

Liturgical History as Gender History: Why Not?

by *Teresa Berger*

This essay inquires into the writing of liturgical history, focusing on the challenges that have emerged for history writing with the interpretive tools of gender history. Ultimately, my historiographic argument has a theological aim, namely, to interrogate liturgical history as this history grounds authorizing claims to the past in the form of appeals to «Liturgical Tradition». In order to attend to this, a prior question has to be explored: Why has the study of liturgy largely ignored and thus occluded gender in the inquiry into liturgy's past? The present essay seeks to answer that question, in order then to argue for a new, gender-attentive writing of the history of worship.

In this essay, I seek to clear the space for a question that undergirds a larger inquiry, namely how claims to 'The Liturgical Tradition' are affected when the writing of liturgical history becomes gender-attentive and thereby re-configures what we know of the past and how we know it.¹ In order to attend to this question, a prior question needs to be explored: Why has the study of liturgy largely ignored and thus occluded gender in the inquiry into liturgy's past? I begin my exploration of this question with a historical vignette that helps to introduce the problem:

It was the year A.D. 1114. A church in Menat, Auvergne, opened its doors to an aging itinerant preacher, Robert of Arbrissel. Robert, who had founded the mixed monastery of Fontevraud, was on a journey together with ascetic companions, both male and female. The people of Menat warned Robert that *females* were forbidden to enter the church, explaining that a saint, revered in the region for centuries, had barred women from this house of God. A woman who defied this tradition would surely die. Robert of Arbrissel responded promptly. He entered the church, together with the women around him. In vain did the doorkeepers of the sanctuary invoke the local saint to intervene.

Inside the church, Robert began to preach. He justified his defiance of the centuries-old tradition of Menat by insisting: «do not continue in vain such foolish prayers! Know instead that the saints are not the enemies of the brides of Jesus Christ».² Robert went on to argue his point from the

¹ My study, tentatively titled *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History: Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past*, will be published by Ashgate in 2011; the current essay presents materials from chapter 1 of this book.

² A critical edition of the hagiographic texts about Robert of Arbrissel is now available: J. DALARUN et al. (edd), *The Two Lives of Robert of Arbrissel, Founder of Fontevraud: Legends, Writ*

biblical precedent of a woman boldly approaching Christ («the blessed sinful woman who kissed the feet of the Redeemer»), and from eucharistic practice: «If a woman takes and eats the body and blood of Jesus Christ, think what folly it is to believe that she may not enter a church!».³ Robert's argument had the desired effect: the church in Menat, so his biographer tells us, was never again closed to women.

In the story of the church in Menat and of the brave women around Robert of Arbrissel who risked their lives by entering the sanctuary, liturgical practice, gender, and tradition form a complex and contested web of relationships. The story of the church in Menat allows us to introduce a crucial set of distinctions that underlie the all historiographic work.

1. *Liturgy's Past: History, Historiography, Tradition*

It is imperative to differentiate between four distinct, albeit intricately related, categories of historical analysis, and since in much of the literature these four categories appear muddled, I begin by parsing them here. Historical analysis begins with the past itself, that is, the «things that happen to have happened».⁴ For liturgical life, this means the liturgies, processions, holy day rituals, fasts, feasts, and liturgical devotions that Christians have engaged in from the earliest beginnings until now. In the story of the church in Menat, this historical level would be the very moment in A.D. 1114 when Robert of Arbrissel arrived at the doorway, discovered that his female companions were barred from entering, defied the ban by walking into the sanctuary together with the women, and then justified their daring entry in a sermon. It is essential to acknowledge that this moment, as all worship life of the past, simply is no more. We have no *immediate* access to this past. None of us can slip back into Menat's church to observe the women walking past the local doorkeepers into the sanctuary, just as surely as none of us can join an early Christian house-church at worship, take part in a medieval Corpus Christi procession, or be present at the funeral of Blessed Pope John XXIII. Our only access to these past liturgical practices is a mediated one. Such mediated access to the past happens through a wide range of primary sources, among them liturgical texts, hagiographic or autobiographical accounts, imperial edicts, gravestone inscriptions, vestments, images, and musical scores. As crucially important as these sources are, none of them grants direct access to the past. Like all mediations, these too are «troubled» [Jon L. Berquist]. The story about the church of Menat tells its tale in textual representation, in a

ings, and Testimonies (Disciplina Monastica, 4), Turnhout 2006, here p. 295. Jacques Dalarun, the editor of the volume and a specialist on the life of Robert of Arbrissel, considers the story of Menat trustworthy, see p. 111, n. 302.

³ J. DALARUN et al. (edd), *The Two Lives of Robert of Arbrissel*, p. 295.

⁴ R. WILLIAMS, *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*, London 2005, p. 1.

traditional historiographic format, centered on a male, named figure and his daring acts, while the truly daring women around Robert remain nameless, unnumbered, and dependent on the master narrative (he 'led' them in).

