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Volume 1

Women in the Medieval Monastic World

Edited by

Janet Burton and Karen Stöber

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First of all we would like to thank the Marists and all the staff – especially Robert Porta – at the Monastery of Les Avellanes for their immense hospitality and for letting us spend three days talking about nuns in an unbeatable environment. The Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation supported this project with a generous grant (HAR2011-12859-E) and we would like to express our gratitude for this. We would also like to thank Karen's colleagues at the Medieval Research Group 'Space, Power and Culture', directed by Flocel Sabaté, of Lleida University, and Janet's colleagues at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

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Introduction

Janet Burton and Karen Stöber*

> In the world of chivalry most literature was composed by men — though often in women's honour — and so we have little direct contact with the nuns of the Middle Ages.[1]

Historiographically speaking, the study of forms of female monastic observance and communities of nuns in medieval Europe has in the past been somewhat in the shadow of the interest shown to their male counterparts. This is most striking, apart from the general imbalance in the volume of publications on male and female monasteries, in some of the 'classics' on medieval monastic studies, where the space allocated to women and men tends to show major discrepancies. Infamously, some six decades ago, David Knowles, in his monumental work on the monastic and religious orders in medieval England, mentions religious women little more than in passing, and, where he does, his verdict is not exactly one of praise or even acknowledgement of their achievements but rather an image of intellectual inferiority and mate-

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[1] Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister*, p. 209.

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rial decadence.[2] And Knowles was not alone in his imbalanced representation of Western monasticism: most of the standard works on the topic match his quantitative — if not qualitative — disparity when dealing with monks and nuns in the Middle Ages.[3] As recently as 2008, Jeffrey Hamburger, in his introduction to the volume *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, laments the 'relative lack of interest' in women's monasticism in the German context; María-Milagros Rivera Garretas makes similar comments in relation the Iberian Peninsula; and, in the case of the British Isles, few studies followed Eileen Power's pioneering work on medieval English nunneries, published in 1922, until the last twenty years or so.[4]

Fortunately, things have changed considerably since then, and recent decades have seen promising changes to this trend, as women in general have increasingly attracted the attention of researchers of various disciplines, among them historians, archaeologists, and art historians. Between them, scholars have done much to rescue medieval religious women from undeserved obscurity and to highlight their very wide-ranging contributions to the religious as well as cultural, intellectual, artistic, and not least also the social, political, and economic landscape of medieval Christendom. Thus in 2011, when Anne Müller was writing her introduction to the book, edited with Gert Melville, on the 'female *vita religiosa* between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages', she could justifiably say that 'there can be no doubt that the research field of female medieval monastic studies is fairly well tilled'.[5] However, as she points out in the same introduction, 'although studies on female religious institutions have increased in relevance in the historical sciences, comprehensive systematic research of the female *vita religiosa* as a common European phenomenon is still on the agenda'.[6] The present volume seeks to address this point.

[2] Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* and *The Religious Orders in England*.

[3] Even Brooke (*The Age of the Cloister*) and Lawrence (*Medieval Monasticism*), for instance, reflect this pattern, though without the hostility evident in the work of David Knowles.

[4] Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*, p. 5; Rivera Garretas, 'El monacato femenino, siglos VIII–XII', p. 106; Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*.

[5] Melville and Müller, *Female 'vita religiosa'*, p. ix. For a selection of recent literature on women and medieval monasticism, see the Select Bibliography following this introduction.

[6] Melville and Müller, *Female 'vita religiosa'*, p. ix. It is worth noting here the increasing number of conferences in recent years that have focused on religious women in the Middle Ages. Several such events took place across Europe in 2011 alone, among them the international conference on which the present volume is based, which was entitled 'El Monacat Femení en l'Europa Medieval', and took place at the monastery of Les Avellanes in Catalonia on 4 and

Just as women differ from men (a fact of which even medieval writers were all too keenly aware), so nunneries differ from monasteries (a fact of which modern writers are perhaps not always aware enough), and while it has in the past been the unfortunate custom to study communities of religious women as little more than female versions of male houses, it has now increasingly been recognized that this is an unhelpful approach, and that we should instead look at these houses as religious (and social and cultural) phenomena in their own right. In the words of María-Milagros Rivera Garretas, all too often the historiography of female monasticism treats 'this social and cultural phenomenon' as nothing more than a variant or an epithet of 'a collective defined by its condition of being non-male'.[7] What has really moved female monasticism along, both as an academic discipline and in terms of our understanding of its dynamics, in her view, is the emergence of women's studies and feminist thought of the past century.[8] This has opened up new areas of debate, new questions, and new approaches.

It is clear that the monastic life, going back to the very origins of monasticism in the deserts of the East, was not entirely a male preserve. Women as well as men participated in the earliest manifestations of a Christian urge to renounce society and all its implications in favour of the solitary life. In medieval Europe, as cenobitic monasticism spread across Western Christendom, female communities emerged alongside male communities. Indeed, in the sixth century Caesarius of Arles wrote two monastic rules, one for men, and one for women. From the beginnings of Western monasticism, women were not only present but were active and enthusiastic participants in this way of life that, nonetheless, in so many ways meant different things to them than it did to their male counterparts. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the debate about the existence and meaning of Cistercian nuns.[9] Women responded, just as men

5 July 2011. And only a couple of weeks earlier the University of Hull in England hosted an international conference entitled 'Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe' (published under the same title in 2013 and edited by Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop). And in the spring of 2009, the Centre for Comparative Research of Religious Orders (FOVOG) in Eichstätt, Germany, organized a conference, 'Female "vita religiosa" between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages', subsequently (in 2011) published under the same title by LIT, edited by Gert Melville and Anne Müller.

[7] Rivera Garretas, 'El monacato femenino, siglos VIII–XII', p. 106.

[8] Rivera Garretas, 'El monacato femenino, siglos VIII–XII', p. 117.

[9] See, for instance, Greven, *Die Anfänge der Beginen*; Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*; Krenig, 'Mittelalterliche Frauenklöster nach den Konstitutionen von Cîteaux';

did, to that surge of devotion of the eleventh and twelfth centuries that gave birth to the 'new' orders. Some of these experiments — those of Fontevraud in France and Sempringham in England — seem to have foregrounded the needs and aspirations of women.[10] Others, most notoriously the Cistercian Order, reacted more cautiously, and — in the opinion of the older historiography — with hostility to women who wished to become part of that movement. Current research, most notably that of Constance Berman and Anne Lester, has restored Cistercian nuns to their place within the Order, but the question still remains: in what ways were women in houses bearing the name 'Cistercian' following the same way of life as Cistercian men?[11] Such a fundamental issue still requires investigation. So if we want to understand female monasticism, we have to consider it both as a phenomenon in its own right, and in connection with male monasticism, with which it interacted on several levels.

From the start, women founded, joined, and led religious communities, and as time went on and new religious orders emerged — first the regular canons, later the different groups of friars — women embraced these new opportunities and, under the vigilant gaze of male ecclesiastical authorities, attached to them their own characteristics. The result was a religious landscape of great diversity, ranging from the strictest enclosure to semi-formal organization that allowed — or obliged — women to participate in the incessantly changing religious life and culture of the Middle Ages.

The essays that constitute this book cover a wide geographical, chronological, thematic, and methodological spectrum in order to offer an ample comparative approach to a complex topic. Certain issues appear and reappear in diverse geographical and chronological contexts, such as, for instance, the crucial consideration of the role of male authority and female communities in the interaction between religious women and ecclesiastical authorities (as for instance the case of bishops, abbots, and so forth), as well as secular authorities (such as patrons or the king). Women in the medieval church had to rely on a male presence, and on male authority, in certain specific contexts, notably and most

Thompson, 'The Problem of Cistercian Nuns'; Degler-Spengler, 'The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order'; Freeman, 'Nuns'; Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*; Burton and Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages*; Berman, 'Were there Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?'; Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe*.

[10] Dalarun, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et les femmes'; *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life*, trans. by Venarde; Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*; Sykes, *Inventing Sempringham*.

[11] Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*; Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*; Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe*.

fundamentally in the celebration of Mass, which was prohibited to women and had to be the responsibility of a male priest.[12] On a more basic level, from the moment of the foundation of a female religious community the male presence of founders, abbots of mother houses, bishops, and kings made itself felt. But there were other areas, too, where female religious had to interact with male authority, meaning that in their dealings with most aspects of life outside their convent walls, nuns were negotiating with male representatives of both ecclesiastical and secular power. Female convents were often placed under the jurisdiction of a male monastery, as in the case of the Cistercian nunnery of Llanllŷr in Wales.[13] And then there were the more immediate, practical occasions of male presence in the female monastic world, such as male servants carrying out heavy physical labour within the nunnery: we know of their presence from monastic accounts detailing their wages, for example, but also from anecdotal evidence.[14]

More generally (and a related issue), we need to consider the important matter of patronage, and the relationships between the religious community and the world outside the convent walls, including the severing or continuing of family ties of women after entering the monastic life. Contacts with patrons, or with relatives or friends, constituted a link with the non-claustral world outside the nunnery and were as such considered potentially problematic and to be avoided. In practice, however, we know from documents such as wills, charters, letters, and monastic accounts, that many religious women maintained ties with their blood families after entering the religious life, and that many nunneries opened their doors to visiting patrons. Under normal circumstances, such encounters did not necessarily cause a disturbance of the monastic life, but they did in one way or another interfere with the ideal of solitude and withdrawal.

Furthermore, we need to address the question of identity — institutional as well as individual — of religious women in the Middle Ages. As in the case of religious men, nuns had to negotiate their identities as members of corporate religious institutions with their individual, personal, and familial contexts. Janet Burton's work on the Yorkshire nunneries has demonstrated the tensions that might arise as female religious found themselves torn between the demands

[12] Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England*, p. 114.

[13] See 'Llanllŷr', in Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories of Medieval Wales*, pp. 123–24; Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'.

[14] Note the example of the recorded staff (in terms of resident and seasonal workers, both male and female) at the English nunneries of Blackborough, Bungay, and Carrow, among others.

of the monastic community (often enforced by male authority figures) and the concerns and expectations of the wider communities in which they were, physically, located.[15]

Finally, we have to consider the internal workings of medieval nunneries, their organizational structures, and ideas of continuity in female communities. Nunneries existed within a wider religious, social, political, economic, and cultural context which had an impact on the way in which they were run and which changed over time. This book covers a long chronological period during which European society underwent fundamental changes. On one hand, religious houses partook in these changes, contributed to them, and were in turn affected by them; while on the other hand, efforts were made to maintain a certain continuity within the organization of religious communities. In the words of Bruce Venarde, 'the importance of female monasticism lies precisely in its relationship to social, economic, and institutional organization and development'.[16] By comparing the structures and workings of medieval nunneries, we are able to discern wider developments over time across Europe and identify both the catalysts for change and the endeavours, by the authorities and by religious communities, to preserve tradition in the face of a constantly evolving world.

The chapters in this volume address a wide range of issues and cover a broad chronological, geographical, and thematic spectrum, from the emergence and establishment of religious communities of women across medieval Europe to their relations with male authorities and the world outside at large. Furthermore, they consider the role of female monasticism in the regions — including Transylvania, Venice, Scandinavia, Catalonia, and Flanders — and its impact on the localities. Some focus is, moreover, on nuns' cultural contributions: art, architecture, and archaeology, and on the important issue of symbolic space. The comparative approach of this volume emphasizes the similarities as well as the variety in foundation processes of female religious houses across medieval Europe, and thereby helps us appreciate dynamics, motivations, and practicalities.

The contributions to the present collection look at female religious communities across the width and breadth of Western Christendom, from its northern peripheries to Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, including Scandinavia (Brian Patrick McGuire), the British Isles (Janet Burton, Brian Golding, and

[15] Burton, 'Cloistered Women and Male Authority'.

[16] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society*, p. 2.

Tracy Collins), Transylvania (Carmen Florea), Flanders (Erin L. Jordan), Gaul (Michèle Gaillard), the Iberian Peninsula (Gregoria Cavero Domínguez and Núria Jornet), and Italy (Anna Rapetti and Guido Cariboni).

The art, architecture, and archaeology of medieval nuns are the subject of the chapters by Tracy Collins and Michael Carter, while the following three essays examine the symbolic meaning of space in female monastic tradition (Anne Müller); the issue of gender, space, and Cistercian nunneries in thirteenth-century Flanders (Erin L. Jordan); and the location of the choir in the churches of female monasteries (Matthias Untermann). Finally, Hedwig Röckelein presents the important research project FemMoData, a Europe-wide database of female religious communities, which simultaneously indicates the direction the dissemination of new research is increasingly taking — namely, the publication of works in electronic format, which often contain an element of interactivity.

A frequently recurring theme among the chapters of this book is the important issue of male authority, both in terms of intervention and interference — especially in the case of figures of ecclesiastical authority, such as bishops and archbishops, or of royal authority, but also in terms of guidance of religious women, their spiritual advice and governance, and even friendship and kinship bonds that might exist between those bishops and individual nuns or communities of female religious. Thus Janet Burton and Brian Golding in particular examine aspects of the relationships between nunneries and episcopal representatives, while the chapters by Michèle Gaillard and Gregoria Cavero Domínguez demonstrate the important impact patrons and benefactors might have had upon female religious communities, a topic also addressed by Erin L. Jordan and by Michael Carter. In this context both Gaillard and Cavero Domínguez examine — using the diverse cases of Gaul and Spain — the significant changes in the nature of certain early female communities as their patronage passed from members of the aristocracy, from being 'family monasteries', to the crown, facing a whole new set of demands. The ways in which extra-claustral obligations penetrated the convent walls can be seen in the manners in which nuns, and especially aristocratic and royal nuns, endeavoured to combine their religious duties and those that bound them to the world outside on account of their lineages.

The important and complex matter of the formation of female religious communities and the construction of a communal identity is a focal point in the chapters of Guido Cariboni, Anna Rapetti, and Brian Patrick McGuire. That the problem of affiliation is an issue especially in the case of the emerging Cistercian Order of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is recognized by scholars working on such geographically diverse regions as rural Scandinavia

and urban Italy. In this context McGuire also addresses the problem that scholars of female religious communities frequently face in terms of documentary sources, which are often ambiguous.

The impact of the mendicant orders, both real and perceived, lies at the heart of several of the present chapters that look at different regions across medieval Europe. Thus Núria Jornet explains the emergence and success of the Poor Clares in medieval Catalonia in the context of the expansion of female monasticism in the region, and Carmen Florea examines the options available to women who wished to enter into a religious community in medieval Transylvania and the role played by the mendicants in this part of Europe.

The contributions by Tracy Collins, Michael Carter, Erin L. Jordan, Anne Müller, and Matthias Untermann all — in different ways, through the archaeology, architecture, and art of religious women — address the material culture of female religious communities and the symbolic use and sacred meaning of space in the monastic context. The study of sacred space and its significance — of liturgy, ritual, and monastic architecture in religious houses of men and women — clearly demonstrates the need to revise the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to male and female monasticism and calls for a whole set of separate criteria, as Collins shows in the case of medieval Ireland and Jordan demonstrates for Flanders and Hainaut.

In one way or another, moreover, all of the chapters look at the ways in which female communities interacted, and were shaped by, their localities: localities that varied a great deal in terms of their political, social, and cultural circumstances, and that underwent significant changes over time.

What these chapters show, then, is that there was a great variety of communities of religious women that existed at some point during the medieval period, ranging from very small, often impoverished, houses to grand royal abbeys, and yet, despite the considerable differences (geographical, political, cultural, social) that existed across medieval Europe, and despite the equally considerable diversity in terms of religious orders and in terms of the characteristics of individual houses, there are certain common aspects and shared experience that can be identified. The contributors agree that the roles played by nunneries, and by individual nuns — particularly their cultural input — have in the past often been undervalued by historians, and what the chapters in this volume emphasize is the important contribution made by female religious communities to medieval life and society, despite the frequent prejudices and occasional hostility medieval nuns had to face. Their importance was in many cases first and foremost local, and contact between the religious and lay communities was frequently close, making institutions of religious women often centrally

significant across Western Christendom. They also shared certain more global experiences that had an impact — in different ways and to differing degrees — on their communities, such as the arrival of the friars in the thirteenth century or the calamity of the Black Death in the fourteenth.

While the common ground connecting medieval nunneries across Western Christendom is a key to understanding them, there were also certain imbalances that are not always easy to explain. Take the distribution of female convents across medieval Europe: it has yet to be explained satisfactorily why we find a proliferation of nunneries in some regions, while, during the same period, they are virtually absent in others.[17]

Finally: a brief comment on sources. In the introduction to *Crown and Veil*, Jeffrey Hamburger addresses the important issue of sources relating to the religious life of women and notes that, contrary to an oft-held conviction that medieval religious women are poorly documented and hence difficult to apprehend, the sources are 'not nearly as scarce as is often maintained'.[18] The chapters in this volume demonstrate the richness of source material which we have at our disposal for the study of religious women and the female monastic life, comprising documentary as well as material evidence that was produced by and for nuns and in and for nunneries, granting a fascinating insight into aspects of the lives of religious women in medieval Europe.

This volume is not a comprehensive history of female monasticism in medieval Europe; rather, it is a collection of new and recent international and interdisciplinary research on many aspects of a religious phenomenon that is not yet fully understood in all its facets.

[17] A striking example here is the case of Wales, where no more than three nunneries were ever established, two of them being very small, while across the border in England, in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire, for instance, houses for religious women were far more abundant. Or take the example of Catalonia, which had an important number of nunneries, while in neighbouring Valencia there were considerably fewer female foundations; cf. Cortés-Vicent Pons, 'Geografía dels monestirs femenins valencians en la baixa Edat Mitjana', p. 80.

[18] Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*, p. 1.

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Spanish Female Monasticism: 'Family' Monasteries and their Transformation (Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries)

Gregoria Cavero Domínguez

Spanish monasticism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was made up of male and female communities. There were double monasteries and also 'family' monasteries, which have been defined as monastic seigneuries and have been considered as cultural, spiritual, and agrarian seeds of colonization whose objective was their members' spiritual improvement. Many of the high medieval monasteries were modelled on 'family' monasticism and founded by members of lay aristocratic families who became reference points for the founding lineages. Lay people's presence and its implications have driven researchers of these institutions to analyse them as instruments generating kindred social networks. Many studies have focused on religiosity, whereas others have been limited to the repopulating process of the northern lands, due to their importance in the formation of the political and socio-economic processes which reorganized the territory. Additionally, over the last few years, archaeological maps and registers have been incorporated into the studies of some areas.

There is no uniting criteria to define and specify the observance and dependence of these monasteries, until at least the late eleventh century. The 'Benedictinization' process has been described as a slow and long-lasting one, except in the Catalonian territory, where Benedict of Aniane's reformation was introduced in the early ninth century. In particular, the monasteries' depend-

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ence, which might have been limited especially to the bishops' control, subordination, and exemption is not very clear either. Their development did not follow one model. The objective of the present essay, therefore, is to analyse the development of the female monasteries in the northern part of Spain throughout the tenth to twelfth centuries, indicating the changes that occurred in the Leonese and Castilian kingdom from 'family' models to the character provided by the Cluniac and Cistercian reforms.

1. From East to West: The Main Nunneries of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

An approach to high medieval female monasticism — which was also closely associated with male monasticism — shows outstanding differences, but also similarities, on an east to west arc. We see this in the first place, because of the early introduction of the Benedictine Rule in Old Catalonia, through Benedict of Aniane's reformation — very likely as a consequence of the concern for the spread of the Adoptionism heresy and the involvement of the Seu d'Urgell itself in the heresy. In the second place, it is due to the survival of 'family' and double monastic formulas, which are seen especially in the northwest of the Iberian peninsula. And in the third place, it is on account of the search for a spiritual, sacred, safe place to shelter *dominae*, dowager queens, and so forth, in the Visigothic period. Let us consider some examples from the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The activities of Wilfred the Hairy and his wife, Vinidilda, in the valley of Ripoll and the Plain of Vic were the result of the early spreading of the Benedictine Order in the Catalonian territory. These activities resulted in the foundation, in the late ninth century, of the monasteries of Santa María de Ripoll, for monks, and another dedicated to St John the Baptist — Sant Joan de les Abadesses — for nuns.[19] Both of them were born as Benedictine foundations. Wilfred and Vinidilda's daughter, Emma, became a nun at Sant Joan and was its first abbess.[20] This nunnery continued to be known as the count's foundation: a few years later, Countess Elo gave her daughter Enquilia to the

[19] Udina Martorell, *El Archivo condal de Barcelona*, doc. 3, pp. 98–103. This document is dated 27 June 885.

[20] Cf. Ferrer i Godoy, *Diplomatari del monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses*, and Ripollès-Ponsi Ortiz and Trayner i Vilanova, *Emma de Barcelona*. The following are also useful: D'Abadal i Vinyals, *Els primers comtes catalans* (particularly pp. 1–20), and Junyent, *El monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses*.

monastery.[21] The latter was the founders' great-granddaughter. The female community was ousted by canons regular of St Augustine who arrived in the twelfth century.[22]

Another case can be found in the north-east. In the central years of the eleventh century, Ramiro I of Aragon founded the Benedictine nunnery Santa Cruz de la Serós, in which three of his daughters — Urraca, Teresa, and Sancha — took their vows.[23]

Further to the west, in the year 1011, Sancho García, count of Castile and grandson of the first count of Castile, Fernán González, founded, together with his wife, Doña Urraca, the nunnery of San Salvador de Oña, on the banks of the river Oca.[24] Tigridia, their daughter, would be its abbess. She was later venerated as a saint. Her aunt Oñeca had preceded her in the position of abbess, as she was too young. In this case there is no evidence that the Benedictine Rule was followed there. This foundation, however, was short lived as a nunnery. In fact, in 1033, Sancho III Garcés (the Elder) of Navarre established the Cluniac Abbot Paternus there, making way, therefore, for a male community.[25] Monastic historiography puts the blame for this change on the monastic moral decline which had taken place after the death of St Tigridia.[26] The prestige of the male community took off after St Íñigo, who apparently started his office of abbot after 1035.

Housing a double community in the tenth century, the monastery of Santos Cosme y Damián at Covarrubias was acquired by Count García Fernández and Countess Ava. In the year 972 their daughter, Infanta Urraca, entered the monastery. She laid the foundations for, and then strengthened, the new insti-

[21] Udina Martorell, *El Archivo condal de Barcelona*, doc. 132, pp. 291–93. Countess Elo was, at the time, the dowager of Count Oliba. The document is dated 4 November 955.

[22] Riu Riu, 'Monacato y colonización rural en la Cataluña altomedieval', pp. 95–96.

[23] Cf. Ubieto Arteta, *Cartulario de Santa Cruz de la Serós*, and Sánchez Usón, *El monasterio de Santa Cruz de la Serós*.

[24] Cf. Del Álamo, *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña*, doc. 8 (dated 12 February 1011), pp. 11–21. In the Introduction, the author remarks that there was a double community and that the village of Oña had been purchased by Count Sancho from Gómez Díaz in 1002. The monks who had arrived at Oña came from San Salvador de Loberuela; and the nuns, brought by Doña Oneca, the founder's sister, arrived from San Juan de Cillaperlata: see p. xxx.

[25] Del Álamo, *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña*, doc. 26, pp. 46–52.

[26] De Barreda, *Historia de la vida del glorioso Aragonés y Gran Padre San Yñigo*, p. 34, cited in López Santidrián, 'San Íñigo, abad de Oña', pp. 444–45. The latter author notices that 'the nuns left Oña on 27 June 1033, and they were scattered into the nearest nunneries'.

tution, which became the head of the 'Infantado' of Castile.[27] Later on it was turned into an institution of canons regular. According to Julio González, on 24 February 1175, Alfonso VIII and Eleanor Plantagenet donated the monastery of Santos Cosme y Damián on the banks of the river Arlanza, which had belonged to the 'Infantado', with all its rights, to the church of Toledo, which was then run by Don Cerebruno.[28]

Ramiro II of León had the monastery of San Salvador de Palat de Rey built for his daughter Elvira, where she became a nun. When St Pelagius's body was moved to León, it was laid in a little monastery which was named after him. This monastery merged with another one named after St John the Baptist, and together they became a double monastery, which, according to Antonio Viñayo, was

> aún monasterio familiar, puesto que en el femenino de San Pelayo se constituye el Infantado, cuya *dómina* era una infanta de León que recibía el cargo hereditariamente.[29]
>
> (still a family monastery, since in the female monastery of San Pelayo the 'Infantado' was constituted, whose *domina* was an 'Infanta' of León who received this office hereditarily.)

After that, the monastery of San Pelayo-San Juan Bautista would take the place of the monastery of Palat de Rey as the royal mausoleum, and a new Romanesque pantheon was built there. When the body of St Isidore of Seville was moved to León under Fernando I, the monastery of San Pelayo-San Juan Bautista lost this name in favour of the Sevillian saint; in the central years of the twelfth century, its community, which was already under the Benedictine Rule, was moved from the city of León to a nearby village, Carbajal de la Legua, and a community of canons regular was installed there under the intervention of the king (Alfonso VII) and the 'Infantado' (his sister, Sancha Raimúndez).

At the end of the tenth century and next to San Salvador of Oviedo, there was a monastery under the patronage of St John the Baptist, which, in its turn, was near that of San Vicente, where Teresa Ansúrez, King Sancho I's dowager

[27] Serrano, *Cartulario del Infantado de Covarrubias*, II.

[28] González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, I, 468. The document itself is in II: *Documentos*, pp. 360–62, under no. 218. See also Cavero Domínguez, 'Fernando Ruiz, obispo de León (1289–1301)'.

[29] Viñayo, 'Reinas e infantas de León', p. 125.

queen, was staying.[30] A diploma by Vermudo II of León attests to this.[31] In the last quarter of the tenth century, and due to one of Almanzor's destructive *razzias* (raids for plunder or slaves, especially those carried out by Moors in northern Christian territories in Spain) (*c*. 987–88), St Pelagius's body was moved from León to Oviedo and laid in the monastery of San Juan, and so St John's name was replaced with St Pelagius's. As Miguel Calleja Puerta comments, in the monastery of San Pelayo there was

> una organización similar al resto de monasterios de propios contemporáneos, del que lo distinguirá básicamente la titularidad regia sobre el mismo y que se podría asociar con la tradición visigoda de retiro de reinas viudas, costumbre perpetuada en tiempos de la monarquía asturiana a través del caso de Adosinda.[32]
>
> (an organization similar to that in the rest of the contemporary private monasteries, being different basically in the fact that it is under the direct protection of the monarchy and that it is associated with the Visigothic tradition of being a retreat for dowager queens, a tradition that was continued in the Asturian monarchy through the case of Adosinda.)

It was especially so when, in 1086, the monastery was run by Gontrodo, the *Deo vota de Sancti Pelagii* (a woman dedicated to God and coming from the nunnery of St Pelagius): it was then a private 'family' monastery in the hands of the monarchs. From an economic viewpoint, this Oviedo monastery functioned as the centre of a domain similar to that of 'family' monasteries. That is why Calleja, citing Pascual Martínez Sopena's words concerning the necessity of clarifying the similitudes and relationships of familial-aristocratic monasteries with those depending on the Infantado, concludes, in his own words,

> que la investigación ha de ser bidireccional, y que mucho de lo que vale para las fundaciones aristocráticas es también susceptible de ser ampliado a las regias.[33]
>
> (that research must be bidirectional, and that much of what is relevant to aristocratic foundations can also be extended to the royal ones.)

[30] She died at San Pelayo in 1039, as is recorded in the inscription on her tombstone; cited by Miguel Vigil, *Asturias monumental, epigráfica y diplomática*, II, 133.

[31] Fernández Conde, Torrente Fernández, and De la Noval Menéndez, *El monasterio de San Pelayo de Oviedo*, doc. 1, pp. 19–22.

[32] Calleja Puerta, *El conde Suero Vermúdez*, p. 429.

[33] Calleja Puerta, *El conde Suero Vermúdez*, pp. 450–51.

In the twelfth century, the monastery of San Pelayo was an independent female one. The Infantas gave way to abbesses of noble birth, and, after a period of stagnation, the monastery recovered its economic activities in the central years of that century.[34] Next to the activities carried out by abbesses of noble descent, the 'Infantado' women never gave up their rights, which accounts for the presence of Infanta Sancha, Alfonso VII's sister and holder of the title, who, as María Élida García has pointed out, used to intervene in internal affairs of the monastery next to Abbess Doña Aldonza.[35] The monastery of San Pelayo, which had already lost its previous name of St John, regularized its monastic life when it accepted the Benedictine Rule. The first clear mention of this dates from 1152.

In 1024, Cristina Vermúdez, a daughter of Vermudo II of León and his repudiated queen, Velasquita, endowed, already as a monastery, the church of San Salvador, which she also founded. It was located in her village of Cornellana, on the river Narcea.[36] The latest study on Cornellana, carried out by Calleja, reminds us that its foundation was constituted independently from the bishop and upon the Infanta's estates. It is difficult to attest that there was a monastic regular life there at the time. Certainly, it was founded as a nucleus for her family's heritage:

> La descripción de los bienes integrantes de la fundación constituye el paradigma de lo que podría constituir una gran propiedad rural en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica durante los siglos XI y XII.[37]
>
> (The description of the properties on which the foundation was based is the paradigm of what might have constituted a large rural estate in the northwest of the Iberian peninsula during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.)

In 1122 this monastery was owned by Cristina Vermudez's descendant, the powerful count Suero Vermúdez, who transferred it to the monks of Cluny for its reformation with a male community.[38]

[34] Cf. Torrente Fernández, 'Abadologio del monasterio de San Pelayo de Oviedo'.

[35] García García, 'Monasterios benedictinos y aristocracia laica en Asturias (siglos XI–XII)', p. 222.

[36] The main documentary sources for the monastery are Floriano Cumbreño, *El monasterio de Cornellana*, and Fernández de Viana y Vieites, 'Pergaminos del monasterio de Cornellana'.

[37] Calleja Puerta, *El monasterio de San Salvador de Cornellana en la Edad Media*, pp. 39–40.

[38] See also Alonso Álvarez, 'El monasterio de San Salvador de Cornellana y el patrocinio nobiliario'.

There were, thus, counts' and monarchs' foundations which followed the traditional private and 'family' monasteries encompassed in the Spanish high medieval monasticism in the west, and under the Benedictine Rule in the east. In this regard, four main features are worth mentioning.

First, there was the necessity of controlling the sacred as a basis for the legitimation of power,[39] a female control which secured a holy *locus* (*ecclesia, monasterium*) for noblewomen who were not destined for marriage, had been repudiated, or had become dowagers, to live. Their strategies to manage sacredness were orientated towards traditional devotions, like those of St Saviour or St John the Baptist, or included new cults spreading in Christian Spain and originating in Islamic Spain, which honoured martyred Christians and desecrated Christian places. This worship legitimated the northern kings' and nobles' power over the sacred, as they effected the transfer of holy bodies from the Islamic south to the Christian north, and fostered the worshipping of their relics. The martyred child Pelagius's presence is a characteristic example in the founding of altars, churches, and monasteries when his mortal remains were moved from the south to the north, and, later on, from León to Oviedo:[40] kings and nobles were protecting, and were persuaded that they were protected by, relics.

Second, there was a particular prominence of *dominae*. These ladies exerted great power in royal and noble spheres, or were included in the Infantado institution in the case of Castilian-Leonese. Urraca of Castile is a relevant example. The study of the figures of Elvira of León (d. *c*. 986) and Sancha of Aragon (d. *c*. 1097) offers a revealing profile.

Ramiro II's daughter, Elvira Ramírez, a nun in the above-mentioned court monastery of San Salvador de Palat de Rey, gained political prominence in safeguarding the interests of the Leonese kingdom, especially after the death of Sancho I the Fat (966), along with his dowager Teresa Ansúrez, during the minority of their prince, Ramiro III, who was five years old when his father died. At that moment Elvira did not hesitate to entitle herself *regina*. In the year 968, the expression 'Regina domna Geloria, Deo Dicata,' appears in the Leonese Aula Regia when settling a legal dispute between an Íñigo Garseani and a priest called Berulfo.[41]

[39] Cf. Le Jan, *Femmes, pouvoir et société dans le haut Moyen Âge*.

[40] On the spreading of St Pelagius' cult, see Díaz y Díaz, 'La pasión de San Pelayo y su difusión'.

[41] Sáez and Sáez, *Colección documental del archivo*, II: *953–85*, doc. 410, pp. 198–99.

As the regent for Ramiro III, she also carried out intense political activities. In the year 973, she dispatched an embassy to Cordoba, in her nephew's name, and participated actively in the government of the kingdom, either individually or jointly with Teresa Ansúrez, her sister-in-law. Together with Ramiro III, Elvira led the army which, in 975, collaborated in the siege of Gormaz Castle, and encouraged the Leonese troops who fought arm-in-arm with the armies of the Castilian counts and the Navarrese monarch. Her job as a regent ended when her nephew came of age, in about 980. She still survived several years in her Leonese monastery of San Pelayo, now away from politics.[42]

Dominae did not always live *sub regula*, that is, they did not necessarily take vows, even though they lived in the cloister. Countess Sancha (d. *c*. 1097), the dowager of Armengol III of Urgell and 'Ranimiri regis filia et Armisende regine',[43] entered the monastery of Santa Cruz de la Serós. This did not prevent her from participating in Pedro I's Aragonese politics, enjoying numerous land tenures (Santa Urbez and Santa Cruz, and Siresa) and even confronting her brother, Bishop García of Jaca.[44] As Agustín Ubieto Arteta remarks,

> Si bien se ha dicho que fue abadesa del monasterio, no consta en la documentación conservada, apareciendo siempre como comitisa o *domina*, aunque en realidad fue el alma del cenobio, que le estuvo supeditado.[45]
>
> (Although it has been said that she was the abbess of her monastery, it is not attested to in the surviving documentation, where she always appears as *comitissa* or *domina*, though in reality she was the life and soul of the convent, which she actually ran.)

Her mortal remains would be buried, next to her sisters', in the monastery of Santa Cruz de la Serós.

Third, counts' and kings' daughters tried to find in monasteries not only a sheltering place but also the preservation of their stock — the memory of their lineage. In fact, there is a special connection with family mausolea, both royal and noble, as everyone wanted to find a place for their eternal rest. For instance,

[42] The archives of the monastery of Sahagún contain information about her until 986. A document in the archives of the León cathedral is also particularly interesting. See Sáez and Sáez, *Colección documental del archivo*, II: *953–85*, doc. 436, pp. 233–36.

[43] AHN, Serós, carp. 785, no. 5, dated October 1076. It contains a donation to the nunnery of Santa Cruz de la Serós by Countess Sancha. Cited in González Miranda, 'La condesa doña Sancha y el monasterio de Santa Cruz de la Serós', doc. 2, pp. 197–99.

[44] González Miranda, 'La condesa doña Sancha y el monasterio de Santa Cruz de la Serós', doc. 2, pp. 185–212.

[45] Ubieto Arteta, *Los monasterios medievales de Aragón*, p. 107.

the Castilian count Fernán González was buried at Covarrubias. But the most outstanding mausoleum is, no doubt, that of San Pelayo (later San Isidoro) of León, head of the 'Infantado' of the Leonese monarchy. Its monastery would be the guardian of their memory.

Fourth, and finally, the monasteries' importance in terms of heritage must be highlighted. There were monasteries protected throughout the centuries in which some *dominae* exerted their power as owners of large estates that increased with donations from their co-heirs and from other private donors. This contributed to the organization of the surrounding space into a hierarchy and, quite often, to the concentration of monasteries and churches. In Asturias, Infanta Cristina's foundation at Cornellana would give her descendants, as owners, the control over other convents like Lapedo, Santa María de Villanueva de Carzana, and San Pedro de Teverga, among others.

That the owners did not give up their control is clear, for instance, in the fact that Sancho III exchanged the monastery of Oña. But there is also evidence that some female communities were replaced with male ones. San Pelayo de León became a community of canons regular in the central years of the twelfth century, as did Sant Joan de les Abadesses. The monastery of Oña, endowed by Sancho, count of Castile, in 1011, would enter the Benedictine reformation only twenty years after its foundation and would become a male monastery.[46] Covarrubias, the head of the Castilian Infantado, would also be associated later with a community of canons regular.

2. 'Family' Nunneries in the Castilian and Leonese Space and their Transformation

'Family' monasteries, which were private, were the properties of laypeople, usually aristocrats or nobles.[47] 'Family' monasticism underwent a deep development during the Visigothic and high medieval periods between the seventh and eleventh centuries. It was frequent in monasteries which contained double communities and were owned jointly by members of the same lineage who had *suertes* (shares) in the same heritage.[48]

[46] Cf. Olmedo Bernal, *Una abadía castellana en el siglo XI*, and Bonaudo de Magnani, 'El monasterio de San Salvador de Oña'.

[47] The traditional work on this topic is Orlandis, *Estudios sobre instituciones monásticas medievales*, esp. pp. 125–64 and 219–379.

[48] Bermejo Castrillo, *Parentesco, matrimonio, propiedad y herencia en la Castilla altomedieval*, p. 563.

The survival of 'family' monasticism throughout the tenth to twelfth centuries owes much to strategies carried out by lay aristocratic families who became centres of power over churches and monasteries, and who drew together social, political, economic, and spiritual functions. Such strategies were planned to use monasteries to concentrate properties which could not be alienated; at the same time as monastic structures themselves functioned as nuclei linking various family groups. José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre argues that monasteries joined relations and properties together and organized social relationships into hierarchies.[49] However, it is also true that it was a slow, evolving process, not at all homogeneous, and in which various kinds of control can be detected.[50]

Essential changes are sensed coming from two factors associated with Fernando I — the council of Coyanza and the abbey of Cluny. These were circumstances which the Castilian and Leonese monarchy acted in order to introduce and spread the Cluniac reformation, and which would continue during the reign of Fernando I's son, Alfonso VI. Both monarchs, Fernando I and Alfonso VI, maintained the same performance line initiated by Sancho III the Elder of Navarre, the former's father and the latter's grandfather.

The council of Coyanza was held in the central years of the eleventh century. It was organized and directed by Fernando I and his queen, Sancha. In the long run, the council's regulations would change the ecclesiastical and monastic panorama. For example, Isidorian and Benedictine observances were accurately specified:

> Deinde statuimus ut omnia monasteria nostra secundum possibilitates suas adimpleant ordinem Sancti Isidori uel Sancti Benedicti et nichil habeant proprium nisi per licentiam sui episcopi aut sui abbatis.[51]
>
> (Then we order that all our monasteries should, according to their capabilities, follow the order of St Isidore or of St Benedict and should have nothing of their own unless by permission of their bishop or their abbot.)

[49] García de Cortázar, 'Monasterios hispanos en torno al año mil', pp. 226–31. The author analyses the role of family strategies and deduces that the monastery was the centre for the family's reserve of wealth, the guardian of the family's memory, and the appropriate place for the lineage's relationship with the Divinity.

[50] See Martín Viso, 'Monasterios y poder aristocrático en Castilla en el siglo XI', esp. p. 95.

[51] There are different editions and versions of the council's texts; for the Oviedo text, see García Gallo, 'El concilio de Coyanza'; and for the Portuguese one, Grassotti, 'La Iglesia y el Estado de Tamarón a Zamora (1037–72)'. The reader is also referred to the edition and study of Martínez Díez, 'La traducción manuscrita del fuero de León y del concilio de Coyanza', p. 175, punto 2 (Portuguese version), and p. 180, punto 2 (Oviedo version).

But the council's minutes seem to have been dealing, at least initially, more with a theoretical than a real field. An intense concentration of monasteries is seen after the council's sessions (*c.* 1055), especially around cathedral sees, as well as a hierarchical influence from some great monasteries, which joined *ecclesiae* and *monasteria* together. This may have been connected with other council canons whose purpose might have been to move laypeople away from ecclesiastical properties.[52] The year after the council, another council was held in Compostela, at which an attempt was made to implement the Coyanza reforms.[53]

Very frequently, monasteries which were near cathedral sees lost the character of royal monasteries as their properties augmented those of the sees. Sometimes they became secular cathedral 'abbeys' (as they were called) under the name of the same patron saint, but they had only the name. Some returned to the cenobitic life later on,[54] and other *monasteriolos/ecclesiae* became just simple rural churches.

In their turn, the monasteries dependent on lay aristocracies seem to have maintained a strong dependency on their proprietors.[55] In fact, according to García de Cortázar,

> Es ya un lugar común de la historiografía la idea de que, hasta la reforma gregoriana en la segunda mitad del siglo XI, los monasterios, como en buena medida toda la iglesia estuvieron en manos de los laicos.[56]
>
> (It is already a common historiographic cliché to say that the idea that, until the Gregorian Reform in the later part of the eleventh century, monasteries, like all the church to a great extent, were in the hands of laypeople.)

[52] See Martínez Sopena, 'Aristocracia, monacato y reformas', p. 78.

[53] Cf. Martínez Díez, 'El concilio compostelano del reinado de Fernando I', and López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago de Compostela en la Alta Edad Media*.

[54] As it was a nunnery, the 'family' monastery of San Salvador in Santa Colomba de la Polvorosa, in the present province of Zamora, is an appropriate case. A part of it was granted by Alfonso VI to the cathedral of León on 14 April 1097. See Ruiz Asencio, *Colección documental del archivo*, IV: *1032–1109*, doc. 1293, pp. 608–10. Later on it would accept the Cistercian reform and since then it has been known as Santa Colomba de las Monjas; Cavero Domínguez, 'El Císter femenino en el reino de León', p. 79.

[55] See, for example, the case of Asturias, which was analysed by García García, 'Aristocracia laica y monasterios familiares en Asturias (ss. X y XI)'. See also by the same author, 'Monasterios benedictinos y aristocracia laica en Asturias (siglos XI y XII)'. The case of Cantabria has been studied by Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias en la Cantabria altomedieval'. On León, see Martínez Sopena, 'Monasterios particulares, nobleza y reforma eclesiástica'; Martínez Sopena, 'Parentesco y poder en León'; and, a more recent study, Martín Viso, 'Monasterios y redes sociales en el Bierzo altomedieval'.

[56] García de Cortázar, 'Monasterios hispanos en torno al año mil', p. 217.

The council of Coyanza, which has been described by historiography in general as the anteroom of the Gregorian Reform, occurred in the later part of the eleventh century. But neither the Coyanza canons nor the Gregorian Reform actually consolidated a monastic reformation at once, which allows us to state that at the turn of the year 1000, the only observance in Spain was the Benedictine Rule. However, what has actually been discovered is a wide variety of 'family' monasteries which, in some cases, still followed the Visigothic tradition, particularly St Fructuosus's pact rule. It is certainly true that their existence would still linger until the end of the twelfth century. Martínez Sopena points out that their last vestiges reached the turn of the thirteenth century, when they disappeared forever;[57] 'family' monasteries were bound to disappear or to be converted to the Benedictine model or other monastic twelfth-century reforms. Fernando I and Alfonso VI were the great driving force of such reforms. Sancho III Garcés had also been 'gané au modèle de réforme du grand monastère bourguignon', as Dominique Iogna-Prat has remarked.[58]

In the central years of the twelfth century the monarchy and the nobility worked together not only to spread the Cistercian reforms but also, in general, the various reforms brought about by Augustinian canons regular, the Premonstratensians, and even the military orders. This was the moment when many 'family' monasteries were incorporated into these observances and absorbed by them. As Martínez Sopena notes:

> Hay empeño por sustituir los monasterios familiares, mediante su transformación o desahucio, y por reordenar el poder de la Iglesia (así como los de la nobleza y monarquía) en términos políticos, fiscales y territoriales. Además de esto, los reyes se garantizaron un papel arbitral, mientras la nobleza se aseguraba una colección de beneficios o prerrogativas en las nuevas casas, respetando su autonomía.[59]
>
> (There was a determination to replace family monasteries, by transforming or abandoning them, and to reorder the power of the Church (as well as the power of the nobility and the monarchy) in political, fiscal and territorial terms. Besides, the kings guaranteed themselves as arbiters whereas the nobility secured a collection of benefits or prerogatives for themselves in the new houses as they respected their self-government.)

[57] Martínez Sopena, 'Aristocracia, monacato y reformas', p. 92.

[58] Iogna-Prat, 'Les Moines et la "blanche robe d'églises" à l'âge roman', p. 319.

[59] Martínez Sopena, 'Aristocracia, monacato y reformas', p. 91.

2.1 The Concentration of Monasteries under a Benedictine-Cluniac Imprint: San Pedro de las Dueñas

Royalty and nobility, above all, increased the properties of churches and monasteries: many of them were turned into priories dependent on the remarkable monastery of Sts Peter and Paul of Cluny, whose piety so much attracted kings and magnates. That meant the establishment of the Benedictine-Cluniac observance, which began to be favoured particularly in the reigns of Fernando I and Alfonso VI, who were great protectors of the Burgundian abbey.[60]

The first transformation model of 'family' nunneries which will be discussed starts with the presentation of a pact, held in 941 in the Cantabrian region of Liébana. It brought together thirty-six female disciples around Abbess Ailón:

> Pactum facimus Deo et tiui matri nostra Ailoni qualiter secundum editum apostolorum et regulam monasterii sicuti sancta precedentium patrum sanxit auctoritas qui homnia sua diuideuant et ante pedes apostolorum poneuant ad instar illorum uno in cenouio auitemus.[61]

> We make a pact with God and with you our mother Ailon thus, according to the edict of the Apostles and the rule of the monastery, just as the holy authority of our fathers who went before us affirmed, who used to share all their goods and place them before the feet of the Apostles, in the likeness of those men in one monastery we will dwell in one monastery.

After Ailón's *signum*, there appear the signatures of the 'filias umiles et obedientes'. This became the monastery of Santa María de Piasca, very close to the powerful monastery of San Martín de Turieno (later named Santo Toribio), in the Liébana area.[62] Actually, in María Isabel Loring García's words, the monastery of Santa María existed before that pact had been formed

[60] See the comprehensive study by Reglero de la Fuente, *Cluny en España*.

[61] This document is now in the AHN, Clero, Sahagún, carp. 873, no. 6. It has been published several times. See Mínguez Fernández, *Colección documental del monasterio de Sahagún*, doc. 79; and Montenegro Valentín, *Colección diplomática de Santa María de Piasca*, doc. 8.

[62] Its cartulary was published by Sánchez Belda, *Cartulario de Santo Toribio de Liébana*. García de Cortázar comments that 'Santo Toribio de Liébana [...] es un monasterio que se ha beneficiado de una cierta memoria histórica mesurada. La generada por la presencia y producción doctrinal de Beato a finales del siglo VIII, prolongada, en el subconsciente colectivo' (St Toribio de Liébana [...] is a monastery which has benefited from a certain restrained historical memory — the memory generated by the presence and doctrinal production of Beatus at the end of the

> absorbiendo a una serie de iglesias y pequeños monasterios, que en su mayoría proceden de la región lebaniega pero también de algunos valles vecinos tanto de *intra montes* como de *foras montes*.[63]
>
> (by incorporating a number of churches and small monasteries which, in its greater part, were located in the Liébana region but which also were in some neighbouring valleys both from *intra montes* and *foras montes*).

Julia Montenegro Valentín, a prominent scholar of the monastery, describes it as a 'Fructuosan inspiration' monastery, and a case of 'pact monarchism'. It appears as a 'private' church in 930 and, only eleven years later (941), was a pact monastery, not a 'private' one.[64]

In the eleventh century Santa María monastery was a 'family' monastery, probably a double one: that is, with a male community and a female one, although the female community was prominent. It had been placed under the multiple dedication of St Mary, St James, and Sts Julian and Basilissa; was connected to the Alfonso lineage, whose head was Alfonso Díaz;[65] and was a 'family' monastery whose *raciones/porciones* (shares) belonged to several members of the owner family, who exerted an energetic control over it. This is shown in the origin of its abbesses, Fronilde in 1030, Eilo in 1039, and the powerful *domina* Urraca Alfonso, who did not take the title of abbess but controlled monasteries without the abbatial dignity.[66]

It was an expanding monastery as the nearby and, until then, powerful monastery of San Martín de Turieno was undergoing a deep crisis. Santa María's grew with the annexation of some churches and monasteries, several of which were donated to it by members of the Alfonso family itself in 1030. These were Santa María and Santiago de Renoso, half of the monastery of San Pelayo as well as San Miguel de Luniezo in 1039, and San Andrés de Valdavia in 1068.

eighth century, extended in the collective unconscious); García de Cortázar, 'Monasterios y dominios monásticos en el Reinado de Alfonso VI de León y Castilla', p. 79.

[63] Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias en la Cantabria altomedieval', p. 113.

[64] Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, pp. 45–47.

[65] Martínez Sopena, 'Parentesco y poder en León durante el siglo x', p. 75.

[66] Frequently *dominae* from powerful noble lineages, such as Urraca Alfonso or Fronilde, who were either single or dowagers consecrated to God (*deovotae*), appear governing monasteries, guarding their lineage's interests, and exerting a firm control over abbots and abbesses. See particularly Loring, 'Nobleza e iglesias propias', p. 99; Martínez Sopena, 'Aristocracia, monacato y reformas', p. 75; and Martínez Sopena, 'Monasterios particulares, nobleza y reforma eclesiástica', p. 327.

However, the Alfonso family also owned the 'family' nunnery of San Martín de la Fuente in the present province of Palencia, which was near the great abbey of San Facundo, in Sahagún. That of San Martín had been built under Urraca Alfonso, after a donation made by her brother Gutier Alfonso in 1048.[67] That donation included other monasteries owned by the same family: San Pedro de Valderaduey and Santa María de Valdetolo, which will be discussed below.

In the central years of the eleventh century, both monasteries, Santa María de Piasca and San Martín de la Fuente, were controlled by the aristocratic owners, represented at the time by *domina* Urraca Alfonso. The transformations undergone by both monasteries were carried out according to the regulations of the Coyanza council (*c.* 1055) and were influenced by Alfonso VI coming to power after the confrontations and fights between Fernando I's children and the death of Sancho II.

The aristocratic owners kept the female communities of Santa María de Piasca and San Martín de la Fuente closely linked. While the Benedictine Rule was developed to be implemented, the community of Piasca, which was a double one, also evolved; but the nunnery, as such, disappeared in about 1071, and, at the same time, the various *portions* of the monastery were concentrated in another great monastic institution, Sahagún. In the twelfth century, Piasca, now only a male community, would remain as a priory dependant on Sahagún. A seemingly similar case is found in San Martín de la Fuente, which would also be taken over by Sahagún.

King Alfonso VI's interests as well as those represented by the Alfonso lineage turned towards the monastery of Santos Facundo y Primitivo at Sahagún, in the basin of the river Cea, the borderlands between León and Castile, where, from the time of Alfonso III (866–910), there existed a small church, identified by some with the chapel of San Mancio, which would be replaced by another church after the former was destroyed by the Muslims.[68] Starting from that church, a monastery was founded. Its existence is registered in 883 by the *Crónica Albeldense*.[69] The earliest document originating in its monastic archives dates from the year 904. It contains a donation by Alfonso III to the church

[67] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, II: *1000–73*, doc. 513, pp. 189–90.

[68] See particularly Fernández Catón, *San Mancio: Culto, leyenda y reliquias*.

[69] On Sahagún (the word *Sahagún* is derived from *Sanctus Facundus*), see Pérez Gil and Sánchez Badiola, *Monarquía y monacato en la Edad Media*; Fernández González and Pérez, *Alfonso VI y su época, I: Los precedentes del reinado* and *Alfonso VI y su época, II: Los horizontes de Europa*. On artistic issues, see Herráez Ortega, *Esplendor y decadencia de un monasterio medieval*.

of Santos Facundo y Primitivo and attests to the presence of Abbot Alfonso.[70] One year later, Alfonso III granted *coto* (enclosed lands) to the monastery of Sahagún.[71]

The monastery of San Facundo, also called the monastery of *Domnos Sanctos*, was King Alfonso VII's favourite monastery. He granted it numerous benefits and privileges, spent long stays there in his royal apartments, which were built especially for him, and chose it as an eternal resting place for himself and his wives — it was his royal mausoleum. This monastery was also chosen to carry out the Cluniac reform. It was associated with the monarchy and would become the great Cluniac Benedictine monastery (though it was not very successful) by the direct desire of the king, who had the monk Roberto brought to the monastery

> qui est in honore Sanctorum Facundi et Primitiui constructum, ut teneant ibi regulam et monasticum ordinem sicut docet beatus Benedictus et secundum quod fratres Sancti Petri Cluniacensis obtinent. Igitur, annuente Deo, mittimus domnum Robertum abbatem ut teneant uitam suprascriptam cum fratribus qui modo ibi sunt uel post eum in loco successerint usque in perpetuum. Mandamus, etiam, ut abbas qui esse debuerit per electionem de congregacione monasterii et per preceptum regis fiat.[72]
>
> (which has been built in honour of St Facundus and St Primitivus, that they are to hold to the rule and the monastic order just as the blessed Benedict teaches and just as the brothers of St Peter of Cluny keep. Therefore, with God's help, we send lord Roberto as abbot, that they may cling to the life as written above with the brothers who are there now or who will come after him in that place for evermore. We also order that the abbot who ought to be elected by the congregation of the monastery shall also be in agreement with the king.)

Other changes were added to the Cluniac reform, such as the introduction of the Roman liturgical rite. However, as Carlos Reglero de la Fuente has pointed out, the monastery of Sahagún would remain among those which Alfonso VI

[70] AHN, Clero, Sahagún, carp. 872, no. 6. The document was published by Mínguez Fernández, *Colección documental del monasterio de Sahagún*, doc. 6, and is dated 22 October 904.

[71] AHN, Clero, Sahagún, carp. 872, nos 10 and 11. See also Mínguez, *Colección documental*, doc. 8, dated 30 November 905.

[72] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, III: *1073–1109*, doc. 782, dated 14 May 1080. With this document, King Alfonso VI and Queen Constanza, after mentioning Abbot Roberto and the procedure to elect abbots, establish the liberties and exemptions the monastery was to enjoy from then on.

placed under Cluny's *consuetudines*, but it was not consolidated and its lifetime was very short. The main character here was Abbot Roberto, identified by Reglero with the abbot who had been the prior at San Isidro de Dueñas and counsellor to the king. He was also the same abbot to whom the king gave the monastery of San Pedro.[73] The purported Cluniac reform of 1079–80 was a failure under him and his successor Marcellinus. It was one thing to follow the Cluniac customs, but it was something quite different to be a priory of Cluny. A short time later, Abbot Bernardo opted for independence, and Pope Gregory VII gave his approval. Sahagún would thus be a simple Benedictine community.[74]

Very closely related to the Sahagún monastery were the members of the Alfonso lineage, whose head, in 1024, was Alfonso Díaz, count of Grajal, a place quite near the monastery. Later on, the Alfonsos also became counts of Cea.[75] In the second half of the eleventh century, they were close to the royalty, especially to Alfonso VI. In reality, they were so close to Sahagún and Alfonso VI that they stopped giving donations to Santa María de Piasca and focused their interest on Sahagún, perhaps following Alfonso VI's policy. Between the last quarter of the eleventh century and the first decades of the twelfth, there occurred a change of orientation. As Martínez Sopena comments,

> se produce la desmembración de las *partiones* que los herederos de la familia tenían en los cenobios de Piasca y San Martín las cuales son cedidas por sus titulares.[76]
>
> (There occurred the dismemberment of the *partiones* which the heirs of this family had in the monasteries of Piasca and San Martín and which were granted by their owners [to Sahagún].)

In fact, between 1095 and 1107, the *partiones* (portions) which were supposed to be directed to Santa María de Piasca were donated to Sahagún by their owners, including Alfonso VI himself. The same thing happened with San Martín de la Fuente. The process was gradual, but eventually the ownership of the 'family' nunnery which was held by the Alfonsos would definitely be linked to the monastery of San Facundo, although their donation implied that the family did not dissociate themselves from it entirely.

[73] Reglero de la Fuente, *Cluny en España*, pp. 165–67.

[74] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, III: *1073–1109*, doc. 809, pp. 102–05.

[75] Cf. Martínez Sopena, 'Monasterios particulares, nobleza y reforma eclesiástica'.

[76] Martínez Sopena, 'Parentesco y poder en León', p. 48.

Alfonso VI and the monastery of Sahagún were the origins of the transformation of female monasticism in neighbouring places both from territorial and family viewpoints. We are speaking about monasteries placed under the dedication of St Peter and whose description and independence do not appear quite clear in the documentation.

(a) San Pedro de Valderaduey. It was quoted above as having been donated, together with the monastery of Santa María de Valdetolo, to the monastery of San Martín de la Fuente, in 1048. In monastic historiography, this monastery is spoken of as a nunnery.[77] The first time that San Pedro de Valderaduey is mentioned in records, it is not clear what it is, whether a church, a monastery, or just a place name.[78] The date corresponds to 1033, and the document deals with a share of a mill on the river.[79]

(b) The monastery of San Pedro de Mazuecos was given to the monastery of Sahagún and its abbot, Roberto, in 1080.[80] The former has been identified and confused with the monastery donated by Alfonso VI and the abbot of Sahagún to a nun, Urraca, at a date around 1080.[81]

(c) The monastery of San Pedro de los Molinos, in the area around Sahagún, and mentioned at the end of the eleventh century,[82] is, according to Carriedo, that of San Pedro de las Dueñas itself.[83]

(d) The monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas. It is only four kilometres away from that of San Facundo, in Sahagún, and became a great nunnery

[77] Escalona, *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sahagún*, p. 247.

[78] It is true that frequently the differences between a church and a monastery are not very clear at this time, as it is pointed out by Loring García, 'Nobleza e iglesias', pp. 90–91.

[79] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, II: *1000–73*, doc. 435, dated 15 November 1033.

[80] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, III: *1073–1109*, doc. 776, dated on 22 January 1080. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the church of San Pedro de Mazuecos belonged to the nunnery of San Pedro de las Dueñas, as shown in Fernández Flórez, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún*, doc. 1576, dated 1210.

[81] See Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 2 (22 January 1080), pp. 420–22.

[82] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, III: *1073–1109*, doc. 950 (11 April 1095) and doc. 1021 (24 October 1097).

[83] Carriedo Tejedo, 'Los orígenes del Monasterio Benedictino de San Pedro de Dueñas', pp. 26–28.

> dependent on the male monastery of Sahagún. We do not know whether it had existed prior to this time or the details of its foundation, dated to 1080 by Montenegro. This author believes that it was not a 'family' monastery and did not belong to the Alfonso lineage, among whose properties it had been included by Martínez Sopena.[84] The first document of it actually dates from 1094, when it is described as Benedictine and said to be under Abbot Diego of Sahagún.[85] It must have been under this abbot that it was built if we trust an epigraph, now lost, that so registered it.[86]

The main problems to identify and clarify female monasticism in the Cea-Valderaduey area come, especially, from two diplomas. The first is a 1048 donation with two different versions: one of them comes from the Gothic 'Becerro' (community register for property and privileges) of Sahagún;[87] and the other is from the monastic archives of the San Pedro de las Dueñas nunnery.[88] Both these versions have been studied and collated by José María Fernández Catón,[89] Montenegro,[90] and Manuel Carriedo Tejedo.[91] The core of the diploma has the same meaning but it is different in the beginning, the invocation, and the ending: Gutier Alfonso and his wife Goto donate to his sister Urraca — *deodicata* at the monastery of San Martín de la Fuente and abbess of the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas — various properties, including the monasteries of San Pedro de Valderaduey and Santa María de Valdetolo. The date is the same in both documents, but the signatories and witnesses date from the last third of the eleventh century in the case of the diploma from the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas.[92]

[84] Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, p. 109. The author's analysis of the existing documentation is very clarifying and is based on the study by Fernández Catón, 'Documentos leoneses en escritura visigótica', docs 2 and 3, pp. 208–25.

[85] Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 3 (28 January 1094), pp. 422–23.

[86] Escalona, *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sahagún*, p. 94. It is also recorded in an appendix by Carriedo Tejedo, 'Los orígenes del Monasterio Benedictino de San Pedro de Dueñas', p. 38.

[87] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, II: *1000–73*, doc. 513 (11 May 1048).

[88] Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 1 (dated 1048 [?]), pp. 419–20.

[89] Fernández Catón, 'Documentos leoneses en escritura visigótica', pp. 222–23.

[90] Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, pp. 106–07.

[91] Carriedo Tejedo, 'Los orígenes del Monasterio Benedictino de San Pedro de Dueñas', pp. 14–17.

[92] In fact, the falsified document is that from the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas and

The three aforementioned authors agree in commenting that the tampering was done on purpose by the monastery, which might have been trying to place its origins earlier, in 1048, perhaps with the intention of freeing themselves from the Sahagún monks. That is, the forgery might have been due to jurisdictional conflicts, which, incidentally, were rather frequent.[93]

The second is a diploma, which certainly did not come from the Royal Chancellery, has some errors in its date and has been dated 22 January 1080 (a Wednesday). It contains the donation made by Alfonso VI and abbot Roberto of Sahagún to the nun Urraca and her nuns of the monastery of San Pedro, so that they could live according to St Benedict's rule and subject to the Abbot of Sahagún.[94] In this case the problem is its identification, made by several authors who understand that the document is about San Pedro de las Dueñas, while others suppose that it deals with San Pedro de Mazuecos. The problem lies in a confusion in terms:

> Ego, Adefonsus, nutu diuino princeps, et Rodbertus, gratia Dei abba, una cum omnem congregationem Sanctorum Facundi et Primitibi, facimus tibi, Urraka, Deo deuota, cartula exarationis, tam tibi quam etiam et alie religiose femine qui tibi sunt subiecte, de illo monasterio uocabulo Sancto Petro, seu etiam et successores uestri qui monasticam uitam secundum regula patris nostri sancti exercere uoluerint, id est, Benedicti, per iussionem domni Rodberti, qui preest omnibus uel successor illius qui in loco hoc fuerit constitutus. Alius uero neminem pretermittimus qui uobis ibidem disturbationem faciat nec inmodice, sed inlesas et intactas permaneatis absque aliam iussionem uos et successores uestri, et sit ipsius monasterii puellarum stabilissimum usque in perpetuum. Ita uero sicut habetur Domnos Sanctos in consuetudinem Sancti Petri, ita abeatur Sancti Petri in consuetudinem Marcilinieco.[95]

the original is that in the *Becerro*. Montenegro and Carriedo notice how other documentary forgeries were executed, and both mention one from 1107.

[93] The strained relations between both monasteries were ever continuous until the beginning of the thirteenth century. About this, see Fernández Flórez, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (857–1300)*, v: *1200–1300*, doc. 1576, pp. 62–66. This document (dated 27 September 1210) contains a final agreement between both monasteries.

[94] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, II: *1000–73*, doc. 777. This document has also been published by Gambra, *Alfonso VI*, pp. 165–66; and Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 2, pp. 420–22.

[95] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, II: *1000–73*, doc. 777; Gambra, *Alfonso VI*, doc. 66, pp. 165–66; Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 2; and Reglero de la Fuente, *Cluny en España*, doc. 3, pp. 694–95.

> (I, Alfonso, prince by divine will, and Roberto, abbot by the grace of God, together with the whole congregation of St Facundus and St Primitivus, make a donation document of the monastery called St Peter for you, Urraca, who are devoted to God, as also for the other religious women who are subject to you or indeed also your successors who wish to live the monastic life according to the rule of our holy father St Benedict, under the mandate of Lord Roberto, who now governs over all, or his successor who will be appointed in this place. We pass over no one who may cause disruption or excesses to you (particularly if they are really serious), but you and your successors are to remain uninjured and intact without any other order. So that this monastery of maidens may be totally stable for evermore. Thus, indeed, just as Domnos Sanctos is bound to the custom of St Peter's, so that of St Peter's should be bound to the custom of Marcigny.)

Actually, it is not about San Pedro de Mazuecos, nor is San Pedro de las Dueñas clearly mentioned. It is only the monastery of San Pedro, which King Alfonso VI and Abbot Roberto of Sahagún donated to Urraca — *deovota*/abbess, who has been identified as Urraca Alfonso[96] —, so that, under the authority of the abbot of Sahagún, they could follow St Benedict's Rule according to the *customs* of Marcigny-sur-Loire:[97] that is, the French nunnery depending on Cluny and founded by Abbot Hugh.

After all that has been said, we can infer that in the basins of the rivers Cea and Valderaduey there were institutions placed under the dedication of St Peter which were called *ecclesiae* and also monasteries. We know that the monastery of San Pedro de Valderaduey was donated to that of San Martín de la Fuente, which might have been in the same area. As for that of San Pedro de Mazuecos, we know it was near Cisneros. Some have noticed that San Pedro de los Molinos is the same as San Pedro de las Dueñas. What is definitely attested to is that the latter two shared the St Peter dedication.[98]

After 1080 one monastery of San Pedro was chosen by Alfonso VI to carry out the reform of female monasticism in the Cea-Valderaduey-Liébana area under the obedience of the Sahagún monastery. Several female communities would have converged in such a monastery: that of Santa María de Piasca;[99]

[96] Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, p. 109.

[97] Cf. Wischermann, *Marcigny-sur-Loire, Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des ersten Cluniacenseinnenpriorates (1055–1150)*.

[98] This kind of occurrence was rather frequent. See, for example, the case of the Aragonese monastery of San Juan de la Peña in Lapeña Paúl, *El monasterio de San Juan de la Peña en la Edad Media*, pp. 53–59.

[99] Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, pp. 104 and 108–09.

that of San Martín de la Fuente[100] — to which, in turn, the monasteries of San Pedro de Valderaduey and Santa María de Valdetolo were subject; and the various monasteries under the same dedication, St Peter, around Sahagún. This convergence seems to have been carried out during the abbacy of Diego de Sahagún (1087–1110) and with Alfonso VI's support.

Under the dedication of St Peter the Apostle, the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas, perhaps eponymous of some of those mentioned above, would have been the converging point of all the other monasteries. This could account for the beginning of the changes which can be detected in the 1080 document referring to King Alfonso VI's decision to transfer the monastery of St Peter to Abbess Urraca and her nuns,[101] so that they might live under the Benedictine Rule, according to the Marcigny customs and subject to the abbey of *Domnos Sanctos* — Sahagún.[102]

What was the relationship between Sahagún and St Peter, on the one hand, and Marcigny, on the other? Perhaps, besides the direct relationships with Cluny,[103] which might be a sufficient explanation, we could also suggest some others, such as, in Reglero's words, the existence of a 'Clunophilic' aristocracy. In the first place, there is the relationship of Countess Teresa Peláez, the dowager of Count Gómez Díaz, who calls herself 'ancilla ancillarum Dei' and who some think was a nun at Marcigny.[104] In the second place, in the year 1085,

[100] Escalona, *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sahagún*, p. 94.

[101] We must remember the presence of the *Libellus a regula Sancti Benedicti subtractus* in La Rioja already in the tenth century. It was published by Linage Conde, *Libellus a regula Sancti Benedicti subtractus*.

[102] Escalona, *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sahagún*, pp. 475–76. See also the comments by Fernández Catón, 'Documentos leoneses en escritura visigótica', p. 213, and Montenegro Valentín, *Santa María de Piasca: estudio de un territorio*, pp. 107–08.

[103] It is the opinion of several authors that the central axis of the Cluniacs' establishment in the Iberian peninsula lay in the kingdom of León, especially under Alfonso VI, who gave them, among others, the monasteries of San Isidro de Dueñas and Santa María de Nájera. See comments on this by Calleja Puerta, *El conde Suero Vermúdez*, p. 499.

[104] Reglero de la Fuente (*Cluny en España*, pp. 241–44) dwells extensively on the Banu Gómez family's relations with Cluny, particularly those of the descendants of the Díaz brothers — Ansur and Gómez. Gómez Díaz was married to Teresa Peláez. Teresa and their children (there were at least seven) donated San Zoilo de Carrión to Cluny. The document is from 1077. Gómez had died in 1057/58. Teresa was included in the Marcigny necrology, which has led some to infer that she had been a nun there. In reality, she was in the kingdom of León in 1091 (she died in 1093), and her tombstone with her epitaph is kept at San Zoilo. The explanation might be that some benefactors were included among the members of a monastery.

Abbot Hugh of Cluny sold Count Pedro Ansúrez all the properties belonging to Countess Justa in Spain for 2500 *sueldos*. This countess, the dowager of Ansur Díaz, a member of the Banu Family, did certainly enter Marcigny; the buyer was her stepson and the most outstanding nobleman from his own family in King Alfonso VI's court. In the *narratio* of this diploma, the abbot accounts for everything:

> Ego Ugo abba Sancti Petri, Cluniacensis monasterio, una cum collegio monacorum qui ibi sunt deseruientium et sub iussionem nostram sororum, deodicarum atque uirginum Sancti Petri Marcionensis sedis monasterii. In ipsius ergo monasterii aduenit nobis sub dominationem nostram, propter amorem Dei, comitissa de terra Spanensis nomine Iusta, et non reliquit in patria sua nec filios, nec filias, et habebat hereditates plurimas in ipsius terra. Et elegimus infra nosmetipsos ut ipsas qui inde pro emere fuissent que non habuisset eas alius homo nisi propinquus suus aut de uiri sui, qui fuit comite Ansur Didaz. Et ipse comes qui fuit uir suus reliquia filius alia uxori, nomine comite domno Petro. Et placuit ad nos super nominati et ad illa comitissa domna Iusta ut emisset eas illo comite domno Petro antenatus suus plusquam alius homo.[105]
>
> (I, Hugh, abbot of St Peter's, the monastery of Cluny, together with the community of monks serving God there and under the order of our sisters and consecrated virgins of St Peter's, the site of the monastery of Marcigny. A countess from Spanish lands named Justa came to us, under our jurisdiction, for the love of God, and she did not leave in her homeland either sons or daughters, and in that land she had a lot of properties. And we chose ourselves that those properties that were on sale there no one else would have them but a relation of hers or his man's, Count Ansur Didaz. And this same count who was her husband had a son by another wife, and his name is Lord Count Peter. And it pleased us, the aforementioned, and the aforesaid lady Justa, that she should sell them to the Lord Count Peter, her stepson, rather than to any other man.)

Alfonso VI and Abbot Roberto took the first steps to establish the Benedictine Rule following the Cluniac reform as it was happening in *Domnos Sanctos*, which the nuns of the monastery of San Pedro were dependent on.

But circumstances changed, as mentioned above, under Abbot Bernardo and his successors, and King Alfonso VI's efforts were ephemeral. Therefore, at the end of the eleventh century, things were also different for the nuns. They

[105] The document is registered by Ruiz Asencio, *Colección documental del archivo*, IV: *1032–1109*, doc. 1237, pp. 519–20; and Reglero de la Fuente, *Cluny en España*, doc. 4, pp. 695–96. The latter comments that some members of the Alfonso family also entered Cluny — Munio Fernández, for example (pp. 314–15).

may have been concentrated at San Pedro de los Molinos while a new monastic building was being constructed, which would account for the fact that temporarily San Pedro de los Molinos sheltered the several female communities while Abbot Diego was having the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas built. This seems sensible to infer from an *oblatio puellae*, in 1095, which can serve as a reference point: Gonzalo Núñez and his wife Goto gave their daughter Teresa to the monastery of Sahagún and its abbot, Diego, so that she could serve God in the monastery of San Pedro de los Molinos; likewise, they donated to the above mentioned monasteries all their properties in several places, including parts of the monasteries of San Martín de la Fuente and Santa María de Piasca.[106] Later on, Teresa became prioress and abbess of the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas.[107]

Second, once the nunnery was built (between 1087 and 1110),[108] the community would follow St Benedict's Rule under the Sahagún Benedictines.[109] By the year 1100, the monastery of San Pedro Apóstol was already consolidated, the various communities were already merged, and only San Pedro de las Dueñas is quoted as being run by Abbess Urraca, possibly Urraca Fernández, in the first decade of the twelfth century.[110] The Alfonso lineage was still present and would continue to be so through the early twelfth-century abbesses, but the nunnery of San Pedro would still be dependent on Sahagún.[111]

To sum up, after the Cluniac solution had failed, the rule adopted was simply the Benedictine Rule. The Cassino model, which was pre-eminent now, would do away with 'family' monasticism and give a firm solution to stop the

[106] Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección diplomática*, III: *1073–1109*, doc. 950 (11 April 1095), pp. 280–82.

[107] In Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, doc. 8, corresponding to 1121, she appears as prioress; and after 1124, as abbess: docs 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Number 11 is from 17 June 1126, and no. 18 is from 1154.

[108] 'La construcción de la iglesia se sitúa entre los años 1087 y 1110, fecha esta última relacionada con el epitafio que se trazó sobre la tumba del abad Diego, hombre que parece haber dado impulsos definitivos a la obra' (The building of the church dates from between 1087 and 1110; the latter year is related to the epitaph on Abbot Diego's tombstone. He seems to have definitely boosted the works to their completion'); Valdés Fernández, 'La escultura románica del monasterio de San Pedro de las Dueñas (León)', p. 378.

[109] See note 67.

[110] Domínguez Sánchez, *Colección documental medieval*, docs 5 and 6, pp. 423–24.

[111] Carriedo Tejedo, 'Los orígenes del Monasterio Benedictino de San Pedro de Dueñas', p. 37, where the author comments on the early abbesses' families.

aristocratic owners' control over religious communities, although the process was slow and gradual. San Pedro de las Dueñas became the main Benedictine nunnery affiliated with Sahagún, with a clear intervention of the Leonese and Castilian royalty. In it converged other nunneries from the Liébana region and from the present-day province of Palencia, as well as those monasteries under the dedication of St Peter in the Sahagún area. A concentration of monasteries had taken place, mainly due to the convergence of *portiones/rationes* of 'family' monasteries in the monastery of Sahagún itself. Alfonso VI was among those owners. Following the Coyanza regulations, as well as the Gregorian Reform, the female communities forgot double monasticism.

After the death of Alfonso VI, his daughter, Queen Urraca, granted Abbot Domingo of Sahagún, in 1116, the right to mint money. Its benefits were divided into three parts: one for the queen herself, one for the monastery of Sahagún, and the remaining third for the nunnery of San Pedro de las Dueñas.[112]

2.2 'Family' Monasteries and 'Benedictinization' in the Twelfth Century: The Case of Galicia

A decade ago, Baury, scholar of the Rioja monastery of Santa María de Cañas, pointed out in an article on the Castilian Cistercian nuns that St Bernard's female branch could not have existed in the twelfth century, given the evolution of the Order itself and the General Chapter of the Cistercians, because there was not a juridical frame for nuns in the Order.[113] However, the White Monks did allow the nuns to call themselves Cistercians and imitate their lifestyle, and also advised the nuns regarding such a life. This is why the 'phenomenon' of integrating the nuns into the Order does not owe anything to the opinion the monks had of the nuns, but is a consequence of the great transformations that the government of the Order underwent in the late twelfth century.[114] In trying to account for the behaviour of Alfonso VIII of Castile and his queen, Eleanor Plantagenet, when they founded the powerful monastery of Santa María de las Huelgas in Burgos, Baury notices that the monarch was trying to imitate the

[112] Fernández Flórez, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 1195, pp. 47–49. However, three years later (doc. 1201, pp. 58–59) Alfonso VII would make a new distribution and this time the convent of San Pedro would be left out.

[113] Cf. Baury, 'Diego López "le Bon", Diego López "le Mauvais"'.

[114] Cf. Baury, 'Émules puis sujettes de l'ordre cistercien'.

Castilian aristocracy and that he simply intended to give pre-eminence to the royal foundation.

Throughout the twelfth century, 'family' monasteries lost ground, were transformed, perhaps rapidly, and, in many cases, were gained by the reforms based on St Benedict's Rule, especially by the Cistercians, which spread in the Iberian peninsula from Tulebras to Perales, Santa María de Gradefes, Cañas, Vallbona, Trasobares, Marcilla, and Las Huelgas, among others.[115] Actually, it expanded from already existent monasteries (Vallbona de las Monjas, for example) or from foundations created from scratch.

If we focus our attention on the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula, we find that between 1152 and 1196 there were seven nunneries in the kingdom of León which accepted the Cistercian observance to various degrees: San Miguel de las Dueñas, Santa María de Gúa, Santa María de Gradefes, San Salvador de Ferreira de Pantón, Santa María de Carrizo, San Salvador de Santa Colomba de las Monjas, and Santa María de Moreira. Out of these seven, four were foundations *ex novo*; the other three were reconverted, and the inference is evident: none of them was initially under a dedication related to St Mary, but under St Saviour or St Michael, who were both (at least, the former) associated with traditional 'family' monasticism. San Salvador (Saviour) de Ferreira, initially of Santa María and San Salvador, would choose the Cistercian dedication of St Mary. Santa Colomba de las Monjas and San Miguel de las Dueñas,[116] however, kept theirs.

Only one of them, Ferreira de Pantón, is in Galicia, where I will now examine the transformation process in the twelfth century — likely a female trans-

[115] Cf. Cavero Domínguez, 'Implantación y difusión del Císter femenino hispano en el siglo XII'.

[116] Santa Colomba de las Monjas was a 'family' monastery — already mentioned above — in the late eleventh century. Its 'heirs' were Alfonso VI himself, Pelayo Vellídiz, and Nepociano Vermúdez, plus others. It continued to be a 'family' monastery until 1181, when it was restored under the Cistercian Order supported by Pelayo Taboadelo's children and other knights. See Cavero Domíngez, 'El Císter femenino en el Reino de León'.

San Miguel de las Dueñas appears in documentation at the end of the tenth century as an *ecclesia/monasteriolo/monasterio*. It was transferred to the monarchy and then to the Infantado, where it still was in the twelfth century, when Infanta Sancha Raimúndez restored monastic life in it as a nunnery dependent on the abbot of the male convent of San Salvador-Santa María de Carracedo, whose federation it joined. At the beginning of the thirteenth century it joined the Cistercian Order. See Cavero Domínguez and González García, *El monasterio de San Miguel de las Dueñas*, pp. 20–21.

formation, whether on the Benedictine general line or on that of the Cluniac or Cistercian reforms.

The great Galician 'family' monasteries were that of Sobrado (founded by Hermenegildo and Paterna, the count and countess of Présaras), that of Celanova (founded by St Rudesind), and that of Lorenzana (established by Count Osorio Gutiérrez). Slightly less important were those of Ramirás, Bóveda, and the aforementioned San Salvador de Ferreira. A priori, the latter were not dependent on the former. One of the former, at Sobrado, would turn towards the Cistercian reform in the twelfth century, becoming a male monastery in the context of an intense Cistercian colonization in Galicia.[117] Let us now consider the transformation of Ramirás, Bóveda, and Ferreira.

According to Emilio Duro Peña, the monastery of San Pedro de Ramirás 'might have existed in the second half of the tenth century', though the first documentary mention dates from the first quarter of the eleventh century.[118] This author adds that, from a 'family' and double monastery, it became a Benedictine female one. However, the editors of its documentary collection refer to it as a monastery not clearly defined, both in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the diploma which is dated 1 March 1017, it is described as

> Sancti Salbatoris, sanctorum Petri et pauli apostolorum et quórum reliquie recondite sunt in loco predicto, baselica fundata ese dinoscitur quod nuncupant monasterii Ramiranis, subtus montis Silbascura, discurrente ribulo Eires.[119]
>
> (The basilica is known to have been founded in honour of St Saviour, of St Peter and St Paul the Apostles, and of those whose relics are contained in the said place, which they now call the monastery of Ramirás, at the foot of the mountain Silbascura, on the bank of river Eires.)

