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Annuaire du Département d'Histoire et Civilisation

H&C

Women in the Religious Life

Edited by

Olwen Hufton

European University Institute Florence 1996 Institut universitaire européen

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Editorial

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Preface

The Yearbook of the Department of History and Civilisation, through its articles and more general summary of departmental information and activities, seeks to convey the essence and originality of the European University Institute. Each year, research students from the member states and other European countries come here to prepare their theses under the supervision of an equally international professorial body. The Department of History and Civilisation attempts to realise the ideal of a university education which transcends the frontiers between nations. The constant confrontation between different academic and historiographical traditions obliges each member of this community to question their previously acquired assumptions and to participate, through comparative encounters, in the construction of a new European history, anxious to discover the roots of our common heritage, but also to trace the special paths which explain the differences of political or economic development, customs, religious beliefs or behaviour.

The Yearbook of the Department of History and Civilisation intends to publish annually articles based on the results of doctoral research focusing on one or two main themes, and also aims in a broader sense to furnish a summary of the academic activities within the Department.

This publication is for researchers, professors, and students who are interested in the most recent developments in the construction of a European history. New research students will find/be able to read the articles of other young researchers who have recently completed or who are in course of completing their doctoral degrees.

Preface

Introduction

OLWEN HUFTON

Our Yearbook brings together work done in the Department of History and Civilisation by researchers, Jean Monnet Fellows and visiting and full-time faculty around a common theme chosen annually. The aim is to demonstrate the kind of work done here and the interaction between researchers and academics from different nations. The theme chosen this year bears witness to the arrival at the Institute in 1991 of three researchers, one Italian, one Spanish and one Anglo-Peruvian, all interested in aspects of Counter-Reformation female spirituality, convent life and in interpreting the nun by reference to contemporary mentalities and possibilities for initiatives afforded by the times in which the women lived. Above all, these graduates had in common the desire to penetrate the cloister and to pursue the nun through her actions and, as far as possible, through her own writings. This latter pursuit accords with the growing interest in the woman in religion as someone far from dead to anything but convent routine when the door purportedly shut out the world and to the developing concern with 'ego documents' (letters, memoirs, diaries, accounts of personal experiences and trial records) in which the individual speaks out revealing both perceptions of the world which are the product of a particular process of acculturation and the degree to which he or she is constrained by gender, religious or class-specific perceptions of the appropriate.

The historiography of the nun has gone through several phases and in so doing has gained in both interest and complexity. Until, and indeed into, the twentieth century approaches to her story could be broken down into the overtly hostile, as evinced by both the Protestant and the anticlerical tradition which gained ground with the Enlightenment in nominally Catholic societies on the one

hand, and the quasi-hagiographic, produced by Catholic historians, on the other. In anticlerical intellectual circles in Catholic countries, the nun was interpreted as the incarnation of Suzanne, Diderot's fictional heroine in *La religieuse*, a novel which, though not published until 1796, circulated long before in the salons and purported to relate to a real case history of an innocent victim forced into an unnatural vocation by parental greed. Once inside the convent she was condemned to the lascivious advances of her sex-starved companions. This was the view of the nun that gripped the French Constituent Assembly (1789-1791)[1] and in somewhat less extreme form, Archduke Leopold of Tuscany when he closed the Tuscan convents in 1785. The French Republican tradition, smarting under the defeats of the late 1790s, developed a view of the nun (a term used very loosely by this time as a term to embrace any woman living under some kind of religious vows) as the active perpetuator of ignorance in society through her role as teacher and nurse, and charged her with impeding the road to modernity because of her control over the minds of the innocent and the weak.

In Protestant societies, Luther's view of the nun as a papist abnormality – someone cruelly forced into a role outside her natural destiny, marriage – held sway well into the nineteenth century and was much the same as that of Diderot, if less graphic[2]. The nunneries disappeared from these Protestant societies until, in a few instances, they crept back in the more tolerant nineteenth century. For three hundred years the convent became a kind of marker distinguishing Catholic from Protestant society in much the same way as does the Muslim veil in our day. The nun was a deeply suspicious personage to the Protestant. When Mary Astell in the 1690s suggested that single women might find dignity through a supportive community of women who would pool their financial resources and live together, she was smartly reproved by Bishop Berkeley as treading on dangerous ground in evoking a notion which, *horribile dictu*, savoured of the Catholic convent[3]. Some hundred and fifty

1 For a bibliography and short commentary on this O. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, Toronto, 1992, 53-88 and notes.

2 L. Roper, *The Holy Household: Religion, Morals and Order in Reformation Augsburg*, Oxford, 1989, 211.

3 B. Hill, 'A Refuge from Men: the Idea of a Protestant Nunnery', *Past and Present*, 117, 1987, 107-130.

years later, when Anna Jameson urged the British to admit that they needed a nursing service to measure up to the French Sisters of Charity and a work sector which could occupy intelligent spinsters for life, she knew that she was still on difficult terrain[4]. When an anguished English father, a Mr Charles Douglas Loveday, whose child after her education opted to stay in a French convent, decided to embark on litigation against that house as late as 1821, the affair assumed gigantic dimensions and on both sides of the Channel aroused emotions running far deeper than any white slave crusade[5]. The convent was charged with *rapt et séduction*. The history of the nun has not then been neutral territory but rather, viewed from outside, suitable material for a Gothic novel. Such fictions were not lacking. Victorians experienced a *frisson* of prejudice mixed with lust over the story of Maria Monk, a variant on the story of the nun of Monza who in the 1630s carried on a liaison with the man living next door to the convent using her cell as a tryst. This scandalous conduct, which led to the birth of two children, was aided and abetted by two nuns and a priest who was also allegedly involved in sexual misdemeanour. It resulted in the nun being walled up for fourteen years in a cell in the *Convertite*, the home for penitent prostitutes[6].

