the programme for the cycle of stained glass developed by Katerina Lemmel. In this setting the

30. We do not know which relics might have been used for the feast of Saint Michael. Also for his feast the antiphon **Preciosi sunt sancti** was sung.
imported liturgy of Gnadenberg must have been scrutinized and reworked by those who performed it, the cantrix and the other nuns.

One important question remains to be answered: What role did the year 1499 play in the reshaping of the processional liturgy? I must admit that I have no clear answer. Looking at the history of the monastery I see only one major change that took place two years earlier when fifteen sisters were dispatched to settle and found the new Birgittine monastery at Altomünster. We know that each of the nuns not only took along her own bedding, but also her liturgical books.\(^{32}\) Based on the names written into the processions from Syon Abbey, Christopher de Hamel convincingly argued that at the English house of the order, two nuns shared one processional.\(^ {33}\) If this was also the practice at Maihingen then seven or eight processions would have left the convent. If each nun indeed had her own book, then as many as fifteen books may have been removed from the Maihingen collection of liturgical manuscripts. We may assume that with the next nuns seeking entry at Maihingen the need to produce or obtain replacement manuscripts became an issue. The house book of the monastery informs us that only three nuns professed between 1497 and 1499.\(^ {34}\) By 1499 the abbess and the convent must have been notified that several postulants were applying for entry into the nunnery the following year.

It might have been at this moment, when multiple copies of an identical manuscript needed to be produced, that a general revision of the processional practice in Maihingen made the most sense. Several nuns at Maihingen copied books, the multi-talented Sister Katharina Joppel from Nuremberg may be mentioned as one prolific scribe among several. We can thus assume that large parts of the production might have been completed efficiently and also economically within the monastery.\(^ {35}\) In other cases large-scale revisions of liturgical practices necessitated the difficult process of recompiling the entire structure of a master template, a complex process that was often more time-consuming than the writing of the book. Perhaps the nuns felt that this task was too complex and tedious. The inclusion of new indexes into the existing manuscripts was sufficient to upgrade them. In the case of new processions, the most efficient approach must have been to copy an existing processional and leave out all the old rubrics. This process erased the formatting and structure of the collection in a manner similar to the process of deleting files on a computer hard drive today.

33. de Hamel 1991, p. 86.
35. Schleif and Schier 2009, pp. 84–85.
Only the structure is removed, the content is still present and can be ‘undeleted’ by applying a new index. The Stockholm processional appears to be one of these ‘reformatted’ manuscripts for the new processional liturgy of Maria Mai.

In spite of their claims to the contrary, liturgical texts were not only regulatory and readerly, but could become increasingly writerly in the hands of the Birgittine nuns. The reworking of an established liturgy by the nuns of Maihingen not only demonstrates the creative potential at the heart of a system that has been deemed by many scholars as stable and clerically controlled, but also shows the extent to which a revision could drastically reshuffle a corpus of chants in order to meet specific spatial needs and aesthetic predilections.

**APPENDIX:**

*Processional Liturgy in Maihingen*

See the chart attached to the end of this volume.
ASSISI
Cattedrale San Rufino, MS 5
Biblioteca comunale, MS 694

AUGSBURG
University Library, MS II 1 4° 68

CHICAGO
Newberry Library, MS 24

DUBROVNIK
Franjevacki Samostan, MS Cod. F

FRIBOURG
Bibliothèque des Cordeliers, MS 2

MUNICH
Franziskanerkloster St Anna, MS 120 Cmm 1
University Library, MS 4° cod. ms. 176

NAPLES
Biblioteca nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, MS vi. E. 20

SOUTH BRENT
Syon Abbey, MS 1

STOCKHOLM
Kungliga biblioteket (National Library), MS A 92a
Riksarkivet (National Archives), MS S 139 a, MS S 139 b

UPPSALA
Uppsala University Library, MS C 442, MS C 472, MS C 473, MS C 482, MS C 485, MS C 506

THE VATICAN
Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 8737

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sfss = Samlingar urtagna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet.


website

cantusdatabase.org (accessed 4 December 2012).
eva-marie letzter

Teaching by Example

Exempla Used in Birgitta’s Revelations and in Old Swedish Popular Sermons

Introduction

In order for a speaker to be persuasive, knowledge of the audience is crucial. The speaker must be able to choose his or her words well to gain the attention of those addressed. This awareness is not new. By the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the sermon was turned into a true mass-medium. At this time, Catholic preaching altered its emphasis from early medieval preaching that was largely monastic and clerical to the needs of wider audiences, a trait that was particularly embraced by the mendicant friars who in the thirteenth century were given papal permission to preach. Standardization and popularization affected preaching in many ways. One of the most notable changes, favoured not least by the ars praedicandi genre, was the frequent insertion of edifying tales called exempla into sermons and religious literature in the high and late Middle Ages. Over time, the popularity of the exemplum also reached the northern periphery of Europe. In Sweden sermon collections and edification literature were imported, and eventually Swedish versions evolved in both Latin and in the vernacular.

The purpose of this essay is to emphasize some of the basic strategies used in medieval exempla to target different audiences. This will be achieved by the close comparison of some typical exempla found in Saint Birgitta’s fourteenth century Revelations and in old Swedish popular sermons from the fifteenth century.

3. Roger Andersson has made several contributions to the study of medieval Swedish sermon collections and their exempla. He identifies two groupings within the collections; one older, more elaborate group and one younger, popular group, which consists of exempla-rich sermons. Sermons from this second group are the sources for this study. The design of Swedish popular sermons can be traced back to mendicant preaching, but there are also signs of Birgittine influence from the fifteenth century. Andersson
As God’s prophet, Birgitta speaks for the reformation of all Christians, but even so, it is the influential clerical and secular rulers of Europe, her aristocratic peers, who are held responsible for the maintaining of moral standards in society and therefore they are the ones addressed. The Swedish popular sermons, on the other hand, were presumably written by clerics or friars who were educated in the art of preaching. Their aim was to teach and make comprehensible the doctrines of the Christian faith to the masses in the Swedish realm. This dichotomy regarding the authors and their recipients in turn suggests that the exempla may present distinct properties of persuasion in the structure and messages of their different sources.

In this essay, three representative exempla will be closely compared. Choosing them, I have carefully categorised and examined about 100 different exempla in the Birgitta sources, and about 140 different exempla in the Swedish popular sermons. In particular, the moral tendencies and the narrative elements in the stories have been studied – as will be evident from the analysis that follows. The exempla in the Birgitta sources are found exclusively in the eight books of Revelations and in the Extravagantes. Regarding the Swedish popular sermons, I have surveyed exempla in the imported model-sermons which were edited and translated into old Swedish in a Birgittine environment. These collections have been published in the volumes of Svensk medeltids-postilla (SMP 4–5), by Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet (SFSS), and in Svensk Järteckenspostilla (JäP), by Rietz.

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1. I use the term ‘prophet’ in the sense outlined in Piltz 2003, pp. 29–30.
2. Alf Härdelin argues that Birgitta often took her examples from influential individuals in society although her message was bestowed upon all people; Härdelin 1998, pp. 91–92.
4. There are narratives in the Revelations which are strongly reminiscent of exempla such as Rev. III:13, §12 and IV:30, §1. Yet these should not be taken as independent moral stories but as references to sayings or well-known stories. Even other narratives like I:55, §1–11 and IV:58, §1–4 lack a concluding moral consequence. Thus they lack the penitential element so vital for the exemplum. See the exemplum definition given below.
5. There are three more sermon collections which are considered to be popular: SMP 6–7 and parts of SMP 3. However, most of these collections are written in mixed languages, like SMP 6 which displays a mixture of Old Swedish and Norwegian, and SMP 3 which is Swedish and Danish, suggesting that they were intended for use outside the Swedish realm. SMP 7 is severely fragmentary and has therefore been excluded. See Andersson 1991a, p. 492; Andersson 2010, pp. 156–157.
Before looking into how each of the three exempla is used to highlight moral messages, I will briefly pay some attention to the typology of the medieval exemplum itself. How can it be described and what qualities does it have?

**Typology and Subcategories of the exemplum**

Christian exempla were inspired by learned and folkloric sources like the Bible, classical mythology, fables, legends and real-life experiences. In fact, preachers saved many ancient tales from oblivion by editing them into useful exempla and by passing them on as preaching aids in catalogues. However, there were apparently different ideas about the term exemplum, a confusion which may be seen in the various medieval definitions. Indeed, medieval culture has been characterized as keenly interested in using narrative but less so in discussing it. Some medieval authors employed the term in the sense of an ordinary example while others saw it as an illustrative tale and sometimes added the notion of a moral discussion.

Since the late nineteenth century scholars have nevertheless tried to narrow down one solid definition of the medieval Christian exemplum. Among the most influential contributions one finds Claude Brémond, Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt who together provide the now-standard definition, namely ‘a brief narrative given as true and destined to be inserted in a discourse (generally a sermon) in order to convince an audience by means of a salutary lesson’. In a more recent essay Brémond additionally argues that the exemplum should not be perceived as a genre of literature but rather a genre of message, narrative and didactic. He means that an exemplum acts as a rhetorical vehicle that is indeed extra-literary.

12. Among others see the introductions to Crane 1890 and Mosher 1911, and the influential work of Welter 1927.
13. Brémond, Le Goff and Schmitt 1982, pp. 37–38. Translation of: ‘un récit bref donné comme véridique et destiné à être inséré dans un discours (en général un sermon) pour convaincre un auditoire par une leçon salutaire’. According to the authors, the narrative may be ‘donné comme véridique’, historically, as if it really happened. Yet, in the case of the animal exemplum it may also carry qualities of what really happened. See the discussion in Brémond, Le Goff and Schmitt 1982, p. 37.
If the definition offered by Brémond, Le Goff and Schmitt is perceived in an inclusive sense, I find it to correspond reasonably well with the exempla used in the *Revelations* and in Swedish popular sermons.\(^{15}\) When examining these sources, it becomes clear that their exempla allude to diverse literary genres, though all have been turned into instruments of moral teaching, advocating penitence amongst their listeners. When narrowing down what an exemplum is, there is, of course, a need to recognise that there are differences among exempla. Indeed, attempts have been made to specify subcategories of exempla.\(^{16}\) The question is what kind of classifications should be made in order to get at the core of their moral teaching? In my analysis of the sources I find it useful to categorize exempla based on the manner in which they are used and comprehended. All exempla take their strength from a moral message, but they transmit this message differently. Consequently, I separate parabolic exempla that allegorize reality from anecdotal ones that present stories in an explicit sense. In the first category exempla always have an allegorical (indirect) meaning affiliated to them – even though they make perfectly logical stories in themselves – while exempla in the second category should be understood literally (directly).\(^ {17}\)

With regard to Birgitta’s exempla, both of these subcategories are present. As is familiar to Birgittine scholars, the rich figurative language of the Revelations displays a range of parables. Many of these parables may in fact be held as exempla, since they convey salutary lessons in the form of autonomous stories. In the conversations between Birgitta and the heavenly voices, parabolic exempla are used as illustrations for moral principles which are otherwise said

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\(^{15}\) In this article I do not distinguish the exemplum as sharply from the *similitudo* or the fabula as Brémond, Le Goff and Schmitt do. In their discussion the exemplum is set apart as a rhetorical argument taken from history (Brémond, Le Goff & Schmitt 1982 pp. 31–32, 155–158). Here the exemplum is more widely stressed as an exemplary story which highlights a moral lesson, be it historically or symbolically. This divergence from the standard notion of the exemplum can be found necessary, especially when dealing with the *Revelations*, where the distinctions between real-life stories, similes and metaphors are sometimes blurry. In this article such ‘elusive’ stories will be discussed as parabolic exempla.


\(^{17}\) In this I have taken inspiration from the literary anthropologist Wanda Ostrowska Kaufmann. Above all, she distinguishes between exempla with fictional and non-fictional nuclei (plots). According to her, the parabolic and anecdotal exemplum are both derived from non-fictional genres, Kaufmann 1996, pp. 12–20. I instead make a distinction between allegorical and literal usage of the plot, whereby the parabolic exemplum can be separated from the anecdotal.
to be incomprehensible to the human mind. Elsewhere Birgitta’s exempla are found to be historical anecdotes, and these are sometimes signalled by headings like *declaracio* (‘explanation’) or *addicio* (‘addition’) in the revelation text. These anecdotes interrupt the flow of divine visions by revealing factual details about individuals and incidents that appear in the visions or by explaining the historical background to the visions. Their objective is to empower the main revelation text with authentic proof of the moral discussed.

Turning to Swedish popular sermons, there are almost only anecdotal exempla to be found. One of the few parabolic exempla is the parable about a monkey with two young, who represent man, man’s love of the world and man’s conscience. Such parables are nonetheless overshadowed by the numerous anecdotes in the factual exposition of the sermon. Usually the exempla are referred to as an *epterdömlisse* (‘judgment given by history’) or as a *järtekne* (‘omen’), which God allowed to unfold in order to give humanity valuable lessons. In the Swedish popular sermons anecdotal exempla are accordingly employed as testimonies of God’s relationship with mankind. Many of the stories can be traced back to continental exempla catalogues from the thirteenth century, though some of them actually date back even further, to the early Middle Ages. Only a minority of the exempla are considered to originate in Sweden, which proves that continental stories were considered suitable for the Swedish population.

There are, in other words, different means of using exempla and as didactic instruments they are actually employed somewhat differently in the *Revelations* and Swedish popular sermons. Now, to further analyse the distinctive features of the exempla and their strategies of persuasion, a closer look at three typical samples is required.

18. This is put forward several times in connection with parabolic exempla. Also see Bergquist 2003, pp. 119–120.
19. Klockars 1966, p. 53; Also see Odelman 1993, pp. 15–20. Thus these additions were not authored by Birgitta herself, but added later by her confessors.
20. SMP 4, pp. 155–156.
22. Investigating the origin of the exempla, several of them may be found in French and German exempla-collections, though some, such as the one about the prostitute Thais in SMP 5, pp. 35–37, or the one about Saint Makarios in SMP 4, p. 130, originate in the lives of the desert fathers in Egypt in the fourth century.
THE PARABOLIC BIRGITTA exemplum

Mankind’s comprehension of the world is limited compared to God’s unfathomable wisdom. With her earthly eyes, Birgitta is unable to see the spiritual reality operating in the world. She may only perceive and put into words the material appearance of things. For this reason, God materialises his divine message for her in stories which take their motives from human emotions and everyday life. In chapter 66 of Book VI of the Revelations, Christ begins by telling Birgitta a story about a powerful lord and his wife:

A certain lord married a woman for whom he built a home. He made arrangements for her to have servants and attendants as well as food supplies. Then he went abroad. When the master at long last returned, he heard that his wife had a bad reputation, that the servants were disobedient and the attendants dishonest. In his anger, he handed his wife over to be judged, the servants to be tortured and the attendants to be whipped.24

After presenting this narrative, it is spelled out as a parable. Christ explains that he is the lord who created the human soul, a being with a free will who in this story is the wife. Furthermore he gave the human soul a body, which is represented by the home, and additionally he provided mankind with food supplies; the necessities in life. Among other things God gave humans their five senses and virtues; these are the servants and attendants. But in great ingratitude humans have now turned away from God and they have begun to sin with their senses and to twist their virtues into vices. Therefore, when Christ returns on the Day of Judgment, the corrupt Christians and all other sinners will be rightfully judged and punished, just as the wife was, along with her servants and attendants.25

From this interpretation, given by Christ, it is obvious that the parabolic exemplum, besides delivering a moral lesson on behaviour, is used to illustrate spiritual matters. This is an element which is essentially typical for Birgitta’s parabolic exempla. While this story clarifies the treacherous nature of humans, others in the Revelations deal with humankind’s liberty to choose the rightful path in life by depicting lost wanderers or maids who have to be on their guard against deceitful advisors.26 Another common theme in Birgitta’s parabolic exempla deals with the ongoing struggle between God’s friends and lurking evil forces. This struggle is sometimes depicted as that of landowners and herdsman

25. See the comments following the exemplum in Birgitta, Rev. VI:66.
26. For wanderers, see Birgitta, Rev. III:12, §6–8; IV:4, §18–19; IV:107, §9–12 and for maidens, see among others Rev. II:21, §16–28; III:24, §2–9; IV:75, §10–15.
protecting their pastures and flocks against devilish predators,\textsuperscript{27} or as a pitched battle in which knights fight against enemies.\textsuperscript{28} What is present in all of these allegories is that they always connect to the spiritual relationship between God and man. Still, this relationship is displayed in a variety of ways, and some appear more allegorical than others.

To return to the exemplum above, the sacred bond between God and mankind is distinguished in bridal mysticism and unfolded in the shape of an expressive family drama.\textsuperscript{29} God is not only seen as the Creator of mankind; as Christ, God is also the bridegroom who offered humanity his love and forgiveness only to be betrayed, as the nobleman was. At the same time, the audience is told about the connections between the human soul, its body, its senses and its virtues. All of these spiritual relationships are made visible on the two levels on which the story may be comprehended: literally and allegorically. There is the literal understanding of the unfaithful wife and her disgraceful household who break God’s sixth commandment while the good lord is away, and, in addition, they are also symbols of abstract matters, that is, man’s clash with God.

Consequently there is a play of metaphors in Birgitta’s parabolic exempla, in which people of different social ranks are used. It is a play in which the social ranks in this world are transmitted to the spiritual world. On the one hand, the lord and his wife illustrate the difference in rank between God and man, while on the other hand, the wife, her servants and her attendants demonstrates the difference in rank between the human soul, her senses and her virtues, setting up a chain of obedience. To please her husband, the wife has to be in command of her household, which is equivalent to the human soul which has to govern the body in order to please God.

A further element in this story, very typical of Birgitta’s exempla in general, is that it conveys the perspective of the prosperous few in society. Predominantly it is the lives and affairs of kings, ladies, knights and church officials that are employed to capture the attention of those addressed. Equally, God frequently takes on the position of an esteemed protagonist, be it in the metaphor of a husband, a supervisor or a lord.\textsuperscript{30} The unprivileged classes of commoners are for their part depicted as servants or as subjects, whenever they take part in the

\textsuperscript{27} Birgitta, Rev. I:59, §2–11; VIII:18, §3–10.

\textsuperscript{28} Birgitta, Rev. II:6, §1–10; II:8, §5–24.

\textsuperscript{29} Nina Sjöberg gives an interesting account of the different features of wives and husbands in the symbolic family dramas in the *Revelations*. These features correlate quite well with those found in the exempla. Sjöberg 2003, pp. 36–38, 110–123.

\textsuperscript{30} See, for instance, Birgitta, Rev. III:31, §1–12; IV:135, §1–5; VIII:18, §3–10.
plot. In a similar way to the story above, they are portrayed as tools available to humanity. On the micro level the lower classes are found as vital instruments of the human mind, instruments that are controlled by the will (the privileged classes), and on the macro level the lower classes are limbs of society which perform necessary work for the other organs.\(^1\) Among other issues this exemplum accordingly brings legitimacy to the social order amongst men by referring to its spiritual equivalence.

Nevertheless, the primary lesson given in the parabolic exemplum about the lord and his wife is that no offence committed in this world will escape God’s justice. More precisely, the exemplum conveys moral criticism of contemporary society, giving voice to Birgitta’s condemnation of her privileged peers, whom in her eyes had moved the furthest away from God.\(^2\) They are also held responsible for much of the corruption in the world. Under their guidance, Christian society has become unfaithful and vicious, and it is this behaviour which will lead to punishment in the afterlife if it is not stopped. According to God, this is the destiny that awaits all of those who do not take the words transmitted by Birgitta sincerely and repent their sins before it is too late.

**THE ANECDOTAL BIRGITTA exemplum**

Just like the parabolic exempla, the anecdotal ones often depict people from the privileged classes in society. These moral anecdotes are supposed to appear as if they have been taken directly from Birgitta’s life and from the stories she heard about her contemporaries, about saints and biblical personalities. As a woman of the Swedish aristocracy, it was natural for Birgitta to meet with her continental peers and to share an interest in them and in their ancestors’ deeds. Without entering into the discussion as to whether the anecdotal exempla really contain accurate information about Birgitta and other people, there is no doubt that they deal with issues that were of current concern in European society during the mid- and second half of the fourteenth century.

This is certainly the case for the story of Birgitta’s encounter with an idle brother, to which the whole of chapter 93 of Book IV of the *Revelations* is devoted. In this revelation, Christ discusses the wrongdoings of the brother by giving some insights into how the brother was thinking. Christ explains that the brother entered the monastery on false grounds. He thought that in this

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\(^2\) Fogelqvist 1993, p. 31.
manner he could evade hard work and still enjoy delicious food and other carnal pleasures. But all the same, his worldly desires came to be his ruin when fatal illness struck him. Had it not been for God’s mercy in sending Birgitta to his aid, the brother would have deserved hell. Instead the brother’s soul is now being chastised in the purifying fire of purgatory since he had a change of heart just before he died. At the end of the revelation, the following anecdotal exemplum is given to provide historical insight into the critical moment when Birgitta helped to save the brother:

This brother had a secret sin and never wished to confess it. On the command of Christ, Lady Birgitta went to him and said: ‘Do more diligent penance, for there is something hidden in your heart, and as long as you keep it shut up, you will not be able to die.’ He answered her that there was nothing that he had not made known in confession. But she said: ‘Examine your intention upon entering the monastery and with what intention you have lived up to now, and you shall find the truth in your heart.’ Then he broke into tears and said: ‘Blessed be God who has sent you to me! Now that you have spoken of my secret, I am willing to tell the truth to those listening. I do have something hidden in my heart that I never dared nor could bring out. As often as I have repented in confession of my other sins, my tongue was always tied about this one. An exceedingly great shame took hold of me, and I could not confess the secret remorse of my heart. Each time I made confession of my heart, I invented for myself a new conclusion to my wording. I used to say: “Father, I confess my guilt to you concerning all the sins I have mentioned and even any others that I have not mentioned.” I thought that in this way all my hidden sins would be pardoned. But now, my Lady, if it please God, I will gladly tell the whole world about all I have concealed in my heart for so long a time.’