With this distinction between the past itself and witnesses to the past, we have already identified a second category of historical analysis, namely the sources for any knowledge of the past. These sources (including autobiographical materials, with their semblance of immediacy) are shaped by those who created them, with their particular lenses and blindspots, as well as by those who authorized their creation and/or transmission. Our knowledge of these authors and their contexts is never exhaustive. We cannot know all we need to know about them, especially when the texts are pre-modern. The story about the church in Menat illustrates this complexity. Its textual source has come down to us in a sixteenth-century Middle French translation, derived from a medieval Latin original.⁵ The author of the original text in all likelihood was Prior Andreas of Fontevraud, a contemporary and follower of Robert of Arbrissel.⁶ Prior Andreas's story may, at first sight, seem to be written with a traditional androcentric focus: the daring male at the center, unnamed women around him. Yet as a whole, this particular *vita* of Robert of Arbrissel highlights Robert's women-identified actions in ways that the initial *vita* had not. Only the *vita* of Prior Andreas tells the story of Robert's act of defiance at the church of Menat. This *vita* had been commissioned by the Abbess appointed by Robert himself to rule the mixed monastery of Fontevraud, Petronilla of Chemillé. Abbess Petronilla had decided to complement an earlier *vita* she had also commissioned, written by a local bishop who had downplayed Robert's pronounced women-centered actions.⁷ In short, the politics of gender are, in more ways than one, at the heart of the transmission of the story of Robert of Arbrissel at the church of Menat. As the sources for the life of Robert of Arbrissel show, troubles with the mediation of the past through textual representation are multiple. Such representation never maps neatly onto reality, especially not in hagiography. Hagiographic texts, in other words, are not transcripts. To complicate matters when it comes to the particular *vitae* of Robert of Arbrissel, we have parts of the original two texts in translation only; the original texts are lost.

Further, and more general difficulties with the mediation of the past through textual representations include the (gender-specific) filtering of texts; the politics of documentation (also gendered) that made these texts, rather than others, available; and, finally the narrator of the past and his or her patron in writing, neither of whom are gender-neutral either. Thus, it is no coincidence that we have no description of what happened in the church of Menat when Robert of Arbrissel arrived there from the hands of a woman who was present, nor from one of Menat's townsfolk. His-

⁵ See J. DALARUN et al. (ed), *The Two Lives of Robert of Arbrissel*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 17. These included syneisactic practices.

torically, far fewer texts exist written by women than by men; and elite males have left far more writings than the «millions of men who were only men».⁸ Because of Robert of Arbrissel's appointment of an abbess to oversee the mixed monastery of Fontevraud, however, a woman authorized Prior Andreas to write his *vita* of the founder. Whatever the specifics of this particular case, on the whole our materials for reconstructing the history of worship are gendered in their very basis, and this gendering is asymmetrical in a number of ways.

A third category in the writing of liturgy's past – and one shaped by the asymmetries inherent in the second category – is historical research and the kind of historiography it produces. Especially if this historiographic knowledge production is gender-oblivious, it will duplicate uncritically the gender asymmetries inherent in its sources. Such uncritical mirroring becomes especially pronounced if the one who produces such historical knowledge, on the basis of a set canon of sources and of received categories of analysis, remains oblivious to the role gender has played in transmitting some sources and not others. To go back to the story of Robert of Arbrissel in Menat: It took the development of gender analysis to set historians wondering about the women who accompanied Robert of Arbrissel on his journeys, about the tradition of men and women cohabiting in ascetic renunciation, and about why we know so little of this form of life apart from negative stereotyping. Furthermore, it took sustained scholarly inquisitiveness about the exclusion of women from the sanctuary at Menat to unravel the complicated evidence for this centuries-old tradition, and more than textual analysis to render intelligible how the townsfolk of Menat gathered for worship. In particular, the witness of material culture played an important role here, namely the analysis of an architectural peculiarity in the form of an enormous entryway to the Menat sanctuary, which explained how local women may have 'attended' church without in fact entering it.⁹

A last category in the writing of liturgy's past is concerned with authorizing claims to the past. In the life of the church this is the level of theological recourse to tradition. For the story about the church of Menat, such recourse becomes visible in conflicting claims to liturgical tradition at the moment when the gendering of this sacred space is questioned and contested. The villagers of Menat invoke an authorizing past in the form of an order from a local saint. Robert of Arbrissel counters with an alternative notion of sanctity [«saints are not the enemies of the brides of Jesus Christ»] and appeals to biblical precedent and to eucharistic practice to ground his defiance of Menat's «saintly» tradition of excluding women

⁸ The term is T. FENSTER's, see her *Why Men?*, in C. LEES et al. (edd), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Medieval Cultures, 7), Minneapolis (MN) 1994, pp. IX-XIII, here p. X.