The change to a more positive and objective view of convent life has occurred in several ways. In the first half of this century occasional voices, amongst them Eileen Power's, suggested that the convent was a meaningful alternative to marriage for women who positively wanted such an alternative and that the potential for study for developing the mind and the companionship afforded by the convent should not be underrated[7]. These were points picked up and developed by recent historians of women. Other scholars,

4 A. Jameson, *Sisters of Charity at Home and Abroad. A Lecture*, London, 1852.

5 C. Ford, 'Private Lives and Public Order in Restoration France', *The American Historical Review*, 99, 1994, 21-43.

6 U. Colombo (ed.), *Vita e processo di Suor Virginia Maria de Leyva monaca di Monza*, Milan, 1985 and R. Canossa, *Il velo e il cappuccio. Monacazioni forzate e sessualità nei conventi femminili in Italia tra '400 e '700*, Rome, 1991. A bibliography on nineteenth-century melodrama focusing on the cloister can be found in C. Ford, 'Private Lives', 39, fn. 65.

7 A summary of this development appears in an excellent article by B. Harris, 'A New Look at the Reformation: Aristocratic Women and Nunneries 1450-1540', *Journal of British Studies*, 32, 1991.

involved in the study of family strategy, have examined in particular contexts (the Italian cities of the Renaissance above all) which, and how many, family members were chosen for the religious life. Striking contrasts have emerged between the high numbers of daughters of the Italian patriciates placed in the convent at the beginning of the sixteenth century and those of the English gentry and aristocracy, but the reasons for these differences remain speculative. Another direction for study has been the refusal to accept the convent wall as impenetrable and to try to discern what exactly was going on behind it so as to understand the nun and her world and differences over time – notably before and after the reforming hand of the Council of Trent. This last development has involved many approaches. Cultural historians have pursued the nun as a creator and as a purveyor of culture through her writings. As writers (of chronicles, letters, hagiographies, etc.) women in religion not only count amongst the earliest women writers but some of their writings influenced a broader social spectrum. This approach has opened up again the issue of what opportunities convent life made available to women, the initial question at the basis of the positivist approach to the woman in religion.

Significant developments occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the form of religious life for women. The charitable *oeuvre* of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries in Catholic countries was by any reckoning remarkable. It eventuated in hospitals, welfare institutions and schools, all staffed and administered by women who finally escaped the requirement of claustration whilst living under religious vows. Another development issued from the European push into the New World, particularly into Canada and South America. The establishment there of religious houses, initially of French or Spanish nuns respectively, made the convent an agent of the process of colonisation. The complexity of this process is only now being unravelled[8]. It involves issues as diverse as the convent as a centre of credit for the villages, or as a cultural force proclaiming the superiority of European religion over the

8 D. Deslandres, 'Femmes missionnaires en Nouvelle France; les débuts des Ursulines et des Hospitalières à Quebec' in J. Delumeau (ed.), *La Religion de Ma Mère*, Paris, 1992. N. Zemon Davis has work in progress on Mère Marie de l'Incarnation.

pagan, sometimes rebutting but often fusing concepts of the native culture with that of the coloniser[9].

Yet another approach has been a consideration of the role of the convent in the perpetuation of a fortress faith during the turbulent times of religious conflict in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This aspect raises issues as diverse as the education of the daughters of important Catholics from countries where the dominant confession was Protestant, or the presence of underground women's religious organisations. An example of the first might be the presence of English children sent to convents in France and the Southern Netherlands from the reign of Elizabeth I for their education. If they returned to their homeland, they were the mothers of a new generation of Catholics and hence the numbers in the faith were maintained[10]. Or, another example of women in religion acting as an underground force to seek to keep a faith alive might be the Dutch Kloppen who, as Calvinism gained the cities of Holland, struggled to see that children were taught the elements of the faith and who are the subject of a Dutch thesis in progress[11].

Clearly, the nun's story is complex, one might even say it defies consecutive narrative and splinters into a series of diverse models contingent upon time and place. One might begin by establishing a chronology and a consciousness of differing national possibilities so as to include differing perceptions of the nun's business according to both time and place, by society at large and by significant individuals of both the ecclesiastical and the secular hierarchies who sought to use her. This done, a further challenging line of en-

9 On the South American convent, E. Arenal and S. Schlau, *Untold Sisters, Hispanic Nuns in their own Works*, Albuquerque, 1989; A. Lavrin, 'Female Religions' in L. Hoberman and S. Socolow (eds.), *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America*, Albuquerque, 1986 and K. Burns, 'Convents, Culture and Society in Cuzco, Peru, 1550-1865', PhD thesis, Harvard, 1993. On Africa in the nineteenth century, Y. Turin, *Affrontements culturels dans l'Algérie coloniale. Ecoles, Médicines, Religion 1830-1880*, Paris, 1971, offers an interesting *entrée*.

10 This became a function of the French Ursulines. M. de C. Gueudre, *Histoire de l'ordre des Ursulines en France*, Paris, 1957-63.

11 Marit Monteiro at Nymegen has a PhD in progress on the Kloppen (spiritual virgins) around Ruremonde. S. O'Brien, 'Women of the English Catholic Community: nuns and pupils at the Bar Convent, York, 1680-1790', *Monastic Studies*, 1, n.d.

quiry is how the woman in religion herself viewed her role and constructed her identity.

In continental Europe the typical pre-Reformation convent was both urban and aristocratic or patrician. In Italy, where there was considerable integration of particular convents into the family strategies of elites, as many as a third or a half of upper-class girls were destined for the cloister[12]. These high figures reflect something more than a need on the part of families to economise on dowries, which escalated in the period. The numbers of aristocratic men entering the church, the army, heavy male infant mortality and shame and honour codes which precluded marrying down (in marked contrast to the English situation)[13] all served to make husbands scarce and the tendency of the Italian patriciates was to marry locally thus limiting the marriage pool. If we add to this the fact that Italian patrician girls were placed from an early age in the convent for an education, then the tendency of the entire system to generate nuns has a conspicuous inevitability. What was true in Italy has strong resonances in Spain, in France, in the German cities and those of the Netherlands.

