

The Transmission and Appropriation of the *Vita* of Christina Mirabilis in Carthusian Communities*

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Abstract

This contribution evaluates the transmission and appropriation of the *vita* of the ‘independent’ holy woman Christina Mirabilis from the diocese of Liège by Carthusians in England. Hers and other *vitae* were witness to the new Christ-centred spirituality and were mainly transmitted and adapted by members of continental reform-minded religious orders. New findings concerning the English manuscripts with the *vita* of Christina show that in England, Carthusians were the leading agents in the process of transmission of this hagiography. Taken together, these findings raise questions about 1) the models these *vitae* provided for Carthusians, 2) the interaction between Carthusians and other religious orders regarding text exchange, and 3) their interaction with laypeople and readers of vernacular translations. Why did English Carthusians transmit and appropriate the *vitae* of relatively unknown Liège saints? The answer lies in the spiritual models these *vitae* provided, stressing the importance of asceticism and a virtuous inner life.

Keywords

Christina Mirabilis – *mulieres religiosae* – Carthusians – Saints

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1 Introduction

Since the appearance of the article “*Mulieres Sanctae*” by Brenda Bolton in 1973, the thirteenth-century *vitae* (*lives*) of the holy women of the diocese of Liège—including Mary of Oignies, Christina Mirabilis, and Elisabeth of Spalbeek—have generated much attention.¹ Over the past forty years, these holy women, who were local and sometimes even forgotten saints, have become well known among scholars of medieval religious history. Almost every aspect of their background, as well as their mysticism, asceticism, and sanctity has been analysed by theologians and (literary) historians, such as Caroline Walker Bynum, mainly with an interest in gender issues and primarily on the basis of their *vitae*, as edited in the Bollandists’ *Acta Sanctorum*.²

One aspect of these *lives* has been neglected, however, and that is their transmission, reception, and appropriation—with appropriation understood as making a text one’s own by putting it in a new (manuscript) context, changing it, and giving it new meaning. Studies, editions, and translations of the *vitae* often mention the existing manuscripts, but do not use them as sources for the history of the texts (their *Nachleben*) and their readers. The *lives* were, however, not static texts that came to us in the same form as their authors invented them. A long chain of copies holds the history of their scribes, readers, and reception contexts. In this article, research on the manuscript transmission of the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis and, to a lesser extent, Mary of Oignies is presented. The focus is not on Christina and Mary themselves, nor on Thomas of Cantimpré and Jacques de Vitry, the authors of their *vitae*, but on the scribes and readers who took these *vitae* as their examples 100–150 years later. An introductory survey of the manuscripts of the *vita* of Mary of Oignies, published in 2006, serves as a starting point for further research.³ In addition, a PhD dissertation about the continental reception history of Christina Mirabilis’s *vita* was published

1 Brenda Bolton, “*Mulieres Sanctae*,” in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World. Papers read at the eleventh summer meeting and the twelfth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Derek Baker [Studies in Church History 10] (Oxford, 1973), 77–85.

2 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley etc., 1987). The *Acta Sanctorum* edition: Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita s. Christinae mirabilis virginis*, ed. Joannes Pinius, in: *Acta Sanctorum* [...], ed. J. Bollandus, G. Henschenius et al. (3rd ed., Paris, 1868), Iulius v, 650–660.

3 Suzan Folkerts, “The Manuscript Transmission of the *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis* in the Later Middle Ages,” in *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker [Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 7] (Turnhout, 2006), 221–241.

in 2010.⁴ The latter was written in Dutch, however, and therefore inaccessible to many non-Dutch readers. Moreover, the English reception history was excluded from both studies. This article focuses on the transmission, reception, and appropriation of the *vita* of Christina in England—activities which appear to have been primarily undertaken by Carthusians.

Researchers of the recently re-edited Middle English translations of the *vitae* of Christina Mirabilis, Mary of Oignies, and Elisabeth of Spalbeek wonder how and why these texts traveled to England.⁵ Taking the continental transmission and reception history into consideration, this article will provide some answers. First, the transmission and reception history of the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis is sketched within the context of the *Nachleben* of the *vitae* of Mary of Oignies and other holy women of Liège in general. A detailed analysis of the textual transmission of Christina's *vita* provides a basis for reflections on the role of Carthusians in this transmission process. Second, the three surviving English manuscripts with the *vita* of Christina, all of which contain the *vita* of Mary of Oignies as well, are introduced. Finally, on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative investigation of the manuscript material, answers will be given to the questions how and why Carthusians transmitted and appropriated the *vitae* of holy women such as Christina and Mary. This study will, therefore, contribute not only to a better understanding of the functioning of the *vitae* of holy women of Liège, but also to a better understanding of the copying and reading activities of Carthusians, both in England and on the continent. Carthusians operated in a broad network of scribes and readers of various religious orders and movements, who exchanged texts, and were not as isolated from the secular world as is often thought. In this respect, the conclusions here are in line with those of the 2013 collection *A Fish Out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*.⁶

4 Suzan Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift: De overlevering en toe-eigening van de vita van Christina Mirabilis in de late middeleeuwen* [Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 124] (Hilversum, 2010); includes an English summary.

5 Jennifer N. Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* [Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 23] (Turnhout, 2008), 9.

6 *A Fish Out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*, ed. Stephen J. Molvarec and Tom Gaens [Miscellanea Neerlandica 41—Studia Cartusiana 2] (Louvain, 2013).

2 The Manuscript Transmission of the *Vita* of Christina Mirabilis

In 1232 the Dominican preacher Thomas of Cantimpré wrote the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis. He had never met her personally, but eyewitnesses testified to her miraculous resurrection from death and the penitential life of a wandering prophetess she led afterwards. Christina lived from around 1150 until 1224. According to the *vita*, she was the youngest of three sisters, who, after their parents died, lived a religious life in a kind of Beguine community. Christina had mystical experiences and was visited often by Jesus while herding. When she was about 32, she died of an illness that was caused by the exercise of contemplation. When Mass was held for her, she suddenly woke up: God had given back her life after she was offered the choice to either live in eternal paradise or to return to earth and be a living example of purgatorial pain. So she returned and endured enormous pains, caused by jumping into fires or ice-cold water, fasting, and so on. People were terrified by her, and thought she was possessed by demons. Her sisters locked her up twice, and during her imprisonment she experienced miracles: milk and oil dripped from her virginal breasts, with which she fed herself and treated her wounds. When her sisters and other people saw this, they decided it must have been God who was working through her. They released her, she baptized herself, and from then on, according to Thomas, she lived a life more moderate and common to all people—but actually, she did not. She continued seeking painful experiences, and horrifying people by floating above the ground like a ghost. Her fellow townspeople, however, now accepted her behaviour as saint-like.

Christina did not live in a convent, but wandered the region of Sint-Truiden and Liège, lived nine years with a recluse in Borgloon, and occasionally resided with the Cistercian nuns of Nonnemielen in Sint-Truiden. She prophesied and preached and taught about purgatory. She was acquainted with the count of Loon, whom she criticized when he sinned. He even made his final confession on his deathbed to her and called her his mother. In this phase of her life, she was an accepted and respected spiritual authority. Thomas wrote of her: *hoc exemplo vitae docuit*—Christina taught with the example of her life, yet she did it with her words as well. She died at about the age of 74 in the convent of Nonnemielen.

The *vita* of Christina Mirabilis is usually studied or perceived as part of a fixed group, consisting of the *vitae* of other, mostly independent, *mulieres religiosae* (as Jacques de Vitry called them) of Liège, such as Mary of Oignies, Elisabeth of Spalbeek, Yvette of Huy, and Juliana of Cornillon, and the *vitae* of Cistercian nuns from the same period and region, such as Lutgard of Aywiè-

res.⁷ These *vitae* were transmitted in one (Yvette) to seventeen (Lutgard) known—not all surviving—medieval manuscripts; the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis in eighteen Latin and seven vernacular manuscripts.⁸ The *vita* of Mary of Oignies and the supplement to that *vita* were the most successful: together they are known in 42 Latin and in fourteen vernacular manuscripts.⁹ Counting the individual copies of the texts, the numbers are even higher.