A confessor was called, and he made a complete and tearful declaration of his sins. He died that very night.

From the dialogue in this anecdotal exemplum, the characters of Birgitta and the brother are fleshed out. The audience learns that the brother purposely withheld his sins although he knew very well that he should not. The moral message to be learned here is that one has to practise what one preaches. Hypocrisy among men will never go undetected and unpunished, and this is a message which is especially significant for those who are set apart from others in society as intercessors. They have to teach by their own example or they will mislead

33. Birgitta, Rev. IV:93.
their fellow Christians.³⁵ A monk’s deceitfulness may therefore be comparable
to a wife’s adulterous behaviour. Both turn their hearts and minds from God
when they break their word. The brother does this by committing the deadly
sin of sloth.

If focus is now shifted from the idle brother to Birgitta, she performs one of
her most common functions in the exempla. She takes the role of a lecturer and
by doing so reverses some of the prevailing orders of authority in her time. As a
woman she reprimands a man and as a lay person she scolds an ecclesiastic on
the basis of Christian morals which the brother should know better than she.
It is a truly astonishing position that Birgitta establishes for herself in view of
medieval misogynistic society where a woman was never allowed to preach in
public. Nonetheless Birgitta’s authority, as shown in the Revelations, has been
described as similar to that of a priest or an ascetic.³⁶ Of course Birgitta never
portrays herself as acting on her own. She is merely transmitting God’s will to
those to whom she is commanded to by God. This is the alibi for her meddling
in the religious and political affairs of those who possess more power and educa­
tion than herself.³⁷

Thus, if one looks at the typical features of Birgitta’s anecdotal exempla it
becomes obvious that they often promote Birgitta as a prophet. She is shown as
a pious woman with God­given abilities. Primarily she is able to detect and help
the morally sick.³⁸ In the cited exemplum Birgitta is guided to the brother on
the explicit command of Christ, but on other occasions she detects a sinner by
sensing a bad odour coming from the person.³⁹ By other means Birgitta’s author­
ity is motivated by Christ who chose her as his spokeswoman, but her authority
is moreover implemented by her true predictions of the future. In her ability
to correctly foresee the outcome of events time and again, she convinces those
who are initially less willing to believe in her words.⁴⁰ And she is seldom afraid
to confront prominent people with her knowledge of them. Criticism towards
contemporaries is common both in the Revelations and in their exempla.

This hints at yet another interesting feature of Birgitta’s anecdotal exem­
pla which is the practical implementation of Birgitta’s reformist ambitions.
She wanted to morally reform society by awakening a greater moral awareness

³⁵. This is stated many times in the Revelations. Fogelqvist 1993, pp. 38–39, 43.
³⁸. Birgitta, Rev. IV:125, Declaracio §17–19; VI:81, §1–6.
³⁹. Birgitta, Rev. VI:87, §1–8; Extr. 81, §1–4; Extr. 108, §1–4.
among those who had the power to inspire others. While Birgitta’s parabolic exempla convey social criticism on an abstract level, the anecdotal ones pinpoint real-life individuals, primarily from Sweden and the Italian city-states, people who were known among the upper classes of the mid-fourteenth century. These are people whose names have often been censored in order to facilitate Birgitta’s canonization – a fact which elucidates how forceful Birgitta’s allegations were perceived to be. Thus, the anecdotal exempla take a strong position for and against some of the influential in society, as individuals are turned into examples of good and evil behaviour. In particular, those who opposed or supported Birgitta as a true prophet are highlighted. Churchmen, royals and nobles are all scrutinized, although servants and other people close to Birgitta are also remarked on occasionally.

In view of this, it can be stated that there are clear political objectives in Birgitta’s exempla. Birgitta wanted to change what she saw as immoral behaviour in society and to this end she needed to start with those holding power. Interestingly however, the preachers who used the Swedish popular sermons do not seem to have shared Birgitta’s negative views of society, as will be further investigated in the next section.

THE ANECDOTAL exemplum
IN THE SWEDISH POPULAR SERMONS

Moving on to the Swedish popular sermons, there are several structural differences between their anecdotal exempla and those of Birgitta which must be acknowledged. Although both sources convey popular knowledge, the former make no attempt to pick up on a more scholarly form of expression. The appeal to learned people, which is unmistakable in the Revelation’s rich figurative language, is by and large absent from the sermons. Instead the Swedish popular sermons display a colloquial style which has the capacity to appeal to a broad audience. This approach also tends to make the exempla longer than those in

41. Birger Bergh has commented on the editing of Birgitta’s confessor Alfonso of Jaén. Some of the sections which Alfonso removed were re-entered into later editions and into Ghotan’s ‘final’ edition in 1492. See Bergh 2003, pp. 47–48.
42. See, for instance, Birgitta, Rev. IV:113, Addicio §15–18; VI:30, §36–38; VI:90, §1–6; VI:92, §1–5.
43. See Birgitta remarking on the immoral behaviour of her servants, in Rev. VI:80, §1–6; VI:84, §1–5; Extr. 59, §1–3; Extr. 112, §1–3.
44. See also Tore Nyberg who proposes that Birgitta turned to the new elite in society: the knights of the lower aristocracy, Nyberg 2003, p. 93.
the Revelations, not least because they often provide more detailed intrigues. Still, the narrative structure of the sermons’ exempla is normally quite simple and much more uniform than in Birgitta’s.45

Prior to an anecdotal exemplum in the Swedish popular sermons, there is normally a discussion involving the scriptures and the sayings of holy men which leads up to it.46 A beautiful illustration of this is the sermon given on the first Sunday after Trinity. Here the preacher discusses how a true Christian ought to act by reciting the passage about poor Lazarus and the rich Pharisee from the Gospel of Luke and by reminding his congregation of Saint Benedict’s words, that he who refuses a starving fellow-Christian some of his own food is a murderer in God’s justice. From the Old Testament the preacher then cites the prophet Hosea, who claimed worldly riches to be the cause of man’s pride and neglect of God.47 Finally the profound meaning of this discussion is displayed in an exemplum which depicts a hermit and simple brickmaker whose destinies crossed:

In a forest there was a good and godly hermit. He used to go to the nearest market town to preach and teach God’s people. There he visited a poor brickmaker who was very kind and generous towards poor people. Though his revenues were neither large nor stable he was always kind towards the hermit whenever he came to him. And because he was so kind and generous, the hermit thought that it was ill-fated that the brickmaker was utterly poor. Therefore the hermit prayed to our Lord, among other prayers, that God would grant the same brickmaker a few more riches and worldly success, so that the brickmaker could prosper, together with the poor people whom he gladly wanted to care for.

As time passed by, our Lord heard his prayer and in a few years’ time the brickmaker became an incredibly rich man. He built himself a large and wonderful farmyard with big gates. There he tied big dogs to prevent poor people from coming in and accordingly, from making him less wealthy. Then it happened that the hermit wanted to visit the brickmaker, as he had done before. Yet this time the dogs ran up to him and tore his clothes so that it took him great pains to enter the farmyard. And when the hermit entered, all the master’s servants were angry since he had come in without their knowledge or permission while their master was not at home. So they drove him off and pushed him out through the gate again in great disgrace.

46. Andersson presents four examples of this in his analysis of the function of exempla, Andersson 1991b, pp. 274–281. After the exemplum is given, the sermon moves on to other subjects; it is thus commented on beforehand.
47. SMP 4, pp. 85–89.
The hermit returned to his home and wondered why the good man, his friend, had become so changed that poor people could no longer come to him. So he heard the voice of God who answered him thus: ‘You are in part responsible for the rich brickmaker’s loss of God’s friendship – which he had before in his poverty – because you prayed so loftily to God that he would be rich. Therefore you are bound to account for his soul.’ The good hermit became very upset and frightened by these words, and later the he prayed to our Lord that God would do with the brickmaker whatever was good, both for the man’s life and soul, so that he [the hermit] would no longer be held accountable for the brickmaker’s soul.

Accordingly, the wealth was soon lost through God’s sudden retribution and torment, whereby the brickmaker was compelled to see the hermit and complain about his distress and setback. Then the hermit told him all about how he had prayed for him and the guilt he was given by our Lord because of this. Now when the brickmaker heard this, he began to labour as he had done before and regretted his sins. By the grace of God he was thereafter given a decent living and he came to love poor people again, so that he became an even better friend of God.48

This anecdotal exemplum clearly proves the wisdom of the previous statements and at the same time it becomes an argument in itself. The exemplum warns the audience of the dangers of riches, and it reminds them of the importance of generosity. However, the most important lesson in this story is that humankind should always trust in God. To think of oneself as knowing better than God is unwise. The hermit misunderstood the situation when he thought that the poor brickmaker was ill-fated, since in reality his poverty was his blessing. Despite his pastoral knowledge, the hermit forgot that wealth may change the heart of a man and make him greedy and sinful. The hermit’s prayer for the brickmaker, asking God to grant him wealth, is accordingly the central point of the story. This is the incident that provokes the following events where the hermit is proven to be an accessory in the drama. He has by his action made himself partly responsible for the fate of the brickmaker, and the brickmaker’s recovery from greed therefore becomes a relief for both parties.

In other words, the moral message highlights the interaction between people in society. If the example is studied more closely, one will discover that there is an integrated social aspect. The characters learn that their faiths are interwoven; that the acts of another have a direct impact on themselves. Greed is proven to be dire not only for the soul of the person committing this deadly sin but for those surrounding him. The social aspect of sin may seem self-evident, but it is nonetheless worth mentioning since Birgitta’s exempla habitually focus either on

the personal relationship between God and humankind in allegorical plots or on
the individual sinner, as was discussed earlier. Hence, there is a collective dimen-
sion in the story about the hermit and the brickmaker that stresses Christians’
responsibility towards one another. And this is an aspect which is typical among
the anecdotal exemla in the Swedish popular sermons.49

It is most likely that the preacher, consistent with mendicant tradition, chose
plots that were strongly rooted in collective affairs because he thought that
these would interest the Swedish public. This may also be the reason behind
the folkloric influences in the exempla. Dancing maidens, ghosts wandering
among the living in broad daylight and a frightening catlike monster are just
some of the many folklore motives which are used in the name of Christianity.50
Accordingly, the purpose of the exempla in the Swedish popular sermons is
not to teach theology. They function as practical arguments for lay salvation.
Emphasis is laid on the teaching of popular devotion, and as in the present
exemplum about the hermit and the brickmaker, attention is not generally
brought to spiritual matters or to life after death; although the soul’s afterlife is
understood as an inevitable outcome of its earthly actions. Rather, concern is
paid to public conduct in civil society and to practical religious life.51

Another typical element in the above-cited anecdotal exemplum is that it
features an instructive relationship between laity and ecclesiastics. Strikingly,
there is what might be called a ‘mirror effect’ taking place in the Swedish popu-
lar sermons. This means that the ongoing preaching situation in church – the
authentic preacher’s speech to his congregation – is commonly mirrored in the
exempla. As could be noted, the hermit’s role as a moral teacher and preacher
was accentuated in the plot. In this exemplum the real preacher actually uses
a preaching protagonist to teach lay people the importance of generosity. The
authentic cleric or friar is, as it were, aided by a fictive colleague, and this is not
an act of coincidence. On the contrary, this mirroring technique seems to have
been quite effective given its frequency of use. Out of all the anecdotal exemla
in the Swedish popular sermons, more than half of them picture a cleric, a friar
or a situation which takes place in church.52

49. Three other striking examples of this are SMP 4, pp. 61–63; SMP 5, pp. 187–88 and
JäP, p. 34.
50. See maidens dancing in SMP 4, p. 80, SMP 5, pp. 69–71; ghosts in SMP 4, pp. 68–69,
51. Moreover, see the table in Andersson 1991b, p. 282.
52. See, for instance, the first half of SMP 4.
In a wider sense, all exempla might be said to reflect a touch of contemporary human existence and echo the spirit of their society. Birgitta’s exempla, it may be remembered, often bring to life her ambitions to morally improve the world, which she saw as her duty to save. Birgitta’s words are generally meant to frighten and to discipline moral awareness into her audience. However, a different picture emerges from the Swedish popular sermons. Here the audience is often approached with a lighter tone which is well-represented in the present exemplum. God’s judgment is revealed to be compassionate towards the two failing men and there is a genuinely happy ending to the story. When the brickmaker regrets his greed he is given a decent living and so he ends up as an even better Christian than before. A similar happy ending may be seen in many other anecdotal exempla in the Swedish popular sermons, where former sinners come to terms with their misdeeds, or where victims of crime become reconciled with their perpetrators. Such events are not as common in Birgitta’s exempla where hell and purgatory play a central role as punishment. From this point of view, the preacher persuades the crowd not by leaving them in dread of punishment but by instilling them with confidence to make the morally right decisions in life.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion I would like to point out some of the key differences that emerge from a comparison of the exempla used by Birgitta and those in Swedish popular sermons. Although they share the common ground of the medieval Christian exemplum, they in fact utilised them somewhat differently when delivering a moral message. First of all, their exempla (in this study represented by three typical samples) may be classified into two subcategories with regard to the manner in which they are used and comprehended, that is, allegorically or literally. Looking at the *Revelations*, both symbolically charged parabolic exempla and factually understood anecdotal exempla are common. In the Swedish popular sermons, on the other hand, parabolic exempla are scarce as the anecdotal ones dominate the exposition of the sermon.

This leads to further dichotomies which can be seen in the schedule below. While Birgitta’s exempla are often employed to illustrate morality by promoting spiritual matters – particularly the celestial consequences of human actions –

54. Birgitta’s comprehension of justice and her strictness when it comes to punishing those committing sins is discussed by Anna Jane Rossing, Rossing 1986, pp. 148–149.
the Swedish popular sermons have a tendency to remain within this world. As in the exemplum with the hermit and the brickmaker, the sermons tend to support a more popular usage of exempla, turning them into practical arguments for lay salvation; how to act in life in order to come to terms with God. Moreover, though there is regularly a personal drama in Birgitta’s exempla, one habitually sees more social intrigues in the sermons. And while there are clear reformist ambitions in Birgitta’s *Revelations* and their exempla, the objective in the Swedish popular sermons is rather to hold Christianity together by explaining Christian doctrine. These incompatible objectives of the authors in turn suggest that the former maintains the Christian world as corrupt, whereas the latter hold a more positive attitude towards contemporary society. Finally, the main characters in both sources correlate quite well with their presumed audiences. As a pious noble widow, Birgitta makes examples out of her contemporaries from the privileged classes in society. In contrast the Swedish popular sermons illuminate the behaviour of a great variety of people. Yet there is time and again an interaction between the lower laity and the clergy which mirrors that of the preaching situation.

### Differing strategies of persuasion used in the two sources

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<tr>
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<th>Birgitta’s exempla</th>
<th>Swedish popular sermons’ exempla</th>
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<tr>
<td>Presumed primary audience</td>
<td>European influentials and rulers</td>
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<td>Description of protagonists</td>
<td>Examples are chiefly made out of Birgitta’s contemporaries from the privileged classes, and Birgitta regularly appears in the plot as God’s messenger.</td>
<td>Examples are made out of a great variety of people, but there is often an interaction between the lower laity and the clergy which mirrors that of the preaching situation.</td>
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All of these differences confirm that authors of the latter Middle Ages adjusted their strategies to persuade different audiences. Moral teaching of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was in this aspect highly customised and by studying edifying stories such as exempla in a widespread range of sources, we may learn more about the shaping of the medieval conscience.
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SOCIAL ISSUES AND RULES OF COMMUNICATION were central themes in medieval monastic rules and guidelines; Birgittine texts are no exception to this. The rules followed by the Birgittines had official status and thus they were widely distributed within the order. A Birgittine monastery as a ‘textual community’ was a place where normative texts affected and shaped the lives of the nuns and the brothers.¹

This article analyses one aspect of monastic life, namely the ideals of social relations and communication in Syon Abbey through one particular text, a list of faults in the Syon Additions for the Sisters. Thus the focus of this article is on the nuns’ convent. Although previous research has analysed the Syon additions from various angles, the text still offers scope for new discussions and interpretations. The list of faults covers chapters 2–7 in the Syon additions. It lists offences the nuns might commit and describes appropriate forms of punishment. Analysis of the list of faults will show that social faults, such as breaking accepted rules of communication, were often seen as serious offences. Analysis of the forms of punishment also reveals the importance of social relations, communication and group solidarity since these played a significant role in the punishment practices.

¹ The concept of a ‘textual community’, a community whose identity is shaped by texts, derives originally from the work of Brian Stock (1983). Previous studies on Syon Abbey as a textual community include, for example, works by Ann Hutchison (1989), C. Annette Grisé (2002) and Laura Saetveit Miles (2010). All these discuss Birgittine normative texts including the Syon Additions. Hutchison concentrates on the reading practices of the nuns, Grisé examines rituals, and Miles discusses the communal usage of the texts.
SYON ABBEY AND ITS NORMATIVE TEXTS

Like other Birgittine monasteries, Syon Abbey followed the regular Birgittine legislative texts, such as the *Regula Salvatoris* and the *Rule of Saint Augustine*. The Birgittine rule, however, was not very detailed or specific, and it was even stated in the Rule itself that additional guidelines should be provided for the use of the Birgittines.¹ This resulted in the birth of various specifications and additional regulations. These include *Addiciones prioris Petri*, attributed to Prior Peter of Alvastra, the *Liber usuum* (for the brothers) and the *Lucidarium* (for the nuns). Syon Abbey, however, is an exception among Birgittine monasteries, since it did not follow the additions used in Vadstena and other monasteries, but created its own set of additions. These were written in the fifteenth century and contain fifty-nine chapters. There were separate versions for the nuns, for the brothers (priests and deacons) and for the lay brothers.² Syon had gained a measure of independence from Vadstena in 1425 through Pope Martin V’s bull *Mare Anglicanum*, and although it consulted Vadstena about Birgittine rule and life, it was not bound by decisions made in Sweden. For example, Syon and Vadstena seem to have had disagreements relating to the role of the brothers’ convent. Vadstena’s interpretation was that both convents were monasteries in their own right; Syon, however, followed more closely Birgitta’s original idea that the convent of the nuns was more important and the role of the brothers was mainly to assist the nuns.³

The list of faults is one of the features in which the Syon additions differ from

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¹ Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 23. In this article, I refer to the Σ text of the rule as edited in Eklund 1975 (pp. 141–173). This was the version approved by the Pope in 1378. Concerning the Σ text, see Eklund 1975, pp. 25–26.

² In addition to the surviving Middle English additions for the sisters (London, British Library, MS Arundel 146) and for the lay brothers (London, Guildhall Library, MS 25524), a few fragments of the Latin version of the additions for the brothers survive (Cambridge, St John’s College, MS 11). See Miles 2010, especially p. 88 and Cunich 2010, p. 42. The Middle English additions have been edited several times. In this article, I use James Hogg’s edition of the *Additions for the Sisters* (Hogg 1980b). Although this article concentrates on the nuns’ convent, I will also refer to the additions for the lay brothers (also edited by Hogg [1980a]) when relevant. In general, the two sets of additions are very similar.

other sets of additions used within the Birgittine order. Neither the *Addiciones prioris Petri* nor the *Lucidarium* originally contained a numbered list describing faults and punishments. This, however, does not mean that there were no similar guidelines in use. A Latin text called *De culpis* (‘On Faults’) occurs with the *Addiciones prioris Petri* in some manuscripts, but it is inserted after the actual additions and was, at least originally, an independent text and not a part of the *Addiciones*.

In the Syon additions, however, the list of faults forms an integral part (chapters 2–7) of the main text. It is evident that the list was put together for the use of the Birgittines: several passages mention Birgittine characteristics, such as double monasteries, the respective roles of the abbess and the confessor general and Birgitta’s *Revelations*.

The list with its detailed descriptions in regard to faults and punishments bears similarities to penitentials that were used by the clergy as aids and handbooks in hearing confessions. Similarly, in the Syon additions, the list of faults is placed after chapter one, which describes the ritual known as the chapter of faults. In Birgittine monasteries, the chapter of faults was held weekly. It was an official and formal ritual where those who had committed faults had to confess them publicly to other members of the community, after which they received appropriate punishments from the superior in the presence of the whole convent. During the chapter, it was also possible to report publicly those nuns or brothers who had committed faults but did not confess voluntarily. The actual list of

5. *De culpis* has been edited by Christer Henriksén. Henriksén mentions six manuscripts of *De culpis*, some of which integrate the text (with chapter numbers) at the end of the *Addiciones prioris Petri*. Henriksén mentions that the text seems to have been influenced by the Benedictine, Cistercian and Augustinian rules. Concerning *De culpis*, see Henriksén 1990, pp. 13–21 and also Andersson 2011, p. 37, n. 205). Henriksén does not mention the Syon *Additions*, and I have not come across any studies on the possible relationship between these texts. Both the *De culpis* and the Syon list of faults include four categories of faults and many of the ones mentioned are the same. However, the texts are not totally similar, and the Syon *Additions* refer to specifically Birgittine issues and to other parts of the *Additions* more clearly. Ellis (1984), who has done research on the Syon *Additions* and its sources, does not mention *De culpis* at all.