Involved in all these female institutions was a great deal of money, accumulated in the form of pious bequests in money and land and dowries, usually in money but enhanced and perpetuated through investments. The late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a falling off in bequests – in Italy a deflection of pious money into dowry funds for poor girls and like initiatives – and the great convents came to depend more and more on careful investments and property management. Life within the pre-Tridentine aristocratic convent reflected the ease and even luxury of its aristocratic components. There were indeed in some 'book-lined cells', in others theatrical and musical performances with invited audiences[14]. All

12 G. Greco, 'Monasteri femminile e patriziato a Pisa (1530-1630)' in *Città italiana del '500 tra riforma e controriforma. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi di Lucca*, Lucca, 1981; A. Molho, "Tamquam vere mortua". Le professioni religiose femminili nella Firenze del tardo medioevo', *Società e storia*, 43, 1989.

13 See Harris, 'A New Look'. Dr. Anne Lawrence of the Open University, UK points out that in 1539 there were 1,600 nuns in England.

14 M.J. King, 'Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance' in P. Labalme (ed.), *Beyond their Sex. Learned Women of the European Past*, London, 1984; C. Monson (ed.), *The Cranied Wall. Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Ann Arbor, 1992;

these establishments knew the continuing to and fro of visitors and relatives and, in some instances, the nuns enjoyed annual breaks when they could return to their families for up to a month.

If the presence of a woman in one of these aristocratic houses depended on money, where did that leave other women who were without funding but who wished to adopt the religious life? The initiatives which led in the late Middle Ages to the foundations of the Poor Clares and the female Carmel certainly reduced the costs of entry and hence to a degree allowed the conventual life to move a little down market. Neither opened up to women the way of life of the wandering mendicant friars. Indeed, the reforms of Saint Colette (pioneered in Besançon in 1410) resulted in the French Poor Clares or Clarisses adopting the most severe form of claustration known in its times. Perhaps as a result of the lack of flexibility, the late medieval and pre-Reformation world knew a number of developments whose significance not only reflected on their times but were important for the future. The first was the emergence of groups of women living together chastely and spiritually but outside the cloister because many were maintained by work in society. The Beguines of the Netherlands, recently analysed by Florence Koorn[15], who often sustained themselves by washing and carding wool for the master weavers as well as by good works, aroused the suspicion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy because of their independence from the cloister and effective control. As legatees of bequests in property from aristocratic women, some of whom were themselves drawn to this way of life for themselves, they were difficult to dislodge. Although the Beguines secured a firm foothold in the Netherlands and a toehold in some German cities they did not expand much beyond.

In Mediterranean society, however, there was a significant increase in tertiaries, women living outside the convent, sometimes dedicated to good works and some of them with a reputation for holy prophecies and visions. Certainly given impetus by the model of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), such women have been the subject of a number of fascinating and seminal studies which have

E. Weaver, 'Spiritual Fun: A Study of Sixteenth-Century Tuscan Convent Theater' in M.B. Rose (ed.), *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*.

15 F.W.J. Koorn, *Begijnhoven in Holland en Zeeland gedurende de middeleeuwen*, Assen, 1981.

served to illuminate popular mentalities and conceptions of saintliness. The link between anorexia (the perceived ability to live on nothing save perhaps the communion wafer) and trances, and the possibilities for deception, but empowerment, through the reputation one could secure from a credulous public, have been graphically depicted by Caroline Bynum, Rudolph Bell and most recently by Gabriella Zarri in *Le sante vive* and her collection of essays *Finzione e santità*[16]. Trances and prophecies on the part of an emaciated, waxen woman, who possibly also claimed to have stigmata or other bleeding wounds, reflect a concept of female holiness not only held on the outside of the cloister but one which, as the writings of Saint Theresa disapprovingly convey, could also be found on the inside of the Carmel[17].

Tridentine reformers of the religious life and of public manifestations of female spirituality found common ground in perceiving the need to tighten up on the conditions of claustration in the aristocratic convents (with varying degrees of success) and in controlling the untidy fringes of tertiaries (also with varying success in the medium term). There was, in addition, another development predating Trent, that of the woman in religion doing good works within the parameters of the great civic institutions dedicated to the sick, the orphaned and the handicapped – to whom were added, from at least the 1520s, the sinful in the shape of the penitent prostitute. In the difficult economic conditions of the early sixteenth century, with the presence of armies who were to spread a new disease – syphilis – around Europe, the number of houses dedicated to the rescue of fallen women burgeoned in the great civic centres of Italy. One such, that of Florence, has recently been the subject of an in-depth study by Sherrill Cohen[18]. All these institutions used as directional womanpower women under some kind

16 C.W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley, 1987; R. Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, Chicago and London, 1985; G. Zarri, *Le sante vive: profezie e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500*, Turin, 1990 and ibid. (ed.), *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, Turin, 1991.

17 Saint Theresa of Avila, *Book of Foundations* (1573), cited by A. Weber, 'Saint Theresa, Demonologist' in A. Cruz & M. Perry (eds.), *Culture and Control in Counter Reformation Spain*, Minneapolis, 1992.

18 S. Cohen, *The Evolution of Women's Asylums since 1500. From Refuges for Ex-Prostitutes to Shelters for Battered Women*, New York, Oxford, 1992. The bibliography contains much comparative work.

of religious vows. In some instances the personnel running the *Convertite* may have been recruited from penitent prostitutes who knew that leaving the house could only mean a return to a former way of life. Serving such institutions did not necessarily mean the freedom to circulate freely outside its walls. Rather did they proffer a variant on claustration, that is good works within a confined space and under terms which did not demand the payment of a substantial dowry before entrance.