There is no indication that the *vitae* of the holy women of Liège were widely spread among and read by these women (i.e. Beguines, religious women, Cistercian nuns) themselves: only nine manuscripts out of 112 (of which 79 have a known provenance) originate from female religious communities. On the contrary, the *vitae* of holy women were read mainly by clerics and monks, mostly from monastic orders that propagated reform, such as Cistercians, Carthusians, Crosiers, and Canons Regular in the context of the *Devotio Moderna*. Perhaps unexpectedly, copies of the *vitae* of independent holy women outnumber those of Cistercian nuns. The *vitae* of independent holy women have a more diverse public as well. They presumably offered a model that suited more diverse groups of readers than the *lives* of Cistercian nuns did. Of interest here is the model they offered to the Carthusians: eleven manuscripts with Latin and vernacular *lives* of holy women come from Carthusian monasteries, six of these containing the *vita* of Christina and six of these with the *vita* of Mary (with an

7 Listed by Anneke Mulder-Bakker (based on a list previously published by Barbara Newman) in *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: The Lives of Yvette, anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, anchoress of Magdeburg*, ed. Anneke Mulder-Bakker [*Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* 20] (Turnhout, 2011), 43–45. *Vitae* of male saints are listed there as well.

8 See for figures and lists of manuscripts Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 88 and 92 (tables) and 239–250.

9 For a list of manuscripts of the *vita* of Mary of Oignies and the supplement written by Thomas of Cantimpré see Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 88, 92 (tables) and 245–247. Folkerts, “The Manuscript Transmission” (see above, n. 3), 240, also lists manuscripts with excerpts from the *vita* of Mary in the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais. Corrections and specifications to these lists were made by R.B.C. Huygens, ed., *Iacobus de Vitriaco, Vita Marie de Oegnies—Thomas Cantipratensis, Supplementum* [*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 252] (Turnhout, 2012), 8–9 n. 7, and 10–18. The manuscripts of Coimbra and Porto are most likely the same. Huygens added one new finding to the list: Innsbruck, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol, MS 950, fols. 1v–35v (or 37v?) (complete manuscript) (fifteenth century), which contains the same text as Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 1168/470 8° (fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Sankt Beatusberg in Koblenz, which will be dealt with below.

overlap of five).¹⁰ Given the quite high proportion of Carthusian manuscripts with the *vita* of Christina—six out of 25—the Carthusians must have appreciated this *vita*.

As mentioned above, the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis survives in eighteen Latin manuscripts (one of which contains two copies of the *vita*), as well as one Middle French, one Middle English, and five Middle Dutch manuscripts. All of these are listed in the *Appendix*. A word-for-word textual comparison of the copies proved that six major variant readings exist, which divide the manuscripts into two main groups (A and B).¹¹ Minor variants further divide these groups into subgroups. The six variants are the following (a double slash indicates the division between group A and group B; a single slash is put between subgroups):

– Variant 1 in chapter i:

A: place of birth is Sint-Truiden // B: place of birth is Brustem, written as *Brusten*, *Brustem* or *Brusteim* / written as *Brustemium* or *Grustemium*

– Variant 2 in chapter xxi:

A: no mention of the year of the battle of Steps // B: 1213 / October 1213 / October 1313 / October 1413

10 Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS A XI 60 (late fourteenth century), from the charterhouse of Sankt Margarethental in Basel: *vita* of Elisabeth; Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS A VIII 6 (early fifteenth century) from the charterhouse of Sankt Margarethental in Basel: résumé of *vita* of Christina; Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 8060–8064 (c. 1390–1525), from an unknown charterhouse (in or near Trier?): *vitae* of Christina, Margareth, and Mary; Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 8763–8774 (1437–1499), from the charterhouse of Saint Alban in Trier: *vita* of Lutgard; Charleville-Mézières, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 181 (fourteenth century), from the charterhouse of Mont-Dieu in the French Ardennes: *vita* of Mary; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 (fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Beauvale in Nottinghamshire: Middle English *lives* of Christina, Elisabeth, and Mary; Oxford, St John's College, MS 182 (1463–1474), from the charterhouse of Witham in Somerset: *vitae* of Christine, Elisabeth, and Mary; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 3631 (early fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Bourfontaine in Picardy: excerpts of *vita* of Mary; SB 1168/470 8° (see above, n. 9): *vita* of Christina and excerpts of *vita* of Mary; Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliothek, MS 391 II (1424–1426) from the charterhouse of Nieuwlicht in Utrecht: *vitae* of Beatrix and Lutgard; Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS m. ch. q. 144 (c. 1479), from the charterhouse of Sint-Andries-Haven-der-Zaligheid in Amsterdam: Middle Dutch *life* of Christina.

11 Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 102–117. For this article the English copies have been included in the textual comparison.

- Variant 3 in chapter xxv:
A: the year of the famine Christina predicted is 1170 // B: 1270
- Variant 4 in chapter xxvi:
A: the convent followed Christina, who was chanting the *Te Deum* / abbreviated version / abbreviated version with *conuentus* as subject // B: the convent did not know the song *Te Deum*
- Variant 5 in chapter xxviii:
A: a castle, located within the confines of Alamannia, called Loon / no information on the location of Loon // B: a castle, two miles from Sint-Truiden, called *Loz* / called *Lo(e)s sive Loon, Loen, Loeun* or *Leonus*
- Variant 6 after ‘Amen’ of the *vita*:
A: addition of two chapters to the *vita* / one sentence of the addition // B: no addition

The following formulas express the division of the copies into these groups and subgroups. The explanation of the sigla can be found in the *Appendix*. The bold sigla **Ba1**, **Br3**, and **T** are Carthusian copies, just like **O2** and, indirectly, **O1** (the newly investigated English manuscripts, which will be dealt with hereafter).

- Formula 1: A: **Ba1** **Ba2** **Br1** **Br3** **Br4** **O2** **T** // B: **Br5** **L1** **L2** / **Br2** **G** **Ca** **Co** **O1** **V1** **V2**
- Formula 2: A: **Ba1** **Ba2** **Br1** **Br3** **Br4** **Br5** **O2** **T** // B: **L1** **L2** / **Br2** **Ca** **V1** **V2** / **G** / **Co** (ch. not in **O1**)
- Formula 3: A: **Ba1** **Ba2** **Br1** **Br3** **Br4** **T** // B: **Br2** **Br5** **G** **Ca** **Co** **L1** **L2** **O2** **V1** **V2** (ch. not in **O1**)
- Formula 4: A: **Ba1** **Ba2** **Br1** **Br2** **Br3** **Br4** **O2** **T** / **Br5** **L2** / **L1** // B: **G** **Ca** **Co** **V1** **V2** (ch. not in **O1**)
- Formula 5: A: **Br1** **Br3** **Br4** **O2** **T** / **Ba1** **Ba2** // B: **Br5** **L1** **L2** / **Br2** **G** **Ca** **Co** **O1** **V1** **V2**
- Formula 6: A: **Br1** **Br4** / **G** **Ca** // B: **Ba1** **Ba2** **Br2** **Br3** **Br5** **Co** **L1** **L2** **O1** **O2** **T** **V1** **V2**

The sixth variant is actually an addition to the *vita* and its formula does not fit in with the others. Considering the other variants, however, the distinction between groups A and B is not strict either. The variants do not physically divide the manuscripts into two groups: some copies have variants of both A and B. Therefore, it is better to speak of textual traditions A and B. Traditions A and B represent, roughly speaking, two different periods (the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries as opposed to the long fifteenth century) and different reception contexts: group A, from the first period, is represented by Cistercian (**Br1**, **Br4**) and Carthusian copies, whereas group B is represented by copies from a broader group of religious orders and communities, most of them connected to the reform movement of the *Devotio Moderna*. The English copies **O2** and **O1**,

however, are represented in both groups and both periods. This quite ‘technical’ introduction was necessary in order to indicate an interesting fact: on the basis of the variants, it is possible to ascertain that both textual traditions found their way to the other side of the North Sea independently. O1 is probably even the earliest representative copy of tradition B.¹²