7. Chapter one survives in the version of the Syon *Additions* written for the lay brothers, see Hogg 1980a, pp. 12–17. In the manuscript containing the version for the sisters (MS Arundel 146), chapter one and the beginning of chapter two (listing the three first faults) are lost. However, it seems probable that MS Arundel’s original first chapter was also about the chapter of faults since the list of faults refers to it. Hogg 1980b, p. 3; Ellis 1984, p. 82. *Regula Salvatoris* prescribes that the chapter of faults should be held weekly. See Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 15.
faults (chapters 2–5 of the additions) is followed by a separate chapter (6) on community members abandoning monastic life without permission (i.e. the apostates) and a chapter on imprisonment and the release from prison (7). Thus the function of the list of faults clearly resembles that of the penitentials, and it was most likely used as a practical reference work during the chapter of faults, since it divides faults into categories according to their gravity and states the proper form of punishment.

Besides the list of faults, there is an extensive amount of material in the Syon additions which can be analysed from the viewpoint of communication, social relations and the place of the individual within the community. This material, which includes separate chapters regarding bodily gestures, rules of silence and communication with outsiders, cannot, however, be analysed in the scope of this article. In addition to the chapters that clearly concentrate on social issues, there are others which convey more implicit information on these themes. For example, chapter 53, which contains rules to be followed in the dormitory, mentions that no one is allowed to enter another nun’s cell and that everyone must have a bed of their own; chapter 57, which gives advice on nursing the sick, pays notable attention to Christian charity.8

THE LIST OF FAULTS, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL RELATIONS IN SYON ABBEY

In full, the list of faults and the descriptions regarding punishments cover chapters 2–7 in the Additions for the Sisters. The list classifies offences hierarchically into four categories labelled as: 1) light (lyght defautes), 2) grievous (greuous defautes), 3) more grievous (more greuous defautes) and 4) most grievous (most greuous defautes).9 Interesting new results can be obtained when the list is analysed from the viewpoint of social relations including issues relating to double monasteries. Thus my analysis is mainly based on those faults that I have labelled as social. The criterion for labelling a fault as social is that the fault will have obvious social consequences within the community. These kinds of faults are either ones that 1) challenge the social status quo (for example by causing discord among the community) and hierarchy of the monastery or 2) challenge the accepted rules of communication.10 First, I will introduce these social faults

9. Hogg 1980b, pp. 1–18. Previously, the list of faults was analysed by Roger Ellis in his study on Birgitteine spirituality. See Ellis 1984, pp. 82–89.
10. Thus I will not regard as social faults those which do not affect social life and com-
category by category. Second, I introduce numerical data on the basis of this material and proceed to analysis and some interpretations.

The list of light faults is the largest of the four and consists originally of twenty-nine items. However, only twenty-six of these are still legible, since fol. 1r of the only surviving manuscript containing the *Additions for the Sisters* is practically illegible and thus the first three faults are missing. Generally, many of these light faults are associated with carelessness and negligence, as Ellis has pointed out in his study.\(^{11}\) For example, if a nun is late for services (or any other duties), neglects her work, mistreats clothes or books, or spills her drink over the table, she commits a light fault. The light faults relating to social issues are: 1) speaking in a place and/or in a time when silence should be kept (without a decent reason); 2) speaking trivialities or too much, or carelessly saying something that hurts others; 3) laughing unnecessarily or urging others to laugh; 4) speaking disrespectfully to others or calling them by their proper name and not using the polite form ‘sister’; 5) intentionally looking at the brothers in the church; 6) meeting and speaking with lay people inside the enclosure without a reason, and 7) taking something that does not belong to the offender and not putting it back in its place, or entering a cell of another nun or some other forbidden place without a proper reason. The first six faults mentioned concentrate explicitly on communication, whereas the seventh fault relates more to the question of violating other nuns’ privacy.\(^{12}\)

The second category, grievous faults, consists of twenty-four offences, of which fourteen can be classified as social. Committing a light fault may often have resulted from carelessness, while grievous faults are, in general, more intentional.\(^{13}\) In addition to this, this category introduces one of the typical features of severe offences: many of them challenge the existing monastic hierarchy and the vow of obedience. Thus, grievous faults include despising the doctrines, defending one’s faults and, for instance, complaining about food or drink. The social faults are: 1) an office-holder\(^{14}\) talking disrespectfully to brothers or sec-

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11. Ellis 1984, p. 84.
13. According to Ellis these are committed with malice and willfulness, see Ellis 1984, p. 85.
14. In addition to the abbess, monastic office-holders (obedientiaries) included, for example, the cellarer, treasurer, chamberer and sacrist. On the role of obedientiaries, see Oliva 1998, especially pp. 75–110.
lars or debating with them; 2) bearing false witness against someone or lying; 3) reproaching or scorning someone for faults already settled; 4) threatening or blaming the person who has reported the offender; 5) speaking in a hostile, offending or reproachful manner to another nun or brother; 6) maliciously reporting errors of other nuns or brothers in public; 7) accusing someone of a deadly sin without sufficient proof; 8) spying on others in order to reveal what they were saying to each other; 9) sowing discord among nuns and brothers; 10) gossiping and backbiting; 11) speaking privately to a brother (without a reasonable cause, such as confession); 12) entering other nuns’ cells, receiving something from or giving something to a fellow nun; 13) an office-holder failing to provide others with necessities when asked, and 14) asking for necessities in an impolite or demanding manner. As can be seen from this list, grievous social faults often relate to sowing discord between the community members. These faults threaten communal solidarity and, in general, committing them seems to require intentionality on the offender’s part. There are also faults that relate to the relationships between the nuns and the brothers, although grievous faults do not include explicitly sexual relationships.15

There are many similarities between the grievous and more grievous offences. For example, both lists include the fault of accusing someone of a deadly sin.16 The faults committed are, again, intentional and they challenge the existing hierarchies in the monastery and the group solidarity. As Ellis has pointed out, many of the faults in the categories of more grievous and the most grievous faults threaten the integrity of the enclosure (for example, by letting outsiders inside the monastery or trying to break locked doors).17 Examples of more grievous faults include denying the divine origin of Birgitta’s revelations, stealing and revealing information to outsiders, as well as witchcraft.

The eleven of the more grievous faults that relate to social issues are the following: 1) rebellion against the superior, arguing and behaving like the abbess was an equal; 2) saying injurious words to the superior or office-holders; 3) sowing discord between nuns and brothers and especially between the abbess and the confessor general; 4) quarrelling and being disobedient to the superior; 5) speaking with a brother or with a layperson in a suspicious place; 6) committing deadly sins openly;18 7) accusing someone of a crime or a deadly sin without

18. There is a specification that sexual and homosexual offences (these are separately mentioned) should be excluded here since they are to be classified as most grievous
sufficient proof or by inventing or forging proofs; 8) offending and defaming others; 9) sending or receiving letters or gifts without permission; 10) making confession to any priest other than the one assigned by the confessor general, and 11) bringing outsiders inside the enclosure without permission. It should be added that among the more grievous faults there is also the act of making wax copies of seals or keys. Although it is not explicitly stated, this could bear some social relevance, if the idea is, for example, that the nuns would try to access the brothers’ convent or that someone would try to provide a layperson with a key to the enclosure. Since, however, it may also refer to offences relating to the stealing of property, I do not count it as a social fault.

Finally, there are the most grievous faults. This is the smallest group containing only fourteen items. Of these, eight are related to social issues. At least some of these are grave indeed, as can be seen from the list: 1) refusing to accept a penalty given by the superior; 2) rebelling against the sovereign for two days; 3) conspiring against the sovereign or against the order; 4) defaming the abbess, confessor general or fellow nuns or brothers or accusing them of a crime; 5) violence against the abbess or the other community members; 6) killing somebody; 7) committing a sexual offence openly, and 8) absolutely and repeatedly refusing to do any penance for one’s faults. The most grievous faults were seen as so severe that the only possible punishment was to imprison the offender. The only possible way for the offender to avoid prison was to confess voluntarily and ask for mercy. This could be granted in some cases but, for example, if a nun had killed somebody or left the monastery, she could not avoid imprisonment.

In order to demonstrate the importance of social offences, I refer to Fig. 1, which includes the number of social faults in relation to the total number of faults. The numbers counted are based on my analysis of the faults as listed above.

offences. It is interesting that the list of faults in the additions for the lay brothers does not mention homosexual offences at all. Hogg 1980b, p. 11.

19. This, again, is a fault which is not mentioned in the additions for the lay brothers.


21. It is known from the Additions that there were two separate keys to the door between the convent of the nuns and that of the brothers. These keys were kept in separate chests, and for both of them, three different keys were needed. These keys were kept separately in the custody of the abbess and two other nuns (or the confessor general and two other brothers in the brothers’ convent). Thus it is clear that relationships and communication between the nuns and the brothers were strictly regulated. Hogg 1980b, p. 205.

As can be seen from Fig. 1, the largest and smallest categories are those of the light and most grievous faults respectively. The total number of faults is eighty-six, and almost half of them (forty) can be classified as having social or communicative relevance. The most interesting observation here is that only a small number of the light faults have social relevance, while the numbers for the grievous, more grievous and the most grievous faults are significantly higher (half or more of the total number). Even though it is necessary to assess these numbers with caution, some interpretations can still be made. First, the overall number of social offences is quite high, which implies that social faults were common.\footnote{It would be enlightening to compare the list of faults and proposed punishments to actual offences committed and punishments received by the nuns in Syon. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, there is no surviving material that would enable such comparisons.}
It is difficult to say whether the list was put together on the basis of precedents, but it nevertheless gives a reasonably valid picture of typical monastic vices and sheds light on the behavioural expectations and ideals of the Syon nuns.

Second, it may be suggested that the faults that had social relevance were more easily classified as grievous, more grievous or most grievous than light. This kind of tendency seems to indicate that offences against social harmony and accepted communication were seen as very grave indeed. It seems that these high numbers of social faults in grievous categories support Ellis’s suggestion that the faults listed reveal anxieties in relationships on various levels of monastic life.24 Third, the results suggest that questions related to social and communicative issues were at the centre of monastic life, and were generally regarded as important. This, however, does not explain why these were more often classified as severe offences.

There may be several answers to this question. First, as has already been mentioned, a typical feature of light faults is that they could easily have been committed through carelessness or by accident (for example, being late for dinner or spilling something on the table).25 The faults in the grievous categories, however, require more intentionality from the offender and cannot be explained by accident. For example, sowing discord among the community members required intentional motive on the part of the offender and it obviously threatened the status quo and social relations within the monastery. These seem plausible reasons for classifying them into more severe categories. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that the list of faults imposes more severe punishments on those nuns who do not confess their faults voluntarily, but try to hide them.26

Second, as Ellis has pointed out, one of the differences between the grievous and most grievous faults is that while many of the grievous faults are committed in secret, such as spying and gossiping, more grievous (and also the most grievous) offences are often committed openly.27 A good example is rebellion against one’s superiors. Thus it seems that one aspect that affected the degree of the offence was whether the fault was committed openly or in secret. This may relate to the idea that offences committed publicly had a greater impact on the other members of the community and their morals. This is a social issue and may

26. Concerning the more severe punishments for those who do not confess voluntarily, see Hogg 1980b, pp. 4, 10, 14.
27. Ellis 1984, pp. 85, 87.
also, at least to some degree, explain why social offences belonged to grievous categories. The faults of the individual nun were not only her own faults: they endangered the temporal and spiritual welfare of the whole community.\textsuperscript{28}

Third, in addition to being intentional, many of the social faults in the grievous categories challenge the hierarchies of the monastery and violate the vow of obedience. Since the monastic community was by its nature very hierarchical and obedience was seen as one of the most important monastic virtues and duties, it seems natural that offences which relate to these issues would be seen as very severe.\textsuperscript{29} For example, such faults as being disobedient to one’s superior or openly rebelling against her, question the authority of those who are above the offender in the monastic hierarchy. In a community where social relations were based on obedience, this would be a threat to the monastic status quo.

Before discussing the various forms of punishment, something has to be said about the list of faults in relation to the fact that the Birgittine communities were double monasteries. It has been mentioned that the list of faults (like other parts of the additions) utilises existing monastic rules and draws on tradition. Thus the majority of faults would be relevant in any monastery of any order. Previous research has not, however, paid much attention to those items which relate to double monasteries, even though these make the list specifically Birgittine. It has been suggested that Birgittines were well aware of the opposition to and suspicions towards the system of double monasteries and therefore paid special attention to organising monastic life in a way that would not leave room for accusations of immoral behaviour.\textsuperscript{30}

On the basis of this it is interesting to examine the Syon list of faults from the viewpoint of relationships between men and women. Of the forty social faults, eleven mention the brothers explicitly. Only one of these is a light fault: if a nun looks at the brothers during the services, except when the rule permits it.\textsuperscript{31} Seven of these belong to the category of grievous faults and three to more grievous. Some of these relate to controlling the communication between the nuns and the brothers, for example, speaking with a brother in a suspicious place or speaking with a brother alone (except during confession). These are revealing from the viewpoint of the organisation of the double monastery: the convents of the nuns and brothers were strictly separate. Normally, the sexes were allowed to

\textsuperscript{28} See, for example, Dyan Elliott’s views on sexual offences and their effect on outsiders, Elliott 1999, p. 73 and \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{29} Concerning obedience and the Birgittines, see Lamberg 2007, p. 336.

\textsuperscript{30} See Lamberg 2007, pp. 282–283 for the various measures by which this was carried out.

\textsuperscript{31} Hogg 1980b, p. 4.
be in the same space only in the church during the services. At other times the nuns and the brothers could only communicate through a window.\footnote{Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 22; Lamberg 2007, pp. 282–283.}

Other faults relating to communication with the brothers are similar to those relating to communication within the nuns’ convent. These include: sowing discord among the nuns and the brothers, and being insulting or disrespectful towards the brothers. In addition to the eleven faults that explicitly mention the brothers, there are three more faults that should be mentioned. First of these is the act of copying a key, which may or may not relate to relations between men and women.\footnote{See n. 21 for the keeping of the keys to the door between the female and male convents. Copying the keys to this door would obviously violate the segregation of the convents.} The other two are from the list of the most grievous faults, namely sending or receiving love letters or committing a sexual offence. Although these may allude to relationships between the nuns and the brothers, the brothers are not explicitly mentioned. Thus these passages may also refer to relationships between the nuns and seculars. It seems clear, however, that the relations between the convents were taken into account in the list of faults, as they were taken into account in the additions in general.\footnote{Hogg 1980b, pp. 4–16 and \textit{passim}.}

\textbf{FROM FAULTS TO PUNISHMENTS}

In addition to the actual faults listed, the list of faults also contains other interesting aspects relating to social relations. In order to get a more comprehensive picture of the importance of social relations and communication, attention also has to be paid to the various forms of punishment.\footnote{Previous research has not paid detailed attention to this part of the list. On corporal punishment and imprisonment, see Ellis 1984, pp. 88–89.} As has been mentioned, the list of faults was most likely used during the chapter of faults, a weekly ritual for public penance.\footnote{In addition to these public confessions, a nun was required to make private confessions to her confessor (one of the brothers). The confessor general was expected to hear the confessions of all the members of the community three times a year. Concerning confessions, see Birgitta, Reg. Salv. 13, 22.} Here, all breaches of the rule were confessed and the punishments were given and executed in front of the community.\footnote{On the execution of the chapters in Syon, see the description in the additions for lay brothers, Hogg 1980a, pp. 12–17.} All the categories of faults include separate guidelines concerning appropriate punishments. If a nun committed a light fault, and confessed it in the chapter of faults voluntarily, the only sanction was that she should read a certain amount of prayers and psalms
as specified by the abbess. In cases where the offender did not confess herself, but was reported by others, or when she committed light faults repeatedly, corporal punishment was to be applied since the faults were no longer considered as light but as committed in a grievous manner. The form of this corporal punishment is then described in detail: normally it consisted of five ‘moderately sharp’ lashes on bare skin given by another member of the community. If the offence was severe, the abbess could add the number of lashes.38

If, however, a nun committed a grievous, more grievous or most grievous fault, punishments were accordingly more severe. For grievous faults this meant that an offender who confessed voluntarily was ordered to read a certain number of psalms and received corporal punishment, but in addition to this, she had to remain totally silent for at least one day. If one did not confess voluntarily, corporal punishment was to be given twice and the obligatory silence was extended to two days.39

From a modern perspective, it seems odd that the more severe form of punishment included silence while nuns committing light faults received ‘only’ corporal punishment. It seems to indicate that although being silent was considered virtuous and silence was seen to benefit religious life, the positive value of communicating with others was also acknowledged.40 Thus it was seen as a severe punishment when the guilty person was deprived of the right to communicate with others. When analysed more closely, this form of punishment can be seen as severe indeed. The corporal punishment was conducted during the chapter of faults: it was a ritual that was conducted with strictly determined rules. When punishment was given, the fault was settled and the nun could continue her monastic life. It should be mentioned here that if a nun scorned or reminded a fellow nun of a fault already compensated, she committed a grievous fault herself.41

If, however, the nun was punished with silence, the penance was not conducted so quickly and easily. On the contrary, when the nun left the chapter of faults, the punishment only began. From the viewpoint of the relationship between the offender and the community this meant that the guilty nun was

40. This interpretation is further supported by the chapter that describes how to behave in the cloister. It gives permission to speak freely in the fireplace room beside the church in the Christmas season. Normally this was not permitted. Hogg 1980b, p. 179. The Additions include an extensive amount of material concerning monastic silence and its value. See, for example, Hogg 1980b, pp. 72–79.
practically excluded from the community during the time she had to remain silent. Both she and the community were constantly reminded of the fault she had committed. Normally, the silence was required for one or two days, but with more grievous faults it could be extended to seven days. In addition to this (and corporal punishment), some restrictions to the diet were made and the offender was excluded from her normal liturgical duties and placed temporarily in the lowest place in the monastic hierarchy.42

The most severe form of punishment was total isolation from the community: if a nun was found guilty of committing a fault labelled as ‘most grievous’ she was to be put into prison either temporarily or permanently.43 Imprisonment as a form of punishment bears a remarkable relevance to social relations. On the one hand, this kind of punishment protected the community from the bad influence of the erring nun, and thus it can be seen as a means to maintain harmony within the monastery. On the other hand, however, the punishment was very severe for the offender and the abbess could send nuns to visit the prisoner in order to comfort her. These visitors could also report whether the prisoner was repentant or not. After proper repentance, the imprisoned nun could be taken back into the community.44

As can be seen from the forms of punishment, social issues play an important part in dealing with faults. Silence was a punishment only for severe offences and the most grievous ones could lead to a nun being isolated from her fellow religious. Although imprisonment protected the other community members and provided a salutary example for them, still the authors of the additions seem to have taken into account that, for the prisoner, isolation could be hard and thus she could be visited by other nuns in the name of charity.

CONCLUSIONS

Rules were a necessity in communal life – especially in as large a community as a Birgittine nuns’ convent, and when sixty people with human weaknesses were living together, it is obvious that errors must have occurred. It is known on the basis of the Regula Salvatoris that in order to find out and to correct the faults committed, a weekly chapter of faults for public penance was held in

42. Hogg 1980b, pp. 4–6, 10, 13–14.
43. A permanent imprisonment followed for those guilty of killing. In the case of the most grievous faults, the Additions advise not waiting for the next weekly chapter. Instead, the chapter had to be held immediately after someone was found guilty of committing a most severe fault. Hogg 1980b, pp. 16–18.
Birgittine monasteries. In addition to this, private confessions were required. In this article I have suggested that social relations and adjusting communication occupied the thoughts of the superiors and community members, and that this can be seen in the list of faults for the Syon Abbey nuns. Since the list of faults is a normative text, it does not provide information on actual faults committed by the Syon nuns in real situations, nor does it say anything about the actual punishments. Thus on the basis of it, it is impossible to assess what faults were the most common ones or how severe punishments were applied in reality. It seems obvious, however, that the list was put together for practical purposes, and, as such, it provides a picture of typical monastic vices.

The list of faults reveals ideals and expectations for the nuns’ behaviour as members of a hierarchical community. It includes eighty-six faults of which almost half relate to communication and social relations. The proportion of social faults is highest among the categories of grievous, more grievous and most grievous faults, while only less than third of the light faults can be labelled as social. As has been argued, there are many possible reasons for the high proportion of social faults in the categories of grievous, more grievous and most grievous offences. While light faults were often committed accidentally, more severe faults required intentionality on the part of the offender. Many of the severe faults were also committed openly and committing them could shake the social harmony of the community. These faults caused disagreements between community members, threatened the existing hierarchy and violated the virtue of obedience. The list also sheds light on the problems faced by a double monastery, such as intimate relationships between the nuns and the brothers.

Finally, in addition to the actual faults, the importance of social issues can be seen in the descriptions of forms of punishment. Reading psalms and prayers for penance and receiving corporal punishment were moderately lenient punishments, while committing a severe fault could lead to obligatory silence and exclusion from the everyday life of the community. This grading of punishments clearly shows that communal aspects of monastic life, such as communicating with other nuns, were seen as very important for the individual nun. If they were not considered important, exclusion and silence would not have been so severe and effective forms of punishment.
CAMBRIDGE
St John’s College, MS 11

LONDON
British Library, MS Arundel 146
Guildhall Library, MS 25524

Printed sources, literature and abbreviations


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EKUND, STEN (1975), see Birgitta, Reg. Salv.


HENRIKSÉN, CHRISTER, ed. (1990), De culpis. Edited with an Introduction (Uppsala).