Not all the poor could be gathered in institutions. The Council of Trent did not specifically consider the need for welfare systems but remained committed to the notion of voluntary charity as the means whereby the rich had a chance of salvation. Demographic growth and economic dislocation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought home to the socially concerned the need for an active philanthropic policy to reach out to the poor in their hovels. It was soon apparent that the only persons likely to do this job were women with a special Christian vocation. But where might they be found? The initial hope that they might be found within lay society (pious widows and wives) proved futile, in spite of some impressive individual initiatives. A full-time dedicated force was needful. The church, however, was reluctant to concede that women, under a religious vow but living outside the cloister and wandering about their business according to the vagaries of the needs of the suffering, was the answer. The history of the Ursulines, arguably the most significant development in women's religious life in the sixteenth century, is one in which an active group of nursing and teaching women, in the world in every sense, encountered the deep hostility of the Roman Catholic establishment, averse to unrestrained movement outside the cloister for women in religion[19]. The activities of Mary Ward, who aimed at creating a force of women to emulate the Jesuits in their daring exploits of mission work, and the perceived need to clean up on the dubious exploits of the tertiaries may have been factors in the decision to enforce claustration upon the literally exponential growth of the Ursulines. Founded by Angela de Merici in 1535 (formally recognised 1565) from good village

19 de C. Gueudré, *Histoire de l'ordre des Ursulines en France*. M. A. Jégou, *Les Ursulines du Faubourg St. Jacques à Paris, 1607-1662: Origine d'un monastère apostolique*. For the German side of the story, A. Conrad, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt. Ursulinen und Jesuitinnen in der Katholischen Reform bewegung des 16/17 Jahrhunderts*, Mainz, 1991.

women prepared to help the sick and the needy and who were often illiterate, the recruitment to the group, who lived under simple vows, expanded upwards in the social scale. Invited into France by Madame de Sainte Beuve, by 1715 there were 300 Ursuline houses. These numbers were frightening and the response of the authorities was claustration. Notwithstanding, the houses continued to attract and were used by the French monarchy as schools for the re-indoctrination of noble girls with Protestant mothers and by the Jesuits in Canada for the teaching of Indian children. The history of their activities is now receiving attention and is generating more questions for further research – not least the interesting question of where the money came from for expansion and who were the sponsors as well as who were the Ursulines themselves[20]? A similar essay in the creation of a force for good works outside the cloister, the foundation of the Visitandines in 1610 by Jeanne de Chantal with the encouragement of Saint Francis de Sales, met with temporary success but again its growth frightened the authorities and the result was claustration[21].

A number of recent works have embarked upon an examination of how in France, in the seventeenth century, a way was found around obligatory claustration so that women could have a religious bond and some communal life whilst active in society. Elizabeth Rapley's *The Dévôtes* (1990) recounts something of the process in a study of some of the ways in which some French women – of very differing kinds – constructed for themselves, in response to perceived social needs, forms of the religious life based upon simple vows of chastity and service under no terms of claustration and subject only to the acceptance of the bishop of the area[22]. Elizabeth Rapley's explanation for this momentous step is that the women took 'private' vows. A more complex analysis is found in Marguerite Vacher's *Des 'régulières' dans le siècle. Les soeurs de*

20 D. Deslandres, 'La femme et la mission française', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, Université de Montréal, vi, 1, 1985.

21 A. Scattigno, 'Jeanne de Chantal, la fondatrice' in G. Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al Femminile*, Rome/Bari, 1992; R. Devos, 'La Correspondence de Jeanne de Chantal: son intérêt au point de vue de l'histoire sociale des mentalités', *Actes du congrès des Sociétés Savantes de la province de Savoie*, Chambéry, 1972.

22 E. Rapley, *The Dévôtes: Women and the Church in Seventeenth Century France*, McGill, 1990.

Saint Joseph du Père Médaille aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Clermont Ferrand, 1991). She tracks the record of an order which was indeed to be the acorn from which great oaks would grow since the sisters were to be absolutely critical in the perpetuation of Catholic identity and culture, not only in central France but in the great cities of North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such an overwhelming success could not have been divined in the beginning when, in a remote region of France, bishop, Jesuit father, founder mother, sponsors and the new sisters themselves worked together closely to carry out a defined social mission involving help to the needy in society. The success of the congregation in avoiding claustration is attributed to the independent line of the French monarchy towards Rome, as well as to the private nature of the vows, the smallness of the initial enterprise and the collusion and active promotion of the Jesuit father with the women[23].

The big success story of the seventeenth century was of course the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul and many of the reasons for their success could be posited in much the same terms as that of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, except that the creation did not take place in an obscure part of France and the interest of the monarchy in having such a group of women to staff the *Hôpitaux Généraux*, institutions intended to cater for the sick, the old, the orphaned and beggars, was very marked. The recent work of Colin Jones has greatly increased our understanding of this critical group who in 1789 accounted for over 15% of all women in religion[24].

That said, there is now some highly interesting work being done on the small associations of women living under simple vows founded in the late seventeenth century to respond to specific social needs. Good examples of such work are studies of *Les Filles de la Croix de Roye* and of the *Béates* of the Velay whose history can be followed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when they received the special attention and opprobrium of the an-

23 Professor Patricia Byrne, OSJ is engaged in a study of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in North America.

24 C. Jones, *The Charitable Imperative*, London, 1989. On other nursing orders, M.C. Dintet-Lecompte, 'Implantation et Rayonnement des Congrégations Hospitalières dans le Sud de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *Annales du Midi*, 104, 1992.

ticlerical Jules Ferry[25]. Such women were, as this minister pointed out, critical in the acculturation process of an entire region, the teachers of mothers and future nuns. Taken overall, the immense burgeoning of the orders dedicated to social work which occurred in France established that country as the particular seat of a brand of social Catholicism which in the nineteenth century other Catholic countries were to seek to emulate. Not only did the French Revolution demonstrate the significance of the social *oeuvre* in question, by revealing the dependency of particular local populations on such initiatives, but this dependence explains the growth of local hostility to policies of de-Christianisation and secular education. The amazing growth of the congregations after the Restoration of 1815 which has been the subject of Claude Langlois's path-breaking *Le Catholicisme au féminin* (1982) and the adoption of these forms of religious life in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and America still offer immense scope for study as does the push into Africa and Asia[26].