3 English Manuscripts with the *Vita* of Christina Mirabilis

The oldest surviving manuscript in England with the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 240. It is a miscellany with works of the fourteenth-century chronicler John of Tynemouth, which contains, amongst many other texts, a résumé of the *vita* of Christina (siglum O1 in the formulas above). It is a very complex manuscript of around 900 pages (it is not foliated, but partly paginated), and has not yet been adequately described. The best description of the manuscript is the one given by Carl Horstman as far back as 1901.¹³ As is noted on page 1, it was copied in 1377 for the Benedictine abbey of Bury Saint Edmunds at the request and/or expense of Roger of Huntingdon, infirmarian of the abbey.¹⁴ The manuscript contains Books 14–21 of Tynemouth’s *Historia Aurea* on pages 1–582. From page 582 on several scribes have added, as a continuation of Tynemouth’s work, miscellaneous historio-

12 O1 = Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 240 (1377 and after), from the Benedictine abbey of Bury Saint Edmunds in Suffolk. It does not contain chapters 21–26, so there is no information on variants 2, 3, and 4. Variant 1 on 708: “ex villa que vulgariter Brusenum [sic] appellat. iuxta oppidum Sancti Trudonis in Hasbanio Leodiensis diocesis.” Variant 5 on 711: “castrum quod Los siue Loeun dicitur ab oppido Sancti Trudonis per duo fere miliaria distans expetiuit.” Abbreviations have been solved silently and names of places are spelled with capital letters.

13 Carl Horstman, *Nova Legenda Anglie: As collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave, and others, and first printed, with New Lives, by Wynkyn de Worde a.d. m d xui. Now re-edited with fresh material from ms. and printed sources I* (Oxford, 1901), lvii–lxv. See also Falconer Madan and H.H.E. Craster, *A Summary Catalogue of Western manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, which have not hitherto been catalogued in the quarto series: With references to the oriental and other manuscripts, vol. II, part I: Collections received before 1660 and miscellaneous MSS, acquired during the first half of the 17th Century: Nos. 1–3490* (Oxford 1922), 384–385.

14 BLO Bodley 240 (see above, n. 12), 1: “Liber monachorum sancti edmundi in quo continetur: Secunda pars historie auree quam scribi fecit dompnus Rogerus de Hundedoun sumptibus graciaram suarum anno domini .m°ccc°.lxxvij°”. Abbreviations have been solved silently.

graphical, monastic, theological, and documentary material under the heading of Book 21, and from page 616 on as Book 22 (a book number which is not included in the work of Tynemouth). One of these texts is a sermon dated 1382, so the scribes continued adding material after 1377, the date of the origin of the manuscript.¹⁵ Among the miscellaneous additions are excerpts from the *Martyrologium* and the *Sanctilogium* of John of Tynemouth, including hagiographical material about Saint Edmund and other saints from England. In this part of the codex we also find the abbreviated *vitae* of three thirteenth-century holy women from Liège as chapters 56, 57, and 58 of Book 22: Christina Mirabilis (708–712; see illustration 1), Lutgard of Aywières (712–719), and Elisabeth of Spalbeek (719–723), respectively. The *vitae* of Christina and Lutgard contain many marginal notes (Elisabeth's *vita* only one). Some of them were put in red frames and were, it seems, written by the scribe himself. These notes are very much like chapter titles, such as *qualiter obiit et reuixit* (p. 708) and *quomodo oleum fluxit de mamillis eius* (p. 710). The other marginal notes could be the work of a later reader. They give summaries of the contents as well and reveal that the texts were intensely read.

The title of Christina's *vita* is *Compendium Vite Beate Cristine Virginis cognomine mirabilis cuius vita originalis est apud Londoniam intra monachos Carthusiensis*.¹⁶ The scribe here refers to a *vita* that originated from the charterhouse of London, presumably the model for his copy. This model manuscript possibly contained copies of the *vitae* of Lutgard of Aywières and Elisabeth of Spalbeek as well, considering that copies of the *vitae* of holy women of Liège often went together in one codex. The charterhouse of London was founded in 1371 and it seems that a manuscript with the *vita* of Christina was available in the newly founded monastery. The Carthusians of London loaned manuscripts to many persons outside the charterhouse.¹⁷ The scribes of Bodley 240, who must have used many examples for the numerous materials they copied in the entire codex, probably borrowed a manuscript with the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis from the London charterhouse. Another possibility is that Roger of Huntingdon himself made a copy in London, because in 1386 he was in London to make extracts from the records of the royal Exchequer.¹⁸ Either way, through this

15 Horstman, *Nova Legenda Anglie* (see above, n. 13), lvii.

16 BLO Bodley 240 (see above, n. 12), 708. Abbreviations have been solved silently.

17 Roger Lovatt, "The Library of John Blacman and Contemporary Carthusian Spirituality," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992), 195–230, there 217–218.

18 Rodney M. Thomson, *The Archives of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (Woodbridge, 1980), 32.

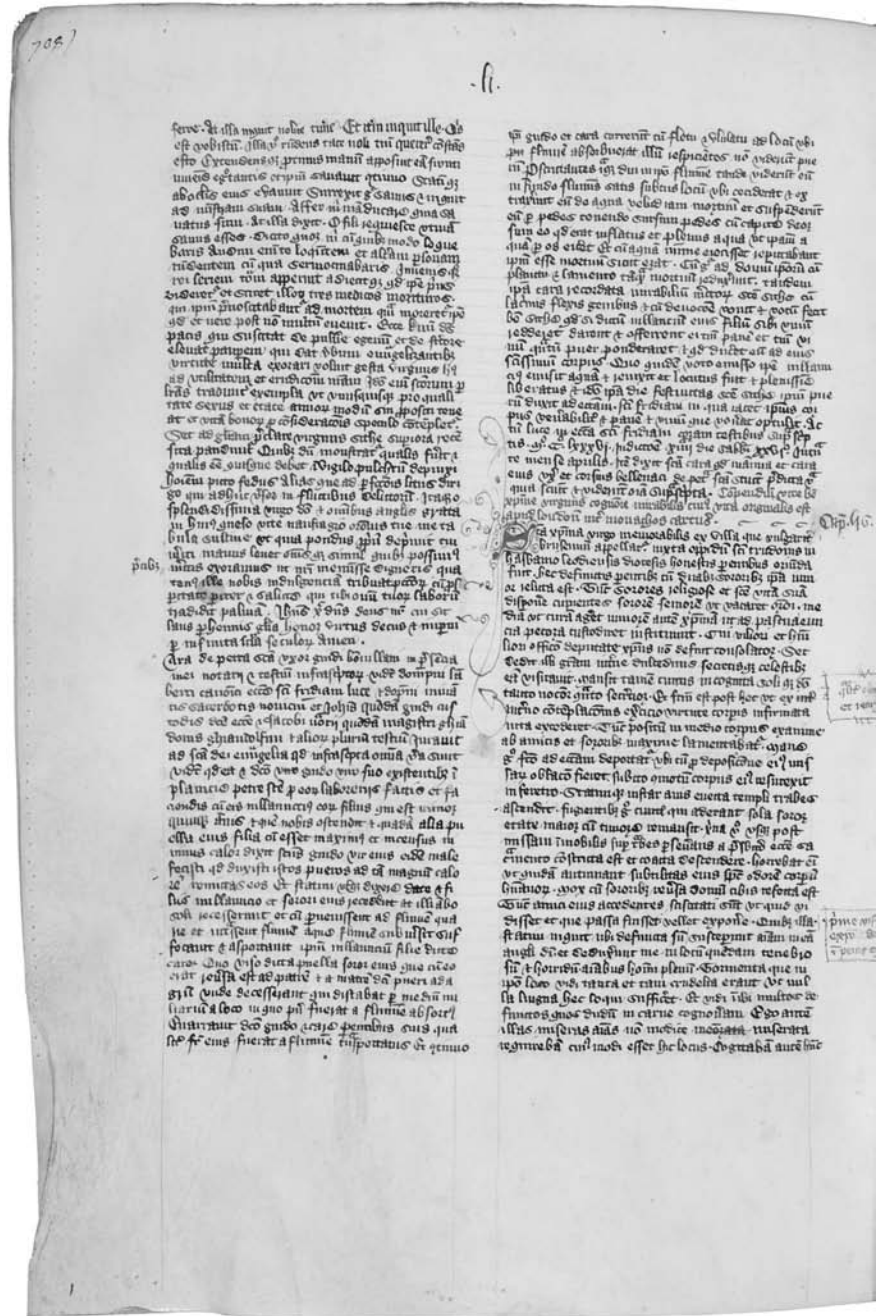


FIGURE 1 *Incipit of the abbreviated vita of Christina Mirabilis in the right column*
 THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, MS BODLEY 240, P. 708