The only safe assertion that can be made about this monastery is that it was a female one governed by an abbess who was called *domina*, *ona*, or lady 'de Ramiranes', and who was the spiritual head of the monastery and, at the same time, a temporary lady with both civil and criminal jurisdiction over its *cotos*.[120] Ultimately the monastery became Benedictine, but there is not a single docu-

[117] Cf. Pallares Méndez, *El monasterio de Sobrado*, and Portela Silva, *La colonización cisterciense en Galicia (1142–1250)*.

[118] Duro Peña, 'El monasterio de Ramiranes', p. 12. The documentary collection of this monastery was published by Lucas Álvarez and Lucas Rodríguez, *San Pedro de Ramirás*.

[119] Lucas Álvarez and Lucas Rodríguez, *San Pedro de Ramirás*, doc. 1, pp. 179–80.

[120] See Lucas Álvarez and Lucas Rodríguez, *San Pedro de Ramirás*, doc. 3, pp. 182–83.

mentary mention that locates this securely in the twelfth century. However, its Benedictine character was clear in the fifteenth century, under the reform carried out by Brother Rodrigo de Valencia, who made St Paio de Antealtares the centre of the Benedictine nunneries in Galicia.[121]

The second centre of interest is the monastery of San Miguel de Bóveda. In reference to it, in 1121 Queen Urraca and her son Alfonso, the future Alfonso VII, granted 'cartam cariterii et cautionis [...] super illud monasterium de Bobeda, in honore Sancti Michaelis archangeli constructum' (The charter of [charity?] and security [...] concerning that monastery of Boveda built in honour of St Michael the Archangel) to Odoario Ordóñez and his wife, Aldara Pérez.[122] In his introductory study on the monastery, the editor of its documentary collection, Adolfo Fernández Fernández, registers some epigraphic and artistic remains which are the evidence that it had existed prior to that date, and remarks that 'quite likely it was' a family foundation and had a double community, like other Galician monasteries in the tenth century. He also adds that, for some time, it sheltered a monastic community whose life was suspended later on. According to Fernández, that would account for an 1168 diploma by which Aris Fernández and his wife Gudina Oduáriz, with their children, endowed the nunnery of Bóveda; this endowment includes, besides the land properties, an important delivery of utensils, clothes and liturgical books, candelabra, crosses, antiphonaries, basins, and so forth:

> Ista omnia iam superius nominata monsterio supradicto integrum damus et firmiter concedimus et in potestate abbatise eiusdem loci et eius monialum qui ibi Deo seruient in uita sancta perseuerauerint et in agonne Dei certabimus, tam de nostris quam de extraneis omnia supradicta in integrum ponimus.[123]
>
> (We grant in full and firmly concede all the things named above to the said monastery, and we place all the above completely under the authority of the abbess of the place and her nuns who might serve God and persevere in the holy life and strive in combat for the Lord, both from our own possessions as from those of others.)

No monastic rule is referred to, nor is St Benedict a reference point for the nuns. But the endowers establish that the abbess will be chosen by them, by their lineage, 'genere nostro', with 'consilio episcopi'; therefore they would

[121] Duro Peña, 'El monasterio de Ramiranes', p. 32.

[122] Fernández Fernández, *O mosteiro feminino de San Miguel de Bóveda na Idade Media*. doc. 1, pp. 119–21.

[123] Fernández Fernández, *O mosteiro feminino de San Miguel de Bóveda na Idade Media*, doc. 2, p. 123.

control the abbess elections which would choose a person from their family. Bóveda would become, too, the reference point for their heirs, who would take it as their burial place:[124]

> Filii nostri et filie nostre et omne genus nostrum qui ipsum monasterium hereditauerint uel corpora sua ibi sepelierent nostris benedictionibus repleantur et eterna hereditate que ualde necessaria et in celo hereditentur.[125]
>
> (Our sons and our daughters and all our kind who might inherit this monastery or whose bodies might be buried there may be filled with our blessings and in eternal inheritance inherit in heaven all those things that are really necessary.)

Bóveda does not seem to have been different from the other aristocratic 'family' monasteries mentioned above. Even the 'heirs' to the monastery are referred to,[126] and its owners belong to the Galician aristocracy.[127] Later on, it was placed, no doubt, under the Benedictine Rule, but in the twelfth century there is no reference attesting to it. However, its female character is certainly evident. In the fifteenth century, it was annexed to the Cistercian community of San Clodio.

The third example is the monastery of San Salvador de Ferreira de Pantón.[128] As it happened with San Miguel de Bóveda, the documentary mentions come from the reign of Urraca (1109–26) and refer to the powerful Galician aristocracy. It was located in what is today the province of Lugo; and, as is reflected in the epigraphic and artistic sources, San Salvador had had monastic life before that time, so that it can be dated back to the central years of the eleventh cen-

[124] Fernando Oduáriz was buried there in 1169. He was Gudina Oduáriz's brother. His tombstone has been studied by Vázquez-Monxardín, 'Aportación á historia do convento de San Miguel de Bóveda'. It is also recorded by Fernández Fernández, *O mosteiro feminino de San Miguel de Bóveda*, pp. 28–29.

[125] Fernández Fernández, *O mosteiro feminino de San Miguel de Bóveda*, p. 123.

[126] 'Un monasterio familiar de herederos' (a hereditary 'family' monastery), says Duro Peña, 'El monasterio de San Miguel de Bóveda', p. 109.

[127] Their belonging to the house of Traba is dealt with in López San Gil, *La nobleza altomedieval gallega*, p. 55. On the relations between the monastery of Bóveda and that of Nogales (in León), founded by Vela Gutiérrez and Sancha Ponce, see Cavero Domínguez, 'La condesa Sancha Ponce y el monasterio de Nogales'. In the case of Nogales there is a precise reference to St Benedict's Rule.

[128] Cf. Enríquez Rodríguez, 'Real Monasterio de Santa María de Ferreira de Pantón'; and Fernández de Viana y Vieites, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Santa María de Ferreira de Pantón*.

tury at the latest.[129] Its description as a 'family' monastery is clear in the twelfth-century documentation, in which the existence of several heirs is registered.

In 1108 the monastery was governed by Abbess Jimena;[130] and, in 1117, Count Fernán Fernández and his wife, Infanta Elvira, Alfonso VI's daughter, donated the fourth part of this monastery, with its properties, to the powerful abbey of Cluny. The donation, which was only a partial one, does not seem to have been successful, as in 1125 the *portion* of the monastery donated to Cluny did not belong to the French monastery any more. [131]

In 1129 the monastery accepted a sale from Infanta Sancha Enríquez and her husband Sancho Núñez, together with Mendo Núñez, which attests to the dynamics of the monastery, now run by Abbess Marina. From that moment until 1175 there is no documentation for this monastery. But in this year Countess Fronilde Fernández was the head of the monastery, 'quam ego [Fronilde herself] habui ab auis, et astatuis meis'.[132] She opted for the Cistercian monastic renovation, being dependent on the male monastery of Meira:

> Concedo [...] illis Monialibus, quae in Religione sancta vouerint perseuerare, iuxta consuetudinem Cisterciensium Monachorum, per manum Abbatis, vocati Vitalis de Meyra et conuentus sui,[133]
>
> (I grant [...] to those nuns who might vow to persevere in holy religion according to the custom of the Cistercian monks, under the authority of the abbot called Vitalis de Meyra and his community,) in agreement with Juan, the bishop of Lugo. Countess Fronilde added other heirs' rights,[134] and, with royal support, transformed this monastery of San Salvador de Ferreira.[135]

[129] According to its editor, the first diploma in the Ferreira collection is a document from 962 (?), which has been considered a forgery by several authors and which also presents several other problems. See Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Santa María de Ferreira de Pantón*, doc. 1, p. 19; and the comments in Moure Pena, *El monasterio femenino de Ferreira*, pp. 21–23.

[130] Cf. Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 5, pp. 22–23.

[131] Cf. Bishko, 'The Cluniac Priories of Galicia and Portugal'. See also this author's later work, *Spanish and Portuguese Monastic History, 600–1300*.

[132] Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 7, p. 24.

[133] Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 7, p. 24. See also the interesting comments by Reglero de la Fuente, *Cluny en España*, p. 174, and Reglero de la Fuente, *El monasterio de San Isidro de Dueñas en la Edad Media*, doc. 66, pp. 170–71.

[134] Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 9 (dated 1182), p. 26: Doña Elvira donates to Countess Fronilde her patronage rights over the monastery of Ferreira 'iure fundationis'.

[135] Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 8, p. 25. It is a diploma issued by

Following Father Risco (a well-known eighteenth-century historian), Teresa Claudia Moure Pena comments that the monastery of Sobrado de Trives, governed by Abbess María Sánchez, was annexed to Ferreira;[136] and another foundation, Santa María de Moreira, was also placed under the abbot of Meira's obedience.[137]

But, as discussed above, the transfer of the monastery did not mean that the owner aristocracy gave up their rights for nothing. On the contrary, they expected to go on controlling the convent. At Ferreira, Guiomar Rodríguez, Countess Fronilde's daughter, ratified her mother's stipulations in 1196 as she confirmed its transfer to the Cistercian Order.[138] The strong control that the owner aristocracy was determined to maintain over nuns can be detected throughout the thirteenth century. By then, however, 'family' monasteries were not viable.

Thus, in the north-western part of the Iberian Peninsula, the monasteries of San Pedro de Ramirás, San Miguel de Bóveda, and San Salvador-Santa María de Ferreira de Pantón underwent an evolving process, slow but unstoppable, from the basis of the traditional 'family' and double monasticism towards the 'Benedictinization' which was progressing through either the traditional Cassino model or the reformed, whether Cluniac or Cistercian. All this happened throughout the twelfth century.

The initial familial origins of Galician female monasticism persisted, as shown in the examples presented above, until late eleventh or early twelfth century, holding on tight to practices which, by then, had already disappeared in lands further east, and in the centre of Castile and León. When the female Cistercians established themselves in Galicia, as well as in El Bierzo in the present province of León, it was clearly done with dependence on male monasticism and with no reference whatsoever to pre-eminent nunneries like that of Las Huelgas in Burgos. In the case of Ferreira de Pantón, it was under the obedience of the male abbey of Meira, whose abbot's name is specifically mentioned.[139]

Fernando II and dated 1180.

[136] Moure Pena, *El monasterio femenino de Ferreira*, p. 33.

[137] Cavero Domínguez, 'El Císter femenino en el reino de León', p. 85. It was founded by Countess Sancha, a daughter of Álvaro Rodríguez and Infanta Sancha, count and countess of Sarria and also founders of the monastery of Santa María de Meira.

[138] Fernández de Viana, *Colección diplomática*, doc. 10, p. 26.

[139] Cavero Domínguez, 'El Císter femenino en el reino de León', p. 92.

The transformation of the Galician monasteries was orientated to the original, though late, Benedictine system, as shown in the cases of Ramirás and San Miguel de Bóveda. In the former, the presence of *dominae/onas* granted a preeminent role to women in the process of transformation, which, likewise, seems to have been rather slow. The managerial power, however, moved away from the familial model — that is, from the pressure of aristocratic owners.

Conclusions

Regional differences are detected in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. These were marked by the more rapid 'Benedictinization' process in the east (Aragon and Catalonia) than in the west (Galicia) and the centre (León and Castile), where the Cassino rule spread more slowly. Benedict of Aniane's presence in Catalonia was the initial instigator of this early dissemination. But let us highlight the presence of Benedictine female regulations in Castile, the *Libellus a Regula Sancti Benedicti subtractus*, which dates from the tenth century, though it seems to be an isolated case.

There was an evolving process in the transformation of monastic family institutions towards Benedictine monasticism, which shows its own timeline. Three stages can be differentiated. The first lasted until the central years of the eleventh century. 'Family' monasticism was remarkable in this phase. A second period, which shows the Benedictine transformation process more clearly, corresponds to the last third of the eleventh century. In the areas of Castile and León, it covers the last part of Fernando I's reign and the first part of Alfonso VI's. A 'Benedictinization' process began during this period, and it was frequently a Cluniac one. Finally, the third stage leads us to a transformation which, besides being Benedictine, was orientated to the Cistercian reform, in the latest part of the twelfth century and well beyond the turning of the thirteenth century.

As far as creation, organization, and transformation are concerned, female monasticism owes a lot to *dominae* coming from the royalty, noble institutions, and regional aristocracies. Both the royalty and the nobility founded, endowed, and maintained monasteries where noblewomen entered and lived. These women had been widows, repudiated, and those who were not meant to marry. They could enter and live in the cloisters, though in many cases they did not live following a monastic rule. Monasteries depending on Infantados or heading them and those that were 'family' institutions maintained their memory of their lineage through their *dominae*.

Finally, the great reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were the key to this process of transformation. It was relevant to this process that important

councils were held at this time — Coyanza (1055) and Compostela (1056). The implementation of the Gregorian Reform in Spain was also quite significant. All of these reforms led to the protection of Church properties that were in lay hands and to the independence of monasteries, which seem to have been trying to break away from lay aristocratic owners and define and protect their land properties.

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Cistercian Nuns in Northern Italy: Variety of Foundations and Construction of an Identity

Guido Cariboni

Introduction

In the last two decades research into female Cistercian monasticism in Italy, and particularly in northern Italy, has undergone certain developments.[1] Representative of these are the pioneering essay by Valeria Polonio, 'Un'età d'oro della spiritualità femminile a Genova: devozione laica e monachesimo cistercense nel Duecento'; the volume *Monasteria Nova*, centred on the coenobites of Liguria;[2] the conference held in *Rifreddo di Saluzzo*;[3] and the recent treatise by Cristina Sereno, *Il monastero cistercense femminile di S. Michele d'Ivrea*. The proliferation of such studies, many of which are built on a solid documentary base, now allows us to attempt to trace a more general picture of the phenomenon, beginning with a comparative analysis.

In her appendix to Louis Lekai's *I cistercensi: ideali e realtà*, Laura Del Pra identifies fifty-eight Cistercian convents in northern Italy up to the end of the thirteenth century: fifteen in Piedmont, eleven in Lombardy, fourteen in Liguria, nine in Veneto, and nine in Emilia Romagna.[4] Although useful, her

[1] The newest report on the bibliography of female Cistercian monasticism is in Felten, 'Abwehr, Zuneigung, Pflichtgefühl'.

[2] Bozzo Dufour and Dagnino, *Monasteria Nova*.

[3] Comba, *Il monastero di Rifreddo*.

[4] Del Pra, 'Repertorio delle abbazie cistercensi in Italia'.

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work, in light of archival research, is limited, particularly with regard to the dates of foundation and incorporation.

In this essay I do not intend to present a complete review of all the female monasteries that were connected in some way to the White Nuns in the area I am considerating. I will, rather, concentrate on two problematic reference points: the moment of foundation or incorporation of the groups of nuns into the Order; and the gradual construction of a Cistercian community identity.

The geographical area considered includes the current regions of Liguria, Piedmont, Lombardy, and Emilia, for which the studies and editions of sources are richer and on which I have conducted direct archival research (especially on Lombardy and Emilia).[5] However, I will also refer sporadically to particularly interesting cases in Veneto and Tuscany.

Foundation or Incorporation

Female Cistercian monasticism in northern Italy is mainly a phenomenon of the thirteenth century. Sporadic examples can perhaps be found even during the twelfth century, but they should be carefully analysed case by case.[6]

The debate on the precise nature of a Cistercian monastery is closely tied to its moment of foundation or, rather, at what level and with what characteristics a community could define itself as fully integrated into the structure of the Order, particularly if an already-founded monastery was the object of a gradual annexation process — something often never fully completed.

Those monasteries that were part of the Order from their foundation constitute a rather small part of the total number. Among these are the Piacentine abbeys of Sta Maria del Terzo Passo, Sta Maria di Nazareth, and Sta Maria di Galilea, as well as Sta Maria del Monte Oliveto near Castellarquato.[7] To this must be added Pogliola, in the diocese of Asti, in south-western Piedmont, first a priory and then an abbey, founded between 1176 and 1180 by the noble fam-

[5] Cariboni, 'Comunità religiose femminili legate ai Cistercensi a Piacenza'; Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo cistercense femminile in Lombardia ed Emilia'; Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo femminile cistercense'.

[6] Chiappa Mauri, 'Sulle tracce del "nuovo" monachesimo'; Merati, 'Una precoce esperienza cistercense femminile'. I have clarified some of the conclusions of these studies in Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo femminile cistercense', pp. 68–69.

[7] Cariboni 'Comunità religiose femminili'; see also Nasalli Rocca, 'I monasteri cistercensi femminili di Piacenza'. On Sta Maria del Monte Oliveto, see also Evangelista, 'Indirizzi economici del monastero di Sta Maria del Monte Oliveto'.

ily of the da Morozzo.[8] There are also St Stefano di Millesimo, originating in 1216 in the diocese of Alba, thanks to the intervention of the marquises of Carretto (a branch of the Aleramici family);[9] and Sta Maria di Valle Christi, founded in 1204 by Otto, archbishop of Genoa, thanks to the donation of a *fundus* in the parish church of Rapallo by two noblewomen, Tiba and Antilia *de Mari*, for the construction of a Cistercian church.[10]

The fortunes of the Piacentine monastery of Terzo Passo were exemplary. Its foundation was promoted by a group of families headed by the Viscontis of Piacenza and including exponents of the Gnachi de Fontana family, major vassals of the bishop, and of the de Tuna family, also members of the vassal order. All clans supported the *societas militum*, the noble party.

If between 1214 and 1218 these clans offered the founding endowment indispensable for the birth of the monastery, the key role in its genesis was played by Baiamonte, the abbot of Chiaravalle della Colomba, also of the Visconti family, who presided at all the acts of donation in favour of the newly created community of nuns of Cîteaux. Baiamonte was a prominent person in Piacentine ecclesiastical circles between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,[11] and held positions of importance for the Roman Church in the areas of reform and of the correction of the regular bodies. Religious motivations and institutional expediency therefore mingled with family strategies. Before 1214 the abbot of La Colomba had already had direct experience of Cistercian female monasticism. His monastery was, in fact, for some years the mother abbey of two of the first communities of Cistercian nuns in Liguria, St Spirito di Bisagno near Genoa and Sta Maria di Latronolio in Varazze.[12] Here Baiamonte conducted periodic visits and corrections, even intervening in abbey elections. The initial Piacentine community developed around the charismatic figure of Franca, abbess of the episcopal monastery of St Siro of Piacenza, who also belonged to the Vitaltas, a family affiliated with the *societas militum*.[13] The first

[8] Grillo, 'Il monastero di Pogliola nella concorrenza'.

[9] Polonio, 'I Cistercensi in Liguria', pp. 44–47.

[10] Polonio, 'Un'età d'oro della spiritualità femminile', pp. 328–29; 'I Cistercensi in Liguria', pp. 161–66.

[11] Rapetti, *La formazione di una comunità cistercense*, pp. 97–101.

[12] For St Spirito di Bisagno, see Ughelli, *Italia sacra*, IV (1719), col. 374. 10 January 1217, *Ex parte priorisse* (Potth. --), in *Regesta Honorii papae III*, ed. by Pressutti, I, 41, n. 222; 20 March 1224, *Ex parte priorisse*, in *Regesta Honorii papae III*, ed. by Pressutti, II, 228, n. 4879.

[13] Bruschi, 'Franca da Vitalta', pp. 588–90.

group of nuns was composed of the faithful of noble Piacentine lineage, among which, naturally, that of the benefactors took the lead.

Some years later Abbot Baiamonte was even more decisive than in the case of the Terzo Passo in the creation of a second abbey, that of Monte Oliveto in Castellarquato.[14] In a papal letter of 1233 he was, in fact, defined as founder of the monastery, *fundator monasterii*.[15]

These two Piacentine monasteries were without doubt exceptions in northern Italy. In fact, incorporations into the order of already-consolidated communities were much more numerous. These were almost always *domus*, isolated and disconnected from traditional monasticism, and, at least apparently, without a precise established regulatory path. To quote Kaspar Elm, we could define these as 'semi-religious' communities.[16] These groups of penitential stamp — often in cooperation with the male element, and also with charitable purposes — managed to survive and even prosper without particular difficulty in the ecclesiastical structure, which was almost always under episcopal protection. They offered a response to the demand for religious life, both because many of the faithful were substantially denied access to a traditional order, and because the monastic model, even reformed, no longer seemed to satisfy the spiritual aspirations emerging in society after the reforms of the eleventh century.

For Piedmont it shall suffice to mention the *conversae et rendute* of Sta Maddalena del Ponte near Biella, subject to the bishop of Vercelli;[17] the hospital of St Spirito of Vercelli, guided by a *magistra* and whose *sorores* were called *de Caritate*;[18] the hospital of St Spirito of Asti;[19] Sta Maria di Fonte Stivolato, in the territory of the village of Chieri;[20] and Sta Maria di Latronolio, in the diocese of Acqui.[21] For Lombardy, there is St Cristoforo and Sta Maria in Pertica, in Pavia;[22]

[14] Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo cistercense femminile in Lombardia ed Emilia', pp. 42–43.

[15] 4 June 1233, *Dilecte in Christo* (Potth. --); Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Archivio Diplomatico, Atti Pontifici, cass. 5, n. 82.

[16] Elm, 'Die Stellung der Frau im Ordenswesen'; Elm, 'Vita regularis sine regula'; Wehrli-Johns, 'Voraussetzungen und Perspektiven'.

[17] Sereno, *Il monastero cistercense femminile di S. Michele d'Ivrea*, pp. 48–50.

[18] Ferraris, 'I fratres et sorores de Karitate'.

[19] Sereno, *Il monastero cistercense femminile di S. Michele d'Ivrea*, pp. 60, 83–84; Bordone, 'St Spirito e Sta Anna', pp. 157–63; Goria, 'Un fondo archivistico inesplorato'.

[20] Vai, 'Le dipendenze femminili', pp. 107–12.

[21] Bozzo Dufour and Dagnino, *Monasteria Nova*, pp. 244–48.

[22] Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo cistercense femminile in Lombardia ed Emilia', pp. 45–47, 51, 54–55.

Sta Maria del Boschetto, in Cremona;[23] Sta Maria di Riolo, near Lodi;[24] and St Vittorello all'Olmo, of Milan.[25]

The incorporation of these *domus*, not always successful, is part of the tortuous process of regulation of religious life, especially female, which without doubt registered a strong impulse in the early decades of the thirteenth century, in particular with canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council: *Ne nimia religionum diversitas*.[26] This development only accentuated a trend already present in the previous century, when the regulatory texts — in particular, the rules — were increasingly considered to found religious life juridically,[27] to the extent that in the papal privileges the clause of regularity was gradually introduced.[28]

For female communities, moreover, an element of vital importance, besides the regular path, was being able to count on the periodic visit and, in particular, on the pastoral and often material care of the brothers, whether these be monks, canons, or friars, into whose order the *sorores* had been incorporated or, as more often happened, attempted to be incorporated. In northern Italy, besides the Cistercians, the *ordo Sancti Damiani* (that is, the future Clarisses),[29] the *Humiliati*,[30] the Order of the canons of St Mark of Mantua,[31] and, to a lesser degree, also the Dominicans,[32] were involved in this process of institutionalization. However, without doubt the Order of Cîteaux represented the most important outlet for these still not fully regularized communities.

[23] Filippini, 'Gli ordini religiosi tra vita ecclesiastica e impegno caritativo', p. 179.

[24] 8 June 1245, *Ex parte dilectarum* (Potth. --); Milano, Archivio di stato di Milano, Pergamente per fondi, cart. 145.

[25] Alberzoni, *Francescanesimo a Milano*, p. 26; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 366, n. 32.

[26] *Constitutiones Concilii quarti Lateranensis*, ed. by Garcia y Garcia, p. 62. On this canon, see Maccarrone, 'Le costituzioni del IV concilio lateranense', pp. 36–45; Alberzoni, 'I nuovi ordini, il IV concilio lateranense', pp. 75–89; Alberzoni, 'Curia romana e regolamentazione delle damianite', pp. 507–11.

[27] See, for example, canon 26 of the Second Lateran Council: *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. by Alberigo and others, p. 203.

[28] Dubois, 'Les Ordres religieux au XII[e] siècle'; Maccarrone, 'Primato romano e monasteri', pp. 853–60; Melville, 'Zum Recht der Religiosen', pp. 166–69, 186–87.

[29] Alberzoni, 'L'Ordine di St Damiano in Lombardia'.

[30] Alberzoni, '"Sub eadem clausura sequestrati"'; Andrews, *The Early Humiliati*, pp. 150–52, 160–62.

[31] Rigon, 'Penitenti e laici devoti'.

[32] Meersseman, 'La Bienheureuse Emile Bicchieri'.

In some cases the *mulieres religiose* settled in monasteries of ancient tradition, taking the place of a morally or economically impoverished Benedictine community. The results of the history of the Cremonese monastery of St Giovanni della Pipia are emblematic. The house, founded in 1079 by Bernardo, count of Sospiro, and his wife Berta, was donated to the *Patrimonium Sancti Petri*.[33] Around the 1230s the Cremonese Benedictines fell into serious material and spiritual crisis. The monastery was described as 'in spiritualibus erat enormiter deformatum' (outrageously deformed in spiritual matters) to the extent that 'quedam ipsarum [monialium] que credebantur virgines matres essent' (certain of the same nuns who are held to be virgins may be mothers). The news induced Pope Gregory IX to intervene resolutely, the more so because St Giovanni della Pipia, although not exempt, belonged to the Holy See. Before July 1235, the pope entrusted the correction of the nuns to some exponents of the Order of the Dominicans, who had established themselves in the city only a few years earlier. However, the initiative was unsuccessful, and the Roman Church then entrusted the reform directly to Stephen, called *Hispanus*, the provincial prior of the Dominicans in Lombardy. Stephen was a prominent figure in the Order; intimate friend of Dominic, he had been nominated as provincial prior, succeeding Jordan of Saxony, and, in this role, had conducted important missions on behalf of the Holy See, acquiring a certain experience regarding female regular life. In the summer of 1235 he visited Pipia personally and interrogated the nuns. Having communicated the results of the investigation to Rome, on 28 September of the same year the provincial prior received orders to proceed without delay with the reform of the institution, involving, if he thought necessary, even the secular branch. Since there was no possibility of the monastery being reformed while remaining within the Benedictine *religio*, on the instructions of the pope the institution was enrolled in the Order of Cîteaux.[34] On 18

[33] Andenna, 'Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche', pp. 46–47.

[34] The reconstruction of this affair is possible thanks to a letter of Gregory IX: 'Gregorius episcopus servus servorum Dei, dilecto filio [...] priori provinciali fratrum Predicatorum in Lombardia, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Olim miserabili statu monasterii Sancti Iohanns de Pipia Cremonensis diocesis intellecto, correctionem et reformationem ipsius primo quibusdam fratribus tui ordinis ac demum, eis non proficientibus, tam correptionem eandem quam transationem ipsius faciendam in Cisterciensem ordinem tibi, si bene meminimus, duxerimus comitendam. Tu vero in executione mandati procedens, prout ex litteris tuis accepimus, recepisti a singulis eiusdem monasterii monialibus de veritate dicenda corporaliter iuramentum, et quamquam per assertionem ipsarum nichil de nefandis earum actis penitus invenisses, cum ea etiam que manifesta erant et publica negavissent, presertim cum ante paucos dies quedam ipsarum que credebantur virgines matres essent, earum tantum infamiam fama

March 1236, the provincial prior, 'delegatus a domino papa super monasterio Sancti Iohannis de Pipia transferendo et mutando in ordinem Cisterciensem' (delegated by the Lord Pope to transfer and bring the monastery of St John of Pipia into the Cistercian Order), having sent away the original inhabitants, introduced the 'conventus et fraternitas Sancte Marie de Buschetto', an aggregation of *mulieres religiose* who had previously led a penitential life without following a precise rule. The *fraternitas* was regularized at the same time as the transfer. The passage of the community of Boschetto to the new residence was made official by a certified act. In fact, on behalf of the Holy See, owner of the building and of the wealth connected to it, Stephen gave the monastery of St John in concession, with all its spiritual and temporal goods, to Castella, already the superior of the penitential community and now the abbess. She received this wealth not only in the name of her community but also in the name of the Order of Cîteaux.[35]

publica manifestat. Ne igitur dicte moniales in multorum scandalum cumputrescant in suis sordibus ut iumenta, discretioni tue per apostolica scripta mandamus quatinus omni dilatione ac excusatione cessantibus, in executione mandati nostri procedas iuxta traditam tibi formam; invocato ad hoc, si opus fuerit, auxilio brachii secularis. Datum Asisii IIII kalendas octubris pontificatus nostri anno nono'; 28 September 1235, *Olim miserabili statu* (Potth --), Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Pergamene per fondi, cart. 172.

[35] 'Frater Stephanus prior provincialis omnium fratrum Predicatorum in Lombardia delegatus a domino papa super monasterio Sancti Iohannis de Pipia transferendo et mutando in ordinem Cisterciensem sicut continetur in literis domini pape bullis domini pape signatis atque bullati et a me visis et lectis, tenores quarum tales sunt [...]. Qua propter suprascriptus frater Stephanus, prior provincialis omnium Predicatorum in Lombardia, delegatus a domino papa auctoritate suprascripti domini pape qua fungebatur, induxit dominam Castellam abatissam monasterii Sancte Marie de Buschetto Cremonensis diocesis et Beatricem, Patientiam, Pacem, Imildam, Olivam, Offrasiam, Umilitatem, Agnetem, Imildam de Vedexeto, Iacopam, Rambertam, Benedictam, Iacopam, Mariam, Citiliam, Richam, Mariam, Ioanam alteram et Berta, sorores suprascripti monasterii Sancte Marie de Boscetto in monasterium Sancti Iohannis de Pipia et tradidit et dedit eis dictum monasterium Sancti Iohannis de Pipia cum rebus et possessionibus suis tam temporalibus quam spiritualibus ubicumque sint et reperiantur esset ad dictum monasterium pertinere sive sint reales sive personales, et de eis rebus spiritualibus et temporalibus datum fecit eisdem mulieribus recipientibus nomine suprascripti monasterii et ordinis. [...] Et insuper suprascriptus frater Stephanus prior provincialis, auctoritate suprascripti domini pape qua in hac parte fungebatur, dedit cessit atque mandavit suprascriptis mulieribus stipulantibus nomine monasterii suprascripti et ordinis omnia iura omnesque acciones seu raciones et defenciones et exceptiones reales et personales, utiles et directas civiles et naturales que et quas ipse prior provincialis attoritate[c] domini pape habebat vel sibi competebant in dicto monasterio Sancti Iohannis de Pipia et in rebus spiritualibus et temporalibus et in domibus et possessionibus et fictis et decimis. [...] Et ita posuit eam abatisam in tenutam et corporalem

Gregory IX confirmed the work of his representative. This passage allowed the monastery to make rapid and clear spiritual and material progress so that, as can be seen from the papal letter dated 2 June 1236, 'It happened that, with the favour of divine Grace, having uprooted the useless plants, and planted perfumed plants rich with fruit, where before eight nuns lived in poverty now fifty live praising God in very sweet perfume'.[36] In this way the Roman Church attained two objectives: in the first place, a monastery of the *patrimonium Sancti Petri*, which otherwise would have been lost, submerged in debt and scandals, was recovered and relaunched; in the second place, a flourishing but originally canonically unorganized community was valorized. To reinforce the measure even further, on 25 June 1238 the pope took St Giovanni della Pipia under apostolic protection and granted the nuns the *privilegium*, *Religiosam*

possesionem de suprascriptis rebus etiam per funem campane qui est in capitulo suprascripti monasterii nomine et vice suprascripti monasterii et ordinis Cisterciensis auctoritate suprascripti domini pape qua super predictis fungebatur', 18 March 1236, Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Pergamene per fondi, cart. 172.

[36] 'Gregorius episcopus servus servorum Dei, dilectis in Christo filiabus .. abbatissae et monialibus monasterii Sancti Iohannis de Pipia Cremonensis, Cisterciensis ordinis, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Quoniam scriptum est omnis plantatio quam non plantavit pater celestis eradicabitur et labores impiorum iusti edent, mutationem dextre excelsi que ad laudem et gloriam Dei animarumque salutem in monasterio vestro auctoritate nostra facta dinoscitur solita volumus sicut et tenemur prosequi pietate. Sane visitatione dicti monasterii quod maxime in spiritualibus erat enormiter deformatum dilecto filio fratri Stephano, priori fratrum Predicatorum in Lombardia, a nobis sub certa forma commissa, idem mandati nostri fines diligenter observans, cum nulla spes superesset quod in suo posset ordine reformari, monialibus in eo degentibus inde remotis, vos prius in loco nimis ineptus, videlicet in monasterio Boscelli[c], Cremonensis diocesis, et in summa positas egestate, de illo ad istum auctoritate apostolica transferens eis substituere procuravit, pluribus ex prioribus monialibus habitum et ordinem vestrum sumentibus, quibusdam vero nec hec facere nec in aliis monasteriis sui ordinis volentibus collocari, iamque factum est gratia cooperante divina quod evulsis plantis inutilibus et fructuosis ac odoriferis consitis, ubi prius octo moniales in paupertate et in miseria vivere consueverant nunc quinquaginta fere habitare noscuntur in suavissimum odorem domino iugiter iubilantes. Nos vero novellam plantationem eiusdem monasterii rore apostolice gratie irrigare volentes ut cum animarum salute flores et fructus valeat sicut fiduciam certam habemus producere honestatis, vestris devotis supplicationibus inclinati quod laudabiliter et pie factum est in hac parte, auctoritate apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti patrocinio comunimus. Nulli ergo omnino hominum licet hanc paginam nostre confirmationis infrangere vel ei ausu temerario contraire. Si quis autem hoc aptentare presumpserit indignationem omnipotentis Dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursurum. Datum Interamne IV nonas iunii anno decimo'; 2 June 1236, *Quoniam scriptum est* (Potth. --), Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Museo diplomatico, cart. 20, n. 547; Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Registri vaticani, 18, fol. 159[v], n. 96.

vitam eligentibus, reserved for female Cistercian monasteries.[37] Only in May 1245, nearly a decade from its entry into the congregation, Innocent IV, from Lyons, instructed the abbot of Colomba to visit the nuns of Pipia, who 'ardently desired to be placed under the guardianship' of the male monastery of Piacenza.[38] The choice fell on the monks of Chiaravalle, for their experience in the direction of female communities but also for the network of relations and contacts which tied them with Cremona.[39]

Various points common to incorporation processes can be found in this reform *iter*.[40] In the first place, the Roman Church played a leading role in the reform, indicating the Cistercian solution among various possible options, probably following a survey of the territory; second, the monastery of St Giovanni belonged to the *Patrimonium Sancti Petri*, as did the other *ecclesiae* with female members which later entered in the circle of the White Monks, such as Sta Maria di Rifreddo in Saluzzese,[41] St Pietro di Vesima, St Spirito di Bisagno, Sta Maria della Vesola, St Sepolcro di Sanpierdarena, and Sta Maria di Latronolio, all in Liguria;[42] third, the normal incorporation practice — that is, a *petitio* sent to the General Chapter of Cîteaux by the promoter of the institution — was not followed. In Lombardy this long and costly *iter* was followed for only three monasteries: Sta Maria Nova of Modena in 1250;[43] in 1251, the Milanese community of St Vittore all'Olmo;[44] and the abbey of Sta Maria del Monte Oliveto near Castell'Arquato in the diocese of Piacenza.[45] The balance

[37] 25 June 1238, *Religiosam vitam eligentibus* (Potth. --), Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Bolle e brevi, cart. 7, n. 55.

[38] 4 May 1245, *Vota devotorum ecclesie* (Potth. –), Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Pergamene per fondi, cart. 172.

[39] Rapetti, *La formazione di una comunità cistercense*, pp. 103–04.

[40] On the processes of incorporation, see also Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'.

[41] Grillo, 'Desiderio di autonomia e ricerche di protezione', pp. 60–65.

[42] *Le Liber censuum de l'Eglise romaine*, ed. by Fabre, Duchesne, and Mollat, I, 75–77.

[43] 'Inspectio abbatiae monialium Sancte Mariae Novae Mutinensis diocesis quam petit incorporari Ordini venerabilis pater episcopus sabinensis, de Locedio et de Fontevivo abbatibus committitur in plenaria Ordinis potestate qui ad locum etc. Abbas de Locedio hoc collegae suo denuntiet'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 353–54.

[44] 'Conceditur a Capitulo generali abbati de Morimundi in Lombardia ut abbatiam monialium Sancti Victoris ad Ulmum Mediolanansis diocesis, pro qua scribit dominus Papa Capitulo generali, sicut hactenus visitavit deinceps visitet auctoritate Capituli generalis'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 366, n. 32.

[45] Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo cistercense femminile in Lombardia ed Emilia', pp. 55–56, n. 3.

is no more reassuring for other regions of northern Italy. In Liguria two incorporations were conceded by the General Chapter: Sta Maria della Vesola[46] and St Sepolcro di Sanpierdarena in 1236;[47] there was one incorporation in Veneto: Sta Maria alla Piana, in the diocese of Treviso in 1230;[48] there were no incorporations in Piedmont.

Instead, St Giovanni della Pipia could take advantage of two elements which in northern Italy seemed to qualify the juridical annexing to the Order of Cîteaux of the majority of the female monasteries: the *privilegia* and the *littere cum sericeo* conceded to the Holy See and in which the appurtenance to the *Cisterciensis ordo* was clearly indicated; and the *officium visitationis* of a father abbot.

In some cases, the incorporation process was interrupted or remained incomplete even for decades. The vicissitudes of the community of St Cristoforo of Pavia, closely tied to Folco Scotti, first bishop-elect of Piacenza from 1210 to 1216 and later bishop of Pavia until 1229, are emblematic.[49] Sensitive to the problems of religious life, Folco had witnessed the birth of the first Piacentine Cistercian monasteries, and thus their initial developments, and so was able to discern their potential. In 1218, relying on these experiences, Scotti introduced the Cistercian institutions in Pavia as well, in a young and prosperous community of *mulieres religiose* established not far from the city walls at an episcopal church, St Cristoforo. At the beginning of the 1200s these nuns, defined as *capuçinne* in the private documentation of the period, had started up a *fraternitas*, leading a penitential life without, however, following an approved rule. Following their regularization a hybrid institutional formula was created; that is, the monastery followed the Cistercian institutions, it was incorporated into

[46] 'Abbatia monialium de Vesola, pro qua scripsit dominus Papa, ob reverentiam ipsius in societatem ordinis suscipitur, definitione tamen contra quam fieri videtur, in suo robore permanente'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 87, n. 18.

[47] 'Mandatum domini papae de abbatia monialium monasteri Dominici Sepulcri, in loco Sancti Patride arena Ianuensis diocesis nostro Ordini socianda, et sit filia domus Cistercii, exauditur, et inspectio locis illius committitur de Tillieto et Ripalta abbatibus, qui ad domum illam personaliter accedant, et faciant secundum formam ordinis quae viderint expedire. Abbas Locedii hoc eis denuntiet, et quid inde, etc.'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 156–57, n. 20.

[48] 'De domo Sancte Marie de Plana, de qua incorporanda Ordini dominus papa misit litteras suas abbati Sane Vallis, pro reverentia domini papae conceditur, ut Ordini incorporetur'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 85–86, n.10.

[49] Cariboni, 'Monasteri cistercensi maschili a Pavia', pp. 386–93.

the order by means of a papal confirmation, but for many decades it was not visited by the White Monks, remaining for this reason tied to the diocesan apparatus. Fulco did not stop with canonical reorganization. In fact, quite soon he transferred the community of St Cristoforo to the more suitable church of *Iesu Christi*, also in Pavia, which had been, up until a short time before, the seat of a small Cistercian male community, a daughter of La Ferté. This was a somewhat audacious operation, a veritable expropriation, conducted to the detriment of the Burgundian abbey. The protests of Simon, the abbot of La Ferté, to the Roman Church in 1227 had no effect. To annul the expropriation, the abbot raised doubts that the nuns of St Cristoforo belonged to the Cistercian Order, maintaining that they were still called *capuçinne*, that is, by the name that indicated the original semi-religious community. He therefore questioned their identity.[50]

The Construction of an Identity

The recourse of the abbot of La Ferté introduces the second point that I intend to deal with in this essay. Most of the communities incorporated in the Order of Cîteaux over the thirteenth century can be traced back to experiences often very distant from the Cistercian world, endowed with a high level of testability and whose institutional development was almost always guided by contingent causes not only of a religious but also economic, political, and social nature. Often these involved a tortuous process with unpredictable results, in which incorporation into the Order represented just an opportunity, a compromise which allowed the *sorores* to enter into a *religio approbata* and in this way to be able to enjoy all the advantages from a juridical and pastoral viewpoint.

Therefore, entry among the Cistercians was not a point of arrival for the nuns, as much as a starting point for the gradual formation of a Cistercian com-

[50] 'Gregorius episcopus servus servorum Dei, venerabili fratri episcopo et dilecto filio archidiacono Vercellensi, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Dilecti filii abbas et conventus de Firmitate, Cisterciensis ordinis, suam ad nos querimoniam destinaverunt quod abbatissa et conventus de domo Iesu Christi, que Capitine dicitur, Papiensis diocesis eandem domum Iesu Christi cum pertinenciis suis eorum monasterii de iure spectantem contra iusticiam detinent occupatam et reddere contradicunt. Ideoque discretioni vestre per apostolica scripta mandamus quatinus partibus convocatis auditis causam et appellatione remota sine debito terminetis, facientes quod decreveritis per censuram ecclesiasticam firmiter observari. Testes autem et çetera. Datum Laterani sexto idus novembris pontificatus nostri anno primo'; 8 November 1227, *Dilecti filii abbas* (Potth. --), Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Pergamene per fondi, cart. 632.

munity identity.[51] This gap, this discrepancy between formal identification and the identity really perceived and experienced, without doubt represents a serious problem, so much so that it was emphasized by the General Chapter of 1249: 'Since the nuns already incorporated in the Order enjoy the privileges and benefits of the Order itself, it is decent and honest that they conform to the Cistercians also in their behaviour.'[52]

Various instruments were employed to gradually elicit a Cistercian awareness in the newly incorporated communities which would differentiate these nuns from the rest of the regular experiences, yet which was, as far as possible, in conformity with the *statuta*. The first instrument was the institution of the *visitatio*, typical of Cistercian circles also among male monks. The figure of the visitor can be found in at least two types of documents. One is the *littere cum filo canapis* which the popes, particularly Gregory IX and Innocent IV, sent to male abbeys, entrusting an abbot with the education in regular discipline of the nuns just incorporated.[53] The second instrument, on the other hand, concerns private acts, often permutations, acquisitions, and donations, where the visitor flanked the abbess or prioress to supervise or watch over the juridical negotiation.[54]

In some cases the nuns themselves complained of the absence of a visitor. In 1230, for example, the *sorores* of St Cristoforo were obliged to nominate *magister* Bartolomeo of Benevento, canon of the cathedral, as their attorney to request from the Roman Curia a visitor of the Cistercian Order.[55]

[51] On these problems, see Burton, 'Constructing a Corporate Identity'; Cariboni, 'Problemi d'identità'.

[52] 'Cum moniales iam Ordini incorporatae privilegiis et aliis beneficiis Ordinis gaudeant, decens est et honestum ut in iis que secundum Deum et Ordinem fieri possunt, Ordini se conforment'; *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 335, n. 3.

[53] See above, nn. 24, 48.

[54] See, for example, a donation for the abbey of Millesimo: 'Quapropter dominus Henricus marchio sua bona et spontanea voluntate fecit puram et meram inter vivos donationem pro remedio animae suae et uxoris ejus Agathae, atque parentum, nec non et haeredum suorum monasterio St Stephani de Millesimo in manibus dominae Vilielmae abbatissae dicti monasterii atque in manibus domini Bonifacii abbatis Tilieti eiusdem monasterii visitatoris'; Moriondo, *Monumenta Aquensia*, II, col. 652. See also 12 September 1248, in *Carte inedite e sparse del monastero di Tiglieto*, ed. by Guasco di Bisio, Gabotto, and Pesce, p. 322, n. 108.

[55] 'Domina Ottobona, monasterii Iesu Christi Papiensis diocesis abbatissa, et domina Benvenuta et domina Valeria, domina Berta, domina Ysaya, domina Maria, domina Otta, item domina Benvenuta Buffaresta, et domina Bontata monace eiusdem monasterii, nomine et a parte eiusdem monasterii, magistrum Bertholameum de Benevento, canonicum Papiensem, constituerunt et fecerunt eorum procuratorem in Romana curia ad impetrandum litteras

Some male monasteries seemed to be more welcoming towards female communities than others. In particular, for a number of foundations visited, Sta Croce del Tiglieto and Sta Maria di Lucedio stand out in north-western Italy and,[56] for the Po area, St Pietro in Cerreto in the diocese of Lodi,[57] while Chiaravalle della Colomba took care of female monasteries throughout the north of the peninsula.[58]

Perhaps an even more effective propaedeutic tool for the gradual creation of a Cistercian identity was the shifting, even temporarily, of nuns from one monastery to another, so that, through example, expert nuns could introduce neophytes to the customs of daily life and especially to the rituals and liturgies of the Cistercian Order. In 1216 Enrico and Agata, the marquises of Carretto, donated St Stefano di Millesimo, the church they themselves founded in the diocese of Alba, to Petronilla, the abbess of the monastery of Sta Maria of Betton in Savoia, who sent nuns there to start a community.[59] Nuns from Betton were also present at the monastery of Brione.[60] In November 1235, Gregory IX charged the abbot of St Galgano, *visitator* of the recently reformed Tuscan female monastery of Montecelso, to introduce, if necessary, three or four nuns from other monasteries into that Cistercian community, to facilitate their learning the customs.[61] Perhaps the most explicit example in this sense

seu rescriptam vel rescriptum a summo pontifici super translatione fatienda de suprascripto monasterio seu premutacione ad ecclesiam predictam Sancti Crispofori et ad petendum visitatorem de ordine Cisterciensi et ad contradicendum in ipsa Romana curia; et quicquid ipse fecerit ratum et firmum habere et tenere promiserunt a parte eiusdem monasterii'; Milano, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Pergamene per fondi, cart. 632.

[56] The abbot of Tiglieto visited San Pietro of Vesima, in the diocese of Genoa (29 March 1224, *Ad preces dilectarum*, [Potth. --], *Regesta Honorii papae III*, ed. by Pressutti, I, 231, n. 4898); St Stefano di Millesimo (see n. 54).

The abbot of Lucedio was visitor of St Spirito of Vercelli (12 November 1220, *Cum sicut dilecte* [Potth. --], *Regesta Honorii papae III*, ed. by Pressutti, I, 459, n. 2770); Sta Maria Maddalena del Ponte di Biella (Sereno, *Il monastero cistercense femminile di S. Michele d'Ivrea*, p. 49); St Spirito di Asti (Sereno, *Il monastero cistercense femminile di S. Michele d'Ivrea*, p. 84).

[57] The abbeys of StaMaria di Riolo and Sta Maria in Pertica: Cariboni, 'Il monachesimo cistercense femminile in Lombardia ed Emilia', p. 47.

[58] St Spirito di Bisagno, Sta Maria di Latronolio, Sta Maria del Terzo Passo, St Giovanni della Pipia, Sta Maria del Monte Oliveto (see footnotes 11–13, 15, 38).

[59] Comba, '"Come le stelle del firmamento": la diffusione', pp. 29–30; Bozzo Dufour and Dagnino, *Monasteria Nova*, p. 45.

[60] Chiarle, 'Fondazioni monastiche e organizzazione del territorio', pp. 352–55.

[61] 22 November 1235, *Magne iocunditatis affectum* (Potth. --), *Carte dell'Archivio di Stato*

is that of the hospital of Sta Trinità and St Spirito of Asti. Bishop Guidotto donated this charitable body to the Genovese nuns of St Spirito di Bisagno in 1215. The abbess Druda, arriving from Genoa with a group of companions, took material possession of the church after receiving permission from its visitor, the abbot of Colomba, symbolically receiving into her own hands the bell ropes, handed over to her by the bishop's delegate. Druda remained in Asti for two months, then returned to her monastery of origin and ceded the office of abbess to Valeria, also originally from Genoa.[62]

In other instances it was the neophytes themselves who, wishing to learn the Cistercian way of life, went to live for a period in an already consolidated female monastery connected with Cîteaux, in this way absorbing, by cohabitation and imitation, the liturgical and disciplinary customs, which upon their return they would then transmit to their recently founded community of origin. An exemplary case is that of Carenza Visconti, among the initiators of Cistercian monasticism in Piacenza, who, on the advice of Abbess Franca, when she was not yet even a novice, accompanied by two preaching friars, went to the Ligurian monastery of Vallechristi, where she stayed for a year.[63]

di Siena, ed. by Ghignoli, pp. 218–20, n. 96: 'Pro instructione ipsarum presertim circa observantias ordinis assumas tres vel quatuor undecumque ipsius ordinis moniales easque ibidem recipi facias ab eisdem.'

[62] Bordone, 'St Spirito e Sta Anna', pp. 159–60; Comba, '"Come le stelle del firmamento"', pp. 25–26 (see n. 64), 30–31.

[63] 'Circa Incarnationis Christi annum millesimum et ducentesimum, exsurrexit quaedam puella, nomine Carentia, filia quorumdam Vicecomitum de Placentia. Ista praesagium exercens futurorum, usque ad annum aetatis quartum decimum scholas intravit, et omnem philosophicam scientiam ac moralem copiosissime didicit. Unde accidit, quod sicuti verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt, et spiritu oris ejus omnis virtus eorum; ita et ista corde conciperet, secumque quotidie tractaret, quomodo melius posset seculi pompam et vitam, ad quam verbis et exemplis per parentes et affines incitabatur, contemnere suamque virginitatem Christo et ejus matri Virgini consecrare. Super quo, fama comperta Virginis et Abbatissae Francae, saepius ad illam recurrebat; et eidem suum propositum intimans, consilium ab eadem solicite requirebat. Illa vero perpendens hoc donum esse a Deo, qui per hoc videbatur satisfacere velle desiderio suo, quoniam de Cisterciensibus monialibus, quarum Religio reboabat ubique, nulla tunc erat Placentae; suasit Carentae ut Januam pergeret, et apud unum monasteriorum Cisterciensis Ordinis, quorum ibi copia magna est et erat, se collocaret; atque desiderium suum aliquibus sanctis feminis manifestans, ab eisdem monasticam vitam disceret et approbaret. Reputans vero Franca beata, quod tantum illi Carentia sancta Religionis forma Cisterciensium complacebit, quod inde moveri non poterit, ex condicto cum illa convenit, ut si vita illa sibi placuerit, redeat ad se; sibique priusquam profiteatur, debeat intimare; Quia tecum, inquit, cogito, si perseveraveris in illo sancto proposito, conversari, et effectum percipere desiderii mei: scio enim quod si

A not inferior role in the gradual formation of a community identity belongs to the hagiographic texts. This involved in particular the *vita* of Franca of Piacenza, written in the fourteenth century by the Cistercian monk Bertramus Reoldus and published in the *Acta Sanctorum*. We also have a condensed version of this text, included in a manuscript originally belonging to the abbey of Terzo Passo of Piacenza.[64] This version is structured in liturgical form, divided into twelve lessons followed by an evangelical passage and a collect to be read on 25 April, the day on which the Blessed Franca was celebrated.

Franca, who on her death had only a local following, was the abbess of the traditional Benedictine monastery of St Siro in Piacenza, which she led, at least formally, until her death, as various documents testify. Although never becoming a Cistercian, in the last years of her life the future Blessed Franca backed and supported the establishment of the first female monastery of Cîteaux in her city.[65]

A very different version was transmitted by an anonymous hagiographer who narrated that Franca was obliged in the final years of her life, because of the hostility of corrupt sisters, to leave her Benedictine community of origin to found a new monastery, this time Cistercian, where she died and was buried in 1218.

There are at least three aspects that contribute to the emergence in this text of a Cistercian identity. The hagiographer, first of all, demonstrated the difference between the highly relaxed traditional Benedictine monasticism and the White Nuns' strictly aesthetic form of life approaching sanctity. In this, Franca of Vitalta seems to repeat the experience of other 'founder saints', such as Clare of Assisi and Diana of the Andalò, who before inaugurating their innovative communities had spent time in traditional monasteries only to leave dissatisfied. All of this put the hagiographer in a position to emphasize the differences between the already consolidated traditional forms and the

perseveraveris, Deus erit tecum, et per te parentes tui conficient monasterium Deo placitum, in quo simul conversabimur, animasque Christo Salvatori nostro multas congregabimus et lucrabimur, juxta pium sanctumque desiderium nostrum. Hujusmodi consiliis et admonitionibus assuefacta et quasi divinitus edocta Carentia, cum negotiatoribus Fratribusque duobus Paedicatoribus assectata, januam perrexit et juxta præmissa consilia recursum habuit ad Rapallum, Cisterciensis Ordinis monasterium feminarum: in quo quasi divinitus complexata, per annum laudabiliter nimis est conversata; et omnem regularem disciplinam cum omni dulcedine spiritus edocta'; Bertramus Reoldus, *Acta*, pp. 389–90, paras 22–23.

[64] Piacenza, Biblioteca comunale, MS Pallastrelli 141: *Vita beate Franche virginis*, fols 34^{r}–40^{v}.

[65] Bruschi, 'Franca da Vitalta', pp. 588–90; Dimier, 'Franca (Bienheureuse)'.

newly arisen *religiones*. This comparison allowed the disciplinary and institutional peculiarities of the new experiences to emerge — to be honest, often not very marked — attesting to the validity of such experiences and therefore, by contrast, causing the emergence of an identity.[66] In the second place, Franca, whose day-to-day experience is described in detail, was elevated to living rule, incarnation of the Cistercian disciplinary path. The individual identity of the abbess therefore constituted the basis for constructing the collective identity of the community.[67]

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the *vita* regards, however, the period of its composition, more than a century after the death of Franca. This delay was mentioned frequently even by the anonymous author who stressed, in fact, that the body of the Blessed Franca remained underground for fifty years, almost ignored, despite the repeated exhortations of Franca herself, appearing in dreams to both her sisters and the monks in the nearby male Cistercian abbeys.[68] All of this seems almost to indicate that the abbess, in whom the most

[66] Cariboni, 'Problemi d'identità', pp. 166–67.

[67] 'In tribus igitur locis praenominatis Franca sacra devote conversabatur, non minus aspere et religiose quam supradictum est in S. Syro, sed multo plus et plus; ita quod vita illius Deo complacens multas personas ad admirationem sui provocabat, et imitationem. Sed et vita dictae Carentiae, quae Priorissa fuerat constituta, ad aemulationem sanctitatis vicinos, ac vicinas incitabat; cujus Carentiae, sociarumque solicitudine locus iste ultimo locatus crevit in amplitudine possessionum, ac multitudine monialium et religiosarum, Beatae Franchae sanctam vitam imitantium. Et merito. Nam ipsa Beata, mirabilis in vita sua, praeter ea quae scripta sunt supra, licet post Completorium intraret cum aliis Sororibus Dormitorium, numquam tamen visa fuit intrare lectum; sed sicut divulgatum est per totum conventum, postquam sentiebat obdormire Sorores, prius de manibus Sacristae clavibus acceptis ecclesiae, intrabat oratorium, ibique pernoctabat, donec ipsamet ad Matutinalem horam socias tempestive satis excitaret. Cum haec et similia gravia nimis et grandia gereret, propter stomachi dolores quos incurrerat, ut praemissum est, Priorissa et aliae Sorores curaverunt solicite, ne denuo claves ecclesiae illi Sacrista permitteret. Quod Sacrista diligenter observante, nihilominus oratorium intrabat illa solito, portas illi aperiente Christo, qui est clavis, quae aperit et nemo claudit' [...] 'Anno vero Domini millesimo ducentesimo octavo decimo, de mense Aprilis, coepit gravius infirmari; et affirmans se mori, quotidie verbis et operibus moniales admonebat, ut honeste viverent et sancte, reddentes gloriam et honorem sponso cælesti Christo, et ejus beatae matri virgini, totique sancto Cisterciensi Ordini, pro cujus observatione non dubitabat se reverenter amantes perenni debere coronari'; Bertramus Reoldus, *Acta*, p. 391, para. 28, and p. 392, para. 33.

[68] 'Quocirca cum consilio Domini Abbatis de Columba fecerunt Sorores fieri capsellam de aere, et ita cum reverentia colligentes ossa, pulveremque corporis jam consumpti, posuerunt ea in decentiori quantulumcumque loco, parum a priori remoto juxta murum, per quem tantus esse non poterat transitus personarum. Et quia timebant istae, ne vi vel furto ab aliquibus comminantibus, ad instantiam praecipue Dominarum de S. Syro, dolentium se talem

profound Cistercian identity projected itself, was neglected for a long time, only to be rediscovered and valorized at a later period.

To conclude, the neglected memory of Franca is in my opinion indicative of the torturous and not at all mechanical or immediate rise among the female communities of a Cistercian identity which went beyond the simple juridical identification present in papal documentation. This objective was without doubt made more difficult by the extreme variety of the religious groups incorporated by various means into the Cistercian Order. There was a variety of origins, social extractions, relations with the ecclesiastic structure, and aims — a wealth which is almost impossible to classify and which testifies to the extreme vivacity of religious life in northern Italy in the midst of the Middle Ages.

thesaurum perdidisse, tollerentur Reliquiae ipsae, multo profundius ac secretius quam antea, tumulaverunt sub terra per brachia plura. Ubi cum per plures annos quiete jacuisset, coepit ipsa S. Franca, sororibus apparere in visionibus et dicere, Deo placere ut inde moveretur, et adhuc venerabilius reconderetur. Quod cum invicem sibi moniales sæpissime reserarent, non audebant haec extraneis revelare, nec novitatem aliquam efficere; praestolantes quod Deus aliter melius dignaretur providere. Anno igitur Domini millesimo ducentesimo sexagesimo sexto, in festo sancti Bernardi Abbatis, quod fit die vigesimo Augusti, odor tam mirabilis effloruit in ecclesia illa tempore vigiliarum nocturnarum, quod vix sufferri posset a sororibus. Et sic animatae transmiserunt ad dominum Gulielmum de Quadrogis, abbatem de Columba, rogantes, ut venire dignaretur ad videnda mirabilia Dei, et quid faciendum sit inde, providendum. Qui Dominus Abbas cum vidisset nuntium adhuc tacentem, Scio, inquit, quare veneris; causa per eundem, affirmante nuntio, illius exposita itineris. Nam ut ipse postea retulit, Franca ipsa comparuerat sibi, monens corpus suum inde moveri, et decentius debere tumulari. Venit igitur Abbas ille Gulielmus, cum duobus monachis venerabilibus, ad monasterium de Tertio-passu, cognitoque ubi capsella præmissa cum ossibus ac reliquiis fuerat posita, senserunt odorem et ipsi. Et indutis illis tribus vestibus sacris, longe præstolantibus monialibus, coepit Abbas cum ligone terram sodere: et statim terra sonuit, acsi capsam tutudisset. Mira res! Cum enim profundissime, ut dictum est supra, fuerit subterrata, quasi penna in aera, sic apparuit subito capsa illa inopinatius elevata; ita quod Abbati competat dicere; Modicum laboravi, et inveni multam requiem, non modo mihi, sed et toti meo Ordini', Bertramus Reoldus, *Acta*, pp. 393–94, paras 34–35.

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Female Monasteries of the Early Middle Ages (Seventh to Ninth Century) in Northern Gaul: Between Monastic Ideals and Aristocratic Powers

Michèle Gaillard

Although monasticism in its origin was not an institution made for women, and although — on account of the mistrust of the body present in Christianity and among the ancient desert monks, as Peter Brown has shown[1] — few *Lives* of holy women were produced in ancient Christianity, women quickly seized this way of life, which enabled them to live together outside of their community and their families: it seems that there were, in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, as many monasteries for women as there were monasteries for men. But it is not from these women that saints were made: in the East, until the seventh century, the two figures of holy women which were most fashionable were that of disguised women who lived in monasteries of men, and that of the repentant prostitute, such as Mary of Egypt.

These two examples served to remind ascetic monks of the humility they ought to show, since they demonstrated that women were capable of doing just as well as they were. These stories were therefore more edifying for men than they were models of holiness aimed at women. According to Marie-France Auzépy, in the East attitudes only began to change from the ninth century onwards, after the iconoclasm movement; but in Gaul, where female monas-

[1] Brown, *The Body and Society*.

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Women in the Medieval Monastic World, ed. by Janet Burton and Karen Stöber pp. 75–96
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Map 3.1. Monasteries of Gaul, from Guillaume,
'Les abbayes de femmes en pays franc à la fin du VII[e] siècle', p. 40.

teries appear as early as the sixth century, their foundresses or abbesses were soon considered saints and recognized as models.[2] We refer, of course, to the holy queen Radegund at Poitiers and the sister of Bishop Caesarius, Caesaria, in Arles.

While in many ways the lifestyle of the nuns and the asceticism of the holy women who founded or led monasteries does not seem to distinguish them from those of monks, there is an important difference between them: monasteries of men are defined as places where women are totally absent, while

[2] Auzépy, 'La Sainteté et le couvent'.

monasteries of women required the presence of men in their relations with the external world, because the enclosure of women was stricter; and especially concerning the sacraments that only priests could provide, which gave rise to what is commonly called 'double-monasteries', a term which, as we shall see, covers many diverse types.[3]

Taking into consideration the recent article by Anne-Marie Helvétius on female monasteries in the Merovingian period,[4] I have chosen to deal here with only four monasteries, for which the sources are relatively consistent and allow us to highlight two underlying problems in the study of women's monasteries in Gaul: in the seventh century, the influence of St Columbanus and his disciples; and in the ninth century, the effects of the handling of monasteries by the Carolingian kings. These two periods were indeed crucial for female monasticism and for monasticism in general: the seventh century was a great time of monastic foundations and a 'century of saints'; and the beginning of the ninth century was a period of reform, initiated by Benedict of Aniane and Louis the Pious, which also affected women's monasteries.

A 'Columbanian' Network?

The seventh century was, indeed, remarkable for the numerous foundations of monasteries, some of which appeared in the wake of the pilgrimage of the Irishman Columbanus into Gaul, sometime between 590 and 612.[5] But it should be noted that no women's monastery was founded by Columbanus himself. It is his hagiographer Jonas of Bobbio (or Susa), writing around 640, who attributes to Columbanus a number of foundations, to which his successor abbots of Luxeuil — Eustasius (d. 629) and Waldebertus (d. 667) — contributed: the monasteries of Jouarre, Faremoutiers, Saint-Jean of Laon, and Remiremont.[6] The blessing of the saint, that is, Columbanus or Eustasius, which was a natural gesture from a man of God coming to visit a family, became, through the pen

[3] On double-monasteries, see Elm and Parisse, *Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose männlicher und weiblicher Religiosen im Mittelalter*.

[4] Helvétius, 'L'Organisation des monastères féminins à l'époque mérovingienne'.

[5] For some background on Columbanian monasticism, note especially Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes à une histoire des relations culturelles'; *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, ed. by Clarke and Brennan; Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus' and 'The *vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography'; Lapidge, *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*.

[6] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. I, §26, pp. 99–100; lib. II, §7, pp. 119–22 and §10, pp. 126–27.

of Jonas of Bobbio, a sign of predestination for the religious life, which would bear fruit when the boy or girl became an adult.[7]

I will not discuss the abbey of Jouarre in this paper, despite its great reputation.[8] It poses many problems. It is poorly documented for the period covered by this study, and the traditional presentation of its history is a product of the interpretation of later sources.[9] I will also leave aside any discussion of the monastery of Sainte-Marie-Saint-Jean de Laon, about which I have written elsewhere.[10] I will instead concentrate my study on four monasteries, often called 'Columbanian' or 'Iro-Frankish' and considered to be double monasteries:[11] Faremoutiers-en-Brie, which was founded in the seventh century and is well

[7] For example, regarding Burgondofara: 'Deinde ad Meldensem oppidum properat. Quo cum quidam vir nobilis Chagnericus Theudeberti conviva, vir sapiens et consiliis regiis gratus et nobili tatis sapientia vallatus, inesset, his virum Dei miro gaudio recepit, seque habere curam spondit, qualiter ad Theudeberti accederet aulam; non esse necesse alios comites e regio latere habere. Ad hoc enim aliorum differebat subsidium, ut vir Dei secum, quamdiu valeret, teneret et eius doctrina sua domus nobilitaretur. Benedixit ergo vir Dei domum eius filiamque illius nomen Burgundofara, quae infra infantiae annis erat, benedicens, Domino vovit, de quo postea in subsequentibus narrabimus'; *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. I, §26, p. 99.

[8] In what is called 'the crypts of Jouarre' (see Périn and Delahaye, 'Jouarre, église funéraire Saint-Paul'), we find the particularly noteworthy cenotaph of the abbess Théodechilde and the sarcophagus of her brother Agilbert, the bishop of Paris and former bishop of Dorchester, who is quite well known thanks to the Venerable Bede (*Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, chap. III, §§25, 26, and 28, pp. 299–311 and 315–17).

[9] Jonas knew only that Ado, after having served at the court, withdrew and founded a monastery *intra Iorani saltus*, according to the Rule of St Columbanus; *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. I, §26, p. 100. One could conclude that Ado had founded Jouarre, as it is mentioned by Jonas just before the foundation of the monastery of Rebais by his brother Audoenus: *in Briegensis saltus*, the Brie. However, a very similar expression, *Iorensis saltus*, is also used by Jonas to indicate the Jura (*Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. I, §14, p. 80). Therefore, we cannot be sure that Ado really founded Jouarre. In addition, it was not until the seventeenth century that a sarcophagus was assigned to Ado in the crypt of Jouarre and a genealogy drafted, showing his kinship with the abbess Theodechildis, niece of the second wife of his father Moda, and sister of Agilbert, the bishop of Paris. See de Maillé, *Les Cryptes de Jouarre*, pp. 66–69, and Guérout, 'Les Origines et le premier siècle de l'abbaye'.

[10] Gaillard, 'De l'*Eigenkloster* à l'abbaye royale'; 'Les Saints de l'abbaye Sainte-Marie-Saint-Jean de Laon'; 'Les *Vitae* des saintes Salaberge et Anstrude de Laon'.

[11] This is especially the case since the thesis of Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*: see particularly the second part ('Das Irofränkische Mönchtum und das Angelsächsiche Karolingische Mönchtum'), and pp. 141–42 for the affiliation of Remiremont and Faremoutiers with Luxeuil; to that of Nivelles through St Amand, pp. 185–86; and Chelles (sur Marne and not 's. Cher'), through Jouarre, pp. 174–75.

documented; Remiremont in the Vosges, whose foundation is known through many hagiographic texts and which in the ninth century is illuminated by an exceptional document, the *Liber memorialis*; Nivelles, founded by Itta, the widow of Pippin I, and their daughter, Geretrudis; and, finally, Chelles, founded by Queen Bathildis.

Faremoutiers-en-Brie (Eboriacum): The Influence of Columbanus and of the Abbots of Luxeuil

There seems to be little reason to doubt the fundamental reliability of the information provided by Jonas about the foundation of Faremoutiers. He relates the visit of Colombanus to Chagnericus, advisor of King Theudebert II.[12] But the name of Chagnericus's daughter, Burgondofara (often abbreviated to Fara) suggests the family's origins in Burgundy. The rest of the story highlights the miracle of healing performed by Eustasius, successor of Columbanus at Luxeuil, and the obstinacy of Chagnericus, in whom violence and faith coexisted. As told by Jonas, the story was one of a conflict between the father's plans for his daughter, and the saint's will, with the latter prevailing: after trying twice to marry Burgondofara against her will, Chagnericus was forced to yield and give her the land required for the construction of a monastery.[13] To teach the Rule to the sisters, Eustasius delegated Chagnoaldus and Waldebertus.[14] The influence of Walbertus upon Faremoutiers has led to him being assigned the authorship of an anonymous rule, the *Regula cuiusdam Patris ad virgines*,[15] inspired both by Columbanian practices (especially daily confession[16]) and the Rule of St Benedict.

[12] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. I, §26, pp. 99–100.

[13] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. II, §7, pp. 119–21

[14] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. II, §7, p. 121: 'Nec mora Eusthasius remeat, puellam ab custodia liberat, patrem terribiliter increpat; religionis vestem per pontificem urbis illius Gundoaldum nomine induit sacravitque salutaribus sacramentis. Monasteriumque Christi virginum supra paternum solum inter fluvios Mugram et Albam aedificat fratresque, qui aedificandi curam habeant, deputat; germanum puellae Chagnoaldum et Waldebertum, qui ei postea successit, ut regulam doceant, decernit.'

[15] This attribution is plausible but unproven.

[16] *Sancti Columbani abbatis et confessoris regula coenobialis*, cap. I, col. 209: confession before meals or going to bed; the *Regula cujusdam Patris ad virgines* (cap. VI, col. 1059) goes further with a confession on the second hour, the ninth hour, and before Compline!

Through what is called the 'testament' of St Fare, shown by Jean Guérout to be genuine and dated 26 October 633 or 634,[17] we know a little about the family of Burgondofara. Comparisons carried out by scholars allow us to consider the family of Fara as one branch of the Agilolfing (the family of the dukes of Bavaria and of the Lombard kings) in Gaul.[18] Burgondofara's father, Chagnericus, resided at Meaux and was close to Theudebert II, king of Austrasia; he was probably also count of Meaux. Burgondofara had one sister, Agnetrudis (or Chagnetrudis), who is known only from the testament, and three brothers:

– Chagnoaldus, who is not mentioned in the testament, because he was probably already dead, was, according to Jonas, one of the companions of Columbanus and became bishop of Laon about 626/27, and died probably between 632 and 634.

– Burgondofaro (Faron), mentioned in Burgondofara's testament, but not by Jonas, became bishop of Meaux, where the foundation of Holy Cross Monastery, which later took his name, is attributed to him.

– Chagnulfus, only mentioned in the testament and not in the *Vita Columbani* of Jonas, can be identified with Count Chainulfus, who was assassinated in 641, according to Fredegar, by order of the *maior domus* of Neustria Aega, and who was probably count of Meaux.[19]

Before settling in the county of Meaux, which was part of the kingdom of Austrasia in the hands of Theudebert II, it is possible that the family had been settled in Burgundy: this would explain the entrance of Chagnoaldus in the monastery of Luxeuil. But more likely this was not a Burgundian but a Frankish family, related to the Agilolfings and located in Burgundy after the Frankish conquest.

It is possible that Chagnericus's family settled in the county of Meaux after the death of Childebert II, king of Austrasia and Burgundy, at the request of his son Theudebert II, to whom they would have remained faithful, while their ancestral possessions were in the kingdom of Theuderic II. This would

[17] Guérout, 'Fare (Sainte)'.

[18] Vollmer, 'Die Etichonen', p. 183; Jarnut, *Agilolfingerstudien*; Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VII^e–X^e siècle)*, pp. 390–91.

[19] *Fredegarii chronicorum liber quartus cum continuationibus*, ed. by Wallace-Hadrill, §83, p. 70.

explain why they welcomed Columbanus, himself banished by Theuderic II and Brunechildis. The names given to the two younger children, probably born after the implantation in Brie, may appear to claim a lost Burgundian inheritance. The settlement in Meaux was probably linked to the count's function, granted by the king but also to the control of the episcopal see, which was attributed to Burgondofaro, and to the foundation of monasteries. The foundation of a monastery by Burgondofara, probably influenced by the first abbots of Luxeuil, must also be understood as an aspect of the familial strategy of settling in the counties of Meaux and Brie.

Remiremont: A Rival Monastery of Luxeuil?[20]

Jonas also credits Abbot Eustasius for the part he played in the foundation of the monastery of Remiremont in the Vosges by a great aristocrat, Romaricus.[21] But other sources also give us information about the foundation of the monastery: the *Life* of Arnulfus of Metz, probably written shortly after 650; and the three *Lives* of the early abbots of Remiremont, Amatus, Romaricus, and Adelphus, which are dedicated to three different persons and seem to have been written a few years apart. These three texts were first considered to be Carolingian works, but scholars have now agreed to date the time of their composition to 675–80.[22] Jonas provides a brief description of the foundation of the monastery: Romaricus, who served in King Theudebert's court, was converted by the preaching of Eustasius and went to Luxeuil to follow the example of Columbanus. Some time later, he founded a monastery of women living according to the 'Rule of Columbanus' in Vosges, *in propria*, with the agreement of Eustasius and with the help of Amatus, another monk of Luxeuil.[23] Indeed, Jonas's purpose here is to highlight the subjection of Remiremont to Luxeuil.

[20] I use here a phrase by Anne-Marie Helvétius in her 'mémoire d'habilitation', sadly unpublished (*Le Saint et le Moine: entre discours et réalité*), and in our jointly written article: 'Production de textes et réforme d'un monastère double'. For Ramiremont in general, see the work of Helvétius.

[21] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. II, 127.

[22] Goullet, 'Les saints du diocèse de Toul (SHG VI)', pp. 42–51.

[23] *Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. II, §10, p. 127 : '[Romaricus] qui primis nobilitatibus fuerat apud Theudebertum habitus, postque per beati Columbae exemplum ac Eusthasii praedicatione monitus, ad Luxovium veniens, monachiae institutis se subdidit. Quo diu sub regulari tenore vitam agente, postea, Eusthasio annuente, puellarum monasterium in propria instruit, in quo et regulam beati Columbani custodiendam indidit.'

In the *Life* of Arnulfus, bishop of Metz, written a few years after the *Vita Columbani*, we learn that Bishop Arnulfus chose to end his days at Remiremont after resigning from his see of Metz in 629. To justify this choice, the author of the *Life* emphasizes the personal links between Arnulfus and Romaricus, who both served at King Theudebert's court and appeared to be equal in holiness. After the resignation of Arnulfus, Romaric is said to have brought his friend to Metz in order to install him in a solitary place near the monastery of Remiremont with some monks and lepers. However, the author of the *Life* does not mention Columbanus, Luxeuil, or Amatus.[24]

The three *Lives* dedicated to the abbots Amatus, Romaricus, and Adelphus are complementary. The third *Life*, which is very brief, is limited to the story of the death of Abbot Adelphus, who died in penitence at Luxeuil. The story of the life of St Amatus is different from Jonas's: here Amatus plays the leading role in the foundation and is presented as the first abbot. Amatus was a skilled monk who was trained at Saint-Maurice of Agaune, which helps to explain the use of *laus perennis* in Remiremont. Romaricus, a member of the royal entourage, retired to Luxeuil on the advice of Amatus, and founded the monastery, which then took his name, Remiremont, on his estate.[25]

Without contradicting the version given by Amatus, the *Life* of Romaricus provides further details:[26] after the assassination of his father (who had been faithful to King Theudebert) by Theuderic II in 612, Romaricus was able to recover his confiscated inheritance by helping Queen Brunechildis to escape from Metz after the death of Theuderic. But in the next chapter, the author shows him as one of the great men at the palace of Chlothar II. We may be suspicious about the veracity of this story because it is difficult to imagine a former supporter of Brunechildis becoming a close associate of King Chlothar. In these circumstances, as Anne-Marie Helvétius has argued, one may wonder if the 'conversion' of Romaricus in Luxeuil was really the result of a deliberate choice, or rather of a forced exile by order of King Chlothar.[27]

But the monastery founded by Romaricus on his estate does not seem to have followed the customs of Luxeuil: the *laus perennis*, which involved daily and nightly prayer, was hardly compatible with the exercise of a disciplinary rule and manual labour. From its foundation, the monastery was designed as a dou-

[24] *Vita Arnulfi*, ed. by Krusch, §19, p. 440.

[25] *Vita Amati*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 215–20; Acta Sanctorum, Septembris, IV, pp. 103–07.

[26] *Vita Romarici*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 221–25.

[27] See n. 20 above.

ble monastery, where a male community coexisted with a female community. It had an abbess, but — just like male monasteries — submitted to the superior authority of the abbot, as the *Life* of Amatus shows;[28] this is a very different situation from that at Faremoutiers, where the abbess ruled alone. The true causes of Arnulfus's resignation are not revealed in our sources, but we can assume that they were primarily political, especially since the date of 629 coincides with the departure of King Dagobert from Metz towards Paris. The *Vita Arnulfi* relates a deep dissension between the bishop and the king, and a very strained situation at the court, where Arnulfus probably had enemies.[29] From that moment on, the fate of the monastery of Remiremont was closely linked to that of the Arnulfings-Pippinids, whereas Faremoutiers was one of the strongholds of the Faronids. Remiremont, rather than being a 'Columbanian' monastery created in the wake of Luxeuil, seems to have been connected to another aristocratic network altogether, and to have developed a monastic way of life very different from that of Luxeuil or Faremoutiers. According to the descriptions by Jonas, at Luxeuil, as at Faremoutiers, only repentance and obedience could bring salvation; while liturgical prayer, which is little mentioned by Jonas, occupied an important place in Remiremont.

Nivelles: A Family Monastery Connected to Ireland

The foundation history of the monastery of Nivelles is known through the *Life* of St Geretrudis, written shortly after her death, probably around 670, by a monk of the abbey. He describes especially the foundation of the monastery by Geretrudis's mother, Itta, and portrays the holy abbess Geretrudis.[30] This indicates both the part played by the aristocracy in the founding of monasteries, the motivations behind this particular foundation, and the ideal of holiness that was in vogue among the aristocracy and men of the church in the seventh century. Geretrudis's family is well known: her father, Pippin, belonged to a family that owned immense estates in Brabant, Namur, and Hesbaye (now in Belgium). He was probably one of the Austrasian nobles who left Queen Brunechildis and sided with Chlothar II in 613. In 614, Pippin was appointed *maior domus* of Austrasia by Chlothar, while his friend Arnulfus became bishop of Metz.

[28] *Vita Amati*, ed. by Krusch, §8, p. 218 Acta Sanctorum, Septembris, IV, §15, p. 105 and §21, p. 106.

[29] *Vita Arnulfi*, ed. by Krusch, §§17–18, pp. 439–40.

[30] *Vita sanctae Geretrudis*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 455–58.

The foundation of the monastery of Nivelles around 650 (or in any case before 652, because Itta died twelve years after Pippin), is not an exceptional event: it is roughly at the same time that Queen Bathildis founded Corbie and restored Chelles, and Sadalberga founded her monastery in Laon; one could quote many other examples of such aristocratic foundations in northern Gaul during the seventh century.[31] According to the *Vita Geretrudis*, this foundation was made under the auspices of St Amandus, himself the founder of the monastery of Elnone (now Saint-Amand-les-Eaux). The monk Amandus, native of Aquitaine and first bishop-missionary in the region of the Scheldt, became bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht about 648/49.[32] His own *Vita*, written in the late seventh or early eighth century, presents him as being close to the family of Geretrudis. His elevation to the episcopate (a charge from which he resigned at the beginning of the year 652) is likely due to the influence of Grimoaldus, *maior domus* and brother of Geretrudis. With this data and the information from the *Life* of St Geretrudis, we can date the foundation of the monastery of Nivelles to between 646/47 and 651.[33] Although greatly conventional, the portrait of Abbess Geretrudis gives some clues regarding the spiritual network of the monastery of Nivelles. The hagiographer emphasizes Geretrudis's links with Rome, where she would fetch books, and with 'the overseas' — that is to say, Ireland — from whence came 'scholars who can teach singing and the Divine Law'.[34] The Roman influence (the legacy of Amandus, who himself made a trip to Rome before becoming a missionary, and which became a constant element in the policy of the Pippinids), highlighted by the dedication of the church of the monastery to St Peter, is combined with the insular influence, which is confirmed by the welcome given by Itte and Geretrudis to Ultanus and Foillianus, brothers of the Irish saint Fursy, expelled from Peronne by Erchinoald, the *maior domus* of Neustria.