In France the growth of the *congréganistes* served to accentuate a decline in the numbers of those entering the contemplative orders which was apparent in Italy and the Southern Netherlands as well as in France by the mid-eighteenth century. The active nun was certainly the model for the future even if the contemplative orders, particularly the Carmel, the incarnation of Baroque spirituality with its emphasis on emotion, the permeability of the human frame by divine ecstasy, controlled deprivation, but also a sense of heavenly splendour, maintained a strong presence in Spain and Spanish America[27].

Even so cursory a summary points to some of the richness and variety of the changing forms of convent life. Moreover, the critical

25 J. P. Henry, 'Les Filles de la Croix de Roye. Les débuts difficiles d'une école populaire féminine (xvii-xviiie siècle)' and O. Robert, 'De la Dentelle et des Ames: les Demoiselles de l'Instruction', in Delumeau (ed.), *La Religion de Ma Mère*; A. Rivet, 'Des "ministres" laïques au XIXe siècle? Les Béates de la Haute Loire', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France*, lxix, 1978; R. Lagier, 'Une Institution vellave: les Béates', *Cahiers de la Haute Loire*, 1979.

26 The anticlerical opposition to the congregations accelerated the expatriation.

27 J.L. Sánchez Lora, *Mujeres, Conventos y formas de la religiosidad barroca*, Madrid, 1988; J.a. Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco*, Barcelona, 1975.

issue of the identity of the nun herself has not been broached. The nun has certainly left herself on record through her writings. From the late Middle Ages in German and Italian convents, chronicles kept by nuns have survived on a piecemeal basis. Sometimes they contained merely the convents' accounts, but in these very prosaic chronologies and commemorations personal commentaries could find a place. Then there was the writing of hagiography, the lives of distinguished sisters who had by their spirituality and exemplary lives embellished and lent meaning to the convent. These works might be intended for no more than circulation within the convent but increasingly, as the hand of the Counter-Reformation was felt, they were used by the missionary orders as mission literature to augment the spirtuality of the parishes.

Then there were autobiographies or spiritual diaries whose keeping was often urged upon the sister in question by the father confessor. These diaries were intended to be a kind of control to prevent the development of false pretensions to mysticism. The confessor was far from disinterested in such a literary enterprise. Through the nun's writings, he could discuss – and shape – her thoughts and if at the end of the day she should turn out to be a candidate for sainthood or an alleged holy woman, another Catherine of Siena, some of the glory would rub off on him[28].

Some women from their book-lined cells emerged as historians. Amongst these could be counted Angelica Baitelli, the Benedictine of Brescia, who, drawing on chronicles in Latin, and pointing out the errors made by earlier, careless (male) scholars when they had drawn on these texts, wrote a history of her convent stretching back to the Lotharingians which detailed property and donations, privileges and the aristocratic backgrounds of the women who had been part of the community over time but, above all, she sought to locate her convent in the socio-cultural environment of her day. For her, this institution was of significance in that it combined aristocratic and spiritual values. The arguments of Caritas Pirkheimer, the Nuremberg abbess against the abolition of her convent by the

28 F.W.J. Koorn, 'Elizabeth Strouwen, La Donna Religiosa' in Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al femminile*, is a good example. See also D. Donahue, 'Nuns and Confessors as Autobiographers in Early Modern Spain', *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 13, 1989.

Protestant reformers are perfectly consonant with Baitelli's approach[29].

Not all, of course, were so content with their lot. Some ran away. One was to become perhaps Italy's earliest feminist woman writer (if we exclude Christine de Pisan and Lucrezia Marinelli, neither of whom addressed essential issues in quite the same way). Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1654) stands out as a rebellious woman of letters who from her convent in Venice turned out a remarkable stream of texts critical of the convent and of the position of those aristocratic women who were not elected by their families for marriage. Her works focused on the lack of choice in the lives of these women and how the convent could be either paradise or hell depending on how readily they could submerge themselves in spirituality, adapt to community life and negotiate their circumstances to give them some satisfaction. She saw about her both happiness and misery[30].

Three of the essays in this collection draw directly upon the written *oeuvre* of the nun herself. They explore the limits of the possible of certain kinds of documentation compiled under very different circumstances, chronicles ('Libri di ricordi'), letters, hagiography and autobiography. The fourth essay moves into the territory of the nineteenth-century nun engaged in active work in society, in welfare, education and in running hostels for young factory workers which can be examined through day books.

The significant issue raised by Silvia Evangelisti is that of property relations within the convent as revealed in convent chronicles and financial registers. Put another way, given that according to the laws of her order the nun took a vow of personal poverty, how did it come about that convent life could pivot on property relations and where and how did property relations impinge on relationships within the cloister? Part of the answer depends upon an appreciation of the relationship between the secular and the spiritual family and in particular, the financial worth of any nun to her foundation. Although convent dowries were much lower than those on the in-

29 S. Evangelisti, 'Angelica Baitelli, la storica' in Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al Femminile*; G. Bryant, 'Caritas Pirkheimer: the Nuremberg Abbess' in K.M. Wilson (ed.), *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, London, 1987.

30 F. Medioli, *'L'Inferno monacale' di Arcangela Tarabotti*, Turin, 1990 and G. Conti Odorisio, *Donne e società nel Seicento: Lucrezia Marinelli e Arcangela Tarabotti*, Rome, 1979.

flationary aristocratic marriage market, they were by no means small and families did not anticipate that their daughters should suffer a decline in their living standards as a result of entry into the religious life. Indeed, they were prepared to furnish and even build cells within the convent destined for the personal use of their daughter(s). In addition to the dowry (the money immediately given) some families provided a living allowance or funds which, if invested, would amount to the same. The nun herself could be the investor and in any case the collective funds of the house were placed out at interest by the house (i.e., the women). In short, if personal poverty was the ideal, it was one manipulated in the aristocratic houses to accommodate the short-term comfort of the individual nun and the long- term profit of the house in question. Of course, where there was property there was dissension over its use, its exploitation and its transmission. There in a nutshell we perhaps have the point of tension in the system and the problems arising from the use of the convent as a part of family strategy. However, without such funds the convent as a site of culture would have been distinctly impoverished.