⁹ J. Dalarun has described this in his «Ève, Marie ou Madeleine? La dignité du corps féminin (VIe-XIIe siècles)», in «*Dieu changea de sexe, pour ainsi dire*»; J. DALARUN, *La religion faite femme (XIe-XVe siècle)*, (Vita regularis, 37) Berlin 2008, pp. 3-21.

from the sanctuary. To put my point more generally, traditioning happens when elements of the liturgical past take on an authorizing role for the present. In the Roman Catholic Church at least, such authorizing moves, when rendered decisively, are not made primarily by historians and scholars, but by the *magisterium*, the teaching authority of the church. This *magisterium* clearly is not gender neutral by any means, since it is tied to episcopal ordination. It is thus constituted more forcefully by gender than any of the other levels outlined here, since priestly ordination requires a particular gender identity, namely maleness.

So much for four distinct though interrelated categories of historical analysis. With these distinctions in place, my larger question is this: what consequences are there for liturgical history writing when gender is not only a fundamental marker of worship life in the past but also a crucial element in the formation of the sources for the study of the past, and by that very fact an ingredient in every narrative of the past? And what consequences are there for liturgical tradition when gender continues to play such a fundamental role in constituting authorizing claims to the past? And, finally, what happens in liturgical traditioning when this power of gender is not only asymmetrical but also unacknowledged?

Of the four categories of historical analysis identified above – the past of liturgical practices, the documentation of this past, the historiography of the past, and authorizing claims to this past – intervention and reconfiguration are not possible on every level, nor do they take the same shape for each level. On the first level, that of the past of liturgical practices, no intervention or reconfiguration is possible. The «pastness of the past»¹⁰ simply puts it out of our hands, irrevocably so. On the second level, that of the witnesses to this past, historians confront a number of basic limitations and imbalances in documentation that also cannot be undone. This holds true even as new sources continue to be unearthed, the canon of sources expands, and witnesses to the past continue to be identified, read, and interpreted afresh. Fundamental imbalances in the sources remain. We will in all likelihood never have more than a dozen texts written by women during the first thousand years of Christian history. We will not suddenly be able to read, in the words of eunuchs or male serfs, how they practiced their faith and how they worshiped. We will not find written sources telling how priests in rural areas negotiated liturgical practice and the practice of gender in their parishes. The contours of the record and the politics of documentation, as themselves a part of what happens to have happened, are out of our hands no less than the past to which they witness.

On the third level, namely the study and writing of history through analysis of the witnesses to the past, intervention and reconfiguration not only become possible but are intrinsic to its very existence. The writing of

¹⁰ The term is J. COLEMAN'S, see her *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past*, New York 1992, p. 285 and *passim*.

history – the making and remaking of a historical narrative – is after all the proper task of this level. The last two levels, the narrating of the past and authorizing claims to that past, are intimately connected. This connection is apparent not least of all when it comes to the occlusion of gender in a history of worship. However, the gendered nature of liturgy's past is not the only matter where theological recourse to liturgical tradition is based on a problematic historiography. As Paul Bradshaw has wryly remarked, most liturgical theology rests either on «bad history» or on «no history at all». ¹¹ The «no history» which is my concern is one that occludes gender as a fundamental marker of liturgy's past. A closer look at the workings of such liturgical historiography is in order here.

2. *The Traditional Writing of Liturgy's Past: Gender-oblivious*

In what follows, I map the development of the writing of liturgical history, so as to shed light on the ways in which gender has come to be written out of the historical record in the first place. In much of liturgical historiography, after all, facts are narrated as if gender was irrelevant to liturgies past. There is little recognition in such historiography that what comes to be configured as «fact» (and as a fact worth narrating) is always theory-specific.¹² If history «is driven by the historian's questions»¹³ then the answers provided are not only shaped but also constrained by the questions the historian asks of the past. There is nothing «relativistic» in such an acknowledgement. It merely recognizes that history writing always takes place within particular cultural contexts, and that these contexts raise specific questions, while disregarding others, for the historian's interrogation of the past. The story of Robert of Arbrissel and his women companions who entered the church in Menat is a case in point. The story of the church in Menat would at best have been a marginal footnote in a traditional liturgical historiography, since this story involves neither a key rite (such as the Eucharist), nor a key ecclesial center (such as Cluny, Saint-Denis, or Chartres), nor a key figure (such as Gregory the Great or Abbot Suger). Similarly, my inquiry's focus on gender and liturgy's past – for which the story of the church in Menat serves as an introduction – would have been inconceivable a century ago (and in all likelihood will be theorized quite differently a hundred years from now).

Liturgical historiography in the past, for all its skills and insights, was oblivious to gender as a fundamental marker of cultural formations and

¹¹ See his *Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology*, in «Pacifica», 11 (1998), pp. 181-194, here p. 193. Gender oblivion, however, is not at all what Bradshaw had in mind in his critique.