The monastery of Nivelles, although it appears to have had close ties with Ireland and Irish monastic currents, is not part of the legacy of Columbanus and his disciples.[35] The only tentative link we have been able to find is that Jonas of Bobbio, author of the *Vita Columbani*, for a while supported St Amandus in

[31] Overview in Gaillard, 'Les Fondations d'abbayes féminines dans le Nord et l'Est de la Gaule'.

[32] Dierkens, 'Notes biographiques sur saint Amand, abbé d'Elnone'; Helvétius, 'L'Origine aquitaine des saints dans l'hagiographie franque des VIII^e^ et IX^e^ siècles'.

[33] Dierkens, 'Saint-Amand et la fondation de l'abbaye de Nivelles'.

[34] *Vita Geretrudis*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 455–64.

[35] Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes à une histoire des relations culturelles'.

his work of evangelization. The close link of the monastery with the Pippinids brought it closer to Remiremont, which, at that time, had rather bad relations with Luxeuil because of the Agrestius affair.[36]

A Merovingian Royal Foundation: Chelles

The establishment (or restoration) of Chelles by Bathildis,[37] widow of Clovis II, around the year 660, a very significant but not well-known event, represents one of the last Merovingian royal foundations and therefore appears as a royal attempt to regain control of a monasticism increasingly controlled by the aristocracy and in particular by the *maiores domus*. The author of the *Life* of Bathildis, who probably wrote in Merovingian times, says that the abbess Bertilla and the first nuns of Chelles came from Jouarre, which shows that the two monasteries enjoyed a good relationship. He emphasizes the numerous gifts that the queen made to the monasteries, especially to Luxeuil and Faremoutiers.[38] One might conclude that the monastery was founded in the Columbanian wake, but at this time, as Alain Dierkens has shown, Luxeuil itself was far removed from Columbanian uses, and we know nothing about what happened in Faremoutiers and Jouarre.[39] These gifts can also be interpreted in an opposite way, that is to say, as the manifestation of the royal will to control these monasteries, as well as the awarding of royal charters of exemption, which granted monasteries smaller autonomy than before,[40] and also as the desire of Bathildis to reform the 'great basilicas' of the kingdom.[41]

In contrast, the two abbeys seem close to Anglo-Saxon circles: at Jouarre, the abbess Theodechildis was the sister of Agilbert, former bishop of Dorchester, and since, according to the Venerable Bede, Anglo-Saxon princesses retired

[36] On the Agrestius affair, which is linked to the quarrel of the Three Chapters dividing the Catholics of northern Italy (precisely where Colombanus fled after his expulsion of Luxeuil), see the account of Jonas (*Vita Columbani et discipuli eius*, ed. by Krusch, lib. II, §§9–10, pp. 123–29) and the interpretations of Gauthier, *L'Évangélisation des pays de la Moselle*, pp. 280–84, and Gaillard and Helvétius, 'Production de textes et réforme d'un monastère double'.

[37] Unfortunately, there is no extant documentation for the early history of Chelles between the mid-seventh and early ninth centuries.

[38] *Vita Bathildis*, ed. by Krusch (BHL 905–07), pp. 489–92A.

[39] Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes à une histoire des relations culturelles'.

[40] Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes à une histoire des relations culturelles', pp. 388–92.

[41] *Vita Bathildis*, ed. by Krusch, p. 493.

to Chelles, it can be suggested that Bathildis was of Anglo-Saxon origin.[42] It was the episode of the murder of Sigobrand, the bishop of Paris, which caused Bathildis's withdrawal to Chelles in 665. The *Vita* says he was murdered by those who reproached him for his *superbia*, his excessive pride. According to Bathildis's hagiographer, Sigobrand was murdered by the Franks, who loved the queen, but this was done against her wish, and so they feared her revenge and finally allowed her to retire at Chelles.[43] In fact, Sigobrand and Bathildis probably tried to regain power to the detriment of the *maior domus* Ebroinus and his supporters, hence the murder of Sigobrand and the forced retirement of Bathildis, 'led by some lords' — indeed, under escort —, in Chelles.

From the Seventh to the Ninth Century: Many Questions and Few Certainties

During the seventh century, the 'Columbanian' influence was much more limited than has often been argued.[44] Among the female monasteries here surveyed, Faremoutiers is probably the community that remained closest to Luxovian customs.[45] Until the ninth century at least, Remiremont remained faithful to the practice of *laus perennis*, perpetual praise incompatible with 'Columbanian' *cursus psalmorum*,[46] as is shown by the list of nuns included

[42] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, chap. VIII, pp. 236–38.

[43] *Vita Bathildis*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 495–96: 'Nam et Franci pro eius amore hoc maxime dilatabant nec fieri permittebant, nisi commotio illa fuisset per miserum Sigobrandum episcopum, cuius superbia inter Francos meruit mortis ruinam. Et exinde orta intentione, dum ipsum contra eius voluntatem interfecerunt, metuentes, ne hoc ipsa domna contra eos graviter ferret ac vindicare ipsam causam vellet, permiserunt eam subito pergere ad ipsum monasterium. Et fortasse dubium non est, quod ipsi principes tunc illud non bono animo permisissent; sed ipsa domna Dei voluntatem considerans, ut hoc non tam eorum consilium, quam Dei fuisset dispensatio, ut eius sancta devotio per quamlibet occasionem, Christo gubernante, esset impleta. Deductaque ab aliquibus senioribus, venit ad praefatum monasterium suum Kala, ibique ab ipsis sanctis puellis, ut decebat, honorifice et satis amabiliter in sancta congregatione recepta est.'

[44] See Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, II, bk VII, 409–580, and more recently Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*.

[45] That is, as far as we can ascertain through the *Regula monachorum*, which focuses mainly on defining the moral qualities of the monk, and through the *Regula coenobialis* (*Sancti Columbani abbatis et confessoris regula coenobialis*), a penitential for monastic use composed in successive strata.

[46] Chapter 7 of the *Regula monachorum* refers to three psalms to be sung at all hours of the day, considering the work to be done in intervals, and stresses the need to increase the

in the *Liber Memorialis*.[47] This in part explains the strained relationship with Luxeuil. Nothing is known about the life of the nuns of Chelles. At Nivelles, the community had links with some Irish monks but it did not have any kind of relationship with Luxeuil or with Columbanus's disciples.

The notion of 'double monastery' is also worth reconsidering: one monastery, namely Remiremont, seems to have been regarded as a double house since its foundation, but Jonas qualifies it as a 'female monastery'. Amatus put an abbess at the head of the community of women, but his *vita* presents him as keeping control of the entire monastery, of men and women. Of the other monasteries, Chelles, Nivelles, and Faremoutiers were monasteries for women ruled by women, where there was a community of men in charge of the spiritual services and probably, as is suggested by the *Life* of St Geretrudis, of relations with the outside world. The whole monastic community was under the authority of the abbess. It seems that after the death of its first three abbots, Remiremont evolved in this direction too.

We know little or nothing about the eighth century. The actions of Pippin II and Pippin III led to the quasi-disappearance of 'independent' monasteries; in the Carolingian period, monasteries were either royal or episcopal houses. All those mentioned here were royal monasteries, which gave them the privilege of having abbesses chosen by the king, and, more often, lay abbesses from the Carolingian family. These include, in Chelles, Gisela, sister of Charlemagne, and later Helwidis, stepmother of Louis the Pious; in Faremoutiers, Rothildis, daughter of Charlemagne; in Laon, the Empress Judith, and a daughter of Louis the Pious, Hildegardis. With the exception of these fragments of information from diplomatic documents, the sources are not very explicit on these female monasteries in the ninth century. However, we can assume that reform efforts, or at least a return of power, took place in Chelles at the time of Abbess Helwidis, which prompted the translation of the body of Bathildis in 833, in the presence of the emperor Louis the Pious, and it was likely on this occasion that the rewriting of St Bathildis's *Life* was ordered.[48] Nivelles is no exception to this blanket of silence: its name appears only among the abbeys entrusted to Charles the Bald in the treaty of Meersen (870),[49] and in a charter of the

duration of the office of the night as the duration of the night increases (*Regula coenobialis*, cols 212–13).

[47] See below, pp. 88–89.

[48] *Vita Bathildis*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 482–504B.

[49] *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. by Boretius and Krause, pp. 193–95.

Figure 3.1. List of nuns of Remiremont.
Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 10, fol. 4^{v}.

same king creating a monastic revenue (*mense conventuelle*), which establishes that the abbey is henceforth to be populated by canons and *sanctimoniales*.[50] At the end of the ninth century, the daughter of Lothar II, Gisela (probably a laywoman), was abbess of Nivelles.[51]

Despite the abundance of legislation concerning religious communities of women in the ninth century (*Institutio sanctimonialium*,[52] canons of councils[53]), for many abbeys, especially those which are the subject of this article, it is impossible to blaze more accurate trails in their history, regarding their religious life, their number, and even regarding the lifestyle they chose to observe, whether monastic or canonical, with the exception of Remiremont.[54]

The Exception of Remiremont

Remiremont, although complex, is exceptionally well illuminated, thanks to the *Liber memorialis* and the letters of Abbess Theotildis,[55] who was behind the creation of this book. The *Liber memorialis* of Remiremont belongs to the

[50] 9 July 877, *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, ed. by Tessier, II, no. 433, pp. 466–68.

[51] *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. by Kurze, 883 and 884, pp. 100–01; *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon*, ed. by Kurze, 882 and 885, pp. 120–22; Hoebanx, *L'Abbaye de Nivelles des origines au XIV^e siècle*, pp. 109–11. It is unclear whether Gisela truly exercised the duties of abbess at Nivelles and lived in the abbey, and whether, in Nivelles as in Fosses, received a little later, she was a lay abbess.

[52] The *Institutio sanctimonialium* promulgated in Aachen in 816 was clearly a codification of already existing practices in communities of women who did not follow to the letter or did not claim a specific monastic rule. Codified and maybe slightly modified, a 'canonical' lifestyle was therefore proposed as a model for those communities which were probably the most numerous; see Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre*, pp. 129–33.

[53] In particular, canon 15 of the Council of Aix in 836 allows us to understand what was expected of women and how this requirement was different from that of men: 'Modus autem erga ipsarum congregationum disciplinam hic esse debet, id est ut canonici secundum id, quod continetur in libro, qui de eorum uita collectus est, religiose conuersentur ; monachi uero secundum traditam a beato Benedicto regulam unanimiter, quantumcumque posse est, cuiusque religionis regularem uitam in omnibus sectentur. Sanctimoniales denique secundum id, quod earundem sexus fragilitati congruit, religioni cum omni diligentia subdantur'; *Concilia aevi Karolini*, ed. by Werminghof, §15, pp. 713–14. For other councils, see Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre*, p. 131.

[54] Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften in Frühmittelalter*, pp. 195–202.

[55] *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, ed. by Zeumer, pp. 525–28.

category of so-called Books of Life, designed to keep alive the memory of the dead but also of the living, for whom the monks were praying. It is a composite manuscript including several books, some assembled together in the ninth century, and others later. It is now preserved in Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 10 and was edited in 1970.[56] The *Liber memorialis* opens with a statement of the nuns of Remiremont and their abbess Theotildis, dated the seventh year of the reign of Emperor Louis, and therefore, in my view, between August 861 and August 862, which was the seventh year of the reign of Emperor Louis of Italy.[57] From this statement we learn that the Rule of St Benedict was henceforth followed by the religious community of Remiremont, and that it was headed by an abbess, Theotildis, and a *praepositus*, Theodericus.[58] The Benedictine Rule seems to have been adopted under Abbess Imma, as fol. 35^{r} bears the names of sixteen abbesses prior to the monastery's application of the Rule of St Benedict; the last name, IMMA, is written in capitals, which suggests that it was at the time of Imma that the change was made. This change of rules should be linked to the reform of Benedict of Aniane and Louis the Pious in 816/817.[59]

The *Liber memorialis* is a key witness for the manner in which the memory of the dead might be practised in a monastery in the early Middle Ages,[60] but it also provides considerable information about life in a ninth-century mon-

[56] *Liber memorialis*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmid, and Tellenbach.

[57] *Liber memorialis*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmid, and Tellenbach, pp. xvi–xxii, and Hlawitschka, 'Remiremont: Drei Hauptabschnitte seiner Frühgeschichte'; for more information, see Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre*, pp. 41–56 and 173–80.

[58] *Liber memorialis*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmid, and Tellenbach, I, p. 1, and II, fol. 1^{v}: 'ANNO SEPTIMO IMPERII GLORIOSI PRINCIPIS HLUDOUUICI . Nos ac si indignę Christi famulę in cenobio sancti Romarici atque almi patris nostri Amati una cum consensu patris nostri domini Theodrici seu matris nostrę religiosissimę deo sacratę Teothildę abbatissę decreuimus pro omnibus his utriusque sexus missam cotidie caelebrari, qui hunc locum pro amore dei ad usus monacharum de rebus suis ditauerunt uel suas nobis seu antecessarum nostrarum largiti sunt ęlemosinas siue qui se in nostris uel illarum se commendauerunt orationibus, tam pro uiuis quam et pro defunctis ; unde et eorum nomina, qui in tempore antecessarum nostrarum fuerunt, subter scripsimus. Illorum uero seu illarum, qui in temporibus nostris extiterunt, in hoc semper curauimus scribere memoriali, hoc nostras ammonentes successores sub sancta patris nostri Benedicti regula militaturas, ut nomina amicorum seu amicarum suarum semper in hoc scribant memoriali et pro omnibus praedictis specialiter missa cotidie, quae super scripta est, cęlebrętur.'

[59] On this reform, see Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre*, pp. 123–48.

[60] Schmid and Wollasch, 'Die Gemeinschaft der Lebenden und Verstorbenen in Zeugnissen des Mittelalters'.

astery.[61] We have seen the introduction of the Rule of St Benedict by Abbess Imma, and we have noted the presence of a provost, Theodoricus, who headed an undoubtedly small community of clerics (whose names are found in the obituaries inserted in the *Liber*), but the major event is the transference of the monastery into the valley. Until this time, indeed, the monastery founded by Romaric in the seventh century had been installed on the top of a hill overlooking the Moselle valley. A reference to this shift appears in an inscription at the bottom of fol. 46^{v},[62] and, at fol. 47^{v}, in a copy of a charter of Abbess Imma, who distinguishes those nuns who remained at Mount Habend from those installed in the new monastery, near the Moselle.[63]

The change of rules is accompanied by the monastery's move down into the valley. From an isolated community with a more or less eremitical purpose, Remiremont became a monastery situated on the lines of communication, installed in a place which was probably already inhabited. Although the Rule of St Benedict demanded that a monastery should be enclosed, and its enclosure be respected, it also stipulates that it should be visible to all, and that one of its churches should be accessible to its royal patrons, to the aristocracy, and to pilgrims. Henceforth, its main function was to pray for the living and the dead included in their hundreds in the *Liber memorialis*. However, some traditions remained alive: the presence of a male community, as evidenced by Imma's charter and several other inscriptions, and, especially, the practice of *Laus perennis*, as demonstrated in the concern to maintain the number of eighty-four nuns in the monastic community in order to form the seven groups (*turmae*) of twelve nuns required for this perpetual praise, as we can see in the list of the eighty-four nuns included in the first pages of the book (Figure 3.1).[64]

However, the Rule of St Benedict does not seem to have been followed for a long time in Remiremont: it no longer appears in any document, and Abbess

[61] Hlawitschka, 'Zur Klosterverlegung und zur Annahme der Benediktsregel in Remiremont' and *Studien zur Äbtissinnenenreihe von Remiremont (7. –13.Jh.)*.

[62] *Liber memorialis*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmid, and Tellenbach, I, p. 107, II, fol. 46^{v}: 'V id. Madias sic coniunxsimus ad istam ordinem ; VI id. decembris sic fecimus sanctam professionem ; in alio iam anno kal. augusti sic uenimus hic ; XVI kal. iunii translatio sanctorum corporum ; et redeunte alio anno ipso die exaltatio eorum.'

[63] *Liber memorialis*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmid, and Tellenbach, I, p. 111, II, fol. 47^{v}: 'In dei nomine deo sacrata Emmane abbatissa et Teoderico preposito uel omni congregatione puellarum in Christo sororum nostrarum in monte Habendo castro [...] Actum ad monasterio nove, q(uod) est constructus in ualle Rumerio regio super flumen Musella.'

[64] Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre*, pp. 216–18.

Ida, who died in the 920s, is described in the obituary as *abbatissa atque diaconissa*, which is more reminiscent of a canoness than of a Benedictine abbess. In 1130 the monastery became the *capitulum Romaricense*. Clearly, like many female religious communities in the Empire, the nuns of Remiremont preferred to follow the *Institutio sanctimonialum* of 816, rather than the austere Rule of St Benedict.[65]

Conclusion

Although it is mostly difficult to follow the evolution of female religious communities from their foundation in the seventh century to the Carolingian reform, we can detect some fundamental changes and also some continuity. The extreme austerity of the community of Faremoutiers seems to have been an exception, unless it has been exaggerated by Jonas of Bobbio. In the seventh century, as in the ninth, women's monasteries were led and populated by women from the aristocracy who intended to live religiously without being deprived of all their comforts. However, there were certainly great differences between a monastery as modest as Hamage, where Etienne Louis's excavations have granted us an insight into the simple life in the seventh century, and the great monasteries such as Remiremont, Nivelles, and Chelles, stakeholders of the strategies of great aristocratic families in the seventh century and then controlled by the Carolingian kings in the ninth century.[66] This royal control is probably the most important factor of change on account of the increase in wealth which it provides, and also by imposing the choice between Rule of St Benedict and the canonical rule, by appointing lay abbesses, often from the royal family, and by the new role now assigned to these religious communities: to pray for the salvation of the emperor or the king, for that of his family, and that of his kingdom or empire.

[65] Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Frühmittelalter*.

[66] Louis, *Wandignies-Hamage, ancienne abbaye de Hamage*.

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Bishops and Nuns: Forms of the *Cura Monialium* in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England

Brian Golding*

The term *cura monialium* has commonly been used by modern historians as shorthand for the spiritual oversight in the provision of pastoral care and for the authority exercised over female communities by male clerics, often bishops or abbots, but also by those variously styled *magistri*, *custodes*, or *priores* in nunneries that were to a greater or lesser extent exempt from episcopal control.[1] Such authority was often autocratic and often resented, both by the nuns themselves and also by those who exercised it, as inappropriate activity. And there was always a potential tension between bishops' desire to distance themselves from too close an involvement in the *cura monialium* and a concern to ensure that their control was not compromised through exemptions from visitations and other rights normally associated with the diocesans.

This essay focuses almost exclusively on the diocesan bishop's roles in the management of communities for women, particularly as it played out in post-

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[1] The literature on the *cura monialium*, which goes back at least as far as Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, is too extensive to cite, but see McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, chaps 10 and 11 for an introduction, and pp. 713–718 for a substantial bibliography. Griffiths, '"Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs"', is a valuable contribution to the historiography and indicates further reading. See also her 'The Cross and the *Cura Monialium*'.

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Conquest England. It will suggest that we have too often tended to see this relationship solely in mechanistic terms; we have concentrated too much on forms and institutional structures and organization. This is partly, of course, because this approach appears more straightforward, more amenable to analysis, and in England, at any rate, there is a substantial documentary archive of episcopal registers from the thirteenth century onward which reveals a great deal both about the workings of episcopal visitations of nunneries and conditions within the cloister.[2] But it is just as essential to examine the 'unofficial' ties of bishops to female communities expressed not only through their foundation and patronage of such houses but through friendship and support for nunneries and individual nuns, particularly through works of spiritual direction, which were often delivered in epistolary form: the *cura* of an individual *monialis* is as important as the *cura monialium*. At the same time, it must be recognized that here there is a problem of evidence, since there are few surviving major letter collections or *vitae* that make this sort of detailed investigation possible.

To over-simplify: the care and control of nuns from the first generations of monasticism had normally been entrusted to the diocesan bishops, who sometimes wrote rules for nuns. Caesarius of Arles's rule produced for his sister's community is the first monastic rule specifically composed for women.[3] He was followed by, and often influenced, others, such as Leander of Seville or, later, Amalarius of Metz.[4] Bishops enforced canonical legislation and issued their own, more local regulations, though these were rarely if at all, at least in England, specific to an individual community.[5] Gradually, however, some male

[2] The classic account of episcopal visitations in this period remains Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries*.

[3] Caesarius, *Regula ad virgines*, ed. by de Vogüé and Correau; Cesarius d'Arles, *The Rule for Nuns*, trans. by McCarthy.

[4] Leander of Seville, *Regula sive de institutione virginum*; *El 'De institutione virginum'*, ed. by Vega; Amalarius of Metz, *Regula sanctimonialium*.

[5] Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury, later bishop of Sherborne, wrote his prose 'de virginitate' for Abbess Hildelith of Barking and her nuns around 700, which was followed by a verse version. Though the argument that this was written shortly before Aldhelm became bishop is strong, it is not conclusive, and it remains possible that he wrote it after he became bishop; Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, ed. by Gwara; for translation, see Aldhelm, *The Prose Works*, trans. by Lapidge and Herren, pp. 59–132, and Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, trans. by Lapidge and Rosier, pp. 97–167. See also Watt, 'Lost Books', pp. 1–22. The difficulties of dating the work and the arguments are summarized in Aldhelm, *The Prose Works*, trans. by Lapidge and Herren, pp. 14–15. In the mid-tenth century Aethelwold of Winchester may well have intended his vernacular translation of the Benedictine rule for the nuns of his diocese. This exists in

monastic houses began to take responsibility for female groups, though there is little evidence of any formal affiliation, and the later emergence of orders such as those of Fontevraud and Sempringham provided a structure of 'internal' governance in many, but not all, ways exempt from episcopal authority.[6]

Though, as synodal legislation makes clear, Anglo-Saxon bishops had long been expected to conduct regular visitations of both male and female communities in their diocese, there is no evidence of how these were conducted or of their edicts being implemented. The earliest known visitation of a nunnery (other than the exceptional, and probably politically motivated, case of Amesbury in 1177, which cannot be regarded as typical of standard twelfth-century practice) is that of Nun Cotham by Hugh de Wells of Lincoln sometime between 1209 and 1235.[7] That it was recognized that diocesans had an obligation to carry out visitations and correct shortcomings is evident from the prologue to Hugh's regulations for the nunnery: 'Cum ad congregationem ancillarum Christi de Cotun, causa visitacionis, ex officii nostri debito faciendae accederemus, ad ea quae didiscimus ibidem corrigenda, remedium studuimus adhibere' (Having come to the community of the handmaidens of Christ at Cotham to carry out an episcopal visitation, we are now eager to apply a remedy for the things we discover need correction there). The catalyst for his action may have been the attempt by Pope Innocent III in the twelfth canon of the Fourth Lateran Council to ensure regular visitations of both male and female communities.[8] Prior to that time, visitations in general were seemingly absent, in spite of royal sanction and canonical codification (as, notably, in Gratian), a situation which requires comment, even if it cannot at present be

two forms, the 'masculine' and 'feminine', and its textual history is extremely complex. The most concise discussion is Gretsch, 'Æthelwold's Translation of the "Regula Sancti Benedicti"', pp. 137–39, and see Gretsch, 'The Benedictine Rule in Old English'.

[6] For Fontevraud, see especially de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique de droit canon*, pp. 68–73; Dalarun, 'Pouvoir et autorité dans l'Ordre double de Fontevraud'; and for Sempringham, Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, pp. 101–06, 134–36; Golding, 'Authority and Discipline at the Paraclete, Fontevraud, and Sempringham'; Sykes, *Inventing Sempringham*, esp. chap. 4, pp. 165–212.

[7] Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, v, 677–78. For Amesbury, see Cheney, *Roger, Bishop of Worcester*, pp. 216–17, 367; Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England*, pp. 146–48; Kerr, *Religious Life for Women*, pp. 70–72; *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, ed. by Round, pp. 378–79; Gerald of Wales, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, VIII: De principis instructione liber*, ed. by Warner, pp. 170–71.

[8] *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. by Alberigo and others, pp. 216–17.

fully explained.[9] It is true that the earliest surviving episcopal registers only date from the first half of the thirteenth century, but it is extremely unlikely that earlier registers once existed but are now lost.[10]

One of the reasons why registers were kept was precisely to keep a record of administrative activity such as visitations. Of course, it cannot necessarily be argued that no registers means no visitations. Yet the lack of reference to them in other sources, such as those generated from within the monastic houses themselves or in *vitae* or *acta* of eleventh- or twelfth-century bishops, strongly suggests that they were indeed unknown. Oversight could, however, be exercised in other ways, both formal and informal: the *acta* (which, in some respects, are the precursors of the registers), for example, contain numerous references to episcopal interventions in nunneries, their foundation and consecration, grants and confirmations of property, consecration of nuns, the capture of apostates, and so on.

Visitations were intended to ensure good order in individual communities; synodal legislation had a wider authority. This was either a restatement of existing conciliar canons or generated by the diocesan bishop and intended for observance solely within his diocese, though other bishops might well copy and incorporate these rulings into their own statutes. We need to distinguish here between those applicable to all religious, male and female, and those which were directed specifically at female houses. Here again the twelfth-century evidence for episcopal interest in religious women is extremely sparse. The 1127 Westminster legatine council forbade abbesses or nuns from wearing clothing made of anything more valuable than lambs' wool or the skins of wild black cats: this ruling on clothing was expanded by the Westminster legatine council of 1138.[11] And that is all.

This brief survey will examine the various ways, other than by visitations and synodal edicts, in which bishops, nunneries, and nuns interacted. Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury and Bishop Gundulf of Rochester had been fellow monks at Bec and were united throughout their lives in close friendship.[12]

[9] *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. by Friedberg, I, C. 18, q. 2, cc. 28–29.

[10] Though the *acta* and registers of many medieval bishops have been edited, there has been surprisingly little study of them as a genre. But see Smith, *Guide to Bishops' Registers*, pp. vii–x, and Cheney, *English Bishops' Chanceries*.

[11] *Councils and Synods*, ed. by Whitelock, Brooke, and Powicke, II, 749, 778.

[12] For Gundulf's friendship with Anselm at Bec, see *The Life of Gundulf*, ed. by Thomson, chap. 8, pp. 30–31, and for his support of Anselm as archbishop, chap. 33, p. 55 and also *Eadmeri Historia Novorum in Anglia*, ed. by Rule, p. 376.

Gundulf founded the nunnery of West Malling sometime between Anselm's consecration and the archbishop's exile to Lyons in 1097. The *Vita Gundulfi*, which provides the fullest account of the community's first years, makes it clear that Gundulf found support and advice from his archbishop.[13] In two letters to Gundulf dated 1104, Anselm sends his greetings to 'your sons and daughters', almost certainly a reference to the monks and nuns at Rochester and Malling.[14] The new foundation was explicitly intended as a female parallel to the male house Gundulf had earlier established with Archbishop Lanfranc's guidance at Rochester, about thirteen kilometres to the north.[15] One of the two manors at Malling was held by the archbishop, the other by the bishop.[16] It was thus an excellent potential site for a nunnery to be established through their joint agency. The *Vita* goes on to describe how Gundulf provided the conventual buildings, including the church, and attended both to the nuns' spiritual and temporal needs. How these nuns were recruited is unclear, though the *Vita* tells how many women, even of noble birth, were happy to enter the community, and that Gundulf introduced nuns ('matres spirituales') from other houses to serve as 'priores vel custodes'.[17] Were these overseeing nuns brought from English houses, or introduced from Normandy, just as monks from Norman abbeys were sometimes brought in to reinforce communities in England, as at Battle, Shrewsbury, and Chester?[18] But Gundulf himself retained overall authority, not wishing to appoint an abbess. He only installed Avice as first abbess on his deathbed, and then not before she had promised obedience to the see of Rochester and on condition that no nun be received except with the bishop's permission. His unwillingness to cede control of the community foreshadows similar reluctance by founders of female houses in the following century, such as Gilbert of Sempringham.[19]

[13] *Life of Gundulf*, ed. by Thomson, chap. 34, p. 58.

[14] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, v, 242 (ep. 314); translated in Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, III, 19, 50.

[15] *Life of Gundulf*, ed. by Thomson chap. 34, p. 58.

[16] *Domesday Book*, I, fols 3^{r}, 5^{v}.

[17] *Life of Gundulf*, ed. by Thomson, chap. 34, p. 58.

[18] *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. by Searle, pp. 42–43, 46–47, 68–71; *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Chibnall, III, 148–49; *The Chartulary or Register of the Abbey of St Werburgh, Chester*, ed. by Tait, pp. 15–22, 38–39; *The Life of St Anselm*, ed. and trans. by Southern, p. 63; Southern, *Saint Anselm*, pp. 188–89.

[19] *Life of Gundulf*, ed. by Thomson, chap. 43, p. 65, and for the oath *Textus Roffensis*, ed. by Hearne, pp. 194–95. See Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, pp. 56–57.

The foundation of Malling represents almost (but not quite) all we know of Bishop Gundulf and his support for nuns. Judging from his correspondence, Gundulf's first archbishop, Lanfranc, had little interest in nuns or nunneries. He once wrote to the bishop of London requiring him to intervene to settle a dispute between the abbess and prioress of Barking.[20] However, there is one well-known letter, much cited by historians of the Norman Conquest, where he sets out his decision on women who fled to nunneries 'not for love of the religious life but for fear of the French', and allowing girls who had been placed in a nunnery but had not yet been professed or presented as oblates to leave. Though very familiar, it is not often sufficiently recognized that this letter is addressed to Gundulf in reply to a letter (which has not survived) Gundulf himself had written raising these concerns.[21]

Largely as a result of his substantial letter collection, we know considerably more about Anselm's encouragement, counsel, patronage, and friendship with individual nuns and communities.[22] All these letters convey that deep sense of spiritual friendship that is found throughout Anselm's works, but they also reveal a concern for the well-ordering of the communal life, founded on harmony and obedience to the Rule.[23] While still at Bec, he wrote to Adelaide, the eldest daughter of William the Conqueror, who was a nun, most probably at St Léger, Préaux, sending her a little book containing a florilegium of the Psalms and a number of prayers and meditations for private devotion which she herself had requested, together with seven prayers and meditations for private devotion. His accompanying letter provided brief guidance on how these were to be used.[24]

[20] Lanfranc, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. by Clover and Gibson, pp. 174–75, no. 59.

[21] Lanfranc, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. by Clover and Gibson, pp. 166–67, no. 53. For a full discussion of this issue, see Searle, 'Women and the Succession', pp. 165–66.

[22] Surprisingly little attention has been paid to Anselm's ties with religious women, with the exception of Vaughn, 'St Anselm and Women', and *St Anselm and the Handmaidens of God*, where she notes (pp. 2, 4) that Anselm corresponded much more with lay than religious women; see also the table on pp. 36–37 and pp. 160–202.

[23] On Anselm and friendship, see especially Southern, *Saint Anselm*, pp. 138–65; and for monastic friendship in general, see McGuire, *Friendship and Community*: he treats of Anselm and Gundulf's friendship, pp. 214–16, 224–25. Canatella, 'Friendship in Anselm of Canterbury's Correspondence', focuses on Anselm's friendship with Gundulf and Ida of Boulogne.

[24] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 121 (ep. 10); Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, I, 92–93. The *florilegium* has not survived: the meditations enjoyed wide circulation. They are

As archbishop he continued to correspond with nuns and send them spiritual advice. Two of his letters may well have been sent to Eulalia, abbess of Shaftesbury, and her community: they are certainly found in the Shaftesbury Psalter of *c*. 1125. Morrow has recently suggested that Eulalia was Anselm's closest friend amongst his female religious correspondents and that his letters indicate a politico - spiritual symbiosis between nun and archbishop. Eulalia was a 'colleague' in his struggles with kings William II and Henry I, and, as powerful abbess of a great and prestigious royal nunnery, gave some political legitimacy to the archbishop's cause.[25] Yet it is to exaggerate to contrast this relationship with his letters to Athelitz, abbess of Romsey, and Matilda of Wilton, arguing that in Eulalia's case he 'did not write in stern admonition or for the sake of bureaucratic supervision'.[26] Anselm refers to all three collectively in equally affectionate terms as his dearest beloved daughters in a letter to Hugh, archdeacon of Canterbury, requesting him to greet them, sending them his blessings, and asking for their prayers in return.[27] Anselm's first letter to Shaftesbury was written shortly after he became archbishop and, in asking for the nuns' prayers, complains explicitly that he would prefer to die than endure the wretchedness of his office. Further, he exhorts them to even greater holiness and that they should observe every part of the Rule, however slight it might seem. This is not 'stern admonition', but admonition none the less.[28]

His second letter, written in 1104 from Lyon, urges the nuns to increasing love of God, and asks that they should display obedience to the abbess not only in outward appearance but in the heart, which might hint at some internal dissensions within the community and perhaps opposition to Eulalia's rule: it also contains a reference to unspecific adversities and tribulations the community faced from every side.[29] His final letter, written two years later, reiterates more strongly the themes of the earlier letters: obedience to the Rule and to the

discussed in Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations*, trans. by Ward, and Southern, *Saint Anselm*, pp. 91–112. See also Bell, 'A Token of Friendship?', and Morrow, 'Sharing Texts', pp. 114–23 and 97–113.

[25] Morrow, 'Sharing Texts', pp. 102–05.

[26] Morrow, 'Sharing Texts', pp. 103 and 110, n. 24.

[27] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, v, 103, ep. 208; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 152.

[28] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 67–68, ep. 183; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 102–03.

[29] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, v, 274–05, ep. 337; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, III, 63–65.

abbess, the avoidance of dissension, and the maintenance of communal peace.[30] Again, the context is unclear, but the difficulties may have been associated with the political tensions of the first years of the reign of King Henry I.

Certainly, in Anselm's dealings with English nuns and abbesses there is almost always a political as well as a spiritual dimension. The thorniest political problems relating to English nunneries with which he had to deal were unquestionably those of Gunnhild, daughter of King Harold II Godwineson, and Matilda, daughter of King Malcolm III Canmore of Scotland. Involving, as they did, the kings of England and Scotland, the old Wessex dynasty, and Count Alan the Red of Richmond (one of the greatest of the Anglo-Norman magnates in the north), the stakes could not have been higher. These events have been much studied and will only be outlined briefly here. Gunnhild had taken refuge in Wilton Abbey following the Norman Conquest, but on failing to become abbess she had left the community to live with Count Alan. Anselm wrote her two stern letters ordering her to return to the religious life.[31] This correspondence, which can be dated to late 1093 or early 1094, has been examined in detail by Richard Southern, who describes Gunnhild as establishing 'the closest friendship with Anselm of any woman known to us'. Many of the women who fled to nunneries after 1066 had not been professed as nuns, as that famous letter of Archbishop Lanfranc's discussing their situation and proposing a solution makes clear.[32] But the precise status of Gunnhild was, and remains, unclear. As Southern notes, 'the situation is hard to disentangle'. [33]

Anselm certainly believed that she was truly a nun and, crucially, wore the habit both publicly and privately: at the same time, he admitted that she had not been episcopally consecrated as canonically required, nor taken her vows in the bishop's presence. However, if she had indeed hoped to become abbess, she must have been fully professed. Anselm regarded leaving the nunnery, wearing secular dress, and living in the world as clear apostasy. Gunnhild oscillated between the secular and religious worlds, perhaps a victim of external political exigencies rather than personal indecision.

[30] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, v, 347–48, ep. 403; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, III, 167–68. The question of obedience, including monastic obedience is, of course, a *leitmotiv* in Anselm's writings. See Southern, *Saint Anselm*, esp. pp. 254–76.

[31] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 43–50. ep. 168–69; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 64–74.

[32] See above, n. 21.

[33] For summaries see Southern, *Saint Anselm*, pp. 262–64, and Barlow, *William Rufus*, pp. 313–14.

At the same time, while dealing with Gunnhild's case, Anselm had to intervene in that of Matilda. This was very similar and equally complex. Matilda had been sent to Wilton (or just possibly, Romsey) to be educated under the supervision of her aunt Christina. Whether she took the veil is unclear: she undoubtedly wore the habit, though perhaps under coercion. Her father certainly thought she was a nun, thus jeopardizing the possibility of a marriage alliance with Count Alan of Richmond — who was simultaneously involved with Gunnhild. Anselm was equally certain that she was professed and that she was an apostate, writing to Bishop Osmund of Salisbury urging him to compel her to return to the community, since he had confirmed with William Rufus that the king wished her to return, probably because William did not wish to see a dangerous bond between the lord of Richmond and the king of Scots. [34]

Anselm's ruling was of no effect, and it seems that Matilda returned to Scotland with her father. By this time, Count Alan was dead: he was succeeded by his brother, Alan Niger, whom it seems Matilda next proposed to marry. He, however, died in 1098. Then in 1100 a further problem arose. Henry I wished to marry Matilda himself, not only because such a marriage would serve a valuable diplomatic function, since it would unite the old native and the Anglo-Norman dynasty with the kingdom of Scotland, but because this was a love match. Anselm had to revisit the question of whether she had ever been a nun. Having made a detailed investigation, the archbishop decided that Matilda had never been professed and that she was free to marry. He had, therefore, completely rejected the position he held less than ten years before. It is hard not to agree with C. Warren Hollister's suggestion that this reversal had political motives, and that the archbishop did not wish to alienate the new king.[35]

Politics possibly also lay behind one of the letters Anselm wrote to Athelitz, abbess of Romsey, in 1102, which contains a strong rebuke to her and her community. They had sent a messenger asking for his advice on how they should deal with the problem of an unofficial cult that had emerged in Romsey around a man whom some wished to be regarded as a saint ('volunt pro sancto haberi'). However, they had then ignored his advice. He now threatened the abbess with suspension from office unless she complied with his strict orders to withdraw all promotion and veneration of the cult and neither to make or receive any offer-

[34] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 60–61, ep. 177; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 91–92.

[35] The fullest account is found in Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, ed. by Rule, pp. 121–26. The clearest summary of events are Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, pp. 17–25, 28–30, and Hollister, *Henry I*, pp. 126–30.

ings to the dead man. Moreover, the nunnery should expel from the town the young man who was hanging about at the tomb, and prevent his return.[36] He simultaneously wrote in very similar language to the archdeacon of Winchester, ordering him to go to Romsey and enforce these injunctions on behalf of the archbishop and the bishop of Winchester.[37] The dead man has often been identified (most recently in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*) as Waltheof, earl of Northumbria, executed at Winchester in 1076.[38] If this interpretation is correct, then Anselm was right to be especially concerned with the suppression of an irregular cult, for such a shrine could easily become the focus of political discontent for the dispossessed Anglo-Saxon *ancien régime*. But there are problems with this hypothesis: Waltheof had been executed (or martyred) over twenty-five years earlier, and there is no hint of continuing Anglo-Saxon opposition at this time; a secondary cult of Waltheof might have been expected to be found at Winchester, not Romsey, if anywhere; Waltheof is never recorded as a benefactor of Romsey nor known to have had any connection with it — after all, his power base lay in the north and midlands, most of his patronage being directed at the Fenland house of Crowland, where his body was taken for burial a fortnight after his death, and where a cult certainly soon afterwards developed.[39] Moreover, though Athelitz was of native origin, and almost certainly drawn from the old aristocracy, it would have been folly to promote the cult of one the Normans regarded as a traitor. It is perhaps more likely that Anselm's concerns reflect a growing unease with popular, unsanctioned cults. Whether the man was Waltheof or a much less important local figure, this episode was probably the prime catalyst for the decree issued a few months later in September 1102 at the council of Westminster under Anselm's presidency forbidding anyone from venerating the bodies of the dead, springs, or other things with rash innovation *which we know to have happened* without episcopal authority.[40] A year later Anselm was writing much less acerbically to Athelitz (addressed as abbess of Winchester) urging her not to be concerned at

[36] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 144–45, ep. 237; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 213–14.

[37] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 144, ep. 236; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 212–13.

[38] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. *Waltheof*; Brett, *The English Church under Henry I*, p. 83.

[39] *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Chibnall, II, 320–25, 344–49.

[40] *Councils and Synods*, ed. by Whitelock, Brooke, and Powicke, II, 678 (my italics).

the departure of her diocesan bishop, William Giffard, but rather to rejoice. It was better to be forced into exile and face confiscation of goods for the sake of justice — perhaps the archbishop was thinking here of his own recent experiences — than to accumulate wealth through injustice.[41]

The only nun to whom Anselm wrote in England who was not an abbess was Mabilia, whom Anselm addressed as his dearest daughter, but whose identity and community are unknown. He urged her not to become entangled with this world and in particular not to visit her secular relatives with whom she could have no common interests or concerns. If they visited her, they would not become monks through her influence; and if they did wish to see her, they should come to her, not she go to them: worldly friendships detracted from divine friendship, and she should desire to be a friend of God alone.[42] Mabilia should probably be identified with the nun 'M', daughter of Richard, to whom he had earlier employed the same salutation. It has plausibly been suggested that 'M' may have been the daughter of Richard and Rohais de Clare.[43] In this letter Anselm refers to his friendship with her parents, which caused him to love her the more, before he goes on to exhort her to remain steadfast amongst the chosen few and asks for her prayers. Richard and Rohais were generous patrons of Bec, and one of their sons, brother of the putative 'M', entered Bec, where he would have known Anselm as abbot. Here familial and spiritual ties are meshed.[44] Both letters certainly suggest a close relationship between family and community, though, of course, prohibitions and warnings against family members, particularly men, visiting nuns except under the strictest conditions were a common theme in later synodal legislation and episcopal visitations.[45]

[41] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 190–91, ep. 276; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 279–80.

[42] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, V, 349–50, ep. 405; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, III, 170–72.

[43] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 68–69, ep. 184; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 103–04 and note.

[44] See *Stoke by Clare Cartulary*, ed. by Harper-Bill and Mortimer, III, 1–2. Richard of Clare's letters relating to the establishment of Stoke by Clare and St Neots, which was also under the patronage of Rohaise de Clare, are found in Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, III, 218–21, ep. 91–94 (especially ep. 94); Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, I, 232–38. For Anselm's links with Bec's English cells, see Chibnall, 'The Relations of St Anselm with the English Dependencies of the Abbey of Bec' and 'The English Possessions of Bec'

[45] E.g., *Councils and Synods*, ed. by Whitelock, Brooke, and Powicke, II, 790 (Legatine Council of London, 1268).

Amongst the most interesting of the letters from the perspective of this essay are the two written — the first *c*. 1102, the second a few years later — to a certain Robert and a small community of women which, judging by the addressees, seems to have grown between these two dates: in 1102 there were just two women, later joined by five more.[46] All had native Anglo-Saxon names, unlike their spiritual director. Unfortunately, neither Robert nor the women can be further identified. The letters themselves give few clues. Robert clearly had the care of the women, teaching them how to live 'verbo et exemplo'. Both letters are of spiritual guidance and advice: both urge Robert and the women to persevere in their calling, which may be a commonplace, or could indicate that the community was in danger of disintegration. Where it was, other than somewhere in England, cannot be determined. It is possible, as Sally Thompson suggests, that it was in or near Canterbury.[47] It may have been the initial core of St Sepulchre's nunnery, whose foundation was attributed by William Thorne, the fourteenth-century historian of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, to Anselm, though William Urry makes a strong case that the nunnery was established by William Cauvel, but perhaps with the archbishop's encouragement.[48] Thompson alternatively suggests that Robert's group might be associated with the four nuns recorded in Domesday as holding four acres in alms of St Augustine, 'close by the city'.[49] However, the status of these nuns is unclear, and it is unlikely that the archbishop and titular head of Christ Church, Canterbury, would have entrusted Robert's community to the care of the cathedral's great rival. It is more probable that these were, as Sarah Foot conjectures, a small group of vowesses who were the abbey's tenants but had no affiliation with it.[50] What is certain is that it can be seen as a precursor of eremitic groups such as the much better-known examples of Markyate and Sempringham, which evolved into formally regulated nunneries.[51]

[46] Anselm, *Opera*, ed. by Schmitt, IV, 130–35, 359–62, eps 230, 414; Anselm, *The Letters*, trans. by Fröhlich, II, 199–200, and III, 184–87.

[47] Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 36–37.

[48] *William Thorne's Chronicle*, trans. by Davis, pp. 214–15; Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, pp. 62–63.

[49] *Domesday Book*, I, fol. 12r.

[50] Foot, *Veiled Women*, II, 51–52.

[51] For Markyate, see *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. and trans. by Talbot, pp. 28–30; and for Sempringham, Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, especially pp. 78–81, 85–86. Anselm had also earlier undertaken the direction of a small community of women at Lyon; Canatella, 'Friendship in Anselm of Canterbury's Correspondence', p. 360; Vaughn, *St Anselm and the*

After Gundulf and Anselm, episcopal involvement with female communities seemingly became generally much more formalized. There is little indication that nuns sought spiritual advice from their diocesan, nor that it was proffered. Many bishops were certainly conscientious visitors of nunneries (as they were of male communities), and they attempted to ensure that the Rule was observed, discipline maintained, and scandal averted, but there is no sense, as there is in the cases of Gundulf and Anselm, of personal engagement, though they might still play a significant role in the foundation and patronage of twelfth-century nunneries.[52]

If there is a theme connecting a number of the twelfth-century episcopal founders, it is their interest in houses that sprang from anchoretic origins. Alexander of Lincoln, the founder of Gilbertine Haverholme, was a committed supporter of the anchoress Christina of Markyate. He consecrated her as a religious and later consecrated the church at the nunnery of Markyate established by Christina's other friend and patron, Geoffrey, abbot of St Albans.[53] Alexander's brother, Nigel of Ely, certainly played a part in the foundation of St Radegund's nunnery, Cambridge, though whether he was actually the founder is questionable. Of more significance in this discussion is his early patronage of the small nunnery of Hinchingbroke, which seems to have been a small community of religious women, not unlike those supported by Anselm at Canterbury. Nicholas Karn has recently suggested that this was anchoretic in nature — Nigel was certainly a patron of hermits and anchorites, and his transformation of the community at Hinchingbroke could be seen as very similar to what his brother was doing at Markyate.[54] Alexander's contemporary, Archbishop Thurstan of York, is described in Christina's *vita* as 'a helpful promoter of such holy vocations', that is, the anchoretic life. According to the *vita*, he initially tried to persuade Christina to become the first prioress of his new nunnery at York, and when that proved unsuccessful encouraged her to go either to the Cluniac nunnery of Marcigny or to Fontevraud.[55] Finally, Bishop

Handmaidens of God, p. 14.

[52] For the fullest discussion of episcopal founders, see Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 191–210.

[53] *Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. and trans. by Talbot, pp. 4, 8–9, 126, 146.

[54] Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 200–01; *English Episcopal Acta 31: Ely*, ed. by Karn, pp. 89–91.

[55] *Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. and trans. by Talbot, pp. 110–11, 126–27. Talbot suggests (p. 8 n. 1) that Thurstan thought Marcigny an appropriate refuge since he had earlier accompanied Adela, countess of Blois, to be received as a nun there.

Roger de Clinton of Coventry and Lichfield was responsible for the conversion of several eremitic communities in the remote area of Cannock Chase to small Benedictine nunneries at Brewood, Farewell, and Polesworth.[56]

In the following century, as is well known, the number of new foundations for women declined, nor is there much evidence to suggest that bishops took an active part in the process. However, Bishop Richard le Poor of Salisbury played a key role in the foundation of the Cistercian nunnery of Tarrant. He seems to have patronized this house for no other reason than that he was born in the village — and at his death he was buried there.[57] His successor as bishop, Robert Bingham, was involved in the establishment of Lacock Abbey. It is impossible to be certain whether the warm words he expresses for the community in a confirmation charter are merely formulaic, but he was certainly instrumental in ensuring that the canonesses followed the Augustinian rule rather than the Cistercian, which seems to have been the original intention of the foundress, Ela, countess of Salisbury.[58] His action was probably a consequence of the Cistercians' recently repeated prohibition of their order taking on the care of religious women. In providing a rule for Lacock, Bingham was not alone. In the following generation the unusually detailed account of the foundation of Flixton Priory demonstrates the role bishops might continue to have in the establishment and ordering of new communities. The *acta* of Bishop Simon Walton of Norwich show that he consecrated the site of the new nunnery of Flixton, founded sometime before 1259 by Margaret of Creake; veiled the nuns; and imposed the Augustinian rule, but with specific modifications of his own which reflect contemporary concerns familiar from visitation records. Enclosure was to be strictly enforced. The nuns were restricted to seven in number; only when its resources had increased proportionately could any more be recruited. When not at the Divine Office they were to work as appropriate for

[56] *English Episcopal Acta 14*, ed. by Franklin, pp. xlvi, 19–21, 30, nos 21, 32.

[57] Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 96–98. According to Matthew Paris, Richard founded the nunnery 'which he gave to the queen'; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. by Luard, III, 392. See also *English Episcopal Acta 18: Salisbury*, ed. by Kemp, pp. liv–lv. Leland, citing a 'table' in the Lady Chapel of Salisbury cathedral, records that Poor founded Tarrant where he was born, and his heart was buried there; *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. by Toulmin-Smith, I, 262–63. Matthew Paris writes that he chose Tarrant as his place of burial; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. by Luard, III, 392. According to the Waverley annals, his older brother Herbert, also bishop of Salisbury, died in Salisbury but was buried at Wilton nunnery, perhaps, as Kemp has suggested, because he had intended it to be the site of his projected new cathedral; *Annales Monastici*, ed. by Luard, II, 287.

[58] Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, VI, 503.

the maintenance of the house. These statutes were amended and extended in 1261 and 1263.[59] However, somewhat surprisingly, these later versions omit any reference to enclosure and do not include the earlier prohibition on eating with men. But the 1263 version did stress the centrality of visitation. The bishop noted that the Augustinian rule followed by the nuns and to which the statutes were supplementary made no provision for visitation and stipulated that this should take place annually.

As in the case of Bishop Poor, informal links between his episcopal contemporaries and nunneries were often grounded in familial ties. In 1232 Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln wrote to his sister Yvette, a nun, perhaps at the Gilbertine priory of Catley, urging her to remain strong in the religious life.[60] His reformist colleague Edmund Rich of Abingdon, who became archbishop of Canterbury in 1233, placed his two sisters, Margery and Alice, in the small nunnery of Catesby.[61] In her turn Margery later became prioress, and she herself became the centre of a small unofficial cult.[62] According to Matthew Paris, the motivation for Edmund's action derived from his extremely pious mother. On her deathbed she commended her daughters to Edmund's care with a sum of money for the dowry payment customarily, though uncanonically, required from recruits to most nunneries. Edmund was reluctant to commit such simony, but on visiting the prioress she agreed to receive the women.[63] There is more to this than is at first apparent: clearly this episode is included to highlight the bishop's opposition to simony, but why choose Catesby? However, the Abingdon family seem already to have been patrons of the nunnery (both Edmund and his brother William granted it property and rent in Abingdon), which may explain why the prioress was happy to receive the nuns without a down payment, but what brought about this connection between a

[59] *English Episcopal Acta 32: Norwich*, ed. by Harper-Bill, pp. 168–75, nos 149–51. See also Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 187, 205, 209. Unlike Poor, Walton was a noted curialist with no reputation for personal piety.

[60] Grosseteste, *Epistolae*, ed. by Luard, pp. 43–45, ep. 8. For English translation and notes, see Grosseteste, *The Letters*, trans. by Mantello and Goering, pp. 75–77. See also Marsh, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. by Lawrence, I, 32–33, 148–49, nos 12, 53.

[61] *Vita Sancti Edmundi*, ed. by Lawrence, p. 222. For Catesby nunnery, see Gervase of Canterbury, *The Historical Works*, ed. by Stubbs, I, 431.

[62] Lawrence, *St Edmund of Canterbury*, p. 108; Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 423–24.

[63] *Vita Sancti Edmundi*, ed. by Lawrence, p. 250. On the particular problems of simony in nunneries, see Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life*, pp. 158–59, 193–94.

wealthy urban dynasty and a small nunnery some seventy-five kilometres away is unknown.[64] Edmund's attachment to Catesby continued through his life and beyond, since on his death he left the nunnery his cloak and a sculpted diptych, which then became the focus of a small cult.[65]

It was presumably these connections with, and patronage of, Catesby that lay behind an incident recorded in the *Lanercost Chronicle* for the year 1238, the year in which Edmund became archbishop, though it is unclear whether the events described relate to the time of his archiepiscopate or his earlier ecclesiastical career.[66] While Edmund was in Norfolk, he persuaded a young heiress who did not wish to be married to be received at Catesby, 'where his sister was then prioress'. He continued to have a close relationship with the woman, greeting her as his dearest friend and providing her with suitable support. Once, while staying nearby, he asked that his sister, accompanied by this nun, should visit him at Easter. Arriving late on Easter eve, they found Edmund already washing his hands (presumably in preparation for the Easter liturgy). As soon as he saw her, he is said to have embraced her in the sight of all, saying that if the world would not think the worse of it, they would never live apart.

That Edmund was noted as a spiritual advisor to nuns and religious women beyond Catesby is apparent from a story in Ralph Bocking's *vita* of Edmund's friend and colleague, Richard, bishop of Chichester. Ralph writes how Edmund was always willing to visit religious women, either to admonish them to good, or to exhort them to even greater perfection. Such behaviour clearly provoked scandalous gossip, as when Edmund was visiting a holy woman alone and the suspicious chatter of the archbishop's servants came to Richard's attention, causing both saints great distress.[67] Both the Lanercost and Bocking accounts are inserted in their narratives to emphasize Edmund's own chastity, a virtue which all his hagiographers emphasized, and to counter any accusations of impropriety; but at the same time, they reflect the bishop's concern to promote the religious life of women under his jurisdiction. This interest may also perhaps be reflected in the Pontigny *vita* which tells how before he became archbishop he went to preach at Buckland nunnery, styled Cistercian here and seemingly a confusion of the nunnery of the sisters of the Order of St John of Jerusalem at Minchin Buckland with the Cistercian monastery of Buckland. A nun had

[64] Lawrence, *St Edmund*, pp. 316–17.

[65] *Vita Sancti Edmundi*, ed. by Lawrence, pp. 270, 278–79.

[66] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Stevenson, I, 36–37.

[67] *Saint Richard of Chichester*, ed. by Jones, pp. 102, 178–79.

a vision that a deceased sister appeared telling her that Edmund would come to preach and that she should give him a thread she would find in order that he might make crosses from it. The nun did as told and Edmund made crosses with which many people were signed. This account is given in the context of Edmund's preaching of the crusade (probably *c.* 1226–27), and the fact that he chose to visit a *nunnery* of a crusading order may be significant.[68]

It is also possible that the Anglo-Norman version of Edmund's *Speculum ecclesie*, the *La Merure de Seinte Eglise* (which perhaps preceded the *Speculum*), was originally intended for a female religious audience, though it soon enjoyed a wide readership.[69] Maybe, as David N. Bell has suggested, following M. Dominica Legge, it was produced for Countess Ela, the foundress and first abbess of Lacock. Such a suggestion is not unlikely since, according to the nunnery's foundation, after Ela had entered the community she always acted in accordance with Edmund's counsel, and the Pontigny *vita* records how he sent her a curative relic of Thomas Becket when she was abbess and ill.[70] Edmund may have already acted as Ela's spiritual advisor while she was still countess, for the same source tells how he refused a gift of jewels the countess sent him.[71] Legge also raised the possibility, though considered it less probable, that *La Merure* was intended for Edmund's sisters.[72] Indeed, there is nothing in the Latin text of the *Speculum ecclesie*, which was certainly written for religious, to preclude the possibility that it too was written for nuns.[73] Moreover, Nicholas Watson has recently suggested that Edmund's *Speculum religiosorum*, another text of spiritual guidance, might have been written for his Catesby sisters.[74]

[68] *Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, ed. by Martène and Durand, III, cols 1799–1800.

[69] *Mirour de Seinte Eglise*, ed. by Wilshere, who argues that Edmund was not responsible for the French version, which he sees as posterior to the Latin text (p. xxxviii). See also the valuable discussion by Iguchi, 'The Visibility of the Translator'.

[70] Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, VI, 501–02; *Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, ed. by Martène and Durand, III, cols 1798–99.

[71] *Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, ed. by Martène and Durand, III, col. 1799.

[72] Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 69; Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, p. 96, and 'Wanted: An Edition of St Edmund's "Merure"'. Legge notes that some manuscripts of the *Merure* are addressed to 'dear sister and friend'. I subscribe to Legge's suggestion, in contrast to Wilshere, that the Anglo-Norman version was written before the Latin.

[73] There is a substantial literature on the *Speculum ecclesie*: see especially Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 222–24; Lawrence, *St Edmund,* pp. 120–22, and Gunn, 'Reading Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum*'.

[74] Watson, 'Middle English Versions and Audiences', p. 118.

Other works of spiritual guidance were also associated with bishops. Simon de Ghent, who became bishop of Salisbury in 1297, was certainly concerned to maintain standards within the nunneries of his diocese. He was among the very first of the English bishops to try to enforce Boniface VIII's edict, *Periculoso*, writing to the abbesses of all the nunneries in his diocese to order them to ensure the strict claustration of their nuns.[75] A manuscript of *c.* 1400 attributed the Latin translation of the *Ancrene Wisse* to him: 'Hic incipit prohemium uenerabilis patris magistri Simonis de Gandavo episcopi Sarum in librum de uita solitaria quem scripsit sororibus suis anachoritis apud Tarente.'[76] This *incipit* raises some obvious problems: the bishop is not known to have to have had any biological sisters, and it is probable that the reference here is to his spiritual sisters in his diocese. Nor were there anchoresses at Tarrant: Tarrant was, as we have seen, a Cistercian nunnery. Indeed, the vernacular version of the *Ancrene Wisse*, which was almost certainly written in the late 1220s, predates the bishop by some decades.[77] Simon was also, however, credited with another rule for both male and female anchorites: the so-called 'Dublin rule', which was probably produced during his lifetime.[78] Here again we see the connection between bishops and the eremitical life. What is important is not whether Simon was really the author of the vernacular text, but that some thought it appropriate to ascribe works of spiritual guidance for women to the bishop.

This survey is intended only to suggest that a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between diocesan bishops and nunneries in medieval England than has generally been presented is necessary. Meanwhile, a number of tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a gradual transition from relatively

[75] *Registrum Simonis de Gandavo*, ed. by Flower and Dawes, I, 10–13, 109–10.

[76] Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 67 (Millett, *Annotated Bibliographies*, pp. 58–59). A similar attribution was probably found at the beginning of an earlier Latin version of the Ancrene Wisse (in the now-fragmentary manuscript British Library, Cotton Vitellius E vii), which is described in the 1696 catalogue of the Cottonian manuscripts, 'Regulae vitae anachoretarum utriusque sexus scriptae per Simonem de Gandavo, episcopum Sarum, in usum sororum': it is also found in an earlier Cottonian catalogue (London, British Library, MS Additional 36682 B, fol. 179^{r}) which also refers to the Magdalen manuscript; Millett, *Annotated Bibliographies*, pp. 53–54; Macaulay, 'The Ancren Riwle', pp. 70, 71, 77–78, 473–74. In 1853 James Morton erroneously ascribed the *Ancrene Wisse* to Bishop Poor; Millett, *Annotated Bibliographies*, pp. 7, 15, 34, 66–67.

[77] On the dating and authorship of *Ancrene Wisse*, see Millett, *Annotated Bibliographies*, pp. 6–13, and *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Millett, II, pp. xvi–xix.

[78] For the 'Dublin Rule', see 'Regulae tres reclusorum et eremitarum', ed. by Oliger, and 'Regula reclusorum Angliae', ed. by Oliger.

unstructured relationships to greater institutionalization and formalization. This transition and the development of processes of control may well have led to a general distancing between diocesan and community and the canalization of spiritual counsel through visitations rather than personal contacts. This counsel was most probably delivered through the sermon which was customarily delivered at all visitations. The biblical texts of some of these sermons have survived, as have a few full sermon texts, though none has yet been identified as being intended for a nunnery.[79] Second, it is noteworthy that all the bishops discussed above (with the exception of Walton) were distinguished for their piety, three (Anselm, Grosseteste, and Edmund) were canonized, and at least one other, Simon de Ghent, was the subject of an unofficial cult. This might suggest that unexceptional bishops in general paid little attention to the care of the nuns in their diocese, and that though even the most worldly might found nunneries, thereafter they were largely ignored, except in the context of routine visitations, consecrations, and other 'official' obligations. But only a small proportion even of the thirteenth-century reformist bishops had any direct encounter with nunneries. Such contacts there were driven as much as anything by familial and friendship ties, which were frequently established well before the bishop was appointed: spiritual and temporal kinship converged.

[79] Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries*, pp. 15–16, 59, 62–63

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Medieval Nunneries and Male Authority: Female Monasteries in England and Wales

Janet Burton

Within the British Isles, provision for women wishing to live the religious, specifically the monastic, life, varied both in terms of chronology and geography. The monastic houses of England in the late Anglo-Saxon period were confined to the south and midlands of the country, and monasteries for men outnumbered the houses for women by about four to one.[1] Both male and female houses enjoyed support from the kings of England, and accumulated considerable wealth, but outside the royal heartlands of Wessex and Mercia provision was non-existent. By the end of the Middle Ages, female monasticism had spread widely, though there were some areas — notably Cornwall and the north-west — where there was still a lack of formal opportunity for female religious.[2] In contrast, a map of monastic England in the Middle Ages would show a density of nunneries, particularly in the north-east and the midlands. In Lincolnshire, for instance, the Gilbertine Order offered nuns a life within one of its highly regulated double houses, where women (nuns and lay sisters, *converse/conversae*) and men (regular canons and *conversi*) formed the four wheels of the biblical 'Chariot of Aminadab', while wealthy female monasteries like Stixwould and tiny, poor houses like Fosse were as much a part of the

[1] On female religious, and the different terminology used to describe them, in Anglo-Saxon England, see Foot, *Veiled Women* and '*Flores ecclesiae*'.

[2] Orme, *A History of the County of Cornwall*, p. 31.

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vibrant religious life of the region.[3] In terms of affiliation and observance, the majority of houses followed the Rule of St Benedict, though there was a handful (around twenty) of houses of Augustinian canonesses.[4] Between twenty and thirty houses — the number is uncertain — were in some ways associated with the Cistercians, though not apparently throughout their history.[5] In Wales, despite a considerable male monastic presence, there were only three small priories for nuns: one Benedictine and two Cistercian.[6] It is largely — though not exclusively — with these smaller Cistercian nunneries that this essay is concerned. Relatively few medieval writers in a British context commented on the status of female Cistercian houses in relation to their male counterparts. One who did was Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), archdeacon of Brecon in South Wales from 1175, a man whose ecclesiastical career and ambitions brought him into contact with the monastic world. In his *Speculum ecclesie*, written around 1216, he mentions — though not by name — a small house for nuns founded by Rhys ap Gruffudd, lord of Deheubarth (d. 1197), endowed with lands and pastures in order to sustain the nuns in their life of service to God: 'Erat autem domus monialium pauperum in dextralis Walliae parte superiori sita, a Reso Griffini filio principe regionis illius suis nostrisque diebus egregio fundata, et praediis ac pascuis, quibus vivere juxta modulum suum Deoque servire poterant, caritative dotata.'[7] The house to which he refers here is Llanllŷr, lying in the valley of the river Aeron. Gerald — by 1216 no friend of the Cistercians — tells how this unnamed nunnery was oppressed by the monks of a rich abbey who appropriated its lands. This house is again unnamed but

[3] For a general study of English nunneries, see Thompson, *Women Religious*; on the northern nunneries, see Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 125–52; on the Gilbertine priories of eastern England and the midlands, particularly Lincolnshire, see Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*; see also Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 165–95.

[4] Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 278–82.

[5] The question of Cistercian nuns has attracted considerable attention over recent years. See, for instance, Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe*; Freeman, '"Houses of a Peculiar Order"'; Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'; and Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*. On the apparent confusion in the affiliation of some English nunneries, see Burton, 'The Convent and the Community', especially pp. 66–71.

[6] On the Welsh nunneries, see Williams, 'Cistercian Nunneries in Medieval Wales', and, more recently, Cartwright, 'The Desire to Corrupt'; Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories*, pp. 5, 13, 120–24, 210–12.

[7] Gerald of Wales, *Speculum ecclesie*, ed. by Brewer, pp. 152–53. I also discuss the significance of this passage in '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*', pp. 380–81.

clearly identified by the description of its location as Strata Florida, which lay some fifteen miles to the north-east of Llanllŷr. Founded in 1164 in the shadow of the Cambrian Mountains, Strata Florida had since 1165 also been in the patronage of the Lord Rhys and his successors. Gerald goes on to tell his readers something of the relationship between the monastery and the nunnery and of the place of Llanllŷr within the structure of the Cistercian family:

> domus monialium exilis et exigua ab initio cultum et habitum exteriorem ordinis Cisterciensis et institutionem etiam interiorem, quoad muliebri sexui licuit, ab eadem divite domo susceperat, et magisterio ipsius ordinationi quoque et gubernationi tanquam subditam et ex toto subjectam se subjecerat.[8]
>
> (The ruined and humble house of nuns had from the very beginning received from that same rich house the outward practice and habit, and also the internal constitution of the Cistercian Order as far as was possible for the female sex, and had also subjected itself to the instruction, government, and direction of the same house as subject and submissive in all things.)

Gerald could not resist drawing attention to what he interpreted as the exploitation of the poor nuns of Llanllŷr by the rich monks of Strata Florida, but he also seems clear in his own mind that there was a constitutional relationship between the two houses, which went back — in his words — to 'the very beginning', that is, to the foundation of Llanllŷr by the Lord Rhys. His comments — although his hint at the exploitation of the nuns by the monks was made in that phase of his career which may loosely be described as anti-Cistercian, with Strata Florida a particular target for his displeasure[9] — form a useful introduction to this essay, which offers a few thoughts on the nature of the relationship between male authority and female religious communities, particularly the Cistercian houses of England and Wales. Gerald, it seems to me, makes two important points here. The first is that outwardly — to the casual visitor, perhaps — the nuns of Llanllŷr were recognizable by their practices (customs) and by their dress, their habit. These were what distinguished them to others as Cistercian. These were markers of a corporate identity. The second point he makes is that there was between the male and female monastery a relationship of authority and instruction, and indeed enforcement. The abbot of Strata

[8] Gerald of Wales, *Speculum ecclesie*, ed. by Brewer, IV, 153.

[9] On Gerald's early admiration for, and later antagonism towards, the Cistercians, see Golding, 'Gerald of Wales and the Cistercians'. For his criticism, see Gerald of Wales, *Speculum ecclesie*, ed. by Brewer, IV, 129–248.

Florida was the father abbot, or father immediate, of the nuns of Llanllŷr. He enjoyed, in Gerald's words, 'instruction, government, and direction' over the nuns. It is this aspect of the life of medieval Cistercian women, their control by male authorities, that this essay explores and, more specifically, the wider issues of male authority over nuns and the extent to which nuns themselves held, or sought, power and authority over their own affairs. Discussion is not confined to Cistercian abbots, to whom the female houses may have been committed, but other male authorities as well, notably, bishops and archbishops on a diocesan level, and masters and guardians on a more local level. It considers such issues as mechanisms of control and the enforcement of authority, and through these the imposition of rules and regulations. Such rules were about routine, and the enforcement of routine and, through routine, of corporate identity. Such identity might be achieved through the structure of the monastic day, through ritual, through the use of space within the monastic cloister and precinct, and through such mechanisms as dress, which was, and remains, a way of enforcing corporate identity. All these aspects of monastic observance might be determined by authority structures *within* the nunnery — the abbess or prioress — but also by external, male authorities. They were enforced by the pope, through papal bulls and mandates, as well as the grant of liberties to individual houses. They were enforced by archbishops and bishops, using the methods of visitation, and periodic intervention in the processes of election of a superior. They may have been enforced through masters and guardians, though these tended to be delegated care of the secular business of a nunnery.[10] All of these male authorities found methods of enforcing a way of life and also of countering, or trying to counter, what we might term acts of resistance to corporate identity and expressions of individualism.

The Cistercian Hierarchy

Recent years have seen a debate about the nature of Cistercian nunneries, although to some there is no debate: women were an important part of what became the Cistercian Order from the very beginning, and were as much Cistercian as Cistercian men. I do not want to enter into this debate in detail in this essay, though it is germane to my subject insofar as one can legitimately ask these questions: if — using the first part of Gerald's description — religious women were defined or recognized as Cistercian by their outward practices and

[10] For remarks on masters and guardians, see below, p. 139.

habits, were they also defined or recognized as such by a dependence on the authority of Cistercian men? Was their identity as Cistercians dependent on recognition that they were part of the structure of the Order? I will accordingly begin with a top-down approach and look for what evidence there might be for the enforcement of authority over nunneries within the Cistercian Order itself, and geographically within the context of England and Wales.

First, however, there is an important point to be made about chronology. Save only three houses — Tarrant, Marham, and Whistones — all the English and Welsh houses of nuns which at some point in their history were termed Cistercian were founded *before* that famous series of statutes of the General Chapter in the early thirteenth century that related to the incorporation of female houses into the Order.[11] In fact, few English houses were founded after that date. In 1213 the Chapter ordered that 'All nuns incorporated in the order, by the authority of the General Chapter, must not leave their cloisters except with the permission of their father-abbot. Moreover, any houses incorporated in the future will be admitted only on the condition that total enclosure is maintained'[12] — this makes clear that some female houses had already been incorporated into the Order before that date.[13] For most of the houses in England and Wales, although there are a few exceptions, there is no evidence that they were Cistercian in the twelfth century — though there is no evidence that they were not. Rather, most references to a Cistercian identity come from a later period. Evidence for our few exceptions — that is, those recognized as following Cistercian customs in some way before the thirteenth century — derives from papal bulls of the later twelfth century allowing nuns to enjoy the same privileges as those enjoyed by Cistercian men. That some nunneries, such as the Yorkshire house of Swine and the Lincolnshire priory of Nun Cotham, were joint recipients of such bulls may suggest some form of corporate enterprise in seeking and obtaining such privileges.[14] The 1213 statute of the General Chapter leaves us in no doubt that male houses were to enjoy an association with incorporated female houses in terms of authority and supervision, but the

[11] For the evidence and discussion, see Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'.

[12] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, I, 405 (1213/3), as translated in Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, p. 93. Lester discusses Cistercian legislation and women on pp. 92–96.

[13] A point made by Freeman, '"Houses of a Peculiar Order"', p. 247. The most famous Cistercian female houses of the twelfth century were those of La Tart (France) and the royal Spanish house of Las Huelgas.

[14] For this see Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, V, 494.

decade and a half that followed saw legislation that both enforced the enclosure of Cistercian nuns and acknowledged the difficulties of entrusting their supervision to Cistercian men.[15] That of 1228, which laid down that no further nunneries of the Order were to be founded, forbade visitation by Cistercian abbots. New houses could use Cistercian customs, but they were not to be under the supervision of, or visited by, Cistercian men.[16] The lack of definition about the foundation and status of the English and Welsh houses raises questions about the relationship — if any — between male and female houses of the Order, both before and after the series of statutes just discussed.

Of association at the time of foundation, we know only a little. Because his own house was closely involved, the chronicler of the male Cistercian abbey at Waverley recorded some of the details of the processes which led to the foundation of Marham Abbey in Norfolk, one of only two fully incorporated English nunneries, the only two female Cistercian houses to enjoy the status of abbey rather than priory. It is clear that the negotiations which led to the foundation involved the abbot of Waverley to some considerable extent, though there is no evidence after the foundation of the nature and extent of any continued relationship.[17] Otherwise, we can only speculate that new or indeed existing houses were eased into the Order by local Cistercian abbots and monks, or founders and patrons of female houses. Gerald's remarks suggest that Lord Rhys negotiated with Strata Florida about the foundation of Llanllŷr, and it is likely that the second of the two Cistercian nunneries in Wales, Llanllugan, might have stood in the same relationship to Strata Marcella as Llanllŷr did to Strata Florida.[18] As we will see, there is a hint in a later source that the northern English nunnery of Sinningthwaite may have been related to the great abbey of Fountains. Sinningthwaite, which like Swine is referred to as Cistercian in a papal bull of 1170, was founded by Bertram Haget, a benefactor of Fountains, where one son, Ralph, was to enter the religious life and rise to the office of abbot.[19]

[15] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, I, 502 (1218/84), 505 (1219/12), 517 (1220/4); II, 19 (1222/30), 36 (1225/7). For discussion, see, for instance, Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, pp. 93–96.

[16] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 68 (1228/16).

[17] *Annales monasteriii de Waverleia*, in *Annales monastici*, ed. by Luard, II, 344; Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*', pp. 375–76.

[18] Cartwright, 'The Desire to Corrupt', pp. 21–23. Cartwright also discusses Gerald's tales of a third Cistercian nunnery at Llansanffraid-yn-Elfael.

[19] Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 151–52; Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, I, 133, 136.

The proximity of Swine Priory to Cistercian Meaux Abbey, both in terms of geographical location and date of foundation, suggests a possible connection between the two. However, Swine, while claiming Cistercian privileges, seems to have been influenced in its internal organization by the Gilbertine Order, or Order of Sempringham, the only medieval monastic order with its origins in England, which grew up in Lincolnshire.[20] Moreover, Swine's relationship with Meaux Abbey was frequently inharmonious, and the nuns, far from being 'subjective and submissive' (Gerald's words again) were vigorous in opposing any encroachments on their rights by their more powerful Cistercian neighbours.[21] This does not rule out that in the initial planning some dependence on the local male Cistercian abbey may have been intended, and I have argued elsewhere that a number of female Cistercian houses in England and Wales may have owed their origins to the cooperation of founders and the leaders of local Cistercian male abbeys, and that there was a grass roots desire to found Cistercian female houses, whatever the ambiguity of the attitude of the Order.[22]

Having said that, the trail of records relating to the relationship between male and female houses of the Order in England and Wales within the archive of the Order itself is disappointing. There is some evidence that the second house in England to be formally incorporated into the Order — that is, Tarrant in Dorset — was under Cistercian supervision and subject to the authority of the General Chapter. In 1243 correction of the abbey was delegated by the Chapter to the abbots of Boxley and Robertsbridge.[23] The reason for the choice of these two abbots is interesting, for they were not by any means the nearest houses in terms of geography, as they were situated far to the east, in Kent. A decade or so later, however, the General Chapter committed to two abbots from the south-west of England, those of Buckfast and Newenham, responsibility for investigating the quarrel between the nuns of Tarrant and the abbot of Bindon.[24] This did keep the process of conflict resolution as a 'local affair': we see the investigation of two Cistercian houses, one male and one female, by two

[20] Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 149–51, and 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"'. Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 166, notes the similarity in terms of organization between some of the Cistercian nunneries of Lincolnshire and that of the Gilbertines.

[21] See the examples given in Burton, 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"', pp. 33–37.

[22] See Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 147–52. For this phenomenon in Italy, see the essay by Guido Cariboni in the present collection.

[23] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 271 (1243/62).

[24] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 434 (1257/50).

abbots in reasonably close proximity. However, for other English and Welsh Cistercian female houses there is a distinct lack of evidence for their interaction with the Order. This raises a number of questions: about the nature of the power and authority of the Cistercian Order, through its legislative body, the General Chapter; about the question of identity — how far did the presence, or lack, of male Cistercian authority affect the nuns' sense of their own identity as Cistercians; and about whether they actively sought, or actively resisted, such authority, and if they harnessed it to their own sense of their communities.

On the whole, the evidence suggests that intervention by Cistercian abbots in the internal affairs of Cistercian nunneries in England and Wales was not common practice. In 1276 the archbishop of York issued a mandate to a number of Cistercian prioresses in his diocese — hinting at some tension over sources of authority — ordering them to receive members of the Friars Minor and Friars Preacher as their confessors as they had customarily done 'notwithstanding the prohibition placed on you by abbots of the Cistercian Order'.[25] This appears to refer specifically to the statute of the previous year ('monialibus nostri Ordinis praecipitur, hoc adiuncto, ne eisdem confiteantur Fratribus sub poena excommunicationis, quam in ipsas ferimus, si statuto non paruerint supradicto, capellanos monialium celebrantes, ipsis Minoribus in monasteriis monialium existentibus, praedictae excommunicationis sententia innodando'), and the inference we can draw is that both the archbishop and local northern prioresses were aware of the rulings of the Order.[26] Cistercian abbots, the archbishop told the prioresses, had no ordinary or delegated jurisdiction over them. It is most likely that this prohibition led to an interpretation of his letter, by some female religious, as a threat to their Cistercian status and identity. Just a few months after the archbishop issued his decree three nuns appeared in court in St Pauls Cathedral in London to give evidence about an appeal that had been made to the pope. They were Prioress Isabella of Sinningthwaite and two of her nuns, Margery Graymore and Ingreta de Walkeringham. Sinningthwaite is described as a Cistercian priory in the diocese of York. The three women claimed the Cistercian privilege of exemption from episcopal visitation, as enjoyed by other Cistercian houses.[27] As reinforcement of their claim they offered evidence that visitation of their priory was a function performed by the abbot of Fountains — something they maintained that the abbot had done time out of mind. The

[25] *The Register of Walter Giffard*, ed. by Brown, p. 295.

[26] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, III, 142 (1275/14).

[27] Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, V, 464–65.

nuns therefore argued that the attempted visitation by the archbishop was an infringement of the rights of the priory as well as the privileges of the order.

As Guido Cariboni has argued in relation to Cistercian nuns in northern Italy, the *officium visitationis* of a father abbot, and the *privilegia* and *littere cum serico* normally granted by the papacy to Cistercian monasteries, were grounds on which female houses might claim membership of the Cistercian Order and might appeal to the Apostolic See when these rights were infringed.[28] The Sinningthwaite sisters not only claimed violation of their Cistercian privileges: they also maintained that their appeal to the pope had led to their excommunication and the deposition of Prioress Isabella. The authenticity of the nuns' claim is impossible to assess. However, as suggested earlier, the indications are that from the very beginning Sinningthwaite was tied in some way to the great abbey of Fountains through the family of Haget, founders and patrons of the nunnery, benefactors of Fountains, and the origin of at least one prioress of Sinningthwaite in the early thirteenth century.[29] Of visitation by the abbot of Fountains, if indeed he ever performed this function, we have no record. This is seemingly the only known reference to Prioress Isabella, although the sequence of prioresses at Sinningthwaite is poorly attested. However, this one document may provide us with a glimpse of what we might have lost: that is, we may have a hint of interaction between local male and female Cistercian houses. The episode could, however, be interpreted in another way. Are we perhaps seeing some enterprising nuns inventing a process — visitation by a Cistercian father abbot — in order to avoid another source of male authority, the archbishop of York? If that were the case, it was a battle or a skirmish that the nuns appear to have lost. We do indeed have record of visitation, by the archbishop, of Sinningthwaite and other female Cistercian houses in his diocese.[30] It is not until the last generation or so of the monastic houses of England and Wales, before the Dissolution of 1536–40, that we have evidence of the intervention of the General Chapter in English nunnery affairs, specifically in relation to

[28] See his essay in this collection, pp. 53–74.

[29] See above, p. 128, and, for Prioress Eufemia Haget, see Smith and London, *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, II, 606–07. It is known that a daughter of the founder, Gundreda, entered the nunnery, and it is possible, though not documented, that she held the position of prioress.