Benedictine copy we know that the *vita* of Christina circulated in a Carthusian context in England already before the 1380s, the date of this oldest surviving copy.¹⁹

The other two manuscripts from England contain the complete *life* of Christina Mirabilis, one in Latin and one in Middle English. Both are from Carthusian monasteries. Bearing in mind that the copy from Bury Saint Edmunds referred to an example from the Carthusians of London, it is reasonable to assume that the transmission of the *vita* in England was a Carthusian matter. The Latin manuscript is from the charterhouse of Witham (founded in 1178/1179), now Oxford, St John's College, MS 182 (siglum 02 in the formulas above). It dates from the middle of the fifteenth century, more precisely after 1434—according to a note on fol. 147v, the date of one of the texts—and before 1474, when the manuscript is mentioned in an inventory of books, which John Blacman donated to Witham. The manuscript was written by John Blacman (1408/1409–c. 1485), who was, among other things, hagiographer of King Henry VI.²⁰ During the first part of his life, Blacman had an academic career, first as bachelor fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and from 1443 on as fellow of Eton. There he was the spiritual adviser, and perhaps also the confessor, of King Henry VI. In or shortly after 1458 he withdrew to Carthusian life and first lived for a couple of years in the charterhouse of London before relocating to Witham from about 1460 on. He never became a monk but was a *clericus redditus*. He devoted much of his time to collecting and copying texts, activities to

19 As for the other holy women: the *vita* of Lutgard is not known in any other manuscript from England, but the *vita* of Elisabeth is known in two fourteenth-century manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 138, 185–192, probably from Norwich; Cambridge, Jesus College, MS 24, fols.(?), from Durham? Two other manuscripts contain excerpts of the *vita* of Elisabeth: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 694, fol. 145v (thirteenth century); Durham, Durham Cathedral Library, MS B.IV.39 (this part: fifteenth century). The *vita* of Mary of Oignies was transmitted in one surviving Latin manuscript from England: London, British Library, Harley 4725, fols. 157-(?) (thirteenth or fourteenth century). The provenance of all manuscripts mentioned here is unknown. See Patricia Deery Kurtz, "Mary of Oignies, Christine the Marvelous, and medieval heresy," *Mystics Quarterly* 14 (1988), 186–196, there 195 n. 3.

20 A note in St John's College 182 (see above, n. 10), fol. 1r says: "liber Wittham quod Johannes Blacman". For an overview of Blacman's life and works see Roger Lovatt, "John Blacman: Biographer of Henry VI," in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), 415–444; Jonathan Hughes, "Blacman, John (1407/8–1485?)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/view/article/2599> (accessed 10 August 2014).

which the aforementioned book list and seven surviving manuscripts testify.²¹ His *life* of Henry VI only survives in a printed edition of Ronald Copland.²²

The book list in which the manuscript is mentioned is an inventory of the books that Blacman donated to Witham in 1474, written in part by an unidentified hand, partly by a librarian, and partly by himself.²³ A note by Blacman after the 66th title says: "Take these, your books, Father, as many as my years."²⁴ Actually, the inventory consists of two lists; one comprised of books Blacman already possessed before his entrance into Witham, and one comprised of books he collected and copied during his years at Witham.²⁵ The surviving manuscript with the *vita* of Christina is part of the second list. According to Roger Lovatt, the first set of titles represents Blacman's academic career and the second set his spiritual journey in the charterhouse, which will be evaluated below. Since another surviving manuscript of the first, 'academic' book list is dated 1463 and can only have been donated afterwards, Lovatt argues that the manuscripts of the second book list, including the manuscript with the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis, must be dated 1463–1474, after the completion of the first set of books.²⁶ The manuscript contains, besides Christina's *vita*, the Latin *vitae* of Mary of Oignies, Elisabeth of Spalbeek, St Marina, St Eufrosina, St Mathilde of Scotland, St Simeon Stylites, and St Alexius, and the treatises *De principio seculi et interregna gentium et in fine seculorum* by pseudo-Methodius and *Questio duracionis huius etatis mundis talis est* by John Paul de Fundis (1434).²⁷

21 The book list was edited in Vincent Gillespie and A.I. Doyle, eds., *Syon Abbey, with The Libraries of the Carthusians* [Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 9] (London, 2001), 630–651.

22 Printed in London, before 1523; reprinted by Thomas Hearne in 1732 and M.R. James in 1919. Gillespie and Doyle, *Syon Abbey* (see above, n. 21), 631.

23 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 154, flyleaf and fols. 1r–2v. Lovatt, "The Library" (see above, n. 17), 200–201.

24 "Lxvi hiemes vidit qui dicit prelate / quot habeo annos tot tolle pater tibi libros / deo gracias. 1474." Gillespie and Doyle, *Syon Abbey* (see above, n. 21), 651. English translation by Lovatt, "The Library" (see above, n. 17), 201. After the 66th title and this note, two more titles were added.

25 After the 24th title a new list, written and numbered by Blacman himself, starts with the words *Perquisita postea*. Actually, the complete book list consists of three lists, but the first two are two different representations of the same list. Lovatt, "The Library" (see above, n. 17), 200–201; Gillespie and Doyle, *Syon Abbey* (see above, n. 21), 631.

26 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 152. Lovatt, "The Library" (see above, n. 17), 202.

27 Ralph Hanna, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts of St John's College Oxford* (Oxford, 2002), 256–258.

Just like the manuscript from Bury Saint Edmunds, this manuscript from Witham bears traces of readership. Blacman himself or another reader set lines in the margins next to some passages, which indicate his special interest in these passages. For example, one line is put next to the miracle of milk dripping from Christina's virginal breasts, with which she fed herself and cured her wounds (ch. 4, fol. 89r). This passage has caught the attention of more readers: marginal notes were written next to this same passage and next to another miracle of Christina's breasts providing her with nurturing oil in the copy of the Cistercians of Villers, as well as in a short version of the *vita* in a manuscript from the Canons Regular of Sainte-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie in Paris.²⁸ The miracle can be understood as God showing his grace to and through Christina, as oil is a symbol of God's grace.²⁹ Other passages which Blacman or another reader marked are the chapters in which Thomas of Cantimpré describes how Christina flew to the tops of trees (ch. 10, fol. 91r), how she predicted the siege of Jerusalem in 1187 by Saladin (ch. 24, fol. 96v), and how she knew Latin although she was uneducated (ch. 26, fol. 98v).³⁰ He also marked the conclusion of the *vita*, in which Thomas exhorted the readers to follow Christina's example and to do penance (ch. 41, fol. 104r).

The other manuscript with a complete *life* of Christina is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 (see illustration 2). It is written in Middle English and dates from the second quarter of the fifteenth century. It belonged to the charterhouse of Beauvale in Nottinghamshire, which was founded in 1343.³¹ The ownership mark is of a slightly later date than the manuscript, so it is possible that the manuscript circulated in another context before it ended up with the Carthusians.³² It contains the only surviving witnesses of the translations of the *vitae* of Elisabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Mary of Oignies,

28 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 4459–4470, fols. 170r and 172r, and Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 413, fol. 107r, respectively. See Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 87 (esp. n. 10) and 131.

29 Anke E. Passenier, "The Life of Christina Mirabilis: Miracles and the Construction of Marginality," in *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration*, ed. Anne-Marie Korte (Leiden, 2001), 145–178, there 173–174.

30 Just like in other manuscripts with the *vita* of Christina, in St John's College 182 (see above, n. 10) chapters 10 and 11, and 25 and 26 are taken together, so Blacman's copy counts 39 chapters instead of 41. See Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 106–115 (Table 4).

31 BLO Douce 114 (see above, n. 10), fol. 150v: "Beauvale. Iste liber est domus belle vallis ordinis carthusiensis in comitatu Nothyngam."