¹² This concise formulation is L. MCDOWELL'S; see *Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Minneapolis (MN) 1999, p. 227.

¹³ E.A. CLARK, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge (MA) 2004, p. 156.

thus presented seemingly nongendered facts. The reasons for the *continuing* occlusion of gender in liturgical historiography – in contradistinction to some other contemporary disciplines, such as biblical studies or medieval history, in which gender analysis has contributed substantially to the field – are connected to the development of liturgical studies as a discipline, its scholarly practitioners, their construal of their subject-matter, and the conversation partners they privilege. A look back at the development of the discipline will substantiate this claim.

a. The Making of Liturgical Studies

A history of the scholarly discipline of liturgical studies has yet to be written,¹⁴ even as histories of worship continue to multiply. What is clear about the emergence of liturgical studies as a scholarly discipline is its roots in early modernity, and its place within the development of the modern research university and its particular practices and tools. That is not to say that up until then, no critical reflection on liturgical practice existed, nor any scholarly engagement with liturgical texts and sources, nor analyses of liturgy's past. On the contrary, these kinds of critical-reflective engagements with liturgical practice and an authorizing past are as old as the first Christian gatherings for worship (one might argue, in fact, that there simply is no non-reflected and unmediated practice to be had, in liturgy as everywhere else). Thus, New Testament texts stand among the earliest witnesses to a critical engagement with practices of worship and with their history. Paul's appeal to the tradition he received and is handing on [παρέδωκα] regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:23) and his vision of how to practice spiritual gifts in worship (1Cor 14) are cases in point. What is distinct, then, in the emergence of liturgical studies as a scholarly discipline in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is not the fact that liturgy becomes an object of critical analysis for the first time, but rather the point at which it takes shape within the broader emergence of modern knowledge production, with its particular forms of academic protocol. These modern protocols of knowledge production (objective, evidence-driven, etc.) shape liturgical scholarship even when this is not practiced at research universities but in older, ecclesial contexts, for example by a Benedictine monastic scholar or an Anglican parson-scholar.

b. «Liturgics»: Born of a Woman?

The late-eighteenth century witnessed the first appearance of «liturgics» in a German-speaking university setting, initially as a sub-field of pastoral

¹⁴ An excellent brief sketch, focused on the German-speaking context, is provided in A. GERHARDS - B. KRANEMANN, *Einführung in die Liturgiewissenschaft* (Einführung Theologie), Darmstadt 2006, pp. 25-42.

theology.¹⁵ If this initial appearance, during state-ordered reforms of the University-based theological curriculum, represents the birth of liturgics as a modern scholarly discipline, then we owe this birth to a powerful woman, Empress Maria Theresia of Austria (1717-1780). The emergence of «liturgics» [*Liturgik*] as part of the establishment of a new discipline, pastoral theology, decreed for all the Austrian Universities by the Empress in 1777 was part of a larger set of Catholic Enlightenment curricular reforms, designed to draw on the practice of religion for practical, moral, and pedagogical purposes.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the term «liturgy» as an overarching category for a pluriformity of ecclesial ritual actions to be studied in «liturgics» now comes to the forefront,¹⁷ establishing not only a particular disciplinary shape but also distinct boundaries for this emerging scholarly field. This development was supported, within Roman Catholicism, by the fact that the sixteenth-century Tridentine liturgical reforms had strengthened the impression that proper liturgy was only worship authorized by the highest ecclesial authority, i.e. Rome. With «liturgy» increasingly meaning the official, prescribed, written texts of the church's ritual life, other liturgical expressions come to be relegated to the margins of scholarly inquiry.¹⁸ In tandem with this strict bounding of the field, categories such as «popular piety» and, later, «para-liturgies» emerge to denote the manifold ritual practices now increasingly written out of the scholarly construal of «liturgy» proper. Important to recognize here is that categories of analysis, as they emerge at particular moments in time, are never analytically neutral, but always shaped by the world-views of their designers. Not surprisingly today, it is precisely scholars of «pre-modern», especially medieval, life, who criticize this narrow, «modern» disciplinary boundary of liturgical studies as deeply problematic and inadequate.¹⁹ For my own purposes, it is important to note that the emerging focus on official, prescribed, written texts also bore within it a weakening of the visibility of gender in liturgical life, since it is not in prescribed texts that gender's workings are most visible when it comes to worship.

c. (Gendered) Sites and Texts

With the emergence of modern forms of knowledge production, liturgical studies move elsewhere than, say, the occasional reflections in New

¹⁵ See F. KOHLSCHNEIN, *Zur Geschichte der Liturgiewissenschaft im katholischen deutschsprachigen Bereich*, in F. KOHLSCHNEIN - P. WÜNSCHE (edd), *Liturgiewissenschaft – Studien zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen, 78), Münster 1996, pp. 9-72, here p. 3.