Evidence for Commercial Book Production in Vadstena Abbey?

VADSTENA ABBEY was the most important cultural institution in Sweden during the late Middle Ages. During its active years the abbey built up a large collection of manuscripts; some were bought, some were brought to the abbey by its new members and a large number of manuscripts were produced in the abbey. Most of the manuscripts produced there were books intended for internal use: books the brothers needed for study and for the writing of sermons, books for the sisters’ spiritual education, and liturgical books used in services.

The question I address in my paper is whether there was also some kind of commercial book production in Vadstena Abbey, and I will do this by discussing the provenance of two manuscripts, namely A 108 and B 185, both in the National Library in Stockholm. We do not have any explicit information about where they were written, but we have good reason to believe that they were written by the same scribe around 1440, and there have been different suggestions as to where this scribe was active. I will try to show that the manuscripts were written in Vadstena Abbey. After presenting the arguments for this, I want to point to some other indications of commercial book production in the abbey.

The reason for choosing these volumes is that while the contents of A 108, which will be presented below, fit well with the literate climate in the abbey, B 185 contains only law texts and we know that the manuscript was used in the town of Arboga. If this codex also originated in Vadstena, this could indicate commercial book production in the abbey. When I talk about commercial book production, I simply mean the production of manuscripts for an external mar-

1. Most of the arguments in this article are taken from my thesis (Dverstorp 2010) concerning palaeographic variation in manuscripts from Vadstena.
ker, where a manuscript was perhaps ordered by someone outside the abbey, and thus produced on demand in exchange for money, gifts or services.

The two manuscripts A 108 and B 185 are, as I mentioned above, written by the same scribe. This was first noted by Natanael Beckman in 1917; and has been confirmed by other scholars, for instance Sam Henning and myself. But before discussing where this scribe was active, I would first like to say something general about these manuscripts and where they were used, since this is also relevant for the following discussion.

Manuscript A 108 consists of 166 leaves. It contains the text *Sjælinna thrøst*, a Swedish translation of the Middle Low German *Seelentrost*, which is a theological work about the Ten Commandments. The frame of the text is a young man asking his father about the Commandments; the father answers by telling stories and giving examples about what happens if you obey or disobey the commandments. A sixteenth century inscription in the manuscript – to which I will return – indicates that it was used in Vadstena, but we do not know anything for certain about the matter. It fits well, however, with the literate culture in the sisters’ convent in Vadstena, and it seems plausible that it was used as edifying reading for the sisters. It is not likely that the manuscript was used in the brothers’ convent, since it lacks a shelfmark, which is a common feature of manuscripts that belonged to the brothers’ library.

Turning to B 185, we actually have explicit information about where it was used. The manuscript, which consists of 91 leaves, contains only law texts – in particular Swedish civic law (*Magnus Erikssons stadslag*) with some additions – and we know for sure that it was the official law book for the town of Arboga. A great many inscriptions in the manuscript tell us that it was being used in Arboga from at least c. 1461. It is therefore plausible that it was written directly for Arboga.

Before assessing the arguments about where these two manuscripts were written, I would like to show at least that they were written in the same scriptorium. This is relevant since it has been suggested that A 108 was written in Vadstena and B 185 was written in Stockholm and Arboga.

2. Beckman 1917a, p. 56.
4. The manuscript is paginated, so when referring to A 108, I refer to pages by number.
5. Henning 1960, pp. 162–164. Henning believes that B 185 was partly copied from the manuscript Stockholm, National Library, B 154, which was the official law book in Stockholm, and partly from a manuscript that he assumes was the former official law book in Arboga, a manuscript which has been lost. There are however arguments against B 154 being the exemplar of B 185, see Dverstorp 2010, pp. 80–81 and 111–118.
In my thesis studying palaeographical variation in manuscripts from Västernbra Abbey, I noticed a few changes in the script of this scribe. I will limit myself here to the one palaeographic change relevant to this discussion. This change occurred in the letter g (Fig. 1). At the beginning of A 108, g is formed as g1, but between page 238 and 239 the form changes completely to g2, which continues throughout the manuscript. The difference lies in the shape of the body of the letter: in g1 the left side of the body is formed with a soft loop, while the same element in g2 is formed with a pointed edge. From this palaeographic change A 108 can be divided in two parts: the first part comprises pp. 1–238 and the second part pp. 239–332.

In B 185 we also find both g1 and g2. At the beginning, the scribe uses g1, but from fol. 40v g2 appears as well, with only a few examples to start with, but its frequency increases, and from fol. 48r g2 is in the majority. From fol. 53v g1 disappears, and only g2 is used.

The most plausible explanation for this pattern is that the two forms of g are the result of a change in the scribe’s writing habits. Such changes in the script of individual scribes are in fact quite common in the late Middle Ages.6 In this case the change goes from g1 to g2, and in B 185 we can actually see how g1 transforms into g2, starting at fol. 40v.7 This also means that the last part of A 108 (pp. 239–332) was written after B 185, since this part of A 108 only exhibits g2. Therefore we can draw the conclusion that the scribe started his work on A 108, and after page 238 he stopped and instead wrote B 185. During the work on B 185, his g changed from g1 to g2.8 He then continued with A 108, but now used g2 instead. And since the scribe’s work on these two manuscripts overlapped, we are safe to assume that they were written in the same scriptorium.

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7. See further Dverstorp 2010, p. 95.
8. It is of course difficult to identify an explanation for this change, but one possible explanation is that this is an influence from the exemplar (Dverstorp 2010, pp. 95–98). Since the exemplar, as far as we know, has not survived, this can only be conjectural.
The first scholar to discuss the provenance of A 108 was Gustaf Edvard Klemming, in his edition of Sjelinna thrøst in 1871–1873. He believed that manuscript A 108 was from Vadstena, simply because Vadstena was ‘the central place for this kind of literature in our country at the time’.9 Natanael Beckman, who was the next to address the question, pointed out that the scribe in A 108 also wrote B 185. He said that it was not likely that Vadstena Abbey produced a law book for Arboga, but without giving any explicit arguments, and instead he suggested another provenance for the two manuscripts.10 In an article from the same year, 1917, however, he seems to be open to the possibility that Vadstena produced two other law books for a community outside the abbey, namely B 1 in the National Library in Stockholm, dating to the late fifteenth century, and B 5 in the University Library in Uppsala, from around the same time or later.11 I have not had the opportunity to examine these two manuscripts, so I cannot add anything to the question, but it is interesting to see how Beckman is open to the possibility that Vadstena produced law books when it comes to B 1 and B 5, but has a totally different opinion concerning B 185.

Some scholars have tried to determine the provenance of A 108 and B 185 by studying the dialect in them.12 This is a rather problematic method, however, since such an investigation can only say something about where the scribe learned to speak, not where he wrote the specific manuscript. So this method is unfortunately not valid for determining provenance.

One indication that at least the translation of Sjelinna thrøst was made in Vadstena is that the translator did not just translate the Middle Low German text, but also compiled material from other sources, sources we know existed in Vadstena, as shown by Ivar Thorén.13 This also makes it plausible that the A 108 copy was written in Vadstena.

In the upper margin of page 150 in A 108 there is an inscription of interest here. The inscription states: ‘In the time when this book was written there was an abbess called Karin (or Katarina), Saint Birgitta’s daughter [1]544.’14 The

10. Beckman 1917a, p. 56.
11. Beckman 1917b, pp. 74–75.
14. ‘På thenna tidh som thenna Bock skreff war en abbatisa som het karin S britha dotther [1]544.’ The same information can also be found in an inscription on the inside of the front cover. Klemming believes that the inscription on the cover is a falsification—that someone wrote this in a fifteenth century hand to increase the value of the manu-
information in this inscription is, of course, not true. Katarina died in 1381, too early a date for this translation, as Klemming showed many years ago. But the information in this inscription is actually interesting, even if it is not true. The inscription shows that it was believed from early on that Sjelinna throst was a Vadstena product. And furthermore, the inscription does not explicitly mention Vadstena, it just mentions Katarina as abbess, which indicates that the inscription was written in Vadstena. Otherwise one would expect that Vadstena would have been specified. I believe that the inscription was made by a Vadstena sister in the year 1544, which, if true, would mean that A 108 was in Vadstena at the time. And this in turn strengthens the already suggested Vadstena provenance.

There are also some codicological features of these manuscripts which indicate that they were produced in Vadstena. The quires in A 108 and B 185 consist of ten leaves, i.e. five folded sheets (quinio). This seems to be a rather typical feature of manuscripts from Vadstena, at least parchment manuscripts. This was pointed out by Vilhelm Gödel in 1903, and I have the same impression after studying the Vadstena material. But this has not yet been verified on a large scale, so this argument is at present not a strong one.

These are the main indications concerning the provenance of A 108 and B 185. As can be seen, none of them is conclusive in itself, but taken together, I think they form a strong argument for a Vadstena provenance, and I think we are safe in assuming that these manuscripts were written in Vadstena.

If we accept that A 108 and B 185 were produced in Vadstena, we have a case of the abbey producing a law manuscript for an external community. This could indicate that Vadstena was able to produce manuscripts on demand, perhaps for economic profit. This is also supported by the relative chronology of the two manuscripts, which I mentioned above. Since the scribe, according to my

script – and he gives some arguments for this. There are some strange grammatical peculiarities in this inscription, but I am not sure it is not from the fifteenth or perhaps sixteenth century. I will not discuss this here, however, since it cannot add information about the provenance at this stage.

17. The Vadstena provenance of A 108 has also been argued for in palaeographical terms. Jonas Carlquist writes that the only thing that supports a Vadstena provenance for A 108 is the script, which he defines as ’typical Vadstena cursive’ (Carlquist 1996, p. 28). This is not a valid argument, however. The script type behind the term ‘Vadstena cursive’, or sometimes ‘Vadstena script’, is in fact not limited to Vadstena, but is actually the normal cursive script type used all over Europe in the fifteenth century (Dverstorp 2008; Dverstorp 2010, pp. 69–72; Åström 2010).
interpretation of the pattern of palaeographical variants presented above, interrupted work on A 108 to write B 185, it seems that B 185 was considered a higher priority, which can be explained if this manuscript was produced in response to demand from an external client.

Let us now look at some other evidence for commercial book production at Vadstena Abbey. The general opinion is that manuscript D 4 in the National Library in Stockholm was written in Vadstena. However, it contains mostly secular texts, and constitutes a kind of small private library, which has led scholars to believe that it was used in a lay milieu. Some scholars have suggested that it was actually commissioned from Vadstena by someone outside.\(^{18}\)

Another possible manuscript in this category is A 5a in the National Library in Stockholm, which contains Birgitta’s *Revelations* in Swedish. Scholars have for a long time assumed that it was written in Vadstena. However, recent scholarship has proved that this early fifteenth century manuscript was written for Bengt Jönsson (Oxenstierna) by a scribe active in the Stockholm area,\(^{19}\) so even though this manuscript itself was not written in Vadstena, the possibility cannot be excluded that its exemplar was a Vadstena codex, and in that case A 5a still testifies to the diffusion of religious literature from the abbey.

We know for sure that Vadstena had ambitions to begin large-scale book production. The abbey bought a printing press in 1495.\(^{20}\) It was destroyed in a fire the same year, together with some printed copies of Saint Birgitta’s *Revelations*, books meant for sale. This is a good indication that the abbey had plans for commercial book production. Since this must have been an expensive investment, we may assume that there was already some commercial book production before this.

We actually have some concrete evidence that Vadstena Abbey sold books. One piece of evidence is a receipt from 1448 for books sold to Nådendal (Nääntali) Abbey in Finland.\(^{21}\) Unfortunately, it does not specify the books, nor even how many. And even if this is a transaction between two Birgittine abbeys, it shows that such trade in books occurred. We also have a case where a sister in Nådendal writes to her uncle in 1515, saying that she has borrowed money to buy books from Vadstena.\(^{22}\)

\(^{18}\) Ronge 1957, p. 71; Carlquist 2002, p. 44; Jonsson 2010, p. 103.
\(^{19}\) Wiktorsson 2004, p. 294.
\(^{20}\) DV 921.
\(^{21}\) FMU 2784.
\(^{22}\) FMU 5852.
From the abbey’s account books from the sixteenth century, we have a lot of information about income and expenditure in connection with writing and writing material. Among other things the abbey seems to have been selling parchment. There are also entries for income from *skriffvaregarden*, literally ‘the scribe yard’, which most likely means the scriptorium. These entries come from a period in the abbey’s history when scribal activity declined.

So it seems that we have several more or less indisputable pieces of evidence that there was a commercial book trade going on in Vadstena. In the light of this evidence, it seems plausible that Vadstena took an order from Arboga for a manuscript containing the Swedish civic law.

It may be worth mentioning that B 185 is not the only law manuscript from Vadstena. I mentioned earlier two other law manuscripts with suggested a Vadstena provenance, namely B 1 in the National Library in Stockholm and B 5 in the University Library in Uppsala. Another such manuscript is B 7 in Uppsala University Library, which contains Magnus Eriksson’s National Law (*Magnus Eriksson’s Landslag*) with some additions and contains physical evidence tying it to Vadstena. One of the manuscripts of the provincial law of Östergötland exists only as fragments used as binding materials in other codices. More than 100 fragments of this manuscript have been discovered, and what is interesting is that they are situated in manuscripts of known Vadstena provenance, for instance C 7, C 46, C 50, C 386 and C 572 (all in Uppsala University Library). It looks as though this manuscript of the provincial law of Östergötland belonged to Vadstena and was discarded and used as binding material for other manuscripts. Fragments from the same manuscript are also found in the binding of the manuscript B 7, and there is therefore a plausible hypothesis – which of course still needs to be proven – that B 7 was also produced in Vadstena. As

23. Edited by Carl Silfverstolpe 1895.
26. See Ståhle 1988, p. 35. The law of Östergötland was outdated by this time, since all Swedish provincial laws were replaced by Magnus Eriksson’s National Law in the middle of the fourteenth century. The manuscript was therefore no longer needed.
27. Olson 1911, pp. xii–xvi; Liedgren 1939, pp 38–40.
28. However Eva Lindqvist Sandgren, to whom I am extremely grateful for providing me with images of this manuscript, claims that the initials in B 7 are not typical of Vadstena. One fragment from the same manuscript of Östgotalagen is in the National Library in Stockholm, with the shelfmark B 179, which according to Emil Olson was situated in the ‘binding of a book’ (Olson 1911, p. xiii). There is however no information about what book this was. I would like to thank Anna Wolodarski for checking this for me.
far as I know there is no information about the owner of this manuscript or who it was written for; it awaits further study.

So, there do seem to be some possible law manuscripts of Vadstena provenance. The idea that B 185 was produced in Vadstena therefore seems plausible. And the evidence is quite clear: there was some commercial book production in Vadstena, although this is not likely to have been on a large scale. But the abbey did have the knowledge and the technology for manuscript production, and it is tempting to presume that those who wanted a manuscript written, and who did not have the knowledge or the technology to do it, turned to the abbey to benefit from their experience of manuscript production. It seems clear that not all the manuscripts that were produced in Vadstena were intended for internal use.

**Excursus: Fragment Fr 11670 of Saint Birgitta’s Revelations**

During the Birgitta conference in 2011 the National Archives presented a small exhibition of material in their collection concerning Vadstena Abbey and the Birgittine order. Among other items, a small fragment of Birgitta’s Revelations in Old Swedish was displayed (Fr 11670), and to my great surprise I noticed that the scribe of this fragment is the same one who wrote the two manuscripts that are the focus of this article, A 108 and B 185. Sara Risberg and Jan Brunius kindly provided me with high-resolution images of this fragment, and after studying the script, the identification is clear. In this fragment, the scribe uses g2 (the variant discussed above), and he often uses a variant of <r> which has a thin hairline from the hook of r downwards (r2).29 Both these variants indicate that this fragment was written later than A 108 and B 185.

Unfortunately, this discovery cannot add anything to the provenance of A 108 and B 185, since we do not know anything about the provenance of this fragment. But the fact that it contains Saint Birgitta’s Revelations is another indication that this scribe was active in Vadstena Abbey, even if this is not a conclusive argument. I intend to publish a more detailed study of the fragment and its relation to A 108 and B 185 in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The Revelations of Saint Birgitta belong to the very core of Swedish medieval literature, by many regarded as one of the most important and influential works of all. Birgitta enjoyed a remarkable international reputation in her own lifetime and in the period that followed after her canonization in 1391. After her death, her Revelations were rapidly translated into a significant number of European vernaculars. This influence has remained intact throughout the centuries. A particular testimony to her present-day popularity is the translation into modern English which is currently being published by Oxford University Press.

The corpus of her revelations comprises the seven ‘books’ of the ‘Heavenly Book of Revelations’ (Liber celestis reuelacionum) and the eighth book containing revelations directed to kings (Liber celestis imperatoris ad reges). These revelations were, according to contemporary sources, received by the future saint in the form of visions during a period of time extending from the 1340s until shortly before her death in Rome in 1373. Besides the revelations proper, a few other texts (Opera minora) are normally included in the Birgittine textual corpus: the Revelationes extravagantes, the Rule of the Order (Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris), the Sermo angelicus and the Quattuor oraciones.

The Revelations are preserved in both Latin and Old Swedish. The complete Latin text including the Opera minora is now available in full critical editions after several decades of work. The Old Swedish text was published by G. E. Klemming well over a century ago (BU). This edition, however, is now considered outdated, mainly because it is based on a limited and partly arbitrary

1. See the essays collected in O’Mara and Morris 2000.
3. On these editions, see Bergh 2003, pp. 50–52.
selection of manuscripts. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, who edited Book I of the Latin text, states:

A new edition based on a thorough study and assessment of all known Old Swedish manuscripts containing the Revelations is therefore most desirable.4

Lars Wollin, one of the most avid advocates of a new edition, emphatically concludes that the old one ‘does not measure up to modern philological requirements’,5 and Hans Aili even lets the prospect of a revised edition affect the critical apparatus in his edition of Book IV of the Latin text:

The readings of the two manuscripts originating in the scriptorium of Vadstena Abbey, namely F and K, may have a significant part to play in a future project of producing a new edition of the Old Swedish version of the Reuelaciones … I therefore also report the most important of their readings.6

As we can see there seems to be general agreement on the need for a revised modern edition and I am happy to announce that the work has already begun, thanks to a generous grant from The National Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.7 It is less evident how such an edition should be made. Several possibilities present themselves and in order to be able to make the case for a specific editorial method it will be necessary to consider briefly some of these different possible solutions from a historical perspective.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TEXTUAL EDITING

In this section I will mainly discuss editions of Old Swedish texts produced during the last century and a half with special regard to questions such as normalization and emendation and to how the editors have chosen to work with multiple manuscript witnesses. This may strike some readers as surprisingly detailed, but it is, in fact, these minute aspects of editorial craftsmanship that have the capacity to reveal differences in the general approach, differences that are related to and can be condensed into the main issue at stake: How faithful to the main manuscript(s) should the editor be?

7. Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. This grant covers the edition of Book I which will be made by the author of this article. Further applications for funding will be made by Centre for Medieval Studies, Stockholm University. The ultimate goal is a complete edition of the entire Birgittine text corpus in Old Swedish.
To claim that the history of Swedish scientific textual editing begins with Carl Johan Schlyter’s (1795–1888) immense edition of the Swedish medieval laws (Schlyter 1827–1877) is certainly an exaggeration, but in a short overview such as the one presented here, the simplification may perhaps be justified. Schlyter’s pioneering work is a special case, since there are so many extant manuscripts of each of the law texts. The two other major source publications launched shortly after, the Diplomatarium Suecanum (1829–; henceforth DS) and Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriptsällskapet (1844–; henceforth SFSS), were oriented towards editions of either original charters or literary texts preserved in significantly smaller numbers of manuscripts.

The large number of manuscripts does not prevent Schlyter from remaining extremely faithful to the original documents. He always bases his editions on one main manuscript, often but not necessarily the oldest, following the principle of codex optimus. The text of the chosen manuscript is rendered in a diplomatic transcription, retaining the original’s orthography, punctuation and use of upper and lower case letters, and with italicization of expanded abbreviations. In those cases when the base text is incomplete or corrupt, Schlyter makes emendations from other manuscripts, but under no circumstances does he make conjectural emendations without support from other witnesses. This method is used consistently with only one minor exception. Moving from the Provincial Laws to the National Law (1862) and the Municipal Law (1865), Schlyter introduces the novelty of adapting punctuation and use of capital letters to modern standards to increase the readability of the text.

Schlyter contributed to the development of philological theory in one particular respect. In order to be able to arrive at reliable editions, it was necessary for him to classify the different, often diverging, witnesses. As a useful aid in deciding which manuscript(s) should be used as the base text(s), which ones could simply be put aside and which ones could be used as sources for emendation, Schlyter already in the first volume (1827) graphically illustrated the relationships between them in a diagram. It has been argued that this was probably one of the first, if not actually the very first, printed stemma codicum. The diagram was, according to Schlyter’s introduction, based on mutual agreements and differences, and even if he did not publish any more stemmata in

9. For a detailed account of Schlyter’s method, see Holm 1972.
10. Holm 1972, p. 52: ‘his is the first manuscript stemma ever to be published’; see further id., pp. 76–79 and Haugen 2004a, p. 86.
the subsequent volumes, it is remarkably clear that he used the same methods throughout. Manuscripts were grouped according to the frequencies of common errors, enabling the editor to eliminate poor manuscripts and to form an opinion of lost stages in the textual development, that is, to reconstruct readings in the archetype or in hyparchetypes. It would be almost a century before a similar method was employed by Swedish philologists.