[30] For the evidence of visitation of the northern nunneries, see Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, pp. 27–36; for the Lincolnshire evidence, see Freeman, '"Houses of a Peculiar Order"', pp. 267–70, and Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 190–92.

their visitation by abbots of the Order. It was perhaps in 1517 that the abbots of Forde, Stratford Langthorne, and St Mary Graces, London, gave notice to the General Chapter of the division of responsibility for the visitation of male and female houses among them: the nunnery of Tarrant had fallen to the abbot of Forde, while the other two visited the nunneries of Marham, Cook Hill (in the county and diocese of Worcester), and — apparently its first appearance in Cistercian records — Pinley (Warwickshire, diocese of Worcester).[31] In 1520 the Chapter ordered the abbots of Stratford Langthorne and St Mary Graces to visit the same three nunneries.[32] Interestingly, in the same year John, abbot of Vale Royal, claimed, among the monasteries under his jurisdiction, the nunneries of Marham, Pinley, and Cook Hill.[33] There was clearly some dispute about pre-eminence among the hierarchy of English Cistercian abbots. Finally, in 1533 commissions were granted to the abbots of St Mary Graces and Woburn in respect of three nunneries (Cook Hill, Marham, and Tarrant, thus omitting Pinley on this occasion),[34] and to the abbots of Fountains and Byland for fourteen female houses in the northern dioceses.[35]

Another method of enforcing authority was by the appointment, or perhaps even more the removal — of heads of houses, the abbesses and prioresses. While accepting that the documentary evidence may be deficient, it is noteworthy that I have been able to locate in the records of the Cistercian General Chapter only one instance of intervention in the headship of an English or Welsh female house. This was at Cook Hill in 1491. The Chapter noted the 'privationem, amotionem, depositionem, et destitutionem' of Joan Frankelden, until recently abbess of Cook Hill, and the 'promotionem, provisionem, insti-

[31] *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux*, ed. by Talbot, pp. 236–38. The document is undated but placed by Talbot with other records under the year 1517.

[32] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, VI, 557–58 (1520/29); *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux*, ed. by Talbot, p. 258.

[33] *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux*, ed. by Talbot, pp. 254–58.

[34] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, VI, 719 (1533/45).

[35] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, VI, 719 (1533/46). With one exception (Newcastle), these lay in the dioceses of York and Lincoln: Nun Appleton, Sinningthwaite, Esholt, Hampole, Wallingwells, Arthington, Ellerton, Swine, Greenfield, Stixwould, Kirklees, Gokewell, Nun Cotham. 'Ardyngthone' is identified in the index to *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez (VIII, 27) as Haddington in Scotland, but is undoubtedly Arthington in Yorkshire. This is usually referred to as a Cluniac house, but changes in affiliation are not unknown; Burton, 'Convent and Community'.

tutionem, et installationem' of Elizabeth Webbe as her successor.[36] This record was only part of a long running saga. Joan's removal had taken place at least as early as 1489, and she had appealed against her deposition both to the court at Canterbury and to the papal curia, and the abbot of Hailes was summoned to defend his action in expelling her from her house. This affair generated lengthy correspondence between English Cistercian abbots and the Chapter, and the intervention of the abbots of Fountains and Stratford Langthorne.[37] But how are we to interpret this? Was this case extraordinary only insofar as it appears to be a unique record? Was there, accordingly, more interaction between male and female houses and with the Order than the records of the General Chapter allow? Or was formal Cistercian intervention in English nunnery affairs unusual? We have an apparent 'hands off' attitude on the part of the Cistercian hierarchy, but we need to ask if this is merely the product of the survival of evidence. Was Cistercian visitation, the attempts to enforce discipline, as well as Cistercian practice, more common than the records suggest? I will leave that question now and turn to a second source of male authority, that is, that which was exercised at episcopal level.

Archbishops, Bishops, and Episcopal Authority

There appears to be no evidence of two Cistercian foundations of the thirteenth century, Tarrant and Marham, being subject to episcopal visitation. Elsewhere there is a different picture. The archbishop of York and a number of diocesan bishops did, in fact, visit the Cistercian nunneries of their dioceses in the same way as they did Benedictine and Augustinian houses, if not on a regular basis, then often enough to suggest that for these houses the archbishop or bishop was a more powerful enforcer of authority than the members of the Cistercian Order themselves.[38] Whereas the process of visitation among male Cistercian houses — by the father abbot (father immediate) or his proxy — would in part at least have related to the maintenance of specifically Cistercian regulations,

[36] *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, VI, 22 (1491/49); Smith, *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, III, 639.

[37] *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux*, ed. by Talbot, pp. 130–39, 146–48, 152–54.

[38] For a discussion of the role of archbishops and bishops in the oversight of nunneries, see Spear, *Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 41–58. On the Lincolnshire houses, see Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 185–90.

an archbishop or bishop would have been more concerned to enforce general monastic codes of behaviour: the proper performance of the liturgy; silence; the norms of food, drink, and clothing; and enclosure. Thus it was that at Swine in 1268 Archbishop Walter Giffard noted *inter alia* that silence was not observed in the church, cloister, refectory and dormitory; and that despite grants being made for the purpose, sick nuns were cared for inadequately and not given extra food.[39] He commented on one infringement of a specific Cistercian regulation: the code of dress was broken by the lay sisters, who wore the black veil of the nuns — which was not the custom in other Cistercian houses.[40] Other problems which surfaced in the course of Giffard's visitation suggest that the nuns were not just influenced in their practices by Cistercian customs. The archbishop noted with disapproval the conversations between the nuns and canons, through the Gilbertine-style window house, which was intended to reinforce the separation of the male and female components of double houses.[41] All this was compounded by the shortcomings of the prioress and the rebellious nature of a number of the nuns. The archbishop's comment that three nuns belonged to the same birth family as well as monastic family ('tres sorores carnales et spirituales') gives us a clue about one source of unease in the convent.[42] In one way this long list of complaints is about norms of behaviour: the apparent inability of the prioress to maintain control; the problems caused by poverty; the factional infighting. Also noteworthy were the accusations of control of nunnery affairs by the male element within this Cistercian priory, the regular canons, to the detriment of the women — the presence of canons furnishing another example of the exercise of male authority over nunnery affairs that appears to owe much to Gilbertine practice.[43] In another way, however, we might interpret

[39] *The Register of Walter Giffard*, ed. by Brown, pp. 146–48 (findings), 248–49 (decrees). For discussion of the history of Swine, and issues relating to the relationship between male and female power and authority, see Burton, 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"'.

[40] 'quod in aliis ejusdem religionis domibus esse dicitur insuetum'; *The Register of Walter Giffard*, ed. by Brown, p. 148. As Anne Lester has highlighted, the General Chapter of 1235 prescribed the dress for female religious: an undyed cowl or mantle (to be worn at all times), a scapular for periods of manual labour, and a black veil (no other colour was permitted): see Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, pp. 107–10. For the decree of 1235, see *Statuta capitulorum generalium*, ed. by Canivez, II, 139 (1235/3).

[41] On the Gilbertine window house, see Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p. 127.

[42] *The Register of Walter Giffard*, ed. by Brown, p. 147.

[43] On the presence of regular canons in Gilbertine priories, see Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, pp. 126–32. For their occurrences in Lincolnshire Cistercian houses, see Wilkinson,

the problems at Swine as a result of the multiple layers of identity within a medieval religious house, the carrying over of family and local loyalties and sentiments into the monastic community — which was probably more common among smaller houses, both male and female, and those that seem to have been closely rooted into the local community. Thirty years later at Swine there were still infringements of dress — the nuns were ordered not to wear large collars, barred girdles, or laced shoes — a description that recalls the thirteenth-century guidance for anchoresses, the *Ancrene Wisse*.[44] The seemingly persistent complaints about dress among nunneries of all orders have been interpreted in different ways. Eileen Power saw them as an indication of lack of vocation among high born women.[45] Conversely, John Tillotson argued that divergence in dress came about because of the extreme poverty of some priories, which meant that the nuns had to rely on hand-me-down clothes from relatives and friends. This, he suggests, lay behind irregularities in dress.[46] Might there be a third explanation, which is that such divergence was a deliberate subversion of the norm and an assertion of individuality? Within their small, poor, and often marginal communities, were the nuns creating their own rules, and defining their nunneries as households, in one way liminal, yet still closely integrated into the broader communities in which they were located? Either way, it is clear that, in respect of dress, archbishops and bishops seem to have encountered difficulty in enforcing institutional identity.

Another way of enforcing authority on female houses (as well as male ones) was by the transfer of nuns, or even prioresses, from one house to another. Within the male Cistercian community this seems to have been a function of the General Chapter, although on a local level it might also be done by episcopal authority. In respect of female houses in England and Wales, however, there is no evidence of Cistercian involvement, though there are numerous examples of the intervention of archbishops and bishops in this way. This might be for the purposes of discipline, or more benignly for the economic welfare of the community, as poverty — either persistent or related to specific occasions — made the continuation of the community for the time being impossible. Two examples will suffice. During a visitation of Hampole Priory (Yorkshire) in

Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire, p. 183.

[44] *The Register of John le Romeyn*, ed. by Brown, I, 203–04; *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Millett, I, 158–60.

[45] Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 73–78.

[46] Tillotson, 'Visitation and Reform of the Yorkshire Nunneries'.

1312, it was discovered that the prioress had — despite the prohibition of the archbishop — accepted two new recruits. Her resignation followed as a result of this revelation, and as a simple nun of Hampole she was sent to Swine Priory to do penance there.[47] We see here the archbishop as disciplinarian, but probably one with a concern that recruitment should match the material and financial resources of the house. At the Augustinian house of Moxby, in the Forest of Galtres to the north of York, the archbishop ordered the dispersal of the prioress and her eight nuns in 1322: the prioress to Cistercian Swine, two nuns each to the Benedictine houses of Nun Monkton and Nunkeeling, and two each to the Cistercian houses of Hampole and Nun Appleton.[48] The reason for the temporary disbandment of the priory was not one of discipline — though once the community reassembled, problems were to follow — but the desecration of the priory church during Scottish raids.[49] In some cases archbishops seem to have been sensitive about selecting an appropriate host for displaced nuns, which is apparent in their letters referring to the settlement of nuns 'vestri ordinis' (of your order).

A final aspect of the imposition, by an archbishop or bishop, of his authority on nunnery affairs can be seen in his intervention in the election or appointment of heads of female communities. I have already indicated that for England and Wales there is little evidence for activity in this respect by members of the Cistercian Order or the General Chapter. For the most part — as far as the evidence will allow us to make this assertion — the heads of English nunneries of any order were, as we would expect, elected by the community. But what happened when the community was unable to agree, or when the prioress turned out to be in some way deficient? Louise Wilkinson has detected an increasing tendency of the thirteenth-century bishops of Lincoln to interfere in the election of the prioresses of their diocese, on a scale not matched in male houses.[50] Here, as elsewhere, surviving records yield many examples of episcopal intervention, but what some of these stories suggest is that resistance to such manifestations of male authority was far from unknown. One example comes from the small northern nunnery of Keldholme, a house that probably had no more than eight or nine nuns. The sequence of events is unusually well

[47] *The Register of William Greenfield*, ed. by Brown and Hamilton Thompson, II, 141–42.

[48] *The Register of William Melton*, ed. by Hill, Robinson, Brocklesby, and Timmins, II, 84.

[49] For these problems see Burton, 'Cloistered Women and Male Authority', p. 162; 'Looking for Medieval Nuns', p. 119; and 'Documenting the Lives of Medieval Nuns'.

[50] Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 186–89.

documented in the registers of the archbishops of York, though many questions still remain.[51] Between 1294, when one prioress resigned, and 1316, a period of just over twenty years, there were five elections or appointments of superiors at Keldholme, and on each occasion the vacancy was caused by a resignation, voluntary or enforced.[52] Two prioresses were elected, resigned, and were then re-elected, though not immediately. The records also suggest a prolonged vacancy between a resignation in 1301 and 1308. Given the attention that the archbishops usually paid to the nunneries, this is surprising. It was in 1308 that the archbishop ordered an enquiry to be made by the rectors of two local parish churches as to how long the position of prioress at Keldholme had been vacant. Their reply did not provide a clear answer to this question, but they did report that because of the length of time since there had been a prioress, the right of appointment had lapsed to the archbishop. The archbishop therefore commissioned the appointment of a nun of the house named Emma of York as prioress. She was not, therefore, elected, but chosen by the archbishop from among the community in the particular circumstance of a prolonged vacancy. Emma of York did not, it seems, find favour among other members of the convent, for within a month the archbishop was forced to warn six nuns to obey the prioress under pain of penalty. Matters still did not settle down, for the prioress resigned, and the archbishop appointed a nun of another convent, the Cistercian house of nearby Rosedale, as prioress. No longer, it would seem — at least for the time being — were the nuns of Keldholme to be allowed the privilege of electing their superior, or indeed providing a superior from among their own number. The archbishop explained his actions in a long letter to the official of the archdeacon of Cleveland, arguing that he had appointed an outsider because he could find no one within the nunnery capable of exercising high office. His letter also reveals that he had for a second time encountered opposition to his plans. Five nuns as well as nine lay men from the immediate locality

[51] For discussion, see Burton, 'Cloistered Women and Male Authority', pp. 160–62. This is based on *The Register of John le Romeyn*, ed. by Brown, I, 179; *The Register of Thomas Corbridge*, ed. by Brown and Hamilton Thompson, I, 126, 128; *The Register of William Greenfield*, ed. by Brown and Hamilton Thompson, III, 20, 21, 27, 29–30, 33–35, 39–44, 58, 93–94, 111–12, 258.

[52] The sequence is: Beatrice of Grendale (resigned by 29 January 1294); Emma of Stapleton (1294–1301); vacancy to 1308; Emma of York (appointed after 20 April 1308, resigned by 30 July of that year); Joan of Pickering, nun of Rosedale (appointed 30 July 1308, resigned 17 February 1309); Emma of Stapleton (confirmed 7 March 1309, resigned, citing old age and ill health, 13 February 1316); Emma of York, confirmed 17 March 1316); Smith and London, *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, II, 574–75.

actively intervened to prevent the installation of the archbishop's nominee as prioress. More arguments followed until the new prioress had had enough. She resigned and returned to her former home at Rosedale, where she was in due course elected prioress. It was not for another eight years, after two more resignations, that life at Keldholme apparently returned to some degree of harmony. Or so it would appear.

From this evidence — and other episodes like it — one might be tempted to fall into agreement with traditional assessments of religious women in England, that is, that they were quarrelsome and lacked vocation. No one would deny that Keldholme Priory was a troubled place in the fourteenth century. From the perspective of the theme of this essay, what is of interest is the attitude of the nuns towards male authority, and in this case the male authority figure of the archbishop of York. For a period of nearly twenty years we see resistance on the part of the nuns to male authority. We see acts of resistance to attempts on the part of the archbishop to impose a corporate identity on the community though acceptance of his nominee as prioress (presumably with a mandate to prevent further discord and restore harmony); we see also the expression of individual wills and a sense on the part of the nuns of a local identity, one which they shared with the local community, and I am thinking here particularly of those local men who resisted the installation of Joan of Pickering, an outsider from Rosedale, as prioress. The archbishop had stated that there were no nuns at Keldholme capable of holding office. The nuns clearly disagreed; indeed, several of them aspired to office and fought keenly to gain and retain power and authority over nunnery affairs. Louise Wilkinson warns that we should not see episcopal interference in nunnery elections in a wholly negative way, suggesting that, particularly after the Council of Oxford of 1222, nunneries welcomed the benign protection of their local diocesan, while bishops, for their part, respected (where they could) the choice of the community.[53] This may have been the case on occasion, though bishops would have varied in the tact, or lack of it, that they brought to their relations with the female houses under their jurisdiction. Equally Brian Golding makes a sound point when he suggests that bishops were often resented, as aristocratic male authority figures, by nuns, while they, for their part, resented, or felt compromised by, the need to oversee female communities.[54]

[53] Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 189.

[54] Brian Golding, in the present collection, pp. 97–121.

It is likely that, from day to day, the men with whom medieval nuns in England and Wales came into most contact were the (often shadowy) masters and guardians of their houses. This topic is a broad one, beyond the scope of this essay, and one worthy of further investigation. Masters or guardians might be drawn from members of the monastic or mendicant orders, of from the ranks of parish priests. Individual houses might show diversity in the course of their history, rarely — as far as the written record will allow us to tell — being served consistently from the same source.[55] The role of these guardians probably varied too, from concern for the secular business of the nunnery, to the implementation of episcopal injunctions issued following visitations. Some — monks, regular canons, friars, and parish priests — were clearly non-resident. Others lived within nunneries, as, apparently, did the male master mentioned in the 1235 injunctions for Nun Cotham drawn up by Hugh de Wells, bishop of Lincoln.[56] But, as C. V. Graves, and more recently Wilkinson, have argued, Cistercian masters or guardians bore no comparison to the male authority figures within the Gilbertine Order:

> The master or warden of an English Cistercian nunnery fulfilled an entirely different role which to a degree subverted gender norms: his authority was secondary to that of the prioress. The master owed his position, in the first instance, to his election by the prioress and convent.[57]

But this was not always the case, and though masters may not have had the same level of authority as archbishops and bishops, it was often these men who appointed them.[58]

Recent years have seen a rise in interest in literacy among female religious, in questions of access to literacy, ownership of books, skills in reading and writing, and so on. With questions of literacy emerge questions of power and authority. The direct evidence for the degrees of learning and literacy, book ownership and libraries, among the Cistercian nunneries of England and Wales

[55] Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 232–58; Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 171–73, and 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"', pp. 28–32.

[56] *Acta of Hugh of Wells*, ed. by Smith, no. 447; Graves, 'The Organization of an English Cistercian Nunnery'.

[57] Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 184, citing Graves, 'The Organization of an English Cistercian Nunnery', pp. 336–38; and *Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton*, ed. by Hill, IV, 101–02; V, 51.

[58] Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries*, pp. 35–36.

is in some cases scarce and in others non-existent.[59] How far the majority of nuns were literate in Latin, or had the pragmatic literacy for keeping of records relating to the administration of their houses, we cannot know. The evidence I have reviewed suggests a high degree of male control, or authority, through the imposition of the rules of the Order, though within an English and Welsh context it was at the level of diocesan administration, rather than through the Order, that authority was imposed. However, the evidence also suggests that English nuns and prioresses did not always take kindly to the imposition of male authority, and that although some of their communities may have been marginal, poorly endowed, and small, religious women had their own aspirations for power and authority.

[59] Bell, *What Nuns Read*.

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Women and Monasticism in Venice in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries

Anna Rapetti

A Historical Paradigm: Venice as a Case of her Own

The study of Venetian female monasticism during the high Middle Ages contributes to our understanding of the long and variegated processes of the formation of those communities which were to become important to the religious, as well as the social, political, and economic, life of the city. We know that there were some old and prestigious female monasteries, which were often intimately connected with the public authorities of the city,[1] but there were others that had an uncertain institutional profile. Both types, however, were original and dynamic as organizations, and it is instructive to assess their specific influence and relevance in the making of the history of the *Dogado*, or Duchy of Venice. In fact, a number of foundation documents of new female communities provide testimony to the great religious vitality of women from both aristocratic and mercantile backgrounds. Such records also suggest the extent of these women's courage when they had to make choices about their lives. Yet such considerations have not been sufficient to foster specific research and studies. Until now, historians have been mainly interested in the political and civic dimensions of monasticism in Venice. This approach is particularly deep seated where female monasticism is concerned: monasticism has been essentially, or even exclusively, studied as a social and economic phenomenon, a strong component of

[1] Among these was the ancient nunnery of San Zaccaria, near Piazza San Marco, suppressed in 1810.

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Map 6.1. Venice and its surroundings.
Source: Istituto geografico militare.

the very myth of Venice, grandly on display during the Renaissance, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries.[2] Religious institutions have for the most part been considered in their relations with the aristocracy, with the most illustrious and richest families sponsoring Venetian churches and monasteries. Such an approach has stemmed from the conviction that monasteries were consid-

[2] See Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, and Pavan, *Venice Triumphant*.

ered to be instrumental in consolidating the oldest families and in sustaining those making their fortunes. In brief, monasteries have been considered only as a fundamental basis of the Venetian state or, alternatively, as an indicator of social and political relationships — although clearly these two aspects are intertwined. As a result, Venetian monasticism has been neglected as a specific religious phenomenon.[3] Scholars have neglected the institutional dimension which each monastery had individually, both with regard to the governance mechanisms of the *conventus*, the community of the nuns, and to the management of its properties, which did not necessarily coincide with the economic interests of the families and patrons of the monasteries themselves.

This essay aims to provide the first answers to such questions about female monastic life in a city during its making. In particular, it focuses on the topic of the *originality* of Venice in comparison with contemporary religious movements, and with the social dynamics pertaining to the city. The relative originality of the Venetian case has always been postulated but has not been properly investigated to date. There is still a dearth of systematic studies on medieval Venetian monasticism, both male and female, with no differentiation between the great Benedictine and mendicant monasteries, and the smaller and poorer ones in the Lagoon. The abundance of monastic studies from the last thirty years, with their different paths of research, is not rooted in the history of medieval Venice.[4]

The current state of research on female monasticism not only prevents a synthesis but also requires a pre-emptive verification of some research hypotheses, which is not always an easy task. This is, in part, due to a lack of case studies and to a historiographic tendency to regard everything that occurred in Venice, including monasticism (in medieval times and later), as exceptional to Venice alone. Such Venice-centric historiography de facto automatically precludes all confrontation and comparison with the same phenomenon in other cities or regions. Consequently, we have to verify whether there actually was a low presence of congregations and reformed monastic orders, whilst many monastic houses maintained their independence at an institutional level, and whether there actually was a prominence of 'internal' relationships (that is, between the

[3] In fact, the erudite studies about the churches and monasteries in Venice and the Lagoon, published by Flaminio Corner in the late 1740s and in the 1750s, are still among the most well-known and useful tools amongst scholars, although their contents are largely still to be verified.

[4] See Andenna, *Dove va la storiografia monastica in Europa*. On the Italian case in particular, see Albuzzi, 'Il monachesimo femminile nell'Italia medioevale'.

monasteries and the *doge*, or the monasteries and the elite families), as opposed to 'external' relationships, above all, with their own orders and with the papacy.

In any case, we have to consider the geographical specificity: on the one hand, the frequent, or even very frequent, transference of communities from the Lagoon to the *Terra Ferma*, or *vice versa*; and, on the other, the transferences and amalgamations of communities within the Lagoon.

The period covered in this paper is one during which a profound change took place in Benedictine monasticism, and in female monasticism in particular, which occurred both in northern Italy and elsewhere, albeit with a rhythm of its own compared to other regions. Proprietary aristocratic monasteries of the eighth to the tenth centuries — conceived as refuges for widows and as a place for organizing both dynasties and estates — often suffered hard times or had a short lifespan. In a sharp contrast, many monasteries founded by kings and queens, with strong symbolic and political implications, witnessed remarkable growth that assured their prosperity for centuries to come, in some cases up to the thirteenth century. As one example, consider the monastery of San Salvatore or Santa Giulia in Brescia, founded in the year 753 by the Lombard queen Ansa for herself and her daughter Anselperga, who was its first abbess. This convent lasted until its suppression in 1798.[5] From the eleventh century, monastic life underwent a profound renewal. The role played by women, both nuns and lay women, who actively took part in the general renewal of religious life, sometimes by modifying their relationships with religious practices, is well known. On the one hand, many female monastic communities, both old and new, tended to imitate customs which were similar to those of the male communities of eleventh-century reform: a renowned example is that of the nuns who asked to become Cistercian.[6] On the other hand, the eagerness for renewal, not just of institutions but also of personal religious practices, was made apparent by many women in quite new, original, and informal ways (works of mercy, praying and penance, voluntary seclusion, for example).[7] As a counterpoint to this fervour, we find the ecclesiastical hierarchies, which had for a long time been engaged in restoring these religious experiences to an institutional frame-

[5] See Stella and others, *Santa Giulia di Brescia*; Andenna, *Culto e storia in Santa Giulia*; Andenna, *Arte cultura e religione in Santa Giulia di Brescia*; Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/S. Giulia: A Case-Study'.

[6] See Cariboni, 'Cistercian Nuns in northern Italy: Variety of Foundations and Construction of an Identity', in this volume.

[7] See Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*. The first Italian version, *Movimenti religiosi nel Medioevo,* was published forty years later.

work, which was to be both recognizable and rational from a regulatory point of view. It is no coincidence that the first female order was founded in the thirteenth century, with a decisive endorsement by the papacy.[8]

What significance may we perceive in this fervour emanating from these religious movements in Venice? There are no straightforward answers to this question. According to the available studies, there is very little we can perceive.[9] In the twelfth century, the Gregorian reform, with its many novelties, determined a push, not a hard one but a gradual one, towards a standardization, a homologation of Venetian religious foundations, both secular and regular, to the other local churches.[10] But with regard to other topics, we can, unfortunately, say very little. First of all, the development of lay religious movements, traces of which are preserved in many documents, is worth studying systematically. However, what we can say is that there were a number of female religious initiatives in Venice during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In part, they occurred within traditional institutional frameworks, and they expressed both ways of life and the rather particular relationships with certain monasteries. Clear evidence of this can be found in a large number of wills and testaments. These features had a profound influence on the development of medieval monasticism, so much so that a real Venetian 'exceptionalism' can be identified within the monastic panorama. This is especially true in the case of women, constrained by both the pressures and the limits imposed upon them from the world outside of the cloister. However, it is best to be cautious. Sometimes, historians have arbitrarily extended what we can verify for single foundations to monasteries in general, whilst the lack of information would recommend a good dose of scepticism.

Let us start with the single most apparent and unquestionable data. The geo-morphological phenomena and the ability of the inhabitants to control the Lagoon waters had a decisive importance for the evolution of several monasteries. From the first centuries of her history, Venice had experienced recurrent abandonments and moved from one island to another, and from the Lagoon to the *Terra Ferma*,[11] because of climate changes and flooding on its outskirts,

[8] These points are quite well known thanks to a number of studies by Italian medievalists: see *Francesco d'Assisi e il primo secolo di storia francescana*, and, in particular, Alberzoni, *Chiara di Assisi e il francescanesimo femminile*, pp. 203–35; more recently, Alberzoni, '"Servus vestrum et ancillarum Christi omnium"'.

[9] See Rando, *Una chiesa di frontiera*, pp. 135–48.

[10] Rando, *Una chiesa di frontiera*, pp. 246–48.

[11] One of the most famous and ancient cases is that of the male monastery of San Servolo, located on the San Servolo island in the north-eastern lagoon. In 819 Abbot John asked

with the result that the ground often became uninhabitable marshland. Natural phenomena added to the process by which the Venetian economy became concentrated in Rialto and also provoked a depopulation of islands that had once been inhabited, as well as of the monasteries which had been built upon them.[12] This process is particularly apparent in the northern Lagoon, where a fair number of convents were constructed in the thirteenth century. These monasteries had a notable, albeit short-lived, success, and were abandoned within two or three centuries.[13] The hydro-geological disorder and the resulting instability have often been considered by historians to be the ultimate cause of the abandonment of these monasteries, and indeed this would seem to be reinforced by the frequent complaints of both male and female communities to the public authorities as they sought more convenient locations. We may suggest that these complaints might have been exaggerated in order to achieve their aim, and it is accordingly difficult to assess the actual causes of these changes and disorders. Did uncontrollable flooding provoke the abandonment of these communities? Or did a lack of maintenance cause the flooding? If so, was a loss of interest in some areas of the Lagoon the reason for the lack of maintenance? The consequences of climate change for the islands differed: some were completely submerged, while others are still inhabited today: for example, Murano, Torcello, and Mazzorbo. Some moves may have seemed unavoidable because of the worsened environmental conditions, but there may also have been other motives. Moreover, some transfers did not involve the whole community, but only a part of it: for instance, the convent of Santi Leone and Basso asked for permission to leave the island of Metamauco in order to move to the island of San Servolo. But a church on Metamauco remained open, as it contained the relics of San Leone, which had previously been kept in the convent.[14] Thus, geographical determinism is not the only issue here. The abandonment of monasteries and the construction of new ones were the result of a combination of factors, in which geography assumed a more important role in Venice than elsewhere but was certainly not the exclusive deciding factor.

One feature distinguishes the oldest Venetian nunneries, that is, the absence of proprietary monasteries. These were usually founded by kings, queens, and

Doge Giustiniano for permission to move to *Terra Ferma* because of the island's unfavourable climate; see Pozza, 'Per una storia dei monasteri veneziani'.

[12] A paradigmatic example of this process is represented by what happened in the island of Torcello: compare Pavan, *La Mort lente de Torcello*.

[13] Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*.

[14] Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae*, VII, 98–109; Carraro, 'Tra sacro e quotidiano', pp. 11–12.

aristocratic families as instruments of dynastic consolidation, of political propaganda, for the organization of the family estate, and, last but not least, for the placement of family widows (but, as already stated, they were completely absent in the Duchy of Venice). However, *Doge* Giustiniano Partecipazio and Bishop Orso of Olivolo, the latter perhaps a relative of the former, created the two major early medieval foundations, San Zaccaria, not far from the *doge*'s palace, and San Lorenzo near Rialto, as proprietary convents.[15] On these nunneries they conferred a rich endowment and extensive exemptions. However, in a relatively short space of time both foundations freed themselves from the control of their patrons and their respective descendants.[16] This process may have been hastened by the disappearance of the Partecipazio family from the political arena during the ninth century.[17] San Zaccaria and San Lorenzo did not perform the functions for which they had been founded, and thus did not become the constitutive elements of a political lordship. In Venice, as is well known, the offices of public power were not fragmented or privatized. San Zaccaria, however, maintained close relations with all the families that rose to the office of *doge*, a fact worth emphasizing. It was more than a family monastery: it was the foundation of the *doge* and of the leading families closest to the apex of political power.

Traditional Monasticism in Rialto: San Zaccaria and San Lorenzo

Historical literature agrees that San Zaccaria was, from its foundation until its suppression, a convent of aristocratic Venetian women.[18] This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, 70 per cent of the identifiable nuns, that is, those with a family name, belonged to the ranks of the aristocracy. Having said that, we clearly need to clarify what is meant by the term 'aristocracy' within the context of Venice, and who could be considered to have been a member of the nobility. In fact, social mobility in Venice was rather high, even after the *serrata*, or closing, of the Great Council, when membership was restricted to the descendants of those nobles who had been its members between the years 1293 and 1297. Following Gerhard Rösch's

[15] San Zaccaria was founded in the year 829; San Lorenzo just some years later, in 853.

[16] Carraro, 'Tra sacro equotidiano', pp. 13–26.

[17] Ortalli, 'Il ducato e la "civitas Rivoalti" tra carolingi, bizantini e sassoni'; Rando, *Una chiesa di frontiera*, pp. 57–60.

[18] Rösch, *Der venezianische Adel bis zur Schließung der Großen Rats*, pp. 200–03.

criterion,[19] whoever acceded to public office in Venice could be assumed to be an aristocrat, although his rank would vary according to the frequency and the level of his office. Families whose members did not hold public office could not be considered aristocratic. To this first criterion, we might add the ability, or at least the ambition, of members of a family of the mercantile milieu to elevate themselves to higher ranks, that is, to ennoble themselves. Remarkable upward mobility was effectively encouraged by such ambitions, by the extinction of aristocratic families, and by the multiplication of the branches of their family tree in the different parishes of the city.[20] As many as 12 per cent of the nuns at San Zaccaria belonged to rich mercantile families, which, in some cases, succeeded in entering the ranks of the ruling classes — a process that may indeed have owed something to the presence of their daughters within this prestigious convent.

Another fundamental feature of San Zaccaria was that, from its inception, it was connected to the *doge*'s court. In the city as it existed in the eleventh century, it was close to the residence of the *doge*. Moreover, the ground upon which the basilica was built to host the relics of San Marco, which had been stolen from Alexandria and brought to Venice in the year 828, belonged to the convent. Giustiniano Partecipazio granted a large endowment to the foundation, as he wanted his wife Felicita to build 'basilicam ad honorem Sancti Marci infra territorio Sancti Zacharie'.[21] Again, around the year 1170, the nuns of San Zaccaria were obliged to hand over a large garden in order for Piazza San Marco to be enlarged, which is how it attained its current size.[22] The direct link with the Partecipazio family ended in the ninth century with the extinction of the family. However, San Zaccaria maintained a central role in the political system of the city because of its intense and often personal relations with the *doge*'s court. Over time, these relations were guaranteed by the recurrent election of abbesses from families of those who had been elected *doge*.[23] Above all, during its first centuries, and up until the twelfth century, the community of San Zaccaria was also a place where political conflicts were settled and where groups competing for power found a new equilibrium, thereby creating a different balance of power. Between the ninth and the eleventh centuries, eight *doges* requested

[19] Rösch, *Der venezianische Adel bis zur Schließung der Großen Rats*, pp. 81–111.

[20] Chojnaki, 'La formazione della nobiltà dopo la Serrata'; on San Zaccaria, see Fees, *Le monache di San Zaccaria a Venezia*.

[21] *Santi Ilario e Benedetto e San Gregorio*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 2, pp. 17–24.

[22] Agazzi, *Platea Sancti Marci*, pp. 79–83.

[23] Fees, *Le monache di San Zaccaria a Venezia*, pp. 45–48.

burial in San Zaccaria, a clear sign of its function as a place for retaining the political memory of the city. Moreover, the convent also became a place where foreign policy was conceived and woven. In the eleventh century, many German emperors visited the convent not only to pray but also to form new pacts and consolidate old alliances. San Zaccaria held outstanding prestige even outside of Venice. At the same time, it was deeply embedded in the more elevated political and social *milieux* of Venice, and, as already mentioned, the abbesses in office were quite often from the families of those who had been elected *doge*. As they had obtained a host of privileges conceded to them from Emperor Otto I onwards, the abbesses took advantage of their position in order to obtain the renewal of their privileges and to ensure the emperor's protection.[24]

The social and political importance of San Zaccaria within Venetian society was mirrored in its substantial endowment, which mostly comprised properties located in the city. The nunnery was the most important ecclesiastical owner of property in Venice and retained this primacy until its suppression in the early nineteenth century. In addition, it had property on the *Terra Ferma* in the areas of Treviso and Verona, even though the size of these properties as a whole was substantially less than that of the properties which it owned in Venice.[25] Rural rents and, in particular, rent from housing represented a considerable — indeed, decisive — proportion of the convent balance sheet. Nonetheless, all female monasteries, even the richest ones, had estates which, as a whole, were smaller and confined to specific geographic areas when compared to male monasteries: a comparison with San Giorgio Maggiore is probably the more telling example.[26]

The monastery of San Lorenzo was founded in the year 853 by Bishop Orso of Olivolo (as mentioned above) and was donated by him to his sister Romana.[27] This also seems to have been a proprietary monastery; that is, Romana was granted the *potestas dominandi* over it, and the church that already existed close to the nunnery was given to Romana herself. But, like San Zaccaria, San

[24] *Heinrici III diplomata*, ed. by Bresslau and Kehr, no. 57 (2 July 1040), pp. 74–75; *Heinrici IV diplomata*, ed. by von Gladiss, no. 445 (June 1095), pp. 600–01.

[25] Masé, 'Les relations des monastères vénitiens'; Modzelewski, 'Le vicende della "pars dominica" nei beni fondiari del monastero'.

[26] A comparison between San Giorgio Maggiore's wealth and the wealth of other Venetian monasteries can be drawn by considering the last will of Petrus Encius, a member of an influential aristocratic family who was involved in the political life of the city; the document has been edited in *San Giorgio Maggiore*, ed. by Lanfranchi, II: *Documenti, 982–1159*, no. 132 (November 1123), pp. 295–303.

[27] *San Lorenzo*, ed. by Gaeta, no. 1, pp. 1–5.

Lorenzo evolved in quite a different way to other proprietary monasteries. Here, the percentage of nuns belonging to aristocratic families increased to 80 per cent from the ninth to the thirteenth century. There is also evidence there of some daughters from mercantile families and the lower ranks of the aristocracy. It should be noted that the recruitment of nuns to the convent of San Lorenzo — certainly, in the thirteenth century, but very probably also previously — seems to have been limited to the city of Venice alone; a few nuns came from outside of Venice, but none have surnames from the *Terra Ferma*.[28]

In 1151, San Zaccaria announced its intention to embrace the Cluniac *consuetudines*. This came at the end of a long period of ten years during which this wealthy and prominent convent had been without an abbess because of the dispute between the *doge*, Pietro Polani, and the patriarch of Grado, Enrico Dandolo, and their families. After the death of Nella Michiel, abbess of San Zaccaria, in 1141, Polani had expected — as was customary — to nominate and invest the new abbess, but Dandolo opposed the *doge*'s claim, insisting that the nuns themselves should hold a free election to choose their abbess without any lay interference. The patriarch's arguments were resonant of Gregorian reform, giving voice to *libertas ecclesiae*. This episode shows that some people, both lay and ecclesiastic, and some powerful families in Venice actively favoured and supported the ecclesiastical reform.[29] Despite this, modern scholarship usually maintains that the Venetians were not interested in introducing the reform of the clergy and the monasteries within the Lagoon.

Pope Eugenius III recognized the nuns' choice and took them 'sub Beati Petri et nostra protectione'. The powerful political connections of the convent allowed it to break off its subjection — which was, until then, very close — to the *doge*; at the same time, it remained independent from the direct authority of Cluny.[30] From then onwards, the abbesses of San Zaccaria were no longer drawn from the elite families of Venice, as had previously been the case on almost every occasion. However, or perhaps even because of this fracture, the abbesses started managing their vast properties personally, both in the city and on the *Terra Ferma*. The abbesses themselves selected and employed priests and lay brothers, who regularly looked after the management and the estates even in areas more distant from Venice.

[28] Carraro, 'Società e religione nella Venezia medievale', p. 39.

[29] Carraro, 'Tra sacro e quotidiano', pp. 51–55, and Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*.

[30] Some interesting remarks about the autonomy of the Lombard Cluniac nuns from their brothers have been expressed by Andenna, '*Sanctimoniales cluniacenses*'.

The first answer to one of my earlier questions is that one of the two oldest and most prestigious female foundations (San Lorenzo) did not enter any of the reformed monastic orders already existing in Venice (Cluny, Fruttuaria, Cîteaux), while the other one (San Zaccaria) embraced the customs of Cluny's monks ('Cluniacensium fratrum observantia'). Nevertheless, they both remained independent, preserving all their rights and privileges, as well as their relationships with society and the political authorities of the city. The phenomenon did not depend on the specific gender of the community, and it was not related to any presumed frailty on the part of female communities. In fact, the main Venetian male monasteries, Sant'Ilario and San Giorgio Maggiore, to cite just two of the oldest ones, also remained autonomous and continued to grow in wealth and power in traditional ways, increasing both their properties and their privileges, in particular, in the so-called *Romània*, which had been conquered in the Crusade of 1204.[31] They continued to be indifferent to religious fervour and calls for the renewal of monastic life, which, in contrast, involved other monasteries in Venice. There are no traces of those difficulties, so often related to problems of internal discipline, which convinced other monasteries to adopt customs, frequently those of the Cistercian Order. This is what happened, for instance, in 1229 in the very ancient abbey of Brondolo, which had probably been founded by the Lombards in the diocese of Chioggia. It was obliged to adopt the Cistercian *instituta* because 'tam in spiritualibus quam in temporalibus enormiter deformata' (it was greatly corrupted both in spiritual and in temporal matters).[32]

Female Monasticism in the Islands of the Northern Lagoon

In the early and high Middle Ages, the diocese of Torcello, which was part of the northern Lagoon, was an important economic area, sufficiently inhabited to have a number of parish churches and a socially diverse population: besides fishermen and hunters, there were inhabitants classified as 'antiquiores et nobiliores de Ammianis'.[33] However, it was an area particularly exposed to climate changes and the tide, which deeply modified its configuration from

[31] Orlando, *'Ad profectum patriae'*.

[32] *Santissima Trinità e San Michele Arcangelo di Brondolo*, ed. by Strina, III: *Documenti, 1200–1229 e notizie di documenti*, no. 686 (24 May 1229).

[33] Ammiana was one of the northern Lagoon islands; see *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 79 (1195), pp. 89–90.

the fourteenth century onwards. Some islands, such as Torcello, Murano, and Mazzorbo, did not suffer significant transformation, whilst others were almost completely submerged. Amongst the latter, Ammiana and Costanziaco are uninhabited today, largely overrun by water and vegetation. San Giacomo in Paludo (in the marsh) is also almost uninhabited. In the high Middle Ages, female monasteries, established between the late twelfth and the thirteenth century, blossomed on these islands.[34] The significant number of these communities and higher proportion of female over male communities raises questions which are not easy to answer. For example, why was there such a concentration of female communities? Two hypotheses have been advanced in relation to this question. The first draws attention to the strong influence of the ideals of the apostolic life and a new initiative by women in religious life. However, the new female foundations normally belonged to the traditional orders, to the Benedictine or the Cistercian Orders, when the latter had lost its reforming character. Moreover, this in itself does not explain the high concentration of nunneries in this part of the Lagoon.[35] The second explanation, put forward by Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan,[36] is that new foundations were a solution to islands which had become uninhabited due to environmental deterioration. However, other scholars maintain that nunneries were dependent on cities, and that they rarely emerged in isolated contexts.[37] It thus seems strange that settlements of women in Venice should favour areas which were becoming marginal. Given that the public authorities viewed monasteries as a means of control and organization — social, economic, and agrarian — and that they often favoured the establishment of a monastery in one place rather than another because particular locations could guarantee such control and protection, both symbolic and material, one must ask whether nuns would be likely to settle on islands which were on their way to being abandoned.

We may also argue a different origin for these convents on the periphery: namely, that they were founded by commoners, in comparison with the more ancient convents in Rialto, which had been established by aristocrats. This is another hypothesis which needs to be tested. Let us start with the more ancient communities. San Lorenzo of Ammiana (1185) was established by two women, Berta and Agnese, under the Benedictine Rule and under the control of the

[34] Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*, pp. 15–31.

[35] Carraro, 'Tra sacro e quotidiano', pp. 107–11.

[36] Crouzet-Pavan, *La Mort lente de Torcello*.

[37] Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città (secoli XV–XVIII)', pp. 359–60.

bishop of Torcello. Sant'Angelo of Ammiana (1195), founded by Berta (the same woman) and Benvenuta, was dependent on San Lorenzo of Ammiana, and was always under the patronage of the bishop of Torcello.[38] The family names of these women are not known, which is perhaps proof, albeit weak, that they belonged to non-aristocratic families. It is possible that the latter monastery was an affiliation of the former.[39] In both cases, the bishop donated the parish church of San Lorenzo and the parish church of Sant'Angelo, which were already operating with their own clergy, to the women so that they could build the monasteries beside the churches. This tie with the church is a feature of many of the monasteries of Ammiana, which were built beside an already existing church, to which they were linked in various ways. We can understand why the bishops of Torcello played a determinant role in promoting new foundations and why they preserved certain control rights over the nuns: the payment of duties (*censi*), rendered in coins and wax candles; the right to appoint the abbess, for many years called *prelata* or *domina*; and the right to receive new nuns. At San Lorenzo, the bishop reserved for himself the right to appoint the parish clergy for the church, a fact that suggests that the parish was not completely uninhabited if the priests were required to provide *cura animarum*. They were always quite small groups, formed by two or three women who, perhaps, lived together spontaneously. At the beginning, even recruiting new nuns proved difficult: in 1193, eight years after its foundation, San Lorenzo only had Berta and Agnese, who had taken vows as nuns.[40] In 1195 they were joined by Engelmota, but the founder, Berta, left to establish the monastery of Sant'Angelo. The following year, Engelmota became abbess.[41] In the founding records of Sant'Angelo, it was anticipated that the new monastery would not succeed in recruiting *fratres* or *sorores*. In the event of the death of the nuns, the net value and the chapel would be returned to San Lorenzo, along with some books, including the *Regula*.[42] The founders themselves were conscious that these nunneries seemed to hold little attraction. It is quite possible that these houses recruited nuns only from the islands that were closest to them

[38] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, respectively, no. 71, pp. 81–83; no. 78, pp. 88–89; Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*, p. 31.

[39] Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*, p. 17.

[40] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 74, pp. 84–85.

[41] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 80, pp. 90–91.

[42] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 78, pp. 88–89.

geographically, because of the difficulties in communicating with the city — difficulties which were further exacerbated with the *Terra Ferma*.

One of the most successful orders of the twelfth century, the Cistercian Order, had great difficulty establishing itself not only in the Lagoon but also in the Veneto. Only one male abbey was created in Venice, that of San Tommaso dei Borgognoni. It was established by a noble Venetian in 1206,[43] much later than the most important Cistercian monasteries of northern Italy, which were founded in the period from the 1120s to the 1140s. For most monastic historians, the reason for this partial failure is still unexplained. However, the influence of Cistercian customs was also apparent in the Lagoon, as is demonstrated by the large number of monasteries created for the female branch of the order. The activity of the latter in the duchy is also clear evidence of the remarkable success of the ideals of the Cistercian monks. If we consider the female communities, which were particularly numerous in the northern islands, it becomes more difficult to sustain the argument for the lack of influence of Cistercian monasticism. San Maffio (or Matteo) of Costanziaco provides a good example. As with all Cistercian abbeys, it adopted the Benedictine Rule, even though the bishop maintained a certain amount of control over it, and the community had to pay tithes. When nuns asked, in 1229, to be incorporated into the Cistercian Order, an argument broke out with San Tommaso dei Borgognoni. This is a well-known phenomenon where relationships between Cistercian nuns and monks are concerned. In 1232 Pope Gregory IX confirmed the net value and the privileges granted to the abbey, and conceded juridical exemption by removing the local clergy's control of the community. Such an act created tension with the bishop of Torcello, who was deprived of his rights.[44]

Foundations and Motivations

What significance may we attribute to the fact that a religious woman was defined as *Christi famula* or *ancilla Dei* in the founding act of San Zaccaria? One such woman was Agata, a daughter of the late Maurizio, 'magister militum qui fuit dux Venecie'.[45] Some other *ancillae* and *famulae Dei* are cited as being among those who gave the lands donated to the new foundation to *Doge* Giustiniano. It is difficult to say whether these women belonged to a

[43] Rigon, 'Présence cistercienne dans le Veneto médiéval'.

[44] Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*, pp. 27–29.

[45] *Santi Ilario e Benedetto e San Gregorio*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 2, pp. 17–24.

real monastic community, under an abbess and a rule. It seems more probable that they lived in an intermediate condition between that of a nun and that of a woman in a semi-religious state. Perhaps they lived in small communities devoted to penance and prayer, spontaneous, not institutionalized, or as hermits living in their own homes. These frail clues testify to the fact that *vivere religiose* ('to live a religious life'), in spontaneous forms, was a practice present both in Venice and on the islands. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were women called *eremite* (hermits) and others who lived in *domicelle* (small houses or rooms) physically attached to city churches. These women found favour with the other citizens, who left them clothes and money in their wills.[46]

Devout women founded, often with the support of the bishop, convents not only in the northern Lagoon islands but also in Chioggia and in Rialto. Others promoted the founding of monastic communities through the donation of property. They were women — some, perhaps, nuns, while others were certainly lay persons — who came from both aristocratic and non-aristocratic families, about which we have scanty information. The monastery of Sant'Adriano of Costanziaco was founded by Anna Michiel, the wife of *Doge* Niccolò Giustiniani, and the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli of Murano (1187) by Ginevra Gradenigo: both of them were from the most prominent families in Venice.[47] Were Agnese, Berta, and Benvenuta devout lay women or nuns who had come from other monasteries, and to whom the bishop of Torcello had given permission to live together under Benedictine Rule? This small but dynamic group founded two communities on the island of Ammiana within the space of ten years, the convent of San Lorenzo in 1185 and that of Sant'Angelo in 1195.[48] Even though they were not from families which can be identified, it is clear that they came from a sufficiently well-off *milieu* that was able to provide for their education and give them the ability to read. In the founding acts, the books to bring to the new convent are cited, as are books belonging to one of them, Agnese ('illos libros quos habeo'), which were to be returned to San Lorenzo in the event that the community be dissolved. It is hard to define the legal status of the other three women — Maria da Canal, Richelda Zancarolo, and Maria da Zara — with any accuracy, although we do

[46] Carraro, 'Tra sacro e quotidiano', p. 95.

[47] On S. Maria degli Angeli, see Corner, *Ecclesie Torcellanae*, II, 261. A short, albeit hagiographic, biography of Niccolò Giustiniani and his wife Anna Michiel is provided by Musolino, Niero, and Tramontin, *Santi e beati veneziani*, pp. 133–36.

[48] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 71, pp. 81–3, and no. 78, pp. 88–89.

know that they received, in the name of the Cistercian monastery of San Maffio of Costanziaco, a church from the bishop of Torcello in 1229.[49] However, we also know that the first two came from well-to-do families: the da Canal family were at the height of their economic ascendancy during the thirteenth century; whilst the Zancarolo family held public office.[50] It seems clear that in all of these cases the women showed their willingness to pass from the religious experience of a penitent and pious life, which was informal and spontaneous, to a formal recognition of their way of living in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These women, independently of their education and social class, were very much aware of the necessity of institutionalizing their religious beliefs and were able to choose the most effective legal instruments, as well as which authorities to address. Usually, it was the bishop of Torcello who formalized such requests, even though they could ask the pope directly for the permission to found a community:[51] this is a demonstration of the strength and initiative of these women.

Within the monasteries of the Lagoon, the abbesses had limited independence; that is, they seldom managed the community matters directly or personally.[52] In order to handle these matters, and especially with regard to their properties on the *Terra Ferma*, they employed priests or lay representatives, who were always male. Nuns in Ammiana and Costanziaco appear more respectful of their vows of claustration in comparison with those at San Zaccaria and San Lorenzo. Nevertheless, in this regard, the dimension of insularity or isolation imposed by living on an island and the high concentration of incomes which originated within the Lagoon were crucial: the exploitation of their rights to water, fish, and the production of salt. This situation generated a strong tie with the local communities. Besides, there was the physical isolation which facilitated the physical stability of the nuns within the cloisters.[53] I would argue that seclusion played a lesser role than the physical isolation of living on an island in conditioning this behaviour, at least during the period considered here. Nor

[49] *San Maffio di Mazzorbo e Santa Margherita di Torcello*, ed. by Frizziero, no. 67 (1229).

[50] Rösch, *Der venezianische Adel bis zur Schließung der Großen Rats*, pp. 128–30.

[51] Corner, *Ecclesiae Torcellanae*, II, 234: 1188. The nunnery of S. Maria degli Angeli, 'impetrata prius a Sede Apostolica expresse per bullam plumbeam erigendi monasterii facultate' (asked to have beforehand an explicit permission, via a lead bull [per bullam plumbeam], from the Holy See to establish a nunnery), was supported by the bishop of Torcello, 'ut ex eius assensu res ad sui perfectionem deduceretur' (so that from his assent the foundation should be completed and perfected).

[52] *San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, ed. by Lanfranchi, no. 74 (1193), pp. 84–85.

[53] Moine, *I monasteri femminili della laguna nord di Venezia nel basso medioevo*, pp. 23–25.

should we think that these abbesses were incapable of, or not interested in, the management of their estates. On the contrary, we have just seen that they were clearly able to assert their rights. A partial exception can be found with regard to the Cistercian nunneries (San Maffio and San Giacomo in Paludo), whose abbesses were able to act more autonomously. In such cases, the key point was that of the belonging to an order which guaranteed their independence from the bishop and provided them with the above-mentioned juridical exemption privileges and close ties with other abbeys of the same order. At San Giacomo in Paludo, the *conventus* was quite often called upon to approve the acts taken by the abbess. Physical isolation continued to be a problem, as it forced them to assign the management of the properties on the *Terra Ferma* to representatives, who were almost certainly not lay-brothers.

With regard to the motivations for women to enter a convent as adults, it generally occurred when they became widows. We have the testimony of Bartolomea Riccoboni and her *Necrology of the Monastery of Corpus Domini*. In this text from the early fifteenth century, there are some interesting biographical profiles of nuns: there are those who entered the convent as children (as eleven- or twelve-year-olds) and those who entered as widows. These include the rich Franceschina da Noale, who entered Corpus Domini when she was forty-nine years old, together with her seven-year-old daughter; and Lucia Fagiuoli, a twenty-eight-year-old widow who lived in the monastery for a further twelve years. In the *Necrology*, the gifts of humility, patience, and religious zeal are remembered. But historians are more interested in observing that the act of entering a monastic community guaranteed both material and spiritual benefits, and, last but not least, good care and attention when they fell sick, sometimes with diseases which lasted for years, and the certainty of being administered the last rites on their deathbeds and being recalled in the prayers of the other nuns.

The necrology also cites lay-sister Ambrosina, who died at the age of thirty, after nine years at Corpus Domini. She had been ill for more than three years, and she passed away after receiving the Sacraments.[54] This woman, unique amongst those mentioned by Bartolomea, had the misfortune of seeing the devil on her deathbed, but she courageously succeeded in driving him away. It seems interesting, and not without significance, that the devil appeared to her, a laywoman, perhaps from a modest background, and with humbler religious virtues compared to her sisters. To other nuns on their deathbeds, angels

[54] Riccoboni, *Life and Death in a Venetian Convent*, ed. by Bornstein, p. 70.

appeared, Sant'Orsola and her companions, or even St Dominic, St Peter the Martyr, and St Thomas Aquinas.[55] It is not clear whether Ambrosina was a widow, nor is she defined as a 'pure virgin', as the nuns who entered as children or adolescents were described. Probably her status as a lay-sister suggested a certain discretion in formulating her obituary, since she was given a lower status even from the point of view of spiritual perfection.

In conclusion, what answers can we offer to the questions formulated at the beginning of this essay? Remembering that our answers are only provisional — as must be the case for whomever studies history — we may say that the specificity of Venetian female monasticism was not exclusive to this city, as is often maintained. First, although it is often claimed that the Venetian experience exhibits 'originality' when these religious phenomena are examined in comparison with the simultaneous movements in nearby countries, it can be demonstrated that this is far from the case: a large number of Venetians participated in the most significant religious movements. In particular, it may be observed that the profound renewal in Benedictine monasticism, and in particular in female religious life, that occurred between the eleventh and the thirteenth century in northern Italy and elsewhere, was also apparent in the Duchy. Venetian women participated in this reform, sometimes in original and informal ways. Furthermore, a number of female religious initiatives occurred within an institutional framework: some older convents adhered to reform by embracing the Cluniac customs (San Zaccaria), whilst some others founded in the twelfth and thirteenth century in the northern Lagoon asked for permission to adopt the Cistercian customs (San Maffio of Costanziaco). As a result of this religious female involvement, small groups of nuns or lay women created many communities in the northern Lagoon islands that were strongly influenced by the ideals of the apostolic life, but they looked from the beginning for the support of the bishops of Torcello. The evidence suggests that these women were eager for the institutionalization of their religious experiences, and the intervention of bishops assured them a degree of success in this regard. On the contrary, the main Venetian male monasteries, like Sant'Ilario and San Giorgio Maggiore, remained indifferent to the fervour of religious renewal and to the main reform's principles.

The geographical specificity of a city founded between land and water, and the capacity of the inhabitants to control the Lagoon waters, held great importance for the evolution of several female communities. The abandonment of

[55] Riccoboni, *Life and Death in a Venetian Convent*, ed. by Bornstein, pp. 70–72.

the islands, which became uninhabitable marshland, frequently forced nuns to transfer from one island to another and from the Lagoon to the *Terra Ferma*, but nevertheless, any geographical determinism should be avoided. The foundation and abandonment of monasteries depended on a combination of several factors: economic, political, social, religious, as well as geographic. The latter perhaps assumed a greater importance in Venice than elsewhere, but surely was not the deciding element. In other words, the emergence of female Venetian monasticism was the result of a mixture of different factors and elements. But all the forms of monasticism in the Middle Ages are intimately related to the conditions of the societies in which they are embedded, of which they are one of the most distinctive manifestations.

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Cistercian Nuns in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Denmark and Sweden: Far from the Madding Crowd

Brian Patrick McGuire

In the course of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, three Cistercian houses for women were established in Denmark and seven in Sweden. One of the 'Danish' houses was on the island of Rügen or Rygen, which was conquered by the Danes in the 1160s but never became a part of medieval Denmark. I include this house because it was established from the Danish women's monastery at Roskilde. For Sweden, I limit myself to the first Cistercian house for nuns at Vreta, in central Sweden, near the town of Linköping. I do not cover the other Swedish houses: Gudhem, Riseberga, Sko, Askeby, Solberga, and Vårfruberga, for the sources for them are extremely limited, and so I find it more useful in this brief study to concentrate on the four houses for women where we can get a fuller picture of their early development. My study limits itself to Our Lady of Roskilde on the island of Zealand; Our Lady of Slangerup, also on the same island, about thirty kilometres to the north of Roskilde; Our Lady of Bergen on Rygen; and Our Lady of Vreta in the Swedish district of Västergötland.[1]

It has long been noticed that Sweden had many more Cistercian women's houses than did Denmark, and the explanation probably lies in the fact that Christianity came later to Sweden than to Denmark.[2] Here there were a num-

[1] For an overview, see France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, pp. 159–84.

[2] France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, p. 171.

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ber of earlier women's houses that were Benedictine, while the first female monasteries in Sweden were established at the very time when the Cistercians were making their presence felt. Only Vreta seems to have existed before the coming of the Cistercians and must around 1200 have made the transition to the Cistercian Order.[3]

There has been general confusion in treatments of the nuns concerning when their monasteries actually became Cistercian.[4] This misconception has to a large extent been due to ignorance of the international development of the Order. Thus, both Roskilde and Slangerup monasteries are usually considered to have been Cistercian from their very beginnings, even though these go back to the middle of the twelfth century and thus to a time when the Order was trying in official terms to keep women at a distance and to avoid any legal commitments to women's houses.[5]

The sources do not allow us to assert an exact 'moment of creation' when Benedictine women's foundations became Cistercian. Instead of thinking of this affiliation in terms of a single date for the event, it would probably be best to imagine a process over a period of years during which the nuns made it clear that they desired this affiliation. At the same time, it was crucial for a Cistercian abbot to be willing to take on the pastoral and economic responsibility for these foundations, the all-important *cura monialium*. We know this happened at Roskilde with the abbot of Sorø and at Slangerup with the abbot of Esrum, but we have no precise date for this arrangement.[6] What we can say, however, is that in Sweden and Denmark, as elsewhere in Western Europe, Cistercian houses for men took on responsibilities for women's houses and thus came to recognize them as Cistercian. Eventually, after about 1200, the Order as a whole recognized women's houses, as can be seen from the statutes of the General Chapter.

This evolution has been traced in detail especially by Brigitte Degler-Spengler, and there is no reason here to repeat her evidence, only to emphasize her point that 'this process of integration did not [...] unfold smoothly'.[7]

[3] McGuire, 'Vretas nonner i europæisk perspektiv'.

[4] Skyum-Nielsen, *Kvinde og slave*, p. 120.

[5] Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', and France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, pp. 164–65.

[6] Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', p. 31.

[7] Degler-Spengler, 'The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order', esp. p. 97; France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, pp. 164–67. The classic study is Krenig, 'Mittelalterliche Frauenklöster nach den Konstitutionen von Cîteaux'.

It seems apparent that the women's houses in Denmark and Sweden became Cistercian in conjunction with the General Chapter's formal recognition of women's houses in the Cistercian Order, even though we have no contemporary sources that record this transition of our four houses to the Order. In what follows here, I will assume that these houses took on a Cistercian identity at the same time or soon after the Order as such came to accept that women's houses belonged to them. I have no conclusive proof, but it is clear that in the course of the later Middle Ages these houses were considered to be Cistercian, and their attachment to the Order must go back to the time when the General Chapter came to take on women's houses as part of its responsibilities.

Besides this dimension of institutional affiliation, it is important to reconsider the sources in terms of what they reveal about women's communities and how they changed. In what follows here I will in one case show how a monastery could house women who may have been there because of social or political pressure and not as a result of their own choice. But I will also make use of sources that reveal the relative flexibility of women in opening their monastic church to pilgrimage and a saint's cult. Finally, I will consider the existence of a women's house in a recently Christianized area: here it is useful to consider the meaning of the contemplative life in a missionary district.

How could the contemplative women cope with the challenges of pilgrimage and a recent transition to Christianity? For the most part, we can only guess the answer to this question, but the very existence of Cistercian women's houses in Denmark and Sweden can shed light on the way Christian belief could have manifested itself among medieval people.

Our Lady of Roskilde: Building on a Solid Church

Sometime around 1080 a bishop of Roskilde, Svend the Northman (1073–88), erected a basilica whose nave has three bays, an imposing church for its time.[8] The church of St Mary, as it is still known to this day, where it now serves as a parish church hidden behind the railway station, was initially built out of porous travertine (*frådsten*) but later completed in brick. There are only a few other churches in Denmark from this period, and even though the present church building is only a fragment of its medieval ancestor, its Romanesque arches suggest the power and beauty of the original structure.

[8] Saxo, *Gesta danorum* XI.12.1; *Saxos Danmarks historie*, trans. by Zeeberg, II, 88.

Our Lady of Roskilde was originally meant only to be a parish church, but after the election of Absalon as bishop of the diocese in 1158, a monastery for women was founded at the church. This was the result of the fact that a church official named Isak and two of his colleagues had come to violate the grave of Bishop Svend the Northman. We know of this misdeed from the Danish historian Saxo, who finished his *Gesta Danorum* a few decades later. In order to do penance for his action, Isak established a monastery for women and 'used the rest of his life to keep the nuns in a virtuous life'.[9]

Saxo was a secular cleric and not generally interested in monastic life. His few mentions of the Cistercians are not exactly favourable.[10] His description of the monastic foundation at Roskilde is probably due to fascination with what happened to Isak in avoiding the divine punishment that apparently struck two of his colleagues, who also had violated the bishop's grave. In any case, Saxo says nothing about a Cistercian foundation. This silence, of course, could mean anything, but we can at least assert that in about 1160, the parish church of Our Lady in Roskilde took on a new identity in becoming part of a women's monastic foundation. On the basis of what we know about the Cistercian Order, it is wrong to claim that this foundation from the beginning was Cistercian. Like so many other Danish houses, its nuns followed the Rule of St Benedict, and so we would have to call them Benedictine, even though it is an anachronism to speak of a Benedictine Order at this time. There were houses all over Europe that followed the Rule of St Benedict, but the creation of a Benedictine Order came after the existence of a Cistercian Order, which forced traditional monasteries to join together and hold General Chapters and visitations, as decided by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[11]

The next indication of the growth of the monastery for women at Roskilde is a letter from Bishop Absalon dated to 1178.[12] He gave the monastery two churches in the vicinity of Roskilde, Sengeløse and Gadstrup, so that the nuns would remember and pray for him. He mentioned the nuns' 'living and lasting charity' ('vivax et inextinguibilis caritas') and spoke of his 'special affection' for them. The phrases could probably easily be shown to be commonplaces in such literature, but when one looks at the beautiful twelfth-century hand, so care-

[9] Saxo, *Gesta danorum* XI.12.5; *Saxos Danmarks historie*, trans. by Zeeberg, II, 90.

[10] McGuire, *The Cistercians in Denmark*, pp. 110–11.

[11] See statute 12, *De communibus capitulis monachorum*, in *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. by Alberigo and others pp. 216–17.

[12] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række I*, III, no. 74.

fully made with its lines and loops, it is clear that Absalon through his scribe was making a statement that he wanted to last forever.

The first signatory of this document is Simon, the abbot of Sorø (1163–86). I have written about him elsewhere as an extraordinary personality who took over the fledgling monastery two years after its Cistercian foundation and probably saved it from chaos. Simon can be located in Cistercian exemplum literature as a former schoolmaster (*magister scholarum*), possibly at Roskilde cathedral, who found meaning and harmony in the Cistercian way of life. A vision changed his life, and news of this conversion reached the Cistercian General Chapter.[13]

Since Bishop Absalon had been the central figure in the foundation of Sorø, it is not surprising that the abbot of Sorø assisted him in providing the nuns of Our Lady of Roskilde with an assured income. Simon's signature by no means proves that the nuns had taken on the Cistercian way of life, but it is the first instance in which we find the women's house in contact with a Cistercian men's house.

The next time the nuns of Roskilde appear in a written source is when the body of Margrete of Højelse was translated in 1177 to their church. Here we have a Danish saint who never received papal canonization but where a cult emerged that in local and regional terms seems to have been quite important. The woman was a relative of Bishop Absalon. She had a husband who first abused her and finally murdered her by hanging. Margrete was buried outside the cemetery, for her husband Herlog made her death look like suicide. His misdeed was revealed, however, for lights appeared around the grave on the seashore and the matter was brought to the attention of Bishop Absalon. He ordered an enquiry to be made and sent to the site investigators to find the truth of the matter. Together with our friend Simon, abbot of Sorø, and Richard, the former Benedictine abbot of Ringsted, he deliberated what was to be done in the matter. The husband was summoned and made to confess his crime.[14]

Margrete's relatives then demanded that the husband be punished for his deed, but Absalon is said to have calmed them. He then 'with great joy' went from Roskilde and, surrounded by a crowd of people, came to the grave. The body was exhumed, washed, placed on a stretcher and brought to Roskilde: 'With the greatest jubilation people of all classes, sex, age, and background come to meet the holy procession.' In front of the stretcher were wax candles

[13] McGuire, 'Absalon's Spirituality'.

[14] *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, pp. 389–90.

and lamps, and behind it came the clergy and bishop, with hymns and songs. The body was brought into the 'basilica of the holy virgin Mary, where a huge mausoleum was built, where she afterwards distinguished herself through many miracles'.[15]

Why did Absalon call upon Abbot Simon of Sorø to participate in this matter? The involvement may be an indication that the bishop of Roskilde wanted the Cistercian abbot to commit himself to the affairs of a nuns' monastery. An indication of a growing closeness is provided by a papal letter from 1182 issued to Abbot Simon and his monks.[16] Sorø was given a third of the offerings left at the grave of Margrete in 'Our Lady's Monastery in Roskilde'. According to the letter, the bishop of Roskilde had already seen that this third was to be handed over to Sorø. The purpose of the gift was to make certain that the monks had the income they needed in order to build their monastery and to cover other needs.

Even though the papal letter does not directly assert that the abbot of Sorø in this manner committed himself to looking after the material and spiritual needs of the women's house, it seems more than likely that the translation of Margrete's body and its presence at Our Lady of Roskilde with a steady flow of pilgrims opened up a new chapter in the nuns' existence. From this time onwards, they are likely to have been under the supervision of the abbot of Sorø, a man who was close to the bishop and at the same time involved in the construction of one of the first brick churches in the country. Sorø needed income, and the Cistercian monastery in turn could provide the nuns with moral support and supervision.

I look upon this papal letter as an indication that by 1182 there was a formal, legal, and financial bond between Cistercian Sorø monks and Benedictine Roskilde nuns. There is no proof that the nuns at this point had become Cistercian, but they were certainly on their way to becoming part of the Order. It is more than likely that soon after 1200, when the General Chapter gave way and acknowledged women's houses, Our Lady of Roskilde took on a Cistercian identity. The sisters themselves probably continued more or less as previously with contemplative prayer and physical enclosure, while at the same time the presence of Margrete's body in the church meant a steady stream of pilgrims, many of whom were praying for a miracle.

[15] *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, p. 390: 'Introducitur ergo corpus in sancte virginis Marie basilicam, ubi mausoleum ingens honeste construitur, ubi postea multis claruit miraculis.'

[16] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, no. 100.

We have no medieval list of miracles but we can see from the east end of the church, where the Romanesque apse was opened out onto a full-scale choir, that the church was provided with adequate room for a shrine.[17] One can only surmise that the pilgrims were let in by an entrance which kept them separate from the nuns' section. The church with its long nave could certainly accommodate such a division. At the same time we are informed in the Elder Zealand Chronicle from the fourteenth century that Margrete is known to have performed few miracles not because they failed to happen but because 'they are not written down'.[18] The compiler of the Chronicle was perhaps on the lookout for a list and was surprised he could not find one. His assertion that miracles had taken place but had not been recorded at the time provides a hint that the nuns of Our Lady of Roskilde were not especially keen on increasing the renown of their shrine. They may have chosen to avoid having a list made. In this manner they guarded the integrity of their foundation by limiting the publicity for their saint's shrine.

The above conclusion is more a conjecture than the result of proof. But there is no doubt that the Church of Our Lady in Roskilde after 1177 became a place of pilgrimage, while the presence of contemplative nuns could hardly have harmonized with the disturbances brought about by the comings and goings of laypeople. Somehow, the sisters found a way to accommodate pilgrims and to maintain their way of life, and perhaps this involved suppressing any attempt to make the cult of Margrete better known. The nuns lived physically close to 'the madding crowd' and yet spiritually far from it.

A final indication of the early history of Roskilde Our Lady Monastery is a letter to its prioress and nuns from William, abbot of the Victorine monastery of the Paraclete, located in Northern Zealand. He had been brought to Denmark by Absalon in order to reform the lives of secular canons on the island of Eskilsø in Roskilde Fjord.[19] Ten years later he moved the community to Æbelholt, where he gave it the name of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, just as Abelard had done with his monastic settlement.[20] William left behind a letter collection whose exact purpose and intent remains a mystery in Danish history

[17] McGuire, 'Roskilde i europæisk middelalderperspektiv'. See the plan of the church on p. 25.

[18] *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, p. 390: 'De miraculis illius sancte [...] paucis, ut opinor, constat, non quia non sunt per virtutem domini facta, sed magis quia non sunt scripto [...] commendata.'

[19] *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, pp. 319–22.

[20] *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, p. 330.

writing.[21] But it seems clear that the letters illustrate his interests and concerns, even though it is not apparent which of them, if any, were actually sent.[22] It is my view that what we have are drafts of letters, in order to illustrate William's ability in *ars dictandi*, the art of letter-writing. At the same time, however, many of these letters, perhaps with later emendations, can have been actually sent to the recipients named in them.

William begins one letter to the nuns in Roskilde by asserting his responsibility to manifest care and concern for the flock to whose care he had been given: 'We have been entrusted with the authority given us by God [...] to care for them handed over to us.'[23] The reader might wonder whether William was asserting some type of responsibility for the nuns, but it soon becomes clear that his concern is not with them but with Niels, the son of their prior. He had apparently come to Æbelholt and had been trained as a member of its Victorine community. William admitted that he had been hard on the youth, and now the young man was threatening to give up the way of life to which he had vowed himself. Without conferring with William, Niels had put aside his cowl and 'deposited' it with the nuns, 'something which has surprised us greatly'. William concludes by asking the prioress of Roskilde and her nuns to hand over the garments, 'so that your Order, which always has loved the truth, does not become a part of evil deeds and become a hiding place and dwelling of evil and wrongdoing'.[24]

By using the term *ordo tuus*, William was probably referring in general to the monastic order, even though he could have been indicating the Benedictine or Cistercian Order. We have no clear indication of when the letter was composed. It has to have been after William in about 1175 made the move to Æbelholt and before his death in 1203. Whatever the exact situation, I find here an indication of the complexity of monastic and ecclesiastical life in later twelfth-century Denmark: we have a prioress, a prior, his son who had taken vows as an Augustinian canon, and now the youth had received some kind of support from the nuns — or, at least, from their prior. This man would have been a layperson who looked after the material affairs of the sisters, and it is likely he is the one who had convinced the nuns to look after his son's monastic cowl.

[21] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, Abbed Vilhelms brevsamling.

[22] Damsholt, 'Abbed Vilhelm af Æbelholts brevsamling'.

[23] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, 27.

[24] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, 470: 'ne vestra religio, quae semper est amatrix veritatis, sit latibulum et refugium malitiae atque nequitiae communicando operibus malis'.

However thin our sources, I think it can be concluded that the Monastery of Our Lady at Roskilde by 1200 had become a significant foundation with links not only to the bishop but also to the Cistercian monastery of Sorø. The nuns had accepted that by the end of the 1170s their church had become a site for pilgrimage, and they had to give up a third of the income from this activity to the monastery of Sorø. As indicated above, we have no contemporary sources telling us the exact time when the nuns came to consider themselves to be Cistercian, but this transition probably took place at the same time as the General Chapter soon after 1200 recognized nuns as being 'incorporated in the Order'.[25]

One indication that the monastery was linked to the aristocracy in Denmark is a papal prohibition in 1257 against the nuns' allowing lay women with their servants to come so frequently to the monastery 'against the regular institutes of your order'. These women were known to 'remain there for a long time, on account of which grave harm is done to the monastery and the leisure of holy contemplation is greatly disturbed'.[26] Here we can see the importance attached to separating the monastery from lay society and ensuring it as a place of prayer and contemplation. The papal letter indicates that it is the nuns themselves who had written to the pope in order to obtain a guarantee of their right to turn aside privileged women who wanted to make use of their facilities.

Our Lady of Slangerup: Royal Nuns

According to the historian Saxo, King Erik Ejegod (d. 1003) built a church at his birthplace to contain the relics of St Nicholas of Bari.[27] At some time in the twelfth century a women's house was established here, but we have no written records of its foundation. By the end of the twelfth century, however, we have a few letters from William of Æbelholt that indicate Slangerup was a monastery for women with members of the royal family. It is not until a document from 1383 that the nuns of this monastery are called Cistercian.[28] As with Roskilde, the question is when the nuns took on the Cistercian observance.

[25] Degler-Spengler, 'The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order', p. 97: 'In 1213 *moniales quae iam etiam incorporatae sunt Ordini* are mentioned'.

[26] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Raekke II*, I, no. 230. France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, pp. 177–78.

[27] Saxo, *Gesta danorum* XII.7.4; Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', p. 7.

[28] *Acta Pontificum Danica*, ed. by Krarup, VII, no. 5571.

William's three letters concerning the nuns are usually mentioned solely because of his reference to excessive drinking on the part of the nuns as an expression of 'the widespread vice in this country'.[29] William may well have felt, as many visitors and immigrants from southern Europe do today, that alcohol was far too prevalent in the culture of the north, but his letters deserve to be seen in terms of a variety of themes. In one letter he wrote to the prioress of Slangerup, together with two other nuns whom he also addresses in the following letter.[30] The letter is a typical twelfth-century manifestation of love and friendship between persons in the religious life.[31] William expressed his 'genuine feeling of love' towards the nuns, but he ended the letter by indicating there was a practical matter at hand: the nuns had asked him to send a certain person to them, and he promised to do so 'as quickly as possible'. We are not told who this person was, and it should not be surprising that so much space is dedicated towards an expression of affection while a practical concern is reserved for a vague final sentence. In the medieval practice of letter-writing between ecclesiastical persons, what mattered was the expression of attachment, while the bearer of the letter could convey any practical matters.

In another letter sent to the same sisters William speaks of what he had heard from 'our dear son Thomas, who honors and loves you in the Lord'.[32] Thomas had informed him of the sisters' affection for William amid all his difficulties. Once again he expresses his love for the sisters, but now he speaks of the devil who goes forth 'like a roaring lion' (cf. 1 Peter 5.8). The devil will not be able to overwhelm the sisters' chastity. William plays with biblical passages about royal daughters and then asserts that the sisters are daughters of kings. Such passages have been interpreted as indicating that Slangerup had become a monastery for royal women.[33] After 1157 King Valdemar had consolidated his power in the country, and it was in his interest to see that female members of the royal family who were not to be married found places in a monastery. It would have been appropriate that a foundation going back to King Erik Ejegod became a home for members of the royal family.

The longest and most complex letter of William to nuns is addressed to M. and M., said to be of royal descent. William describes them as happy not only

[29] Jørgensen and Thomsen, *Gyldendals bog om danske klostre*, p. 243.

[30] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, 471.

[31] McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, chap. 6, 'The Age of Friendship'.

[32] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, 472.

[33] Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', p. 25.

in their blood but also in their entrance to the monastery. He also here mentions the ravages of the devil, whose fall from heaven is described. William provides a long sermon on the dangers the nuns face and assures the sisters that his words should provide a promise of his devotion to them. Here finally comes the admonition against drinking: 'We do not think it necessary to remind you of your vow of piety and your way of life, so that it shall not become your habit to seek relief in intoxication at your meals, even though this belongs to the custom of the country.'[34]

It should be noticed that this warning is but a small part of a long letter, and William continues at this point in giving his assurance of friendship. Since our text only has initials and not full names, we cannot know precisely to whom William was writing, but there is no doubt that he was addressing women connected to the royal family. We see here an abbot doing what male monastic figures had done since late antiquity and still do to this day: they address with respect monastic women and criticize them, for they take it for granted that it is their rightful function to correct and improve them. William, so far as I can tell, had no legal or institutional bond with Slangerup, but since it was only about fifteen kilometres from his monastery, he could easily have kept informed about the nuns and told them what he thought about their way of life. In these letters we get a rich indication of the *cura monialium* in a Danish context.

Slangerup has an even more shadowy existence than Roskilde, but our sources indicate that it grew on its twelfth-century foundation, and that the succeeding medieval centuries contributed to its prominence. Slangerup's royal connections continued, as manifested by a 1344 grant by King Valdemar Atterdag of possessions in the town of Slangerup. Valdemar wanted to reward the nuns for allowing the Swedish king Birger's daughter Agnes entrance to their community.[35] It is possible that there was an attempt to have King Erik Ejegod canonized, and so the early history of the monastery would have been connected with this prospective cult, in the same way as with Margrete of Køge at Roskilde. At least we find in Saxo's narrative about the death of Erik Ejegod materials for considering him to be a saint.[36] Nothing came of this possible interest, however, and Slangerup developed as one of the three Cistercian houses for women in medieval Denmark.

[34] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, 468: 'Non credimus, quod vobis sit necessarium, vestram sanctitatem atque propositum commonere, ne sit vobis familiare in mensis vestris ebrietatis habere diffugium, licet consuetudinis terrae sit.'

[35] Jørgensen and Thomsen, *Gyldendals bog om danske klostre*, p. 244.

[36] Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', p. 7.

Our Lady of Bergen on Rygen: Contemplatives and Christianization

In 1193 Prince Jaromar of Rygen, an island in the Baltic to the south of medieval Denmark, drew up a foundation document for a monastery of women.[37] His salutation addresses 'all believing Christians', and the first lines of the document express gratefulness that God 'removed us from the worship of idols, which our ancestors unhappily toiled for'. Instead, the Lord brought Jaromar and his contemporaries 'to the true and rightful faith which allows us to take part in the blessings of his grace'.

Jaromar (or the priest who formulated his thoughts for him) explained that in order to cultivate the holy name of God and to encourage people in great numbers to show honour to Him, he had built a brick church 'on our own land and had it consecrated' by Bishop Peter 'to the glorious Virgin Mary'. This is Bishop Peter Sunesen of Roskilde, a nephew of Absalon and his successor in the diocese. Building a church in brick is significant: at this time, the only brick ecclesiastical buildings in Denmark were the churches at Ringsted and Sorø abbeys. It is also important that the church was entrusted to the patronage of Mary: Jaromar added how he had obtained nuns from the monastery of the Holy Virgin in Roskilde and brought them there so that 'they will eternally praise her glorious, fruitful virginity'.[38]

Less than twenty years after the body of the holy Margrete was brought to the Roskilde monastery of Our Lady, the same nunnery was able to send a sufficiently large number of sisters to make a new foundation on an island that only a few years before had been pagan. What unites Roskilde and Bergen monasteries is a shared devotion to St Mary the Virgin. Since every Cistercian male monastery took its name from Mary, it would be tempting to conclude that the naming of Bergen's female monastery after Mary indicates that the new foundation was Cistercian.