¹⁶ F. KOHLSCHNEIN, *Zur Geschichte der Liturgiewissenschaft*, pp. 9-12.

¹⁷ The term «liturgy» as an overarching term emerges in the West not until the sixteenth century, see P.-M. GY, *La Liturgie dans l'histoire*, Paris 1990, pp. 177-184.

¹⁸ Cf. A. ANGENENDT, *Liturgik und Historik. Gab es eine organische Liturgie-Entwicklung?* (Quaestiones Disputatae, 189), Freiburg i.Br. 2001, p. 142.

¹⁹ See, for example, C.C. FLANIGAN, *Liturgy as Social Performance: Expanding the Definitions*, in T.J. HEFFERNAN - E.A. MATTER (edd), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, Kalamazoo (MI) 2001, pp. 695-714.

Testament epistles, the postbaptismal catecheses of the early church, the medieval allegorical interpretations of liturgy, the theological arguments born out of contestations and reformations in liturgical life, and the rubricism of post-Tridentine liturgical catechesis. The location of liturgical studies as a scholarly field of inquiry now in growing measure is the academy. This does not mean that liturgical studies are no longer anchored in ecclesial, and more specifically, monastic contexts. Indeed, liturgical studies continued to thrive there well into the twentieth century. Two of the key twentieth-century books of liturgical historiography originated in lectures given to monastic communities: Anton Baumstark's *Liturgie comparée* and Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy*. At the same time, the more the discipline of liturgical studies grows into an academic field in its own right, the less influence the ecclesial and monastic sites of liturgical scholarship seem to carry.

Empress Maria Theresia notwithstanding, the academy in which liturgical studies ultimately found a home was established as a specifically gender-constrained terrain of scholarly inquiry. The knowing subject was male, even if the scientific claim to lack of bias hid this gender-specific scholarly agency. Women did not enter the world of higher education in substantial numbers until well into the twentieth century; for the theological disciplines, liturgical studies included, this took place in the second half of the century. Earlier sites of liturgical scholarship, such as female convents, which produced the eucharistic reflections of Hildegard of Bingen, had been lost or devalued much earlier, namely with the emergence of the medieval universities.

The field of liturgical studies as it emerged in early modernity initially concentrated its scholarly work on the study and editing of ancient liturgical texts and their interpreters. An example can be found in the work of the Maurists, French Benedictine monks of the Congregation of Saint-Maur, who in the seventeenth century began a remarkable series of editions of manuscripts, many of these liturgically relevant. Similarly, the Bollandists, a group of Belgian Jesuit, started their massive series of saints' lives, the *Acta Sanctorum*, in the seventeenth century. The volumes were published in the order of feast days in the liturgical calendar. In the nineteenth century, the (re-)founded Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes rose to prominence not only because of its Abbot, Prosper Guéranger, but also through the publication of the *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, edited by the monk-scholars Fernand Cabrol (1855-1937) and Henri Leclercq (1869-1945). Drawing on these various collections of texts, historians of liturgy began to engage questions of origin and development using the historiographic tools of their time, especially philological analyses of primary texts. In England, the nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholic movement generated sustained attention to «liturgiology» (John Mason Neale) and produced editions of primary texts as well as historical inquiries into liturgical developments.

d. The Long Twentieth Century

With the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of distinct emphases emerged within liturgical historiography, all following standard historical, exegetical, and philological approaches of their time. The most important of these emphases bear highlighting here because they have continued to shape, in various ways, the development of the field over the past hundred years. The first emphasis might be described as the in-depth analysis of the historical development of a particular rite. The overarching objective here was an explanation of how a particular rite came to have its present form. A preeminent exponent of this form of liturgical historiography was Josef Andreas Jungmann, S.J. (1889-1975), best known for his magisterial *Missarum Solemnia*, first published in 1948. The German sub-title describes the intention of this historiography well: *Eine genetische Erklärung der römischen Messe*. Jungmann, in his words, sought to offer a narrative of the «genetic» development of the Roman Mass. Giving the then-known form of the Mass a history had a clear and present purpose for Jungmann, namely the demonstration that the Mass had developed not only with continuities but also much change. At a point in time when the Roman Mass still seemed unapproachable, this historizising underwrote a progressive project, ultimately that of liturgical reform. At the same time, Jungmann was obviously working with the historical tools of his time. The material basis of his analysis was almost exclusively liturgical texts, which he interpreted with the exegetical tools of his time, especially philological ones. Gender analysis was not a tool available to Jungmann; neither would gender analysis produce its clearest results when applied to liturgical texts alone.