The editorial principles of the Diplomatarium Suecanum have remained surprisingly constant over the years. Charters in Old Swedish are not frequent before the middle of the fourteenth century, so it is only with DS VI, covering the years 1348–1355 (the first fascicle appeared in 1878, the last in 1953), and in Vol. 1 of the additional series Svenskt Diplomatarium fr. o. m. år 1401, edited by Carl Silfverstolpe 1875–1902 and covering the years 1401–1420, that principles of editorial methodology are discussed to any considerable degree. The editors make faithful transcriptions of the original documents, but normalize punctuation and use of capital letters and italicize expanded abbreviations. A peculiarity is that Silfverstolpe decided to italicize abbreviations in the Latin texts as well, something which was totally contrary to tradition. The attempt was not long-lived, and already in Vol. 2 (1879–1887) he abandoned it, ostentatiously and perhaps with some irritation, removing italicization also from the Old Swedish texts.

Moving on to the beginning of the 1950s, we see a tendency towards more faithful transcriptions and reluctance to standardization. The adaptation of upper and lower case letters and punctuation to modern usage is abandoned. However, for the sake of clarity, subsidiary punctuation marks are sometimes inserted within italicized square brackets. This method is adopted by Nygren, Sjödin and Liedgren in DS VII, VIII and the first fascicle of DS IX. The most far-reaching principles are those adopted by Lars Sjödin for DS IX:1 (1970). Here, for example, the editor typographically marks line breaks in the original and unusually long spaces between words are rendered exactly as in the manuscript. From DS IX:2 (1995), however, normalization of capital letters is reintroduced, and subsidiary punctuation marks are no longer placed within brackets. This method is in all essentials the one still prevailing.

Given the nature of the Diplomatarium as a reliable source publication, it is of course important that the texts are basically free from errors. As a result of the sig-

15. It should be noted that DS X:1–2, which appeared before DS IX:2 does not normalize capital letters.
significantly stricter grammatical and orthographical standards in medieval Latin compared to the vernacular, and given also the impact of philological tradition, emendation is much more common in editions of Latin charters. Jan Öberg, the editor of DS X:1–2, declares, ‘In accordance with the principles of classical philology I consequently emend obvious corruptions in the main text where this is possible.’\textsuperscript{16} And this is done not only in those cases where a text is preserved in the form of a copy, but also when the editions are based on original charters. The reason is that most originals can be regarded as clean copies of preliminary drafts. The willingness to emend original charters has been slightly mitigated in the most recently published fascicles, where only very obvious corruptions are corrected. In most cases doubtful readings are retained in the text but discussed in the footnotes.

In the publications of \textit{Svenska fornskriftsällskapet}, the major national series for the edition of Old Swedish literary texts, the editorial methods are so multifaceted that it is impossible to encapsulate them in a short description. Generally speaking, the diplomatic approach has always been at the forefront, and even in those cases where a text is preserved in several manuscripts, the early editors preferred to edit each manuscript separately.\textsuperscript{17} Over the course of time, the philologists have dealt with issues such as normalization and emendation in slightly different ways. To mention but one isolated example: when George Stephens and Jeremias Wilhelm Liffman edited \textit{Herr Ivan Lejonriddaren}, one of the Eufemia romances, in 1845–1849, as Vol. 5 of the main series (‘Svenska skrifter’), they based their edition on one manuscript, MS D 4 (National Library, Stockholm). The text was rendered exactly as it appeared in the manuscript, and no attempt was made to eliminate or emend corruptions or lacunae. However, in an appendix (‘Olika Läsarter’, pp. 185–388, thus covering more than two hundred pages!), variant readings in other witnesses were given and evaluated. And in the section ‘Remarks’ (‘Anmärkningar’, pp. CXLI–CCVII), problematic passages in the printed text were discussed and suggestions for emendation made. It immediately becomes clear from reading this that Stephens would in fact have preferred that these emendations had been incorporated in the main text instead

\textsuperscript{16} ‘I enlighet med den klassiska filologiens principer rättar jag konsekvent […], där så är möjligt, i själva texten dess uppenbara felaktigheter’ (DS X:1, p. VIII).

\textsuperscript{17} In the same way, all manuscripts containing the Old Swedish sermon collections (\textit{Svenska medeltidspositillor}) were edited in separate volumes (SFSS 23:1–8). Recent scholarship has demonstrated that these texts should instead be regarded as different witnesses or versions of two now-lost original collections. See Andersson 1993, 2006.
of being treated in a separate section.\textsuperscript{18} This is interesting since it testifies to an ongoing discussion in which Stephens and Liffman probably held contrasting views. The passage in which Stephens informs the reader that the text has not been corrected betrays his opinion. He deprecates the method and seemingly puts the blame on Liffman.\textsuperscript{19}

A couple of decades into the twentieth century, some of the texts, primarily the three Eufemia romances, which had been edited in the earliest volumes were now re-published in what were called ‘critical editions’ (‘kritiska upplagor’).\textsuperscript{20} The pioneering work is Emil Olson’s edition of \textit{Flores och Blanzeflor}, which appeared in 1921 (SFSS 46). This year also saw the publication of Rolf Pipping’s new edition of \textit{Erikskrönikan} (SFSS 47).\textsuperscript{21} Both editions are based on a thorough review and critical evaluation of the manuscript evidence, and both supply extensive variants from other text witnesses. However, they differ in precisely those important respects with which we are concerned: Pipping normalizes neither use of capitals nor punctuation, and makes no emendations in the main text. In a way, his method is almost the same as the one practised by Stephens and Liffman. Olson, on the other hand, makes such normalizations, and in addition emends the text when necessary and ‘reconstructs on the basis of the entire material’.\textsuperscript{22} It is of the highest importance to Olson, however, that such emendations and reconstructions are carefully motivated: ‘no changes in the text have been made without solid support’.\textsuperscript{23} We remember that almost a century ago Schlyter made a similar statement regarding conjectural emendations. And in fact, in all essentials Olson’s method strongly resembles that of Schlyter. One way of looking at this is that it is only now that the development of philological theory, after a long detour of ingenuous innocence, has reached the standards set in the 1820s by Carl Johan Schlyter. Olson’s work was followed a few years later by Erik Noreen’s critical editions of \textit{Hertig Fredrik av Normandie} (SFSS

\textsuperscript{18} ‘Herr Ivan bör läsas (och hade bort tryckas) med strängt iakttagande af följande ställen uti dessa Anmärkningar’ (1845–1849, p. CXLII).

\textsuperscript{19} ‘Herr Rektor Liffman har återgifvit handskriftens text aldeles ordagrant (sic!), följaktligen med alla dess afskriftvarefel och talrika vers-överhoppningar’ (1845–1849, p. LXIII).

\textsuperscript{20} This change in approach is what Lars Wollin (1991b) calls the beginning of the ‘philological’ period as opposed to the preceding ‘naive’ (characterized by patriotic and nationalistic ambitions) and ‘diplomatic’ (mainly nineteenth century) periods.

\textsuperscript{21} Pipping 1921.

\textsuperscript{22} ‘… genom rekonstruktioner på grundval av hela det föreliggande materialet’ (Olson 1921, p. XXII).

\textsuperscript{23} ‘Ingen textändring har vidtagits utan fullt betryggande stöd’ (Olson 1921, p. XXII).
49) and Herr Ivan Lejonriddaren (SFSS 50), where basically the same methods were applied.24

It is impossible to do justice to the different approaches to textual editing in the SFSS series during the second half of the twentieth century, and the works that are mentioned here are to be regarded as nothing more than a few selected examples. Generally speaking, however, there has been a strong tendency towards more diplomatic editions. This is traceable in editions of both literary texts and laws. In both these genres a number of ‘monotypic’ editions of one single manuscript have been published.25 The editors give ample proof of their critical awareness, and some of them provide useful and representative selections of variants, but the focus is always on the individual manuscript.

In fact developments during the last twenty years or so are characterized by a renewed interest in the manuscripts themselves and the mechanisms of manuscript culture. All manuscripts can be studied in their own right independently, whether or not they would be ignored from a stemmatological viewpoint according to the principle of eliminatio codicum descriptorum. The mere fact that a text has been copied at a specific time and in a specific place can provide us with detailed information about the production and reproduction of texts. Scholars representing this new philology are interested in related sub-disciplines such as codicology and palaeography, and in what ways a medieval codex can be studied as the collective work of several people: main scribe, rubricator, corrector, illuminator etc. This approach to editing is highly prevalent in Bridget Morris’s and Inger Lindell’s editions of Book V (SFSS 80) and VII (SFSS 84) of Saint Birgitta’s Revelations, which came out in 1991 and 2000. These are editions of one particular manuscript, in both cases MS C 61 (Uppsala University Library).26 Both editors provide detailed information about the scribe’s own corrections, cancellations, and such ‘primary emendations’ are incorporated in the text, whereas others which are deemed more doubtful are recorded only in the apparatus. It is interesting, and highly revealing of this new approach, that in those cases where an emendation is printed in the text, it is not the emendation of the modern editor, but that of the medieval scribe or corrector. Under no circumstances do these editors make their own corrections. Their intention

25. On the term monotypic (‘an edition (some would say transcription) made from a single primary source’), see Haugen 2003, p. 16.
26. A similar method is also adopted in Jonathan Adams’s doctoral dissertation (2005), an edition of the revelations contained in MS E 8902 (National Archives, Stockholm) which still awaits publication.
is not to publish a text free from errors but a genuine textual witness as it was used and read by its contemporaries. From this it follows also that lineation, pagination and the use of paragraphs exactly follow the use in the manuscript. This method can justly be said to be the most prevalent among modern SFSS editions and it is strongly supported by leading theorists. Other illustrative examples are Jonas Carlquist’s edition of MS A 3 (National Library, Stockholm) containing lessons for table reading at Vadstena abbey (SFSS 87) and Jonathan Adams’s edition of three sermons in Old Danish which appeared only a couple of years ago (SFSS, Ser. 3:4).

My own edition of one of the Swedish sermon collections (SFSS 86) a few years ago can, in this perspective, be seen as an attempt to return to the methodologies adopted by Stephens and Olson. The transcription of the base manuscript remains diplomatic and no normalization is made, but corruptions are emended and lacunae are filled with the help of other witnesses. The relationship between the manuscripts does not allow for any reconstruction, but the ambition was all the same to produce a complete text which is reasonably free from errors. Maybe the renewed interest in philological theory, above all attested in Old Norse scholarship, will open up yet another shift of focus in this constant pendular movement. It is true that strictly stemmatological considerations only rarely allow for reconstruction of earlier and more ‘original’ versions of vernacular texts, but irrespective of that, it is desirable that we attempt to bridge the dichotomy between Latin and Old Swedish philology, as far as editorial methods are concerned.

27. See, for example, Williams 2010, who argues against emendation and correction claiming that the result necessarily becomes an abstraction, a text about which we know nothing except that it has never existed (‘Man skapar på så sätt en text om vilken vi bara vet en enda sak helt säkert, nämligen att den aldrig har funnits’, p. 228).
30. There is still no Swedish (or Danish) correspondence to the extremely useful handbook of Old Norse philology that was published some years ago (Haugen 2004b). In this context there is no need to point out that synthetic and normalized editions have a much longer tradition in Old Icelandic literature.
31. Another example which may be mentioned is Henrik Williams’s (1999) edition with parallel English translation of Herr Ivan Lejonriddaren, the introduction to which includes insightful comments on principles for normalization.
32. See the discussions in Haugen 2003, Frederiksen 2005 and Driscoll 2010.
Elements of the New Edition

It has been necessary to dwell at some length on the preferences of previous editors. Not because the new edition of Saint Birgitta’s *Revelations* must follow any of the particular paths already trodden, but because the relationship between the adopted methodology and the theoretical development of the field needs to be clarified. And also because so much can be learnt from studying the past. The techniques and preferences of earlier philologists provide the modern editor with useful tools, and he or she will thus be better equipped to elucidate the details of his or her own method. And the way the editor does that depends ultimately and above all on the purpose of the edition, and on its primary target audience.

One of the principal goals for the new edition of the *Revelations* is that it should be based on all manuscripts, including the numerous fragments and extracts in other manuscripts which were unknown to the nineteenth-century editors. At the same time the ambition is to publish one text which in the future may serve as a ‘standard’ edition of the Old Swedish text, something scholars can refer to as naturally as they refer to the Latin critical edition. This edition should ideally present a text which is complete and reasonably free from errors.

Is it possible to combine such seemingly contradictory aims? I believe it is, if the editor accepts the necessity of compromise and if he is open to publication in different media. Even if the number of manuscripts and fragments is not by any means negligible, it is still not so overwhelmingly large that it would not be possible to make faithful transcriptions of all witnesses separately, especially if one aimed slightly lower than a complete recording of the type found in Lindell’s and Morris’s publications (see above). Such transcriptions could preferably be displayed electronically, together with images of the manuscripts. The main edition, however, would be published in the form of printed books. By this means it would be possible to publish both a series of authentic hand-written documents with all their scribal corrections, readers’ remarks and marginal notes but also with all their possible deficiencies and shortcomings and, in addition, a complete text based on the totality of all those manuscripts. But how should that be achieved?

In order to find that out we need to briefly consider what previous scholarship can tell us about the genesis and subsequent development of the Old Swedish text.33 The main part of the text extant today is the result of a translation, probably made in the early 1380s, from the Latin ‘standard’ version, which was produced

33. Without going into details, the most important contributions to our knowledge of this process can be found in Westman 1911; Kraft 1929; Ståhle 1956; Wessén 1968, 1976; Wollin 1991a, 2004 and the introductions to Morris 1991 and Lindell 2000.
in order to be presented to the Pope for the opening of a canonization process.\textsuperscript{34} However, no single manuscript contains the full version of this translation.\textsuperscript{35} The oldest one, MS A 110, contains nine revelations from Book I; MS A 5b seventy-four revelations from Books I–IV and MS C 61 three hundred and thirty-one revelations from Books III–VIII.\textsuperscript{36} Another manuscript, MS A 44, contains forty-six chapters from Book VIII but opinions differ concerning the status of this text.\textsuperscript{37} Later, possibly around 1400 or shortly after, a minor stylistic revision and modernization of the original translation was made. All eight books of this new version are contained in two manuscripts: MS A 5a and MS E 8801. Portions of the text are extant in a few other manuscripts, the most important of which is MS A 33 (Books I–III). This manuscript is of special interest since it contains further stylistic adaptations and amplifications other than those characterizing MS A 5a and MS E 8801. In addition there are a large number of extracts from the \textit{Revelations} in other manuscripts and also many lesser fragments, several of which belong to the collection of mutilated codices at the National Archives (see Appendix). However, it has also been convincingly demonstrated that portions of the corpus pre-date the Latin version. One celebrated case is the two leaves written in Birgitta’s own hand in the 1360s (now MS A 65).\textsuperscript{38} But there are other instances in which the vernacular version may bring us closer to Birgitta’s original language than does the Latin, for example, some of the revelations contained in MS E 8902, written in a peculiar mixture of Swedish and Norwegian.\textsuperscript{39} For the sake of simplicity I will use ‘phase A’ for the pre-Latin version, ‘phase C’ for the original translation and ‘phase D’ for the revised translation.\textsuperscript{40} It should be noted that for most of the incomplete or fragmentary manuscripts it has not yet been established what textual phase they represent. For the rest, the assumptions are reasonably well-founded, but should by no means be regarded as definitive. A full collation of all variation is necessary before the nature of and demarcation lines between these phases can be ascertained.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} For a detailed account of the different stages in the development of the Latin text, see Birgitta, Rev. I, 1978, pp. 4–37.
\item \textsuperscript{35} For details about the manuscripts and their contents, see the Appendix below.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Only Books V (Morris 1991) and VII (Lindell 2000) in MS C 61 have been systematically studied in this respect.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Kraft (1929, pp. 36–38) claims that this text represents the original translation while Ståhle (1956, pp. 16–18) identifies a stylistic revision in MS A 44 which is independent of the one in MS A 5a (and MS E 8801).
\item \textsuperscript{38} See most recently Gunneng and Westlund 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{39} See Adams (2005) with further references.
\item \textsuperscript{40} ‘Phase B’ (the Latin text) is not discussed here.
\end{itemize}
EDITORIAL METHOD

The first thing that must be decided is which one of these textual versions should be edited. The pre-Latin version is attested in extremely small samples of the total corpus, which excludes phase A. The same goes for phase C. Even if we combine all relevant witnesses it will not be possible to present a complete text of this version. So what remains is phase D. The next question is what copy text should be used. Since MS A 33 is incomplete and MS E 8801 has proved to be a direct copy of MS A 5a, the only remaining candidate for a complete edition of text version phase D seems to be MS A 5a.

It has been demonstrated that MS A 5a was commissioned in the 1420s by the nobleman Bengt Jönsson (Oxenstierna) to be read by him and by others in the aristocratic circles around his estate of Salsta in the province of Uppland. If the stylistic revision as represented by MS A 5a can be attested for all eight books it will thus be possible to view it as a conscious adaptation for an audience outside Vadstena abbey. From a philological point of view, however, this codex has its obvious drawbacks. For a start, three chapters are rendered in Latin because they were considered inappropriate for the ears of the lay public for whom the text was intended. There are also a good number of copying errors, misunderstandings and minor lacunae, and since the aim is to publish a text which is both complete and free from (obvious) errors, it will be necessary to make emendations. Such emendation, however, will never be made without solid support from other text witnesses, and for reasons already given, variants will primarily be adopted from other phase D manuscripts. Such an editorial methodology would result in a text which could tentatively be described as a corrected version of the text in the main manuscript. This seems to be the closest we can get to a complete edition of the Revelations if we do not want to mix different stages in the development.

There are, however, a number of instances where the intriguing manuscript MS A 33 agrees with phase C manuscripts against MS A 5a and MS E 8801. In those cases it can be argued that the same readings were present in the phase D archetype, that is, the now lost text from which all revised (phase D) manuscripts are derived. Let me given one example (Birgitta, Rev. I:58):

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41. Wessén 1976, pp. 10–17. From a stemmatological perspective MS E 8801 must therefore be dismissed according to the principle of eliminatio codicum descriptorum.
42. See, for example, Wiktorsson 2004 and Wollin 2004 with further references.
44. See also Ahlberg 1942, pp. XVIII–XIX.
Latin
Benedictus sis tu, quia dulcis es, dulcior et dulcissimus! Tu sanctus eras ante …
(Blessed are you, for you are sweet, sweeter, and most sweet! You were holy before …)

Phase C
MS A 5b: Wælsignadhīr vari thu thy at thou æst sōtir sōtare ok sōtast Thu vast hælaghir for æn thu …
MS A 110: vælsignadhīr vari thu thy at thu æst sōtir ok sōtare ok sōtast Thu vast hælaghir for æn thu …

Phase D
MS A 5a: vælsignadhīr vari thu wast sōtir oc sōtare oc sōtast Thu vast hælaghir for thu …
MS E 8801: Wælsighnadhīr wari thu tw wast sōtir oc sōtare oc sōtast Thw wast hælaghīr for tw …
MS A 33: vælsignadhīr wari thu thy at thu æst sōtir ok sōtare ok sōtastir Thu wast hælaghir for æn thu …

Since MS A 33 is in all essentials a phase D manuscript, the readings thy at thu æst and for æn in MS A 33 must therefore also be the readings of the phase D archetype. It also closely follows the Latin text, which heightens its authority. This means that the omission of the causal subjunction (thy at), the change from present (æst) to past tense (wast) and the reduction of for æn to the simple for with the same meaning ‘before’, must have been introduced into the textual tradition by the MS A 5a scribe or in another lost intermediary manuscript derived from the phase D archetype. If we anticipate the results of the full collation, we seem to be facing a situation where to some extent it would be possible to reconstruct readings in the phase D archetype. This could make it possible for the new edition to present the text of the (hyp-)archetype (D) instead of the text of the copy text (MS A 5a). However, given that not all eight books of the Revelations are attested in phase C manuscripts (in fact not even all the chapters in Book I), this method, if it is adopted, will have to be restricted to those cases where the separate development in the base manuscript (apart from obvious copying errors such as in the example just cited) seems to detract from or obscure the intended meaning of the revised translation. Consider the following example (Birgitta, Rev. I:56):
Latin
Funiculus autem patibuli est ignis eternus, qui non extinguitur aqua nec rescinditur forpicius nec finietur vel rumpetur vetustate
(The rope of the gibbet means everlasting fire that can neither be put out by water nor cut by scissors nor broken and terminated by old age)

Phase C
MS A 5b: galgans rep ær awærdelikin eldir · hwilkin ey wtslækkis mædh watn · Ok swndir skærs ey mædh sax ok skal ey ændas ælla swndhir slitas for allir

Phase D
MS A 5a: Galghans reep ær æuærdhelikin eldir thær ey kan vt slækkias mædh watn oc ey syndir skæras mædh sagx ox skal ey ændas ælla · forgangas af allir dom

MS E 8801: Galghans reep ær æuærdhelikin eldir thær ey kan wt slækkias mædh watn oc ey syndirskæras mædh sagx ox scal ey ændas ælla forgangas af allir dom

MS A 33: Galgans rep ær æuærdhelikin eldir · hulkin som ey vt slækkis mædh watn ok ey sundir skærs mædh sax ok skal ey ændas ælla sundir slitas ælla forgangas af allirdom

Since both MS A 5b and MS A 33 read 'swndhir slitas'/‘sundir slitas’ we can safely assume that this phrase was also in the phase D archetype (cf. Latin: rumpetur) and that it should therefore be adopted. It must have been deliberately replaced in MS A 5a (or in a now-lost intermediary source). The sentence in the latter manuscript is coherent and grammatically correct, but, it must be admitted, the original concrete imagery (rope, fire, scissors, broken) has become substantially less evocative.