James France, in his splendid monograph on the Cistercians in Scandinavia, assumes that the nuns who came from Roskilde to Bergen in 1193 were Cistercian, and so Bergen would have been Cistercian from the time of its foundation.[39] I am not so sure and cannot give a clear date for when Bergen can

[37] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, no. 196.

[38] *Diplomatarium Danicum: Række 1*, III, no. 196: 'assumentes de ecclesia eiusdem sacre virginis Roschildis sanctimoniales inibi perpetuo laudaturas eius gloriosam fecundam virginitatem'.

[39] France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, p. 107.

be considered to be a Cistercian house, but it is likely that Roskilde Our Lady's transition to the Cistercian Order also meant Bergen's entrance into the Order.

The rest of the charter lists the many properties that Jaromar was handing over to the nuns, including five estates on Rygen and other holdings there and in Pomerania. Among the witnesses to the transaction are named Jakob and Bo as *provisores* or caretakers of the monastery. Thus there were two ecclesiastical persons entrusted with the task of looking after the needs of the nuns. One can ask what the purpose and function of the nuns was in a territory that so recently had become Christian. My answer is that the nuns were brought to Rygen in order to perform the same function as they had in Roskilde and Slangerup: to pray and praise the Lord through singing the Psalms of David and to seek the salvation of their people. In spite of the lack of sources, I can easily imagine the nuns respecting their monastic enclosure in keeping a distance to the rough-and-tumble society around them. For Jaromar, their prayers were an integral part of his strategy aimed at completing the Christianization of his island.

It is noteworthy that once Bergen monastery came under the Cistercian Order, its father abbot became the abbot of Eldena, a daughter house of Esrum.[40] This arrangement reflects the development of politics in the Baltic after 1200: Danish military power diminished, and so abbeys like Eldena that had been founded from Denmark came under German houses. Eldena was founded in 1199 by monks from Dargun and had as its patron the same Prince Jaromar who had founded Bergen. Geographically and politically Eldena was closer to Bergen than Esrum or Sorø, and so the initial bond to Denmark via Our Lady Monastery in Roskilde seems to have disappeared.

Vreta in Sweden: A Royal Foundation with Lay Access

Vreta outside of the town of Linköping in south-central Sweden may go back to the end of the eleventh century or the very beginning of the twelfth. In 1162 King Karl Sverkersson decided to strengthen the foundation with his own property.[41] It has been taken for granted that Vreta at this time associated itself with the Cistercian Order, but I find no evidence for this assertion.[42] We do have a document from King Johan Sverkersson, dated to 1216–22, in which the nuns are called *sanctimoniales*, but there is nothing about belonging to any

[40] Smith, 'De danske nonneklostre', p. 31.

[41] McGuire, 'Vretas nonner', p. 244.

[42] Lundberg, *Vreta Kloster*, p. 3.

specific order. This is the period, as I made clear above, when Cistercian foundations for women were being recognized as such elsewhere in Western Europe, and it is likely that the same was happening in Sweden. Vreta began its existence as probably the first house for women in the Swedish kingdom, a beneficiary of royal generosity, and by the end of the 1100s or the early 1200s it could have made contact with the Cistercian monasteries of Sweden; for example, with Alvastra, located about seventy kilometres to the south-west.

The first time Vreta is called Cistercian is in a letter from 1248 written by the papal legate, Cardinal William of Sabina. For all who assisted the nuns of Vreta in rebuilding their monastery after a fire, he gave forty days of indulgence.[43] Here the leader of the monastery is for the first time called *abbatissa*, while in earlier documents she is entitled *priorissa*. The document reveals that it was not only the monastic church that had burned but also the sisters' living quarters and surrounding workshops. In 1266 another papal legate, Cardinal Guido, granted a hundred days of indulgence to those who contributed to the repair of the monastery. Here again the monastery is said to belong to the Cistercian Order.[44]

Later documents preserved for the monastery deal almost exclusively with its possessions. Our only other source for the life of the monastery is the abbey church, which was divided between a lay section and one for the nuns.[45] Such a division was unthinkable in a Cistercian house for men, where at least in the first centuries laypeople were kept out of the monastic church. But at both Roskilde and Vreta, church architecture reveals an opening to the laity in women's houses and makes one think of what the Birgittines would do in their churches in the late Middle Ages, making the ground floor level available to the laity while the nuns on an upper floor were protected from view.

Conclusion: Rivalry between Men's and Women's Houses?

The foundations of women's houses at Roskilde, Slangerup, Bergen, and Vreta all seem to have taken place in good order and in harmony with the wishes of the most powerful men in medieval society: bishops, kings and princes. This development, however, may not have always been so harmonious, even in a time of growth in church and society. Thanks to the witness of the Chronicle of Øm Abbey in Jutland, it is possible to see the establishment of a Cistercian

[43] *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, ed. by Liljegren, I, no. 356.

[44] *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, ed. by Liljegren, I, no. 434.

[45] Tagesson, *I Erik Lundbergs fotspår*.

house for men in opposition to the needs and desires of at least one powerful woman. For her the goal was a monastic foundation for women.

The Chronicle of this Cistercian abbey, whose first part was drafted soon after 1200, tells how a certain noble woman Margareta plagued the monks when they were living at Veng, which formerly had been a Benedictine foundation.[46] Finally, the brothers arranged to move to Kalvø. This move was approved of by both Archbishop Eskil of Lund and by Pope Alexander III. Margareta was not satisfied with this arrangement and is said to have plagued King Valdemar I to hand over Veng to her 'so that she could found a house for nuns' (et posset ibi congregationem monialium constituere).[47] Margareta tried to get the support of Valdemar's queen by offering her two gold rings, together with a golden chasuble of the finest workmanship 'so stiff with gold that it could not be folded together in the creases made for that purpose'. These precious objects Margareta is said to have robbed from the church at Veng.

The story continues: the pope wrote to the woman, but she refused to obey him:

> In spite of all the many and important letters which the pope had sent, the brothers did not succeed in getting their possessions back, because the king on the basis of family bonds loved the woman dearly and would not make her sad so long as she lived and so he put aside what was rightful.[48]

The conclusion is that the brothers who ended at Øm Abbey via Veng and Kalvø complain to this day and will not stop complaining until they get what was taken away from them: 'nec cessabunt conqueri, donec eis iusticia de iniuste sibi ablatis fiat'.[49]

For our purposes, the narrative is a superb indication of how a woman close to the king could pursue her own monastic policy and establish a house for women precisely where a house for men had been established. There was rivalry, as also can be seen in the narrative for the foundation of Vitskøl Abbey, also in Jutland, but whose monks first lived at Varnhem in Sweden, where they were driven out by Christina, the wife of King Erik, who 'in every way was pestering the abbot and his convent',[50] even getting some of her female friends to dance in scanty clothes in the cloister.

[46] McGuire, *Conflict and Continuity at Øm Abbey*.

[47] *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, ed. by Gertz, II, 173.

[48] *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, ed. by Gertz, II, 175.

[49] *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, ed. by Gertz, II, 175.

[50] *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, ed. by Gertz, II, 139.

Such narratives have been used to indicate male Cistercian hostility against women, but in my view they indicate that there could be disagreement about what kind of monastery was to be founded.[51] There were powerful women who preferred houses for their own sex instead of for men. In the case of Øm, the monks won out; but in Roskilde, Slangerup, and Vreta, already-established foundations for women in the Benedictine tradition became Cistercian houses for nuns after 1200. However difficult it is for us to reach the daily life of such places and to see how the sisters perceived their lives, we can at least claim that their prayers were considered essential for those who were in commanding positions in church and society. The sisters were meant to be far from the madding crowd, but they were clearly in touch with what was going on around them. Their monasteries became part of the fabric of medieval society, also in Scandinavia.

[51] Damsholt, *Kvindebilledet i dansk højmiddelalder*, pp. 209–30.

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Female Mendicant Spirituality in Catalan Territory: The Birth of the First Communities of Poor Clares

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The Religious-Monastic Background

Our topography begins in the decade of the 1230s when the first female communities entered the orbit of mendicant spirituality. These female communal expressions brought about a disruption of the traditional monastic scene, marked by a strong Benedictine background and the pre-eminence of the Rule of St Benedict. In Catalonia, several nunneries still active today, exemplified that scene, such as Sant Pere de les Puel·les in Barcelona and Sant Daniel de Girona, which sank their roots well into the tenth and eleventh centuries respectively. Scholars have already established the role played by these two nunneries (as well as that of several others, no longer extant, that also belonged to the Benedictine family, such as Sant Joan de Ripoll, also known as Sant Joan de les Abadesses; Sant Pere del Burgal, in the Vall d'Àneu; Santa Cecília d'Alins, in Alt Urgell; and Santa Maria de Meià, in La Noguera) in the shaping of Catalonia during the early Middle Ages. Their role in the resettlement of population and the design of the first urban topography of cities such as Barcelona or Girona has been duly noted. In this early period, however, the

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spirituality of women tended just slightly toward monasticism. As Montserrat Cabré has noted, only a few nunneries predate the year 1000 (three over a total of forty-seven monasteries).[1] This lack of proportion could indicate, among other factors, the existence of other expressions of piety, such as those displayed by *deodicatae* and *deovotae*, who lived their spirituality outside the walls of the monastery without submitting to any rule, by themselves or in small communities, and devoting their time to both the assistance of others and transcendence of self. It is also likely that some women chose to lead an eremitic life. We will find some of them as promoters of several later monastic foundations (particularly Cistercian).[2]

In the twelfth century, before the foundation of the first communities of Poor Clares or Clarisses, the religious landscape showed a significant change in the number of nunneries. The Cistercian reform certainly had a lot to do with this new trend. For the first time, female monastic foundations outnumbered their male counterparts. Some of them were emblematic, such as Santa Maria de Valldemaria, Santa Maria de Cadins, Santa Maria del Montsant, Santa Maria de la Bovera, Santa Maria de Valldaura, Sant Feliu de Cadins, Santa Maria de Vallverd, Santa Maria de Pedregal, Santa Maria de Vallsanta, Sant Hilari de Lleida, Santa Maria de les Franqueses, and, especially, Vallbona de les Monges — which, in many cases, was itself the promoter of new foundations — or, later in the thirteenth century, the community of Santa Maria de Valldonzella in Barcelona. In the twelfth century, we also find communities of canonesses related to military orders, such as the order of St John of Jerusalem, which was in charge of the Catalan hospitals of Cervera, Siscar, and Sant Salvador Isot.

The last examples of the scene we have so briefly outlined were certainly the result of the first expressions of what scholars have called the 'dynamism of the female religious movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries'.[3] The strong participation of women, triggered by the dawn of the evangelical awakening of the twelfth century, undoubtedly became one of the most significant phenomena in both the history of medieval spirituality and the history of women. It is in this phenomenon that we can discern the real feminization

[1] Cabré, '"*Deodicatae*" y "*deovotae*"'.

[2] A good overview of early medieval Catalan monasteries until the explosion of mendicant monasticism (including interesting theoretical ideas on female monasticism) can be found in Rivera Garretas, 'El monacato femenino, siglos VIII–XII'.

[3] Andenna, *Dove va la storiografia monastica in Europa*; Garí, *Redes femeninas de promoción espiritual en los Reinos Peninsulares*.

of religious women. There was a strong presence of women in the orthodox movements (that held fast to traditional ways, such as the Cistercian Order) as well as in those considered heretical. Women also took part in the reorganization of monastic structures (mendicant movements) and in other alternatives to pious life or religious vocation that escaped the strict walls of the monastery and regular religiosity. Those alternatives were embodied in different projects and varieties of lay semi-religious life, either autonomous or weakly dependent on the clergy, which synthesized active and contemplative life (female recluses, beguines, *beatas*, female penitents, *pinzochere*). Over the last decades, the integration of the Iberian kingdoms into this European movement during the central centuries of the Middle Ages has been well proven, as have been several of its most specific traits (such as an extension of the chronology, especially in Castilian territory, with the emergence of the *beatas*).[4]

These new expressions, which were actually the result of a genuine female concern,[5] also prompted the feminization of urban space. For instance, in the case of Tuscany, Anna Benvenuti has remarked on the exponential growth of new forms of female religiosity that went beyond the more traditional framework offered by classic monasticism. These new communities often preferred the outskirts of the urban world in a double sense: they took in women who came from the lowest social strata, including prostitutes, and chose areas outside the city walls but close enough to the movements of urban and commercial expansion that would give birth to the profile of late medieval cities.[6]

It is thus impossible to understand the meaning of the development of the spiritual and communal journey of St Clare and the first Damianites-Clarisses without relating them to this broader movement that undoubtedly disrupted the religious panorama of the moment: a moment characterized also by new urban scenarios in which our Sisters Minor would be fully integrated, by the new actors of economic and mercantile growth, and by the more intense participation of laity in the different spiritual options at hand (such as third orders or fraternities).

[4] Muñoz Fernández, *Beatas y santas neocastellanas*.

[5] The theologian Adriana Valerio has repeatedly used the term *concern* to define the mystical experience as the result of a female concern, understood in a positive sense, as an experience of the search for God and a deep demand for God, with its final destiny not so much in truth or certainty, but in the definition of a path toward Him; see 'L'altra rivelazione: l'esperienza profetica femminile'.

[6] Benvenuti, 'Consideracions generals i alguns exemples locals'.

The Birth of the Order of St Clare

Catalan (and also Iberian) Clarist topography places the first communities in the first half of the thirteenth century. This chronology is embedded in a larger discussion that addresses two structural issues: the complex and difficult insertion of women, and particularly these Sisters Minor, within the newly born Franciscanism, and the role played by Clare of Assisi in the definition of these communal expressions of religious commitment. It was in this context that the preconceptions specific to a patriarchal culture, and the subordinate position of women in the ideological and symbolic scheme, came into play. The existing concerns about the necessity of channelling female religious experiences into the system became apparent. In the case of the Clarisses, the situation was aggravated by a certain ambiguity in the specific status of women within the new Franciscan movement — a status just as ambiguous as was the attitude of St Francis himself towards the female movement that had emerged around Clare and, particularly, towards the Damianite communities emerging at that moment across the Italian territory and, soon after, all over Europe.

The matter of the *cura monialium* was in this sense a recurrent topic that accompanied the birth and structuring of all the new female communities, and not only those run by the new mendicant orders. For instance, throughout the thirteenth century, the Cistercian Order changed its attitude towards those semi-religious women who would become gradually and significantly more involved in the life of its nunneries, especially between 1220 and 1240. Eventually, those women were accepted, but only into those monasteries provided with endowments.[7] Actually, this question was brought to discussion in a moment of increasing mistrust of the autonomy of women and the rise of initiatives and commitments that escaped the traditional framework. In the particular case of the Clarisses, this issue came along with another discussion: the adaptation of the new female communities to the ideal of radical poverty, inherent in Franciscan charisma. This was a process that was, in the long run, impossible to combine with the necessity of monastic enclosure progressively promoted by ecclesiastical authorities. Poverty, but also preaching, the apostolate, and an itinerant profile, were the central elements of the Franciscan mendicant ideal that were, or could be, disrupted by their adjustment to the female reality.

The decisive evolution of the movement took place in the midst of this tension: the transition from an initial *fraternitas*, in which men and women

[7] Roisin, 'L'Effervescence cistercienne et le courant feminine'; Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*.

shared the same project of evangelical life, albeit with certain differences, to the establishment of a more stable *ordo*.[8] Jacques de Vitry, after his visit to Italy in 1216, left us an interesting account of that first Franciscan fraternity. He wrote about the *paterini* or *humiliati*, men and women who preached and worked with their hands, and about the *fratres minores* and *sorores minores* who, in the region of Perugia, did not possess temporal goods and worked for the care of souls, wandering through towns and villages and going back home at night to devote themselves to contemplation.[9] Later, though, in the 1220s, the founder, already working on a rule for the movement, had already been imbued with the traditional ecclesiastical suspicion of women. At the same time, an institutional 'solution' was found for the sisters and female religious communities approaching the movement. In 1219, Cardinal Ugolino (who was the first papal legate in Umbria and Tuscany and, after that and since 1227, was pope under the name of Gregory IX (1227–41) wrote the first rule for Clarisses. The rule shaped a space for women within Franciscanism according to the legal framework of Benedictine observance (the profession of the Rule of St Benedict), although adapted to the premises of Franciscan spirituality. From then on, the papal policy would foster the progressive insertion of informal semi-religious female communities into the Franciscan orbit. This determined intervention marked a first important phase of 'monastization' or institutionalization of female Franciscanism that revolved around two axes: endowing Damianite communities with immovables and properties in order to guarantee their survival in an environment of contemplation and monastic enclosure, and regulating the relationship between Clarisses and Friars Minor, forcing the latter to take charge of the pastoral care of the former, as well as other domestic and organizational issues.

The Franciscan Order, evolving from the initial fraternity into a fully structured congregation, needed to find a place for the *sorores minores* and to face the institutional relationship between both branches of the Order. Those women, called 'poor recluse nuns of the order of St Damian' in the first documents and members 'of the order of St Clare' from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, obtained their first institutional definition under Gregory IX. However, the issue was far from resolved, and the successive pontiffs had to deal with the difficult and complex question of the location of these groups of women and, above all, with their relationship with the Friars Minor.

[8] Dalarun, *Francesco, un passaggio: donna e donne negli scritti e nelle leggende di Francesco d'Assisi*.

[9] Jacques de Vitry, *Letters*, ed. by Huygens, pp. 72–73.

Their transition through different monastic rules, from a simple 'way of life' with Benedictine roots to the Urbanist rule, including the precept of radical poverty Clare always yearned for, would still be another aspect of the problem.

The definition of a regular monastic space for women could certainly be interpreted in comparison with the male branch of the Franciscan Order. Such a subsidiary perspective puts under the spotlight its deficiencies concerning the original ideal, better upheld in the case of the friars, and leaves in the background the female initiative in the acquisition of that space, as well as the assertion of female freedom it entails. In that sense, Roberto Rusconi states that female Franciscanism progressively became a monastic institution in the traditional sense, with a definite disciplinary orientation and nurtured by a Franciscan spirituality conditioned by its singular institutional context.[10] The research of Maria Pia Alberzoni,[11] in turn, has prioritized another issue: the papacy's part in the progressive institutionalization of female communities linked to mendicants and in the creation of an exclusively female order, the *ordo sancti Damiani*.

As for the direct implication of Clare of Assisi (in other words, the founding 'missions' carried out by her disciples and, therefore, the founding desire of the saintly woman), scholars have limited it to Italian territory, considering as foundational myths the stories involving the disciples and relatives of St Clare. On the other hand, the religious and communal project led by St Clare was quite renowned in a more or less explicit way, thanks to both the pilgrimage to Rome of several *mulieres religiosae* — such as the four foundresses of the community of Burgos, who obtained from the pope their foundational bull after becoming acquainted with the movement during their travel to Rome — and, in all likelihood, the presence of Italian Damianites in the Iberian Peninsula, the 'educators', suggested by José García Oro in the case of Barcelona, on the basis of names such as Maria de Pisa or Clara de Janua/Genoa.[12]

In any case, the rapid increase in the number of Damianite houses cannot be understood without Clare's involvement: by 1238 there were already seventy nunneries, most of them in Italy, the rest in France, Germany, and Spain.

[10] Rusconi, 'L'espansione del francescanesimo femminile nel secolo XIII'.

[11] Alberzoni, *Francescanesimo a Milano* and *La nascita di un'istituzione*. Her thesis was also supported by Knox in *Creating Clare of Assisi*.

[12] García Oro, 'Orígenes de las clarisas en España', p. 172. Maria de Pisa appears in the document containing the permission of the bishop of Barcelona to build the monastery (1237): Arxiu del Monestir de Sant Benet de Montserrat, Fons del Monestir Santa Clara de Barcelona (MSCB), Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 209.

However, even if the foundational legends linking the creation of a community with the express wish of Clare and the presence of her disciples-relatives are, in most cases, implausible, we cannot ignore what these legends might be concealing or transmitting.[13] As María-Milagros Rivera states, 'the legend, like the myth or the fable, retrieves a known truth that other ways of knowledge transmission or historical memory are not able to admit'.[14] The legends created by these first Iberian Damianites and preserved within the oral tradition of the communities (as the case of the nunnery of Barcelona well shows) bring under the limelight of history the direct relationship between women who shared a common spiritual yearning and several other actors who intervened in a determined manner (especially the papacy, with its wish for channelling the female experience and homogenizing it within the framework of a more or less traditional monasticism). Those women, touched by St Francis's charisma, managed to follow the female project outlined by St Clare, although not without difficulties, as we have already seen. The lack of a legal link between these communities — which, unlike the friars, did not have a general abbess nor general or provincial chapters, — brought to the fore the awareness of sharing the same root and, in my opinion, progressively provided the figure of Clare with a preeminent place in Clarist genealogy.[15] The first Clarisses of Barcelona manifested this link, as well as the clearly Damianite character of the new community, and relived in the figures of their foundresses — Agnès de Peranda and Clara de Janua, relatives and disciples of St Clare according to the legend — and in the handling of their historical memory, the idea of the founding purpose of the Italian saintly woman.

On the contrary, the works by Herbert Grundmann in the 1930s stressed an important aspect of this characterization of the female Franciscan movement in northern-central Italy:[16] its autonomous origin and institutional development from the male branch of the order of St Francis. Later researchers, in particular Anna Benvenuti, have placed this approach into a larger framework that comprises the study of all those forms of female spiritual life in specific

[13] According to Benvenuti, while the communities of Foligno, Florence, Perugia, Siena, and Lucca were born from the charismatic diaspora of the first companions of Clare, the chroniclers of the order not only accepted without reservation the *topos* of a foundation closely related to the matriarch or her first disciples but also elaborated it: 'La fortuna del movimiento damianita in Italia', p. 68.

[14] Rivera Garretas, 'El monacato femenino, siglos VIII–XII', p. 110.

[15] Omaechevarría, *Las clarisas a través de los siglos*, pp. 51–52.

[16] Grundmann, *Movimenti religiosi nel Medioevo*.

regional or topographic contexts. Another question ensues: the necessity of a study that avoids the understanding of Damianites and the expansion of female Franciscanism as a mere branch of the Order's history.[17] In that sense, Benvenuti also speaks about a genuine 'Damianization' of many communities of female recluses and, in particular, about the existence of a whole normative programme that would regularize the 'generazione spontanea della religio femminile'.[18] Subsequent studies by Alberzoni also stress this last aspect by taking into account the implication of the papacy as well as the lesser incidence in the foundational dynamics of the Franciscan Order and the *sociae* of Clare of Assisi.[19]

In conclusion, recent research has highlighted the necessity of placing the birth of female communities within Franciscanism in a wider scene that takes into account regularization or institutionalization processes that, however different their origins, share a common denominator: semi-religious communities with pauperistic and penitential profiles within the framework of a female religious movement both monastic and lay.[20] The incorporation into the order of pre-existing communities of *mulieres religiosae* (female converts, women in hospitals, penitential *fraternitas*, etc.) or, in any case, the attempt to regularize their situation, also appear in other monastic contexts, as Guido Cariboni has noted for the Cistercian Order.[21]

Clarist Topography: Thirteenth-Century Catalan Foundations in the Iberian Context

Even nowadays, the analysis of the origin and foundation of the houses of Sisters Minor in the Iberian Peninsula is full of uncertainties. This is partly because so far the surviving records of these houses are not substantial enough to put together a monograph, and partly because of the lack of documents, which makes it difficult to narrow down the year — or years — of their foundation. In 1989, Manuel de Castro stated this fact in a brief catalogue of the Spanish Clarist nunneries,[22] which compiled, in turn, the first reviews of Atanasio López.[23]

[17] Pecorini Cignoni, 'Francescanesimo al femminile'.

[18] Benvenuti, 'La fortuna del movimiento damianita in Italia', p. 62.

[19] Alberzoni, 'Chiara e San Damiano tra Ordine minoritico e chiesa romana'.

[20] Graña Cid, *Religiosas y ciudades*.

[21] See the chapter by Guido Cariboni in the present volume.

[22] Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas'.

[23] López, 'Los monasterios de clarisas en España en el siglo XIII'.

The studies of Ignacio Omaechevarría are another outstanding contribution. As translator and editor of the textual corpus of the saintly woman of Assisi and the rules of the Poor Clares,[24] in 1972 he produced the first statistics of their houses, also providing the foundation dates of Clarist nunneries around the world.[25] John Moorman has devoted several chapters of his voluminous work on the origins of European Franciscan monasteries to St Clare and the Clarist order.[26] Also remarkable are the synthesis of the Iberian Franciscan phenomenon in the Middle Ages produced by García Oro, *Francisco de Asís en la España medieval*, and more recently, his analysis of the birth of the first Iberian Clarist nunneries.[27]

For the Catalan case, the most extensive approach to the history of Franciscanism is the work of Jill Webster, who has thoroughly analysed the history of most Franciscan communities — particularly communities of friars, such as the convents of Puigcerdà, Girona, and Vic — in specific papers, and has also synthesized most of her research in her thesis *Els Menorets*, updated in part in *Els Franciscans catalans a l'edat mitjana: els primers menorets i menoretes de la Corona d'Aragó*. In this work she adds, for the first time, a chapter devoted to Clarisses, even though the author herself points out that it must not be in any case taken as a history of the Minoresses but only as a first attempt that has to be followed up and that requires further years of research as well as a separate study. Regarding those monographs or papers devoted to specific monasteries, we point out the following: Pedro Sanahuja, who has reviewed several female Catalan nunneries, such as Balaguer and Cervera;[28] the historical notes on the monastery of Pedralbes written by its archivist Sister Eulàlia Anzizu[29] — Pedralbes, the emblematic monastery of the order in Catalonia, was the object of a well-documented monograph devoted to its medieval period in the doctoral thesis of Anna Castellano, published in 1998[30] — and, more recently, my own doctoral thesis, published in 2007, on the first monastery of Clarisses in Catalan territory, Sant Antoni I Santa Clara de Barcelona.[31]

[24] Omaechevarría, *Escritos de santa Clara y documentos complementarios*.

[25] Omaechevarría, *Las clarisas a través de los siglos*.

[26] Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan Houses*.

[27] García Oro, 'Orígenes de las clarisas en España'.

[28] Sanahuja, 'El convento de Santa Clara de Balaguer' and 'El monestir de Santa Clara de Cervera'.

[29] Anzizu, *Fulles històriques del reial monestir de Santa Maria de Pedralbes*.

[30] Castellano, *Pedralbes a l'edat mitjana*.

[31] Jornet-Benito, *El monestir de Sant Antoni de Barcelona*. In this historiographical

This historiographical overview cannot leave out Franciscan chronicles, general chronicles as well as provincial accounts, since they provide historical notes on every monastery and recount their origins, albeit following, in many cases, hagiographical patterns previously established. As an example of a general outline, Father Damián Cornejo offered a historical synthesis of the Clarist family in the two volumes of his *Chrónica seráphica*. For the case of the Franciscan province of Catalonia, the eighteenth-century chronicles by Father Josep Batlle and Father Jaume Coll are indispensable references.[32] In the twentieth century, the work of Father Pedro Sanahuja stands out[33] — he composed a brief monographic study for each monastery in the ecclesiastical province of Catalonia providing specific notes for the foundations and including, when available, the papal bull that gave them institutional shape. Even today, Sanahuja's *Historia*, based on the classic work of the chronicler Francisco Gonzaga and the *Annales Minorum* by the annalist Lucas Wadding, is still an essential reference.[34]

The aforementioned scholars have considered the Iberian Peninsula as a privileged scenario for the analysis of the establishment of the order, both the male branch and its female counterpart. The Iberian kingdoms, in general, played an outstanding role and had an enormous significance in the genesis and development of the Franciscan movement, mostly due — according to García Oro — to two different realities that coexisted in the area: on the one hand, the pilgrimage route to Santiago; and, on the other, the Arab presence and the subsequent *Reconquista*. Those two factors are of the essence in order to understand the presence of the Franciscan 'family' in what has come to be called the 'Spanish Franciscan spring'.[35] Other significant elements in the interpretation of this phenomenon were the remarkable Franciscanist component of the religiosity of the royal dynasties — especially and quite early, that of the House of Aragon — and the social and political dimension of the Friars Minor, the most dynamic ecclesiastical group together with the Dominicans and the Mercedarians. Its most prominent members were required by the papacy for

context, the project 'Atlas of Female Spirituality in the Peninsular Kingdoms' is important; it contains the listing and mapping of spaces of feminine spirituality <http://www.ub.edu/claustra/eng/Monestirs/atles> [accessed 7 May 2015].

[32] Barcelona, Biblioteca de la Universitat de Barcelona, MS 993–94: Josep Batlle, *Crónica de la provincia de los frailes menores de la regular observancia del seráfico padre san Francisco de Cataluña*; Coll, *Chrónica seráfica de la santa província de Cataluña*.

[33] Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*.

[34] Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis franciscanae*.

[35] García Oro, *Francisco de Asís en la España medieval*, p. 47, and *Los franciscanos en España*.

important matters and questions (from popular preaching in an atmosphere rarefied by 'heresy' and religious dialogue with Arabs and Jews, to the economic and diplomatic relationship with Iberian ecclesiastical and civil powers, without leaving out their welfare work and hospital tasks[36]). They also had a considerable influence in royal circles as shown, for example, by their active participation in the campaigns of the Christian *Reconquista* and resettlement, the diplomatic missions assigned to individual friars in the service of the royal house, and their function as confessors or even right-hand men.

By the time of St Clare's death (11 August 1253), according to the data provided by Manuel de Castro, there were twenty-two Clarist nunneries in the whole Iberian Peninsula. Therefore, it was one of the regions most favoured by the second Franciscan Order, second only to Italy. Later on, between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, 194 Spanish monasteries of Poor Clares are documented. Santa Engracia of Pamplona, according to Ignacio Omaechevarría,[37] and St Claire of Reims, according to John Moorman, dispute the privilege of being the first Damianite community founded outside Italian territory.[38]

The first Iberian foundations of this 'order of St Damian' span a chronological arch that starts with the monastery of Santa Engracia in Pamplona. Mary and her companions — first living in a *beaterio* dedicated to St Mary of the Virgins — were pioneers in establishing the first Iberian Damianite community, asking the new pope, Gregory IX, for the statute of the Clarisses in 1227, a request to which they received effective confirmation in a bull dated 1228.[39] Six years later, four women from Burgos, acquainted with the new project of Clare of Assisi at St Damian while on pilgrimage to Rome, received a foundational and constitutive bull (1234) for the nunnery of Santa Clara, and the rule of life that Gregory IX himself had just composed.[40] Six days later, still in 1234, four women from Zaragoza sponsored by Lady Ermessenda de Celles (the aunt of Jaume I) also received papal approval for the foundation of the monastery of Santa Catalina.[41] Santa Clara de Zamora and Santa Clara

[36] García Oro, *Los franciscanos en España*, pp. 458–60.

[37] Omaechevarría, *Las clarisas a través de los siglos*, p. 44.

[38] Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, p. 210.

[39] See, on this subject, the study by Ruiz de Larrinaga, 'Las clarisas de Pamplona'.

[40] On this community, see Omaechevarría, 'Orígenes del monasterio de Santa Clara de Zamora'.

[41] On this community, see López, 'Monasterio de Santa Catalina de Zaragoza'; Ruiz de Larrinaga, 'El monasterio de Santa Catalina de Zaragoza'.

de Salamanca, together with the *sorores penitentium* of Barcelona, who would receive in 1236 the papal answer to their request for the establishment in the city of a monastery of poor recluse nuns of the order of St Damian, complete this panorama of primitive Iberian Damianite foundations in the decade of the 1230s.[42]

According to García Oro, these nunneries were located in significant locations on the so-called route of St James and its derivations — for instance, from Barcelona to Zaragoza, through Lleida, Tarazona, and Calatayud — where the 'mysterious disciples' of St Clare appeared, either playing the leading role in foundational legends or surrounded by a halo of sanctity (as in the case of the foundress and first abbess of Barcelona, Agnès de Peranda).[43] In the Franciscan province of Aragon, the pioneering communities of Zaragoza and Barcelona would become foundational poles and a model for other communities.[44] Franciscan chroniclers, led by Damián Cornejo, saw the latter as one of the most important Iberian foundations on account of the legend that attributes its origin to the disciples and relatives of St Clare. Barcelona would thus be, in the words of García Oro, a paradigm of St Clare's foundation, in which the hagiographical images relating it to a personal desire of the Italian saintly woman could be best projected.[45] This community would exercise a significant influence within its territory, helping establish other houses of the order. In 1267 a group of nuns left Sant Antoni to set up the monastery of Santa Clara de Castelló d'Empúries; in 1300, three nuns from Barcelona were transferred to the new community of Santa Clara de Vilafranca del Penedès;[46] and in 1326, fourteen nuns moved to a new foundation in the city of Barcelona, Santa Maria de Pedralbes.[47]

If we follow the foundational sequence set by Webster, we find a group of nunneries founded before 1250, several others established around the turn of the century, and another significant group founded around 1340.[48] Webster notes the way in which, in general, the establishment of the first Franciscan

[42] On the first one, see Omaechevarría, 'Orígenes del monasterio de Santa Clara de Zamora'; on the second, see Riesco, *Datos para la historia del real convento de clarisas de Salamanca*.

[43] García Oro, 'Orígenes de las clarisas en España', p. 168.

[44] Specifically, in the Aragonese area: Calatayud, Santa Inés, 1240; Tarazona, Santa Inés, 1240.

[45] García Oro, 'Orígenes de las clarisas en España', p. 168.

[46] MSCB, Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 722.

[47] Castellano, *Pedralbes a l'edat mitjana*, p. 43.

[48] Webster, *Els franciscans catalans*, pp. 298–307.

foundations — male as well as female — in the territories ruled by Jaume I is related to the travel of St Francis to Spain as much as to the reconquest of territory from the Muslims: from Barcelona to Tarragona in the south, from Lleida up to Navarra in the west, and in Valencia and the Balearic Islands. She finally determines that, despite several exceptions, for the case of thirteenth-century foundations and those of the first half of the fourteenth, the communities of Poor Clares settled in those nuclei that already had a house of Friars Minor, and that they did so within one or two decades.

A distinct foundational strategy can be observed in the area from the 1240s onwards. On the one hand, the community of Barcelona, consolidated by means of privileges and donations endowed by the pontiff himself — who clinched the tutelage of the Holy See with the offering of spiritual incentives to the protectors and devotees of this new monastery — the great donations contributed by the royal family, and, finally, the close relationship between members of the Catalan court, particularly the queens, and the Minoresses and Franciscans. On the other hand, new houses started spreading all over the territory, with several foundations set up by nuns who came from pre-existing communities, especially, as mentioned above, the nunneries of Barcelona and Zaragoza. That was the case of the establishments of Santa Isabel de Lleida (1240),[49] Santa Magdalena de Tarragona (1248–49),[50] Santa Clara de Tortosa

[49] The monastery of Santa Isabel de Lleida appears in the 1240 bull *Gratum gerimus*, addressed by Gregori IX to Queen Violant. In that document, the pontiff thanks her for the donation of a number of houses for the settlement of several women devoted to contemplative life in a place known as the *beateri* of Santa Isabel d'Hongria and urges her to hold on to that protection. In her testament of 1251 she left fifty *morabatins* for the *dominas inclusis Sancti Damiani*. The monastery was out of the city, close to its walls, in the place known as 'secanet de Sant Pere'; in 1481 they were transferred to the convent of Clot, inside the city, which had up until then belonged to the Friars Minor. See Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas'; Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*. Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan Houses*, suggests that the monastery already existed in 1236.

[50] The monastery of Santa Maria Magdalena de Tarragona appears already documented between 1248 and 1249, when the community had a part in the foundation of a new house of Clarisses in the city of Valencia, that of Santa Isabel also known as La Puridad; in 1256 they also destined several nuns to the new foundation of Santa Clara de Palma de Mallorca in both communities, by the action of Abbess Caterina. Father Sanahuja suggests that Santa Magdalena could have been founded by a group of penitent women from Tarragona who were granted the statute of Clarisses by the pope; in 1254, a papal bull commanded the monastery of Zaragoza to provide two nuns for the 'instruction' of the monastery of Tarragona. Also an out-of-town settlement, it was located in the house known as 'ermitori de Santa Magdalena' (hermitage of St Magdalene), between the main water channel and the Francolí river. At the

(1267),[51] and Nostra Senyora de la Serra de Montblanc (1296).[52] Some communities settled in southern areas, next to the Saracen frontiers, while the only new house in the northern regions was Santa Clara de Castelló d'Empúries (1260).[53]

The communities of Valencia (1250–51),[54] Palma de Mallorca (1256),[55] and Ciutadella (1285–87) were founded outside the principality of Catalonia.[56] This group was clearly related to the expansion project of the Catalan mon-

end of the fourteenth century, they transferred to another location, again outside the city walls, at the end of the current *Rambla Vella* and close to the sea. See Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas'; Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*; and Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan Houses*.

[51] The monastery of *Santa Clara de Tortosa* was founded, according to de Castro, Sanahuja, and the chronicler Wadding, around 1267. One of its initial protectors was another wife of Jaume II, Maria of Cyprus. The foundresses of the convent of Xàtiva and the Conceptionists' convent of the city of Tortosa came from the group of religious women of Santa Clara de Tortosa. There is a legend that the founders were Agnès de Peranda and Clara de Janua.

[52] As for the monastery of Nostra Senyora de la Serra de Montblanc, in 1296, the neighbours of Montblanc, responding to King Jaume II's plea, donated the spot of 'Santa Maria de la Serra' to the Greek princess Làscaris, daughter of Theodor II and widow of Arnau Roger, count of Pallars, for the foundation of a Clarist nunnery. The sanctuary aroused great devotion due to the miraculous apparition of the Virgin in the same place where the Clarisses later settled. It was studied by Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*; Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas'; and Serra, *El Monestir de la Mare de Déu de la Serra de Montblanc*.

[53] In the case of the monastery of Santa Clara de Castelló d'Empúries, the archive of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara preserves a first document where, in 1261, the noble lady Dolça de Pau donated several houses for the foundation of a monastery of Poor Clares, and where two nuns of Sant Antoni appear (sor Ramona de Vilanova, sor Jaumeta, sor Joana) (MSCB, Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 536); in 1267, Abbess Agnès allowed that three nuns should arrive from the monastery of Sant Antoni de Barcelona to be its foundresses. It went through the Colettine reform in 1505, and its nuns also reformed the convent of Tarragona in 1578. It was described by Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis franciscanae*; Batlle, *Crónica de la provincia de los frailes menores*; and by Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*. More recently, see Martí i Mayor, *Les Clarisses a l'Alt Empordà*.

[54] The monastery of Santa Isabel de Valencia was founded between 1250 and 1251 on a plot of land outside the city walls but close enough to them, upon the donation Ximeno Pérez de Arenós granted sister Caterina, the abbess of Tarragona. In 1534, a papal brief issued by Clement VII granted them the dedication to 'la Puridad or la Purísima Concepción'. See Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas', and more recently Antón, *El monasterio de la Puridad*.

[55] The monastery of Santa Clara de Palma de Mallorca was founded in 1256 and went through the Observance reformation in 1490. See Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas', and more recently, Sastre, *Espiritualitat i vida quotidiana al monestir de Santa Clara*.

[56] On Santa Clara de Ciutadella, see Castro, 'Monasterios hispánicos de clarisas'.

archy, which relied on the Franciscan element for the design of the conquest policy and the territorial, urban, and ecclesiastical arrangement of the new settlements. At that point, the monasteries of Tarragona and Tortosa played the role of 'mother' communities in the foundation of new nunneries and the provision of the first groups of sisters for them. The convent of Tarragona was involved in the foundation of the Clarist house of Valencia, and in 1256, they destined several nuns to the foundation of Santa Clara de Palma de Mallorca. Some of the religious women of the monastery of Tortosa set out to found the convent of Xàtiva well into the fourteenth century.

Towards a Definition of a Foundational Model for the First Communities of Catalan Damianites: The Example of the First Community, Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona

The monographic study of the monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona, together with the possibility of consulting its magnificent archives — held by the Benedictine community of Sant Benet de Montserrat, heir to the late medieval Minoresses — enables us to draft a first foundational pattern that can be also perceived, at least in part, in several other communities within this first group of Iberian foundations from the thirteenth century.[57]

First, radical poverty would be one of the most characteristic traits of these religious expressions (it was, after all, characteristic of mendicant spirituality and, furthermore, the central pillar of Clare's charisma). This component was expressed in the terms used to name the new order: 'pauperes dominae, ordo pauperum dominarum, pauperes inclusae ordinis sancti Damiani'.[58] Second, the original communities or groups that, at a certain point in their trajectories, entered the Damianite-Clarist orbit shared a semi-religious profile (beguines, female oblates, female recluses, female penitents) in an 'extra-claustral' framework not ruled by any specific monastic order. They embodied the synthesis between the active (charity and welfare) and the contemplative. Based on the Clarist nunnery of Lleida, there was a group of women devoted to a contemplative life, that is, the *beateri* of Santa Isabel d'Hongria; in the case of Tarragona, Sanahuja suggests a possible foundation by penitent women who obtained

[57] Jornet-Benito, *Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona*.

[58] In 1237: 'filiabus pauperibus monialibus inclusis monasterii Barchinensis de ordine Sancti Damiani' (MSCB, Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 187). In 1315: 'monasterii dominarum inclusarum Sancti Anthonii, ordinis Sancte Clare' (MSCB. Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 2232).

the status of Poor Clares from the pope. As mentioned earlier, this model has already been established by Italian scholars for the Italian case, where many of the first Damianite houses also began as female associations with a beguine-penitent profile. The research for the regions of Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, and Umbria has made possible to adjust some of those previous community profiles that would later join the new Damianite order: a hospital in the case of Santa Maria de Siena, a hermitage in that of Lucca, and a group of female 'converts' or 'oblates' in that of Monteluce.[59]

In the case of Barcelona, a dynamic group of twelve women had enough economic resources and strength to ask for the help of the pontiff and accomplish their desire to settle as 'poor recluse nuns of the order of Saint Damian';[60] the pre-existing hospital of Sant Nicolau might have been related to the pious and charitable trajectories of those women, who would have been involved in charitable work. Benvenuti has also noted the presence of women around hospitals in the Italian case. They would have been the substratum from which Damianite communities were born.[61] The new community was located outside the city walls, in the outskirts of an area in full expansion, the *Ribera* quarter, which, in fact, would become one of the most populated and dynamic areas of the city; one of those *viles noves* (new villages) that escaped the old walls of the Roman Barcelona. The growth of the urban perimeter of Barcelona in the thirteenth century matches the arrival of the new ecclesiastical orders, all of them sharing a strong mendicant mark: the Dominicans (Santa Caterina) occupied the area of the *Mercadal*, another 'new village'; the Franciscans (Sant Nicolau) and the Mercedarians (Nostra Senyora de la Mercè) occupied locations between the *Carrer Ample* (Broad Street) and the sea before 1232 and 1242, respectively. The 'poor recluse nuns of the order of St Damian', would settle beyond the *Rec Comtal* water channel, at the opposite side of the beach, in the place through which the coastal route entered the city from Badalona.[62] They established their house next to the port's sandy area, the 'new village' that was becoming then, according to the geographer Francesc Carreras Candi, 'a

[59] Benvenuti, *'In castro poenitentiae'*. See also Pellegrini, 'Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth-Century Italy'.

[60] 'in quo sub regula et ordine pauperum monialum inclusarum Sancti Damiani ei desiderant famulari in fundo propio edificare cupian'. They are: Guillema de Polinyà and Berenguera d'Antic and 'decem sororum penitentem sociarum ipsarum'; MSCB, Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 179.

[61] Benvenuti, *La fortuna del movimento*, pp. 63–64.

[62] Vila and Casassas, *Barcelona i la seva rodalia al llarg del temps*.

barren place where the outcasts of fortune usually raised their shacks'.[63] It is plausible that the initial group of penitent women performed pious and charitable tasks in this marginal area, close to the poor, unfortunate, and needy.

That topographical remark points to another specific aspect of those early communities: the initial 'peripheral' or eremitic establishment that would eventually transfer to an urban location. However, as Ángela Muñoz notes in the case of Madrid, nunneries were usually assigned lesser locations, since female communities were not supposed to perform pastoral tasks.[64] García Oro notes in his approach to the Iberian Poor Clares that, after this 'peripheral presence', and over the three central decades of the thirteenth century, the communities would enter the urban orbit, led in particular by the papacy that conducted an extensive campaign of rapid settlement supported by sovereigns and, at least in part, by episcopal authorities.[65] For instance, the community of Pamplona had its first provisional eremitic location in a plot of land provided by an honourable citizen. Later, the nuns requested and obtained permission from the diocesan to build a monastery dedicated to Santa Engracia, also outside the walls of the city and close to the public road of Zandua.[66] The community of Santa Magdalena de Tarragona would also have started as a community of penitent women located outside the city, in the hermitage of Sainte Madeleine.[67] In the case of Barcelona, the foundation legend recounts how the two foundresses, who had reached the beach miraculously, received the chapel of St Anthony the Abbot as their first dwelling place.[68]

[63] Carreras Candi, *Geografia general de Catalunya*, I: *Barcelona*.

[64] Muñoz Fernández, 'Fundaciones conventuales franciscanas en el ámbito rural madrileño'.

[65] García Oro, 'Los orígenes de las clarisas'.

[66] Ruiz de Larrinaga, 'Las clarisas de Pamplona'.

[67] Sanahuja, *Historia de la Seráfica provincia de Cataluña*.

[68] This detail appears in the notes written about the saintly women and the foundational legend by Sister Dorotea Sarrovira between 1632 and 1637. She wrote down the stories that had remained quite alive in the oral memory of the community and the city of Barcelona. Antoni Domènech — who probably knew about it through the 'old memories of the monastery' — had already referred to this legend in his *Historia general de los santos y varones ilustres en santidad del Principado de Cataluña*. The legend took its final shape in Franciscan chronicles with Lucas Wadding and Antonio Cornejo. Dorotea's notes were recorded, together with several other documents, in the process of beatification and recognition of the cult *ab immemorabili* of the two saintly foundresses that was initiated before the curia of Barcelona in 1912. It seems that the process was never resumed, since it does not appear in the list of pending cases of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (I thank Father Gabriel Soler for this information). Barcelona, Arxiu Diocesà de Barcelona, *Causa de beatificació i confirmació del culte d'Agnès de*

The case of Barcelona also suggests another important element to bear in mind when drafting a possible foundational model: the presence of Agnès and Clara, the foundresses and, according to the legend, relatives and disciples of St Clare herself, who would hold a sort of charismatic authority, became the reference for the identity and the memory of the house, and would be worshipped as saints by both the community and other local people.[69] In that sense, it is interesting to ponder the role played by the presence of charismatic, 'saintly' women, related to local worship in the first thirteenth-century foundations — women who must be understood within the broader framework of the heterogeneous female religious movement, which entailed, as André Vauchez notes, a true 'feminization of medieval sainthood'.[70] The similarities between the Catalan territory (exemplified by the Damianite community of Barcelona) and the Italian case are again evident. Anna Benvenuti has remarked how sainthood became related to the figure of a woman connected with Franciscan or mendicant charisma within an urban environment. This kind of sainthood was not always officially sanctioned and mainly appeared outside the cloisters (*mulieres religiosae* or 'tertiary saints'), although she also mentions 'saintly Damianite abbesses', pioneers, and foundresses of the communities of Tuscany and Umbria.[71] Agnès, one of the leading characters of the foundational legend of the monastery of Barcelona, would belong to this group.

The constant element in this foundational overview of thirteenth-century Clarisses is the implication, at different levels, of the Catalan monarchy, perfectly exemplified in the monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona. The clear moral and economic support of the royal house to the mendicant cause must undoubtedly be taken into account in order to explain the success — meteoric success, in some cases — achieved by Franciscan houses in Catalan territory. As the chronological sequence has shown, foundations such as Valencia, Palma, and Ciutadella appear clearly related to the expansion project of the Catalan monarchy. With the support of the papacy, Catalan monarchs would be one of the cards played by the monastery of Sant Antoni de Barcelona.

Peranda i Clara de Janua 1912, 'Apuntes que se refieren a una declaración prestad', no. 37 bis. On the foundational legend and the role of the two saintly women, Agnès de Peranda and Clara de Janua or Porta, and the recognition of their sanctity, devotion and cult, see Jornet-Benito, *El monestir de Sant Antoni de Barcelona*, pp. 55–83.

[69] Jornet-Benito, 'Memoria y genealogía femeninas'.

[70] Vauchez, 'L'Ideal de saintité dans le mouvement féminin' and *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age*.

[71] Benvenuti, 'Una terra di sante e di città', p. 200.

The Catalan royal house acted as protector of the nunnery, endowing it with rights and privileges: lands and money to enable the urban and patrimonial settlement of the community and the construction of its main buildings or the upgrade of the original see. These donations guaranteed the subsistence of the community at the most basic level (such as the right to use water from the *Rec Comtal* channel or the privilege to run ovens). The royal house was also present during the first decade of the monastery through the devotional and spiritual link that some of its members established with the nunnery. In particular, in 1240, Gregory IX granted Queen Violant of Hungary and her daughters permission to enter the premises three times a year for devotional reasons.[72]

According to Jill Webster, the foundational dynamics of that first group of establishments, especially those settled before 1250, involved an important factor: the previous presence of Friars Minor, who would have undertaken tasks of dissemination of the new evangelical ideal, thus paving the way for the new community. In the case of Barcelona, if that previous function of the Friars Minor regarding the group of penitent women is to be considered at an individual level, their concrete and direct contribution as an order to bring forth the foundation of the monastery is darker and poorly documented. This fact could be explained by the phase of uncertainty that both the new order and the insertion of women were still going through. The delicate relationship between those women, the Friars Minor, and their role as confessors, chaplains, and preachers, also an issue, would slowly become defined and institutionalized. María del Mar Graña states, for the Andalusian area, the ambiguous role played by the Friars Minor in the foundational dynamics of the first Clarisses: they either assumed a position as determined promoters or, on the contrary, impeded their establishment, showed certain indifference, or even total inhibition. She also notes that the friars' influence did not leave any documentary trace, and that even if there is a topographic link between the monasteries of friars and nuns, this correspondence is not so much based on the interests of the first but on other dynamics related to the policy of *Reconquista* of the Castilian monarchy, the most important defender and promoter of the Andalusian Clarisses.[73] In the case of some Italian communities, Anna Benvenuti, in turn, speaks of the difference between the 'semi-official nature' (this is the expression used by the author) of the presence of a friar among other mediators in the foundation of the Florentine monastery of Santa Maria de Monticelli (1218), and the more

[72] MSCB, Col·lecció de pergamins, no. 254.

[73] Graña Cid, 'Las primeras clarisas andaluzas'.

formal stance of the Friars Minor in the document of creation of other communities, such as that of San Salvatore di Colpersito (1224–25).[74]

In any case, the scarce official presence of the sibling community of Friars Minor in the foundational dynamics of the community of Barcelona would actually confirm the initial hypothesis: it is necessary to read and interpret the birth of the first Clarist communities on the basis of new research parameters that account for the whole history and evolution of female spirituality in the thirteenth century, instead of only focusing on its relationship with the first order, that is, exclusively as a 'second order'.[75] Maria Pia Alberzoni has approached the subject from another perspective: the essential role of the papacy, in particular under the rule of Ugolino, the future Pope Gregory IX, in the shaping of the *ordo Sancti Damiani* (the future order of St Clare, especially after 1263). The new order enabled the inclusion, within a more formalized and regular framework, of a whole variety of female religious groups, with informal profiles and present all over Europe, the viability and future of which worried ecclesiastical authorities.[76] In the case of Barcelona, the direct implication of the papacy is well documented: the group of *sorores penitentium* addressed the pope, and he promoted the new community through indulgences for those who gave alms to the nunnery and shaped its essential juridical profile (that is, observance of the Rule and papal dispensations).

In conclusion, despite the lack of monographic studies on thirteenth-century Clarist houses, the model described for the first community founded in Catalan territory, the nunnery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona, is only partially valid: the initial group of women with a beguine or penitent profile, usually in an eremitic location outside the city walls, can also be found in the communities of Lleida and Tarragona (1240s), which were also under papal protection. However, according to the available data, other foundations of the second half of the century show foundational dynamics that emphasize the role and the sponsorship of women of the Catalan royal house (Violant of Hungary in the case of Lleida, and Maria of Cyprus, wife of Jaume II, in the monastery of Santa Clara de Tortosa) and noblewomen (the Greek princess Làscaris, widow of the count of Pallars, in the community of Montblanc, or Lady Dolça de Pau in Castelló d'Empúries).

[74] Benvenuti, 'L'insediamento francescano a Firenze: le origini'.

[75] Pecorini Cignoni, 'Francescanesimo al femminile'.

[76] Alberzoni, 'Chiara e San Damiano tra Ordine minoritico e chiesa romana'.

The communities of the Principality of Catalonia and the new Clarist houses founded in the newly conquered territories of the Crown of Aragon — which followed the itinerary of the Catalan conquest and expansion (Valencia, Palma de Mallorca, and Ciutadella) — defined a foundational network. The first node was the origin of the groups of nuns who made connections throughout the territory with the foundation of new nunneries: from Barcelona to Castelló d'Empúries in the thirteenth century; to Vilafranca del Penedès, and back again to Barcelona and Santa Maria de Pedralbes in the fourteenth century; from Tarragona to Valencia and Palma in the thirteenth century; from Tortosa to Xàtiva in the fourteenth. Thus, we can understand the almost 'genealogical necessity' of the sisters of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona to pass on the legend that recounted how the nunnery had been founded by two disciples and relatives of St Clare who had come from Italy in a boat without oars or sails, following the wishes of the saintly woman. A legend that recreated the true links that existed among a group of Catalan beguines or penitents, who became acquainted, during a pilgrimage or through the presence of some Italian women in Barcelona, with the new statute of the poor recluse nuns of the order of St Damian.

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'For they wanted us to serve them': Female Monasticism in Medieval Transylvania

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In 1406, Innocent VII issued a letter to the archbishop of Esztergom. According to the papal bull, Elizabeth, Margaret, another Elizabeth, Gertrud, and Catherine — Cistercian nuns in the monastery from Braşov (Kronstadt, Brassó) — had complained about the difficulties they had to face and appealed to the papal curia for a solution. Because they wished to embrace religious life, from their own income and with the help of other pious people, these women built a house next to the chapel of St Catherine, entered into the Cistercian Order, and lived in that house under the supervision of the abbot of a nearby Cistercian monastery. After a while, however, the abbot, some of the Cistercian monks, and the parish priest of the town had started to offend them. The women were forced to leave the house they had built, some of their belongings were confiscated by their persecutors, and the abbot even took away the Order's habit from them. All of this happened because they did not want to cook for the monks or take care of their gardens; as the letter describes, they did not want to do such work appropriate only for those engaged in domestic service. Because they did not want to live in apostasy, they took the habit of the Benedictine nuns. A solution was found to their complaint, as a papal envoy

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was sent to settle the affair. The women were received back into the Cistercian Order and the abbot from the nearby monastery of Cârța (Kercz) was obliged to appoint a monk to take care of them 'in spiritualibus et in temporalibus'. Finally, the pope confirmed the restoration of their status, and the women returned to their house and to their lives within the Cistercian Order.[1]

Why would this example be relevant for an analysis devoted to female monasticism in medieval Transylvania? On the one hand, it illustrates the tensions between women wishing to assume a religious role and the clergy under whose supervision they would have to fulfil that role. The notorious reluctance of the First Order regarding the provision of material and spiritual assistance for the female religious associated with their Order would partly explain the fate of the Cistercian nuns from Braşov.[2] On the other hand, this example is also relevant because it reveals the efforts made by female religious within an urban environment, as their way of life was not only opposed by the Cistercian monks, but also by the ecclesiastical elite of the town, represented by the parish priest. In what follows, therefore, I will discuss female monasticism in medieval Transylvania at the intersection between particular, local contexts and the more general policy that religious orders designed in order to integrate women into the religious life.

Before embarking on this, however, it should be mentioned that the surviving Transylvanian source material seriously limits the extent to which one can offer a detailed analysis of this subject. The spread of evangelical ideas greatly disturbed religious life in Transylvania. For example, in the year 1556 the authorities decided that all religious orders must be expelled from this region and their properties confiscated. As a result, the libraries and archives of monasteries and convents suffered severe losses, and in the churches of the religious orders, altarpieces were destroyed and murals were whitewashed. The houses of female communities were also seriously affected, the majority of the buildings being transformed to serve diverse purposes, such as schools or even

[1] *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, ed. by Mályusz, I, 576–77, doc. 4698.

[2] For example, in 1228 the General Chapter prohibited the Friars Preachers to undertake responsibilities regarding the female houses affiliated with them because it prevented the friars from accomplishing their ministry; Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, pp. 263–65. Further decisions were formulated by the Dominican governing body which aimed at severely limiting the friars' interaction with the nuns: thus, in 1321 the General Chapter asked the priors to nominate those who would guide the nuns, specifying that this could also be very well accomplished by the secular clergy, whilst in 1462 it was agreed that only old priests could visit the Dominican nunneries. On this, see Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, pp. 387–97.

warehouses.[3] Thus, one is forced to rely on a rather limited number of textual sources to attempt to reconstruct the fate of female monastic life according to the information they provide.

To begin, the main characteristic features of medieval Transylvania should be reviewed. The region, located on the margins of Latin Christendom, was part of the Hungarian kingdom, and it was inhabited by ethnically diverse groups, such as Germans, Hungarians, Sezeklers, and Romanians. The population's religious affiliation with either the Western or the Eastern Church further contributed to the cultural diversity that prevailed in the area. Christianization was a belated process as compared with other parts of Latin Christendom, the Transylvanian diocese and the network of the parish churches being established only after the year 1000.[4]

This ecclesiastical network was completed by traditional religious orders, such as the Benedictines and the Premonstratensians, who are attested in the course of the thirteenth century. By royal initiative, a Benedictine abbey was founded in Cluj-Mănăştur (Kolozsmonostor, Abtsdorf) and a Cistercian one in Cârța.[5] Despite having a short-lived existence, two female monasteries of the Premonstratensian Order were recorded by the surviving sources in the first half of the thirteenth century, whereas a house of the Benedictine Order had also been functioning in the episcopal town of Alba-Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Weissenburg).[6] Whilst our knowledge of the female monasteries is severely limited by the sources that survive, we can still see that the Premonstratensian houses were most likely founded as part of the formation of the towns of Sibiu (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben) and Braşov, and the related institutionalization of the Christian religion there.[7]

Unlike the situation in other parts of Latin Christendom, medieval Transylvania was predominantly characterized by a limited presence of the traditional

[3] Rusu and others, *Dicționarul mănăstirilor*, pp. 47–49, 54–55, 67–69, 80–82, 105–08, 119–20, 169–70, 172–75, 186–87, 198, 232, 234–37, 242–44, 251, 260–62, 266–67, 280–81.

[4] Kristó, 'The Bishoprics of Saint Stephen, King of Hungary'. The parochial network can be reconstructed by using the tithe registers compiled at the beginning of the fourteenth century and published by Beke, 'Erdélyi egyházmegye képe a XIV. század elején'.

[5] Rusu and others, *Dicționarul mănăstirilor*, pp. 96–99 and 114–18.

[6] Binder, 'Unele probleme referitoare la prima mențiune documentară a Braşovului', pp. 126–29; Huttmann and Prox, 'Corona-Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Kronstadt', p. 8; and Romhányi, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon*, p. 29.

[7] For the role played by the Premonstratensian Order in the Christianization of central and eastern Europe, see *Netzwerk des Glaubens*.

religious orders, the example of the female monasteries of the Benedictines and Cistercians accurately demonstrating this pattern. However, things were different concerning the female branches of the mendicant orders. The success of these new religious orders, particularly the Dominicans and Franciscans, has long been acknowledged in existing research. This situation has been given several explanations. There was, on the one hand, the proximity of non-Christian groups, such as the Cumans and Tatars, which stimulated the mendicant apostolate. On the other hand, another explanation derives from the largely monoparochial profile of the majority of Transylvanian towns, which for most of the Middle Ages had only single parish churches.[8]

Highly illustrative in this regard are the most important towns of the region, such as Sibiu, Braşov, Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg), and Bistriţa (Bistriz, Beszterce), which became free royal towns in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This was a privileged status which allowed the citizens not only to elect the urban magistracy but also the parish priest. Furthermore, given the fact that these towns were ethnically homogenous, being inhabited predominantly by a German population, it has been considered that the functioning of a single parish church which gradually became supervised by the city council enforced the cohesion of these urban communities.[9]

At the same time, it must be mentioned that urbanization was a belated process in this region as compared to other territories of Western Europe, a process which in fact appealed to the mendicant ministry keen to become engaged in the evangelization of the urban population.[10] As a result, the first convents founded by the Dominicans and Franciscans were located in the major urban centres of Sibiu, Braşov, Cluj, and Bistriţa, where the friars had already managed to establish their houses in the course of the thirteenth century. The greatest part of the Dominican priories was founded before the second half of the

[8] Dobre, 'The Mendicants' Mission in an Orthodox Land', pp. 226–34. The functioning of the parish churches in Transylvanian towns is discussed by de Cevins, *L'Église dans les villes hongroises*, esp. pp. 38–44 and pp. 157–65.

[9] Several decisions taken by the city councils of Sibiu and Bistriţa, such as those from 1432, 1457, and 1504, established the type of divine services to be celebrated in the parish churches of these towns and regulated the administration of pious donations made to these institutions; see Gündisch, 'Hermmanstädter Messestiftungen im 15. Jahrhundert', and Teutsch, *Geschichte der evangelische Kirche in Siebenbürgen*, I, 149–51.

[10] Le Goff, 'Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale'. Fügedi, 'Koldulórendek és városfejlődés Magyarországon', has discussed the extent to which the assumptions made by Le Goff regarding the relationship between the mendicant orders and urbanization are confirmed by the settlement and development of these religious orders in the kingdom of Hungary.

fourteenth century, while those belonging to the Friars Minor were established at an accelerated rate in the course of the fifteenth century, particularly after the creation of the Observant branch of the Friars Minor.[11]

The female houses belonging to the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor were a belated presence in Transylvania, the Dominican nunneries being attested only from the second half of the fifteenth century. There is no doubt that these foundations can be connected with the reformation of the most important Dominican priories through the adoption of Observant ideals.[12] As the chronology testifies, all the houses of the Dominican Second Order from Cluj, Sighişoara (Schässburg, Segesvár), Bistriţa, Braşov, and Sibiu were established after the reformation of the corresponding male convents.[13] This would suggest that the well-known rule of founding a female house only when a male convent was already in place was applied to Transylvania in as much as the priories were adopting the Observant ideals.[14]

The case of the Franciscan female houses presents some marked differences to the Dominican ones. The existence of Poor Clare nunneries is confirmed by the surviving sources for the town of Cluj, but the functioning of those from Braşov is still a matter of debate within current scholarship.[15] Yet, the Observant Franciscans were very successful in integrating women through

[11] Karácsonyi, *Szent Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig*, pp. 310–56.

[12] In the fifth decade of the fifteenth century, Jacob Riecher was sent to Transylvania by the Holy See in order to reform the Dominican houses. As part of his missionary activities, the convents of Sibiu, Cluj, Braşov, and Bistriţa were reformed; Harsányi, *A Domonkosrend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt*, pp. 35–39.

[13] The Dominican nunnery of Cluj was first mentioned in 1450, that of Bistriţa in 1476, that of Sighişoara in the last decade of the fifteenth century, and those of Braşov and Sibiu in 1502; Iványi, 'Geschichte des Dominikanerordens', pp. 25, 30, 37.

[14] Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, pp. 378–88. The most interesting case is that of Sibiu, where the Dominican priory founded in the course of the thirteenth century was located outside the town's fortifications and as a result was severely damaged in the first half of the fifteenth century due to the Ottoman attacks. The friars tried for almost three decades to obtain a site inside the city walls, but this happened only in 1474. The successful relocation of the priory has been connected to the adoption of Observant ideals. Significantly enough, soon afterwards, the Dominican nunnery of St Mary Magdalene was founded in Sibiu; see Salontai, *Mănăstiri dominicane din Transilvania*, pp. 216–18.

[15] Karácsonyi, *Szent Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711–ig*, II, 19, argues that in Braşov there was only a house of the Third Order and not a Poor Clare nunnery. However, Rusu and others, *Dicţionarul mănăstirilor*, pp. 79–80, claim that in Braşov there was a Poor Clare nunnery attested in 1486 and a tertiary house attested in 1534.

the network of the houses belonging to the Third Order. To this success undoubtedly contributed the missions undertaken in this region by noteworthy Observant Franciscans, particularly John of Capistran.[16] As a result, the number of houses of the Third Order significantly outnumbered those of the Poor Clare nunneries, a situation well reflected by the Transylvanian experience, where no less than ten such establishments are mentioned in the surviving sources, predominantly in the first half of the sixteenth century.[17] One should also take into account that by the late Middle Ages, the Third Order became in many respects similar to a traditional monastic order and with a predominantly female membership. These features are largely reflected by the tertiaries from the kingdom of Hungary, where, as it has been observed, the Third Order gathered exclusively women who led an enclosed, monastic way of life.[18]

Let me return now to the more general context within which Transylvanian female monasticism was shaped. It has been discussed above that mendicant success was prompted by the feeble parochial network and was reflected by the large number of houses the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor managed to establish. The priories and the female communities affiliated with the friars surpassed in each locality the number of parish churches, a situation which in fact opened up possibilities for a better integration of lay religious life.[19] To be sure, however, the Transylvanian parish churches seriously competed with the mendicants, and the parochial clergy did not hesitate to appeal to the Holy See in order to protect their pre-eminence over the cure of souls. It is surely not coincidental that such conflicts recorded by our sources concern the most important towns and were formulated with regard to the administration of confession and burials by the friars.[20]

[16] Andrić, *The Miracles of St John Capistran*, pp. 16–25. On John of Capistran's contribution to the emergence and official approval of the Third Order Regular, see Matanić, 'Il "Defensorium Tertii Ordinis Beati Francisci" di San Giovanni da Capestrano', pp. 45–57.

[17] De Cevins, *L'Église dans les villes hongroises*, pp. 304–07, has explained the growth in the number of the houses of the Third Order by both the poor representation of Poor Clare nunneries and the late urbanization of the region which prompted the organization of the tertiaries. Houses of the Third Order were attested in the following Transylvanian localities: Albeşti (1535), Bistriţa (1531), Braşov (1534), Cluj (1522), Coşeiu (1507), Mediaş (1525), Orăştie (1334), Suseni (1535), Tirgu Mureş (1503), and Teiuş (1520). See Rusu and others, *Dicţionarul mănăstirilor*.

[18] Pásztor, 'Per la storia dell'esperienza penitenziale francescana in Ungheria nel medioevo', p. 121; Kollányi, 'Magyar ferencrendiek', p. 415.

[19] De Cevins, *L'Église dans les villes hongroises*, p. 328

[20] In 1460 for several months members of the Dominican confraternity from Cluj protested against their parish priest, who prevented burials by Friars Preachers, whereas the conflicts

When seeing this competition from a broader perspective, it should be mentioned that the friars' apostolate did not only resemble the activity of the parish church in what concerns pastoral care.[21] The Transylvanian examples accurately prove that the mendicant ministry intensified precisely when lay religious life became better integrated with the parochial network through the functioning of devotional fellowships and the religious goals the guilds pursued in the parish churches. Evidence for such associations dates predominantly from the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth, at the time when the majority of confraternities organized by the friars was also attested.[22] But, as was previously discussed, this was precisely the time when the majority of the houses of the Second Order and Third Order were founded in Transylvania. It can be considered, therefore, that the adoption of the Observant ideals and the growing competition with the parish must have encouraged the friars to institutionalize women's religious life.

But who were those who were becoming nuns or tertiaries? There are not many instances recorded by our sources which reveal such choices, but based on the available information it can be suggested that recruitment in Dominican nunneries was particularly targeted at young, unmarried women, whereas that of the tertiaries consisted almost exclusively of widows. For example, in the year 1485 a Transylvanian nobleman, Thomas Farkas from Herina, lavishly endowed the Dominican nunnery of Bistrița, a pious gesture which was common at that time in the region.[23] Interestingly enough, two decades later, his daughter Catherine is among the nuns mentioned by her father in his deathbed bequest.[24]

between the mendicants and the parochial clergy in Bistrița were solved by papal mediation: see Gross, *Confreriile medievale în Transilvania*, pp. 170–80, and *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, I, 569, doc. 1465; p. 570, doc. 1466; and p. 571, doc. 1470; *Urkundenbuch*, ed. by Zimmermann and others, VI, 84, docs 3225 and 3226; pp. 517–18, doc. 568.

[21] Mertens, 'Clero secolare e cura d'anima nella città del tardo medioevo', pp. 262–63.

[22] Several confraternities, such as those of Corpus Christi, the Virgin Mary, St Catherine, and St Mary Magdalene, were attested in the parish churches of Cluj, Sibiu, Braşov, and Bistrița, particularly from the fifteenth century onwards. Based on the guild statutes drafted in the second half of the fifteenth century, the guilds of the tailors, tanners, blacksmiths, weavers, furriers maintained altars in the parish churches of Cluj and Braşov and became engaged in the liturgical services performed there. This was precisely the time when the functioning of the fellowships organized with the Dominicans of Cluj, Sighişoara, and Bistrița were also recorded; Gross, *Confreriile medievale în Transilvania*, pp. 170–80 and 245–69.

[23] Lupescu Makó, '*Item lego*...: Gifts for the Soul in Late Medieval Transylvania'; *Urkundenbuch*, ed. by Zimmermann and others, VII, 388, doc. 4592.

[24] *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, I, 225, doc. 3272.

It cannot be ascertained whether his daughter was already affiliated with the Second Order at the time of this donation; if this were the case, he might have been aiming to provide for her support. Yet, as we can see from a last will issued in 1520, it seems that youth was indeed a prerequisite for those wishing to join the Dominican Second Order.

The document I have alluded to above was issued by Dorothy, widow of Martin Cruez from Braşov, on behalf of the Dominican friars from Sighişoara. According to the testamentary clauses drawn up by this widow, she provided the friars with sufficient funds to support a chapel being built in their church and dedicated to five saints: the Virgin Mary, St Dominic, St Francis, St Rupert, and St Ulrich.[25] As the association of the founders of the two most important mendicant orders is peculiar in the titular dedication of this establishment founded with the Friars Preachers, one wonders what might have motivated Dorothy when making this selection. As seen in the document, she wished to become a Dominican nun but was unable to because of her widowhood. Since Dorothy wanted to prevent worldly life from having a negative effect on her chances of salvation, and since the prospect of accomplishing her goal could not be achieved by becoming a member of the Dominican Second Order, she chose to be a penitent of St Francis instead.

It is therefore her adjustment to the available institutional options which made Dorothy pair, in the patronal dedication of the chapel she founded, two saints which would otherwise be unlikely to appear side by side. The testament of 1520 is also important because it gives further weight to the idea that in late medieval Transylvania those wishing to be affiliated with the Friars Preachers must indeed be young and unmarried women. In fact, the examples that have been analysed have not only the merit of clarifying issues concerning recruitment in the Dominican Second Order, but also of highlighting that this path was, to be sure, a desirable choice for female religious.[26]

As for those wishing to pursue their devotional goals with the Franciscans, either as Poor Clare nuns or tertiaries, in the light of the surviving sources it seems that not youth but adulthood was a requirement to be met. When in 1531, Magdalene, a Franciscan tertiary from Cluj, drafted her testament she was already a widow, as also were those elected as executors of her testamentary

[25] Fabritius, 'Zwei Funde in der ehemaligen Dominikanerkirche zu Schässburg', pp. 16–17, doc. XX.

[26] At Bistriţa the master general of the Order of the Friars Preachers had to limit the enrollments into the Second Order in 1506 to twenty-two members; Iványi, 'Geschichte des Dominikanerordens', p. 36.

clauses, who were mentioned as belonging to the Third Order.[27] This status is further proven by another Dorothy, who, being of old age and gravely ill, lived as a tertiary in Tg. Mures.[28] Albeit in an indirect manner, the vulnerable condition of becoming affiliated with the Third Order is revealed by a decision taken at the provincial chapter of the Franciscans held in Oradea in 1542. There, it was decided that as a result of a request reiterated several times by the parish priest, the city council, and the citizens of the town of Mediaş, a young girl was accepted to join the sisters of St Francis.[29]

Based on this information it can be argued that not only adulthood but also a certain social standing eased integration with the Friars Minor. This was, for example, the case with a married woman who decided together with her husband that she would become a nun of the Poor Clares, whereas he would become a Franciscan friar.[30] The two agreed to leave all their valuables to their relatives who would then raise their son, a decision which might indeed be considered as proof of their attachment to the way of life to be followed alongside the friars and nuns. Whilst this example speaks about adulthood, prosperity, and perhaps selfishness, another case reveals that sometimes those in need might find with the Second Order a suitable place to live. Because of her serious illness, a certain Anne sold her property and became affiliated with the religious women from the Order of St Francis in Cluj.[31]

To be sure, these individual cases do not allow us to define definite patterns according to which recruitment to the Second and Third Order was made. They create rather a composite picture which displays, in the case of the Dominican nuns, youth and wealth, the latter feature being coupled in the case of the Franciscan Second and Third Order with widowhood and, more generally speaking, with social vulnerability. But what was the life that these women, as well as dozens of others whose names and motivations remained unknown to us, led in their houses? What were the exigencies they had to deal with in order to attain perfection of their devotional endeavours, once they passed the formal requirements?

[27] *Monumenta Ecclesiastica tempora innovatae*, ed. by Bunyitay, Rapaics, and Karácsonyi, 1: *1520–1529*, pp. 178–81, doc. 159.

[28] *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, 1, 225–26, doc. 3273.

[29] *Monumenta Ecclesiastica tempora innovatae*, ed. by Bunyitay, Rapaics, and Karácsonyi, 1, 499

[30] *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, 1, 391, doc. 3846.

[31] *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, 1, 648, doc. 4808.

First of all, it should be said that with the implementation of Observant ideals in the Transylvanian male convents and the foundation of the Dominican nunneries in its aftermath, the rules of strict enclosure, asceticism, and a penitential way of life were reinforced.[32] The best illustration of this policy is reflected by the *patrocinia* of the Dominican nunneries of Cluj and Sibiu. That great emphasis was indeed being laid on the revival of asceticism in the way of life that the Observant Dominicans sought to impose is demonstrated by the choice of hermit saints for the convents of Cluj. Reformed in the mid-fifteenth century, the priory, initially dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was given a second patron, St Anthony. By selecting the First Hermit to protect the friary of Cluj, the Observant Dominicans ingeniously and unambiguously reflected in titular dedication the restoration of an ideal religious life.

At the same time, another hermit, St Egidius, was chosen as patron of the Dominican nunnery of the town. Renowned for his asceticism and for the isolation and solitude in which he lived, Egidius also became the protector of those truly repenting their sins through confession. It was specifically for this latter quality that Egidius became a specialized protector within the groups of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. At the same time, the ideal of sainthood represented by Egidius was also an embodiment of what a Dominican nun must achieve, as she had to live cloistered, in isolation, and do penance. Visual representations of St Egidius, dressed in monastic habit and depicted as a Holy Helper, as well as those surviving from an altarpiece most likely belonging to the Dominican church of Sighişoara, testify to the adoption of this cult by the Observant Dominicans because it fitted well with the ideals they strove to implement in the female houses of their Order.[33]

Of similar importance in this regard is the titular dedication of another Dominican nunnery, that of Sibiu, which was under the patronage of Mary Magdalene. Adopted and assiduously propagated by the mendicant friars, the saint par excellence of the penitents, Mary Magdalene became emblematic for women in the monastic life, the example of Sibiu being thus an integral part of numerous similar European cases.[34] Connection to the reform movement is also

[32] Huffmann, 'Inside and Outside the Convent Walls'.

[33] Firea, 'Polipticul din Sighişoara — un retablu dominican?'; Nagy Sarkadi, 'Szent Mártonnak szentelt szárnyasoltár Segesvárról'; Richter and Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*, pp. 165–69; Vătăşianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Ţările Române*, I, 795–97.

[34] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, see esp. Part I, 'The Mendicant Magdalen', pp. 44–227. The Dominican adoption of the cult of Mary Magdalene is also illustrated by the foundations which she was called to patronize. For example, in the diocese of Spoleto over the

detectable, as the nunnery of Mary Magdalene was established at the very end of the fifteenth century and was a foundation which must have occurred in the aftermath of the adoption of the Observant ideals by the Dominican priory.[35]

Therefore, the understanding of local circumstances, derived from the history of the Dominican Order in Transylvania, offers insights into the way of life led by women affiliated with the Dominican Second Order. Enclosure and penitence were thought to pave the way towards the achievement of Christian perfection, and it can be argued that this has indeed become a hallmark of the nuns' piety. According to surviving testamentary clauses, the Dominican nuns were employed in the economy of salvation by being commissioned to carry out commemorative prayers.[36] From the last will issued by Magdalene, the Franciscan tertiary from Cluj mentioned above, it can be argued that the Dominicans of the town specialized in mediating Marian protection through their prayers.[37] Their engagement in liturgical practices seems to have been of constant concern, as the charter that informs us about the functioning of the Dominican nunnery in Cluj specified that the prioress sold some liturgical books which were of no more use to her congregation.[38] As such, when Magdalene asked several decades later that the sisters of the Friars Preachers would have to chant for her the *Salve Regina* antiphon, it can be suggested that the life they pursued within the walls of their nunnery had transformed them into valuable intercessory vehicles.

Magdalene's example, the *confratrissa* of the Observant Franciscans from Cluj, also deserves to be examined in some detail, and not only from the point of view of the religious options she devised according to the Dominican Order, or the parish church that was, as discussed above, lavishly endowed in her testament. In fact, a thorough reading of this document could help us get a more nuanced understanding of the religious life and devotional motivations of the women associated with the Friars Minor. Magdalene belonged to the urban

course of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, not even the Virgin Mary acquired so many *patrocinia* of Dominican houses of the Second Order as Mary Magdalene, whereas in Germany the entire Order of the Penitents of St Mary Magdalene, consisting of more than forty houses, was affiliated in 1287 with the Friars Preachers. See Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, p. 378.

[35] Salontai, *Mănăstiri dominicane din Transilvania*, p. 225.

[36] *Urkundenbuch*, ed. by Zimmermann and others, VII, 388, doc. 4592.

[37] *Monumenta Ecclesiastica tempora innovatae*, ed. by Bunyitay, Rapaics, and Karácsonyi, I, 180, doc. 159.

[38] *A Kolozsmonostori Konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, ed. by Jakó, I, 402, doc. 828.

world of craftsmen, being the widow of one of the masons who most likely worked on the construction of the Observant Franciscan church in Cluj.[39] Her testament details at length her concerns for her soul, which is entrusted first of all to the prayers of the Franciscan friars with whom she wanted to be buried, and then to the Dominican friars, the Dominican nuns, and the parish clergy.

What it is striking, however, is the amount of valuables, money, and property, including her house, furniture, dishware, silver objects, and clothing that she bequeathed. There are no less than fifteen such clauses which carefully specify how these goods were to be used: for which altars and chapels, as well as for Dominican and Franciscan friars, nuns and tertiaries, and also the poor. One is given the impression that Magdalene acted as a housewife who, whilst leaving behind her former way of life, was diligently planning her future one. Among the fifteen regulations of her last will that were meant to provide for liturgical vestments, altar cloths, and restoration or decoration of altarpieces, ten concerned the Observant Franciscan church and within it the chapel used by the tertiaries.[40] Thus, Magdalene disposed of her wealth and domestic comfort by transforming it and adapting it to the sacred space where she would live a new, different life as tertiary.