It is no surprise, then, that in the one thousand pages of *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, women appear just over ten times, and that in passages which narrate women's liturgical presence as problematic, marginal, or, simply, absent. Neither do men who were «only men» make much of an appearance in this liturgical historiography, nor are priests seen as having a gendered particularity of their own. Gender history would later reveal such (seemingly) ungendered histories of the liturgy as quite particular representations of the past. These histories were event-centered institutional chronicles and histories of male elites and their textual productions. Such history writing «naturally» by-passed liturgical sites not shaped according to the accepted scholarly paradigm; in this way it projected on the object studied what its own interpretive strategies and investigative procedures required: a narrative of liturgy's past seemingly untouched by gender.

The fact that these interpretive strategies functioned with only limited success already points to the importance of gendering processes in the liturgical past: One can, after all, not really write a history of the Eucharist without at some point confronting the fact that gender is inscribed into its very celebration, if only through specifications as to the gender of the presider.

In traditional liturgical historiography as a whole, however, with its particular construal of what counted as «liturgy», gender is marginal in the subject deemed central to the history of worship: the development of rites, texts, and institutions. Moreover, where gender does surface, traditional liturgical history presents it to be natural, essential, and binary – as did all history writing of the time.

A second trend in twentieth-century scholarship in liturgical studies is the turn to cultural analysis. Granted that the understanding of culture changed fundamentally in the twentieth century, a «cultural» approach to liturgical history remained somewhat on the margins until cultural studies irrupted as a vibrant field of scholarly inquiry in the second half of the twentieth century. A mid-century expression of a cultural history of liturgy is found in the work of Anton Ludwig Mayer (1891-1982) who sought to elucidate, in liturgical developments and changes, the impact of larger cultural trends. Mayer's focus was on elite intellectual history, however. Somewhat later conversation partners for historians of liturgy are provided by the French *Annales* school, especially when it begins to focus on «mentalité» (Arnold Angenendt is a case in point), and, most recently, historians in conversation with cultural studies.²⁰

A different emphasis in early twentieth-century liturgical historiography emerges with the work of Anton Baumstark (1872-1948) and his program of *liturgie comparée*, comparative liturgical historiography.²¹ To a greater degree than Jungmann, Baumstark sought to elucidate liturgical development by comparative analysis across ritual families, East and West. In this, he worked with a strong philological emphasis and at the same a keen interest in questions of methodology. One chapter in his *Comparative Liturgy* seeks to describe «The Laws of Liturgical Evolution».²² As others have noted, the influence of contemporary developments in evolutionary biology, especially the work of Charles Darwin, is strong, not only in Baumstark's basic model of historical development, but also in the theorizing of liturgical development by those who followed him.²³ One might think of this historiographic model as liturgical evolutionism. Conceiving liturgical history in linear or evolutionist terms has had an effect of almost naturalizing power: a historical narrative is imagined whose unfolding requires the identification of individual elements that become stepping-stones for later progress.

²⁰ Miri Rubin's work on Corpus Christi and Robert Orsi's work on women's devotion to St. Jude are two examples of his approach.

²¹ *Liturgie comparée* was the title of a series of lectures Baumstark first gave in Chevetogne in 1932, then published as a series of articles, and, finally, in 1939 in book form. The English edition by F.L. CROSS, *Comparative Liturgy*, is a translation of the third edition of the French book as revised by B. Botte (Westminster [MD] 1958).

²² A. BAUMSTARK, *Comparative Liturgy*, ch. 2.

²³ See F. WEST, *The Comparative Liturgy of Anton Baumstark* (Alcuin Club & Group for Renewal of Worship Joint Liturgical Studies, 31), Bramcote 1995.

Gregory Dix (1901-1952), especially in his *The Shape of the Liturgy*, took yet a different approach. First published in 1945, this book exerted tremendous influence on liturgical scholarship, especially in the English-speaking world. Dix's basic methodological strategy was to move beyond a narrow focus on texts to an analysis of ritual structures, and it was here – in a common shape – that he thought to find the earliest expression of (eucharistic) worship.

The liturgical scholarship described so far is, for the most part, that of the first half of the twentieth century. Before I turn to the second half of the twentieth century, I note the obvious, namely that liturgical historiography has always moved in tandem with broader developments, not only in historiography but also in intellectual and cultural trends. Any historical sketch of the discipline of liturgical historiography needs to attend carefully to this fact and render it visible as an integral part of the task of history writing rather than as accidental, or as, in and of itself, problematic. That said, it is time to turn to the developments in historiography that so vibrantly mark the second half of the twentieth century and the beginnings of the twenty-first.

3. *Contesting Conventional Histories*

In the second half of the twentieth century, the field of history as a scholarly discipline becomes a vibrant, changing, and contested terrain. This development and the attendant reconfigurations of the historian's tasks and tools are many. Newer developments and shifts in the field of history include the many variants of social history, whether the French *Annales* school, Marxist history, or local histories. What all these have in common is a critical analysis of conventional historiography as one constrained by a narrow focus on a particular set of sites (elite institutions, usually political or ecclesial), a small number of historic agents («hegemonic males»), and, dependent on them, a host of historiographic presuppositions and occlusions that neatly follow.