There is a need for firm principles for the recording of variants in other manuscripts. For practical reasons the editor will have to exclude orthographic variation. Otherwise the critical apparatus would be substantially longer than the edited text. The most reasonable solution is to record variation on the syntactic, lexical, and morphological (such as case, grammatical mood and number) levels. In this way the edition will have the capacity to record the exact wording (but not the exact spelling) not only in the copy text but in all textual witnesses. In order to make the edition more accessible to non-specialists, capitalization and punctuation will be adapted to modern usage.

45. See the similar conclusions in Lindell 2000, p. 134.
To sum up, the new edition as just briefly outlined would essentially comprise the following elements:46

- the main printed edition presenting the text of the revised translation as represented mainly by the base manuscript (MS A 5a); obvious errors; readings from D archetype normally preferred
- the recording of all manuscript variants on syntactical, lexical and morphological levels, disregarding all aspects of ‘correctness’
- capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing adapted to modern standards
- separate editions of the deviant chapters representing the pre-Latin version
- in addition, diplomatic transcriptions of all manuscripts available electronically together with colour images.

46. In addition, the printed text will be preceded by an introductory section containing a summary of previous scholarship, schematic accounts of the textual genesis and the relationship between the Old Swedish and the Latin versions, manuscript descriptions, editorial principles etc. A separate apparatus of sources (such as biblical or other quotations) will be attached to the individual chapters and indexes of different kinds will be provided at the end. It should be noted that details of the editorial method may be subject to further change.
## APPENDIX

Preliminary list of manuscripts containing the
Old Swedish text of the Revelations

Note that chapter numbers in some cases differ from those in the Latin version. Underlined chapter numbers indicate incomplete text. A chapter having been consciously left out in the manuscript with reference given to its location in another book (often Book VIII) is not treated as a missing chapter. This also applies to conscious abbreviations or omissions in relation to the Latin text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Previously edited</th>
<th>Chapters in Books I–VIII</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 33</td>
<td>Middle of 15th c.</td>
<td>BU, vol. 1</td>
<td>I:1–6, 7–9, 10–60; II:1–10, 11–12, 13–22; III: 1–13, 14, 16, 17–34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 110</td>
<td>Late 14th c.</td>
<td>Geete 1900–1916, pp. 17–40</td>
<td>I:8, 28, 31, 36, 42, 52–53, 58; IV:110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 44</td>
<td>First half of 15th c.</td>
<td>BU, vol. 4, pp. 279–419</td>
<td>VIII: 8, 9–11, 12–13, 14–48, 49, 52, 53–55, 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 5b</td>
<td>Before 1452</td>
<td>Facsimile ed. in Wessén 1949</td>
<td>I:55, 56–60; II:1–22; III:1–16; 17, 27, 28–34; IV:2–24, 25</td>
<td>From the same codex as MS A 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 24 (cover)</td>
<td>before 1452</td>
<td>Stähle 1936</td>
<td>V: 1, 4–5</td>
<td>From the same codex as MS A 5b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Additional Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mh 20</td>
<td>First half of 15th c.</td>
<td>Lagerbring 1758, pp. 85–108</td>
<td>IV: Lat. 131; VI: Lat. 118</td>
<td>Only 11 lines now extant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 54</td>
<td>Middle of 15th c.</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>See Carlquist 1997</td>
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<tr>
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While the so-called Lucidarium, the Customary of the Birgittine sisters, is often used and referred to in the study of the life of female members of the Birgittine order, the tradition and transmission of the text has received very little scholarly attention. It is my aim in the following to look at some parts of the composition and the establishment of these regulations for the sisters, as well as the transmission of the Lucidarium in some of the female Birgittine convents in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The life of any member of a Birgittine convent was carefully regulated by several different sets of rules and statutes. As the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 prohibited the establishment of new religious orders, Saint Birgitta had to set her rule – the Regula Salvatoris – as subordinate to another established rule, choosing the Rule of Saint Augustine as the main authority. In 1378 Pope Urban VI issued a bull which confirmed Saint Birgitta’s rules as Constitutions, i.e. supplementary regulations, subordinate to the Rule of Saint Augustine. However, these Constitutions did not adequately explain a number of practical matters,

1. The title Lucidarium should not be confused with its namesake Elucidarius, Lucidarius or the like, which was the common title for a number of encyclopaedic works from the 1100s onwards. These were assumed to have been written by the theologian Honorius Augustodunensis in the twelfth century, although this has been debated. (See KL, s.v. ‘Elucidarium.’) The Birgittine title Lucidarium or Elucidarius is however given in all versions of the text that I am discussing here, and simply refers to the enlightenment of the sisters. As the title Lucidarium has become more or less established, I have chosen to use it also in the following.

2. As this study is of limited scope, the work has only included some of the extant manuscripts, excluding, for example, the Dutch versions of the text as well as the post-medieval copies. It is most likely that further research into these manuscripts will shed additional light on the transmission of the text.
and in the *Regula Salvatoris* it is stated that additions to the Constitutions should be written by a Benedictine or Cistercian brother. This became the duty of Saint Birgitta’s former confessor, Petrus Olavi of Alvastra, commonly called Prior Peter. In the 1380s he composed and compiled from the *Revelationes Extravagantes* what is known as the *Addiciones prioris Petri*. The Additions comment on and explain Saint Birgitta’s Constitutions. As will be illustrated below, not all of these Additions were appreciated and supported by the members of the convents.

This was, however, not enough for the Birgittines, who required further clarifications and developments of the regulations. Thus, there were two different customaries written – the *Lucidarium* for the sisters and the so-called *Liber usuum* for the brethren. The *Liber usuum*, composed of a prologue and 56 chapters, is concerned with the daily life of the brethren, quotes from papal bulls and other normative texts, and a more liturgically oriented part.

It is unknown when the *Liber usuum* began to be composed, though there are indications that a decision to compile such a work had already been made at the general chapter at Vadstena in 1429. It cannot have been finished earlier than 1448. This *terminus post quem* is based on a reference in the text to a statute which was approved in January that year. At the general chapter at Gnadenberg in 1487 the brethren’s customary was approved for the entire Birgittine order, together with that of the sisters.

3. These were the additional revelations that were not included in the edition prepared by Alfonso of Jaén for the canonization process of Saint Birgitta. For the history and an edition of these revelations, see Birgitta, Rev. Extr. (1956), p. 28 ff.

4. Höjer 1905, p. 72. On this text, also known as the *Constitutiones*, see Vitalis 1995; for the background to the rules and the approval of the order, see especially pp. 47–50, but also Morris 1999, pp. 161–163.

5. For example, how to observe humility; how to avoid having properties; when to keep silence and fasts; how to receive visiting brothers and bishops; how to accept new members; the duties of the lay brothers, the deacons, the priests and the confessor general; the rituals by which new members should be consecrated; the duties and rights regarding sermons and confessions; the administration of the sacraments; the ceremonies dealing with dying and funerals; procedures regarding meals and what to be read at mealtimes.

6. On this text, see Risberg 2003, and a more detailed summary of each chapter on pp. 21–47.

Before going further into the structure and contents of the *Lucidarium*, I would like to present the manuscripts in which the text is now extant, either in Latin or a vernacular language. Five of the known copies of the text are medieval.

The first one is Munich, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, MS Cgm 5612, which contains a German translation of the *Lucidarium*. The dialect has been identified as north Bavarian, and it is therefore most likely to have been written in the monastery at Gnadenberg, probably sometime between 1440 (at least after the foundation of Gnadenberg in 1438) and 1450.8 The dating is based on the palaeography, which has been compared to that of other north Bavarian manuscripts.9

It is believed that the book, together with other manuscripts and archival material, was sent to the Benedictine nuns in Hohenwart Abbey (also in Bavaria) after the dissolution of Gnadenberg in 1563. A note on fol. 123v says that the Hohenwart abbess Anna Johanna Sibenaicher (abbess 1635–1679) presented the manuscript to her sister Barbara Sibenaicher, who was a Birgittine sister in Altomünster, in 1636. After the secularisation of Altomünster at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the manuscript was transferred from the abbey to the Reichsarchiv, and from there to its present library.

The book also includes several other texts relating to the rules and regulations of the Birgittines: the *Regula Salvatoris*, an inaugural formula for a kitchen sister, the Additions of Prior Peter, as well as the Rule of Saint Augustine.10

The second manuscript is Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS 726 fol. This is a Vadstena manuscript and the only witness to the text in Old Swedish, written by the sister Christina Hansdotter Brask (in Vadstena 1459–1520).11 Christina Hansdotter Brask mentions herself explicitly as the scribe on fol. 168v: ‘Sister Christina Hansdotter wrote this book.’12 Additionally, on the verso of the front flyleaf it is explained that ‘Mother Abbess Sister Anna Pauli had this book written for the good of the entire convent’.13 Anna Paulsdotter, who entered Vadstena Abbey in 1436, was its abbess from 1487 to 1496, when she resigned on

10. For a complete description, see Wunderle 2009.
11. DV, nos. 705 and 1063. As the most well-known female scribe in the convent her distinctive hand can be found in many manuscripts of Vadstena origin, see Hedström 2009, pp. 66–69 and (a more extensive summary) Hedström 2013, p. 269, n. 57.
12. ‘Tæssa book screff syster cristin hanssa dotther.’
13. ‘Tæssa bookena læt modher abbatissa syster anna pauals dotter scriffua gudhi til hedhers oc alle conuentonne til hugnat.’
grounds of old age. The manuscript therefore can be dated to this time period.

The book has the ex libris of ‘Danziger Museum’ on the recto of the first flyleaf, and we should probably assume that one of the last Vadstena sisters brought the manuscript with her when emigrating to the Birgitine convent of Marienbrunn (Fons Mariae) in Gdańsk after the dissolution of the Swedish mother convent in 1595.

The manuscript does not only contain the Lucidarium but also the Regula Salvatoris, the Rule of Saint Augustine, some of the Revelationes Extravagantes and the Additions of Prior Peter. The Swedish translation of the Lucidarium was edited by Klemming 1883–1884, and the entire manuscript was printed as a facsimile by Wessén in 1965.

Third, Augsburg University Library, MS III 1. 2° 40 is a German manuscript from Maihingen. It is dated 1497, and the scribe Katherina Jopplin (or Joppel) names herself on fol. 124r: ‘The writing of this book of the Rule and Statutes of the Order of the Holy Saviour was finished on Wednesday before the day of the death of our holy mother Saint Birgitta, as one reckons after the birth of Christ our dear Lord in the year 1497, by sister Katherina Joppel of Nuremberg. Pray to God, also for me.’ The manuscript also contains the Regula Salvatoris, the

14. DV, nos. 459, 867 and 926.
15. The last leaves (fols. 169r–170r) were written by a different scribe – the sister who also wrote the manuscript Stockholm, National Library, MS A 2 (see Hedström 2009, p. 137, n. 198). This sister has, based on the initials k p on fol. 3r, been identified as Katarina Petersdotter, who was in Vadstena 1520–1564 (Geete 1923–1925, pp. xxv–xxvi). However, the leaves that have been attributed to Katarina make up a separate gathering, and could be a replacement or a later addition to the manuscript. The text on fol. 168v – two pages from the end – ends mid-sentence, but Christina has still left her name as the scribe in the colophon at the bottom of the page, which might indicate that she thought that the work had been finished.
17. For a fuller description of the manuscript and more details on the contents, see Klemming 1883–1884, pp. 149–153.
18. It might be added that (except for the Regula Salvatoris and a few of the Revelationes Extravagantes) this is the only known copy of the Old Swedish translations of these texts.
19. For information on this manuscript and further references, see Schneider 1988, pp. 225–226.
20. On Katherina Jopplin and her scribal activities, see Schleif and Schier 2009, pp. 84–85.
21. ‘Das buch der regeln vnd saczung Sannt Saluators ist auß geschrieben worden am mitwoch vor der verschydung vnser heylligen mütter sant Birgitten do man zalt nach der gepurt Cristi vnners lieben hern 1497 iar von schwester katherina jopplin von nürmberck pit got auch fur mich.’ The original quotation can be found in Montag 1968, pp. 52–53, the translation is from Schleif and Schier 2009, p. 84.
Rule of Saint Augustine, the Additions of Prior Peter, the inaugural formula for a kitchen sister and for a brother *ab extra*.  

The fourth medieval manuscript is Uden, Bibliothek Maria Refugie, H:Lu 1 (*olim* 231). This is a manuscript in Dutch and dates to c. 1500, from the abbey of Mariënwater. The manuscript also contains the Rule of Saint Augustine and some prayers. An ownership inscription informs us that the book once belonged to sister Barbara Loyer (d. 1531).  

The last copy is a fragment of eight leaves of the Latin text, with the shelf-mark F.m. V TH AA 128 in the Fragmenta Membrana collection in the National Library of Finland (Helsinki). The original manuscript was probably cut up after the Reformation and was subsequently used as binding material for an account book from 1562. On fols. 5r and 8v we find the year as well as information about the account book, which covered Vemo (Vehmaa), Nykyrka (Uusikirkko), Letala (Laitila) and Raumo (Rauma) parishes, all in the region of Åbo (Turku). In addition, the name ‘Thommas Henriksson’ – written by a sixteenth century hand in the margin of fol. 2v – points towards a provenance from this area. Thomas Henriksson was the scribe and treasurer for Prince John’s tax chamber in 1558–1564 and a scribe at Åbo Castle in 1565–1568.  

On palaeographical grounds I would date this *hybrida* script to the second half of the fifteenth century. There are a number of features which suggest a direct connection between the hand in the Finnish fragment and that of the Vadstena sister Christina Hansdotter Brask. Many of the features commonly found in texts written by Christina can also be seen here. Some examples are the ‘flags’ on the tall stems, somewhat chunky and placed a little way down the stem; the strokes over the letters *i* and *j*; the straight nasal strokes and the way that there tends to be a hair-stroke going from the right bottom (i.e. the body) of the letter *g* and up from the stem. Christina seems to most often write the *re-* abbreviation simply as a ‘diamond’ without the ‘hook’ at the top, but there

24. Kiuasamaa 1962, p. 593. See also Walta in this volume.  
25. The monastery of Nådendal, *Monasterium Vallis gratiae*, existed from the 1440s to the 1550s. On its history, see for example Leinberg 1890 and Klockars 1979.
are examples of manuscripts (for instance Stockholm, National Library, MS A 38) in which she adds the hook as well, the way it is written here. Normally Christina writes between the lines, rather than on them. That feature is also found here.

Usually, one would expect Christina to write Latin in *textualis* and use the script type *hybrida* only for the vernacular.\(^{26}\) However, there are examples also of the opposite (for instance Uppsala University Library, MS C 12), and it can therefore not be regarded as a distinctive feature, and it is certainly not unique to her.

Of course, these features are not enough to identify Christina as the scribe of the Finnish *Lucidarium* fragment, but the illuminated initials add another dimension. The illuminated initials in the National Library of Finland, F.m. V TH AA 128 correspond closely to the pen-flourished letters that are characteristic of Christina.\(^{27}\) These initials have been described by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren as having ‘short marginal stems and the uprising marginal stem protrudes at an angle of 45° out and up in the left margin. Christina is furthermore one of the few sisters who sometimes let the down leading marginal stem end as a small hanging heart’ (or perhaps an ivy leaf).\(^{28}\) This is illustrated above (Fig. 1) in the prayer book manuscript Uppsala University Library, MS C 12, fol. 52v.

If one compares this to the illuminated initial on fol. 2v in the Finnish fragment (Fig. 2), the similarities are striking. We find here Christina’s use of red and blue ink, her specific flourishing and – perhaps most importantly – the characteristic ‘hanging heart’. The attribution of scribal hands in manuscripts from Vadstena is not something to be done lightly, and I cannot yet definitively state that this is Christina’s hand. However, it is safe to say that the scribal hand here at least belongs to someone who has worked closely with her. Thus, it seems likely that the fragment was in fact not written at Nådendal, but rather in Vadstena Abbey and subsequently sent to the daughter convent in Finland.

The text in National Library of Finland, F.m. V TH AA 128 is ‘neater’ than that of many of Christina’s other manuscripts – something which could indicate that it is a fairly early production. A comparison could be made to her hand in the manuscript Uppsala University Library, MS C 443, where her writing is very

\(^{27}\) Sandgren 2010, p. 136.
shaky and irregular and in which (on fol. 10v) she calls herself ‘the old one’. The Helsinki fragment could also be compared to the manuscript Lampeter, University of Wales Trinity Saint David Library, MS 5, which contains the Ordinal of the Birgittine sisters. The manuscript was written in 1481, and Christina Hansdotter once again explicitly names herself as the scribe. This is one of the neater examples of her scribal hand, and gives a general impression closer to that of the Finnish fragment.

The fragment is the only surviving text witness in Latin. Unfortunately, there are several leaves missing in the middle as well as at the end, so it is not possible to work out the original extent of the text. Also, it is not known if the fragment was originally part of a larger manuscript, containing other texts as well. This text witness was edited by Elmgren in 1868.

In addition, there are eight post-medieval copies of the text, from the mid-sixteenth century to the twentieth century. They can be found in the following:

1) Dillingen, Kreis- und Studienbibliothek, MS XV 75. This manuscript in German, dated to 1551 and written in Maihingen, is a direct copy of the Augsburg manuscript.
2) Uden, Bibliothek Maria Refugie, MS H:Lu 2 (olim 230). A paper manuscript in Dutch from the sixteenth century, from Mariënwater.
3) Stockholm, National Library, MS A 931. Another German translation, written after 1675, either in Mariasion or Marienforst.
4) Altomünster Klosterarchiv, MS M6. An incomplete copy in German, written in Altomünster after 1677.
5) Uden, Bibliothek Maria Refugie, MS H:Lu 3. A nineteenth century copy in Dutch from Mariënwater.
6) Uden, Bibliothek Maria Refugie, MS H:Lu 4. A twentieth century copy of a seventeenth century manuscript, also in Dutch from Mariënwater.
7) Uden, Bibliothek Maria Refugie, MS H:Lu 5. A photocopy of a sixteenth century manuscript, possibly from Marienbaum. However, the whereabouts of the original is unknown.

29. ‘Oc glemen ekke c h gambla som screff’ (‘And do not forget C[hristina] H[ansdotter] the old one, who wrote [this manuscript]’).
30. On this manuscript, see Hedlund 1981.
32. As the dating of this manuscript is not exact, it is possible that it should in fact be grouped with the medieval manuscripts above. For this one and all the Uden copies, see Sander Olsen 2002, p. 116.
Moreover, two manuscripts are now lost: Gdańsk, Biblioteka Gdanska Polskiej Akademii Nauk nos. 2164 and 2165 are noted in earlier records, but have been missing since the Second World War. Both manuscripts were seventeenth century copies in German, thought to have been from Marienbrunn. All of these late copies are written in either German or Dutch. The Syon copy is in a position of its own, as it is a modern translation and the text was never in use in Syon Abbey.35

Three of the medieval witnesses to the text have been used in the following study: the one in German in Munich, MS Cgm 5612, the one in Swedish in Berlin, MS 726 2° and the Latin one in Helsinki, F.m. V TH AA 128.

THE TEXT AND ITS TRANSMISSION

The question of who wrote the Lucidarium has been raised briefly in earlier research. A note recorded in the now lost Gdańsk MS 2164 stated that the text was editum a S. Catharina [sanctae Birgittae] filia.36 However, it is very unlikely that this is correct and there are strong reasons for doubting Katarina’s role here. If this was the case, the information would have most probably have been reported more widely than in one late witness. The Birgittines seem to have been very conscious of reporting which authority (preferably from their own order) had written certain texts. For instance, we are clearly told in all the manuscripts containing Prior Peter of Alvastra’s Additions to the Rule that he is the author of that text. Birgitta’s daughter Katarina was on her way to be sanctified at the time of the acceptance of the Lucidarium, and was beatified the same year as the general chapter in Gnadenberg was held (1487); if she had composed the text, that would have been important information to the members of the order. Also, it would mean that the text was composed before her death in 1381, which seems unlikely. The author remains unknown.

The dating of the composition of the Lucidarium has also not been thoroughly discussed by earlier scholars, although occasionally the 1380s are mentioned.37 However, to the best of my knowledge, no medieval source actually records

34. Hogg 1990, p. 73; the text has been edited by Hogg 1990, pp. 75–155.
35. Syon Abbey seems to never have accepted the Lucidarium, but used instead a special compilation, see Hogg 1980.
37. See, for example, most recently Carlquist 2007, p. 89.
when the text was composed. Höjer is of the opinion that the *Lucidarium* was composed considerably later than the Additions, although he gives no arguments for this stand. Instead an estimated dating would have to be based on more circumstantial indications.

It might be argued that an initiative to compose a customary for the sisters would be likely to have arisen at more or less the same time as that of the brethren (beginning in 1429 at the earliest). However, unlike the customary of the brethren which mainly deals with practical matters, the sisters’ customary is largely focused on the liturgical aspects of their lives. When the brothers celebrated the divine office and mass, they were to follow the rite of the diocese in which the monastery was situated. The sisters, on the other hand, celebrated a specially composed Birgittine liturgy. A customary focused on this vital – and in fact the most important – part of the sisters’ lives therefore must have become necessary very early on.