The abandonment of worldly life seems to have been rather a process of converting it to the requirements of the Third Order as suggested by the analysis of Magdalene's last will. When investigating the Third Order regulations drafted in the third decade of the sixteenth century by the Observant Franciscans, to be followed by the pious women, this idea seems to emerge even more clearly. Whilst the tertiaries lived a common life in a house usually placed near a male convent, measures were taken to limit their interaction with those from the outside. They were allowed to beg only from their closest relatives and not from strangers, and when going to the church there had to be at least two of them, whereas conversation with laypeople could happen only after permission was granted by their superior, the so-called *prelata*.[41]

This gradual detachment from the world was accompanied by obedience to the exigencies of a religious behaviour, which consisted of daily praying one hundred Pater Nosters in the memory of Christ's suffering and one hundred Ave Marias in veneration of the Virgin. Devotion to Christ was further

[39] Entz and Kovács, *A Kolozsvári Farkas utcai templom címerei*, pp. 9–11.

[40] *Monumenta Ecclesiastica tempora innovatae*, ed. by Bunyitay, Rapaics, and Karácsonyi, I, 178–81, doc. 159.

[41] Kollányi, 'Magyar ferencrendiek', pp. 912–14.

endorsed by requiring each tertiary to flagellate herself every Friday and to wear *cilicium*. Focus on and development of personal piety is further revealed by the daily recitation of prayers to the Virgin Mary and St Francis.[42]

Self-denial and repentance thus shaped the life of these religious women. This is also reflected by the so-called codex *Teleki*, which not only enumerated the regulations of the Third Order but also explained them.[43] This codex was compiled by a Franciscan friar for the use of his sister who was a beguine in the house of Tg. Mureş (Marosvásárhely, Neumarkt). Interestingly enough, this work seems to have been aiming at the religious education of the tertiaries. The regulations were but one part of it. Another part of equal interest and importance was represented by the legends it contained. Among them, there was an extant version of a Franciscan legend of St Anne.[44] It can be argued that its inclusion was not by chance. The Virgin's mother became a popular saintly figure at the end of the Middle Ages, particularly among the urban population; women from towns easily identified in Anne how reconciliation of wealth and involvement in family life with the exigencies of Christian perfection could be achieved.[45] Therefore, as one could learn from *confratrissa* Magdalene, leaving behind a certain way of life and attempting to accommodate oneself in the requirements of the life of the Third Order seems to have indeed been dealt with by the Franciscan friars, and solutions to this adjustment were ingeniously devised.

At this point it might be useful to return to those Cistercian nuns whose example was discussed at the beginning of this analysis. The functioning of the female monastery of the Cistercian Order in Braşov seems to have continued without difficulties until 1474, when King Mathias decided to dissolve the Cistercian monastery at Cârţa. The king then decided that the female community from Braşov would be placed under the spiritual guidance of a chaplain who would be appointed by the city council of Sibiu.[46] However, it seems that the councillors did not take seriously this responsibility, as a few years later the magistracy of Braşov applied to the king himself, complaining about the fact that no chaplain had been sent to serve in the chapel of St Catherine, which as a result was in very poor condition.[47]

[42] Kollányi, 'Magyar ferencrendiek', p. 915.

[43] *Régi magyar codexek és nyomtatványok*, ed. by Volf, XII, 400–03.

[44] Horváth, *A magyar irodalmi műveltség kezdetei*, pp. 202–18.

[45] Sheingorn, 'Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History'.

[46] *Urkundenbuch*, ed. by Zimmermann and others, VII, 17–19, doc. 4005.

[47] *Urkundenbuch*, ed. by Zimmermann and others, VII, 128, doc. 4169.

It is unclear what happened in the end to the Cistercian nuns of Braşov who were grouped around the chapel of the virgin martyr Catherine. The surviving tax registers of the town inform us in 1480 and again in 1490 that near this chapel, in the *Katharinenhof*, lived nineteen women who belonged to the category of the poor inhabitants of the town, although not to that of the extremely poor. It has been argued that they embraced the way of life of the beguines, leading a life in common and providing for themselves, since they were mentioned as weavers, wax makers, and one of them even as *Schreiberin*.[48] The complicated situation of female religious in this town with regard to their institutional affiliation thus complements our understanding of the local contexts which decisively shaped the religious life 'of the other half of Christendom'.

Transylvanian women living a monastic life in the late Middle Ages thus had several choices they could opt for when deciding to join a religious order. On the one hand, the examples investigated here suggest that affiliation with the Cistercian and Dominican Order was available to well-to-do women, most likely those who were young and unmarried. On the other, association with the Franciscans, particularly with the Third Order that the Observants supervised, appears to have been favoured by women who found themselves in a vulnerable condition because of their widowhood, old age, or even illness. Whilst the surviving source material is neither generous nor does it take into account all female communities which have been attested in medieval Transylvania, it can nonetheless be observed that female monasticism was primarily linked with towns and articulated in direct connection with the specificities of urban religious life.

[48] Philippi, 'Die Unterschichten der Siebenbürgischen Stadt Braşov (Kronstadt)', pp. 671–73.

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An Archaeological Perspective on Female Monasticism in the Middle Ages in Ireland

Tracy Collins

Concepts of monasticism or 'getting closer to God' first developed in the East, which made isolated, physically enclosed spaces sacred through prayer and contemplation.[1] Two complementary strands of monasticism developed in this region: eremitism, a deliberately solitary life led by hermits; and coenobitism, or a communal way of life.[2] While there were some differences in how women were perceived within the nascent monastic tradition, they were accommodated from its origins. For example, Gregory of Nyssa created an ascetic community for his sister Macrina. By entering such a community, she was considered to have 'surpassed' her gender.[3] This perceived transcendence of gender meant that male and female could mix together without sexual impropriety. By the late third to early fourth centuries, the Nile delta and Asia Minor were the location of several mixed monastic communities.

Pachomius was instrumental in the development of coenobitic or community monasticism.[4] However, Pachomius did have 'proximity anxiety' about mix-

[1] McNamara, 'Monasticism and Nuns'.

[2] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, pp. 1–41; Harmless, 'Monasticism'.

[3] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 43.

[4] McNamara, 'Monasticism and Nuns', pp. 580–82.

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ing male and female, so he did not establish mixed communities.[5] In Alexandria, a number of wealthy women joined together and vowed themselves to virginity and continence, some with men in 'spiritual marriage'. By the 350s, Roman women had become interested in monasticism.

It is traditionally thought that St Patrick introduced Christianity and monasticism to Ireland in the 430s, though it is likely that several missionaries facilitated its spread.[6] It is known from Patrick's writings (his *Confessio* and his letters) that religious women were present at the introduction of this new religion into Ireland.[7] Hagiographic writings and saints' lives also suggest the presence of religious women in the early medieval period in Ireland.[8] Four important Irish female saints have *vitae* and all are reputed to have founded nunneries: Brigit (Brighid) of Kildare, who was born in Faughart and died at Kildare in the 520s, is the most famous of all the female saints; Ita (Íde) of Killeedy, who was born in Waterford and died in the 570s; Monenna (Moninne) of Killevy, who died in 519; and Samhthann of Clonbroney, who died in 734.[9] Christina Harrington has used their *lives* to plot their travels throughout the island. She has demonstrated that that all four travelled extensively and are associated with many nunnery foundations, many of which have archaeological remains.[10] Therefore, the popular perception of enclosure and isolation, for these religious women at any rate, does not appear to hold true.

Brigit's foundation at Kildare appears to have been a particularly important site in the early medieval period. Literature, such as that written by Cogitosus in the seventh century, suggests that this was a mixed community of monks and nuns ruled by Brigit herself, and, after her death, by an abbess.[11] He particularly describes the functioning of the church and how it was shared with the community, while maintaining a strict separation of the sexes.[12] The site was reputed to have housed a perpetual flame maintained by the nuns for many

[5] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 46.

[6] Duffy, 'The Arrival of Christianity'; Thom, *Early Irish Monasticism*, p. 5.

[7] De Paor, *Patrick: The Pilgrim Apostle of Ireland*, pp. 121–29.

[8] Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*.

[9] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary of Irish Saints*, pp. 123–25, 375–78, 545–46.

[10] Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, maps 1–4.

[11] Connolly and Picard, 'Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit*'.

[12] De Vegvar, 'Romanitas and Realpolitik'; Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints*, pp. 137–61; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 172.

centuries, which even Gerald of Wales commented upon.[13] This association with fire has led many to suggest that Brigit might represent a Christianization of a pagan deity.[14] While there is a historical record for Kildare, its nunnery material culture is sparse, and includes an undiagnostic structure called the 'fire house', while its cathedral and round tower do not betray any distinctive nunnery traits (although they would not be expected to).[15]

Other important early medieval nunneries, which lack the historical accounts of Kildare, include Killeedy, Killevy, and Clonbroney, already mentioned, and others such as Ballyvourney, founded by St Gobnait or Cloonburren, whose founding saint is unknown.[16] Therefore, from the beginning of the Middle Ages, religious women were functioning in Ireland as female saints, nuns, priests' wives, and pilgrims. The documentary evidence from the later Middle Ages (referred to as the later medieval period in Ireland), which includes letters, patent rolls, and other state papers, also records female recluses, anchorites, nuns, and the female orders.[17] While mystics and beguines are recorded elsewhere in this period, no reference has yet been found for their presence in Ireland.[18]

Scholars have demonstrated that records relating to nunneries have much to reveal when they are explored.[19] How can the discipline of archaeology elucidate the lives of these women religious? Women, and in particular religious women, are mentioned in Irish archaeological literature; nevertheless, they continue to remain an understudied resource. Archaeology can make a significant contribution to the study of medieval religious women and help fill this lacuna.[20] Indeed, the study of medieval monastic archaeology in Ireland has been unbalanced in favour of male monasticism. Religious male houses of

[13] O Meara, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, pp. 81–82.

[14] Ó Catháin, 'Hearth-Prayers and other Traditions of Brigit'; Ó Duinn, *The Rites of Brigid*; Swift, 'Brigid, Patrick and the Kings of Kildare', esp. p. 100. However, for an alternative view, see Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, pp. 63–68.

[15] Andrews, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas No. 1: Kildare*.

[16] Both these places have archaeological remains dating to the early medieval period, though little is known of their early history.

[17] Hall, *Women and the Church*; Kenny, *Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Women*, pp. 169–84; Ó Clabaigh, 'Anchorites in Late Medieval Ireland'.

[18] For example, Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, and Neel, 'The Origins of the Beguines'.

[19] Hall, 'Towards a Prosopography of Nuns'; Mac Curtain, 'Late Medieval Nunneries'; Burton, 'Looking for Medieval Nuns'.

[20] Edwards, 'Early Medieval Munster', esp. p. 204; Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, pp. 49–51; Hall, *Women and the Church*, pp. 96–97.

all orders and time periods have been comprehensively studied, and academic interest in their remains continues to thrive.[21]

Subtle differences can be identified in the treatment of medieval religious men and women in archaeological discourses. Stereotypes of both male and female religious tend to feature both in archaeology and history.[22] The archaeological study of women has generally followed the three waves of feminism.[23] After the identification of androcentrism across archaeological studies, a remedial phase, called the 'add women and stir' approach, was adopted, in for example *Medieval English Nunneries*.[24] These studies, while ground-breaking, are now considered somewhat essentialist, as they seek to make religious women 'visible', which is no longer considered adequate for a truly engendered approach. Thus, many early studies are being revisited by modern scholars influenced by postmodernist thought, which has been influential in gender theory-building, particularly post-processual archaeologies and the study of space, temporality, and the life course.[25]

In many aspects of archaeology, man and the male have long been considered the standard. This has been dubbed 'man as the measure'.[26] Roberta Gilchrist, in particular, rejects this status quo as it belies the premise 'that women, their behaviour and material culture, can be recognized only as a deviant pattern to a standard which is male'.[27] In Ireland and elsewhere, female monastic houses, where known and considered, are (unfairly) compared to this male standard and are found lacking. Gilchrist has shown in her research that nunneries in England did *not* have the same purpose and functions as male houses and so to make direct comparisons results in meaningless conclusions.[28] This method of approach is somewhat easier said than done. The popular 'mental template' of a monastery, whether it is a male house or a nunnery, originates in the male

[21] For example, Clyne, *Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny* and 'The Founders and Patrons of the Premonstratensian Houses in Ireland'; Doherty, Doran, and Kelly, *Glendalough*; Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*.

[22] For reviews, see Mac Curtain, O Dowd, and Luddy, 'An Agenda for Women's History in Ireland'; Gilchrist, 'Women's Archaeology?'; Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, pp. 1–16; Bhreathnach, 'Medieval Irish History'.

[23] For example, Wylie, 'Gender Theory and the Archaeological Record'.

[24] Knapp, 'Boys Will Be Boys'; Power, *English Nunneries*.

[25] For example, McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*; Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*; Stuard, *Considering Medieval Women and Gender*.

[26] Spector, 'What This Awl Means'.

[27] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 6.

[28] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 190.

standard. Therefore, it is not an easy task to challenge this male-based template in order to highlight the complexities and nuances in the archaeological record of female houses. This challenge is, however, essential and the basis of any gendered archaeological approach.[29] This is a key theoretical perspective which allows the complexity of female monasticism in Ireland to be realized. The strategy of a gendered archaeology is applied to the Irish data in order to interpret the evidence in new ways and to generate further debate. As with any theoretical approach, there are pitfalls! Scholars inevitably bring their own background and baggage to their research, and the bias of presentism looms in any archaeological study. Archaeologists inhabit 'the past' archaeological landscape in the 'present'.[30] Indeed, it has been suggested that archaeology itself is the most recent form of dwelling on an ancient site and is thus part of its story.[31]

Considering the volume of data on nunneries in Ireland dating to the Middle Ages, surprisingly very little archaeological work has been undertaken, and no archaeological synthesis has been published.[32] Archaeological sources of information for nunneries in medieval Ireland are wide ranging. In addition to historical evidence,[33] manuscripts, and hagiographic information mentioned previously, there are images of religious women in figure sculptures, tomb carvings, and several artefacts.[34] Some artefacts are attributed to female saints themselves, such as St Brigit's mantle and shoe, the crosier of St Dympna, or the cross and cup of St Attracta.[35] The nunnery sites and their architecture can be recorded in the field and are complemented by historic mapping, archaeological inventories, aerial photography, local histories, and folk memory.[36]

[29] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*; Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*.

[30] Frazer, 'The Public Forum and the Space Between', p. 204.

[31] Thomas, 'Archaeologies of Place and Landscape', p. 181.

[32] Unpublished studies have been done, for example, Ronan, 'Irish Nunneries'.

[33] Most recently, Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*; Hall, *Women and the Church*; Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints* (with references). Occasionally studies of nunneries abroad mention Irish sites, for instance, Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*.

[34] For example, a corbel of a female head at Killone, County Clare; tomb surrounds showing St Brigit as at Cashel Cathedral, County Tipperary; Abbess Alice Butler's Tomb in St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny; and the reliquary known as the *Domnach Airgid*.

[35] McClintock, 'The "Mantle of St Brigid" at Bruges'; Mac Dermott, 'The Crosiers of St Dympna and St Mel'. Images of St Brigit's shoe are reproduced in Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries*, p. 44, and Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints*, p. 200. For St Attracta's relics, see Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries*, p. 30; Hall, *Women and the Church*, p. 117.

[36] Collins, 'An Archaeology of Female Monasticism'.

Place and townland name evidence, as well as local tradition, can also be useful in identifying nunnery sites. Place names such as Nun's Island, Nunsacre, Nunsland, Nun's Quarter, and Nunstown all point to the previous presence of nuns or their land holdings. Furthermore, the Irish word for nun is *cailleach*, meaning 'veiled one', and, interestingly, it also translates as 'hag' or 'old wise woman'.[37] Place names incorporating *cailleach* and its derivatives include Ballynacallagh, Ballynagallagh, Monasternagalliaghduff (the monastery of the black nuns), and Templenagalliadoo (the church of the black nuns).

Another possible source for religious women, particularly dating to the early medieval period in Ireland, is the occurrence of segregated burial places. Some ecclesiastical sites are known as specific burial places for women, such as Relignaman, County Tyrone.[38] Other larger sites also had an area designated for women, either a church or burial place, as on Inishmurray or Inishglora Islands.[39] It has been noted that contemporary sources provide no concrete evidence that separate burial of the sexes or children was normal in Ireland from AD 900–1500, but there is a good deal to show that there were cemeteries in Ireland devoted exclusively to the burial of men, women, or children.[40]

Following this suggestion, excavated female human remains might contribute to the identification of religious women in the archaeological record who may represent priests' wives, pilgrims, or nuns.[41] Archaeological data from an intensive period of recent excavation in Ireland has been collated in several open access state-funded databases, such as Mapping Death and the National Roads Authority.[42] Mapping Death covers the early medieval period to the eleventh century and includes some sixty-one sites containing female burials. However, none is suggestive of obvious segregated burial.[43] The archaeological

[37] Ní Dhonnchadha, '*Cailleach* and Other Terms for Veiled Women'; Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of 'The Cailleach'*, pp. 81–99.

[38] Hamlin and Foley, 'A Women's Graveyard'.

[39] O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin, *Inishmurray Monks and Pilgrims*, pp. 152–58, 243–46; Harbison, *Guide to National and Historic Monuments of Ireland*, p. 247, for Inishglora.

[40] Fry, *Burial in Medieval Ireland*, p. 180.

[41] Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, p. 50–51. However, her example of the female burial at Church Island, County Kerry, is problematic, as not all the burials were analysed from the excavations and so it is unclear if this was a single female burial. O Kelly, 'Church Island near Valentia Co. Kerry'.

[42] For Mapping Death, see <www.mappingdeath.ie>; for the National Roads Authority, see <www.nra.ie/archaeology> [both accessed 3 March 2015].

[43] The writer is grateful to Dr Elizabeth O Brien for supplying information on relevant sites.

evidence from sites which do have lower numbers of segregated female burials does not permit a religious or ecclesiastical interpretation. Most sites appear to be related to ancestral burial places known as *Ferta*, and, more recently, cemetery settlements.[44] Similarly, there was a lack of archaeological burial evidence from later medieval nunneries until recently, as none was investigated archaeologically.[45] Some are mentioned in historical evidence. For example, Gormlaith, an anchorite who died in 1437, was buried in religious habit; and Fionnuala O'Connor, who had retired to the nunnery at Killeigh, was buried there in 1447.[46]

I have undertaken research which has identified a total of some 114 medieval nunnery sites in Ireland. Of that number, forty-nine date to the early medieval period (*c*. 450–1140) and sixty-five to the later medieval period (*c*. 1140–1540). There are some further seventy-six sites identified as possible nunnery locations.[47] Finally, there are eight sites which are known from documentary sources but which remain unlocated. It is important to note that these sites were never all used at the same time, and several sites were abandoned to be later replaced elsewhere. Ten nunnery sites have an early and a later medieval phase, but which may not necessarily have been continuously occupied.[48]

Early medieval nunneries are known, including those at the larger ecclesiastical centres of Armagh, Clonmacnoise, Glendalough, and Kildare. Armagh and Clonmacnoise each have two nunnery sites adjacent: Temple-na-Ferta and Temple Brigit at Armagh; and the Nuns' Church and possibly Temple Finghin at Clonmacnoise. Temple Finghin has only recently been identified as a possible second nunnery.[49] Other important early ecclesiastical sites, such as Finglas and Tallaght, which are now no longer extant, also had nunner-

[44] Ó Carragáin, 'From Family Cemeteries to Community Cemeteries'.

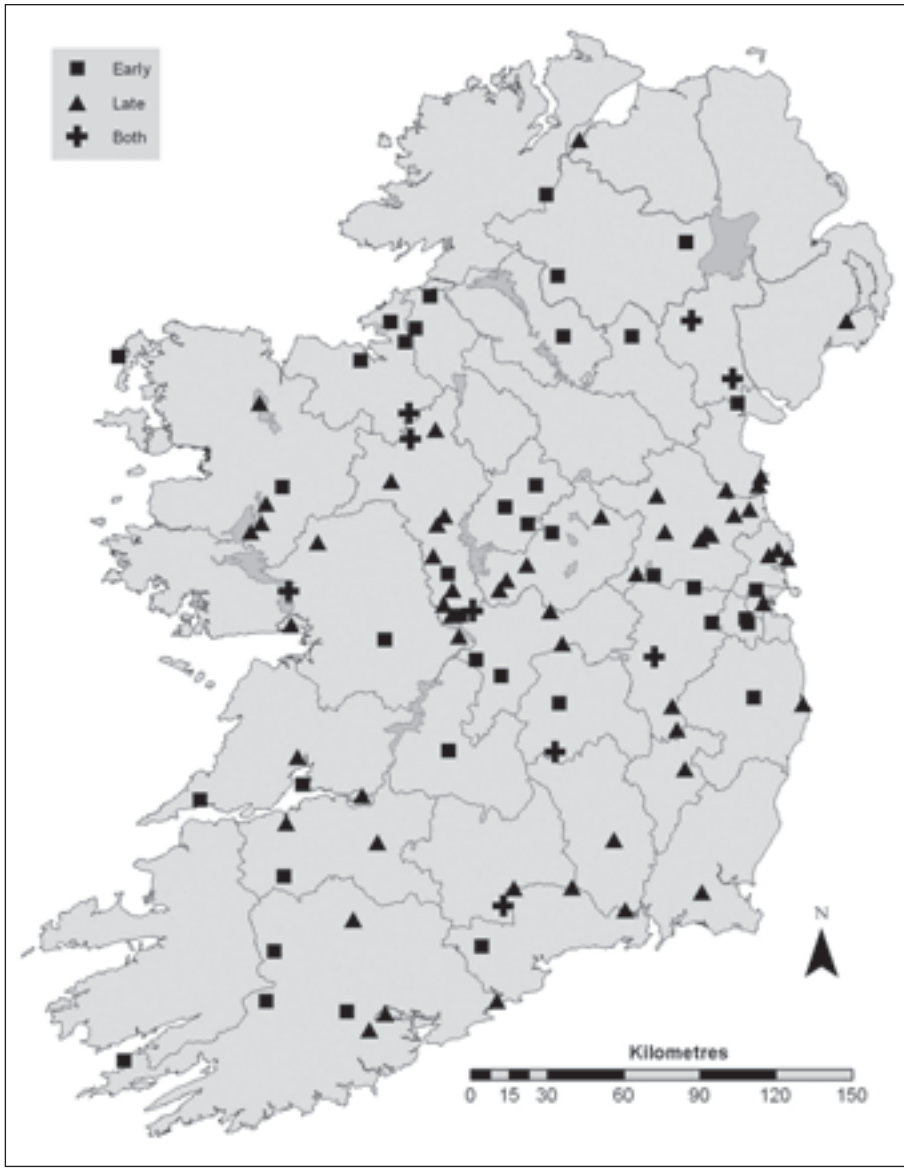
[45] There have been a few investigations adjacent to nunneries which discovered female human remains, for example, Graney, County Kildare. The writer is grateful to Byrne, Mullins and Associates archaeological consultants for providing this unpublished report.

[46] Fry, *Burial in Medieval Ireland*, p. 159.

[47] In the majority of these cases the foundation date is unknown. This number is not exhaustive and includes sites which have a female saint dedication, local tradition, or tentative place name.

[48] None of these sites has been extensively excavated, and so it cannot be demonstrated archaeologically if they were continually occupied. It is possible that the larger nunneries were continuously occupied, with the nuns adopting a rule and order in the twelfth century when the church was being reformed; see Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church*.

[49] Manning, 'Finghin MacCarthaigh, King of Desmond'.



Map 10.1. Distribution map of nunneries in Ireland in the Middle Ages.
Map by the author.

ies adjacent.[50] Smaller early medieval nunnery sites include the ecclesiastical complex on Inishglora Island and a possible nunnery at Templecashel. What would these nunnery sites have looked like originally? It is suggested that they probably looked similar to those ecclesiastical sites which are extant along the western seaboard, containing a small church and circular huts within a usually sub-circular enclosure.[51] It is postulated that some of these sites were occupied by mixed communities, or communities that may have been more segregated, though in close proximity, such as Armagh, Clonmacnoise, or Glendalough. It is likely that monks, priests, and nuns interacted and may have been related.

The somewhat artificial division of the Middle Ages in Irish history is primarily created by the reforms of the church in the twelfth century, which archaeologists use to define the early from the later medieval period. This reform was constituted at a series of church synods, such as that of Rathbreasil in 1111. These re-established dioceses throughout the country and made Armagh the primary church (although Kildare greatly disputed this primacy). Tuam and Cashel were later established as archbishoprics.[52] St Malachy was a leader of this reform and returned from travels with a continental approach to monasticism along with the Rule of St Benedict. He is singularly credited with introducing both the Cistercians and the Augustinians to Ireland.[53] The archaeological record perhaps illustrates this reform most starkly, with a monastic claustral layout being adopted in male and female houses, such as at the nunnery of Killone, an Augustinian house founded in the late twelfth century by the O Briens.[54]

Many of the later nunneries in Ireland were affiliated to major orders: Cistercians (six sites), Augustinians (eight), those following the Arroasian rule (forty), and Franciscans (four).[55] Some nunneries were originally Benedictine but later changed to other orders, such as Kilcreevanty, Downpatrick, and possibly Cork. Only the nunnery at Wicklow is definitely a Benedictine

[50] Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, pp. 104–30.

[51] For example, O Kelly, 'Church Island near Valentia Co. Kerry'; Fanning, 'Excavation of an Early Christian Cemetery and Settlement'; White-Marshall and Walsh, *Illaunloughan Island*; Sheehan, 'A Peacock's Tale'.

[52] Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church*.

[53] Flanagan, 'St Mary's Abbey Louth'; Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*, pp. 7–16; O Keeffe, 'Augustinian Regular Canons'.

[54] Collins, *The Other Monasticism*.

[55] There are no known medieval nunneries of the Dominican Order, although there are several founded in the post-medieval period.

house, of which nothing is now extant. Killeentrynode is doubtfully of the Premonstratensian Order.[56] Interestingly, a female recluse is recorded at their house of Holy Trinity, although this site was never considered a nunnery.[57] Six nunnery sites cannot be affiliated to any order.

The 'double houses' or orders which were specifically dedicated to women religious, such as Sempringham and Fontevraud, were never established in Ireland.[58] There is a possibility though that some religious houses here may have been co-located, where men and women religious lived in proximity and may have shared facilities and duties.[59] It has been suggested that order affiliation is an unhelpful category to employ when studying nunneries because of its fluid nature, and the fact that many nunneries were never actually officially affiliated.[60] However, there must have been reasons for preferring one order's ethos and rule over another, although whether this choice was through the agency of the nuns themselves or the patron is difficult to gauge. In Ireland, there is a preference for the Augustinian of Arroasian observance for nunneries; while nunnery identity in England was distinctly Benedictine; while in Scotland and Wales, their identity was predominately Cistercian.[61]

Prior to this study, there were a number of gaps in the research. The first is the classification of the nunnery sites on various national databases and inventories.[62] Many of the sites are not classified as 'nunneries' but rather cover a range of archaeological site types, including church, graveyard, deserted settlement, ecclesiastical enclosure or site, castle, fortified house, holy well, or even male religious house. A very small number remain unrecorded. This situation is understandable as classification of an archaeological site rests on the extant

[56] Miriam Clyne suggests that this order did not found nunneries in Ireland as it was already prohibited when it was established in Ireland (personal communication, 28 April 2012).

[57] Clyne, 'Archaeological Excavations at Holy Trinity Abbey'; Ó Clabaigh, 'Anchorites in Late Medieval Ireland', p. 155.

[58] Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*; Kerr, *Religious Life for Women*.

[59] For example, several Cistercian houses and many Augustinian of Arroasian observance: Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*, pp. 22–23; and Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church*, pp. 149–61, who coined the useful term 'co-located'.

[60] Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 86; Jäggi and Lobbedey, 'Church and Cloister', p. 119.

[61] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 61; Hall, *Scottish Monastic Landscapes*, pp. 87–202; Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales*, pp. 177–81.

[62] See National Monuments Service <www.archaeology.ie> [accessed 3 March 2015], the portal for the Archaeological Survey of Ireland and various published county inventories.

Figure 10.1. Carrowntemple, County Roscommon, showing a small church with attached domestic accommodation, viewed from northwest. Photo by the author.

remains identified during field survey, and usually the site is manifested in its last function. The reuse of many of these sites causes their nunnery function to be sometimes overlooked. A second gap in the archaeological evidence from medieval nunneries in Ireland is the lack of archaeological investigation and excavation. There have been only eighteen modern investigations over a fifty-six-year period from 1951 to 2007 — and of that number, only four could be considered to be research driven.[63] In order to rectify this, I have undertaken excavations at St Catherine's, Old Abbey (see below).

A popular view of later medieval nunneries in Ireland is that most followed the typical claustral plan of many of their male counterparts. Many of the nunneries in Ireland do not appear to have had cloisters. While it is possible that a number now have no extant trace, or that they were constructed in timber, there is a significant number of smaller churches, some with attached accommodation, that suggest a much more fluid arrangement was employed. This is not unique, and the phenomenon has previously been noted on the Continent.[64] One such site is Tisrara, Carrowntemple, where excavations revealed a later medieval church with attached first floor domestic accommodation over a double vaulted transept.[65] Inishmaine Abbey similarly lacks a claustral plan, but has probable domestic spaces attached to its church. In this case, it has a large separate gatehouse which would have provided extra accommodation.[66]

[63] See Database of Irish Excavation Reports <www.excavations.ie> [accessed 3 March 2014], a database of all licenced archaeological work undertaken in Ireland.

[64] Jäggi and Lobbedey, 'Church and Cloister', p. 119.

[65] Higgins, *The Tisrara Medieval Church*.

[66] Healy, 'Two Royal Abbeys by the Western Lakes'.

While it is clear from the historical evidence that many of the larger later medieval nunneries, of which nothing now remains extant, such as St Mary de Hogges and Grace Dieu, Lismullin, or Kilculliheen, probably did utilize a claustral layout, there are now only three nunneries where this 'standard' claustral plan is extant. They are St Catherine's Old Abbey, founded sometime before 1261; Molough, founded sometime in the fourteenth century; and Killone, founded around 1189. Their extant cloisters measure 508 metres, 392 metres and 217 metres squared respectively.[67]

St Catherine's is located in the southwest of Ireland in the county of Limerick.[68] This region was once part of the ancient area of Connello and within the territory of the Anglo-Irish earls of Desmond, who were its patrons. Its precise foundation date is not known, though it is likely, however, that it was founded in the mid-thirteenth century, as its founder is known to have died in the 1260s.[69] While the nunnery now appears to be in an isolated rural location, it is centrally placed near Desmond strongholds in the region, including the early castle site at Shanid to the south-west, and the medieval towns of Askeaton to the north-east and Newcastlewest to the south. The medieval village of Shanagolden is just four kilometres to the west.[70]

The nunnery comprises the claustral complex, with several features remaining within its surrounding precinct. The precinct boundary is no longer extant, nor can it be traced in the field boundaries due to field amalgamation. Features in the precinct include an arched entrance gateway, a dovecote, and a fishpond, to the south and west of the main complex. Water management appears to have been undertaken at the site, where two streams converge to run adjacent to the nunnery, while also filling the fishpond. A number of small footbridges have been identified, which span the watercourses, facilitating access to the nunnery complex.

Its parallelogram church unusually projects from the east wall of the cloister.[71] There is evidence for two ranges, one on the west, comprising three vaulted rooms on the ground floor with dormitory accommodation above. The south

[67] All are affiliated with the Augustinian Order and located in the province of Munster.

[68] St Catherine's was chosen as a case study and for excavation, as it is the best preserved and is no longer used for burial.

[69] Lydon, 'A Land of War', esp. p. 252.

[70] Wardell, 'The History and Antiquities of St Catherine's'; Keegan, 'The Archaeology of Manorial Settlement'.

[71] This is a unique arrangement in Ireland. The only other two known are in Dartford, England, and a second near Paris.

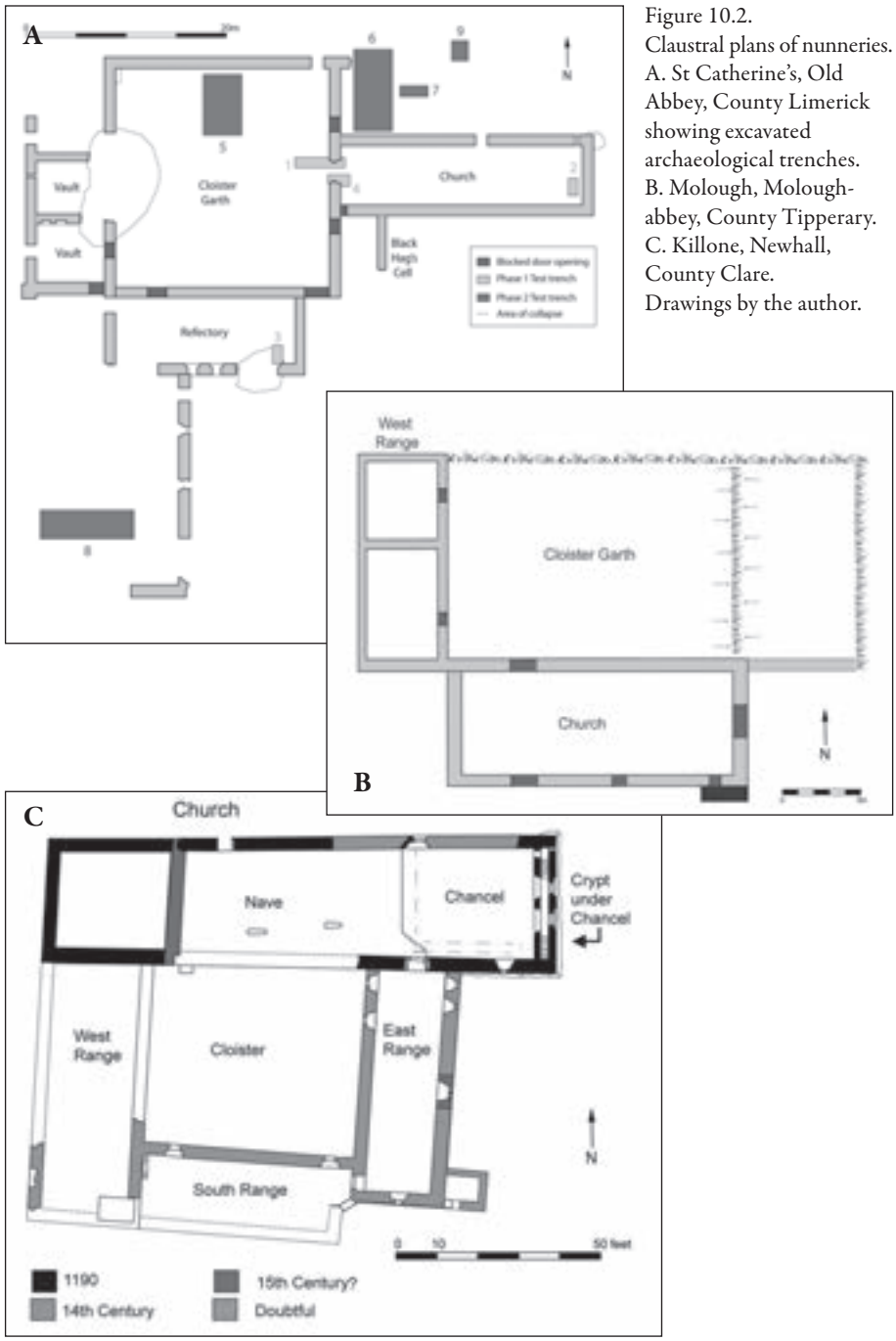


Figure 10.2.
Claustral plans of nunneries.
A. St Catherine's, Old Abbey, County Limerick showing excavated archaeological trenches.
B. Molough, Molough-abbey, County Tipperary.
C. Killone, Newhall, County Clare.
Drawings by the author.

range contains the refectory. The kitchen extends to the south and is adjacent to a watercourse. There is no north range, and the cloister is completed by a high wall. There is no evidence for a chapter house. The building survey and phasing indicates two main phases of construction, the first dated to the mid-thirteenth century. It appears that the west range was built first, then the inner cloister walls, followed by rest of the ranges. The kitchen section is later, as it partially obscures the refectory's windows. The church also appears to be later, though also dating to the thirteenth century.

The second phase of building dates to sometime in the fifteenth century, when the nuns' church became a parish church.[72] These amendments included the raising of the wall plate of the church, which changed its roof, the blocking of a large west window, and a number of smaller windows, and the insertion of a north doorway, presumably for parishioners' use. A small structure was also added at the west end of the church, on its southern side.[73] A small doorway, with an external porch, was also inserted in the north wall of the cloister in order to facilitate direct access.[74]

Excavations within the nunnery complex revealed a substantial wall to the eastern and northern sides of the cloister, which was interpreted as the basal courses of the cloister arcade wall. This feature appeared to have been dismantled in the past as no arcade fragments were recovered.[75] It would have supported a lean-to roof over the cloister ambulatory, the line of which can still be identified by the presence of corbels. The ambulatory was significantly wider on the northern side of the cloister. I am suggesting that it was probably used for everyday activities, such as reading or needlework, due to its south-facing aspect. The ambulatory was floored in a stony metalled surface. This was similar to floor surfaces identified in the refectory area near the location of a reader's recess and also in the kitchen range.

The excavations revealed that the ground plan of the nunnery was changed quite early on in its construction. An east range was begun (identified to the

[72] Gywnn and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, p. 323.

[73] This structure was described as a sacristy by Westropp; however, its location at the west end of the church is highly unusual. It has similarities with a recluse's cell, though again its location is unusual for this function; see Ó Clabaigh, 'Anchorites in Late Medieval Ireland', for other examples. A small squint (window) is located at the east end of the church, which seems an original feature, which also suggests that the nunnery may have had a recluse at some time.

[74] A geophysical survey was undertaken to the north of this doorway in the adjacent field. No features related to the nunnery were revealed.

[75] A single fragment of possible cloister arcade was recorded by Wardell, which is now lost.

north-east of the complex outside the church), which formed an interior space with mortar floor. For reasons not clear, this plan was abandoned, its access doorway to the cloister was blocked, and the church foundations dug through the mortar layer. The elaborate doorway for a room in this range (perhaps the chapter house?) became the west doorway of the church, though it was positioned slightly off-centre of the church in the revised plan.

Although there was no local tradition of burial in the nunnery, and only one thirteenth-century grave slab had been identified, which is now lost, many burials were found during the excavation.[76] Burials were located in the cloister ambulatory, the church, and outside, immediately to the north of the church. Interestingly, no burials or *ex situ* human remains were found in the cloister garth, which suggests it was deliberately kept free of burials. Radio carbon dating has shown that many of the burials were contemporary with the nunnery's use and are likely to represent members of the religious community and its parishioners.[77] Burial in cloister ambulatories is not unusual in an Irish context. Excavations at the friary at Ennis uncovered many burials within its ambulatories, some placed three burials deep, while at Tintern burials were also discovered in its ambulatories.[78]

Artefacts, in addition to several *ex situ* architectural fragments, included a pruning hook and a variety of local medieval pottery wares, possibly from the nearby medieval town of Adare, and some imported pottery such as Saintonge from southwest France. A fragment of a candlestick was recovered from a trench at the east end of the church, which was perhaps used on the altar. An incised ship on plaster on the southern wall of the church's nave towards its western end was also identified during the archaeological investigations. The ship has been identified to the keel tradition of shipbuilding, a type which would have been in use in Ireland from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.[79] These ship motifs are ecclesiastical Christian symbols, and it is likely that they formed part of a larger pictorial scheme, of which no trace now remains. Incised motifs elsewhere suggest that they would have been painted.[80] The location of the ship at St

[76] For the grave slab, see Wardell, 'The History and Antiquities of St Catherine's', p. 56.

[77] Collins, 'Excavations at St Catherine's Old Abbey, Co. Limerick'.

[78] O'Sullivan, Roberts, and Halliday, 'Archaeological Excavation of Medieval, Post-Medieval and Modern Burials'; Ó Donnabháin 'The Human Remains'.

[79] Brady and Corlett, 'Holy Ships'. I am grateful to Karl Brady for identifying the ship type. Collins, 'Missing the Boat...'.

[80] Morton, 'Iconography and Dating of the Wall Paintings'; Morton, 'Aspects of Image

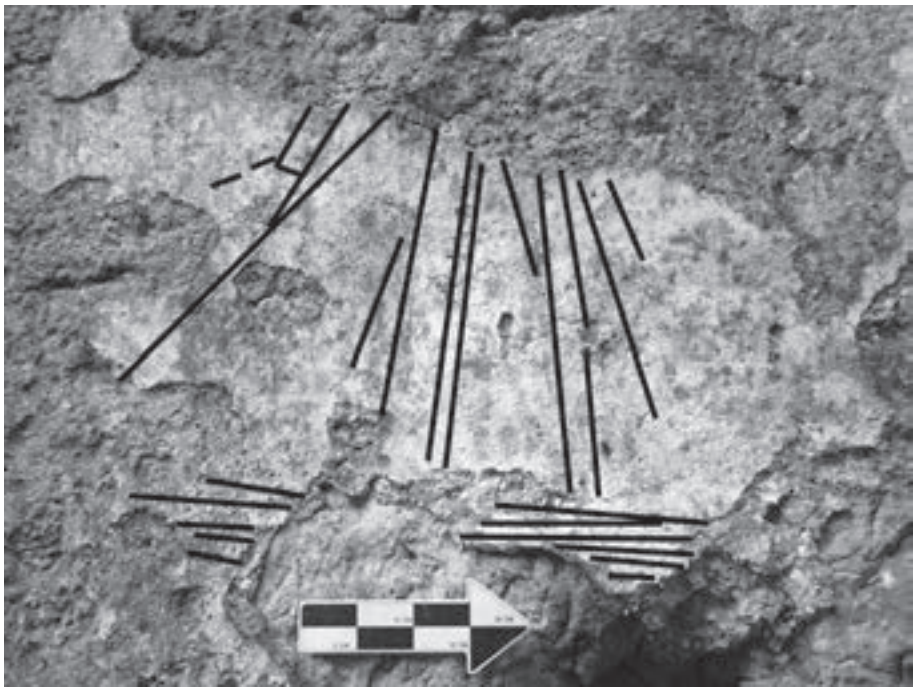


Figure 10.3. An outline of the incised ship graffiti in the church at St Catherine's. Photo by the author.

Catherine's towards the west end of the church suggests that it may mark the location of an altar, as other ships are usually in proximity to an altar. The west end of the church is actually not an unusual location for the nuns' space, and west end choirs and galleries for nuns are known from both England and the Continent.[81]

The archaeological investigation at St Catherine's is the first dedicated research excavation of an extant claustral-plan nunnery in Ireland. Meaningful results have emerged from the excavations. It has been noted that the construction plan for the nunnery changed at an early stage in its development, and the west range was the earliest building on site. It is possible that this was a pre-existing structure which was re-used in the nunnery complex. In the fifteenth century the interior of the church was likely to have been decorated, at least in part, and the nuns probably used the west end of the church for their own use.

and Meaning', esp. 66–67; Brady and Corlett, 'Ships on Plaster'.

[81] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 97, 101–02;. Jäggi and Lobbedey, 'Church and Cloister', p. 121.

The nunnery, while being an impressive structure in an Irish context, did not contain expensive fittings; for example, no floor tiles were recovered, and floor surfaces were either earthen (in kitchen) or metalled (in refectory and cloister ambulatories). Several fragments of medieval pottery were recovered and a few artefacts, most notably a fragment of a pruning hook and a candlestick. Burial was undertaken in the early years of the nunnery's use in the thirteenth century and continued intermittently until after it was abandoned in the sixteenth century. The church interior, cloister, and outside the church were all used for burial. The burials included men, women, and children. These are likely representative of the nuns themselves, laypeople, and possibly the male clergy, although there were no 'special' graves uncovered.

Building on the scholarship on medieval religious women, this research attempts to elucidate all aspects of material culture relating to medieval nunneries in Ireland. The broad gender approach adopted is an ideal perspective from which to ask new questions of the archaeological evidence. This provides 'new angles of vision' — angles and perspectives which have not yet been fully considered in the study of female monasticism in medieval Ireland.[82] A consideration of the wider archaeological landscape around nunneries may help to illuminate nunnery communities and how they interacted with the surrounding lordships and towns, and the people who lived there. This will reveal more about medieval nunneries in Ireland, the religious women who inhabited them, and will hopefully paint a more balanced picture of monasticism.

The archaeology of female monasticism and medieval nunneries in Ireland to date has been greatly understudied. For the early medieval period (*c.* 450–1100), the archaeological record for nunneries includes small communities at sites such as Inishglora Island and larger monastic 'cities' of Armagh, Kildare, Glendalough, Clonmacnoise, Tallaght, and Finglas. Many of these sites would have housed mixed communities of holy women and men, working, living, and praying together. In the later medieval period (*c.* 1100–1540), nunneries became more formalized in Ireland with the introduction of the Continental orders and their rules. Monastic enclosure, architecturally manifested in a claustral arrangement, though not exclusively, became a feature of female monastic life, perhaps to a greater extent than in the earlier period. It is a popular belief that enclosure was strictly observed, particularly after 1298.[83] Individual nunnery histories suggest that they were more 'permeable cloisters',

[82] Wylie, 'The Interplay of Evidential Constraints and Political Interest'.

[83] Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure'; Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*.

as abbesses, prioresses, and nuns negotiated their medieval world through patronage, family connections, the wider church, their estates, and pastoral works within their community.[84] The archaeological evidence similarly suggests, through analyses of architecture, space, and layout, that enclosure may have been more symbolic than actual. These medieval nuns interacted with society in their hinterlands and further afield, and their lives were ones of contemplation *and* action.[85]

An archaeology of female monasticism in Ireland is emerging. Rather than having a distinct architecture, later medieval nunneries use the architectural 'grammar' of monasticism in a variety of fluid forms. Patronage appears to have been the key factor in the location and distribution of nunnery sites in Ireland, as has been demonstrated elsewhere.[86] Like the British evidence, medieval nunneries in Ireland had different functions than male monasteries, and so it is unhelpful to consider them deviant to a standard which is male. Nunneries should be compared to their own standard.

[84] Hall, *Women and the Church*, pp. 159–90.

[85] Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*.

[86] Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*.

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Silk Purse or Sow's Ear? The Art and Architecture of the Cistercian Nunnery of Swine, Yorkshire

Michael Carter*

A total of thirteen nunneries in medieval Yorkshire had a Cistercian identity (Map 11.1).[1] Unlike the eight Cistercian abbeys in the county, their art and architecture has received little scholarly attention. This is partly because the nunneries have traditionally been regarded as small, peripheral, and scandal-ridden institutions. Their spiritual life has been characterized as having the same poverty as their endowments.[2] The fullest analysis of their art and architecture is John Nichols's 1982 article, which provides a useful description and catalogue of their often scanty physical remains.[3] Since the publication of Nichols's essay, the history of England's medieval nunneries has been largely reappraised, and long-held views about the characteristics

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[1] Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 284–85 lists twelve: Baysdale, Ellerton, Esholt, Hampole, Handale, Keldholme, Kirklees, Nun Appleton, Rosedale, Sinningthwaite, Swine, and Wykeham. The list was recently augmented with a thirteenth house, Arthington, which was described as Cistercian by the Order's General Chapter in 1539; see Freeman, '"Houses of a Peculiar Order"', p. 284.

[2] For instance, see Power, *English Medieval Nunneries*, especially pp. 597–601.

[3] Nichols, 'Medieval English Cistercian Nunneries'.

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Map 11.1.
The location of Cistercian nunneries in northern England. Map drawn by Steve Edwards.

of female monasticism have been challenged.[4] Moreover, important studies on the art and architecture of late medieval nuns, especially their material and visual cultures, have appeared.[5] (For example, Glyn Coppack recently used reports compiled in 1535 to chart the planning of six Cistercian nunneries in Yorkshire.[6]) Despite this, many aspects of the art and architecture of Cistercian nunneries in Yorkshire (and elsewhere) still remain unexplored. The sources for such a study are surprisingly rich. Much of the evidence comes from Swine

[4] For example, Burton, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Middle Ages'; Cross, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Early Tudor Period'.

[5] Especially, Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*; Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists* and *The Visual and the Visionary*. For the art and architecture of Cistercian nunneries in northern England, see Carter, 'The Art and Architecture of the Cistercians', pp. 206–48.

[6] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived'.

Priory, the largest and wealthiest house of Cistercian nuns in the county, where the chancel of the medieval church which served as the nuns' choir survived the Dissolution and remained in use as a parish church.[7] It is well known for its splendid series of alabaster tombs and its misericords.[8] But also present are two early sixteenth-century screens which have hitherto have been largely overlooked. Both have a hybrid of late Gothic and early Renaissance ornament and one has an inscription giving the identity of the patron. Medieval visitation records, wills, Suppression era documents and antiquarian literature are also illuminating. Using these sources, the present essay will provide an analysis of the art and architecture of Swine Priory between *c.* 1300 and 1539. It will discuss the identity and motives of patrons, the extent and type of ornament within the nuns' church, and explore the influence of late medieval devotions and spirituality on the material and visual cultures of the priory.

Cistercian Nunneries in Yorkshire

The Cistercian nunneries in Yorkshire were founded between 1133 and the end of the twelfth century. On the whole, their patrons did not have the aristocratic status of those who founded the Order's male houses in northern England, and this had implications for the endowments of the nunneries, which were generally poor.[9] Swine was no exception. The priory was founded before 1153 by Robert de Verli, priest of Swine.[10] Papal taxation records give the income of the priory as £53 8s 6d in 1291, and in 1535 its annual income was £83, which at the time of the priory's dissolution in 1539 supported a community of twenty nuns.[11] Although this income was well below the £200 limit set for the suppression of the smaller houses in 1536, Swine was nevertheless the richest and wealthiest priory of Cistercian nuns in the county.[12]

[7] For a description of the architecture of Swine, see Pevsner and Neave, *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire*, pp. 719–20.

[8] The fullest description of the tombs can be found in Routh, *Medieval Effigial Alabaster Tombs in Yorkshire*, pp. 106–16. For the misericords, see Remnant, *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain*, pp. 184–85; Nichols, 'The Cistercian Nunnery of Swine Priory'.

[9] See Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* and *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 125–54; Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 94–112.

[10] Burton, 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"'.

[11] Page, *Victoria County History: The County of Yorkshire* (hereafter *VCH: Yorkshire*), p. 179.

[12] For the income of these houses, see Knowles and Hadcock *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 284–85.

The history of these houses was occasionally marked by scandal,[13] but the research of Claire Cross has shown that Yorkshire's nunneries retained the esteem of local elites until the very end of the Middle Ages. The nunneries allowed their daughters to pursue a religious vocation and also gave a refuge to unmarriageable daughters and widows. They also provided educational opportunities, social prestige and, perhaps most importantly of all, prayers for both living and dead family members.[14] Swine (and other Cistercian nunneries in Yorkshire) had a complex and at times confused relationship with the Cistercian Order, which initially resisted accepting responsibility for female houses. Even though it became possible for Cistercian sisters to receive official recognition in 1213,[15] only two houses in England, Marham (Norfolk) and Tarrant Keynes (Dorset), were incorporated into the Order and became abbeys. Instead, the nunneries in Yorkshire, and those elsewhere in England, had a looser relationship with the Cistercian Order. Indeed, at times there is confusion about the identity and affiliation of some of the nunneries. Until well into the fourteenth century, the community at Swine included not only sisters but also canons and lay brothers, and a master of canons is mentioned as late as 1344. The various components of the community at Swine appear to have lived according to different rules. The canons are referred to as *canonici albi*, a designation used for Premonstratensian canons, and in the late thirteenth century Archbishop Romanus of York appealed to the General Chapter of the Premonstratensian Order for help in regulating the spiritual life of the nunnery. The lay brothers seem to have been under some form of Cistercian jurisdiction, as in 1335 a troublesome lay brother was transferred to Sawley Abbey, Yorkshire.[16]

This provides a rare instance of recorded contact between male Cistercian houses and nunneries. Swine was in close proximity to Meaux Abbey, and in their early histories there was conflict between the houses over landholdings and the burial of benefactors.[17] But only occasionally did Cistercian monks become involved in the internal affairs of nunneries. A charter of 1240 records that the abbot of Kirkstall was the visitor of Esholt Priory.[18] Despite this, it seems that the nunneries were actually subject to episcopal visitation, and male

[13] For which, see Power, *English Medieval Nunneries*, pp. 597–601.

[14] Cross, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Early Tudor Period'.

[15] Burton and Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, p. 53.

[16] *VCH: Yorkshire*, pp. 180–81.

[17] Burton, 'The "Chariot of Aminadab"', pp. 33–35.

[18] Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete*, p. 201.

religious from other orders or the secular clergy attended to the spiritual and material wellbeing of the White Nuns. For instance, in 1283 the prior of the Augustinian priory of Nostell was appointed by the archbishop of York to conduct a visitation of the nuns at Hampole;[19] in 1378 it was the prior of the Augustinian house of Guisborough who received the resignation of Prioress Alice Page of Baysdale Priory;[20] and the archbishop of York's visitation records show that the nuns' confessors were Franciscans, with Brother John Wotton, Friar Minor, appointed confessor to the nuns of Hampole in 1426.[21] Only at the very end of the Middle Ages did Cistercian abbots in Yorkshire take an interest in the welfare of their sisters. In 1533 the Order's General Chapter ordered the abbots of Byland and Fountains to conduct visitations of eight Yorkshire houses: Arthington, Ellerton, Esholt, Hampole, Kirklees, Nun Appleton, Sinnigthwaite and Swine.[22] As these, and all the other religious houses in the county were dissolved between 1536 and 1539, this intervention was unable to have any lasting impact.

Planning and Architecture

The loose relationship between the Order and Cistercian sisters, and the fundamentally different nature of female monasticism, may explain why neither the churches nor claustral precincts of nuns conform to a recognizably Cistercian plan.[23] Their churches were unaisled halls, and with a length of between 80 and 90 feet,[24] which was shorter than the norm of 105 feet for nunnery churches established by Roberta Gilchrist.[25] However, Swine was an exception in both planning and scale. An engraving of 1782 shows the remains of north and south transepts, a broad central crossing tower, the traces of an aisled nave, and a large aisled choir (Figure 11.1). This cruciform plan is likely to be because

[19] *VCH: Yorkshire*, p. 163

[20] *VCH: Yorkshire*, p. 159.

[21] *VCH: Yorkshire*, p. 165.

[22] Freeman, ""Houses of a Peculiar Order"', p. 276.

[23] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', pp. 293–97. Examination of Cistercian nunneries elsewhere in Europe has also failed to find a distinctive plan; see Coomans, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries', and Kratzke, 'The Architecture of Cistercian Nunneries in the North of Germany'.

[24] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', p. 294.

[25] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 45.

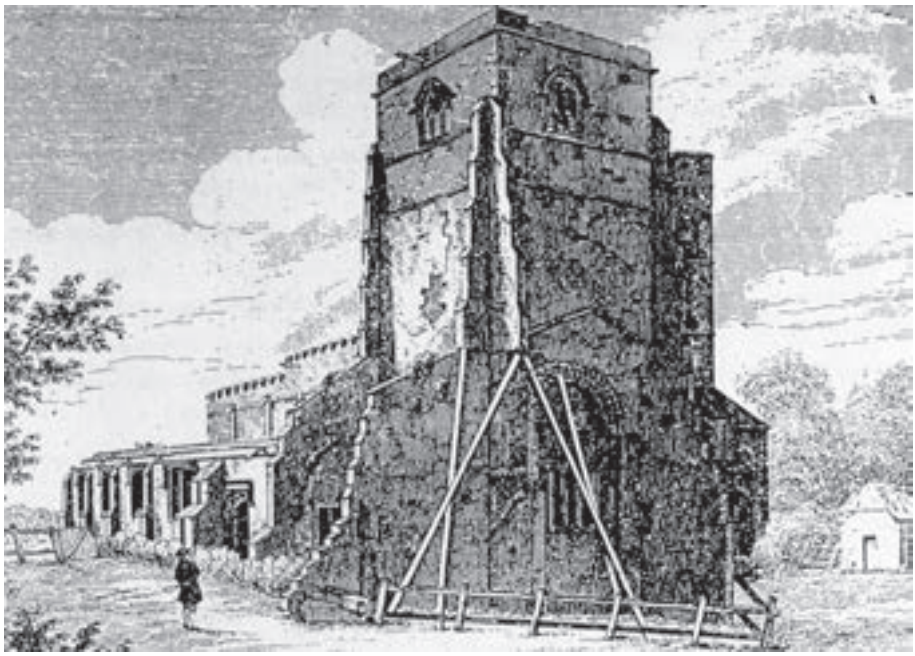

Figure 11.1 Engraving of the church at Swine in 1782 (from Poulson, *Holderness*, II).

Swine's early community had both female and male inmates who required different liturgical spaces, the sisters occupying the chancel, with the canons and lay brothers using the nave, which also functioned as the parish church.[26] Swine's cloister is now lost, but the 1535 description of the house states this was to the south of the church. This also records that the chapter house, with the dormitory above, was in the east range; that there was a first floor refectory in the south range; and a kitchen and chambers were in the west range. The other nunneries surveyed at this time had a broadly similar plan.[27]

The chancel at Swine is the most significant architectural remnant of a Cistercian nunnery in Yorkshire. It is therefore worthwhile describing it in some detail and outlining the sequence of building campaigns it reveals. The core is late twelfth century. The earliest features on the exterior are the lancet

[26] Some older literature suggested that the nuns' choir at Swine occupied the nave. However, Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', p. 284, shows that the fenestration of the present parish church closely matches that described in the 1535 survey.

[27] For these plans, see Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived'.

Figure 11.2. Exterior of the church at Swine. The sequence of building works between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries can clearly be seen. Photo by the author.

windows in the clerestory and the corbel table (Figure 11.2). The buildings of the nunnery were destroyed by fire in 1308.[28] Modifications to the church in the later Middle Ages are clearly visible, including the construction of a north aisle. Its east window, and the great east window of the church, are both in the late Decorated style. The aisles have Perpendicular fenestration and the doorway of the northern porch is also in this style. The 1782 engraving of the church shows that crenellations were also added.

Inside, the late twelfth-century circular piers have multi-scalloped capitals (Figure 11.3), and Romanesque chevron ornament is visible on two arches of the north arcade.[29] The interior of the church also shows evidence of enlargement and modification in the later Middle Ages. On the north side of the chancel a large arch provides access into a chantry chapel containing alabaster tombs

[28] Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, II, 205.

[29] For a description of the architecture of Swine, see Pevsner and Neave, *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire*, pp. 719–20.

Figure 11.3. Interior of the church at Swine. Photo by the author.

of the Hilton family dating from the last quarter of the fourteenth century and early decades of the fifteenth.[30] It seems reasonable to assume that the chapel was constructed to accommodate the earliest of these, the monument of Sir Robert Hilton (d. 1372).

Furnishings

The description made in 1535 gives some idea of the furnishings of the church, which had 'xxxvi goode stalls alle along bothe the sydes of waynscott bordes and tymber for the nonnes',[31] and eight of these have survived. All have misericords, and their subjects are: a bearded man looking through his legs, exposing

[30] The earliest monument is that of Sir Robert Swine, who died in 1372, and his wife, Maud, and the latest tomb is probably that of his son, another Sir Robert, the father of the Sir Robert who died in 1431, and who was buried in the chancel of the parish church. For the date of the Hilton monuments, see Routh, *Medieval Effigial Alabaster Tombs in Yorkshire*, pp. 107–16.

[31] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', p. 281.

Figure 11.4.
Swine Priory, surviving portion of the early sixteenth-century rood screen.
Photo © Conway Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art.

his anus and genitals; a man's head with a forked beard; a griffin; a knight's head in profile; a nun's head between two back-to-back animals; a grotesque wearing a mitre; a Green Man; and a female head. A further misericord with a grotesque has been incorporated into the pulpit.[32] None have supporters, and although there are various opinions about their date,[33] it seems likely that they are late fourteenth century. A man with a twisted, forked beard similar to that on one of the misericords can be seen in the illuminations of the Lytlington Missal

[32] Williamson, 'A Note on the Hidden Misericord of Swine'.

[33] A date of *c*. 1400 is suggested by Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches*, p. 226, and repeated by Nichols, 'The Cistercian Nunnery of Swine Priory', p. 283. However, Remnant, *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain*, pp. 184–85, dates them a century later, whereas Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, II, 212, suggests a date of 1500.

Figure 11.5
Swine Priory, early sixteenth-century parclose screen at the west of the Hilton chapel. Photo by Conway Library.

(*c*. 1384).[34] The square headdress on the alabaster effigy of Catherine Norwich, wife of Sir William de la Pole, who died in 1366, at Holy Trinity Hull,[35] is similar to that worn by the female head which adorns one of the misericords.[36] A late fourteenth-century date would mean that the stalls are broadly coeval with the Hilton chantry, and it is possible that its construction was accompanied by a refurnishing of the church and the donation of the stalls.

[34] Illustrated in Millar, *English Illuminated Manuscripts*, II, pl. 71.

[35] For this monument, see Routh, *Medieval Effigial Alabaster Tombs in Yorkshire*, pp. 73–74.

[36] This square headdress evolved from French and German fashions in the middle of the fourteenth century; see Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince*, pp. 96–97.

In 1535 it was recorded that each of the Cistercian priories had a rood screen, and a portion of Swine's is extant (Figure 11.4). Also at the church is a largely intact parclose screen enclosing the west of the chapel at the east of the north aisle (Figure 11.5), the chantry chapel of the Hilton family which contains the monuments of several members of this family.[37] These screens provide previously overlooked evidence concerning the priory's late medieval furnishing and ornament, and show the continuing importance of external patrons to the art and architecture of the priory in the late Middle Ages.

Both screens have a hybrid of late Gothic and early Renaissance ornament. The parclose screen before the chantry has thirteen rectangular compartments, and beneath the central three are folding doors. There are upper and lower registers divided by a middle rail. The screen is surmounted by a frieze, which has traces of polychrome and contains fragments of a black letter inscription. The inscription was still largely intact in 1665 and was transcribed thus:

> ISTA SUETOS SCULPTA SUNT ARMA DOMINI THOMAE DOMINI DE DARCY ET HEREDERUM [sic] SUORUM ET FINITUM EST HOC OPUS TEMPORE DOMINI GEORGII DARCY MILITIS FILLI [sic] ET HEREDIS DOMINI THOMAE DARCY, 1531[38]
>
> (Below are carved the arms of Lord Thomas, Lord Darcy and his heirs and this work was finished in the time of Sir George Darcy, knight, son and heir of Lord Thomas Darcy, 1531).

Each of the compartments below contains a shield with traces of polychrome as well as tracery. The screen is divided into sections by pilasters, which have honeycomb or cylindrical ornament, reminiscent of Netherlandish early Renaissance work.

The screen's middle rail contains fragments of a second black letter inscription, which was also recorded in the seventeenth century:

> ORATE PRO ANIMABUS DOMINI THOMAE BYWATT' CAPELLANI HUIS [sic] CANTARIAE BEATAE MARIAE ET OMNIUM CAPELLANORUM TAM PRAETERITORUM QUAM FUTURORUM[39]
>
> (Pray for the souls of Master Thomas Bywater, chaplain of this chantry of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all chaplains past and to come.)

[37] For detailed descriptions, see Vallance, 'The History of Roods, Screens and Lofts', pp. 173–76.

[38] Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, II, 212.

[39] Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, II, 212.

Figure 11.6.
Thame Church, former prebendal church, early sixteenth-century screen. Photo by Charles Tracy.

The surviving portion of the inscription is interspersed with three small shields carved with the arms of the priory's historic patrons. These will be described and discussed presently. Beneath the inscription rail are compartments with linenfold panelling and some retain elaborate blind tracery in their head.

The fragment of the rood screen is located before the chancel. Only the dado survives, as it is cut off at the middle rail, which also had an indent for an inscription. Its loft and upper portions were removed in 1720 because they were 'old, decayed and indecent'.[40] It is divided into compartments contain-

[40] Vallance, 'The History of Roods, Screens and Lofts', p. 173.

ing linenfold panels surmounted by blind tracery. There are two central doors, each of which is divided into two by a pilaster, and two panels with blind Netherlandish-style tracery are in the base of each door. The pilasters and the doors' tracery are similar to those seen on the chantry screen.

The ornament on the screens can be related to so-called 'Renaissance Gothic' architectural ornament, which first emerged in the Netherlands in the early to mid-fifteenth century.[41] This was characterized by the use of highly elaborate Flamboyant tracery in vegetal forms and by then archaic Romanesque style ornament on pillars. These motifs were used, in addition to ornamenting architecture, on ecclesiastical furnishings, including screens and choir stalls: for example, the fragments of the stone screen at St Janskerk, Tervuren,[42] and the still intact wooden screen at St Nicolaaskerk, Monnikendam.[43] It seems likely that this form of ornament was introduced into England by resident Flemish sculptors and craftsmen such as those who were associated with royal commissions in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These include the stalls and gates of the chantry of Edward IV at Windsor and the stalls in Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey.[44] The bronze cage surrounding the tomb of Henry VII's is known to be the work of Thomas Ducheman,[45] and the style of its corner pillars is reminiscent of ornament in the Netherlands.

The ornament on the Swine screens have a number of close parallels, especially the contemporary rood screen at the former prebendal church at Thame, Oxfordshire (Figure 11.6).[46] Notable similarities include: the lack of vaulting; the frieze at the top of the screen (blank at Thame); the cylindrical and honeycomb ornament of the pilasters; the elaborate, vegetal tracery; and the use of linenfold panelling in the lower registers. Prebendary Richard Maudeley of Lincoln is known to have commissioned new stalls for his church in 1529,[47] and it seems likely that the screen was ordered at the same time, making it almost contemporary with the parclose screen at Swine.

[41] Kavaler, 'Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands'.

[42] Steppe, *Het Koordoksaal in de Nederlanden*, pp. 95–110.

[43] Elias, *Koorbanken en Kansels*, pl. 172.

[44] Tracy, *English Gothic Choir Stalls*, pp. 47–58; Geddes, 'John Tresilian and the Gates of Edward IV's Chantry'.

[45] Stone, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 230.

[46] Vallance, *Greater English Church Screens*, pp. 175–76.

[47] Lee, *A History of the Prebendal Church of Thame*, p. 63.

The proximity of Swine to the major North Sea trading port of Hull may help to explain this Netherlandish influence apparent in the priory's screens. The bulk of the town's trade in the later Middle Ages was with the Low Countries, and individuals of Netherlandish origin were certainly resident in the port; John and Walter Flemyng are recorded there in 1320.[48] Continental images were also being imported into Hull, and at least four were acquired for the port's two parish churches between 1438 and 1521.[49] However, screens are large, cumbersome objects that would be difficult and expensive to transport by ship; and, rather than being imported, they are much more likely to have been the work of craftsmen working locally. Indeed, Flemish influence can also be detected in other screens in northern England, including that surrounding the chantry of Prior Richard Leschman (d. 1499) at the Augustinian priory of Hexham, Northumbria, and the screen of Prior Thomas Gondibour (d. 1507) at the Augustinian cathedral priory at Carlisle.[50] There is good evidence that carvers who were at the very least of Netherlandish descent were working in early sixteenth-century Yorkshire. In 1516, a Thomas Flemyng, 'carvour' was admitted as a freeman of the City of York, and a John Flemyng with the same trade gained the freedom of the city in 1538.[51] It is alternatively possible that native carvers, such as the Thomas Hynde, documented in Hull in 1526,[52] were influenced by the style introduced by craftsmen with Netherlandish connections. It has long been recognized that Continental prints were an iconographic source for woodcarvers working in northern England at the end of the Middle Ages. Examples include misericords of *c.* 1520 at Beverley Minster, close to Swine, which are based upon woodcuts in the *Biblia Pauperum*.[53] Similarly, figurative sculpture at the Newcastle Packet, a late medieval timber framed house in Scarborough, has been shown to have a source in Continental prints.[54]

[48] *Selected Rentals and Accounts of Medieval Hull*, ed. by Horrox, p. 155.

[49] Woods, *Imported Images*, pp. 113–15.

[50] Tracy, 'The Stylistic Antecedents of the Gondibour Screen'.

[51] *Register of the Freeman of the City of York*, ed. by Collins, 1: *1272–1558*, pp. 239, 259.

[52] *Selected Rentals and Accounts of Medieval Hull*, ed. by Horrox, p. 121.

[53] Grössinger, 'The Misericords of Beverley Minster'.

[54] Pacey, 'German Prints, Flemish Craftsmen, and Yorkshire Buildings'.

Patronage

Until the very end of the Middle Ages Cistercian nunneries maintained a close relationship with the local elites.[55] The Netherlandish influence and quality of the screen at Swine is a reflection of the high status and metropolitan connections of its benefactor, Sir George Darcy (*c.* 1499–1558). The Darcys were an ancient gentry family whose estates were originally centred on Lincolnshire. By the late thirteenth century, they had become established in Yorkshire, with their principal seat at Temple Hirst, near Selby. The family rose to prominence and was briefly ennobled in the fourteenth century. They were benefactors of the Augustinian priory of Newburgh and the Benedictines at Selby. There was a decline in their status in the early fifteenth century, but they nevertheless remained a substantial gentry family. Their fortunes were restored in the early sixteenth century by Thomas Darcy (*c.* 1465–1537), a talented soldier who was ennobled by Henry VIII and made a Knight of the Garter. Religiously conservative, he was a leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, leading to his execution a year later.[56]

His son George, the patron of the screen, was knighted in 1513 after distinguishing himself at the Battle of Flodden. He was established with his own seat at Gateforth, close to Temple Hirst, and occupied a number of offices in Yorkshire, including the stewardship of manors for Pontefract Priory. Sir George was summoned to the royal court in 1524, his father recommending him to the care of Cardinal Wolsey.[57] It was perhaps thanks to this great patron of art and architecture that Sir George acquired a familiarity with modish Renaissance ornament and established contacts with the craftsmen who executed the screen at Swine in 1531.

Sir George's obtained the lordship of Swine and patronage of the priory through his marriage to Dorothy Melton in 1511. Her family had in turn acquired these in 1431 through marriage with the Hiltons.[58] The three coats of arms on the lower inscription on the chantry screen noted above refer to this descent of the priory's patronage and are decorated with a trefoil leaf for Hilton, a crosslet

[55] Vickers, 'The Social Class of Yorkshire Medieval Nuns'; Burton, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Middle Ages'; Cross, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Early Tudor Period'.

[56] For the early history of the Darcys, see Verduyn, 'The Darcy Family'.

[57] For details of Sir George Darcy's career, see Smith, *Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII*, pp. 67, 194, 241–50.

[58] For the descent of the patronage of the priory and lordship of Swine, see Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, II, 199–202.

Figure 11.7. Swine Priory, Darcy arms on the parclose screen. Photo by the author.

for Melton and a sexfoil voided for Darcy (Figure 11.7). This heraldry, therefore, made clear the association between Sir George and the priory's historic patrons.

The Hilton connection with Swine extended back to the early thirteenth century. Swine was the Hilton's mausoleum, and the alabaster monuments in their chantry are adorned with their arms and those of their familial connections, a reminder that nunneries in Yorkshire and elsewhere in England continued to attract gentry burials until the end of the Middle Ages.[59] An early nineteenth-century description of the priory notes that the arms of Hilton were also glazed in the chapel's east window.[60] Recognition of the importance of the Hiltons' historic relationship with the nunnery is suggested by the inscription 'vnius fundatoris de Swyne' beneath the arms of Sir Robert Hilton in *Jenyns' Ordinary*, an armorial roll from the second half of the fifteenth century, which contains depictions of the arms of aristocratic and gentry families, many of which had strong connections with the north. The passage of the patronage of the convent to the Darcys is similarly recorded in this manuscript by an inscription beneath the arms of Piers de la Hay which reads 'vnius fundatoris de Swyne Abbey postea Melton modo Dacy'.[61]

The heraldry on the screen at Swine demonstrates the intimate and enduring relationship between the priory and the local gentry community, and bequests to Swine by members of the gentry and Hull merchants can be related to description of the priory made in 1535. This mentions that the cloister had

[59] Cross, 'Yorkshire Nunneries in the Early Tudor Period'; Oliva, 'Patterns of Patronage to Female Monasteries'.

[60] Thompson, *A History of the Church and Priory of Swine*, p. 94

[61] London, British Library, MS Additional 40851, fol. 65^{v}.

'wyndowes rounde aboute, and all glasid, except one, which conteyn in alle by estimacon ccc^{m} xx ffoote of glasse'.[62] The cloister appears to have been glazed in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Thomas Hedon, gentleman, of Mardon, Holderness, requested burial before the image of Our Lady of Pity at the priory in 1504 and left the priory 20s for the glazing of its cloister.[63] In 1505 Robert Garner, alderman of Hull, willed 'that my wyffe make a glasse wyndowe for her and me in Swyne abbey cloister of the north side'.[64] Thanks to this benefaction, Swine was thus equipped with an architectural luxury associated with much wealthier monasteries. The Cistercian nunnery of Wienhausen, Lower Saxony, had glazed windows in its cloister by *c*. 1280.[65] Richer houses of Cistercian monks in England and Wales were building glazed cloisters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including Byland Abbey, Yorkshire, and a magnificent cloister with glazing was built in the early sixteenth century at Forde Abbey, Dorset, by Abbot Thomas Chard.[66]

Wills also provide evidence of gentry patronage of the architecture of other houses. In 1406 Sir John Scot left 10 marks for the fabric of the church at Kirklees Priory;[67] in 1412 John de Burgh bequeathed 13s 4d for the same purpose;[68] and, later in the fifteenth century, John Wollwrowe of Kirklees contributed 20d to the priory's campanile.[69] Gentry benefaction also provided nunneries with liturgical equipment, including vestments. In 1400 Dame Johanne Hesirig left Basedale 20s and a vestment of gold cloth, with Handale also receiving two vestments.[70] Joan Ward bequeathed her best gown and gilt girdle to Esholt in 1472 to buy a vestment,[71] and Margaret Dodsworth's will of 1520 provided the community at Sinningthwaite with her best diaper cloth 'for to make a alter cloth of, and a kirchiff to make a corprax of w^{t} a corprax case of gold and damasck and purple velvet'.[72]

[62] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', p. 281.

[63] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, IV, 224.

[64] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, V, 39.

[65] Hayward, 'Glazed Cloisters', p. 100.

[66] Robinson and Harrison, 'Cistercian Cloisters in England and Wales', pp. 151–52.

[67] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, I, 346

[68] *VCH: Yorkshire*, III, 170.

[69] Armytage, 'Kirklees Priory', p. 27.

[70] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, I, 266.

[71] Bell, 'Esholt Priory', p. 11.

[72] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, V, 119.

The clergy were important and often very generous benefactors of nunneries. In 1404, Bishop Walter Skirlaw of Durham left £100 to the priory of Swine (well in excess of its annual income) in return for prayers and an obit; and his sister, Joan Skirlaw, the prioress, received £40, and one of his 'best' silver cups, gilded with a cover. Swine held lands at the nearby village of Skirlaugh and the bishop's will provided also provided for the construction of a chantry chapel there.[73] The bequests of other clerics enriched the priory's library. In *c*. 1400, Peter, vicar of the parish church at Swine, bequeathed the nunnery twelve volumes in Latin, and in 1486 Thomas Hornby, chaplain of York, left Dame Anne Vavasour, a nun of Swine, a life of St Catherine in English.[74]

It is clear that the clergy continued to be patrons of Swine into the sixteenth century. The second inscription on the parclose screen at the priory names the chantry's chaplain, Thomas Bywater. The registers of the archbishop of York record that he was from Ledsham, a village in the West Riding, close to the Darcy seats at Gateforth and Temple Hirst, and that he was ordained priest at York in 1526.[75] He is documented as the 'lady priest' at the priory at Swine at the time of its suppression, when he was receiving a salary of £2 and a further £2 13s 4d in allowances.[76]

External patrons, lay and ecclesiastical, clearly enriched the material and visual culture of Swine and the other houses of Cistercian nuns in the county. In contrast, there is little evidence of internal patronage from these houses, and a likely explanation is their poverty. Even the comparatively wealthy Swine appears to have had difficulty maintaining its buildings in good repair. In February 1318 the prioress was instructed by Archbishop William Melton to have the dormitory roofed without delay 'so that the nuns might quietly and in silence be received in it, without annoyance from storms'.[77]

Nevertheless, the nunneries had some means, and this was due to the social origin of the nuns themselves, who usually came from well-connected families, as shown by the membership of several of the prestigious Corpus Christi Guild in York.[78] The prioresses occupied positions of status and performed valuable

[73] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, I, 309.

[74] Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 170–71.

[75] *York Clergy Ordinations, 1520–59*, ed. by Cross, p. 32.

[76] London, The National Archives, SP 5/2, fols 132^{v}, 134^{v}.

[77] *VCH: Yorkshire*, III, 181.

[78] For example, Cecily Hik, Prioress of Kirklees in 1473, and in the same year Edenne Neville of Joan Roose, nun of Sinningthwaite; see *Register of the Corpus Christi Guild in the City of York*, ed. by Scaife, pp. 90, 97.