Liturgical studies has not remained untouched by the critical developments in historiography, albeit seeking to develop the strengths of earlier approaches while mingling them with newer approaches. Four methodological consequences deserve particular mention here. The first concerns a broadening of the material object of historical analysis. Liturgy's past is no longer understood as accessible primarily through the study of liturgical texts. Instead, there has been a deepened appreciation of liturgy as a multi-textured practice, in which not only words but also space, images, acoustics, material culture, bodies, voices, and instruments play a role. Writing a history of worship thus involves the study of practices rather than an analysis of liturgical texts only. Second, liturgical texts themselves have come to be read afresh, as a form of «living

literature»²⁴ with a quite complicated relationship to the past they embody. A rubric, for example, seeks to enjoin a specific liturgical action, yet the mere existence of a rubric does not mean that the action itself took place. Third, there has been a move beyond the (at heart: modern) bounded-ness of the term «liturgy», back to a broader, older, more comprehensive understanding of liturgical practice that includes not only the key sacramental rites, but ecclesial rituals more broadly, including processions, blessings, domestic liturgical practices, and feasts and fasts as these shape everyday life. Lastly, the *context* of worship, that is its situated-ness in the material realities of lived life including particular cultural, geographic and geopolitical givens, has increasingly come to the fore. None of these shifts happened as a development in liturgical studies alone; on the contrary, these developments are related to and indeed fueled by wide-ranging shifts in intellectual knowledge production, especially the twentieth-century anthropological and linguistic turns. For liturgical studies in the second half of the twentieth century, this meant a definite broadening of scholarly tools of analysis. Fields and subfields from within the social sciences – such as cultural anthropology, semiotics, sociology, performance theory, ritual studies, and ethnography – began to supplement the more traditional ancillary disciplines of liturgical studies. The pluriformity of methods for the study of liturgy – and the way in which these methods construct the object of their inquiry – mirrors the expansion of methods of inquiry in other scholarly disciplines. In contemporary liturgical studies, diachronic textual analysis, analyses of ritual actions, questions about meaning (theological, anthropological, cultural), and contextual analysis, to name but the dominant approaches, all cohabit.

Overall, liturgical studies in the past decades has moved to the social sciences as a new conversation partner. This holds true not only in the contemporary pastoral side of liturgical studies but also for its historical analyses. Two recent histories of worship in fact self-identify as social histories, Martin Stringer's, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship* and Frank Senn's, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy*.²⁵ Neither of these two studies employ gender as a category of historical analysis, although both seek to attend to women as liturgical agents. Tellingly, «men» as the relational «other» of women remain mostly invisible, as does the category gender itself.

The linguistic turn in historiography, with its focus on the textual representation of the past as our main access to what happens to have happened has not impacted the writing of liturgical history in a sustained way as of now. That said, even the historiography of Christian worship cannot but be shaped by broader intellectual trends, postmodern formations

²⁴ See P. BRADSHAW, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, New York 2002², p. 5.

²⁵ M. STRINGER, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship*, New York 2005; F. SENN, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy*, Minneapolis (MN) 2006.

included. An example may be found in the work of Paul F. Bradshaw, who, in a range of sustained scholarly publications spanning the last thirty years, has rewritten the history of the early centuries of Christian worship as we knew it. His methodological principles, seemingly generated simply by a fresh, careful rereading of the sources themselves, nevertheless bear the stamp of their time, in this case a telling affinity to postmodern theories of knowledge. Such a reading of Bradshaw's methodological principles of course does not – at least in my understanding of the workings of liturgical historiography – in any way negate his findings and re-readings of the origins of Christian worship. Rather, it simply suggests how these findings are produced under the conditions of our own times.

4. *Women: Beginning to Make Liturgical History Gender-attentive*

Given these various engagements with newer developments in the field of history, what about gender analysis as a conversation partner for liturgical historiography? The answer to this question will depend in part on how one understands the field of gender analysis in the first place. An interest in women's voices and feminist theory as these emerged in the early 1970s has certainly found a place in liturgical studies, even if most prominently in its pastoral side. The literature there has grown to be quite substantial. The impact of women's history and feminist historiography on the writing of liturgical history, however, is much less pronounced.

It would be a mistake to think that women begin to make liturgical history merely with the 1960s, just as it would be wrong to claim that critical reflection on liturgy emerges with modernity. Such misconceptions can only be maintained by limiting the critical engagement with liturgy to the practice of professional academic research. As I have indicated above, reflections on and critical engagement with worship are as old as the first Christian gatherings, and those included women. About these women's engagement with worship we can know very little. Throughout the following centuries, however, we do get glimpses of women's engagement with and reflection on liturgical practice, from Egeria's travelogue to the Holy Land in the late fourth century to the ninth-century Frankish noblewoman Dhuoda's written advice to her son on the recitation of the psalms; from Hildegard of Bingen and Teresa of Avila's rich reflections on liturgy to the work of Josephine Mayer in the 1930s[!] on women deacons in the early church.