32 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 11.

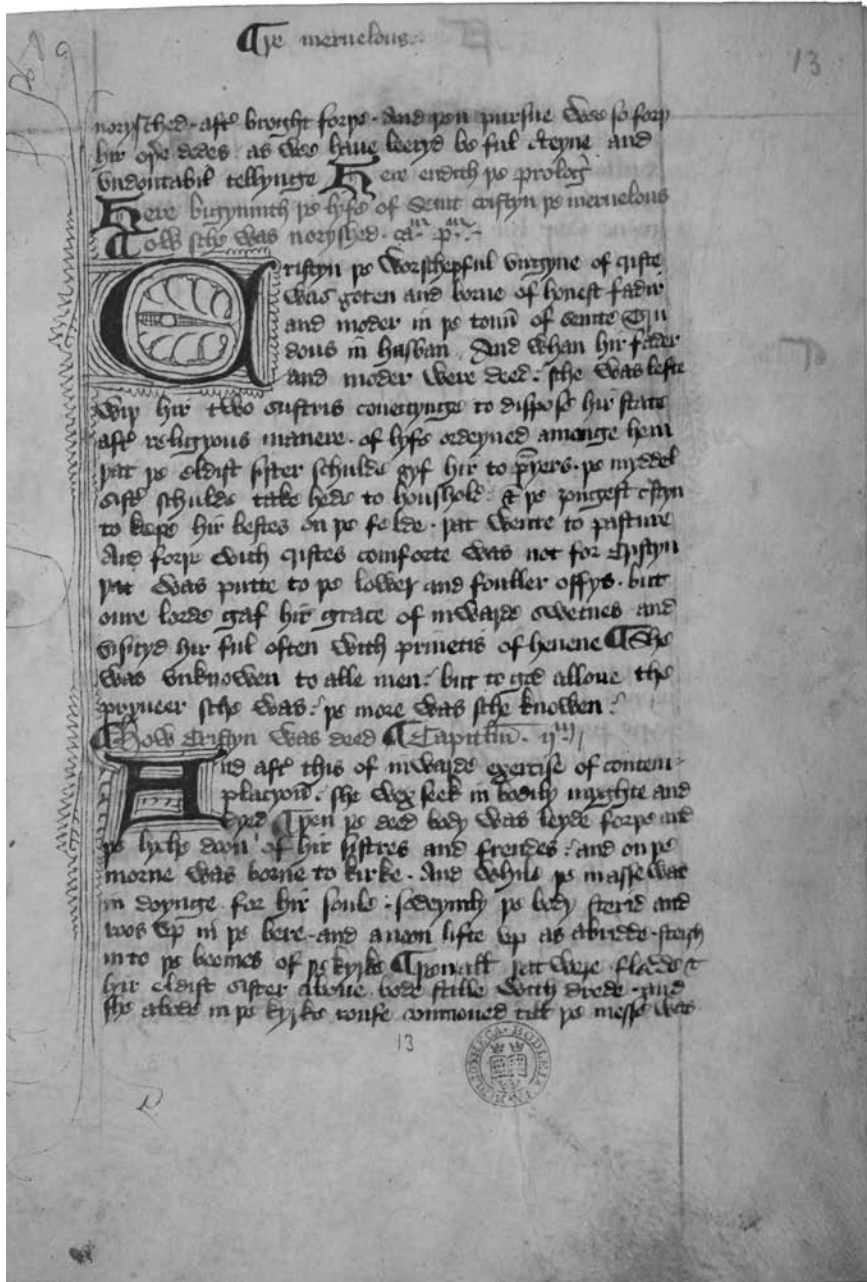


FIGURE 2 *Incipit of the Middle English life of Christina Mirabilis*
 THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, MS DOUCE 114, FOL. 13R

along with Middle English translations of a *vita* of Catharine of Siena and Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*, entitled *The Seuene Poyntes of Trewe Loue and Euerlastyngge Wisdame*.³³ The Middle English text of the *vita* of Christina can be placed in exactly the same textual tradition as the Latin text of O2, compared with the six variants mentioned above.³⁴ The translations of the *lives* of Mary and Elisabeth are also very close to the Latin texts in Blacman's manuscript, especially the *life* of Elisabeth, in which the same passages are omitted as in the Latin version of Blacman's copy.³⁵ Naturally, Blacman's manuscript is much younger and cannot have served as an example. But another candidate has been found: a book list from the Augustinian priory Thurgarton, very close to Beauvale, names a miscellany with exactly the same four *vitae* as the Middle English manuscript, in exactly the same order (Blacman's copy has another order).³⁶ This now-lost manuscript might have been the model for the translation in the manuscript from Beauvale. However, according to Jennifer Brown, the copy from Beauvale contains errors that can only have been mistranscriptions from a Middle English example, so this copy is not a direct translation from a Latin model.³⁷

33 The *lives* of the three Liège women were edited by Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 5). All four *lives* were edited by C. Horstman[n], ed., "Prosalegenden: Die Legenden des ms. Douce 114. (Dialekt von Nottinghamshire?)," *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* 8 (1885), 102–196.

34 BLO, Douce 114 (see above, n. 10), fol. 15r: "in þe toune of seinte Trudous in Hasban" (variant 1); fol. 19v: year 1213 not included (variant 2); fol. 21r: "a þowsande two hundredth and seuenty" (variant 3); fol. 21v: "þen sche bigan Te deum laudamus and alle þe couente folowyng after, she made an ende þere of" (variant 4); fol. 21v: "a castell in þe marches of Almayne þat is called Loen" (variant 5). Jennifer Brown discovered another similarity between the Middle English Beauvale manuscript and Blacman's copy: to the chapter title of ch. 16 (15 in Blacman's ordering), "Quomodo cogebatur a spiritu elemosinis viuere," Blacman added "et quasi homo." St John's College 182 (see above, n. 10), fol. 93r. The Middle English also has as ch. 15: "How she was constreyned of spirite to lyue wit almes and as a man." BLO Douce 114 (see above, n. 10), fol. 17v; Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 236.

35 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 14.

36 Kurtz, "Mary of Oignies" (see above, n. 19), 187; Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 12. See also Brian C. Vander Veen, *The vitae of Bodleian Library Ms Douce 114* (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2007), 53–55 <http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk/1455/1/The_Vitae_of_Douce_114.pdf>.

37 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 15. Vander Veen came to the same conclusion: Vander Veen, *The vitae of Bodleian* (see above, n. 38), 67.

The *lives* of the three holy women from Liège were, presumably, translated as a set. In the book list of Thurgarton they were also put together as one entry.³⁸ The *vita* of Catharine might or might not have been part of this set; in the Thurgarton book list the title was written as a separate entry.³⁹ In the Beauvale manuscript they are copied as a set of four, preceded by an introductory “apology” on fol. 1r (*PE Apolege Of the compilour*) and followed by another apology on fols. 87r–87v (*A shorte Apologetik of bis englishe compyloure*). Both texts were written by the translator. In the first he explains that he translated the English text from Latin to the honour of God and to the edification of devout souls who are not familiar with Latin, and that he translated it, just like St Jerome, from sense to sense, not from word to word. In the second text we learn which public the translator had in mind: both men and women, both laypeople and clerics, and both readers and listeners.⁴⁰ He begs forgiveness for any mistakes he might have made. Finally, the author says that he has written the text at the request of his superior.⁴¹ In sum, Brown suggests, the *vitae* were probably translated by an Augustinian Canon of Thurgarton, based on the Latin miscellany of the book list, and intended for a mixed public.⁴² However, the question here is why the Carthusians ended up with a copy of this translation.

4 Carthusians and Their Appropriation of New Models

There are two ongoing debates about the role of Carthusians in the transmission of texts in the English situation. First, there is the question to what extent they were involved with translating and spreading vernacular religious literature among devout laypeople. Scholarship on English vernacular religious literature often stresses the prominent role of Carthusians in its production, referring to the very popular *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* by the Carthusian Nicholas Love and to the fact that the only manuscript of *The*

38 The entry is: “Vita trium virginum scilicet Elizabeth Cristine et Marie Oegenes”. Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 12.