Elisa Sampson explores the mental world of the nun in the Spanish New World cloister in Mexico through her writings. The women who came from Spain carried with them the intellectual baggage of Baroque spirituality and imported literary forms, hagiography, autobiography, letters, commentaries and chronicles. Some of their writing revealed not only the women's concept of the spiritual but embodied details revealing as well attitudes to racial difference and to the experience of changing continents. The texts reveal a very blurred line between Catholic doctrine and superstition. They also show a very close link in the minds of the writers between the concept of racial purity and that of the true Catholic. One interesting detail which emerges from this study is the notion (and the reality) of the convent as a site of conflict between the saintly nun and her more earth-bound sisters. Saint Teresa herself had torn her convent apart by her insistence on her reforms and by her criticisms of her fellow nuns and in so doing had established, as it were, a kind of trope of the convent as a place of dissent (which could mean factions and rivalry).

Ana de Jesús, whose correspondence is the subject of the third contribution to this collection by Concha Torres, was herself such a dissenting figure but one chosen to take the reformed Carmel from

Spain into France and thence into the Southern Netherlands. How did this woman who had opted for a life of the most austere and rigid claustration feel about not only hitting the road for months but continual uprooting? What kind of problems did she face? If each new foundation was a triumph for God and the Spanish Carmel, what did it mean for the women themselves? What kind of relationships were permissible within the convent and how did it integrate into the wider society? The tone of the letters of Ana de Jesús and the very basic nature of her preoccupations with cold and damp and supplies for the institution afford a striking contrast both with the material concerns of the well-endowed Florentine convents described by Silvia Evangelisti and with the life of the Spanish nun in Mexico.

They are also a far cry from the prosaic concerns of the women who kept the convent dormitory in Brescia which served as a hostel for girls in the textile factories. These nineteenth-century women chosen for study by Professor Alice Kelikian of Brandeis University, Jean Monnet Fellow at the Institute in 1992-3, interpreted their dedication to a life of service to Christ very differently. Some were very closely related to the *patronat* (rather than to the aristocracy) and certainly promoted the interests of these entrepreneurs in providing a highly structured framework for a disciplined, cheap, young female workforce. The dormitory services and religious environment profferred by the nuns countered the fears families might have about releasing daughters for work in the factories as a threat to female honour and hence to their marriageability.

Le Catholicisme au féminin, to borrow Claude Langlois' phrase, even *le féminisme 'en religion'*[31], to use that of Yvonne Turin, is hence distinctive and part of an evolving story. It involves a perception of changing social imperatives, of attitudes to women and of attitudes held by women about their roles in society and mission to humankind. If the nun has become 'interesting' it is because of the richness and diversity of her past.

31 Y. Turin, *Femmes et religieuses au XIXème siècle. Le féminisme en religion*, Paris, 1989.

Moral Virtues and Personal Goods: The Double Representation of Female Monastic Identity (Florence, 16th and 17th centuries)

SILVIA EVANGELISTI

A book written in the Florentine convent of the Poor Clares of Santa Maria in Montedomini, entitled 'Croniche delle nostre sorelle trapassate', which records and commemorates all the nuns who died in the community from 1594 to 1680, contains the following passage[1]:

> Yehsus Maria 1650.
> As the sage said, the living must seek virtue with all their strength, and honour is only achieved on death, as we learn that the virtuous actions of the dead are to be praised. God has called unto Him our Suor Maria Benedetta Buontalenti, on Saturday the 7th May, at 11.30, at the age of 59 after 49 years of religious life. Having followed the path of virtue with the study of grammar in her youth, a virtue acquired by few women, with the goodness of her life, with her reserve, her assiduity in attending the choir, her exemplary religious observance, she would deserve much praise, but this is neither our task nor the place, because it would require a more eloquent language and much longer time, and we would only be able to say what the nuns of this convent already know... We shall only say that in her time on this earth this blessed soul did not hide the talent that God had given her, but instead used it so virtuously that now she has won the embrace of her celestial

1 The documents of Florentine monasteries, suppressed first in 1785 by Pietro Leopoldo and then in 1808 by the French government, are kept in two different series: *Corporazioni religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo* (which I will refer to by the name of the convent and the number of the volume), and *Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal governo francese* (which I will refer to as CRS, with the number and name of the convent, and the number of the volume).

spouse Jesus. May he make us worthy of her, and her funeral incurred the following cost...[2]

Beginning with this terse description, the record of Maria Benedetta Buontalenti's death is followed by several extensive and detailed pages of accounts listing the expenses undertaken by the convent for Benedetta's funeral, the mass and the offerings made for the salvation of her soul, and the profit made from the sale of all her effects, including the appropriation of her capital. The passage ends by recording the amount left after subtracting the costs incurred from the profit made by the convent. 'And after all the above costs,' it concludes, 'the Convent is left with 279 *scudi* 5 *lire* 3 *soldi*. *Laus Deo Semper*.'

The record describes two sides of the identity of Maria Benedetta Buontalenti, a member of a prominent Florentine family. First, her moral and intellectual virtues, praised at the beginning of the biographical note. In this description her personality resembles one of the thousands of female heroines who enriched the collections of 'illustrious women', a widespread genre with a long tradition in Western literature. Second, there is her precise economic value, recorded in a sum placed at the end of the note, the amount of money she brought to the community. Her memory therefore has a double value: on the one hand religious and intellectual, on the other financial.

The study of a series of commemorative writings from Florentine female monasteries enables us to reconstruct both the spiritual and intellectual life of the community and its financial situation. This kind of text reveals different aspects of the social roles adopted by female religious institutions in the past. The studies of Gabriella Zarri have illustrated the multiple functions carried out by female convents in the urban societies of the Italian *ancien régime*[3]. As well as being places of polarisation of public religious life,

2 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (henceforth ASF), CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, *Cronache di monache*, c.171v.