The emergence of women's voices in liturgical studies in the second half of the twentieth century has to be seen within this larger trajectory. What is new in this recent emergence is the fact that women, who had begun to enter the academy in sustained numbers with the twentieth century, eventually also gained access to the field of liturgical studies. The first doctorate in liturgical studies at a Roman Catholic faculty, at least

in Europe, came in 1965, when Irmgard Pahl defended her dissertation at the University of Munich. The point here is a broader one than, simply, the entry of female bodies into a field of scholarly inquiry traditionally linked with priestly ordination and/or a religious vocation. This entry meant access to a particular material practice, with its own scholarly protocols and possibilities, including sustained access to key libraries, academic networks, employment opportunities, and professional status and voice. The beginnings of liturgical scholarship in conversation with women's history and feminist theory lie here.

The first sustained expression in print of this conversation appeared in 1990, in a volume titled *Liturgie und Frauenfrage*.²⁶ Roughly half of the essays were dedicated to historical inquiries. The thematic range was broad indeed, from an essay on the Holy Spirit as mother in Syriac and Armenian sources (Gabriele Winkler) to a discussion of gender roles in sixteenth-century Lutheran worship (Karl-Heinrich Bieritz), and Catherine Winkworth as a translator of hymns (Geoffrey Wainwright). The approach in this volume was basically one of «adding women» to the traditional history of worship which had largely left them invisible. *Liturgie und Frauenfrage* was soon followed by two monographs that analyzed in detail two very different moments in liturgical history using the interpretive lenses of women's history. Gisela Muschiol, in her magisterial study *Famula Dei* (1994), examined the liturgical lives of women's communities in Romano-Merovingian Gaul. Muschiol showed that the center of daily life in these communities was a liturgy the women themselves shaped and celebrated under the liturgical presidency of their abbess, including the practice of hearing confession, and absolving.²⁷ The women thus exercised a considerable measure of control over their own liturgical lives. *Liturgie und Frauenseele* (1993) focused on the early twentieth-century Liturgical Movement; the study asked about the presence of women in this movement, as well as the role of feminine images in the movement's theology of liturgy.²⁸ *My Women's Ways of Worship*, published in 1999, sought to introduce gender analysis to the study of liturgy's past and to bridge the growing rift, in liturgical historiography, between the conventional historical narrative and the ever-growing study of women's history. The subtitle of the book, *Gender Analysis and Liturgical History*, already laid claim to the broader field of gender studies, while the book's focus clearly remained on one particular aspect of gender identity, namely «women». Yet looking at *Women's Ways of Worship* a decade later, it is clear that the book was not able sufficiently to pursue the always relational character of its

²⁶ T. BERGER - A. GERHARDS (edd), *Liturgie und Frauenfrage. Ein Beitrag zur Frauenforschung aus liturgiewissenschaftlicher Sicht* (Pietas Liturgica, 7), St. Ottilien 1990.

²⁷ See G. MUSCHIOL, *Famula Dei. Zur Liturgie in merowingischen Frauenklöstern* (Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens, 41), Münster 1994.

²⁸ T. BERGER, «*Liturgie und Frauenseele*». *Die Liturgische Bewegung aus der Sicht der Frauenforschung* (Praktische Theologie Heute, 10), Stuttgart 1993.

key category, women. Similarly, the book did not attend to genders other than those constructed within the traditional binary of men and women.

The time has now come to turn from women's history to gender history. In the last two decades, gender theory has forcefully expanded, and now comprises a broad range of diverse and complex scholarly projects. Today, gender history has convincingly moved beyond attending simply to «women» and thereby leaving a host of other gendered identities, including «men», unmarked. It is high time for scholars of liturgy to make gender history an integral part of the ongoing work of writing the history of liturgy's past; with my new book project, I wish to show the way. The first step toward that is a clear analysis of what in the discipline's very construction hinders such gender-attentive work. I hope to have sketched such an analysis in this essay.

In conclusion, I return to the year A.D. 1114 and the church in Menat one last time. When the women around Robert of Arbrissel risked their lives by entering this sanctuary, they did not introduce gender into this liturgical space for the first time. Gender had marked liturgical life in Menat as long as gendered bodies had gathered there for worship, whether male (clerical and lay) bodies alone or women together with lay men. What Robert of Arbrissel and his female companions did that day was to render visible, to question, and to contest the gender-specific ground rules of this sanctuary, which by A.D. 1114 had become saintly tradition, set in stone. In so doing, they created space for a different future. Much of my project seeks to follow in their footsteps.