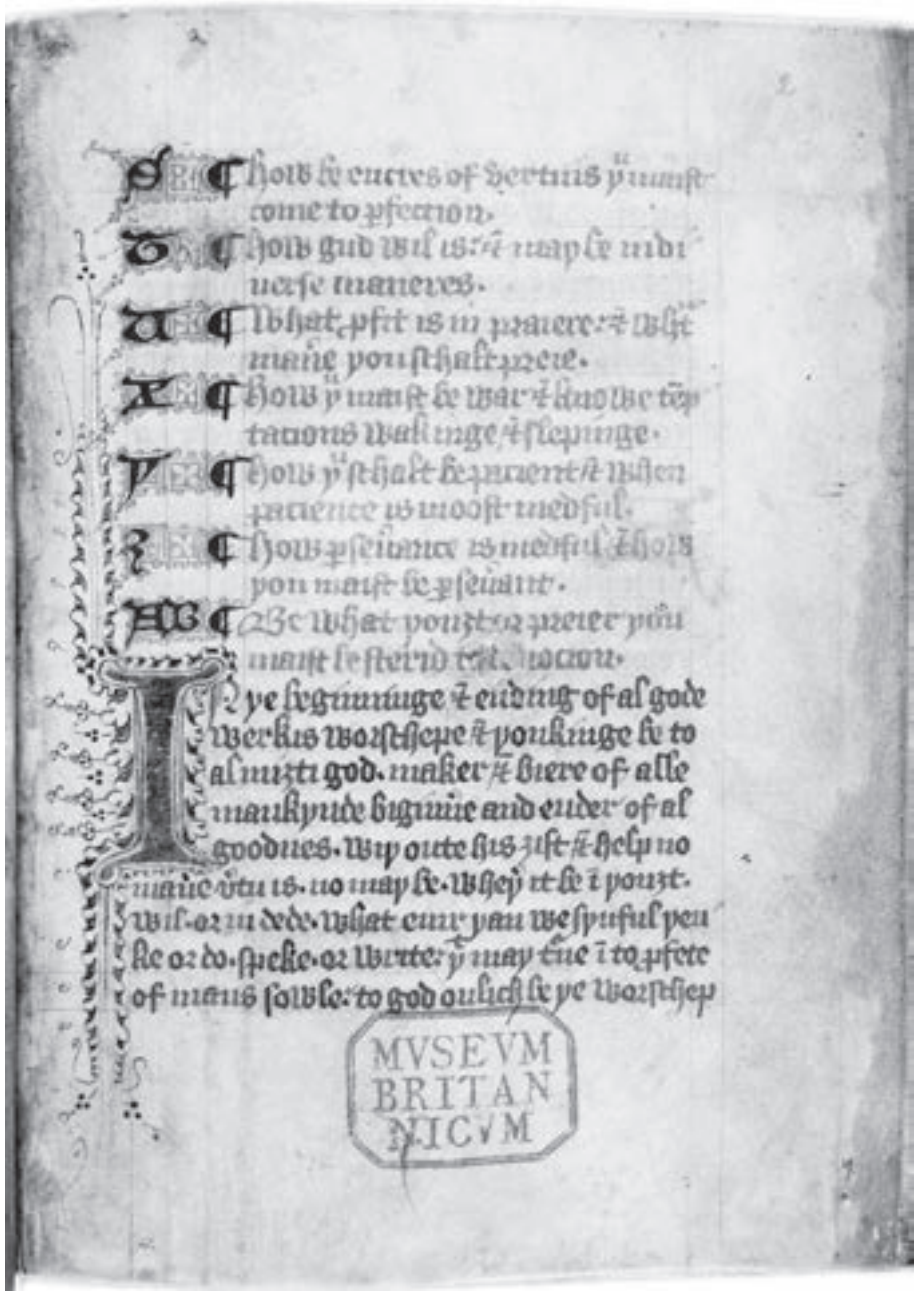

Figure 11.8. London, British Library MS Harley 2509, fol. 2r, devotional book owned by Prioress Maud Wade of Swine. Photo © British Library Board.

services for the local gentry community. At the end of the fifteenth century, Prioress Beatrix Lowe of Swine was custodian of the muniments of the Twyer family, and Prioress Isabel Whateley of Hampole was 'delivered [...] of jewels, plate and household stuff of Dame Lucy Fitzwilliam'.[79] What little evidence there is of internal patronage at a Cistercian nunnery in Yorkshire invariably relates to a prioress who belonged to an elite local family. An example is the illuminated devotional book (Figure 11.8) that is inscribed with the name of Dame Maud Wade,[80] prioress of Swine. She seems likely to have come from a prominent Holderness family with this name,[81] and she was admitted to the Corpus Christi guild in York in 1473, resigning as prioress of Swine in 1482.[82] The volume contains a number of devotional works in English, including *The Contemplation on the Dread and Love of God*, or the *Fervor Amoris*, and a life of St Catherine of Siena. Even though the former text was probably written for the laity, a number of other copies survive with a monastic provenance. The prioress's manuscript is handsomely written in a neat Gothic script and is ornamented with two illuminated initials, and there are numerous other initials with decorative penwork in red and blue. However, it is by no means a deluxe volume. It and other copies of *The Contemplation on the Dread and Love of God* have been described as 'unpretentious working books'.[83]

Ornament and Devotion

Other aspects of the late medieval ornament of Swine have also been overlooked, but they nevertheless provide insights into the extent and character of the priory's material and visual cultures and the devotional world of Cistercian nuns at the end of the Middle Ages. In the eighteenth century, 'storied glass', a narrative glazing scheme, was present in the east window at Swine,[84] and this seems to have been part of a wider decorative scheme. The 1535 description of the priory records that the church roof was 'coueryd with leade, and sylid

[79] *Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, ed. by Purvis, pp. 137, 47.

[80] London, British Library, MS Harley 2509, fol. 78^{r}.

[81] Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of the Seignory of Holderness*, I, 189, 205, 207.

[82] *Heads of Religious Houses*, ed. by Smith, p. 697.

[83] Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', p. 331; for other surviving copies with a monastic provenance, see p. 342 n.59.

[84] Thompson, *A History of the Church and Priory of Swine*, p. 126.

w^{t}yn w^{t} boourdes paynted'.[85] The ceiling possibly resembled that surviving at St Mary, Beverley, close to Swine. Here the chancel ceiling is painted with images of forty kings of England from the mythical Brutus to Henry VI. The chancel aisle once had fourteen painted panels depicting the legend of St Catherine of Alexandria, and another ceiling painted with figures and scrolls once existed in the south transept.[86] Plaster ceilings at Hampole also appear to have been decorated, fragments of plaster being recovered painted blue and ornamented with golden stars, a typical late medieval decorate scheme intended to represent the heavens.[87] Surviving Continental evidence shows that the churches of Cistercian nuns often had elaborate painted decoration, and a striking example is the nuns' choir at Wienhausen, Lower Saxony. The vault is painted with scenes from the life of Christ, the Coronation Virgin, apostles, and a choir of angels. There are also scenes from the Old Testament on the walls and figures of saints on the window jambs. The work has been dated to *c.* 1330 but was repainted in 1488 and again in the nineteenth century.[88] Fourteenth-century paintings of St Christopher, John the Baptist, and Christ blessing the Virgin decorate the walls of the refectory at Bijloke, near Ghent.[89]

There is also evidence of figurative wall painting at Swine. The removal of whitewash from the piers in the Hilton chapel in the early nineteenth century uncovered the incised image of the Virgin, with a crown and lily on one of the piers. Below *AVE M*' was inscribed in 'Gothic letters', and on the same pillar, 'on the side towards the chancel' there was a second inscription. However, this could not be read because of the 'foul bedaubings' of whitewash.[90] The Gothic script beneath the image suggests that the work was late medieval, and the inscription on the chapel's early sixteenth-century screen records that the chantry was dedicated to the Virgin. The description of the image suggests that it was similar to the representation of the Virgin on an undated seal of the priory, which also depicts her crowned and with a lily.[91]

[85] Coppack, 'How the Other Half Lived', p. 281.

[86] Pevsner and Neave, *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire*, pp. 297–98.

[87] Whiting, 'Excavations at Hampole Priory', p. 205.

[88] *Die Zisterzienser*, pp. 460–62.

[89] Coomans, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries', p. 125.

[90] Thompson, *A History of the Church and Priory of Swine*, p. 100. There is now no trace of either the indent of the painting or the inscription.

[91] Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals*, p. 21.

All of Yorkshire's Cistercian nunneries were dedicated to the Virgin, and there is considerable evidence of both individual and communal devotion to her. The seal used by the prioress of Swine at the time of the Dissolution has an image her crowned and seated on a bench-type throne, holding the Christ child on her left knee. Below, the prioress is shown kneeling in prayer.[92] Images of the Virgin at Cistercian nunneries were also the focus of lay devotion. In 1472, Joan Ward left Esholt priory her 'bedys of coral, gauditt wit calsedone to the payntyng of an ymage of Our Lady of Pete'.[93] Images of Our Lady of Pity, or the Pietà, are documented at other Cistercian nunneries in the county, where they acted as a focus for lay burials, a widespread use of this image in medieval England.[94] Thomas Hedon of Mardon asked to be buried before such an image at Swine in 1504,[95] and in 1526 Sir John Hall, vicar of Huddersfield, requested burial front of the image of Our Lady of Pity in the church at Kirklees.[96]

Conclusion

These images perished as a consequence of the Dissolution and Reformation. The English historiographical tradition that was established at this time has meant that until recently most scholars have had an unfavourable view of the quality of religious life observed within most nunneries, and their material and visual cultures have been largely neglected. Swine, and all the other Cistercian nunneries in Yorkshire, was unquestionably poor, but that does not mean that their art and architecture were uninteresting. As has been shown, the patronage of local elites and clergy helped maintain the convents' buildings and contributed to the nuns' material culture. Thanks to the wealth and status of these patrons, the nunneries had 'ffayre' buildings, including a glazed cloister at Swine, which also had screens of the highest quality and latest fashion. Nunneries also benefited by the donation of vestments and books. The gentry favoured Cistercian nunneries with their burials until the very end of the Middle Ages, and recorded their patronage by the depiction of their arms in stained glass windows and in sculpture. Prioresses were also, on occasion, patrons. Occupying positions of local status, they usually originated from the

[92] Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals*, p. 21.

[93] Bell, 'Esholt Priory', 11.

[94] Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, p. 140

[95] *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. by Raine and others, IV, 224.

[96] Armytage, 'Kirklees Priory', p. 29.

gentry families who were such important benefactors of their convents, and perhaps it was their family means rather than the resources of the convent that paid for the illuminated book owned by Prioress Wade of Swine.

The surviving evidence allows some insights into the spiritual world of Cistercian nuns. Images of the Virgin, to whom all Cistercian nunneries were dedicated, proliferated and were the focus of both individual and communal adoration. Like elsewhere in England, burial before images of Our Lady of Pity was esteemed. These requests for burial support the conclusions of a recent generation of scholars that female monasticism remained vibrant and continued to fulfil useful religious and social functions until the eve of the Suppression. This enduring vitality ensured that the art and architecture of Swine Priory continued to attract patrons until the very end of the Middle Ages and was much more of a silk purse than a sow's ear.

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Pro remedio anime sue: Cistercian Nuns and Space in the Low Countries

Erin L. Jordan

In 1242, Marguerite, countess of Flanders and Hainaut, issued a charter in her capacity as executrix of the will of Isabelle, the widow of Thierry, castellan of Diksmuide. In accordance with Isabelle's last wishes, Marguerite arranged to have a grant of 400 *livres parisis* annual rent to be divided equally between the Cistercian nunneries of Bijloke and Nieuwenbos to fund commemorative services on behalf of Isabelle and her late husband. Marguerite recognized that fulfilling Isabelle's request might overtax the liturgical staff currently in place in both abbeys. To that end, she gave each permission to use the funds to hire additional chaplains to supplement those currently in residence if necessary, ensuring each abbey's ability to offer the spiritual remuneration desired by patrons like Isabelle.[1] The contents of this charter are remarkable for a number of reasons. The centrality of female actors is one. Isabelle was clearly a wealthy and powerful woman. Her husband, Thierry III, was the castellan of Diksmuide and, through her, lord of Beveran Waas. Together the couple ranked among the most important nobles in the county of Flanders.[2] Marguerite was even more powerful. The daughter of Baldwin IX, count of Flanders and Hainaut and first Latin emperor of Constantinople, and Marie of Champagne, she succeeded her older sister Jeanne as countess in 1244, ruling Flanders and Hainaut in her

[1] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Nieuwebos, O 50/22.

[2] Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, I, 674. On the importance of castellans in Flanders, see Blommaert, *Les Chatelains de Flandre*.

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own right until 1278/80.[3] Together, Isabelle and Marguerite demonstrate the ability of women to inherit powerful offices, exercise authority, and dispense wealth well into the thirteenth century, a period often characterized by scholars as increasingly detrimental to members of the female sex.[4] However, this discussion does not concern itself with the ability of females to wield power, but rather with the second feature of the charter: namely, the esteem placed by those women on the sacred space within a Cistercian nunnery.

Contrary to what scholars have often assumed about the position of nuns in the spiritual landscape of the thirteenth century, patrons like Isabelle continued to value their prayers — so much so that they were willing to entrust them with their spiritual fates.[5] By the end of the thirteenth century, the counties of Flanders and Hainaut were peppered with monastic and religious foundations. Patrons like Isabelle had a wide spectrum of choices from which to choose when considering venues for commemorative services. In Ghent alone there were nearly a dozen communities, ranging from the more traditional Benedictine abbeys of St Bavon and St Peter to more recent arrivals like the Dominicans and Franciscans. Cistercian monks inhabited the monastery of Boudelo, located just north of the city.[6] In the face of all these possibilities, Isabelle's decision to request commemorative services from not one but two Cistercian nunneries is telling. Clearly, Isabelle perceived the space within the

[3] In spite of his prominence in late twelfth-century French politics and his role in the infamous Fourth Crusade, little has been written about Baldwin IX. The most comprehensive study remains that of Wolff, 'Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople'. For his daughters and successors, Jeanne and Marguerite, see Luykx, *Johanna van Constantinopel, gravin van Vlaanderen en Henegouwen*; and Jordan, *Women, Power and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages*. Marguerite abdicated as countess of Flanders in 1278, allowing power to pass to her son, Guy. She remained countess of Hainaut until her death in 1280.

[4] This characterization of the position of women regarding land and inheritance was made prevalent by Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, trans. by Bray, and more recently Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe*, p. 5. Duby's model of declining female power, however, has been challenged, most notably by Evergates, 'The Feudal Imaginary of Georges Duby'. See also Livingstone, 'Noblewomen's Control of Property' and, more recently, *Out of Love For My Kin*.

[5] For scholarship that presents nunneries, Cistercian in particular, in a negative light, see Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 217; Jordan, 'The Cistercian Nunnery of La Cour Notre-Dame de Michery'; de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p. 53.

[6] On monasticism in the region generally, see Michel, *Abbayes et monasteries de Belgique*, and Canivez, *L'Ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique*. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the mendicants had appeared on the scene, providing even more competition for religious patronage. See Simons, *Stad en Apostolaat*.

Cistercian nunnery as exceptionally sacred, possessing the ability to confer spiritual value on the commemorative services offered by the nuns and affording her the opportunity to share vicariously that space in the form of prayers and anniversary masses.

While somewhat unusual in terms of the status of the donor and the amount of wealth entailed in the donation, the charter issued by Marguerite is by no means exceptional in its request or its recipient. Dozens of similar examples exist, recorded in charters by nunneries in the thirteenth century and currently housed in state and departmental archives across Belgium and northern France.[7] By the middle of the thirteenth century, thirty Cistercian nunneries existed in the counties of Flanders and Hainaut; of these, twenty-one have left considerable archival collections.[8] Such documents provide an opportunity to explore the relationship between gender, space, and monasticism in the Middle Ages, particularly as it pertained to Cistercian nuns. This discussion focuses specifically on the interior space of the cloister, examining it from a conceptual as well as a physical point of view, through investigating requests for commemorative services. Conceptually, it will utilize extant documents to explore the sacred meaning of space and assess the extent to which it was valued by patrons. It will simultaneously assess the physical space within these communities, using charters to penetrate the walls of the cloister, identifying the individuals who shared that space with the nuns. Understanding what confers meaning on a particular space often entails identifying how that space was regulated. The measures taken to regulate movement across the boundaries that delimited sacred from secular space are often privileged in scholarly debates about monastic life.[9]

[7] These documents are predominantly housed in the Archives Départementale du Nord, Lille, France, and the various Rijksarchief in Belgium.

[8] This list includes the abbeys of Ath (1216), Beaupré at Grimminge (1228), Beaupré-sur-la-Lys (1220), Blendecques (founded 1186, incorporated 1228), Bijloke (1228), Bonham (1233), Brayelle (founded 1196, incorporated 1212), Doornzele (1234), Épinlieu (1216), Flines (1234), Fontenelle (1212), Hemelsdale (1237), Groeninghe (1237), Maagdendale (1233), Marquette (1224), Wevelgem (1214), Nieuwenbos (1215), Notre-Dame des Près (1218), Notre-Dame d'Olive (1233), Oosteeklo (1228), Ravensberg (1194), Saulchoir (1233), Soleilmont (founded 1088, incorporated 1237), Spermalie (founded 1200, incorporated 1234), Ter Hagen (1234), Ter Roosen (1228), Verger (1225), Vivier (1219), Woestine (1233), and Zwijveke (founded 1214, incorporated 1233). For a history of the Order in this region, which comprises the modern Belgian provinces of West Flanders, East Flanders, and Hainaut and the French departments of Pas-de-Calais and Nord, see Michel, *Abbayes et monastères de Belgique*, and Sabbe, Lamberigts, and Gistelinck, *Bernardus en de Cistercienzerfamilie in Belgie*.

[9] The issue of enclosure tends to dominate discussions of late medieval monastic life for

Although at times limited to providing a snapshot of those who may have been within the abbey's walls for the purpose of a specific transaction (most commonly donors and those individuals witnessing the donation), the charters do identify individuals who occupied the space within the cloister more permanently. The presence of chaplains, priests, father abbots, and patrons of both sexes within the cloisters examined here indicate that the most sacred spaces within the monastery were never unilaterally restricted to nuns, a conclusion that has significant implications for our understanding of gender and monasticism during this period. By assessing the various commemorative services sought from Cistercian nunneries, most notably anniversary masses, provisions for chaplains, and requests for burials, this investigation of the space within the cloister aims to shed new light on the experience of nuns and the various ways that that experience was influenced by gender.

Even the most general requests for commemorative services reveal the value placed on the sacred space of the cloister, and the laity's regard for the prayers of Cistercian nuns in particular. They also allow us better to appreciate what made a certain space sacred in the medieval imaginary, who could be present and in what capacity. The qualitative and quantitative analysis employed here indicates that women's houses fielded nearly as many requests for such commemorative services as men's. Further, men and women were equally inclined to request such services of nuns, as illustrated in the obituary of the Cistercian nunnery of Fontenelle. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were 126 individuals who received memorial masses from the abbey, sixty-six men and sixty women.[10] While many of those listed were nuns from the community or their relatives, a considerable number were drawn from the local nobility, reflecting the value such patrons placed on the spiritual services offered by the nuns, services that would have been performed within the sacred space of the cloister.

In October 1239, Folcandis, a resident of the city of Ghent, and his wife Aelidis stipulated that the 14 *librarum* annual rent left to the abbey of Oosteeklo in their will be used for obits 'following the usage of the Cistercian Order'.[11] The nuns received a similar request in 1248 from Hosto de Wedergrada,

women, though the focus is most often on legislation and the beliefs that prompted it rather than on the impact of such policies. See Anson, 'Papal Enclosure for Nuns'; Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*; Johnson, 'The Cloistering of Medieval Nuns', and Jordan, 'Roving Nuns and Cistercian Realities'.

[10] Lille, Archives Départementale du Nord (ADN), 32H3.

[11] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Oost-Eecklo, Inv. 31, no. 7.

knight, and his wife Johanna. The couple donated an annual rent of 20 *solidos* on pasture land in the parish of Caprica. In return, they demanded that a mass be performed on the anniversary of their deaths.[12] In 1224, the dean of the city of Lille made a donation of 200 *libras flandrensis* to the abbey of Nieuwenbos for a daily mass in honour of the Virgin Mary. Any additional funds were to be distributed among the poor.[13] The abbey's founder, Countess Jeanne, donated 310 *bonniers* of land in 1218, requesting in return that anniversary masses be said for her and her husband Ferrand, as well as for her father Baldwin, her mother Marie, and her uncle Philip of Alsace, whom her father succeeded as count of Flanders in 1191.[14] In return for a donation of 80 *livres parisis*, which was used to purchase land at Beaucamps, the nuns of Notre-Dame des Près agreed to have anniversary masses performed for Borgain du Sauchoit de Lens, the donor, as well as for his sisters Marien and Jehanain.[15]

The nuns of Blendecques received a donation of land from Mahaut, daughter of the castellan of St Omer, to assist in the construction of their new church. In return, Mahaut requested that the nuns recite psalms for her soul, as well as those of her father, mother, sisters, and brothers.[16] Although it initially used the parish church of Blendecques for its liturgical needs, the abbey of Blendecqes was able to erect its own church as a result of Mahaut's donation. The abbey of Blendeques attracted the attention of an even more powerful woman in 1221, when Béatrix, countess of Guînes and castellan of Bourbourg, made an extremely generous donation on behalf of her father Gautier, formerly castellan of Bourbourg, her mother Mahaut de Béthune, her husband Arnoul, the current count of Guînes, and her son Henry.[17] Blendecques received a number of other requests for commemoration, ranging from pittances to prayers to providing wine for the daily mass, reflecting the value members of the local nobility placed on the spiritual services offered by its nuns.[18] Even those patrons who

[12] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Oost-Eecklo, Inv. 31, no. 12.

[13] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Nieuwenbos, O 50/17.

[14] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Nieuwenbos, O 50/22.

[15] ADN, 30H23, pièce 212, 2 April 1293.

[16] Bonvarlet, 'Chronique de l'abbaye de Sainte-Colombe de Blendecques', p. 125.

[17] Bonvarelt, 'Chronique de l'abbaye de Sainte-Colombe de Blendecques', p. 127 (4 May 1221).

[18] In 1238 Guy, castellan of Berghes, granted an annual rent of six *rasieres* of wheat to provide wine. In 1242 Guillaume de Suerdes, chevalier de Clety, granted an annual rent on two houses in the village of Saint Omer, located near the market, requesting the celebration of anniversary mass in return. In May 1265 Enguerran Gohcaus, knight, castellan d'Ardres,

considered death to be an immediate possibility looked to Cistercian nuns for spiritual assistance, as reflected in a donation made by Helenard, seigneur of Clarques and Grigny, to the nuns of Blendecques in October 1223 prior to his departure on the Albigensian Crusade. Helenard granted the nuns 20 *measures* of land at Cormettes in return for prayers to be said on his behalf. In the donation charter, he stipulated that if he died on crusade, the prayers should be converted to an obit, and the donation increased by thirty additional *measures* of woods at Raugosart.[19]

Taken collectively, the charters cited above illustrate increasing emphasis on anniversary masses and obits that characterized commemoration during the thirteenth century, when donors seemed more intent on securing individual intervention from monks and nuns. This development culminated in the emergence of the chantry (*chapéllenie* in French), which reserved the liturgical services of a chaplain specifically for a single donor and members of his or her family.[20] As early as 1225, the Cistercian Order was concerned about the implication of such requests, attempting to restrict such commemorative services to the most significant patrons of a foundation and stipulating that patrons who were granted an anniversary mass were only entitled to one per year.[21] As the discussion here indicates, it seems unlikely that the Order's effort to stem the tide of such requests was successful.

While the text of such donations requesting anniversary masses and obits implies, but does not confirm, the permanent presence of chaplains in these abbeys, other charters are more revealing, illustrating the gender diversity of personnel within monastic communities as well as the ability of Cistercian nuns to avoid the problems that could have resulted from their inability to be ordained.

granted an annual rent for anniversary masses for him and his wife. See Bonvarlet, 'Chronique de l'abbaye de Sainte-Colombe de Blendecques', pp. 132–34.

[19] Bonvarlet, 'Chronique de l'abbaye de Sainte-Colombe de Blendecques', p. 129.

[20] Colvin, 'The Origin of Chantries'. Colvin defines a chantry as 'an endowment for the performance of masses and other works of charity for the benefit of the souls of specified persons' (p. 164). For the significance of spiritual commemoration to patrons generally, see Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise*; Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages*; and McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*.

[21] Colvin, 'The Origin of Chantries', pp. 168–69. Additional legislation regarding anniversary masses was issued by the General Chapter in 1250 and 1272. Colvin suggests the preoccupation of patrons with the anniversary mass was integrally connected to the formalization of the doctrine of purgatory, completed in 1274. See also Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Context*, pp. 206–07.

One of the earliest Cistercian abbeys for nuns founded in the region was that of Ravensberg, established by Christina of Ravensberg in 1196. The community counted a chaplain among its residents from its very beginning.[22] In 1196, Pope Celestine III issued a charter to the abbey in which he confirmed a number of donations, and granted the nuns the right to elect their own chaplain.[23] A similar charter was issued in the same year by Arnould, the prévôt of Watten.[24] In 1205, Christina, the abbey's founder, donated an annual rent of 10 *rasieres* of oats to provide for a chaplain, and in 1227, Countess Jeanne and her husband Ferrand made a donation of an annual rent of 10½ *marcs* and 11 rams, valued at 30 *deniers* each, on the condition that the money be used to support a chaplain who would celebrate the Divine Offices for them and their predecessors.[25]

In spite of what appears to have been a rather modest endowment, the abbey of Oosteeklo supported at least one chaplain, as indicated by several donations made to the abbey requesting masses referenced above. A donation of a tithe made by Everardus to the abbey of Nieuwenbos in Ghent in 1220 suggests that the abbey was staffed with several chaplains capable of performing masses. Everardus requested that a mass be said daily by one of the two chaplains currently in residence.[26] In 1219, Countess Jeanne made a donation to Niewenbos of 12 *bonniers*. The countess stipulated that the revenue generated by the donation be used for the support of the abbey's priests.[27] Even the smallest of the Cistercian nunneries in Flanders and Hainaut supported chaplains, providing further illustration of the continued permeability of the cloister well into the thirteenth century. For example, in 1219, the knight Gautier du Flos founded a chaplaincy in the church of the abbey of Beaupré-sur-la-Lys.[28] Mahaut de Béthune, the daughter-in-law of Countess Marguerite, established a perpetual chantry in the abbey of Beaupré as well, donating an annual rent of 13 *livres parisis* to provide the necessary funds.[29]

[22] De Coussemaker, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Ravensberg', pp. 251–52, no. 13.

[23] De Coussemaker, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Ravensberg', p. 250, no. 5.

[24] De Coussemaker, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Ravensberg', p. 251, no. 7.

[25] De Coussemaker, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Ravensberg', p. 259, no. 32.

[26] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Nieuwenbos, O 50/11.

[27] Vleeschouwers, *Het archief van de Abdij van Boudelo to Sinaai-Waas en te Gent*, pp. 181–82, no. 20 (9 October 1219).

[28] ADN, 29H3, pièce 23, 1219.

[29] Dom Eugène, 'Histoire de l'abbaye de Beaupré-sur-la-Lys', p. 233

Prior to leaving on pilgrimage to Compostela, Arnoul, castellan of Bourbourg, donated a rent of 12 *livres* on a mill at Blendecques to the nuns of Sainte-Colombe. The money was specifically earmarked for the service of a chaplain. It is clear from the witness lists of later charters that a chaplain named Hugh was in residence among the nuns of Blendecques from at least 1209.[30] Based on the litany of requests for anniversary masses and obits that appear in the cartulary of Blendecques, Chaplain Hugh would have been kept extremely occupied by the liturgical services requested from the abbey's patrons. In 1227, Arnulf, described as a knight, granted the nuns of Doornzele an annual rent of 100 *livres flandres* 'for the support of a priest for the convent'. Presumably, the priest would include Arnulf in his commemorative services.[31] The abbey of Doornzele received a similar donation from Marguerite de Valle of 150 *libras flandrensis* in September 1240 for the support of a chaplain to perform daily masses on her behalf in the abbey's church.[32]

While some patrons were vague about the exact nature of the services they required in return for their grants, other donors were more specific. For example, in 1227, Count Ferrand and Countess Jeanne granted the nuns of Épinlieu an annual rent of 13 *libras* to provide a chaplain who would perform the Divine Office on their behalf once a day.[33] Several male donors established obits in the abbey of Hemelsdale, including Salemons Morins, bourgeois of Ypres, and Michiel de Trehout.[34] By including the monetary provisions necessary to provide the chaplains needed to perform the desired masses, such donations surmounted the obstacles faced by the nuns in fulfilling their requests.

While the prohibition against ordaining women may have had the potential to disadvantage nuns, the tendency of donors to provide the funds necessary to hire chaplains allowed them to circumvent such restrictions resulting from views about their sex. And in spite of ecclesiastical attempts to reserve the most sacred space of the abbey for nuns only, the commemorative services demanded by patrons perpetuated the presence of men within the interior of the cloister. As these documents demonstrate, chaplains and priests remained prominent

[30] Bonvarlet, 'Chronique de l'Abbaye de Sainte-Colombe de Blendecques', p. 95.

[31] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Doorenzele, Inv. 027/C 4, 16 June 1227.

[32] Gent, Rijksarchief, Abdij Doorenzele, Inv. 027/C 19.

[33] *Chronique de l'abbaye d'Epinlieu*, ed. by Devillers, no. 55 (1229).

[34] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Hemelsdale*, ed. by Van de Putte, p. 61, no. 20 (1270) and p. 58, no. 17 (March 1266). Both charters included detailed discussions of the monetary provisions provided by each donor.

features of Cistercian nunneries throughout the thirteenth centuries. Their presence did not detract from the sacred nature of the space they occupied, as reflected in the propensity of donors to seek spiritual services from these communities. This suggests the need to revisit current conceptions about the relationship between gender and the sacred in the Middle Ages. Scholars in the past have engaged in extensive discussions about the need to control such space once it was understood as sacred in order to maintain its spiritual integrity. They have typically focused on the gendered nature of such restrictions and their implications for women, understood as routinely denied access to sacred space for fear of pollution. Similarly, scholars have long discussed ecclesiastical efforts to control the spaces occupied by religious women, preventing the movement of nuns outside of their cloister walls and prohibiting men from penetrating cloister walls, regardless of their capacity. As the discussion here demonstrates, the evidence provided by the charters reveals a much more complex situation that prompts reconsideration of the relationship between space and gender in the medieval monastery, as well as in medieval mindset more generally. While scholars have examined the sacred nature of monastic space, they have often focused on communities of monks or cathedrals, places that often understood the very presence of women to be polluting and limited their access accordingly.[35] The logical application of this conclusion to monastic space occupied by nuns suggests that it would be perceived as having less spiritual value, due to the very presence of members of the 'inferior' sex. Yet examining the value patrons placed on women's religious communities indicates that not all women were understood this way, and that the relationship between gender and spirituality was much more complex than we have previously assumed.[36]

Due to the vagaries of time and the destructive nature of war, physical remains of Cistercian communities in Flanders and Hainaut from the thirteenth century are exceedingly rare.[37] Architectural plans, when available, pro-

[35] Schulenburg, 'Gender, Celibacy and Proscriptions of Sacred Space', p. 192, focuses on the exclusion of women from monastic churches, which she interprets as further evidence of the church's ongoing attempts to exclude women from sacred space. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, deliberately excludes nunneries from the discussion (p. 12). The exception would be Gilchrist, who is more focused on archaeology as reflecting gender difference; Gilchrist, 'The Spatial Archaeology of Gender Domains' and *Gender and Material Culture*.

[36] Examples of space as theoretical construct, particularly in conjunction with discussion of gender, include Spain, *Gendered Spaces*; and Johnson, '*Mulier et monialis*', p. 242.

[37] Beginning with the religious wars at the end of the sixteenth century and intensifying again with the French Revolution and forced dissolution of monastic communities in the

vide a sense of the structure and dimensions of Cistercian abbeys, but they tell us very little about the interior of the space.[38] Similarly, archaeological excavations provide knowledge of the layout of an abbey but reveal little information about the individuals who resided within it. In these instances, written documentation provides an important supplement to the material evidence we do have. Further, in the complete absence of material remains, charters provide an opportunity better to understand how space was configured within Cistercian abbeys. The chapels and altars that they often arranged for would have been instrumental in defining the interior space of the abbey churches in which they were placed, on occasion even providing alterations to the physical structure. While the nature of the source prevents us from determining their exact placement, we are able to know that they were there. Since few of these communities have left any physical traces of their original buildings, this proves to be a significant addition to our very limited knowledge of what a thirteenth-century Cistercian nunnery would have looked like, inside and out.[39]

Close examination of the documents reveals much about the various ways that space within these abbeys was configured. The tendency of patrons to demand anniversary masses in return for the donations described could prompt the physical transformation of monastic architecture over the course of the thirteenth century. Accommodating such requests often entailed the construction of additional altars, housed in chapels that radiated from the centre of the church. In the absence of material evidence, scholars have concluded that nuns seldom faced such pressures to alter the physical space within their churches, in part because they fielded few requests for the type of such commemorative services that prompted them to begin with.[40] However, as the examples drawn from the charter evidence attest, Cistercian nuns not only received requests for anniversary masses, but they built chapels and altars to facilitate their ability to fulfill such requests, transforming the physical space of their communities accordingly.

eighteenth century, the abbeys of Flanders and Hainaut were almost systematically destroyed; Coomans, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries', p. 63.

[38] Chauvin, *Marquette-lez-Lille à la Redécouverte de l'Abbaye de la comtesse Jeanne*, uses charters and cartularies to determine what buildings were present within abbey complex. Plans of the abbatial churches of Bijloke and Flines are published in Dimier, *Recueil de plans d'églises cisterciennes*, II, pls 37 and 114.

[39] Coomans, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries', p. 65.

[40] Even if archaeological remains were extant, the presence of altars and chantries might not be evident because such structures did not always leave tangible evidence of their presence within the church; Colvin, 'The Origin of Chantries', p. 164.

The construction of chapels often resulted from arrangements made by individual donors, especially those involved with the initial foundation of the abbey. Mathilda, lady of Tenremonde, requested that the abbey of Zwijveke arrange for a priest to perform a mass on her behalf every Sunday after prime 'in accordance with the rites of the Cistercian Order.' In order to realize her demands, she provided the funds necessary to establish a chapel and pay for the services of a permanent chaplain.[41] The foundation of the abbey of Notre Dame d'Olive is often attributed to a member of the local bourgeoisie named Guillaume. The abbey was built on land first donated by Berthe de Morlanwelz, widow of Eustace, seigneur de Roeulx. Guillaume not only arranged to have seven nuns sent from the nearby monastery of Moustier-sur-Sambre, but he served as the abbey's chaplain until his death in 1240.[42]

A number of individuals founded chapels in the abbey of Flines, including the founder Countess Marguerite, her son Guy, and her daughter-in-law Mahaut. Mahaut became an avid patron of Cistercian women in Flanders and Hainaut, erecting chapels in the abbeys of Flines, Beaupré-sur-la-Lys, and Zwijveke.[43] Flines also received a donation of twenty *livres* from Jean, seigneur de Dampierre and de St Dizier, to fund 'a chapel in the church for the soul of his dear seigneur and father of good memory Jean.'[44] Although the configuration of the abbey complex in the thirteenth century is unknown, the plan of the church does exist. Archival evidence, used in tandem with archaeological investigation has revealed the existence of thirteen secondary altars by 1279, along with five radiating chapels.[45]

In June 1277, Marie, abbess of Brayelle, issued a charter confirming a donation made to her abbey by Pierre, knight and lord of Ghoy, of an annual rent of 100 *libras parisienses*, to be used to erect a chapel in which services would

[41] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Zwijveke-lez-Termonde*, ed. by De Vlaminck, pp. 52–53, no. 59 (7 February 1250).

[42] Little remains of the abbey's archives, though excavations have revealed the configuration of the abbey complex; *Monasticon Belge*, ed. by Berlière and others, 1.2, p. 371.

[43] Mahuat made several donations to Flines to provide monetary support for a chaplain to perform masses on her behalf: ADN, B 446/202 (27 March 1259) and B 446/1264 (13 April 1262); for Beaupré see ADN, 2187 51 H, no. 1202 (1258); and for Zwijveke, ADN, 2187 51 H, no. 1202 (1258).

[44] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Flines*, ed. by Hautcoeur, pp. 158–59, no. 145 (September 1263); pp. 261–62, no. 240 (19 October 1284).

[45] Heddebaut, 'L'Abbaye de Flines'.

be performed twice a week on his and his wife's behalf.[46] In 1293, Pierre's wife Honnestasse de Hamelaincourt added an additional six *livres parisis* annual rent along with a life rent of an unspecified amount, and requested that the number of masses said per week be increased to four. A pittance was to be distributed to the nuns on the day of her death.[47] In spite of the absence of architectural evidence for the abbey of Brayelle, which was destroyed during the French Revolution, the written evidence reveals that after her death, Honesstasse was buried in the chapel her donation funded.

Honnestasse was not alone in requesting burial within the monastic precincts, preferably within the abbey's church. While prayers and obits provided an opportunity for patrons to participate vicariously in the spiritual life of the monastic community, burials were even more desired by donors seeking physically to share the sacred space of the abbey for eternity.[48] Archaeological investigation into the site of the abbey of Beaupré-sur-la-Lys revealed the presence of several sepulchres in the abbey church, including their most prominent patron, Sybille de Wavrin, who was buried under the nuns' choir 'sur un marbre plat ou est empreinte la figure d'une dame couronnée avec ceste escrit aux environs: Cy gist Sibille, dame de Wavrin et de Liller'. Remains of a second tomb near the sacristy were also discovered. It was identified as the burial site of Marie, chatelaine of Berghes, who died 1265.[49] Similarly, several sepulchral enclosures were discovered at Fontenelle, indicating the burial of at least two individuals within the abbey church.[50]

While archaeological excavation has revealed the presence of tombs in the abbeys mentioned above, written evidence has proven equally valuable for those nunneries that left no material traces of their thirteenth-century structures.

[46] *Cartulaire et abbesses de la Brayelle d'Annai*, ed. by Demarquette, pp. 378–79, no. 109 (June 1277).

[47] *Cartulaire et abbesses de la Brayelle d'Annai*, ed. by Demarquette, pp. 379–81, no. 110 (June 1293).

[48] On burials, see Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, who argues that the physical sites of death were spaces associated with memory and commemoration, an association that strengthened as the thirteenth century wore on (p. 236). Also Hall, 'The Legislative Background to the Burial of Laity'. The significance of burial location to patrons is addressed by Golding, 'Burials and Benefactions'.

[49] Dom Eugène, 'Histoire de l'abbaye de Beaupré-sur-la-Lys', p. 229 ; it is interesting that Piérone de Lannoy, abbess of Beaupré, was buried in the chapter house following her death in 1261, rather than in the abbey's church (p. 236).

[50] Beaussart and Maliet, 'Les Pavements de l'abbatiale de Fontenelle a Maing'.

Egidius de Bredeene, chancellor of Flanders and a canon of St Donatien, was instrumental in the foundation and early growth of the abbey of Spermalie. His special relationship with the community was demonstrated in his burial in the nuns' choir, beneath an elaborate marble sepulchre.[51] Similarly, Guillaume, the founder and first chaplain of the abbey of Notre-Dame d'Olive at Morlanwelz, was buried in the abbey church following his death in 1233. Like their male counterparts, female founders of Cistercian nunneries also sought a permanent place among the nuns. Marguerite de Guînes, the founder of the abbey of Wevelgem, was initially buried in the church at its original location in Moorseele after her death in 1221. Her body was later exhumed and moved to the new church after its completion the 1230s, where it was buried in the middle of the nuns' choir. Their decision to move the body of their founder and most generous patron reflects the nuns' recognition that it was their presence that conferred spiritual significance upon the space within the cloister; in their absence, the structure lost its sacred value — hence, the need to transfer the body of Marguerite.[52]

In accordance with the wishes expressed in her testament, Countess Jeanne was buried at Marquette following her death in 1244, alongside her husband Ferrand and daughter Marie. They were interred in the middle of the nuns' choir; their prominent burial location was clearly intended to reflect their position as founders of the prosperous abbey. They were also ideally positioned to benefit from the prayers and songs offered daily by the nuns when they congregated in the church for liturgical services. Jeanne's nephew Guillaume, who was killed at a tournament in 1251,was buried in the church of Marquette in a lateral chapel. The significance associated with one's final resting site is reflected in the dilemma faced by Guillaume's wife, Béatrice of Brabant. During her extended widowhood, Béatrice developed an extremely close relationship with the nuns of Groeninghe, building a house within the enclosure of the abbey that eventually became her primary residence. In spite of her clear affinity for Groeninghe, Béatrice, who never remarried after Guillaume's untimely death, requested that she be buried alongside her husband in the abbey of Marquette. However, in a gesture rife with symbolism, she stipulated that her heart remain with the nuns of Groeninghe, interred in a marble effigy positioned at the centre of the nuns' choir.[53]

[51] Canivez, *L'Ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique*, p. 430.

[52] *Monasticon Belge*, ed. by Ursmer Berlière and others, III.2, p. 479.

[53] Coomans, 'Moniales cisterciennes et mémoire dynastique', p. 104.

Archaeological investigation, in tandem with written documentation, has revealed the presence of a number of individuals in the abbey church of Flines, most notably its foundress, Countess Marguerite, who was buried in a particularly prominent location at the heart of the choir, surrounded by the numerous relics she had donated to the abbey in her will.[54] Sharing this sacred space with Marguerite was her second husband William of Dampierre. William was buried at the abbey's initial location in Orchies. His body was transferred after the abbey was relocated, and was interred in one of the many chapels of the new church. Flines was also the burial site of Marguerite and William's son, Guy; his wife, Mahaut de Béthune; and Guy's son Robert and his wife, Blanche of Sicily. Marguerite's youngest daughter, Marie, a nun at Flines, occupied the space in the choir with her. Marguerite's granddaughters, Jeanne de Dampierre and Jeanne d'Avesnes, were buried in to the left of the altar in the church and in the chapter room, respectively. A number of other prominent individuals not connected to the comital family also requested and received permission to erect sepulchres in the abbey, including Jean de Neuville, prévôt of Soignies, and Gerard, prévôt of Cassel.

Cistercian nunneries in the thirteenth century were vibrant communities, constantly evolving to meet the needs of patrons and potential adherents. In addition, the experiences discussed here prompt a reconsideration of a number of past assumptions about the limitations faced by religious women in securing patronage and sustaining their communities. Contrary to claims about the inferiority of religious women in the spiritual hierarchy of the Middle Ages, the evidence for Cistercian nunneries in Flanders and Hainaut suggests that not only were nunneries not disadvantaged by their inability to offer such commemorative services, but that such services were actually sought from them as often as they were from their male counterparts. In suggesting that nuns were viewed as inferior to their male counterparts in the monastic landscape, their motives suspect and the finances of their abbeys muddled, scholars have often cited their inability to attract sustained religious patronage. Such views ultimately stem from an interpretation of medieval society that assumes that men's prayers were more valued than women's. In particular, historians have argued

[54] For details regarding the burial of Marguerite, see Coomans, 'Moniales cisterciennes et mémoire dynastique'. Anne Lester disagrees with Coomans regarding the burial place of Marguerite's husband William, arguing instead for a sepulture at the abbey of St Dizier, which he founded; Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, p. 166. Based on the written evidence, most notably Marguerite's testament of 1278, which clearly stipulated burial next to William, who had predeceased her, I concur with Coomans.

that nuns were less capable of providing the types of commemorative services preferred by thirteenth-century patrons, leading patrons to direct donations to communities of monks instead.[55] Most notably, the anniversary mass has received most of this attention. This type of commemoration involved the performance of a mass, requiring the presence of an ordained individual. Since church doctrine prohibited the ordination of women, nuns are often viewed as being disadvantaged in terms of the donations and resources that would have accompanied such requests.[56] Male communities could adjust to this shift in commemoration by including more ordained monks among their ranks; nuns could not, prompting scholars to assume that donations to their communities declined accordingly.[57] To quote C. H. Lawrence, 'The lay donor who endowed a monastery hoped to reap spiritual benefits from his gift, and the most highly valued of these was one that women could not provide: women could not celebrate mass.'[58] As the numerous examples cited above attest, Lawrence was mistaken in his conclusions about the inability of women to provide commemorative services desired by patrons. This corrective to our assessment of the appeal of female prayers has significant implications for our understanding of the position of women in the spiritual landscape of medieval Europe more generally.

As the discussion here demonstrates, nuns employed and occupied physical space in ways that very much resembled those of their male counterparts. The most notable difference between foundations for religious men and women seems to be that men's communities attempted to reserve their most sacred places for males only, while women's communities were more diverse. This difference has been noted by scholars, who often interpret the presence of men within the cloister in a negative light. It is often explained as a reflection of the secondary spiritual status of nunneries within the monastic landscape, an unavoidable consequence of the gender dynamic that informed medieval society and forced women into a position of dependence on men. However,

[55] Southern, *Western Society and the Church*, p. 310; Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, p. 2. See also Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession*, p. 191 and p. 224; Lemaître, 'Nécrologes et obituaires des religieuses en France', p. 196; and more recently Muschiol, 'Time and Space', p. 195.

[56] Michel Lauwers argues that the overall decline in bequests to monastic communities in the thirteenth century was especially disadvantageous to religious women, who were excluded from sacerdotal functions and could not offer anniversary masses; Lauwers, *La Mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts*, p. 429.

[57] Cardman, 'The Medieval Question of Women and Orders'.

[58] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 216.

the evidence of the esteem placed on the commemorative services offered by Cistercian nuns discussed here suggests the need to revisit these conclusions and to revise our understanding of how gender influenced the way religious men and women were perceived by the laity.

Clearly, the physical presence of a woman was not in and of itself regarded as polluting. If so, nunneries would have never had patrons. Rather, the space within the monastic cloisters discussed here derived their sacred status from the presence of the nuns who occupied it, and it was obviously esteemed by members of the laity, who sought spiritual association with the nuns. Further, past focus on ecclesiastical and monastic legislation perpetuated the belief that in order for such spaces to remain sacred, men and members of the laity were prohibited entrance, just as women were prohibited entrance into male monastic communities. Such conclusions are belied by the evidence cited here. The numerous charters produced by Cistercian nunneries in this region suggest the vibrancy of these communities and the diversity of their members. Not only do they illustrate the periodic presence of non-monastic personnel within the cloister in the form of donors, both symbolically in the case of those invoked in anniversary masses and obits and physically in the form of burials, but even more present are the chaplains, often permanent members of the monastic community, who regularly frequented the confines of the abbey church to perform the masses requested by patrons. Their presence did not disqualify the space from being considered sacred by those requesting the commemorative services, suggesting that what qualifies a space as sacred in the medieval mind was considerably more complicated than prescriptive sources have indicated.[59]

Attitudes about gender difference undoubtedly shaped society's views of monks and nuns and their respective communities in the thirteenth century. However, in order to reposition nuns more accurately within the social and spiritual landscape of the Middle Ages, we need to reassess many of the gendered assumptions that inform modern notions of medieval perceptions of the sexes. The experience of women in the Middle Ages is often understood as uniform, which fails to appreciate the complexity of medieval society. As the discussion here demonstrates, the uniform application of beliefs about medieval gender norms to the experience of all women should be avoided.[60] Religious

[59] Penelope Johnson makes a similar argument, suggesting that nuns were less defined by gender than other medieval women; see Johnson, '*Mulier et monialis*', p. 246.

[60] LoPrete, 'Gendering Viragos', p. 17, warns against the imposition of universalizing categories on women in the past.

women are assumed to have encountered the same difficulties and disadvantages as their secular sisters. However, the evidence provided here suggests the need to reexamine the extent to which women, both religious and secular, were negatively impacted by medieval gender norms. Such generalizations do a dual disservice, one to the past in their inaccurate portrayal of monasticism and one to the present in their failure to accurately understand how gender functioned across time and space.

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Symbolic Meanings of Space in Female Monastic Tradition

Anne Müller

This essay offers a few thoughts about how we might look at conceptions of space in the female monastic tradition and at their possible symbolic meanings. It will build on a range of studies, which have shown historical interest with spatial matters in a female monastic context. This interest, I think, is directly connected to a rising academic awareness of the important potential that monastic spaces provide for the representation of identities and the creation of order. The following takes up this issue of the nature of space to discuss a range of general problems that I identify from current studies. What I would also like to do, without delving too deeply into detail, is to consider a few paths and routes that future research could take to move a vibrant and vital subject forward.

There is no need to open this essay with a lament about an overlooked topic. Studies on female monastic spaces are not as scarce as one would, perhaps, expect. Scholarly interest in the relationships between space and gender came up among Anglo-American scholars as early as the 1980s, and since then research in that area has become relatively well established.[1] However, one defi-

[1] There is an excellent introductory essay by one of the pioneers in this field of research about how the exploration of women's religious life developed: see Bitel, 'Convent Ruins and Christian Profession'. One of the first major approaches to female monastic space is Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure'. An important step towards integrating historical and archaeological questions with sociological theories of space was taken by Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture.*

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cit in regard to the complexity of space is that investigations in this field are often located in single disciplines, in particular history, architectural history, or history of art. Frequently, they embrace phenomena such as the normative settings for the use of space, physical structures, or the use of real spaces and art for devotional and imaginative practice, which is a theme crucial in the studies of Jeffrey F. Hamburger.[2] While all these studies have drawn attention to the complexity of space and its importance for identity-building, there have been few attempts so far to transcend the traditional bounds of disciplines and work out a broader dialogue. Another shortcoming is that, with the exception of a range of high-quality studies on individual religious orders, such as Meredith Parsons Lillich's work on female Cistercian art and architecture or Carola Jäggi's study of the churches of the Poor Clares and Dominican sisters,[3] female monastic spaces are not often approached as a pan-European phenomenon. What we can also note, where systematic spatial studies are concerned, is a clear focus of interest on the nunnery church and church typologies. This appears to be reasonable given the evident role of the church as a liturgical and symbolic place. It is in this particular part of the monastic compound that the answer to a most crucial question of identity-building is revealed: how could women move through the space and participate in liturgy and mass and, at the same time, keep their enclosure? There is no better place than the church to see how the creation and use of space was indeed affected by the difference and different character of the female monastic life.[4] I believe, however, the same is true for the wider space of the enclosure. Therefore, a perspective is taken in the following pages that is complementary to that of Matthias Untermann in the present volume: while his essay analyses the space of the church, I shall look into the claustral compound beyond.

It is a striking fact that the cloisters of religious women in particular have attracted scant research so far. For instance, in Claudia Mohn's important study

[2] See, for example, Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*. This approach led to a conference and an important exhibition, accompanied by substantial new publications; see Hamburger and others, *Frauen – Kloster – Kunst*. The splendid exhibition catalogue is Frings and Gerchow, *Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern*. An English translation of the essays in this catalogue is in Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*.

[3] Lillich, *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture, Volume 6*: *Cistercian Nuns and their World*; Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*. A step towards a comparative investigation of space within a broader geographical and chronological frame was attempted in Melville and Müller, *Female 'vita religiosa' between Late Antiquity and High Middle Ages*.

[4] This is discussed in detail by Matthias Untermann in the present volume.

Mittelalterliche Klosteranlagen der Zisterzienserinnen — a title that decisively implies the investigation of claustral layouts — only twelve pages of what is a substantial book are dedicated to claustral buildings. Where scholars have devoted attention to the monastic compound, their interest often appears to be with 'domestic functions'. Meredith Parsons Lillich's view might be characteristic of this when, regarding the impressive buildings of the medieval nunneries, she concludes: 'Monasteries are nothing if not practical.'[5] This is certainly true, but we should not forget that there is no functional arrangement in social contexts — monastic or not — that would not also have a symbolic side. It is only during recent years that spatial studies have looked at this interrelation and have stressed meanings and functions of monastic buildings that are other than merely instrumental. A ground-breaking enterprise in this regard is Megan Cassidy-Welch's book (published in 2001), which is a systematic spatial analysis of the Cistercian houses in northern England. Unfortunately, this fine book also excludes the female tradition, with the sound argument that women's houses — due to their distinctive nature — deserve better than to be dealt with as an appendix to the epistemologies created by men.[6] So we are still left waiting for the first comprehensive study about the individual nature of female monastic spaces.[7]

In this context, one crucial question concerns the possibilities that claustral space provided for the presentation and representation of distinctive identities in female monastic tradition. I will try to address this issue in different historical and geographical contexts. I exclude the church itself from this discussion, as this primary liturgical space opens completely different fields of reference. I will begin by looking at the earliest concepts about female monastic enclosure and how they were put into practice. Using the example of early Ireland, I will then briefly turn to the relationship between particular sociocultural conditions and the development of spaces within nunneries. The second part of my essay considers a range of spatial symbolism in the female context, including the possibilities available to nuns for symbolically transcending the earthly space of their cloister and creating a heavenly place.

[5] Preface to Lillich, *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture*, v, p. x.

[6] Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, pp. 12–13.

[7] Emerging from a new understanding of space, stimulating individual discussions on real and imagined spaces in the claustral compounds of medieval nunneries are now appearing: see, for example, Jäggi, 'Raum als symbolische Kommunikation', pp. 196–205; or Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent*.

Two more brief thoughts when it comes to the question of space: first, I think it is important to realize that concepts of female claustral space did *not* follow those of men. There were so many ways in which the religious life of women diverged from that of men and had completely different functions — an aspect that has also been emphasized in most of the essays of the present book. Therefore, it would be bad science to judge spatial arrangements in nunneries against male standards. This, of course, should not prevent us from comparing basic structures in order to then identify the particular, distinctive characteristics of female monastic space — or, if one prefers, the other way around.[8] In doing so, and this is my second point, any attempt at comparison must be contextual and take into account the full range of milieux in which these institutions developed. The social standing of the founder, the social hierarchy within the convent, the variety of urban or rural situations in which these communities operated, external expectations, forms of interaction, and social functions connected to the religious life — these are only a few of the factors that were apparently decisive for the construction of particular space and need to be considered. It is established knowledge today that monastic space is social space, and not a fixed place but constructed and shaped through complex human action, inside and outside the monastic compound.[9] As such, space is not static but in permanent motion. Yet interestingly, monastic spaces, and female spaces in particular, *can* create the impression of being static and closed — a capacity of symbolization that was apparently pivotal for conceiving these spaces as a quasi-sacred counter-world and a place already understood as between heaven and earth.

If we now look for the primacy of this complex development, it appears that all the later expressions of female monastic enclosure were rooted in a 'monastic experiment' that took place around the year 500 and was connected to Caesarius of Arles (468/70–542),[10] who lived in the surroundings of new and

[8] There is a compelling essay on the use of a comparative history in the context of the religious orders, including comparison between female and male institutions by Felten, 'Wozu treiben wir vergleichende Ordensgeschichte?' Strong arguments in this regard were also made by Caroline Walker Bynum in her foreword to Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*, pp. xiv–xv.

[9] On the engagement with theorized discussions of space within monastic studies, see, for example, Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, pp. 2–12; or Spicer and Hamilton, 'Defining the Holy'.

[10] Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*. The title of this book refers to the interplay between ideals of chastity and community building, which generated completely new concepts of enclosure, originating in the female religious world.

complex religious formation.[11] In creating a rule for his sister's newly founded convent Saint Jean in Arles — the *Regula ad virgines*, which was actually the result of a thirty-year-long experiment and modification — this leading ecclesiastic and bishop in Gaul appears to have set the spatial frameworks for the rigorous enclosure of women to come. Albrecht Diem, when analysing the *Regula ad virgines* in relation to the organization of the nunnery in Arles, has stressed the point that in this rule Caesarius assigned a truly distinctive and so far unknown functional role to claustral space.[12] According to Diem, Caesarius's conception of enclosure for women centred on the creation of a place free of sin ('sündenfreie Zone'), marked out and delimited through space.[13] The value of this separate, closed, and 'pure' place lay in the fact that it offered completely new and significant opportunities for salvation, from which — mediated through the prayer of the nuns — not only the founder of the house could benefit but external groups as well. This very idea of prayer on behalf of a wider outside world apparently grew out from the female community in Arles and was, according to Diem, not yet associated with the various options of monastic living then available for men. So, from what Diem suggests, it looks as if the idea of the monastery as a quasi-sacred space with the capacity for salvation would have its roots in female, and not in male, monastic tradition. This, in fact, is a remarkable suggestion, questioning the paradigm of male religious life as being senior to that of the late-coming sisters.[14]

Two central ideas were connected to Caesarius's concept of enclosure. First is the creation of a *distinctive* space where a community of women would continuously pray for the coming of Christ. Here, it appears, lie the roots of the *stabilitas loci*. For having entered this place, the nuns were not supposed ever to leave it. Second, designed as a refuge where women could escape the jaws of the spiritual wolves ('fauces spiritualium luporum', as Caesarius put it), the nunnery was a place of shelter. Caesarius also used the metaphor of the ark that

[11] For Caesarius's life, work, and influence, see Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*.

[12] I am here following Albrecht Diem's argumentation as provided in *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 173–93. For a critical edition of the versions of the *Regula Caesarii ad virgines*, see Césaire d'Arles, *Oeuvres monastiques*, ed. by de Vogüé and Courreau, pp. 170–273. For an introduction to the rule and English translation, see Césaire d'Arles, *The Rule for Nuns*, trans. by McCarthy. For a new spatial analysis of the *Regula cuiusdam ad virgines*, see Diem, 'Das Ende des monastischen Experiments'. Diem also provides an English essay on normative settings for spatial developments: 'Inventing the Holy Rule'.

[13] Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 178–80.

[14] Diem, 'Das Ende des monastischen Experiments', p. 83.

protected the women from the storms, temptations, and perils of the world. As long as the women did not transgress the boundaries of their enclosure, they were in a safe place, offering not only physical protection but what was then regarded as the greatest chance for spiritual salvation.[15]

A set of elements from the material, symbolic, and normative household supported and constructed this spatial design of the nuns' enclosure. At the core of Caesarius's new experiment was the strict physical delimitation from the urban world. Walls and physical space were, as Diem says, 'institutionalized' for the purpose of religious perfection and salvation. Nevertheless, there appears to be a striking difference to later monastic notions of space. Although a spatially confined area provided the framework for the women's holy life from the time of Caesarius onwards, this was evidently not yet linked to the mechanics of 'sacralization', as they were to mark out the space as distinctively 'holy' at a later point in time. There is no indication whatsoever in Caesarius's rules that symbolic actions or rituals would have vested the space with meaning or that, for instance, relic cults were used as a generator for the sacralization of the place. Evidently, it was only from the sixth century onwards, or the post-Caesarius generation, that female monastic houses started to become centres of relic veneration.[16] But if this is the case, what, then, was the base for the creation and perception of a distinct *locus sanctus*?

Caesarius's project is based on a model known as active enclosure — in contrast to passive enclosure. Active enclosure is marked by the prohibition against leaving the cloister; passive enclosure also regulates access and keeps strangers out. In Caesarius's earlier rules for nuns, emphasis is on active enclosure, and there is little directive about who was allowed or forbidden to enter the women's space. This lack of interest in matters of ingress might correlate with the fact that up to Caesarius's own time religious women (*sanctimoniales*) could live in their families' houses where the physical sealing-off from the secular world was simply not an option. Within the spaces of the nuns, the reception of visitors or the answering of letters was part of their everyday life. This practice of interaction, however, was to change. It was still during Caesarius's episcopacy that religious enclosure was established and seen as a *secretum*. In this 'secret' or closed place sanctity was generated not only through the permanent presence of the nuns but through the absence of all other persons. In one of the later versions of his rule, Caesarius stipulated that in order to protect the repu-

[15] Diem, 'Das Ende des monastischen Experiments', pp. 175–79.

[16] Smith, 'Women at the Tomb'.

tation of the house ('propter custodientiam famam'), no man was to enter the *partes secretae* of the women's enclosure, with the sole exception of the bishop and the clerics in charge of the mass. Even the *provisor*, the economic manager, was excluded from the nunnery, while the abbess, usually the contact person with the outer world, was now expected to speak to visitors and guests only if trustworthy witnesses were present, which marked a significant loss of her authoritative power.[17]

Such ideas of rigorous enclosure were characteristic of the female monastic institutions in Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish empire.[18] In the course of the Carolingian reform, active cloistering for religious women was then specified in a series of conciliar degrees.[19] In these texts a significant change can be noted. What seemed to have started as a policy of protection soon appears to have turned into a policy of restriction. Jane Tibbits Schulenburg has provided a comprehensive analysis of the normative settings for this development. She has made the point that this policy of narrow enclosure may have sparked from 'the desire of controlling women's sexuality through enforced isolation, not guarding her autonomy'.[20] What the reformers apparently envisioned when they discussed enclosure was to protect the women from the fragility of their own sex rather than from the dangers imposed on them from the outside world. Such a notion may have laid down the roots for the long-standing theological perception of the women's bodies as dangerously porous. Eventually it culmi-

[17] *Regula Caesarii ad virgines*, cap. 36, pp. 218, 220; on this aspect, see also Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 187–88.

[18] An excellent discussion of the development of the female Merovingian monastic foundations and of the state of research is in Helvétius, 'L'Organisation des monastères féminins à l'époque mérovingienne'. For the earliest developments of female monastic spaces, see Schulenburg, 'Women's Monasteries and Sacred Space'; Jäggi and Lobbedey, 'Church and Cloister', pp. 110–12; or the important case study by Blennemann, 'Raumkonzept und liturgische Nutzung'.

[19] According to Schulenburg, at least a dozen separate pieces of legislation from *c.* 750 to 850 demanded rigorous enclosure for nuns. Important sex-specific canons in regard to the claustration of nuns were released, for example, by the Council of Ver (755), the Council of Friuli (796/7), the Council of Riesbach and Freising (800), the General Council of Aix-la-Chapelle (802), the Council of Tours (813), or the Council of Mainz (847) — all of these stipulating strict claustration for nuns and enumerating the circumstances under which the abbess could leave the monastery. For the names and content of these specific conciliar decrees, see Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure', pp. 56–59.

[20] Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure', p. 79.

nated in the bull *Periculoso* (1298), which was the most radical papal attempt to force religious women universally into full, strict enclosure.[21]

Returning to Caesarius's original model for a nunnery in Arles, there are hints that this bishop's notion of space did in fact affect physical structures. After the original cloister outside the Roman city walls was destroyed following the siege of Arles in 507/08, the convent moved into a town house that would have accommodated more than two hundred women.[22] In one of his latest stipulations, Caesarius had all the former entrances into this new nunnery bricked up so that the nuns could not leave their house for the rest of their lives. The only door cut through the walls of the cloister connected to the basilica of St Mary, the nuns' burial church.[23] Though there are very few physical remains left from that early time, what archaeologists did discover, interestingly, is the place of the funerary church (adjacent to the Roman city walls) and a barricaded gate where the cloister of the women of Arles was supposed to be.[24]

Among the points of discussion that could follow from here is how Caesarius's idea of strict enclosure developed on a wider European scale. This issue was dealt with, for example, by Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg in her study of contemporary texts, such as historiography, hagiography, and normative writing, or, more recently, by Matthias Untermann, who has looked at the building structures and physical remains of early nunneries.[25] Interestingly, what the scant archaeological evidence reveals for the four or five hundred years following Caesarius — up to the tenth and eleventh centuries — is a striking variety in the conception and construction of female monastic complexes. Among the cloisters that emerged, there is scarcely any evidence for a residential structure that would have enclosed an open central court, corresponding to the 'classical' arrangement we are familiar with from the plan of St Gall. Interestingly, it is precisely this great diversity in structures that can lead us to suggest that

[21] Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women*, pp. 29–31, where parallels between *Periculoso* and Caesarius's cloister rules are discussed.

[22] Helvétius, 'L'Organisation des monastères féminins à l'époque mérovingienne', p. 157.

[23] Cf. *Regula Caesarii ad virgines*, p. 236, and *Vita Caesarii*, ed. by Krusch, p. 470. On the aspect of physical delimitation, see van Rossem, 'De poort in de muur', and Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 175, 191, 313.

[24] For the spatial arrangements in Saint Jean of Arles, see Heijmans, 'Édifices religieux d'Arles' (providing ground plans).

[25] Schulenburg, in addition to her article 'Strict Active Enclosure', provides a wider overview on this issue in 'Women's Monasteries and Sacred Space'. For archaeological considerations, see Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage'.

nunneries were *centrally* in the mainstream of spatial monastic developments of their time and not only fringe players.[26] Up to the tenth and eleventh centuries, the claustral arrangements of nunneries appear to have paralleled those of monks. The male houses were characterized by the development of a so-called *Konventshaus* that would have housed the community and integrated a range of rather 'domestic' functions.[27] Noticeably, this building often did not establish a close spatial relationship with the church by physically adjoining it, but existed as a separate unit. Such flexible, irregular solutions are characteristic of male and female houses of the earlier time. However, later developments in the male and female branches diverged. While the nunneries continued tending to individualism, the male counterparts, the *Mönchshäuser*, often became 'orderly', aligned towards the church, and were earlier and more frequently built on an axis.[28] One might wonder whether such spatial development might parallel and represent principal distinct identities and objectives of the female and male religious branches. Whereas in the male houses the church became the benchmark for order and was to fix four proper wings of the cloister in close, functional communication, the long-term detachment of the women's living centre from the church, which in fact was a semi-public and male dominated space, may signify that women's religious life was not primarily connected to the altar but to devotion and individual prayer. Thus, building structures eventually continued to express the early Christian ideal of ascetic retreat in a symbolical way.[29]

[26] Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage', p. 107.

[27] For an investigation of the structure of the 'monks' house', the nucleus of the east wing, see Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage'.

[28] Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage', p. 103; for the male houses, see the examples throughout (with ground maps).

[29] See the conclusion in Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage', p. 107: 'Es wäre dann eine Ironie der Geschichte, daß die männlichen Zisterzienser in ihrer Suche nach Regelhaftigkeit eine Klosterbauform propagiert hätten, die gerade nicht asketischen Rückzug, sondern Dienst an den Heiligen und Gläubigen symbolisiert, während Frauenkonvente, mit deren Existenz und Spiritualität sich die kirchliche Obrigkeit so viele Probleme machte, frühchristliche Ideale monastischer Abgeschiedenheit und Autarkie in ihrer Architektur weitertrugen.' Untermann sees the 'irony of history' in the development of male and female monastic buildings. While the male Cistercians, in their striving for rule and order, drifted off in their buildings from the ideal of ascetic retreat, nuns, in spite of having caused so many problems for the ecclesiastical authorities in terms of their existence and spirituality, were, according to Untermann, more successful in perpetuating the early Christian ideals of monastic withdrawal and autarchy through their buildings.

Were we to move this topic forward, we could also look at spaces other than physical spaces, and their impact on women's enclosure. As we know, in religious life there was a strong notion of the *domus interior*, the individual inner space of the body and soul, which in the theological debates of the Middle Ages was metaphorically linked to the vocabulary of real architecture; for example, the structure of the cell or the four-winged cloister. I cannot delve deeply into this subject here, but I should like to mention a new analysis of the mid-seventh-century *Regula cuiusdam ad virgines*, compiled presumably in Luxeuil, which provides fresh insight into how such 'inner spaces' correlated to female religious life.[30] In the *Regula cuiusdam* great emphasis is placed on the 'closed body', a symbolization of a barricaded space. This emerged as a central focus for their individual spiritual life. The rules suggest that in the same radical way the nuns were expected to open and turn out their very inner selves in the moment of confession, they were also expected to keep locked their body at all other times. Their eyes, but also their ears and mouth, were all considered to be potentially dangerous loopholes to their pure inner space (the true meeting place with God). For this reason ears, eyes, and mouth were to be kept closed. A broad range of normative texts centred on controlling particularly those accesses to the women's 'inner house' and regulated precisely what and how they were supposed to hear, see, and speak.[31]

It would certainly add a new dimension to our understanding of space if we were to investigate further how conceptions of enclosure — both physical and allegorical — developed in relation to the body or, as another focal point, to the church building and its own symbolism, and how this affected everyday life. However, in looking at the complexities of the nunneries' own spaces, we should not only consider theoretical and normative models but also, for instance, the formative impact of the wider macro space and surroundings. This nexus and mutual relationship between the convent's inner spaces and the outer world is beginning to enter current research. There is, for example, a clear trend among German historians to address the important role that medieval nunneries at times would have played in German lands as *Wissensräume*, *Wirtschaftsräume*, or *Kulturräume*[32] — as spaces of intellectual, cultural, economic,

[30] For the following see the two fundamental articles by Diem, 'Das Ende des monastischen Experiments', pp. 91–102, and Diem, 'On Opening and Closing the Body'.

[31] For further discussion of the 'inner house', see van 't Spijker, *Fictions of the Inner Life*; Constable, 'Metaphors for Religious Life in the Middle Ages'; Melville and Müller, 'Franziskanische Raumkonzepte.

[32] See, for example, Eisermann and others, *Studien und Texte zur literarischen und materiellen*

and also political power. Most of these studies reveal the significant cultural contributions that female communities were making. But there are also investigations that clearly show that in some regions the opposite was true. Janet Burton's examination of nunneries in northern England makes a striking case by showing that houses of nuns, in contrast to the neighbouring houses of monks, did indeed remain in the shadow of society where they scarcely left cultural marks.[33] Further systematic comparative investigation in various sociocultural contexts would certainly help to construct a more rounded understanding of how nunneries may have created a spatial and cultural presence and role for themselves in the political and cultural life of distinct European regions.

A fruitful venture point for analysing particular spatial arrangements of nunneries in regard to wider regional functions and expectations is the example of early medieval Ireland. What is most striking here is that in this early period very little evidence can be found of nuns being shut away — a phenomenon that can also be observed in Anglo-Saxon England. On the contrary, it appears that the earliest female religious houses in Ireland (and England) even developed a fairly relaxed attitude to claustration. This forms an obvious contrast to the strict cloistered life of the nuns on the Continent and is, apparently, related to their distinctive roles and functions. As Lisa Bitel and Sarah Foot have shown, the first generation of nuns in Ireland and England often played an active role in pastoral care — at least up to the late seventh century, when their houses began to disappear for a combination of reasons.[34] Evidence for such active life can be found, for instance, in the first *Life* of Brigit of Kildare (the so-called *Vita prima*), where Brigit (*c.* 451–525), the famous founder of the double house in Kildare and a contemporary of Caesarius, is presented, and in some sense celebrated, as a 'female bishop' with close ties to the secular world.[35] This foundress, we read, arranged baptisms, supervised penance,

Kultur, and Melville and Müller, *Female 'vita religiosa'*; or, focusing on the production of visual culture, Frings and Gerchow, *Krone und Schleier* (in English, Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*). Another important collection of papers is Signori, *Lesen, Schreiben, Sticken und Erinnern*.

[33] See Janet Burton's contribution to the present volume and, with more extensive literature, Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'.

[34] On Irish female monasticism, see Bitel, 'Women's Monastic Enclosures' or *Landscape with Two Saints*. On the continuation of female Celtic nunneries at the time of the Anglo-Irish colonization, see Hall, *Women and Church in Medieval Ireland*. On early Anglo-Saxon nunneries, the new principal work is now Foot, *Veiled Women*.

[35] See, for example, '*Vitae S. Brigitae*: The Oldest Texts', ed. by Sharpe; cf. Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints*, p. 151.

organized cure of the sick, and care for the guests. To manage and bless the fields, she rode around in her chariot. By providing service to the laity of the region, and beer for the eighteen churches in her district, she and her community had regular contact with men. Brigit and her nuns seem to have travelled extensively and for various reasons, including political, and the bounds of their enclosure appear to have been defined by the boundaries of the Irish provinces and their own clan's lands rather than by cloister walls.[36] There were, of course, physical structures connected to their dwelling site. Yet often no stone walls were needed for demarcation, for there were, as Lisa Bitel has noted, other, more powerful markers to keep them safe.[37] Brigit of Kildare had supposedly marked the outer boundaries of Cell Dara, her house in Kildare, with invisible limits that were just as good as walls for stopping intruders from the outside world. No stone walls appear to have confined the settlement when Cogitosus visited the place in the late seventh century, and he believed that none were needed, for at the boundaries 'which Brigit laid at a certain limit, no human adversary nor advance of enemies is feared'.[38] In early Ireland and other Celtic regions, carved stone crosses and cross-inscribed slabs often marked out and enclosed monastic settlements, and apparently they could fulfil the same function as walls. There is sufficient archaeological evidence to show that such a model of 'open space' was very common in early Irish monasticism, both male and female.[39] This, however, raises the question of how the religious could sense and prove the presence of God in their places, and the sacredness of their locus, if this was not physically confined. There must have been other, non-physical forms of symbolization that could transcend the worldly space.

Among the characteristic features of early Irish monasticism is the absence of square, stone-built cloisters. Whilst in Continental monasteries this feature developed into a strong symbol of the Heavenly Jerusalem, Paradise, and its garden, square stone cloisters seem to have arrived in Ireland only with the

[36] Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, uses the term 'open claustration' to describe the nature of the life of the early Irish nuns.

[37] On the nature of enclosure in early Irish nunneries, see Bitel, *Isle of Saints*, p. 58–66.

[38] Cogitosus, *Vita Brigidae*, col. 790; English quotation in Bitel, *Isle of Saints*, p. 63.

[39] For the construction of enclosures, physical and ritual, see the discussion in Bitel, *Isle of Saints*, pp. 58–66; and, from an archaeological point of view, Herity, *Studies in the Layout, Buildings and Art in Stone*. The new standard work for early ecclesiastical architecture in Ireland, which addresses structures of boundaries and delimitation, is Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 15–234, for the pre-Romanesque period.

Cistercians in the 1140s.[40] The model that earlier Irish monastic buildings, for men and women, were based on was circular, as exposed, for example, in the highly schematic plan in the *Book of Mulling*, a pocket gospel book from the late eighth century. This ground plan can be seen as the Celtic counterpart to the famous Continental plan of St Gall.[41] Until recently, only limited study was devoted to the symbolic meaning of that circular configuration of enclosure. The suggestion was made that such circular patterns were inspired by medieval depictions of the Temple of Jerusalem, or the layout of the Holy Sepulchre, which would symbolically connect the monastic sites with the image of a *locus resurrectionis*.[42] What this concentric design also brings to mind is the image of the cosmos. It can be seen, perhaps, as an icon of infinitude and model for a place that existed simultaneously between the two spaces of time: heavenly earth. As a common universal symbol for the cosmic and celestial, the circle had a long tradition in the spirals of pagan metalwork. It appears in the shape of the sacral sites of the Iron Ages, such as Tara, seat of the high kings of Ireland (County Meath), or the many other ringfort enclosures that occasionally continued as monastic sites. In regard to the earliest Irish monastic places, there is evidence that the marking out of such sacred topographies was connected to elaborate ritual acts that, progressing in circular movements from the fringes of the monastic enclosure to the centre, would recall the creation of the world.[43] There are good new ideas about how concentric enclosures, together with performative actions, marked out sacred space. From there we could, I think, turn to the transcendental meaning of female spaces and their own functions and symbolism.

Another issue that would need further attention is the spatial order *within* the female monastic compound. How were social relationships structured through space? How and where could different social groups move? Who had

[40] This, however, was the case only after a strong resistance from the side of the Irish monks who, preferring their old-fashioned huts of wattle construction instead of proper cloisters, provoked drastic sanction from the side of the Order's government. For the 'vernacular component' in early Irish Cistercian style and the resistance to continental patterns, see Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*, pp. 7–20.

[41] Nees, 'The Colophon Drawing in the Book of Mulling'.

[42] On the morphology of early medieval Irish religious settlement, see Jenkins, *'Holy, Holier, Holiest'*. There is new fundamental consideration of biblical models and the *Imitatio Hierusalem* in Irish churches in Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 57–60 and 72–82.

[43] Bitel, *Isle of Saints*, pp. 59–62; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 168–69.

access to which spaces? Both in the semi-public nunneries of the earliest times and in double houses in particular, the spaces of the male and female component developed in close communication. Cogitosus's account of the life of St Brigit offers some insight into how this may have functioned, though his special interest is with the micro-space of the church. He relates how the male part of the community entered on the south, and the women on the north side of the church — an order that implies its own symbolism[44] — and goes on to describe how the church was partitioned and decorated and the altars were arranged.[45] Sadly, there are no traces of the earliest structure of the monastery of Kildare and it is far from clear how this strict sex segregation continued outside the church. Regarding the domestic quarters, it is far from clear whether the nuns shared a single dormitory or inhabited individual huts, or how the mixed community worked or met.

Given the lack of information for the early Irish context, a useful comparative example, though from a later point in time, is the community of the Gilbertines — the only monastic order that originated in medieval England and was restricted in its geographical spread to this country. Founded about the year 1130 by St Gilbert in Sempringham, Lincolnshire, this order of canons regular and nuns has its roots in a community of female recluses. Soon, however, these Gilbertine communities developed into an amalgam of nuns, lay sisters, lay brothers, and canons observing the rule of St Augustine. The introduction of a male component in the Gilbertine nunneries led to the revival of the double-house model. Roughly half of the English foundations were double houses, though, in clear contrast to the developments in the early Irish or Anglo-Saxon double houses, the individual houses were now to be governed by men.[46] Watton, the most fully excavated double house in England, reveals the

[44] Roberta Gilchrist suggests that this order may be seen as a metaphor for the body of the crucified Christ with the Virgin Mary at Christ's right-hand side (north) and John the Evangelist on the left (south). This, according to Gilchrist, may also have led to the affinity of nuns for north facing cloisters, of which there is a strikingly high percentage in England; see Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 128–49.

[45] Cogitosus, *Vita Brigidae*, cap. 8. For the rhetorical or rather hagiographical component in Cogitosus's description of the church, see Bitel, 'Ekphrasis at Kildare' and *Landscape with Two Saints*, pp. 137–61; further consideration is in Haarländer, '*Innumerabiles populi de utroque sexu confluentes*'. For a comparative discussion of early Irish internal church arrangements and the place of the congregation within, see Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 169–75.

[46] The standard work on the Gilbertines, discussing normative, social and economic

spatial structure set up for the separation as well as interaction of the canons and nuns. There was a longitudinally divided church where the nuns had the larger part to the north. Attached to the church were the detached cloisters for the two sexes. An original element is the so-called window house (*domus fenestre*). Placed in the deepest space of the enclosure and accessible by passages from each of the cloisters, controlled exchange between the nuns and canons was possible in there by means of a great turning window. This place, to some extent, was 'boundary transcending', as it allowed women and men to exchange words, food, or goods through a turning hatch, but without any glimpses at each other's faces.[47] The window house was only one of the many elaborate fixtures used in double as well as in genuine female communities to differentiate diverse spheres of space. In nunneries, usually, all communication and exchange with the outside world would have passed through turnstiles or grilles. These could be perforated platters in the outer walls or special confessional boxes that from a modern perception might allude to a prison. Other markers of segregation were the talking grilles. An extreme form of them still exists in the outer walls of the former cloister of the Poor Clares at Pfullingen (Germany). Here the platters are equipped with long iron thorns, giving a clear warning to the outsiders that, by glimpsing into the sacred world of the nuns, they were indeed to 'risk an eye'.[48]

Another way to progress with the question of how the distinct identities in female religious communities were shaped through spaces, and social relationships ordered, is through a systematic analysis of the structure of boundaries and their negotiation. Roberta Gilchrist, in her book *Gender and Material Culture*, has done a pioneering job in drawing attention to the range of boundaries in women's houses — both physical and symbolic — and how they were organized and traversed. Emphasis, apparently, was on the boundaries between those enclosed and those not belonging to that group: the founders and sponsors; the priests and male confessors; the visitors and guests; the servants (male and female), labourers, bailiffs, and other personnel. This she connects to basic issues, such as the structures of interaction and delimitation between these

contexts, is Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham.* The system of government in this order is discussed by Sykes, *Inventing Sempringham.*

[47] The archaeological situation is documented by Hope, 'The Gilbertine Priory of Watton', who notes that a similar *fenestra versatilis* — a wheel or turntable for passing things from the space of the canons to that of the nuns — was identified in the presbytery wall of the church.

[48] On these to date scarcely studied symbols of segregation, see Beuckers, 'Neue Forschungen zur Architektur mittelalterlicher Frauenklöster', p. 174.

groups, or the accommodation of non-core groups within the sacred space. Another question is where the 'outsiders' could move and what that meant and involved for the internal order. One of her findings, which may surprise, is that it was common in a number of English nunneries to link the guest tract closely to the symbolical heart of the cloister. Occupying the full west range, this tract, however, was often distinguished from the nuns' quarters by the use of superior quality masonry.[49] Features like this appear to be symbolic. In our case, this leap in quality could express the nuns' particular attitude to hospitality or, perhaps, their own 'humble' status.

Apart from the links between the inner and outer world, another fundamental question is how internal relationships were spatially defined. Here the wider spatial setting of, and the communication between, the diverse internal groups — such as the novices, the sick, or even the dead — might be considered. The spaces of these groups were clearly defined, but what happened at the moments of transgression? What were the rituals that symbolically bridged and negotiated the boundaries between those living the regular life of the nuns and those neither really inside nor outside the core community, as it was the case, for example, with the deviants in their own spaces of sanction, with the lay sisters, the novices, or the sick, all of whom were orbiting in a sort of liminal or 'in-between' space'?[50] Clearly, and this would be another point to consider, space was also used in monasticism to strengthen the power and authority that operated within these communities. Given, for example, the higher status of the abbess or prioress, issues of interest are ceremonies of entry into the church, the refectory, or the chapter house; seating patterns; or art and architecture as markers of power. Strikingly, English nunneries appear to have possessed no detached prioress's lodge for residence. It has not yet been fully established whether this paralleled wider European trends or was typical for England, where nunneries are supposed to have followed, in terms of architecture, a rather lower gentry-house style.[51]

[49] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 119.