3 On female Italian convents in general see the fundamental essay by G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città (secoli XV-XVIII)' in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, 9, *La chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Torino, Einaudi, 1986, 357-429.

female convents were also centres of intense cultural activity[4]. They played a central role in the education of women, allowing them to acquire a high level of literacy and on certain occasions provided access to a wide selection of books. From the convent women could also maintain intellectual relationships with the outside world, principally their families and literary society. The large number of works written by nuns is evidence of how, in the female cloistered world, women could find a place where their intellectual identity and their authority in writing was likely to be recognised[5]. Moreover, the monasteries carried out an important function in relation to the economic and patrimonial strategies of families of the aris-

4 On the circulation of books within the convent see G. Zarri, 'Le istituzioni dell'educazione femminile' in *Le sedi della cultura nell'Emilia Romagna*, 5: *I secoli moderni. Le istituzioni e il pensiero*, Milano, Federazione delle Casse di Risparmio e delle Banche del Monte dell'Emilia Romagna, 1987, 85-109; Id., 'La vita religiosa femminile tra devozione e chiostro' in *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500*, Torino, Rosemberg & Sellier, 1990, 21-50. D. Zardin, *Donna e religiosa di rara eccellenza. Prospera Colonna Bascapé, i libri e la cultura nei monasteri milanesi del Cinque e Seicento*, Firenze, Olschki, 1992 and Id., 'Mercato, librario e letture devote nella svolta del Cinquecento tridentino. Note in margine ad un inventario milanese di libri di monache' in N. Raponi and A. Turchini (eds.), *Stampa, libri e letture a Milano nell'età di Carlo Borromeo*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1992, 135-246. S. Spanò Martinelli, 'La biblioteca del "Corpus Domini" bolognese: l'inconsueto spaccato di una cultura monastica femminile', *La Bibliofilia*, LXXXVIII, 1986, 1-23. For a series of examples of learned nuns in Catholic countries see also M. Rosa, 'La monaca' in R. Villari (ed.), *L'uomo barocco*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1991, 219-267.

5 On the problem of the authority of women writers within the convent see: D. Donahue, 'Writing Lives: Nuns and Confessors as Auto/Biographers in Early Modern Spain', *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 13, 1989, 231-239; E. Arenal and S. Schlau, '"Leyendo yo y escribiendo ella": the Convent as an Intellectual Community', ibidem, 214-229; Id., *Untold Sisters. Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1989. For the Middle Ages see also C. Walker Bynum, 'Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: the Case of the Nuns of Helfta' in *Jesus As Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley Ca., University of California Press, 1982, 170-262. Interesting comments on women writers' authority in the Middle Ages and early modern period are offered by M. Cabré i Pairet, 'La ciencia de las mujeres en la edad media. Reflexiones sobre la autoria femenina' in C. Segura Graino (ed.), *La voz del silencio*, II, *Historia de las mujeres compromiso y metodo*, Madrid, Coleccion Laya, 1993, 41-74.

tocracy and of the financial and mercantile bourgeoisie of the city. In a society ordered by a patrilinear system of family descent, convents were a place where important families could send the daughters they did not intend to marry off. In fact, the cloister was an advantageous solution not only because female honour was guaranteed, but also because it offered economically more favourable terms than marriage. The so-called 'spiritual dowries' – the sums paid to the monastery for each daughter sent there – were often notably smaller than marriage dowries[6].

In this paper I would like first of all to make some remarks on the writing tradition of recording convent collective life, a tradition which is still clearly visible in the numerous texts kept in archives of female monastic institutions. I will then focus my attention on a group of this kind of writings, principally from Florentine convents, in order to indicate some of the possible functions they might have had in the past. I will devote the final pages of my article to the analysis of a specific group of writings – the lists of deceased nuns containing also *post mortem* inventories of their individual goods. While giving a precise idea of the nuns' perception of their own identity, these books can be considered a preliminary source for addressing the more specific question of nuns' relationships with property.

1. The tradition of recording the convent memory

The writings produced by female religious communities for the preservation of their collective memory represent an important contribution to discerning the origins of the female intellectual tradition, one of the most productive fields of women's history in recent years. Traces of this writing can be found in various coun-

6 In early sixteenth-century Florence the amount of the spiritual dowry could vary from a third to a tenth of the marriage dowry, see G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città', 361-368. For a testimony of the women's awareness of their being involved – sometimes as victims – in their families' strategies see one of the many works written in the seventeenth century by the very learned Venetian nun Arcangela Tarabotti, in Francesca Medioli, *'L'Inferno monacale' di Arcangela Tarabotti*, Torino, Rosemberg & Sellier, 1990.

tries from the Middle Ages onwards[7]. The similarity of the words used at the beginning of these books suggests that the writers may have been aware of reproducing, and contributing to, a precise tradition or genre of religious writings. 'Iste liber est sororum de subtilia' reads the first sentence of the 'Vitae sororum' of Unterlinden, the collection of the *Lives* of thirty-nine nuns of the Dominican convent of Colmar in Alsace, a work composed in Latin by one of the nuns around the beginning of the fourteenth century[8]. 'Iste est liber reformationis vel memorialis presentis monasteriis Sancte Marie Montis Lucidi extra menia Perusina' wrote the nuns who began the 'memoriale' of the Poor Clares convent of S. Maria di Monteluce in Perugia, a very long book written in Italian, recording the chronicle of the community from 1448 to 1838; and again, 'This book is of the nuns of Saint Orsola of Florence, and in it we will write daily the record of some important things, as in the book we shall say,...' writes Suor Benedetta Ricasoli in 1618, while beginning the book of 'ricordi' that would be concluded more than a century later, in 1738[9].