A few things about the composition are known. In the prologue to the Latin version, we are informed that the text was originally written in the vernacular and then translated into Latin to avoid any confusion about the regulations, by request of the senior sisters in Vadstena: ‘I have, on demand of some of the older sisters in the Abbey in the Order of Saint Saviour in Vadstena, without maliciously adding or leaving anything out while writing, faithfully translated the following Customary from the vernacular into Latin.’

Likewise, in the prologue to the *Lucidarium* in Munich, MS Cgm 5612 (fol. 40rv) we are given some information: ‘Therefore, at the request of several of the oldest sisters in Vadstena Abbey in the Order of Saint Saviour, I have carefully translated this customary rule and statute into Latin, which after that also has been translated into German in the Abbey of Gnadenberg in the same Order.’ Thus, if this is correct, we know that the text was originally written in Swedish in Vadstena Abbey, and that (some of the older) sisters there demanded that the

38. Höjer 1905, p. 46, n. 4.
40. The so-called *Cantus sororum*. See, for example, Norlind 1907 and Härdelin 1998.
41. My translation; original quotation in Elmgren 1868, p. 91: ‘Propterea ad rogatum qua­rundam sororum seniorum ordinis sancti salvatoris monasterii varstzenensis materna lingua in gramaticam has sequentes observancias usuales […] fideliter translatavi nil maliciose addens vel minuens in scribendo.’
Based on this, one can estimate when the translation into Latin was made. While it is possible that a translation into Latin was made because of the status of the language and that a Latin version would make the customary more authoritative, it seems more likely that a translation was not needed until there were daughter convents outside Sweden that needed the same guidelines. Paradiso (in Florence) and Marienbrunn (in Gdańsk) were established already in 1394 and 1396 respectively, but it was not until the 1410–1420s that the real expansion of the order began. These new convents obviously had a limited knowledge of Swedish, and would have needed the customary in a different language. It is most likely that a translation and the dissemination of these additional regulations would not have been necessary until there was an audience and a need for them.

It has been suggested that it was the Vadstena brother Clemens Petri who presented the *Lucidarium* to the general chapter in Gnadenberg, by reading it aloud to the assembly there. This must have been a version in Latin, the *lingua franca* of the brethren. As the oldest manuscript witness is dated to 1440–1450, we can assume that the original translation into Latin was made sometime between perhaps the 1410s and the point of writing this manuscript in the 1440s. It is of course possible that a translation was made already for Paradiso and Marienbrunn. In that case we would be able to date the first translation to between the mid to late 1390s and the 1410s.

Clearly a Latin copy of the *Lucidarium* had already begun to be disseminated by the 1440s (or at least no earlier than 1438 when the abbey in Gnadenberg was founded), when the German translation was made. Ulrich Montag has assumed that the Latin original on which the German translation in Munich, MS Cgm 5612 is based was brought from Maribo Abbey in Denmark at the time of the founding of Gnadenberg. If this hypothesis is correct then the *terminus ante quem* for the translation into Latin is 1438. Although speculative, it is tempting to think that a copy of the Latin version of the *Lucidarium* (although still unap-

43. Expanding to Mariental (Tallinn) 1412, Marienwohle (Lübeck) 1413, Syon Abbey (Isleworth) 1415, Maribo 1416, Marienkrone (Stralsund) 1421, Maria Triumph (Lublin) 1424 and Munkaliv (Bergen) 1425. On the expansion of the order, see, for example, Nyberg 1965; Morris 1999, pp. 169–177. An illustrative summary can also be found in Sander Olsen 2000, pp. 118–119.

44. Risberg 2003, p. 50, n. 101.

proved) spread among the Birgittines after the general chapter in Vadstena in 1429, and that this perhaps further inspired the compilation of the Liber usuum.

THE CONTENTS

The first part of the Lucidarium gives instructions regarding the liturgical life of the sisters, following the hours of the day – beginning with matins and procedures around mass – on how to behave and sing and what prayers to say. After the first chapters concerning the sisters’ behaviour in the choir, the remaining chapters give meticulous details for their life in the convent in all other respects, following the order of the day. First come chapters regarding the meals, the table readings and the serving at tables. Next follow regulations about the sisters’ daily work between noon and vespers, and then details of the evening activities (vespers, evening meal and the retreat to the dormitory). After the specifications of the normal, daily activities follow chapters on more specific topics like fasting, commemoration days, and special duties among the sisters (for example tasks in the garden, the cellar and the infirmary). Finally, the text ends with chapters mainly concerning the design of the abbey (for example the sisters’ choir, the interior of the church and the thirteen altars) and how the sisters should live in the order.

However, the numbering of the chapters varies, and – as will discussed below – some chapters are excluded in certain versions of the text. For the different text witnesses examined here, this can be summarized in the chart overleaf.

As this shows, all the versions of the text which have been used for this study, except for the Swedish one, begin with a prologue. The prologue starts with a reference to Thomas Aquinas, as well as two quotes by Christ from the Regula Salvatoris: one from the very first line of the first chapter, ‘I will have this order first and chiefly erected for women in the honour of My Most Adorable Mother and with My own lips I will fully explain and declare its constitution and statutes’, and one from the end of the second chapter of the prologue to the Regula, ‘Out of this Vineyard many others [i.e. other orders] now dry and useless shall be renewed and once more bear fruit.’

The Latin prologue also includes a statement about the translation which is not included in the German version – that all chapters have been translated faithfully, ‘without maliciously adding or leaving anything out while writing’. Nevertheless, in the Latin text it is also stated that the penultimate two chapters,

46. Here quoted from the Syon translation, see Hogg 1990, p. 129.
47. Cf. n. 41 above.
which describe the church and the priest brothers’ choir, have been excluded. 48
However, if one looks at the German text, these chapters are in fact present. Chapters 49, 50, 52 and 53 in the German translation all deal with these things: chapter 49 with how the sisters’ choir should be built, 50 the interior of the church, 52 how the church should be built (including the priests’ choir) and 53 with the 13 altars of the church. The German translation hence has more than two chapters with these descriptions, but as chapter 52 and 53 correspond to chapter 28 and 34 of the Revelationes Extravagantes these could be seen as separate additions, and not part of the actual Lucidarium. Thus the two extra chapters contain information on exactly those parts that the Latin prologue says has been removed. 49

48. ‘[P]reter duo penultima capitula de descriptione ecclesie et chori sacerdotum.’
49. It is not possible to know what the original ending was as the Latin text is missing its final chapters. The Swedish one, however, clearly states that chapter 49 is ‘the final chapter’ (’ythersta capitulum’).
As the Latin text is incomplete and lacks the ending, it is not possible to know which regulations were intended to be at the end of that particular translation. But all these chapters describing the church and the choirs are missing in the Swedish version. The reason might be quite simple. The question of how the church should be built and its interior was of course no longer in any way an important issue for the sisters in Vadstena. The building of their church had begun in the 1380s (and it was inaugurated in 1430), so the chapters concerning the design of the church were for them no longer an essential part of the Lucidarium. On the continent, however, it was probably much more necessary as new convents were built or converted to fit in with the Birgittine regulations.

There is however, another important difference between the Swedish and the German versions of the text. The Swedish version is not only missing the introduction, but also a chapter in the middle. It is the German chapter 39, and unfortunately it is not possible to tell whether this one was included in the Latin version or not, as there are leaves missing from the Latin fragment and the text ends incomplete in chapter 38. The chapter that has been omitted (whether consciously or by mistake) concerns the sisters’ duties in the kitchen and the so-called *focariae* (or ‘kitchen sisters’).

The discussion about whether the sisters should have to work in the kitchen was for a long time a controversial issue. In the *Revelationes Extravagantes*, chapter 35, it is stated that the abbess is allowed to take into the sisters’ enclosure four women as *focariae* to help out with heavy kitchen duties, like fetching water and wood, looking after the fire and so on. These ‘kitchen sisters’ should live close to the kitchen and the gate of the convent, and their work should be supervised by one or two sisters. This was questioned by the members of Syon Abbey, where it was thought that the sisters got away very lightly as they did not have to do any hard work. Rather, the sisters who were on kitchen duty only had to make sure everything was fully cooked, correct the seasoning, divide the food into portions, and after the meal carry out the bowls and vessels to the kitchen.50

In the *Additiones* of Prior Peter, two chapters included the sisters’ obligation to work in the kitchen and also do the heavier tasks. However, when Bishop Knut of Linköping confirmed the Additions in 1420, the paragraphs about the sisters’ kitchen duties had been removed, and it has therefore been suggested that the sisters were released from some of the heavier work in the kitchen, but not completely relieved of it. The same year as the confirmation of the Additions it is noted in the Vadstena memorial book that the sisters once again (*iterate*)

50. Andersson 2011, p. 179.
took in women as focariae, even though no focaria is mentioned in the Diarium before 1420. The matter was further settled in 1422, when a papal bull allowed the abbess to take in sisters to work in the kitchen. The topic was once again discussed at the general chapter in Vadstena in 1429, when it was decided that the sisters were to be relieved from the tasks of brewing and baking, and their duties in the kitchen were limited to two of them having to supervise the servants’ work every week.

One might be tempted to believe that this missing chapter about the kitchen sisters in the Swedish text is simply a mistake, and that it has fallen out in the copying process or similar. It is, however, interesting to see that in the Swedish translation of the Additions (of which the only extant copy is found in the same manuscript) the two chapters regarding kitchen duties (the Latin chapters 26 and 27) have also been removed. In Munich MS Cgm 5612, which has a German translation of the Additions, the chapters about kitchen duties are included (fols. 86v–87r). Additionally, both of the two medieval German manuscripts listed above also contain an inaugural formula for a kitchen sister, which further emphasises the importance of the focariae. Thus, it is tempting to see the removal of the regulations regarding the sisters’ duties in the kitchen in the Swedish version as a conscious decision in the light of the debate about the focariae and the tasks of the sisters in the enclosure.

CONCLUSION AND SOME FINAL REMARKS

Before closing this paper, there are some final remarks to be made. The Lucidarium is focused on the daily life of the sisters, mainly regarding liturgical aspects but also concerning the normal tasks and duties in the convent. Except for the mention of Thomas Aquinas in the prologue there are very few references to other texts. When there are, these always refer to other normative texts of the Birgittine order. The Lucidarium text is also always found in a manuscript context alongside the other normative texts: the Rule of Saint Augustine, the Regula Salvatoris and the Addiciones prioris Petri.

51. DV, no. 315; cf. Höjer 1905, p. 77 and 332.
52. Höjer 1905, p. 78.
54. As in, for instance, chapter six – on how the members should go to the open grave after the sisters’ terce – this is mentioned to be ‘according to the rule’, and corresponds to chapter 27 of the Regula Salvatoris. Likewise, in chapter ten there is a reference to ‘a revelation’ regarding how the sisters should sing. This refers to chapter four of the Revelationes Extravagantes.
Unlike the brethren’s *Liber usuum*, which shows only minor changes to the
text in the different manuscripts, the *Lucidarium* seem to have been susceptible
to change – both in the arrangement and numbering of the chapters, and which
ones were to be included. The fact that there are chapters included in the German
translation of the text which have been explicitly removed in the extant Latin version, tells us that there must have been two different traditions of the *Lucidarium*. The German version cannot have been translated from the extant Latin fragment or any copies thereof. Thus, there must have been a second Latin translation of the original Swedish text, or at least a version with the final few chapters included.

However, it is clear that the Swedish text must go back to the particular Latin translation found in the Finnish fragment, or that of a similar tradition, as they both lack the penultimate chapters. The Swedish text can therefore not be ‘the most original’ one, i.e. the one closest to the *urtext*, which must have included these other chapters as well (although perhaps not all the chapters found in the German translation).

It should be added that it has previously been noted that ‘[t]he Old Swedish text is very Latinized in form, which seems strange, as it deals primarily with everyday, practical matters.’ This would further suggest that the Swedish text is not a copy of the original text, but rather a re-translation from the Latin. The re-translation could have been made from the extant Latin fragment or a copy of one, which also had the final chapters on the interior and the priest brethren’s choir omitted and which would thus explain the missing chapters in the Swedish version.

The matrix of extant manuscripts indicates that the *Lucidarium* derived from the Swedish original composition spread in two branches. Interestingly enough, the first translation into Latin was made in response to a demand by the sisters in Vadstena Abbey. For the Birgittine sisters there was one customary to rule them all, but there was also a great variation in the transmission of this text.

56. This could for instance easily be compared to the intricate matrix of the text witnesses of Saint Birgitta’s *Revelations*, which were translated from the vernacular into Latin, and then re-translated back into the vernacular again. A further comparative study into the Swedish *Lucidarium* text could possibly confirm this.
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schleif, corine & schier, volker (2009), Katerina’s Windows: Donation and Devotion, Art and Music, as Heard and Seen Through the Writings of a Birgittine Nun (University Park).
sfss = Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet.
sslf = Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.
INTRODUCTION

It will come as no revelation to those who work with medieval Scandinavian manuscripts that there are a number of Birgittine texts written in a curious mishmash of vernacular linguistic forms resulting from language contact and mixture. For example, manuscripts in Danish originating from the Birgittine monastery in Maribo on Lolland demonstrate a number of linguistic features typically found in Swedish manuscripts, and similarly, Norwegian manuscripts from around 1400 also appear to be strongly influenced by the linguistic forms usually found in the manuscripts of Norway’s eastern neighbour and thus also contain a large number of sveticisms. It has even been noted that danicisms appear in Swedish Birgittine manuscripts written in the so-called – and to my mind specious – vadstenaspråk, or Vadsten language.

Through the years, these mixed linguistic features have been the subject of varying amounts of interest to language historians and philologists who work on medieval Scandinavian material. Some see them as nothing more than scribal interference, while others have hailed them as evidence of an attempt to create a

1. Skautrup 1947, pp. 37–40. Some scholars (e.g. Dahlerup 1998, 1, p. 342), consider the Danish translations of Birgitta’s Revelations to be in a mixed Danish-Swedish language claiming them to be translated from Swedish originals. But the Danish Revelations, extant in just six fragments, are translated from Latin into a fairly straightforward East Danish variety called østdansk or skånsk – they are not written in a mixed linguistic variety; see Diderichsen 1931–1939, pp. 323–324; Adams 2000; Frederiksen 2001, pp. 94–95.
3. Vadstenaspråk refers to the written language said to have been developed, used and taught in Vadstena monastery. It is characterized by the frequent use of a number of features, which – so the argument goes – although found in other manuscripts, tend to be concentrated and used together in manuscripts from Vadstena (Henning 1960; Wessén 1960, p. 103; Larsson 1975; Pettersson 1996, pp. 140–141).
pan-Scandinavian written language for use in the Birgittine scriptoria, namely the so-called lingua brigittina or ‘Birgittine language’, a term coined by Peter Andreas Munch in 1845 to characterize a type of inter-Scandinavian written language that appeared around the turn of the fifteenth century. The term has been used both to describe the language of Stockholm, National Archives, E 8902 (= Cod. Skokloster 5, 4º), which contains a collection of Saint Birgitta’s Revelations with a considerable and relatively consistent use of Norwegian forms among Swedish ones, and to refer to the language of a manuscript like Stockholm, National Archives, E 8822 (= Cod. Skokloster 156 fol.), which contains a number of poems including The Knight with the Lion (Ivan Lejonriddaren) with sporadic Norwegian forms in an otherwise Swedish-language text. It is thus unclear from the term whether an intentional, stylistic mixing is meant by lingua brigittina or whether it ‘just’ refers to unintentional interference, the result of a scribe copying a text written in another mutually intelligible language. Indeed, the term is so broad in its meaning that on those grounds alone it should be abandoned.

One of the unfortunate consequences of the scholarly work on language in Birgittine texts to date is that certain ideas have become entrenched and have often been accepted without being questioned any further. The whole issue of Birgittine language – not to mention vadstenaspråk – is, in my view, highly problematic. Thankfully, recent work has kick-started a reappraisal of the development of a written norm at Vadstena. At the very least, it seems to me that the language of linguistically mixed Birgittine texts should be described and compared rather than just being labelled – or written off – as typical examples of some poorly defined phenomenon, such as lingua brigittina, or as scribal interference. In this article, I aim to describe a new method for measuring and analysing language mixture in medieval manuscripts and to present the results of such an analysis for a Birgittine manuscript.

E 8902: the ‘Birgittine-Norwegian texts’

One vernacular text of great philological (and Birgittine) interest is the aforementioned E 8902. It dates from c. 1400 and is currently housed at the National

4. Munch seems to have recognized – or intended – a degree of vagueness in the terminology. He writes (1924, i, pp. 136–137) that ‘[…] the language or orthography in question is Sveconorwegian, Normanno-Swecian, Brigittine or corrupted Norwegian, intended to be understood by Norwegians’.
5. See, for example, Carlquist 2007.
Archives (Riksarkivet) in Stockholm. The manuscript contains an assortment of 31 of Saint Birgitta’s *Revelations*, collected into 25 sections, and it appears to have been written by Norwegian scribes using early Swedish and possibly Latin original texts. It is one of the earliest extant vernacular texts of Birgitta’s *Revelations* and contains several interesting variations on her visions as well as two found nowhere else – presumably they were expunged by later editors on political or theological grounds. Although not as ‘original’ as Birgitta’s own autographs, the sheer quantity of material in E 8902 and its proximity to the original texts make the manuscript fundamental to an understanding of how the saint expressed herself.

Very little is known about when, where and how the manuscript was written – there is even disagreement about which language it is written in and how many scribes were involved in its copying, with between one and three scribes having been suggested. Swedish scholars have tended to claim that the language of the manuscript is Swedish, whilst Norwegian scholars have found it to be Norwegian.

**Method**

The language mixture in the manuscript needs to be investigated as objectively as possible, to see how Norwegian and Swedish are combined and to identify any patterns or differences in the type of mixture between the various hands. Using standard palaeographical methods I identified four hands:

**Hand 1**
- p. 1, l. 1 – p. 18, l. 4 (‘Assit principio … Ok þz smælikast’)
- p. 24, l. 4 – p. 34, l. 24 (‘nilsa. Swa … sialin sag<dæ>’)
- p. 37, l. 1 – p. 38, l. 25 (‘ok gör miskund … gora. Værnarane’)
- p. 40, l. 1 – p. 67, l. 29 (‘ras nu ok … i sino hiærta’)
- p. 68, l. 7 – p. 111, l. 2 (‘a hans hofde … þett’)
- p. 115, l. 1 – p. 127, l. 14 (‘mino folke. … das. vtran. mik.’)

**Hand 2**
- p. 18, l. 5 – p. 23, l. 19 (‘war. gaf. æk … ræinsat ok.’)
- p. 35, l. 1 – p. 36, l. 22 (‘salæn … ungdoom.’)
- p. 39, l. 1 – p. 39, l. 24 (‘sagdo … þett hæi’)
- p. 111, l. 2 – p. 114, l. 22 (‘ær. gudlikir … diewlen.’)
- p. 127, l. 14 – p. 128, l. 5 (‘Saþnalika. … þol<omodh a>men’)

**Hand 3**
- p. 24, l. 1–3 (‘ok verdogh … vm lik[n_sæ]’)

**Hand 4**
- p. 68, l. 1–7 (‘þz war … krona’)


8. The following is based on work for my doctoral thesis (see Adams 2005); the palaeographical and codicological description can be found on pp. 87–131.
The text written by each of the hands was then subjected to a quantitative analysis of its mixed linguistic forms, and it is this statistical approach that is presented in this article.

The aim of the analysis was to provide an accurate quantitative description of the language mixture in E 8902. The ultimate aim was to try to discover and understand the generative factors behind the mixture, but, of course, all we have to hand are the observed features, that is the results of these generative factors. We can sift through these observed features to find those that best describe the mixture in the manuscript (= Step A in Fig. 1). This descriptive evidence can then be traced back to possible generative factors, thus enabling an explanation of the phenomenon (= Step B).

![Fig. 1: The process of the analysis of language mixture in E 8902.](image)

An investigation of the distribution of mixed features in the manuscript might also help corroborate the number of scribes involved in its copying that were identified using palaeographical methods – a point of disagreement among previous scholars.10

10. Westman (1911) and Wessén (1968) propose one scribe; Wollin (1991, 2004) one to two; Möberg (1998) two or more; Klemming (1883–1884) two to three, and both Sandvei (1938) and Seip (1937) propose three different scribes.
In order to produce a descriptive statistical analysis of the language mixture, it is first necessary to decide what to measure and describe. There are, of course, difficulties using terms such as Swedish and Norwegian to discuss the linguistic situation at the turn of the fourteenth century, not least as neither of the languages had gained a level of standardization required to make foolproof, comprehensive distinctions between them – particularly in the border regions of south-eastern Norway. Indeed, when looking at Norwegian manuscripts from the Middle Ages, does it make sense to talk of a Norwegian ‘language’ at all, and if so, what characterizes this language?

The question of a late medieval written norm for Norwegian has been addressed several times by scholars, but even though all linguistic descriptions and analyses of Old Norwegian involve an implicit understanding of the notion of norm, this notion has rarely been defined. Some are sceptical about the use of terms such as norm in discussions of the medieval period. Kjell Venås suggests that a norm should be regarded as the established rules for writing a language. On the other hand, Magnus Rindal has suggested that a norm is present in a text when a set of linguistic ‘criteria’ are used consistently. We thus have two quite different concepts of norm: Venås’s requires a norm to be seen as a set of rules that may or may not be followed, whereas Rindal’s requires nothing more than the expectation of some kind of regularity. Renate Bartsch would approve of Venås’s usage, but would add that a norm is a social creation with a normative force. Jan Ragnar Hagland has shown that such a socially constructed norm with a normative force did exist in medieval Norwegian and that it was transmitted through legal codices and diplomas, that is, the text production of the chancery. This norm was so prestigious – that is, it had such a great normative force – that Swedish scribes working in the Norwegian chancery (1360–1380) produced texts in Norwegian that do not stand out linguistically from other texts of the period produced by Norwegian scribes.