39 “Littere quedam de vita sancte Katerine de Senys”. [*in vno quaterno*]. Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 6), 12. “In vno quaterno” was crossed out, reason to think this *vita* was indeed copied separately.

40 BLO Douce 114 (see above, n. 10), fols. 87r–87v: “alle men and wymmen þat in happe rediþ or heriþ this englyshe [...] lettird men and clerkes [...] beinge reders or herers of bis englyshe.”

41 For an edition of both texts see Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 5), 16–17.

42 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 5), 19.

Book of Margery Kempe was transmitted in a charterhouse.⁴³ The similarities between *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the *vita* of Mary of Oignies, both about married laywomen living a chaste religious life, are striking. Therefore, the connection between *The Book of Margery Kempe*, manuscript Oxford, BL, Douce 114, containing the vernacular *vita* of Mary, and the role of Carthusians as active promoters of the production and spread of these texts is often made.⁴⁴ However, recently published studies on this Douce manuscript are not unanimous about the identity of the translator, the intentions of the translator, and the intended public. Whereas Brown suggests that both the manuscript and the translation may not have been produced in Beauvale at all and that the Carthusians were the unintended secondary audience, Brian Vander Veen argues that the *vitae* of holy women of Liège were acquired on the continent by the prior of Beauvale, were spread to Thurgarton and Witham, and were translated in Beauvale, and that Beauvale even attempted to promote these saints' cults.⁴⁵ The crux of the debate lies in the question: Did the Carthusians actively spread vernacular texts among laypeople? Vander Veen, identifying the translator as a Carthusian monk, supposes they did, as the apologies in Douce 114 prove. He proposes that the translation was meant as a kind of supplement to Nicholas Love's *Mirror* in the anti-Lollard campaign.⁴⁶ Brown and Sarah Macmillan suggest the opposite: they assume that the Carthusians considered the *vitae* of visionary, barely orthodox women inappropriate or 'dangerous' for laypeople, and that they kept them isolated and safe in their libraries.⁴⁷ Macmillan also states that Carthusians did not so much spread texts as collected these for their own use. Jessica Brantley and Vincent Gillespie also warn against exaggerating the active spreading of vernacular texts by Carthusians. What is interpreted as distribution could actually well have been the conservation or the absorbing of vernacular literature.⁴⁸ In my view, one should look at the Carthusians' interest in the *vitae* of holy women from this perspective: they found inspiring

43 Michael Sargent, "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 225–240, there 238–239.

44 Vander Veen, *The vitae of Bodleian* (see above, n. 36), 2–3.

45 *Ibid.*, 52–55.

46 *Ibid.*, 170.

47 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 5), 20; Sarah Macmillan, "Mortifying the Mind: Asceticism, Mysticism and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter symposium VIII*, ed. E.A. Jones (Cambridge, 2013), 109–124, there 112.

48 Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2007), 56–57.

role models for themselves in these texts, whether they were written in Latin or in the vernacular. They did not store them, but used them, as the plentiful marginal notes in the Latin manuscripts prove. Vernacular texts, such as the *lives* in the Douce manuscript, could well have been copied for illiterate inhabitants of their monasteries: not all *conversi*, *donati*, and lay brothers knew Latin.

Macmillan and Brantley touch upon the second debate: How isolated were Carthusians, and what was their role in the circulation of texts, both Latin and vernacular? In recent years most (literary) historians, both of English and continental Carthusians, have come to the conclusion that the Carthusians were not acting, copying, and reading in isolation.⁴⁹ On the contrary, they collected and exchanged texts with members of other orders, as well as laypeople.⁵⁰ The charterhouses of London and Sheen offered many books on loan—both in Latin and the vernacular. This partly had to do with pastoral or moral care for the surrounding lay community. In turn, they received books from lay benefactors, as is clear from wills and other sources. London and Sheen seem to have functioned as resources of books for other charterhouses as well. Lists of books that were lent to other charterhouses survive for Hinton (one list), London (six), and an unidentified charterhouse (one).⁵¹ This lively interaction and exchange was not the same for all charterhouses, however. For Witham, much more isolated than the urban charterhouse of London, we have no information on the active spread of texts, let alone those in the vernacular. The books that are known to have come from Witham were, with the exception of one book on Blacman's list, only in Latin and, according to Lovatt, “unaffected by the spiritual demands of the laity.”⁵² Yet it is evident from this list that Witham was not isolated: many books introduced to the charterhouse via Blacman reveal a taste of the continental intellectual tradition, such as the *Amoris inflammatorium* of Denys the Carthusian.⁵³ The Carthusians of London, Beauvale, and

49 Stephen J. Molvarec, “*Vox clamantis in deserto*. The Development of Carthusian Relations with Society in the High Middle Ages,” in *A Fish Out of Water?* (see above, n. 6), 13–49, there 44–49; Erik Kwakkel, *Die Dietsche boeke die ons toebehoeren. De kartuizers van Herne en de productie van Middelnederlandse handschriften in de regio Brussel (1350–1400)* (Louvain, 2002), 155.

50 For example: the charterhouse of Sheen provided the Bridgettine house of Syon with books. Vander Veen, *The vitae of Bodleian* (see above, n. 38), 42–44 and Lovatt, “The Library” (see above, n. 17), 218. See also Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness* (see above, n. 48), 44–46 and 50–56, on pastoral care provided by Carthusians via the spread of books.

51 All edited by Gillespie and Doyle, *Syon Abbey* (see above, n. 21), 611–630 and 651–652.

52 Lovatt, “The Library” (see above, n. 17), 221.

53 *Ibid.*, 226–228.

Witham, who possessed copies of the *lives* of the holy women of Liège, played a role in the dissemination of these *lives*, but not necessarily with an eye on pastoral care. Given the manuscript evidence provided above, the *vitae* of the holy women of Liège first and foremost served the edification of the Carthusians and their illiterate co-occupants.

One question remains: Why were Carthusians in England interested in the *vitae* of continental holy women, who were neither officially canonized saints nor well known? Their cults were quite local matters—Christina was venerated in Nonnemielen near Sint-Truiden, in the county of Loon, and Mary in Oignies. Christina was, however, still venerated in the fifteenth century, and no one less than Denys the Carthusian, who grew up near Sint-Truiden, testified to that. In his *Liber utilissimus de quatuor hominis novissimis*, he wrote that he had often heard people talk about Christina.⁵⁴ He further stated in his *Dialogus de iudicio particulari animarum post mortem* that he believed the miraculous deeds of Christina to be true, and related that he often visited Christina's grave.⁵⁵ Although Denys was an influential Carthusian writer, his admiration of Christina can be ascribed to his roots in Loon, and English Carthusians were probably not interested in introducing the holy women's cults in England. In order to determine why they transmitted the *vitae*, we could better look into the models the *vitae* provided. Since Bolton's study in 1978, historians and theologians have interpreted the *vitae* from different perspectives, stressing various themes found therein. In recent literature about the English manuscripts containing the *vitae* of Christina and Mary, Kurtz has focused on the anti-heretical character of the *vitae*, and Macmillan sees asceticism as a unifying factor among the four *vitae* in the Middle English Douce manuscript (thus including Catherine of Siena's *vita*).⁵⁶ Brown stresses

54 "Recordor quoque, quod dum in pueritia frequentavi scholam in oppido illo, frequenter audiui mentionem admirabilis illius Christinae, atque (vt dicebatur) aliqui tunc vixerunt in Sancto Trudone qui nouerunt nonnullos, qui ipsam feminam gloriosam viderunt in carne." Dionysius Carthusianus, *D. Dionysii carthvsiani liber vtilissimvs de quatuor Hominis nouissimis, Nempē, 1. Morte. 2. Iudicio. 3. Inferni poenis. 4. Gaudijs coeli. Eiusdem Colloqvium particulari iudicio animarum. Nunc demum omnia recognita, & à plurimis, quibus scatebant, mendis sedulo repurgata*, ed. Bernardi Gualtheri (Cologne, 1626), 233 (Pars 3, art. 16).

55 "Ego quoque in loco quo fuit sepulta, fui frequenter: et dum in pueritia oppido S. Trudonis frequentavi, scholares ex relatu suorum parentum saepe loquebantur de ea." Dionysius Carthusianus, *D. Dionysii carthvsiani [...] Colloqvium particulari iudicio animarum* (see above, n. 54), 509 (art. 33).

