



Brother Hermann's 'Life of the Countess Yolanda of Vianden' (Leben der Graefen Iolande von Vianden) (Medieval Texts & Translations)

Richard H. Lawson

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Brother Hermann was a cleric in the region of Luxembourg in the last quarter of the thirteenth century; evidence from his Life of the Countess Yolanda suggests that he was a Dominican with, perhaps surprisingly, knowledge of the Middle High German courtly epic and the poetry of other contemporaries such as Walther von der Vogelweide. The Life, written shortly after Yolanda's death in 1283, concentrates on her struggle from childhood to free herself from secular society, principally by avoiding a contracted marriage, and to enter the cloister of Marienthal, of which she became Prioress. Although Brother Hermann's epic is hagiographic in tone, the fact that he wrote it in German, not based on a Latin vita suggests that he did not regard Yolanda as a candidate for sainthood; his heroine's attempts to find fulfillment have a strong contemporary resonance. Professor Lawson's translation, the first ever into English prose, makes this work accessible to a more general readership.

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