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### Authorship and authenticity in the visions of Elisabeth of Schönau

The visions of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine nun Elisabeth of Schönau were very popular and widely disseminated during the Middle Ages. Most of Elisabeth's visions were written down by her brother Ekbert, who entered the double monastery of Schönau on the request of the Abbot Hildelin and Elisabeth herself. The majority of visions in her first book, however, were noted by Elisabeth's fellow nuns.

The visionary did not put any of her visions in writing herself. To this day, scholars have struggled with seemingly unanswerable questions about both the authenticity of Elisabeth's visionary experiences in their written form, and the reliability of the scribes. Moreover, Ekbert's personal contribution to the visions he wrote down himself, should and has been questioned.

Because of Ekbert's significant role as scribe, editor and author of his sisters' *Vita*, his relationship with Elisabeth has been the subject of intensive study, as, e.g., the publications of Clark (1992 and 2000) and Coakley (2013) show. On the basis of Ekbert's own, albeit few textual remarks, all of the existing scholarly literature points towards his intention not to interfere with Elisabeth's descriptions of her visions and his own sincere intentions. This approach should however be reconsidered. By focusing solely on Ekbert's own statements as an editor, while neglecting the specific textual characteristic and features of the visions written down by Elisabeth's fellow nuns, no attention has been paid to the apparent dissimilarities and visible changes in the content and description of the visions over the course of the three books of visions. Hence, the conclusions of the existing secondary literature on Ekbert's role as a scribe of the visionary books cannot be called definitive. It follows, that both the methodology and results of previous scholarly research do not provide satisfying answers regarding the authorship of Elisabeth of Schönau's visions. It also fails to solve the problem of the reliability of her brother in his role as scribe and editor.

The aim of the presentation is to address this problem of shared authorship, first and foremost by using stylometrical analysis. Previous research has used stylometry in cases of authorship attribution in medieval texts (cf. Kestemont, 2012; Kestemont, Moens & Deploige, 2013) with successful results. In the second part of the presentation a traditional literary method for style determination will be discussed. By studying the keywords and the use of stylistic literary features such as metaphors, imagery and bible quotations in the particular books written by the nuns and Ekbert respectively, the differences between the author(s) will be pointed out.

By combining these two methods, we aim at both a better and renewed understanding of the genesis of Elisabeth's visionary books and a clearer view on the differences between the authors.