56 Kurtz, "Mary of Oignies" (see above, n. 19), 194–195; Macmillan, "Mortifying the Mind" (see above, n. 47), 110.

the extraordinary pain the women suffered and the *exemplum*-function of the *vitae*.⁵⁷ In my view, the authors and scribes of the *vitae* never meant the holy women should be imitated in their physical behaviour; rather, their *vitae* should be read as *exempla*, providing a spiritual mirror of humility, asceticism, and God's grace. Carthusians were first and foremost interested in the models and mirrors the *vitae* offered to them personally, as monks striving for inner reform, humility, and asceticism. Here the continental transmission provides some insight.

Manuscripts from continental charterhouses containing the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis do not deal with female saints as a category (as modern researchers do); instead, they stress the importance of reform, and bring together the *vitae* of 'new' saints—meaning saints who represented the new religious movements of the high and late Middle Ages—clerics, women, and laymen alike. These new religious movements of the high and late Middle Ages were, generally speaking, characterized by a focus on the imitation of Christ. For example, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 8060–8064, from an unidentified charterhouse near Trier, contains many *miracula*, together with the *vitae* of Mary of Oignies, Christina Mirabilis, and Margareth of Ypres; the *vitae* of Rupert of Bingen and Disibodus, the founding fathers of the religious centre of Disibodenberg, written by Hildegard of Bingen; and the *vita* of Anno, the eleventh-century archbishop of Cologne. Anno was a reform-minded bishop who encouraged celibacy and a strict monastic observance of the Rule. In another manuscript, Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 1168/470 8°, from the charterhouse of Sankt Beatusberg in Koblenz, the *vitae* of Mary of Oignies and Christina Mirabilis were also put together in one codex with the *vita* of Anno. Furthermore, this manuscript contains the *vitae* of Dominic Guzman; the Dominican Peter Martyr of Verona; Dunstan and Edmund, archbishops of Canterbury; the virgin Geneviève of Paris; and the Dominican Vincent Ferrer. This is a mixture of important churchmen and ascetic preachers and virgins, who all share the pursuit of a pure Christian life of asceticism (Edmund wore, for example, a coarse cloth), and the imitation of Christ (Peter Martyr was even murdered as a new martyr). Carthusians took a broad spectrum of saints as their models, and it seems that Mary and Christina served this function on the same level as bishops and Dominican preachers. These women represented the Carthusian values of asceticism, humility, and, most importantly perhaps, a critique of the moral decline of secular clergy—both Christina and Mary often exposed clerics who were living in

57 Brown, *Three Women of Liège* (see above, n. 5), 7–8, 243–245, and 287.

sin.⁵⁸ The *vitae* of the holy women of Liège were perfect models for monks who wanted to “nakedly follow the naked Christ.”⁵⁹

The Sankt Beatusberg manuscript contains a special abbreviated version of the *vita* of Mary of Oignies, from which, according to the scribe, “nothing of importance seems to have been left out.”⁶⁰ A careful analysis of its text gives some insight into the appropriation of this *vita* by its Carthusian readers. Given the many erasures, corrections, and additions, it seems possible that this manuscript contains the work-in-progress of the anonymous editor himself, although the title suggests it is a copy.⁶¹ At the end of the text the scribe wrote a sentence of what should have begun (a version of) the *vita* of Christina, but he did not finish it and left some folio’s empty (the *vita* was written in another quire by another hand).⁶² In the prologue the anonymous editor situated the *vita* of Mary in a tradition of ‘classic’ hagiographies, such as the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Sevilla, and Bede.⁶³ He then gave a short overview of the life of Mary, abandoning the original composition of Jacques de Vitry, which divides Mary’s *vita* into two Books, dividing the text instead into a *vita* and *miracula*. The theologically well-developed *vita*—one book dealing with the external deeds and the other with the internal seven virtues—thus becomes a simplified miracle collection. This version of the *vita* brings the question of the Carthusians’ outreach or pastoral care into focus. *Miracula*, also prominent in the earlier-mentioned manuscript from an unknown charterhouse (Brussels, KBR 8060–8064), were, generally speaking, used as preachers’ aids. One could wonder what this has to say about the

58 Tom Gaens, “*Fons hortorum irriguus, ceteras irrigans religiones*. Carthusian Influences on Monastic Reform in Germany and the Low Countries in the Fifteenth Century,” in *A Fish Out of Water?* (see above, n. 6), 51–103, there 54–55. Gaens also notices the interest of Carthusians in the lives and works of female passion-mystics.

59 Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 73.

60 SB, 1168/470 8° (see above, n. 9), f. 204r: “Incipiunt excerpta ex vita Sancte Marie de Oegnies Brabancie [struck through] In quibus tamen nihil de necessarijs videtur omissum.”

61 Yet this text is found in another manuscript as well: ULB Tirol 950 (see above, n. 9). This manuscript is, most interestingly, bound together with printed material.

62 SB 1168/470 8° (see above, n. 9), fol. 222v: “Item in vita Sancte Cristine virginis que fuit de civitate Sancti Trudonis in Hesbanio: que semel mortua reuixit. et postquam xlij annis in hac mortali vita manens purgatorium horrendum sustinuit: similes laudes Marie huius et Iacobi habentur.”

63 SB 1168/470 8° (see above, n. 9), fol. 204r: “Patres nostri quondam multa diligentia studuerunt actus sanctorum stilo commendare inter quos Egesippum, Eusebium Cesariensem, Sanctum Ieronimum, papamque Gregorium, Ysidorum Ispalensem, Bedam et Uswardum: singulariter fuisse sollicitos reperimus.”

Carthusians' outreach activities in the region Trier-Koblenz, but again, such texts could be used for the guidance of lay brothers and *donati* in the charterhouses themselves. Moreover, Mary's miracles showed her humility and her capacities of exposing iniquitous clerics during life, and, therefore, functioned as *exempla* rather than spectacular miracles performed from the grave, which served as a claim of sanctity.

A final thought about the models that the holy women of Liège provided is prompted by John Blacman's work. Although Blacman never became a fully enclosed Carthusian monk, his book collection was shaped by Carthusian sources and spirituality, and was likewise left as an important legacy to the Witham charterhouse. Blacman's interest in the model of Christina's *vita* can be further explained if the parallels with his *vita* of King Henry VI (l. 1421–1471) are considered. Blacman wrote this *vita* between 1471 and 1485, when he was already a member of the Witham community. He portrays Henry as an ascetic layman who wore “as a second Job” a coarse hair shirt underneath his simple clothes, had visions of Jesus, and had an intense devotion to the Eucharist.⁶⁴ Blacman did not stress the miracles Henry performed after his death (which were recorded by others),⁶⁵ so he presumably did not write the *vita* in order to establish canonization, but rather to create a model of a virtuous inner life.⁶⁶ This is very similar to the *vitae* of Christina and Mary, which do not describe miracles performed after death, but instead sketch a model of virtuous yet simple inner spiritual life. Just like Christina and Mary, Henry is portrayed as living the life of a religious layperson without formally being a monk or nun. Just like them, he is exemplifying a simple but visionary holy layperson who has direct contact with God, and in this way functions as a mirror for educated clergymen.⁶⁷ Blacman's portrait of Henry VI is completely in line with ideas of

64 Lovatt, “John Blacman” (see above, n. 20), 438–439; Thomas S. Freeman, “*Ut Verus Christi Sequester*: John Blacman and the Cult of Henry VI,” in *Of Mice and Men: Image, Belief and Regulation in Late Medieval England*, ed. Linda Clark [The Fifteenth Century 5] (Woodbridge, 2005), 127–142, there 137–138.

65 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 1992) 164–165, 169, and 187–188.

66 Freeman, “*Ut Verus Christi*” (see above, n. 64), 142. As one of the anonymous reviewers remarked, Carthusians in general downplayed the role of miracles. See also Dennis D. Martin, “Sanctity in Carthusian Spirituality,” in *San Bruno et sa posterité spirituelle. Actes du colloque international des 8 et 9 octobre 2001 à l'Institut catholique de Paris*, ed. Alain Girard, Daniel Le Blévec, and Nathalie Nabert [Analecta Carthusiana 189] (Salzburg, 2003), 197–215.