[50] A body of theory that can be utilized for the investigation of issues of transgression is Arnold van Gennep's concept of 'rites des passage': see *The Rites of Passages* (original title: *Les Rites de passage*). There are studies on monastic graveyards, prisons, or infirmaries that draw on theorized conceptions: see, for example, Gilchrist and Sloane, *Requiem*; Cassidy-Welch, 'Incarceration and Liberation'; Cristiani, 'Integration and Marginalization'. An important, more recent book on the English Cistercian infirmaries is Lindenmann-Merz, *Infirmarien: Kranken- und Sterbehäuser der Mönche*.

[51] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 119, 125, with further reference.

In this context it may also be worth looking at the impacts of external powers in shaping space. How were these outsiders represented and integrated in the female enclosure? Key themes in this regard are burial practice and memorialization on the one hand, and structures of access into the enclosures on the other hand. Based on a comparison of monastic ground plans for women and men, Robert Gilchrist offers a type of 'access analysis'. Her point of departure is the precinct — the outer space of the monastic compound — from where she identifies all possible routes and diverse access points into the heart of the cloister. Her analysis suggests that the level of permeability (based on the number of access points) was higher in female than in male houses. At the same time, however, the private quarters in female houses developed greater spatial segregation from the surrounding precincts and were guarded by a higher number of physical and symbolic barriers than was the case in male houses. In nunneries the dormitory tended to lie in the 'deepest' space, at the fourth level or ring of access, while in male houses the sacristy and chapter house were the most encapsulated parts, situated at the third level. Such spatial analysis undoubtedly has considerable potential to be developed further and to be tested against other samples, including cross-order comparisons as well as other forms of religious life available to women, such as houses of canonesses, anchorages, hermitages, or hospitals.[52]

Another issue progressing in current debate concerns the particular gender-specific usage of the claustral buildings. Appropriate venture points for closer studies are the dormitories and refectories that have attracted much attention in terms of their function. In the medieval visitation records, refectories are more often addressed than dormitories, and they were always focal points for correction. The suggestion has therefore been made that the refectory was of vital importance for regulating the communal life of the religious.[53] It is obvious that the refectory was more than a place for communal eating. There is evidence that in the refectories of male communities, the act of eating was connected to the symbolic behaviour and rituals that elevated the meal to the Last Supper

[52] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 160–69. A new research project by Matthias Untermann and Leonie Silberer in Heidelberg (Germany) offers a structured spatial access analysis into medieval friaries. See the collection by Melville, Silberer and Schmies, *Franziskanerklöster: Räume, Nutzungen, Symbolik*. Another research project at the University of Dresden is concerned with the structures of boundaries; see Melville, 'Inside and Outside: Some Considerations'.

[53] Signori, 'Zelle oder Dormitorium?', p. 67.

— the monks joined with Christ.[54] This idea had a strong impact on the use of this space: the rituals connected to entering the room, the sitting order, the keeping of absolute silence, and the reading during the meal, which is liturgy. There was also the issue of abstaining from certain foods (such as the meat of *quadripedes*), or a quasi-allegorical meaning of the food consumed; there were the washing ceremonies connected to the meal, or the exclusion of the deviants from the table — all these things and actions symbolically purified this room and made this space sacred. But can we apply such symbolic construction of holy space also to female contexts? Thanks to Caroline Walker Bynum we know much about the religious significance of food to medieval women.[55] But how was this integrated into female monastic life and connected with ritual, architecture, art, and decoration? Among the inspiring, but at times perhaps a little unsettling, ideas put forward by Roberta Gilchrist on the symbolism of female monastic enclosure is her suggestion that the two-storey refectories, which nunneries in England tended to possess, might have represented a symbolic image of the *coenaculum* — the place of the Last Supper of Christ that also housed the Holy Women after Christ's death.[56] Though at the moment we lack convincing evidence for such a link, ideas like this certainly stimulate one to look more closely at the symbolism behind the material facades of the so-called 'functional rooms'.

Similar links to the symbolic meaning of space can be established in regard to dormitories or chapter houses. In terms of function and iconography, these rooms have found much attention in recent studies, though unfortunately scarcely a word has been said about women.[57] What these new studies, such as Jörg Sonntag's fundamental book on the symbolic dimensions of monastic life, have demonstrated is that symbolism in monasticism is a complex issue, which is evident as a construct on diverse levels.[58] Studies like Sonntag's suggest a range of aspects we might consider in relation to the creation of symbolic space

[54] On the symbolical potential of the refectory, see Rüffer, 'Refektorien – Zisterzienser und benediktinische Tradition', and Bonde and Maines, '"To Hunger for the Word of God"'.

[55] Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast.*

[56] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 115–17. This draws on Peter Fergusson's discussion of the double-storey refectories in Cistercian houses in northern England; see Fergusson, 'The Twelfth-Century Refectories'. See, however, the forceful refutation by Rüffer, 'Refektorien – Zisterzienser und benediktinische Tradition', pp. 47–56.

[57] Stein-Kecks, *Der Kapitelsaal in der mittelalterlichen Klosterbaukunst*. An English summary is in Stein-Kecks, '"Claustrum" and "capitulum"'.

[58] Sonntag, *Klosterleben im Spiegel des Zeichenhaften*.

in nunneries; that is, among other things, location and topographies, markers such as the monastic habit, symbolic behaviour and rituals, or — a long ignored aspect — atmospheric qualities, such as light or silence. To the comparatively well-studied dimension of architecture, the issue of art and decor must be added. I should like to emphasize at this point that I do not mean to suggest that the splendid new studies about space that we have for male monasteries should be used as a blueprint for approaching the spaces of nuns. This would ignore their own distinctive nature and their own dynamics in their development. But what the growing spatial studies on male monasticism certainly can help us with is to raise our own questions and to develop methodologies that set the female religious institutions in a more contrastive comparison against those of men.

A final issue I would like to address is the matter of spatial arrangements in the male and female branches of the same religious order. Here, again, past scholarship has taken a strong interest in church buildings and has made significant contributions by looking at issues such as the relationship between distinct female identities and the use and material arrangements of the inner space of the church.[59] One of the next steps, I think, must be to integrate these particular insights into a wider analysis of the female monastic spaces which lay *outside* the church, involving the question of how they differed from the arrangements of men. There are notable examples of such comparative investigations, among them, for instance, the interdisciplinary work carried out by Margit Mersch on the spatial structures in Cistercian nunneries: her work certainly provides a template for scholars analysing the relationships between belonging to an Order and architectural form.[60] Building on the consensus that Cistercian nunneries had their own programmatic dimensions in the architecture and spaces of their houses, which were linked to a distinct identity, Mersch has systematically combed a range of sources, including literary, documentary, and archaeological sources. The house she looked at in detail was Brenkhausen, a Cistercian nunnery in Westphalia, one of the rare examples in Germany where the claustral buildings of the thirteenth century are still preserved.[61] The simple church

[59] For example, Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, and Bruzelius, 'Hearing is Believing'. For more details and literature, see Untermann's essay in this volume.

[60] Mersch, 'Programmatische Ordensarchitektur'. For architectural characteristics of female Cistercian monasteries in France and the organization of space in these nunneries, see the important collection Barrière and Henneau, *Cîteaux et les femmes*.

[61] For the following, see Mersch, *Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei*.

and the eastern and southern wings of the cloister, both equipped with claustral walks, came into being straight after the foundation in 1246. Towards the west, the cloister was originally closed only by a wall, though this appears to have had a provisional gallery at its inner side. There is no indication where the spaces of the lay sisters or brothers may have been — an issue that still lacks comparative investigation.[62] The original cloister, despite its incomplete form, appears to have provided all the constituents the nuns needed for the regular life. In the two-story eastern wing they had their dormitory at the upper level — a single space with an open roof-structure and the typical small window openings that indicate thirty-six sleeping places. Below the dormitory, there was a richly decorated sacristy. Evidently, however, this room did *not* belong to the nuns' enclosure but was, as liturgical space, a male domain. Centrally, in the east wing was the chapter house with a range of familiar features: a depressed ground level, in order to allow the building-up of an elegant groined vault supported by pillars; two open windows flanking the open entrance; three windows facing the east, of which the middle one had tracery to mark out the place of the abbess. Next to the chapter house was a passage to the garden, a small staircase to the dormitory, a little chapel room with apses, and a large polyfunctional room that the nuns used during the day. At the outer post stood a six-sided tower, housing latrines (*necessaria dormitorii*) over two floors. In the south range the nuns had their two-storey refectory with the typical interior.

In its spatial arrangements, particularly those in the east range, the Cistercian nuns of Brenkhausen clearly adopted patterns that were common in the Order and known from the 'ideal Cistercian plan'. They took up the elaborate antetype of male houses, such as Maulbronn, although — and this is an interesting point in Mersch's argumentation — this evidently did not provide an optimal solution for the nuns' daily usage and needs. Among the rather unpractical features in Brenkhausen, as well as in other Cistercian nunneries, we find the intrusion of the sacristy into the women's space, or the fact that the central living space of the nuns continued to be bound to the traditional position in the east of the cloister. This constituted a striking breach with the usage of space in the neighbouring church, where the nuns were banned from the choir and backed off to the west. The cloister of Cistercian nuns, we could conclude, was the place for continuing male claustral tradition. Much emphasis in Mersch's and other recent studies is on uniformity and a corporate order identity that would have shaped the architectural style of the early female Cistercian houses, rather than diversity. Local and regional building tradition no doubt affected

[62] Mersch, '*Conversi* und *conversae*'.

female houses in their style, yet this diversity was apparently overlain by a common *forma ordinis*. The Order's intention, so it appears, was to distinguish its nunneries from the bulk of other female houses sprouting at that time and to mark them out as distinctively Cistercian.[63] Therefore, the suggestion was made that Cistercian nunneries can and must be compared with the houses of Cistercian men. Such a comparative approach must now be widened and tested to include other orders and congregations, such as the female mendicant houses or, looking back in history, the houses for women of the earlier reform movement, such as Hirsau or Cluny, phenomena which have only recently been systematically studied for the first time.[64]

I hope that this essay has shown the developments of scholarship on space in female monasteries and suggested some new directions. It seeks to demonstrate that the fruitful insights provided by previous scholars, particularly in regard to nunnery churches, should be integrated into studies about the wider claustral compound. Corporate and separate identities, individual functions of the diverse groups of religious women, external impacts and expectations, as well as the integration of wider ideas of the divine — all these are issues a systematic and comparative exploration should consider with regard to women and space. What future investigation can certainly benefit from is a wider notion of space, which basically means that space is not only the physical container in which life takes place but a product of manifold social and cultural interaction. Based on such a wider notion of space, a systematic investigation *can* start with physical structures but should not remain stuck there. Social behaviour, rituals, religious practice, art, and decoration (such as painting, wall hangings, pictures, and images), as well as atmospheric qualities — 'the visual and the visionary', as Jeffrey Hamburger puts it[65] — it was all of these elements *combined* that created

[63] Mersch, *Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei*, p. 237. Another important new study that comes to similar conclusions after studying a wider geographical area is Jäggi, 'Ordensarchitektur als Kommunikation von Ordnung'.

[64] New investigation on these earlier congregations of women is in Melville and Müller, *Female 'vita religiosa'*; among them is Hedwig Röckelein's pioneering work on the female branches that emerged during the Benedictine reform; see Röckelein, 'Frauen im Umkreis der benediktinischen Reformen'. In the same book, Janet Burton considers the connection of female houses to the earliest Cistercian Order: Burton, '*Moniales* and *Ordo Cisterciensis*'. An important new study on the norm and practice of early female religious life is in *Vita religiosa sanctimonialium*.

[65] Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*. For 'sensory' definitions of the sacred, see Spicer and Hamilton, 'Defining the Holy', pp. 7–10.

the space of the religious, both male and female, and were vital for definitions of the sacred. Clearly our investigation of female monastic spaces should not be guided too strongly by what we already know about monks and their spaces, or about supposedly ideal plans, for in doing so we run the risk that an essential part of what is a complex and individual world might otherwise escape our attention.

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The Place of the Choir in Churches of Female Convents in the Medieval German Kingdom

Matthias Untermann*

Difference or conformity to the male convents was a quintessential issue for the topography of the female monastic church in the high and late Middle Ages. The modern seminal research on the female monastery complexes in the medieval German Kingdom by Claudia Mohn, as well as on the female monastic churches of the mendicant orders by Carola Jäggi and some earlier authors, focuses only on particular groups of ecclesiastical building.[1] The lesser importance of the liturgical service may explain the lack of a systematic and comparative investigation in the liturgical layout of female convent

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[1] Mohn, *Mittelalterliche Klosteranlagen der Zisterzienserinnen*; Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*. For particular observations on the topic of this essay, see Achter, 'Querschiff-Emporen in mittelalterlichen Damenstiftskirchen'; Kosch, 'Organisation spatiale des monastères de Cisterciennes et de Prémontrées en Allemagne'; Leopold, 'Frauenemporen in Stifts- und Klosterkirchen des frühen Mittelalters'; Muschiol, 'Architektur, Funktion und Geschlecht'; Untermann, *Ausgrabungen und Bauuntersuchungen in Klöstern, Grangien und Stadthöfen*, pp. 59–64; Mersch, 'Gehäuse der Frömmigkeit – Zuhause der Nonnen'; Volti, 'Le Chœur des sœurs mendiantes au Moyen Âge'. I have already discussed the dispositions of the nuns' choir in Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage'; Untermann, 'Angemessen und zugleich erschwinglich'; Untermann, *Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Architektur*, pp. 105–06.

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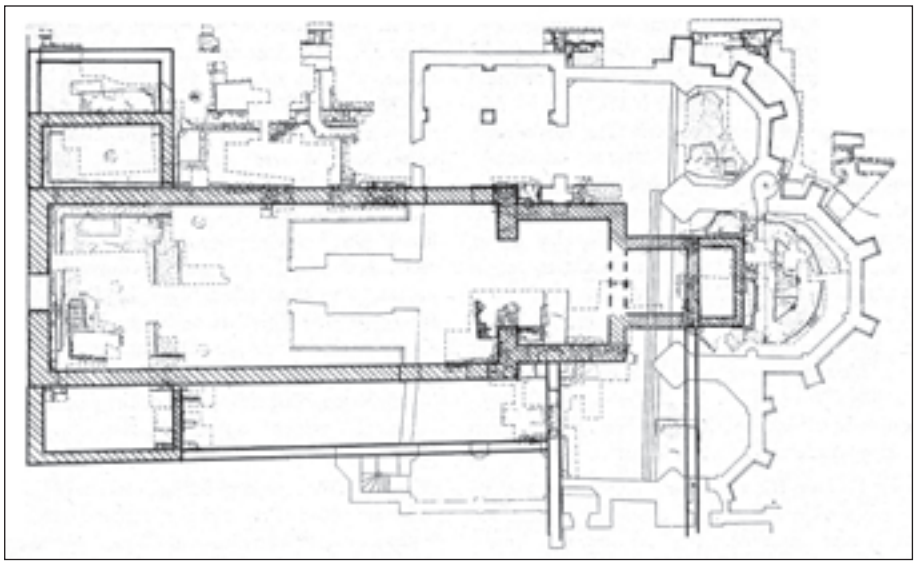

Figure 14.1. Vilich, convent church, *c.* 990, reconstruction by Irmingard Achter (Achter, *Die Stiftskirche St. Peter in Vilich*, 1968 p. 137).

churches. Even a quick glance shows contrary solutions to the disposition of the nuns' choir,[2] and this is no coincidence. It is, however, not easy to interpret these different dispositions as an expression of various liturgical arrangements or monastic ways of life. Medieval female convents belonged to different religious orders — we see Benedictines and canonesses, Cistercian and mendicant nuns. Excluded from celebrating the mass — for all of them the regular choir service was their main duty — the choir stalls were their only accepted place inside the church. For the moment, let us consider no fewer than seven different options for the positioning of the medieval nuns' or canonesses' choir in their churches. In contrast, monks' and canons' churches in the medieval German kingdom present only three positions: in the crossing or in the eastern part of the nave, or in a separate eastern choir combined with the high altar.[3]

[2] Zimmer, *Die Funktion und Ausstattung des Altares auf der Nonnenempore*, pp. 15–19; Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 185–246

[3] Untermann, *Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Architektur*, pp. 57–64, 94–105; Untermann, *Forma Ordinis*, pp. 233–41; Descœudres, 'Choranlagen von Bettelordenskirchen'.

1. The West Gallery

Modern scholarship and popular opinion consider as typical the galleries in the western end of female convent churches of the medieval German kingdom: hidden from the view of men, raised above the laity, and removed from the sanctuary, the choir stalls are positioned on an elongated fitting above a ground floor with columns and low vaults or a flat ceiling. Numerous examples of this arrangement are to be found in the churches of Cistercian, Franciscan, and Dominican sisters, as well as canonesses regular from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries.[4] Well preserved is the nuns' choir in the former Cistercian convent of Wienhausen.[5] Here, the Gothic stalls date back to *c.* 1330. The choir is accessible from the cloister by a staircase, as well as directly from the upper floor of the monastic buildings.

The early history of such galleries is unclear. An important example is the church of the female convent of Vilich near Bonn (Figure 14.1), founded in 980.[6] Detailed written sources inform us that the first head of the convent, a daughter of an aristocratic family, had long hesitated between the observances of canonesses and the Benedictine nuns. About 990 she chose the strict monastic observance. In the excavated western part of the church there was a low basement floor. Above it could have been a gallery, a presumed location of the choir stalls.

The Benedictine abbey church St Mary in Quedlinburg, founded in 989, also had a transverse west gallery, where the nuns' choir is presumed to have been.[7] The convent was constructed in the immediate proximity of the high nobility house of secular canonesses of Quedlinburg for the sisters of the lower nobility. In the collegiate church for women, the canonesses sat presumably in the transept arm, and therefore in the east end of the church. A wide west gallery from the twelfth century is preserved in the canonesses' church of St Cecilia in Cologne.[8] It is comparable to Vilich, as the space below the gallery

[4] Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 191–207.

[5] Bühring and Maier, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Landkreises Celle*, pp. 16–25; Appuhn, *Kloster Wienhausen*, pp. 12, 17–21; Zimmer, *Die Funktion und Ausstattung des Altares auf der Nonnenempore*, pp. 46–58.

[6] Achter, *Die Stiftskirche St Peter in Vilich*, pp. 64–81, 135–39; Untermann, *Architektur im frühen Mittelalter*, p. 180.

[7] Scheftel, 'Die ehemalige Klosterkirche St Marien auf dem Münzenberg in Quedlinburg', pp. 169–70.

[8] Kubach and Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas*, I, 523–27.

Figure 14.2. Gnadenthal, Cistercian nuns' church, *c.* 1230, view to the west (photo Charlotte Lagemann, Heidelberg).

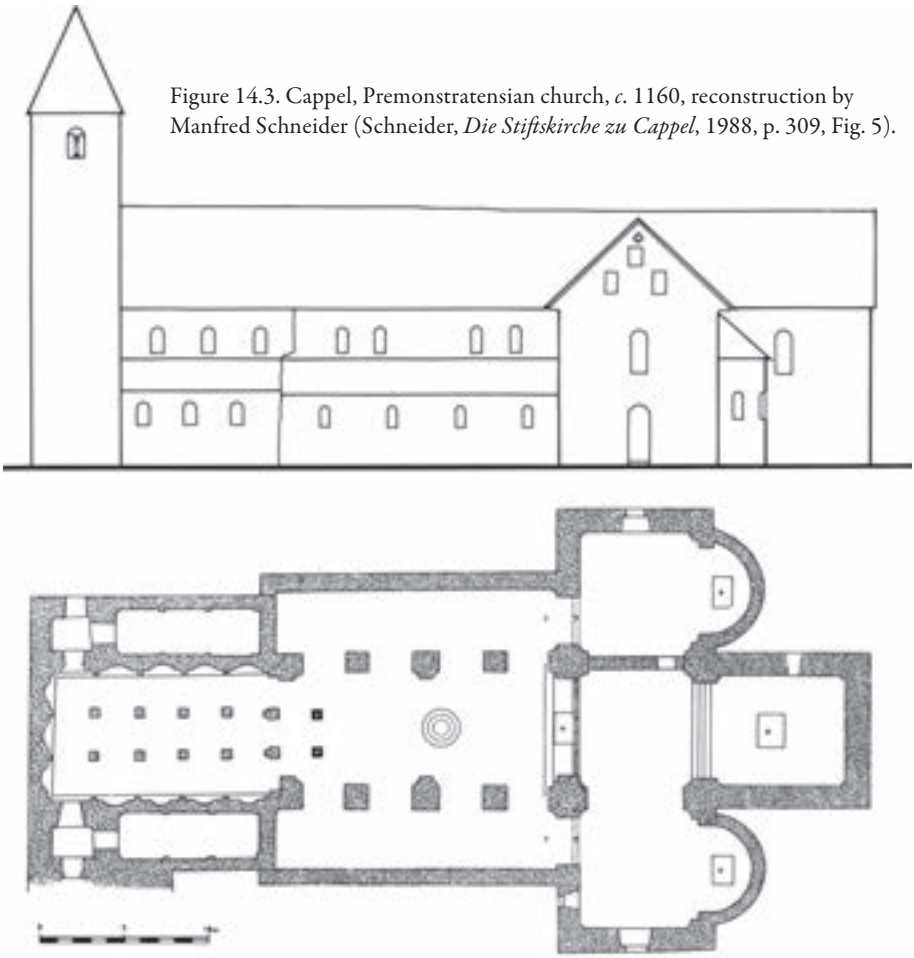

Figure 14.3. Cappel, Premonstratensian church, *c.* 1160, reconstruction by Manfred Schneider (Schneider, *Die Stiftskirche zu Cappel*, 1988, p. 309, Fig. 5).

lies lower than the rest of the nave. The west gallery was therefore not limited to the Benedictine (or the later mendicant) convents.

There were various uses for the space under the gallery: sometimes it served as a burial place, sometimes as a part of the space for the laity or a narthex, sometimes perhaps merely as a storage room. Interesting solutions from the thirteenth century resolve the problem faced by priests who had to deliver the Eucharist to the nuns without them leaving the enclosure. In the Franconian Cistercian nuns' convent at Gnadental (Figure 14.2), two staircases once led to the doors of the rood screen of the gallery.[9]

[9] Lagemann, 'Die Bauformen der Klosterkirche Gnadental', pp. 181–83.

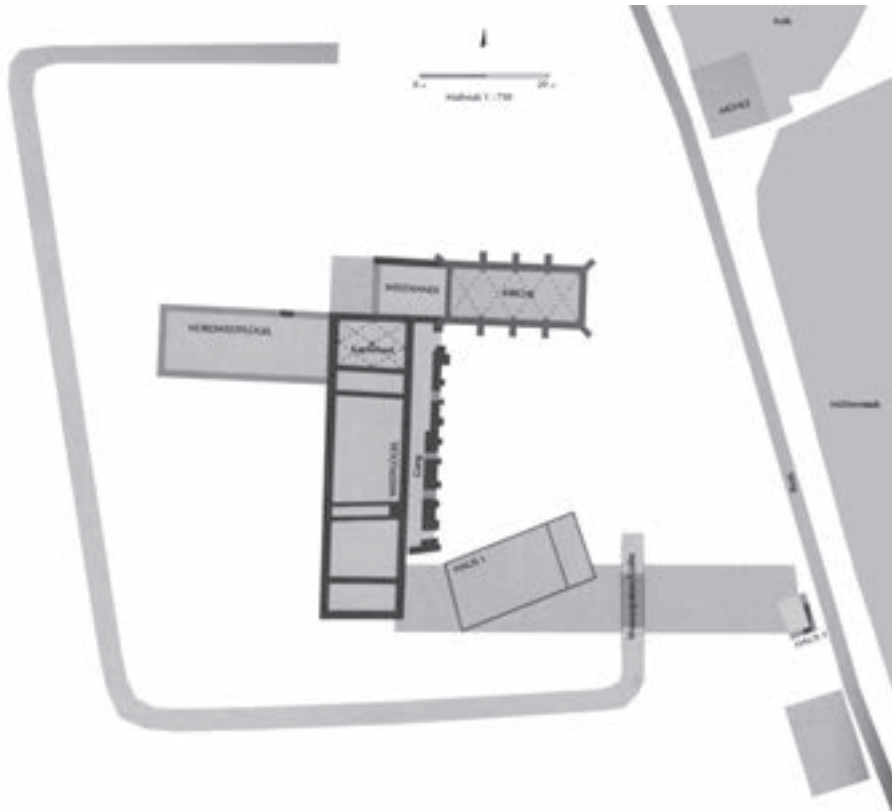

Figure 14.4. Gravenhorst, Cistercian nuns' church, late 14th century.
Reconstruction by Birgit Münz-Vierbohm (ed.), *Von Klostermauern und frommen Frauen*, p. 60.

The west gallery could also be a distinct structure annexed to the church of a male convent or a parish church. An impressive example is to be seen in the church of Cappel in Westphalia (Figure 14.3), founded *c*. 1140 as a double monastery for Premonstratensian canons and canonesses.[10] In the eastern crossing of the church, the male choir is separated by the rood screen. In the west end there is an elongated, double-storied structure with a gallery for the female choir. To secure the enclosure of the women during the foundation of the convent, the female choir was first built attached to the older parish church. Also in the above-mentioned Cistercian convent at Wienhausen, founded shortly before 1229, the nuns received a new western part of the church for their gal-

[10] Schneider, *Die Stiftskirche zu Cappel*, pp. 122–25, 142–53, 159–61.

lery in 1325.[11] The new choir stalls, comprising eighty-nine seats, incorporated elements of the older stalls dating back to 1277. The vaulted choir is richly decorated with frescoes depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament as well as the Acts of the Saints.[12] This nuns' choir had its own sacristy. The winged altarpiece was installed there in 1519.[13] Particularly monumental is the autonomous nuns' choir in the abbey church of Cistercian nuns of Roermond, founded in 1218.[14] As an endowment of the high aristocracy, the church displays a very rich late Romanesque architecture — it presents itself not as a Cistercian building. A big, three-aisled western structure stands out from the nave in the ground plan as well as in the cross-section. Here, the nuns' choir was located on a gallery of the central nave.

More often the western gallery was an integral part of the nave.[15] This applies to many new monastic churches of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. In the Cistercian convent of Gravenhorst in Westphalia (Figure 14. 4), founded before 1255, the first church of the thirteenth century had a gallery in the nave.[16] It was extended to the west two times — the first time after 1317, contemporaneously with the construction of the new dorter, and again in the late fourteenth century. The present-day gallery was installed in 1677.

Easily detectable is the construction sequence in the abbey church of Cistercian nuns of Nordshausen in Hesse.[17] After the foundation of the Cistercian female convent shortly before 1257, the Romanesque parish church, now in use by the nuns as well, was first expanded to the east by a new nave for the laity and a sanctuary. Immediately afterwards, the older church was raised, vaulted, and a western gallery was inserted.

Three-nave churches could also have a western gallery. The Romanesque Premonstratensian churches in Wenau, Konradsdorf, and Averdorp may serve

[11] Bühring and Maier, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Landkreises Celle*, pp. 16–25.

[12] Michler, *Die Wand- und Gewölbemalereien im Nonnenchor des ehemaligen Zisterzienserinnenklosters Wienhausen*.

[13] Zimmer, *Die Funktion und Ausstattung des Altares auf der Nonnenempore*, pp. 233–49.

[14] Kubach and Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas*, II, 965–70.

[15] Coester, 'Die Cistercienserinnenkirchen des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts'; Coester, *Die einschiffigen Cistercienserinnenkirchen West- und Süddeutschlands von 1200 bis 1350*, passim.

[16] Pieper, '"Musterbeispiel" einer mittelalterlichen Zisterzienserinnen-Klosterkirche', pp. 40–41.

[17] Martin, 'Von der romanischen Kapelle zum gotischen Kloster'.

as examples.[18] In Wenau and Konradsdorf the western part of the nave did not feature arcades. Corbels carried the floor of the nuns' choir, unmarked on the exterior. The Averdorp church is even depicted in the contemporary illustration in the choir book of the canonesses:[19] The existence of the gallery is in no way indicated; it is an image of a 'normal' church — the exact placement of the nuns' choir was evidently, one would presume, of no interest to the paintress and, therefore, to the self-image of the convent.

2. The Choir in the West End of the Church, on the Ground Level

A west choir on the ground floor of the church is found in many Spanish medieval churches, such as the Cistercian nuns' abbeys in Gradefes or Las Huelgas.[20] In the German region, the evidence seems to be less frequent, dating predominantly to the second half of the thirteenth century and in rebuilds of the later Middle Ages.[21]

Therefore, of great importance is the well-documented excavation evidence of the early medieval female convent church of Oberroden near Frankfurt.[22] In the first stone structure dating back to the ninth/tenth century, two side altars were located in the eastern part of the nave; the nuns' choir must therefore have been in the western end of the nave. In fact, the clay tile flooring from the twelfth century proves that the choir stalls stood here along the sides and that the middle path was a walkway. The west tower belonged on the ground level to the area of the nuns; it featured no portal, and its flooring was levelled with the choir. The location of the convent building remains unknown.

In some churches of Cistercian nuns the western gallery was incorporated subsequently. This is proven in the single-nave church of Rosenthal in the Palatinate (Figure 14. 5), which was erected for the abbey of Cistercian nuns

[18] Verbeek, 'Romanische Prämonstratenserinnenkirchen am Niederrhein'; Friedrich, *Das ehemalige Prämonstratenserinnenkloster Konradsdorf*, pp. 90–107.

[19] Verbeek, 'Romanische Prämonstratenserinnenkirchen am Niederrhein', ill. 1.

[20] Fernández González, Cosmen Alonso, and Herráez Ortega, *El arte cisterciense en León*, pp. 71–85; Karge, 'Die königliche Zisterzienserinnenabtei Las Huelgas de Burgos'; Herrero Sanz, *Santa María la Real de Huelgas*, pp. 18–37.

[21] Sennhauser, 'Kirchen und Klöster der Zisterzienserinnen in der Schweiz', pp. 29–31; Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 204–07.

[22] Schallmayer, 'Geschichte bis zum Bau der neuen Kirche', pp. 23–29.

Figure 14.5. Rosenthal, Cistercian nuns' church, *c.* 1260 and *c.* 1480 (photo Charlotte Lagemann, Heidelberg).

founded in 1251.[23] In the fifteenth century the nave was raised, and a long western gallery was added. The new entrance to the convent leads above the old door to the choir area at the ground level. The nuns' choir was therefore initially located on the ground floor in the western end of the church, presumably enclosed by an eastern rood screen, and separated from the sanctuary by the space for the laity.

3. The Choir in the Gallery of the Transept Arm

Characteristic of canonesses' churches of the early Middle Ages in Saxony is the positioning of the choir in the gallery of the transept arm.[24] This arrangement

[23] Heberer, 'Das Zisterzienserinnenkloster St Maria im Rosenthal', p. 101.

[24] Achter, 'Querschiff-Emporen in mittelalterlichen Damenstiftskirchen'; Lobbedey, 'Bemerkungen zur ursprünglichen liturgischen Nutzung der Stiftskirche zu Freckenhorst', pp. 36–37; Leopold, 'Frauenemporen in Stifts- und Klosterkirchen'.

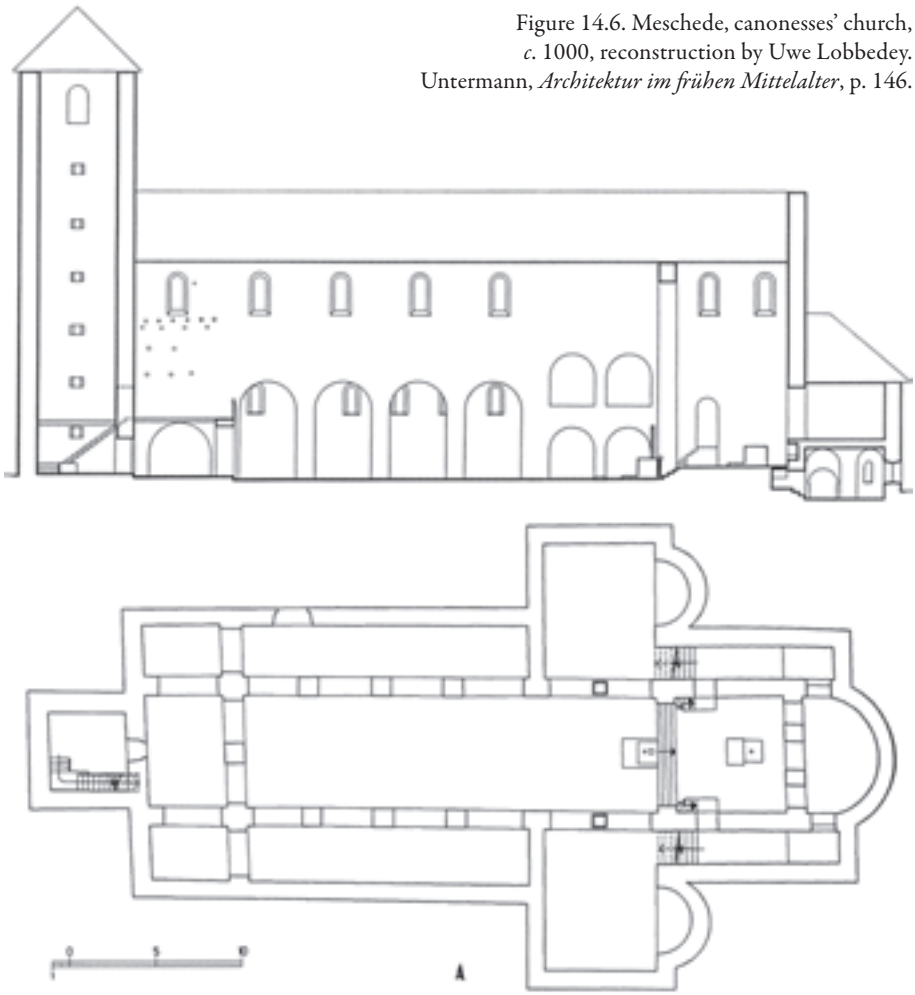

Figure 14.6. Meschede, canonesses' church, *c.* 1000, reconstruction by Uwe Lobbedey. Untermann, *Architektur im frühen Mittelalter*, p. 146.

is preserved in Gernrode, founded in 969.[25] The vaulted substruction of the Romanesque transept arm gallery was integrated later in the twelfth century. The church also has side galleries in the nave as well as a gallery in a western tower. The side galleries seem not to have been used, their arcades serving as an

[25] Voigtländer, *Die Stiftskirche zu Gernrode*, pp. 29–53; Erdmann and others, 'Neue Untersuchungen an der Stiftskirche zu Gernrode', pp. 254–69; Leopold, 'Frauenemporen in Stifts- und Klosterkirchen des frühen Mittelalters', pp. 22–25.

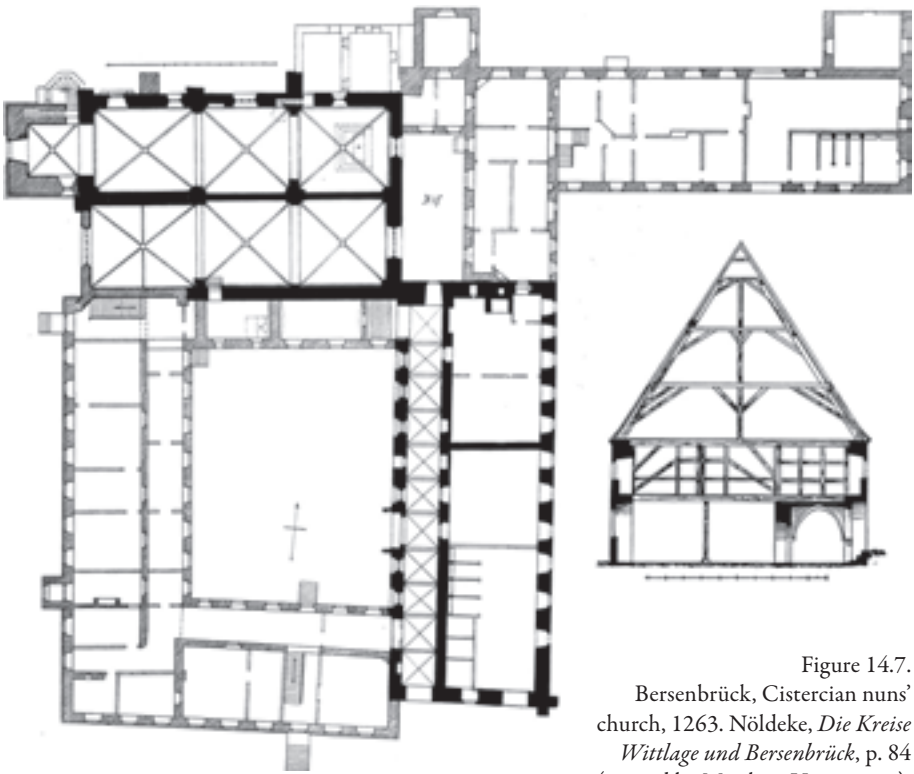

Figure 14.7.
Bersenbrück, Cistercian nuns' church, 1263. Nöldeke, *Die Kreise Wittlage und Bersenbrück*, p. 84 (revised by Matthias Untermann).

architectonic enrichment of the central aisle. The west gallery was presumably, as in other monastic and collegiate churches, a chapel.[26]

New problems have arisen during the archaeological investigation on the canonesses' church in Meschede (Figure 14.6).[27] This building, constructed *c*. 900, has three galleries: in both transept arms and in the western tower, dendrochronologically dated to 897. The walls of the tower gallery had many ceramic pots immured in them that acted as a sound box.[28] This is an important indication that this area was used for singing. However, there is no convenient access to this gallery, therefore disqualifying it as a choir of the canonesses. Unfortunately, the transept-arm galleries in Meschede have been barely preserved.

[26] Lobbedey, 'Der Herrscher im Kloster'.

[27] Claussen and Lobbedey, 'Die karolingische Stiftskirche in Meschede'; Kottmann, 'Die Ausgrabungen in der karolingischen Stiftskirche St Walburga'.

[28] Kottmann, 'L'Allemagne: état de la recherche'.

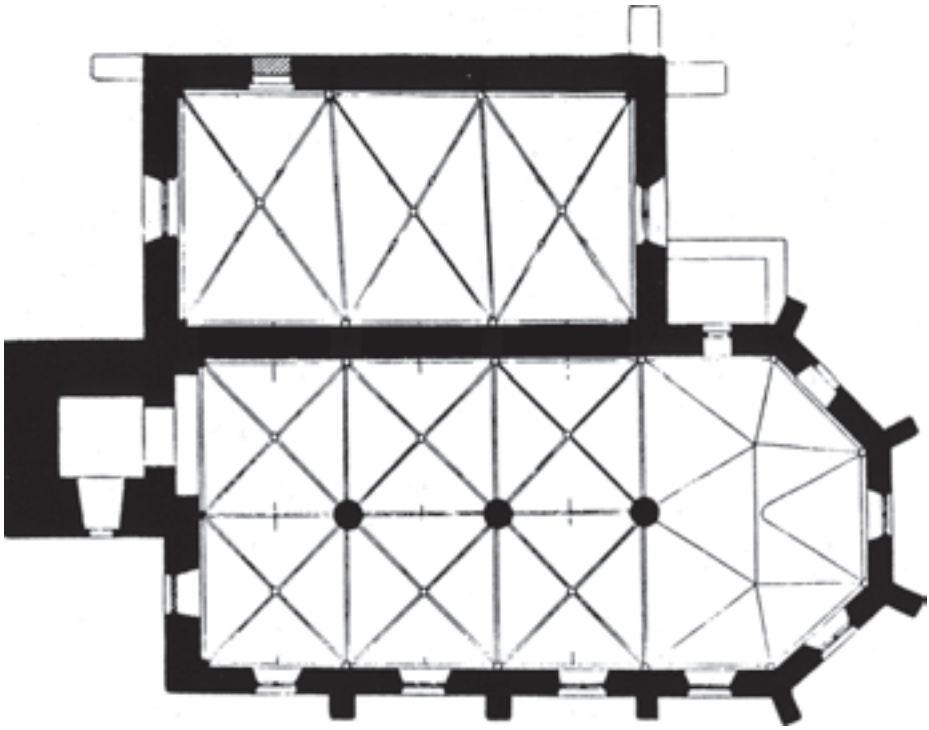

Figure 14.8. Levern, Cistercian nuns' church, *c*. 1230.
Pohlmann, *Kirche und Stift Levern*, p. 9 (revised by Matthias Untermann).

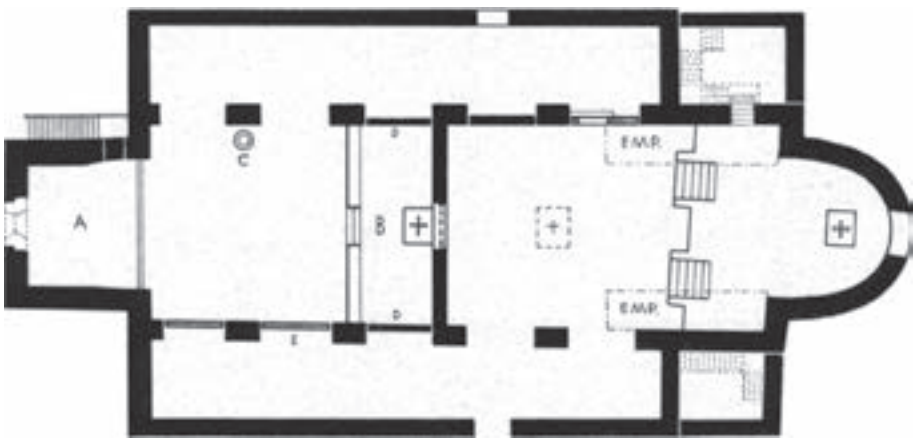

Figure 14.9. Sulzburg, canonesses' church, *c*. 990,
reconstruction by Karl List. List, *St. Cyriak in Sulzburg*, p. 110.

Based on the compound piers, similar transept arm galleries can be assumed for the above-mentioned Quedlinburg abbey church for the ladies of the nobility.[29] In the new high Romanesque church of this abbey, the transept arms along with the clergy area and the chancel were raised above the crypt and separated from the nave. While the south transept arm housed the nuns' choir, the north transept arm had a stone depository for the important treasury of the church. Both transept arms were separated from the clergy choir in the crossing by a richly decorated rood screen.

4. A Separate Nuns' Choir on the Side of the Church

Seldom seen is the construction of a second nave for the nuns' choir on the side of the church. This solution, as well as the separate west construction, was symptomatic of the female convents that were erected next to an older parish church.

In the Cistercian convent of Bersenbrück in Lower Saxony (Figure 14.7), founded in 1231, the nuns' choir was added to the parish church wall-to-wall, its construction commencing in 1263.[30] There the choir stalls stood on the ground level. Eighty nuns lived in this convent *c*. 1280. The preserved choir stalls with tracery decoration date to the year 1511. Only after the dissolution of the convent were both church parts united by arches. Similarly constructed were the convent churches in Levern (1227; Figure 14.8) and Netze (1228).[31]

This fourth disposition stands in the tradition of the 'Church families' of early medieval female convents. These consisted of two or three separate churches: one for the Liturgy of the Hours and mass of the female convent, another for the priests and laity, and the third one for the burial of the nuns and noble benefactors. An important example is the monastery of Nivelles, founded in 642.[32] The burial church, with the shrine of the daughter of the founders — the first abbess —, was turned into a monumental abbey church in the eleventh century and the convent moved here.

[29] Leopold, 'Die Stiftskirche der Königin Mathilde in Quedlinburg', pp. 168–69, 153–54; Leopold, 'Frauenemporen in Stifts- und Klosterkirchen des frühen Mittelalters', pp. 16–22.

[30] Witte, *Ehem. Zisterzienserinnenkloster Bersenbrück*, pp. 7–9; Nöldeke, *Die Kreise Wittlage und Bersenbrück*, pp. 80–91, esp. pp. 86–88.

[31] Pohlmann, *Kirche und Stift Levern*, pp. 10–12; Schaal, 'Netze'.

[32] Mertens, 'Recherches archéologiques dans l'abbaye merovingienne de Nivelles'; Kubach and Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas*, II, 860–96.

5. The Choir in the Eastern Part of the Nave

Two further, today seemingly unusual, solutions follow logically these early medieval dispositions: the canonesses assume the area of the *populus ecclesiae* in the nave. This fifth disposition, the choir in the east part of the nave, differs only in the large churches with transepts from the choir in the crossing, to be discussed in the next section.

The early medieval canonesses' church of Sulzburg near Freiburg (Figure 14.9), bordering on the Black Forest, is well examined.[33] It was built *c*. 1000; the female convent was endowed in 1108. It is a small basilica with an apse and a slightly newer west spire. Two screens were detected in the middle of the nave: the western one separated the area of the altar of the Holy Cross, while an older screen was located behind it. The little crypt is in the eastern end of the nave and in the apse. The liturgical use is therefore divided into the chancel and clergy area in the east, two metres above the crypt, as well as the choir of the female convent in the eastern part of the nave, and the space for laity in the west and in the northern flanking aisle. Stone rood screens, that separated the choir from the nave and from the aisles, were installed in the high Middle Ages — presumably their precursors were made of wood.

In the house of secular canonesses of Oberstenfeld in Württemberg the female choir was elevated in the east part of the nave over a crypt, directly following the sanctuary in the east.[34] The aisles and the west end of the nave were assigned to the laity. Strikingly, apart from the chancel only the choir was vaulted; the rest of the church featured flat roofing. The house of the canonesses was founded in 1016, and the new construction of the church begun *c*. 1180/1200. This situation is in complete accordance with the choir location in a monastery or a collegiate church with a male convent. A west gallery was added to the — Protestant since 1535 — church of Oberstenfeld only in the year 1891.

More difficult to interpret is the situation in the Cistercian nuns' church at Brenkhausen in Westphalia.[35] After the foundation *c*. 1240, the building of a three-nave church came to a stop following the completion of the second double-bay; the nave was expanded by another bay in the fourteenth century and remained unfinished. The nuns' choir was located in the second bay of the nave,

[33] List, *St Cyriak in Sulzburg*, pp. 51, 57, 83–87.

[34] Mettler, 'Die bauliche Anlage der alten Stiftskirche und der Peterskirche in Oberstenfeld', pp. 48–56.

[35] Mersch, *Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei*, pp. 168–86, 225–33.

Figure 14.10. Preetz, Benedictine nuns' church, *c.* 1330, choir seen from the east (Photo Charlotte Lagemann, Heidelberg).

directly following the sanctuary. It was extended to the west later. The nuns' entrance to the cloister led to the aisle from the south, as was common in male monasteries. The area for the laity could only have been located in the northern aisle. That this solution corresponds to the original plan — as I do suppose — cannot be proven without a doubt since the church remained unfinished.

There is, however, a well-preserved example of such a disposition of a choir in Preetz in Holstein (Figure 14.10), the church of the Protestant convent of canonesses.[36] It was founded in 1211 as a convent for Benedictine nuns and relocated to Preetz in 1260. The church, newly constructed *c.* 1330, presents itself as a three-aisled basilica without windows in the nave. This unusual form is very typical of the region. The nuns' choir follows directly the sanctuary and the clergy area; the western part of the nave and the southern aisle were designated for the laity. The floor plan thus in no way differs from the layout of a male monastery, with the exception that the area of the northern aisle served as

[36] Stocks and Schütz, *Klosterkirche Preetz*, pp. 4–10.

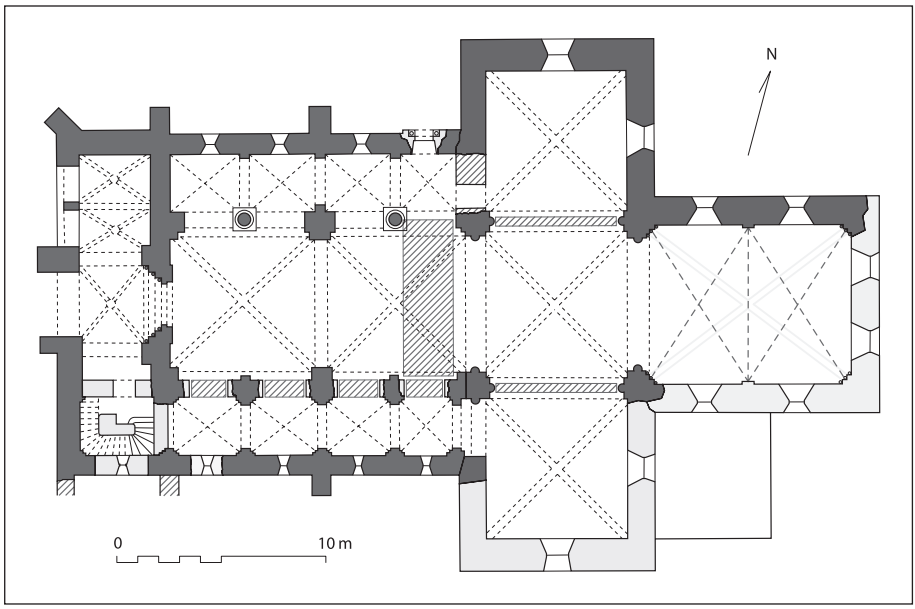

Figure 14.11. Enkenbach, Premonstratensian church, *c.* 1150/1200.
Matthias Untermann, Heidelberg/Heribert Feldhaus, Trier.

the southern wing of the cloister. In the present day, the choir is characterized by Baroque modifications for the Protestant canonesses of the high nobility: loges for the family members of the ladies are located above the choir stalls. Original gothic stalls for seventy persons are preserved in its core; tracery finials are still visible in its western part. Located in the far north of Germany, this crucial complex has been practically ignored in the academic literature.

6. The Choir in the Crossing

Remarkably often, the choir stalls of the ladies are even located in the crossing, matching the location of choir stalls in many male monasteries. Both options — choir in the crossing and choir in the east part of the nave —prevailed in male monasteries from the ninth to the thirteenth century. 'German' traditions (exemplified by the plan of the abbey of St Gall) stand hence in contrast to the 'French' customs.[37]

[37] Untermann, *Forma Ordinis*, pp. 233–41.

In south-western Germany, the twelfth century produced an important group of cross-shaped female convent churches with a transept that, however, remained unfinished for some time after the construction of the east end. In Lobenfeld, construction of a church began *c.* 1180 for a female convent founded in 1145.[38] The order of this convent is unclear, a typical state of affairs in the German kingdom.[39] In the beginning the nuns stood officially under the auspices of the Augustinian canons; factually, however, their affiliation was swiftly moved to the Cistercians of the nearby monastery of Schönau. It was only in the course of the thirteenth century that the Cistercian Order allowed the incorporation of this female convent. The nave with a large nuns' choir dates to the fourteenth century.[40] Previously, the ladies must have had the rich, late Romanesque east end at their disposal. There are fragments of a rood screen, but due to lack of excavations the location of the choir stalls remains unknown. The south transept arm on the side of the enclosure is unsuitable for the choir stalls since a southern aisle was supposed to begin there, leading directly to the cloister portal. Therefore, the stalls must have been located in the crossing, in the same manner as in male monastery churches.[41] In Cistercian monks' churches the nave often remained unfinished, after the initial financing sufficed only for the sanctuary and the monks' choir in the east end.[42]

In the female convent of Enkenbach (Figure 14.11), vacillating between the Cistercian and Premonstratensian Orders, a south transept was also supposed to be extended by a southern aisle; later, when the construction of the nave resumed, however, the only addition was a narrow entrance for the canonesses.[43] The choir stalls were located here likewise in the crossing, separated on three sides by rood screens.

Prototypes were the monumental female collegiate churches in the Rhineland: in Neuss the house of canonesses of high nobility had a new church with a magnificent triconch built starting in 1209.[44] The canonesses had their choir stalls in the east end, above the crypt. The size and the form of St Quirinus

[38] Beuckers, 'Die Klosterkirche von Lobenfeld', pp. 145–55.

[39] Rückert, 'Frauenzisterzen und Paternitätsstrukturen in Südwestdeutschland'.

[40] Beuckers, 'Zur kunsthistorischen Stellung des gotischen Langhausneubaus'.

[41] Untermann, review of 'Kloster St Maria zu Lobenfeld', pp. 353–54.

[42] Untermann, *Forma Ordinis*, pp. 205–06.

[43] Kaiser, 'Die ehemalige Prämonstratenserinnenkirche Enkenbach'; Keddigkeit and Untermann, 'Enkenbach, Prämonstratenserinnenstift', pp. 391–402.

[44] Kubach and Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas*, II, 827–36.

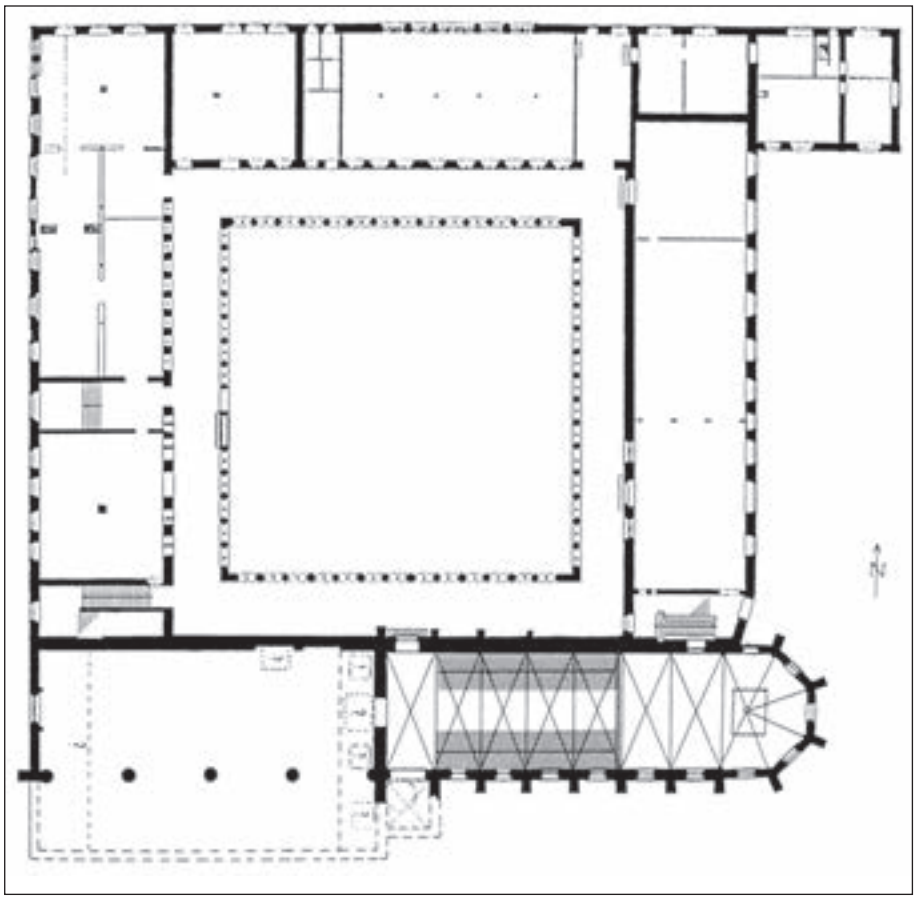

Figure 14.12. Colmar, Dominican convent of Unterlinden,
reconstruction by Carola Jäggi, 'Eastern Choir or Western Gallery', p. 87.

in Neuss give no indication that this was not, in fact, a church of an important male convent — thus, the liturgical disposition differs cardinally from the contemporaneous, above-mentioned Cistercian church at Roermond.

7. The Choir in a Separate Eastern Part of the Church

The second, greater church of the Dominican sisters' convent of Unterlinden in Colmar (Figure 14.12), founded in 1232, was built from 1252 onwards by the Dominican brother Volmar and solemnly dedicated in the year 1269 by the

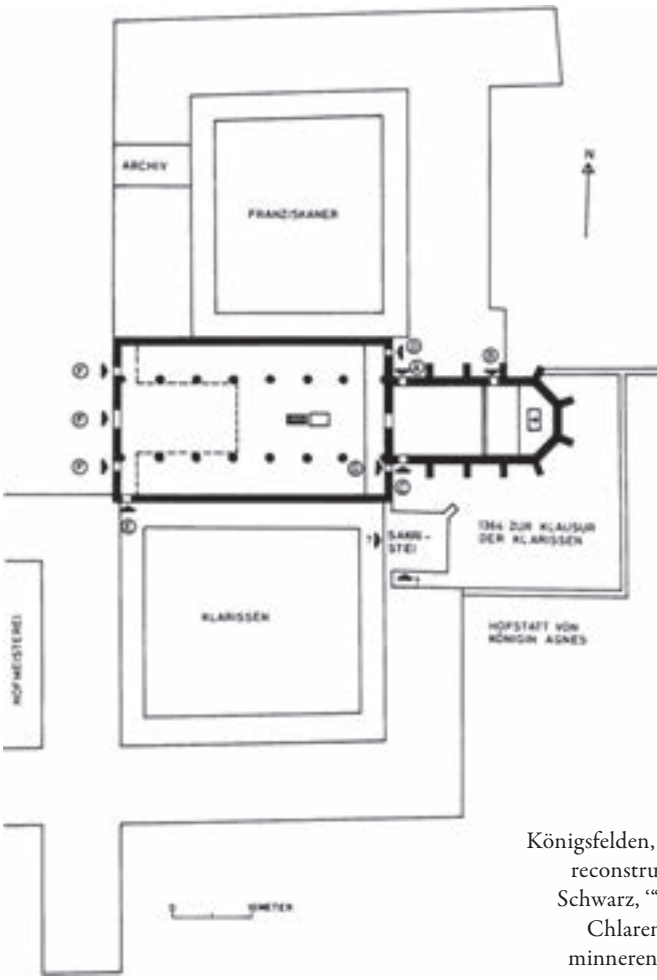

Figure 14.13.
Königsfelden, Franciscan double convent, reconstruction by Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz, '".. ein vrowen chloster sande Chlaren orden und ein chloster der minneren Bru(e)der orden..."', p. 153.

Dominican Albertus Magnus.[45] The nuns' choir was located in the eastern part of the church, formerly separated from the nave by the rood screen. Around 1250, the junction of choir and sanctuary in a separate, elongated eastern part of the church (in German, *Langchor*) was then very modern, developed for churches of Premonstratensian and Franciscan male convents who sought isolation of their choirs from the laity.[46] In Unterlinden, the sisters shared this choir

[45] Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 45–48, 207–18.

[46] Descœudres, 'Choranlagen von Bettelordenskirchen'.

building with the priests belonging to their monastery, and they apparently behaved as a male convent. In Basel, the Dominican nuns' church of Klingental, built from 1274 onwards and consecrated in 1293, was similarly organized.[47] From the outside there was no way to distinguish whether a male or female convent used the choir.

8. An Unclear Case: Königsfelden

In conclusion, a controversy about the church of the Clarisses in Königsfelden (Figure 14.13), in northern Switzerland, merits a mention.[48] The convent was founded in 1308 upon the murder of King Albert of Habsburg by his widow Agnes of Hungary not far from the site of the crime. Dendrochronological data show that contrary to the usual practices, the nave was constructed first: the nave was roofed in 1313/14; the choir was completed in 1330. There were two convents in Königsfelden: a small Franciscan community ministering to a large convent of the Clarisses. Until recently it was a matter of contention as to which convent had its buildings on which side of the church. The location of the nuns' choir stalls remains unclear to this day. Only the location of the stalls in the choir behind the screen has been proven — but it remains an open question whether they belonged to the male or female convent. Detailed written choir regulations only complicate the matter because the statements are ambiguous. Temporarily, based on these regulations, it was assumed that both nuns and monks used the stalls in the choir on a rotating system,[49] but the choir is less elongated than in Colmar and Basel, and not suitable for the large nuns' convent. Later, Carola Jäggi suggested that a narrow gallery along the west wall could be interpreted as a nuns' gallery[50] — even though it does not have sufficient room to accommodate traditional facing choir stalls. Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz has finally convincingly ascribed the western part of the nave to the nuns' choir.[51] She did, however, also reconstruct a wooden gallery between the

[47] Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 49–52; Maurer, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Basel-Stadt*, pp. 13–140, esp. pp. 35–53.

[48] Maurer, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Aargau*, pp. 42–59; Kurmann-Schwarz, '"Quam diu istud cadaver equitare permittemus?"'.

[49] Gerber, 'Die Verwechslung des Männer- und des Frauenklosters zu Königsfelden'.

[50] Jäggi, 'Eastern Choir or Western Gallery?' and *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*, pp. 201–02.

[51] Kurmann-Schwarz, '".. ein vrowen chloster sande Chlaren orden und ein chloster der minneren Bru(e)der orden..."'.

arcades that left no traces on the walls or the floor. With scholars fixated on the idea that there must have been a gallery, the possibility of locating the choir stalls on the ground level in the nave — the second disposition in my system — has never even been up for discussion.

Conclusion

Strikingly, older monastic regulations had no references to the various architectonic dispositions.[52] Only the transept galleries are attributed exclusively to the convents of the high nobility, the monumental houses of canonesses in medieval Saxony with a long history dating back to early Middle Ages. The place at the western end of the nave on the ground floor, separated from the sanctuary by the zone of the laity and clerics, was chosen by Cistercian nuns of the twelfth and thirteenth century, but is proven also to be an early medieval disposition. All other dispositions are to be found in the churches of a strict monastic order, such as Benedictine and Cistercian nuns, as well as in the churches for canonesses, and also in the strict regulated orders of the Premonstratensian nuns. The Italian disposition of a choir room outside the nuns' church, annexed to the sanctuary or to the nave (in German, *Psallierchor*) was not adopted before the sixteenth century, and also from the eighteenth century onwards by male convents.[53]

The correlation with the enclosure buildings also remains inconclusive. Since the surviving buildings of the enclosure are predominantly younger than the church, it seems that their location is determined by the disposition of the choir area[54] — but there are nonetheless monasteries, such as Marienstern, with a dormitory in the east, a nuns' choir in the west gallery, and an accordingly long, impractical connecting corridor.[55]

Many unusual female convents have been overlooked by academia, which has focused primarily on the architecture of the mendicant orders and seemingly typical churches of Cistercian female convents.[56] The 'normal', i.e. cor-

[52] Ellger, 'Das "Raumkonzept" der Aachener Institutio sanctimonalium von 816'.

[53] Jäggi, 'Raum und Liturgie in franziskanischen Doppelklöstern'.

[54] Untermann, 'Das "Mönchshaus" in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Klosteranlage'.

[55] Winzeler, 'Das "Opus sumptuosum" des Bernhard III. von Kamenz'.

[56] Jäggi, *Frauenklöster im Spätmittelalter*; Coester, 'Die Cistercienserinnenkirchen des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts'; Coester, *Die einschiffigen Cistercienserinnenkirchen West- und Süddeutschlands*; Mohn, *Mittelalterliche Klosteranlagen der Zisterzienserinnen*.

responding to the male monasteries, location of the choir in the east end of the nave and in the crossing was quite common in the female convents of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries — my examples are but a few of this group. In the context of the development towards the west gallery — in the modern period at the latest — a discussion must address whether the stalls in the east reflect an old 'self-evident' monastic tradition or a conscious, active conformation to the male positions. The visible and tangible distinction to the male monasteries, as in the case of the segregated choir in the west gallery, has long been noticed — I would, however, like to call into question whether this was a valid convention already in the thirteenth century. The architectonic evidence reveals that in the territory of the German kingdom until the fourteenth century, the choice of different locations for the choir of female convents was indeed possible and common.

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FemMoData: A Database of Medieval Female Monasteries in Europe

Hedwig Röckelein

My contribution is dedicated to a tool for research on female religious houses — 'Female Monasticism's Database', or FemMoData in short.[1] FemMoData provides access to a vast corpus of information on medieval female religious houses all over Europe. The database currently comprises entries on three thousand European religious communities. By giving access to data on social, economic, geographic, and gender-related issues, as well as material culture, innovative perspectives of research as well as comparative studies can be opened up to scholars. The database allows us to group religious houses according to specific periods in history, to analyse the social background of important people associated with any given convent. Thus, it gives us the opportunity of creating prosopographical analyses.

FemMoData incorporates all European female religious houses that were founded between the beginning of the monastic movement in *c.* 400 AD and the Reformation period (*c.* 1550 AD). This distinguishes FemMoData from other databases that are usually limited to one country or one region — such as the database for Hungary or 'Monastic Wales',[2] the latter of which only covers the period from the eleventh century onwards.

[1] 'Female Monasticism's Database' <http://femmodata.uni-goettingen.de> [accessed 3 March 2015]. This is also the location where the current state of work on FemMoData and information on its application are published.

[2] 'Monasteria Hungarica': 'monastic routes', currently only available on CD-ROM and in

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FemMoData focuses on the individual monastic house, not on monastic networks or orders. The database reflects the whole spectrum of female religious communities before the emergence of orders in the twelfth century. It encompasses houses that were incorporated into orders from the twelfth century onwards as well as those that remained unincorporated, such as most Cistercian convents. Also included are the few and usually short-lived double monasteries and — sporadically — semi-religious communities (Third Order, so-called Schwesternhäuser, houses of Beguines, Hospitallers).

FemMoData is a database designed for research from the ground up. As opposed to the Scandinavian monastic database of Johnny Jakobsen,[3] it is not limited to providing general information of interest to a non-academic audience; nor does it focus on primarily regional aspects, such as the databases for Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg.[4] While other databases, such as those for Hungary and Catalonia,[5] were created for predominantly or even exclusively touristic purposes, FemMoData provides comprehensive information on the written and material evidence for individual religious houses. It gives access to current research but also refers to established older publications and editions.

Technical Information and Functionality

FemMoData is structured as a relational database using the open source content-management system 'Contao'. Each item — that is, each religious house — is identified by a unique number (ID) and can be addressed by permalinks. There is an option for entering personal names and place names in accordance with authority files (such as that of the German National Library, 'Gemeinsame Normdatei/GND').

There are two different field categories: first, the statistical data fields (e.g., 'order', 'date of foundation') that can be used to observe larger trends and tendencies. They also allow the creation of maps displaying the distribution of

Hungarian. An English version is in preparation. For 'Monastic Wales', see <www.monasticwales.org> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[3] 'Katalog over klostre i middelalderens Danmark' <www.jggj.dk/KlosterGISkatalog.htm> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[4] For Bavaria, see 'Klöster in Bayern' <www.datenmatrix.de/projekte/hdbg/kloster/index.php>; for Baden-Württemberg, see 'Klöster in Baden-Württemberg' <http://www.kloester-bw.de> [both accessed 3 March 2015].

[5] See 'Monestirs' <www.monestirs.cat> [accessed 3 March 2015].

communities based on specific queries. The statistical data fields are completed with fields for commentaries. Second, 'narrative' fields for extended description (e.g., 'history') can also be accessed by a full text query.

The Basis of FemMoData

FemMoData's corpus is based on both published and unpublished data as well as on already existing, but incomplete or specialized, digital resources. The lion's share of data was adopted from the online database 'Monastic Matrix',[6] which was created in the late 1980s in the United States by Mary Mc Laughlin and Suzanne Wemple in the context of the project 'Women & Religious Life'.[7] 'Monastic Matrix' is based on published — in many cases outdated — handbooks of research on monasticism, for example Laurent Henri Cottineau's *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et prieurés* (published between 1935 and 1939).[8]

The 'Monastic Matrix' core of data was supplemented by collections of index cards and unpublished material by Robert Suckale, Free University of Berlin, which are mainly concerned with information on art history and architecture. A second unpublished corpus was provided by the notes of Katrinette Bodarwé. Her material reflects the state of research, albeit only for the Frankish period until about the year 900.

In addition, we have systematically incorporated data from current online databases, handbooks on monastic history, and monographs on specific regions, orders, or individual religious houses.[9] FemMoData incorporates data from the repertories 'Germania Sacra', 'Helvetia Sacra', and 'Germania Benedictina', as well as data from monastic handbooks on individual federal states of Germany.[10] Because FemMoData integrates these systematic and, in some cases,

[6] 'Monastic Matrix: A Scholarly Resource for the Study of Women's Religious Communities from 400 to 1600 CE' <http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[7] The project is currently directed by Alison Beach of Ohio State University: <http://monasticmatrix.org/dematrice> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[8] Cottineau, *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et prieurés*. Cottineau is now in revision in the database 'Corpus des monastères français', which is not yet available to the public.

[9] Compare the list on FemMoData's website.

[10] Heimann, Neitmann and Schich, *Brandenburgisches Klosterbuch*; Dolle, *Niedersächsisches Klosterbuch*; Hengst, *Westfälisches Klosterbuch*; Zimmermann and Priesching, *Württembergisches Klosterbuch*; *Klosterführer Rheinland*; Groten and others, *Nordrheinisches Klosterbuch*.

finalized publications, female religious houses in the German-speaking part of Europe dominate the corpus of the database, while other European regions are underrepresented. In the future, we will add data from publications on other European countries.

For Ireland, the main task will be the integration of numerous *cellae*. With regard to the Iberian Peninsula, only Catalonia has been included comprehensively so far. For Castile, only Cistercian convents are represented.[11] In Italy, only the areas of Rome, Latium, Apulia, and the Basilicata,[12] as well as female monasteries connected with Cluny,[13] have been incorporated. Monasticism in Italy was of a very differentiated nature. There were many smaller eremitic communities and minor female convents associated with urban monasteries. No research on these has been carried out so far. Furthermore, one has to consider both Latin and Greco-Italian monasticism. Both Central and Eastern Europe — that is, Poland, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria — are decidedly underrepresented at the moment.

The Input Mask

FemMoData's input mask is available in German and in English. New entries can be created in major modern languages used by the scientific community, for example, English, German, French, Italian, and so forth. It is subdivided into the following sections: name of the monastery (including medieval variants), place (including medieval and modern diocese), founding process and development (including date of foundation, reform, destruction, and abolition), prosopography (including the founder's and donor's family; the advocate; a list of abbesses and nuns; monastic offices; such as cantrix, portaria, etc.; the social background of the convent's members), function of the house (burial place of a noble family, parish church, incorporated parishes, seat of an archdeacon, anchorites in the vicinity, etc.), institution (e.g., abbey, priory, double monastery) and order (including filiations, congregation, observance, and rule), cult (patron saints, relics), history (including economy and possessions), equipment, architecture and archaeology (including sources in archives and libraries — such as charters and manuscripts, architectural monuments

[11] Based on Cavero Domínguez, *El esplendor del Císter en León (siglos XII–XIII)*.

[12] Based on Garaffa, *Monasticon Italiae, I: Roma e Lazio*; Lunardi, Houben, and Spinelli, *Monasticon Italiae, III: Pugliae e Basilicata*.

[13] Based on Andenna, *'Sanctimoniales cluniacenses'*.

and material culture, and the bibliography). For frequently quoted references, only short titles are listed in the entries, a click on which shows the full title. The full references are collected in a separate general bibliography that can be accessed individually. Where contradictions are presented by current literature, we point these out, albeit without correcting or commenting on them. It is up to the user to evaluate the extant evidence, possibly by conducting further independent research.

Historical phenomena and processes are often more complex and more differentiated than the standards of modern databases. This concerns particularly the names of persons, places, orders and offices, and the high proportion of variants in Medieval Latin and in vernacular languages as well as in modern ones. The problem of standardization for female monastic houses is rather relevant due to the fact that female monastic institutions in the Middle Ages were often at the margins or excluded from the norms of the male ones. A significant number were not integrated into the hierarchy and affiliation systems that are typical of male convents.

For the names of religious orders and their corresponding acronyms, we adopted the standards set by the third edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (LThK^3) (Encyclopaedia for Theology and Church).[14] For routines we implemented lists of standardized entries of acronyms of religious orders, dioceses, congregations, reform groups/observances, and rules. Standards for the spelling of saints' names — with regard to patron saints and relics — are taken from 'Calendoscope', a database intended as a tool for the calculation of feast days, which is maintained by the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes at the CNRS in Paris.[15] This database, however, has its limits: Calendoscope is based on the Roman calendar and therefore does neither cover the numerous local saints of Gallia in the early Middle Ages nor the hundreds of Irish saints!

But not all problems can be attributed to the structure and necessities of databases in general. A number of difficulties result from gaps in the transmission of female religious houses, as well as from the specific status of women's communities which was markedly different from that of their male counterparts. Thus, the history of their foundation is often obscure and the date of foundation cannot be determined precisely. In the case of double monasteries, it is usually only the male part of the community that is well documented, while the female

[14] Kasper, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.

[15] 'Calendoscope: logiciel d'aide à l'identification des calendriers liturgiques médiévaux' <http://calendriers.irht.cnrs.fr> [accessed 3 March 2015].

component is either completely undocumented or the little information that does exist rests solely on memorial lists. Written sources, especially in the case of female religious houses, rarely allow conclusions with regard to processes of reform. Sometimes material culture — such as architecture and equipment, or liturgical texts — are much more convincing than (other) written sources. But in times of reform, changes in the convent often coincided with a change of gender.

Applications of FemMoData

The following examples may serve to illustrate how investigations on monasticism can profit from the database. With regard to the examples of publications that were prepared with the help of FemMoData it has to be stressed that they relied on older versions of the database (local version in AskSam and the first web-based version) that did not include geographic data.[16]

FemMoData, launched in 2002, was first used for the creation of maps for *Crown and Veil (Krone und Schleier)*, a major exhibition on female religious institutions and female religious attitudes that attracted international attention and was hosted at the Federal Exhibition Centre in Bonn (Bundesausstellungshalle) and the Museum of the Ruhr in Essen (Ruhrlandmuseum) in 2005.[17] With the help of FemMoData, maps were created that displayed foundations of monasteries, monastic reforms, and Benedictine as well as Augustinian double houses in the Empire, 1050–1200 CE;[18] statistical analysis was carried out on patron saints of female religious houses.[19]

In 2009 FemMoData contributed significantly to the investigation of the role of male canons in the reform of female monasticism during the high Middle Ages. This investigation highlighted various relations that transcended the sys-

[16] The older state of the database is described by Bodarwé, 'FemMo-Data — Female Monasticism's Database'. I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude for many suggestions and essential help to my colleague Katrinette Bodarwé, as well as to my former and current student research assistants, chiefly among them Katharina Mersch, Timo Kirschberger, Katharina Knesia, Alexander Winnefeld, and Robin Volkmar, who have been involved in the development of the database during the last ten years.

[17] Frings and Gerchow, *Krone und Schleier*. The English translation of the main articles (the catalogue itself is not included!) is Hamburger and Marti, *Crown and Veil*.

[18] Frings and Gerchow, *Krone und Schleier*, p. 309.

[19] Röckelein, 'Gründer, Stifter und Heilige', p. 74, figs 4–6; cf. the English version: Röckelein, 'Founders, Donors, and Saints', cf. p. 218, figs 9.4–9.6 (percentage of dedications to the Virgin, St Peter, St John the Baptist, and St John the Evangelist considering the number of foundations of female monasteries, 400–1300 AD).

tem of religious orders — relations between canonesses, Augustinian canonesses, Benedictine nuns, and male Augustinian houses, particularly in the Middle Rhine Valley, Bavaria, and Saxony.[20] In other cases, research questions clearly demonstrated the deficits of the database. When I wanted to prepare a paper on the role of female monasteries in connection with the Benedictine Reforms of the high Middle Ages in 2009, we noticed that the database did not contain any usable data on this topic. There were only a few entries that listed 'Hirsau' in the field 'reform observance', and other reform groups such as 'St Blasien' and 'Siegburg' were missing altogether. To make matters worse, entries on Hirsau were of little use because they were either wrong or did not contain precise information. The reason for this unsatisfactory situation lies in the source database 'Monastic Matrix' which did not fully consider German research and thus omitted the vital data provided by the monographs of Josef Semmler and Hermann Jakobs on Hirsau, St Blasien, and Siegburg.[21] Before using the database for the paper, we had to dedicate a lot of effort to extracting, correcting, and systematizing relevant data from the published monographs and integrating it into FemMoData. The huge number of female monasteries and double monasteries that emerged during the Benedictine Reform period is now accessible in the printed version and integrated into FemMoData.[22] This example clearly illustrates the mutually beneficial relation between the database and current research.

Working on another project in 2008, we learned that many female monasteries served the function of parish churches.[23] There are many reasons for this, such as the location of parish churches within the territory of a female community, the foundation of a female house in association with a parish church — quite frequent in the case of Cistercian convents —, or the incorporation of parish churches into female houses during the high medieval period due to economic and legal reasons. This fact had consequences. For example, it is the origin of the community's, respectively, the abbess's protective power and advowson, and at times also of her role as archdeacon. FemMoData also provided us with the

[20] Röckelein, 'Die Auswirkung der Kanonikerreform des 12. Jahrhunderts'; cf. the English version: Röckelein, 'The Implications of 12th Century Canonical Reforms'.

[21] Jakobs, *Der Adel in der Klosterreform von St Blasien*; Jakobs, *Die Hirsauer*; Semmler, *Die Klosterreform von Siegburg*.

[22] The paper is now available in print in a significantly extended version: Röckelein, 'Frauen im Umkreis der benediktinischen Reformen des 10. bis 12. Jahrhunderts' (see also the appendices and the maps).

[23] See Röckelein, *Frauenstifte, Frauenklöster und ihre Pfarreien*, particularly my introduction: 'Die Frauenkonvente und ihre Pfarreien — Aufriss eines Problems', pp. 9–17.

insight that a substantial number of female religious houses developed into centres of pilgrimage — even if this appears to be a contradiction of prescriptions mandating strict enclosure in many late medieval communities. We are going to investigate the female religious houses as places of pilgrimage in the course of a recent research project with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem: 'Practising Love of God: Comparing Women's and Men's Practice in Medieval Saxony'.

Future Plans for the Improvement of FemMoData

1) Creation of maps and links to external maps: So far, maps are created manually, using the data provided by FemMoData. In the future we will implement the option for the dynamic creation of maps based on (variable) periods of time, religious order, and geographic regions (including data on abandoned villages).
2) Integration with image databases: Art historians, archaeologists, and conservators have voiced the wish to combine our textual database with image data. In future, we would like to link to digital facsimiles of charters,[24] manuscripts, and to digitized editions.
3) Expansion of the editorial team: During recent years a group of colleagues have engaged in discussions about the uses and structure of our database and have contributed to the improvement of FemMoData. Mention must be made of the long-term project 'Germania Sacra' at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, and particularly Bärbel Kröger, responsible for the IT aspect of that project.[25] Colleagues from Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Wales, Spain, and particularly Catalonia have been active in an exchange of ideas and knowledge with us and have signalled their intent to establish pilot projects for specific countries. Some of these colleagues have also been involved in a joint DAAD-MÖB project 'Monastic Landscapes' at the Central European University in Budapest.[26] The aim is to establish a Europe-wide network of authorized editors in different countries, each chosen for their specific areas of expertise.

[24] For example, 'Monasterium.net' <www.monasterium.net> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[25] In the future, 'Germania Sacra' is going to publish a database of all monastic institutions (male and female) of the Empire; 'Germania Sacra: Klöster und Stifte des Alten Reiches' <http://klosterdatenbank.germania-sacra.de> [accessed 3 March 2015].

[26] Laszlovszky and Röckelein, 'Medieval Monastic Regions in Central Europe'.

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