12. Note that the situation changed entirely after the Middle Ages, so that by 1560 all vernacular documents in Norway were produced entirely in Danish (Haugen 1976, p. 330).
14. Rindal 1984, p. 172. However, it is questionable whether ‘criteria’ (‘kriterium’) is the best choice of word as it will surely be ‘features’ that dominate.
To describe a late fourteenth century written norm for Norwegian is, however, not the aim of this article.\textsuperscript{17} Nonetheless, the recognition that some sort of norm existed (even just a localized one) and that deviation from it must have occurred for a reason is an important prerequisite for the analysis.\textsuperscript{18} Although we cannot reconstruct a norm, we can describe some of the features that we would expect to appear with regularity (Rindal’s requirement) and assume that such forms are governed by a set of rules (Venås’s requirement). For our purposes, however, the rules will be taken to be of a broad phonological, morphological and graphemic nature and will serve only to differentiate between forms considered typically western (Old Norwegian) and those considered typically eastern (Old Swedish). They form the basis of the distinguishing features used in the following analysis of language mixture which is necessarily based on the dichotomous pairing of West Scandinavian forms (\textit{w}-forms) and East Scandinavian forms (\textit{e}-forms). A list of some forty-nine dichotomous pairings was compiled, see chart overleaf:\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Hagland (1986) has described such a norm for the period 1200–1350 using empirical research.
\textsuperscript{18} We should, however, be careful not to regard the written language as a fixed standard and to assume that any deviation from it must be due to Swedish (or Danish) interference.
\textsuperscript{19} After Haugen 1976, pp. 210–213, fig. 11 (see feature descriptions in Adams 2005, pp. 746–809).
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð &gt; V / _R, r, l, n</td>
<td>TF29 ð : V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R &gt; ð / _R</td>
<td>TF30 R : ð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð &gt; i / i</td>
<td>TF31 ð : i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m &gt; p / _p</td>
<td>TF32 m : p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n &gt; t / _t</td>
<td>TF33 n : t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n &gt; k / _k</td>
<td>TF34 n : k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m &gt; p / _p</td>
<td>TF35 m : p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n &gt; t / _t</td>
<td>TF36 n : t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n &gt; k / _k</td>
<td>TF37 n : k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Description</td>
<td>Reference Number and Dichotomous Pairing (w-form : e-form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite Dative Plural Suffix</td>
<td>-unum : -umin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicative Second Person Plural Suffix</td>
<td>-ir : -in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong ≤ i-Mutation</td>
<td>V&lt;sub&gt;back&lt;/sub&gt; &gt; V&lt;sub&gt;front&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite Dative Plural Suffix</td>
<td>-unum : -umin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive Preterite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medio- Passive Suffix</td>
<td>-sk, -st : -s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Person Singular</td>
<td>ek : iak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person Plural</td>
<td>yōvār : iðhir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person Singular</td>
<td>hūn : hōn, hōn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc./fem.</td>
<td>hann : þann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neut.</td>
<td>þatt : þæt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seinn : sum</td>
<td>TF47 seinn : sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Conjunction</td>
<td>ef, en : um, en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Saxon Letter Forms</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon/Insular ‘f’ in the west : Latin/Continental ‘f’ in the east</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 2:** Reference list of diagnostic test features (TFs).
From this list, those diagnostic test features that best describe the linguistic mixture in E 8902 are selected. This is done on philological and statistical grounds. For example, TF26 is inappropriate on philological grounds as the forms with /y¯/ are only really relevant for texts with Danish influence.20 TFs should also occur in fairly large quantities in order to be statistically relevant. The rate of occurrence (RO) should be higher than 0.01, in other words the feature under discussion should occur at least once per hundred tokens or 271 times out of a total of the 27,089 words in the manuscript. In this way, the list of diagnostic features was reduced to just ten features that best would describe the language mixture in E 8902:


3. See Noreen 1897, pp. 72–75 §75–79; Brøndum-Nielsen 1950, pp. 148–161 §93–97; (an alternative theory is offered by Svensson 1944); Bandle 1973, pp. 52–54.


20. For example, compare the adjective ‘deep’ in Old Norwegian djúpr, Old Swedish diūper and Old Danish djūp > dyb. See Noreen 1897, pp. 92–93 §100; Brøndum-Nielsen 1950, pp. 345–347 §179(3).
| A  | (= TF11) | **Progressive i-mutation**  
By the influence of a preceding /j/, a short /a/ was shifted to /æ/. |
| B  | (= TF14) | **Itacism**  
The short vowel /y/ was unrounded to /i/ in unaccented syllables and also in accented syllables if the /i/ followed in the next syllable. |
| C  | (= TF15) | **Diphthongization** (/e > ja, jø)  
A short stressed /e/ diphthongizes to /jæ/ before an /a/. |
| D  | (= TF23b) | **Monophthongization** (/ei > ē)  
The diphthong /ei/ was monophthongized to a long /e/. |
| E  | (= TF29) | **Vowel merger**  
In East Scandinavian, the unstressed vowels /a/ and /u/ were frequently reduced (/i/ less so). This reduced vowel (/o/ or /æ/) could be written either /e/ or /æ/.

| F  | (= TF31) | **Elision** (/r > Ø / ___#)  
The (originally) palatal r was lost in morpheme-final position in East Scandinavian. |
| G  | (= TF33) | **Dental assimilation** (/ð, ð, t > l / l___)  
An immediately following dental consonant assimilates to /l/ giving long /l/. |
| H  | (= TF42) | **First person singular pronoun**  
The form *ek* is the first person singular pronoun used in West Scandinavian (and Jutlandic) and *iak* (or *iæk*) is the form in East Scandinavian. |
| I  | (= TF47) | **Relative particle**  
The form of the relative pronoun was *sem* in West and *sum* in East Scandinavian. |
| J  | (= TF49) | **Anglo-Saxon letter forms**  
The Anglo-Saxon (insular) ‘f’ is used manuscripts from the West Scandinavian area and the continental (Latin) ‘f’ is used in manuscripts from the East Scandinavian area. |

**FIG. 3:** The ten diagnostic features that best describe the mixture in E 8902.
We can compare the rates of occurrence of the \textit{w}- and \textit{e}-forms of a test feature between the different hands:\footnote{21}{On rates of occurrence, see Kenny 1982, pp. 15–31; Butler 1985, pp. 14–26; Woods, Fletcher and Hughes 1986, pp. 8–24. Henceforth Diagnostic Feature I – the relative particle – will be used as the illustrative feature.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Total number of occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEM:SUM</td>
<td>SEM \textit{(w)}</td>
<td>sæm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUM \textit{(e)}</td>
<td>som</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 4:** Rates of occurrence by each hand.

Or we could do it by comparing the rates of occurrence by manuscript section or even per ten lines throughout the entire manuscript. The latter method is particularly good for quickly identifying clusters of features (notice the clusters of the \textit{e}-forms \textit{sum} in the diagram below):

**FIG. 5:** Rate of occurrence per ten lines of text.

We can use proportion to create a profile for each of the hands involved in copying the manuscript:\footnote{22}{See Kenny 1982, pp. 67–68.} Of the four hands identified by palaeographical methods, Hands 1 and 2 are responsible for the vast majority of the manuscript (over 99 % of the entire text). For this reason, the methodological description below...
concentrates on these two hands. The preference of each hand for the $W$- or $E$-form of a given feature is calculated from the number of occurrences:

![Fig. 6: Proportion by Hand.](image)

A test was also made to check that each hand used a feature in roughly equal quantities – otherwise results for each hand would not be comparable. The test showed, for example, that each hand uses diagnostic feature I ($\text{sem:sum}$) in almost equal amounts, and the results can therefore be compared statistically.

In order to provide a measure of how distinctive one hand’s use of a particular form (i.e. the $W$- or $E$-form of a given feature) is when compared with another hand’s, Ellegård’s distinctiveness ratio was applied:

\[
\text{Rate of occurrence of form A in Hand 1} : \text{RO of \text{sem} in Hand 1} = 0.0197 \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{0.0197}{0.0050} = 39.4
\]

![Fig. 7: Calculation for Ellegård’s distinctiveness ratio of the form \text{sem}.](image)

If the use of the forms is not distinct between the hands, then the result of the calculation is 1. If the form is more common in Hand 1 than Hand 2, then the distinctiveness ratio is greater than 1; if it is more frequent in Hand 2, then the distinctiveness ratio is less than 1. In the calculation here, the distinctiveness ratio is extraordinarily high and we are clearly dealing with a discriminating feature. However, we need to be sure that this distinctiveness is statistically significant. It is not just enough to say that it looks like it is; we need to prove that it is. In order to do this, the chi-squared ($\chi^2$) test with Yates’ correction was applied:

23. The test is described in Kenny 1982, p. 68.
Observed Frequency (O)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>SUM</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>492</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>493</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected Frequency (E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>SUM</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H 1</td>
<td>(493×517) / 563 = 452.7194</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(70 × 517) / 563 = 64.2806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2</td>
<td>(493 × 46) / 563 = 40.2806</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(70 × 46) / 563 = 5.7194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculations

| O  | E        | | O – E | – 0.5 | (| O – E | – 0.5)|2 | (O – E)|2 / E  |
|----|----------|---|--------|-------|--------|---|-------|-------|
| 492| 452.7194 | 038.7806 | 1503.9349 | 0.0033220 |
| 001| 040.2806 | -038.7806 | 1503.9349 | 0.0373365 |
| 025| 064.2806 | -038.7806 | 1503.9349 | 0.0233964 |
| 045| 005.7194 | 038.7806  | 1503.9349 | 2.629533  |
| Σ  | 327.0082 | |       |       |        |   |       |

χ² at 327.0082 > 0.001 significance level at 1 degree of freedom (df).

**FIG. 8:** The chi-squared test for significance of the feature sem:SUM between Hands 1 and 2.
What this is saying is that the difference in use between Hand 1 and Hand 2 of sem and sum is highly significant. The probability that such a distribution could have happened by chance is very small indeed.

Finally, the behaviour of all the $W$- and $E$-forms of the features could be compared and the degree of association between them, their correlation, could be analysed using Pearson’s Product Correlation Coefficient ($r$). This shows us whether there is any relation between the occurrence of one feature with that of another. The correlation coefficient lies between $-1$ and $1$:

- $r$ is close to $+1.000$: Positive correlation – the occurrence of a $W$-form is related to the occurrence of another $W$-form; or the occurrence of an $E$-form is related to the occurrence of another $E$-form. In that more feature $x$ means a related increase in feature $y$.
- $r$ is close to $0.000$: Lack of correlation – the occurrences of $W$- and $E$-forms is unrelated, in that more feature $x$ means neither a decrease nor an increase in feature $y$.
- $r$ is close to $-1.000$: Negative correlation – the occurrence of a $W$-form is related to the occurrence of another $W$-form; or the occurrence of an $E$-form is related to the occurrence of another $E$-form, in that more feature $x$ means a related decrease in feature $y$.

If all the features in the manuscript correlate significantly then we say the mixture is unidimensional. However, it could well be the case that a feature correlates significantly with some features but has a low correlation with others. This sort of multidimensional mixture reveals feature clusters in the manuscript. The results are shown later in this article.

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FINDINGS

These calculations tell us a number of things about how the mixture is working in the manuscript. By far the most noticeable aspect of the mixture is that the levels of West and East Scandinavian forms vary – sometimes greatly. So, just because one West Scandinavian form is in use, maybe even nearly 100% of the time, does not necessarily mean that other west forms are in use even by the same hand:

![Chart showing percentage of each feature in w-form.](chart1.png)

**Fig. 9:** Percentage of each feature in \( w \)-form.

We can also see that scribes have not mixed \( w \)- and \( e \)-forms in the same way.

![Chart showing comparison of feature proportions (w-forms).](chart2.png)

**Fig. 10:** Comparison of the feature proportions (\( w \)-forms).
Most of the $w$-forms are by Hand 2, but note that features G (l:d:l) and I (sem:sum) are predominantly by Hand 1. The west form of feature B (y:i) only occurs three times and is thus not particularly relevant here.

**Fig. 11:** Comparison of the feature proportions $E$-forms.

$E$-forms are largely written by Hand 1, but $e$-forms of features G (l:d:l), H (sem:sum) and I (ek:1ak) are predominantly by Hand 2 (the most surprising of these is the use of the east form of the first person singular pronoun and the relative particle). Here (Figs. 12 and 13) we can see what the most distinctive features are between the hands and also to what extent they are significant statistically. A general indication of their significance is given by Yes for significant and No for not significant.

**Fig. 12:** The sum of Ellegård’s Distinctiveness Ratio (DR) of $W$-forms for Hand 1/2 and Hand 2/1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Significant?</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p \leq$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>117.3294</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>000.0815</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>012.9139</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>035.3455</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>010.4056</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>087.9915</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>007.3803</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>027.6496</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>327.0082</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>003.9908</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 13:** Summary of significance and probability – chi-squared test.

In figs. 14 and 15, we can see how the correlation matrices for all the features that were tested:

**Fig. 14:** Summary of correlation coefficients ($w$-forms).

The coefficients show a positive correlation (the occurrence of $w$-form $x$ is related to the occurrence of $w$-form $y$ etc.).
FIG. 15: Summary of correlation coefficients (E-forms).

Although it can be difficult to see from the tables, the correlation between W-forms is generally greater than between E-forms. This means that W-forms tend to occur in related quantities whereas E-forms are more sporadic. Notice how diagnostic feature B (y:i) correlates poorly with the other features and can therefore be considered a sporadic feature. The same figures can be illustrated more clearly using a cluster map; the thicker the line, the greater the positive correlation (Figs. 16 and 17).

STEP B

A surprising finding of the analysis concerns the first five sections of the manuscript which are generally thought to have been translated from Latin whilst the remaining 29 sections are thought to be copied from Swedish originals. Yet what the statistical analysis shows is that the sections translated from Latin as well as those from Swedish contain East Scandinavian forms in roughly the same quantities. Why would Norwegian scribes translate a text from Latin and introduce Swedish forms? As Lennart Moberg has suggested, it may simply be the case that the first five sections are not in fact translated from Latin at all, but are also copied from Swedish originals.27 Maybe the mixture is due to the environment in which the manuscript came about (perhaps the scriptorium at Vadstena) or

**Fig. 16:** Cluster mapping of $w$-forms.

**Fig. 17:** Cluster mapping of $e$-forms.

**Key to Diagrams:** All lines represent a positive correlation – the thicker the line, the greater the rate of correlation.

- $r$ is equal to or less than 0.25 (no line)
- $r$ is equal to or less than 0.50
- $r$ is equal to or less than 0.75
- $r$ is equal to or less than 0.100
through the scribes’ training (again a possible link to Vadstena).\footnote{We know of a number of Norwegian nuns who visited or lived at Vadstena and are mentioned in the Diarium Vadstenense. For example, in 1389, ‘Brynildir Iosepsdottir de Norvegia’ entered the monastery at Vadstena (Gejrot 1988, p. 122, no. 49:2), where she dies in 1394 (Gejrot 1988, p. 129, no. 81); another Norwegian, ‘Raghnildis Thorisdottir de Norvegia’, is mentioned in the 1408 entry (Gejrot 1988, p. 155, no. 169:2) as is a Norwegian nun ‘Dorothea Nicolai Nørcha’ in the 1515 entry (Gejrot 1988, p. 297, no. 1035).} It may be that a mixed Norwegian-Swedish variety was prestigious at the end of the fourteenth century or that Swedish forms in the Birgittine text provided the manuscript with a colouring of authenticity. There are plenty of reasons why Norwegian was exposed to Swedish influence, not least external factors such as the intermarriage between the Swedish and Norwegian nobility and the Black Death which arrived 1349–1350 and emptied the monasteries and centres of writing of scribes.\footnote{Hødnebø (1996, p. 173) even goes as far as to claim that the mixed language found in E 8902 is ‘ikke ulikt det som praktisertes i adelsfamilier med svenske inngifte’ [‘not unlike that practised among [Norwegian] noble families with Swedish members who had married in’].} In fact, towards the end of the fourteenth century, Norway appears to have been developing a diglossic situation with a prestigious H-variety language (the written [and spoken?] mixed Swedish-Norwegian) and a less prestigious ‘purer’ Norwegian L-variety (the spoken language [of the peasants?]).\footnote{Diglossia as defined by Ferguson 1959 and elaborated by Fishman 1967 and 1972.} However, this diglossia never had the opportunity to develop beyond the embryonic stage. After the establishment of the Kalmar Union and from the beginning of the fifteenth century, there is a new H-variety – Danish – which proves so prestigious that it becomes the spoken (albeit with Norwegian pronunciation) as well as written language of all socially ambitious Norwegians for the next four centuries. It is interesting to think that the circumstances were right for the creation of a diglossic situation in Norway during the fourteenth century. Even though the H-variety was soon switched from mixed Norwegian-Swedish to Danish, Norwegian, with its comparatively long history of use in writing and its vast body of literature and learning, had become of such low status that a fertile bed for diglossia was created, a situation that was to work to the advantage of Danish in the following centuries.

The fact that the different hands in E 8902 demonstrate quite different types of mixture suggests that although a mixed Norwegian-Swedish language was considered desirable, there was no agreed or uniform way of creating it. Although a certain hand might consistently use a particular form, this form may
appear only sporadically, if at all, in one of the other hands. It is difficult to believe that this could be the result of the scribes’ having learnt *lingua brigittina* or a Birgittine-Norwegian language as has been suggested by scholars such as Marius Sandvei (1938).\(^{31}\) The fact that each hand uses its forms fairly uniformly may show that the intra-hand distribution of west and east forms is not merely the result of unintentional scribal interference but rather that E 8902 is the result of a concerted adaptation process on the part of the scribes. The original has been intentionally adapted by the scribes – each using a different approach, as summarized in Fig. 18.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Statistics, when applied to questions concerning language mixture, can not only shed new light onto difficult areas, but actually force us to abandon certain preconceptions and vague terms such as *lingua brigittina* and to stop dismissing the majority of language mixture in medieval vernacular Scandinavian manuscripts as erratic scribal interference. As we know of other manuscripts that contain a mixed Norwegian-Swedish variety (for example, Stockholm, National Archives, E 8822; Oslo, National Archives of Norway, München perg. 4292, and Linköping, Stifts- och landsbibliotek T 180), it may be that this mixture was desirable or even the required written language not just for Birgittine literature in Norway but also for a much wider selection of original literature and writings at the time. By applying statistical methods to these manuscripts and their scribes, we should be able to gain a much more thorough understanding of the mechanics of medieval Scandinavian language mixtures and of the differences between mixtures in translations and original texts.

\(^{31}\) And more recently by Barðdal et al. 1997, p. 82.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL COMMENTS</th>
<th>HAND 1</th>
<th>HAND 2</th>
<th>HAND 3</th>
<th>HAND 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The hand is characterized by its large number of eastern features.</td>
<td>Generally there is a greater mix of <em>E</em> and <em>W</em> forms than in Hand 1, but overall the hand prefers <em>W</em>.</td>
<td>The paucity of material makes the description inconclusive.</td>
<td>The paucity of material makes the description inconclusive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHONOLOGY</th>
<th>HAND 1</th>
<th>HAND 2</th>
<th>HAND 3</th>
<th>HAND 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The phonology of the TFs measured is overwhelmingly <em>E</em>. However, the merger of */a, i, u/ to /æ/ (TF29) and the assimilation of /ld/ to /l/ (TF33) are not common. There are three other <em>W</em> forms: the diphthong /æi/ occurs; former palatal /k/ is not elided in suffixes, and there is southeast Norwegian metaphony.</td>
<td>The phonology of the TFs measured is largely <em>W</em>. There are a number of ‘minor’ <em>E</em> forms that occur in preference to the <em>W</em> alternative: <em>æ &gt; a</em> / v / (TF5); *a &gt; q / __C / [u] (TF8); <em>y &gt; i</em> (TF14), and <em>e &gt; ja, jø</em> (TF15). The southeast Norwegian features of the &lt;a&gt;svarabhakti vowel and metathesis of ‘vr’ are only found in this Hand.</td>
<td>The phonology of the TFs measured is approximately half <em>E</em> and half <em>W</em>. Particularly interesting is the <em>E</em> use of ‘i’ in ‘spiria’ (spyrja) and ‘firi’ (fyri).</td>
<td>The phonology appears fairly <em>E</em> in character. Particularly interesting is the <em>W</em> assimilation in ‘svaat’ (= osant).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORPHOLOGY</th>
<th>HAND 1</th>
<th>HAND 2</th>
<th>HAND 3</th>
<th>HAND 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The three TFs measured were all <em>E</em>.</td>
<td>The three TFs measured were all <em>E</em>, but more weakly than Hand 1.</td>
<td><em>E</em> in character.</td>
<td><em>E</em> in character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEXICON</th>
<th>HAND 1</th>
<th>HAND 2</th>
<th>HAND 3</th>
<th>HAND 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a very clear preference for <em>W ek</em> and <em>sem</em>, and <em>E han</em>. Nearly all the hapax legomena, and all the so-called vadstenaspråk and östgötska features are in Hand 1.</td>
<td>Apart from the near exclusive use of <em>E sum</em>, the lexical forms are <em>W</em> in character.</td>
<td><em>E sum</em>, but <em>W ek</em>.</td>
<td><em>E sum</em>, but <em>W ek</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 18:** Summary of hand mixture types.
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