67 Lovatt, “John Blacman” (see above, n. 20), 441.

the *Devotio Moderna* and the spirituality of the reform-minded Carthusians, to which his whole book collection also testifies.

5 Conclusion

The transmission of the *vitae* of Christina Mirabilis and Mary of Oignies in England was, according to the manuscript evidence, a Carthusian matter. As the variants in the surviving copies prove, the *vita* of Christina was even brought to England in two separate transactions. The abbreviated *vita* of Christina in the manuscript from Bury Saint Edmunds represents a textual tradition not typical for Carthusians, yet the scribe writes that it is based on a manuscript from the London charterhouse. This indicates that English (or London) Carthusians not only exchanged texts with their continental counterparts, as is generally known, but also that they might have received copies from other religious orders, more specifically, those linked to the *Devotio Moderna*. The existence of Middle English translations of the *vitae* of Christina, Mary, and Elisabeth has given rise to speculation about the Carthusians' outreach to a lay audience and their intentions to spreading or withholding these texts. The continental transmission and reception of these *vitae*, however, show that Carthusians were mainly interested in the models of lay saints as models for themselves and yet that there is no reason to assume that Carthusians disapproved of laypeople reading these *vitae*. The models that Carthusian monks found in the *vitae* of holy women of Liège were perfect examples of asceticism and simple, inwardly directed piety, gifted by God's grace; in short, they provided mirrors for learned clergymen and monks who sought to humbly follow Christ.

Appendix: Manuscripts with the *Vita* of Christina Mirabilis

Latin vita by Thomas of Cantimpré

(Explanation: Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina—BHL 1746: *vita*; BHL 1747: *Additamentum = miracula*)

1. **Ba1** Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS A VIII 6, fols. 210r–215r (early fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Sankt Margarethental in Basel. Donated by brother Leonard Wettinger of Rinfelden.⁶⁸ Résumé of the *vita*, same as Ba2.
2. **Ba2** Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS B IX 11, fols. 92r–93v (middle of fourteenth century), from the Dominican monastery in Basel. Résumé of the *vita*, same as Ba1.
3. **Br1** Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 4459–4470 (3161), fols. 168r–180v (1320), from the Cistercian monastery of Villers. BHL 1746 and BHL 1747.
4. **Br2** Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 7917 (3189), fols. 171r–176v (fifteenth century), from the house of Brothers of the Common Life of Saint Jerome in Utrecht. BHL 1746.
5. **Br3** Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 8060–8064, fols. 132r–137v (c. 1390–1525), from an unknown charterhouse (in or near Trier?). Donated by Hermanus, Canon Regular of the priory of Sankt Simeon (Trier?), previously keeper of seal of the Council of Trier. BHL 1746.
6. **Br4** Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 8609–8620 (3206), fols. 127v–137r (this part: second half thirteenth century), from the Cistercian nunnery Ter Kameren near Brussels. BHL 1746 and BHL 1747.
7. **Br5** Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 2328 (3310), fols. 96v–113v (fifteenth century), from the house of Brothers of the Common Life of Saint Gregory in 's-Hertogenbosch. BHL 1746.
8. **G** Groningen, Universiteitsbibliothek, MS 23, fols. 98r–108v (after 1446), from the house (probably of Brothers of the Common Life) of the confessor of the Tertiaries of Olde Convent in Groningen. BHL 1746.
9. **Ca** Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 839 (744), fols. 37r–46v (fifteenth century), from the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Sépulcre in Cambrai. BHL 1746.

68 The manuscript contains the note: “[...] proveniens a confratre nostro domino Leonardo Wettinger de Rinfelden.” I thank Dominik Hunger for this information (University Library, Basel).

10. Co Cologne, Historisches Archiv, MS 7008 nr. 3 (olim GB 8° 3), fols. 160r–180v (this part: c. 1455), from the Crosier priory of Cologne. Scribe: Abbo of Middelburch. BHL 1746.
11. L1 and L2 Liège, Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire, MS 6 L 21, fols. 225v–240r and 346r–358v (these parts: last quarter fifteenth century respectively 1479), from the Crosier priory of Clairlieu near Huy. Scribe of fols. 346r–358v: Christiaan of Sittard. BHL 1746 (2×).
12. olim Münster, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 21 (Cat. Staender 214, 11), fols. 143v–149r (fifteenth century), from the priory of the Canons Regular (Chapter of Windesheim) of Böddeken. April volume of the *Magnum legendarium Bodecense*. Lost in WW II. BHL 1746.
13. O1 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 240, pp. 708–712 (c. 57) (1377 and after), from the Benedictine abbey of Bury Saint Edmunds in Suffolk. Written for Roger of Huntingdon. Résumé of *vita* BHL 1746
14. O2 Oxford, Saint John's College, MS 182, fols. 87r–105r (1463–1474), from the charterhouse of Witham in Somerset. Scribe: John Blacman, *clericus redditus* and spiritual counsellor of Henry VI. BHL 1746.
15. T Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 1168/470 8°, fols. 226r–235r (fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Sankt Beatusberg near Koblenz. BHL 1746.
16. v1 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Ser. n. 12707, fols. 289r–295v (c. 1476–1483), from the Canons Regular (Chapter of Windesheim) of Rooklooster in Oudergem. *Hagiologium Brabantinorum* II of Johannes Gielemans. BHL 1746.
17. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Ser. n. 12814, olim fol. 1187r (this part is missing) (c. 1470–1482), from the Canons Regular (Chapter of Windesheim) of Rooklooster in Oudergem. *Sanctilogium* IV of Johannes Gielemans. Résumé of *vita* BHL 1746 by Johannes Gielemans.
18. v2 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Ser. n. 12831, fols. 55v–65r (fifteenth century), from the Canons Regular (Chapter of Windesheim) of Rooklooster in Oudergem. BHL 1746.
19. [Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 1177/479 8°, fols. 65r–80v (seventeenth century). BHL 1746.]

Reworking of Parts of the Vita by Henricus Bate

1. Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 413, fols. 107r–108v (fifteenth century), from the priory of Canons Regular of Sainte-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie in Paris. Résumé of *vita*, copied from Henricus Bate, *Speculum divinatorum* XIX (not from BHL 1746).⁶⁹

69 Folkerts, *Voorbeeld op schrift* (see above, n. 4), 87 and 209–210. See also Henri Martin, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque de l' Arsenal* I (Paris, 1885), 279–282.

Vernacular Lives

1. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS I G 56, entire manuscript (fourth quarter fourteenth century), from the Benedictine nunnery of Nonnemielen near Saint Trond. Written for Femine of Hoye. Originally this manuscript was one with MS I G 57 with the *Life* of Lutgard of Aywières. Middle Dutch rhymed translation by Brother Geraert.
2. Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 10487–10490 (5016), fols. 76r–112v (fifteenth century), unknown provenance. Middle French prose translation.
3. Düsseldorf, Hauptstaatsarchiv, MS G V 1, fols. 116r–134r (second half fifteenth century), unknown provenance, from Meuse-Rhine region. Middle Dutch prose translation.
4. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk 1211, fols. 1r–17v (c. 1470–1480), unknown provenance, from Holland (Amsterdam?). Middle Dutch prose translation.
5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114, fols. 12r–26v (fifteenth century), from the charterhouse of Beauvale in Nottinghamshire. Middle English prose translation.
6. Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1016 (5 D 6), fols. 307vb–316rb (1491), from the priory of Canonesses Regular (Chapter of Windesheim) of Saint Agnes of Neerbosch near Nijmegen. Scribe: Adam Daemsz, Canon Regular of the priory of Gaesdonck near Goch (Chapter of Windesheim). Written for Sister Maralde of Sallant, subprioress (but this was struck through in a colophon). Middle Dutch reworking of parts of the *vita* of Mary of Oignies and the *vita* of Christina Mirabilis in one text.
7. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS m. ch. q. 144, fols. 10r–36r (c. 1479), from the charterhouse of Sint-Andries-Haven-der-Zaligheid in Amsterdam. Possession of the lay brother Gherit Claesz. Middle Dutch prose translation.