In Italy this tradition, so vibrant in the seventeenth century, appears to decline in the eighteenth, in line with the monastic institutions' gradual loss of their religious and social function. These texts produced within female convents have not generally been published and hence remain more or less unknown. Some preliminary research on the subject has begun to show the existence of a

7 For a theoretical proposal on women's writing of history in modern Europe see N. Zemon Davis, 'Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820' in P.H. Labalme (ed.), *Beyond Their Sex. Learned Women of the European Past*, New York and London, New York University Press, 1984, and G. Pomata, 'Storia particolare e storia universale: in margine ad alcuni manuali di storia delle donne', *Quaderni storici*, 74, 1990, 341-385. On nuns as historical writers see the two case-studies on modern Germany: G. Bryant, 'Caritas Pirkheimer: the Nuremberg Abbess' in K.M. Wilson (ed.), *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 1987, 287-303; G. Jancke-Leutzsch, 'Clara Staiger, la priora' in G. Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al femminile*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1992, 97-126.

8 J. Ancelet-Hustache, 'Les "Vitae sororum" d'Unterlinden. Edition critique du manuscrit 508 de la bibliothèque de Colmar', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, t. 5, 1930, 317-509.

9 U. Nicolini (ed.), *Memoriale di Monteluce. Cronaca del monastero delle clarisse di Perugia dal 1448 al 1838*, Assisi, 1983, p. 1; ASF, CRS, 100, *S. Orsola*, 52, *Ricordi (1618-1738)*, c.nn.

variety of texts of religious history and hagiography: many *Lives* of nuns and saints, reports of their miracles, necrologies, convent chronicles and some rare examples of annals[10]. Committing the collective memory to paper was an activity reserved in particular for the nuns responsible for administration ('ministre') and the sister-bursers ('camarlinghe'). It was an official activity, one of the many monastic tasks assigned by abbesses on beginning office. The books were compiled one immediately after the other, and no gaps were left in the recording of the monastic memory. As well as nuns, priors or administrators were also charged with the task of writing, although perhaps more rarely. In view of this double presence – female and male – in the writing of the convent record, a gender analysis of such texts would be of great interest, to detect possible differences in the narrative choices of nuns and religious men.

The heterogeneity of the collection of texts indicates that they were not written by an intellectually uniform group. Their authors are women, and sometimes men, with different educational levels, narrative skills and literary aspirations. The broad selection of books collected in my study of Florentine female convents range from very simple and repetitive texts to complex chronicles, such as that written by Maria Esaltata Ridolfi[11]. Shortly before 1750, Maria

10 On Italian nuns as historical writers see: M.A. Roca Mussons, 'Raccontare e raccontarsi in Sardegna: la scrittura di Maria Rosalia Mancusa, suora cappuccina del '600', *Biblioteca francescana sarda*, I, 1987, 323-63; A. Quondam, 'Lanzichenecchi in convento. Suor Orsola e la storia tra archivio e devozione', *Schifanoia*, VI, 1988, 37-125; L. Sebastiani, 'Cronaca e agiografia nei monasteri femminili' in S. Boesch Gajano (ed.), *Raccolte di vite di santi dal XIII al XVIII secolo. Strutture, messaggi, fruizioni*, Brindisi, Schena Editore, 1990, 159-168. I have tried to provide a preliminary description of this genre for the Italian area in 'Memoria di antiche madri. I generi della storiografia monastica femminile in Italia (secc. XV-XVIII)' in C. Segura Graino (ed.), *La voz del silencio*, I: *Fuentes directas para la historia de las mujeres (siglos VIII-XVIII)*, Madrid, Coleccion Laya, 1992, 221-49.

11 For a pioneering study on female convent books of 'ricordi' see E. Viviani Della Robbia, *Nei monasteri fiorentini*, Firenze, 1946. On Florentine convents see: G. Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine. Divise ne' suoi Quartieri*, 7 voll., Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1754-1762; A. D'Addario, *Aspetti della Controriforma a Firenze*, Roma, Ministero dell'Interno, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, LXXVII, 1972; R. Trexler, 'Le célibat à la fin du Moyen Age: les religieuses de Florence', *Annales ESC*, 27,

Esaltata, an aristocratic nun in the monastery of San Giovannino de' Cavalieri of the Military Order of Jerusalem, wrote the chronicle of the convent going back to its foundation in 1392. As we learn from the dedication, it was the prioress who assigned her the task:

> As Your Reverence has often expressed the desire that I should write about the origin and foundation of our monastery, in order to please you and satisfy this desire I have decided to do it. Even if I am not an expert in writing or comprehending ancient texts, I will try to do everything I can with the help of God and of the Holy Virgin and of our Patron Protector and Father Saint John the Baptist. On the first years after the foundation there will be very little to write as some books have been lost during the changes of the convents during times of war. So I will write about the first foundation, the first women founders, the changing of the monasteries, the Orders received from the Lords Priors of the Town of Pisa, the entry of novices, the Professions, the boarder-girls and in particular I will write about the time when Saint Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, as a boarder, entered our monastery. There will be a lot of mistakes but your goodness will forgive my ignorance[12].

Far from being 'not an expert in writing', or a modest nun using an uncertain style, Maria Esaltata was a skillful author, quite capable of organising her work. After the first lines, which are devoted to justifying her act of taking up the pen by asserting her intellectual incapacity – a topos we find in many of the women's texts – she turns to the reader in order to explain what her book

nov.-déc. 1972, 1329-50; O. Fantozzi Micali and P. Roselli, *Le soppressioni dei conventi a Firenze: riuso e trasformazioni dal sec. XVIII in poi*, Firenze, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1980; A. Molho, '"Tamquam vere mortua". Le professioni religiose femminili nella Firenze del tardo medioevo', *Società e storia*, 43, genn.-mar., 1989, 1-44; K.J.P. Lowe, 'Female Strategies for Success in a Male-Ordered World: The Benedictine Convent of Le Murate in Florence in the 15th and 16th Centuries' in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church. Papers read in the 1989 summer meeting and the 1990 winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, 209-221; G.A. Brucker, 'Monasteries, Friaries, and Nunneries in Quattrocento Florence' in T. Verdon and J. Henderson (eds.), *Christianity and the Renaissance. Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, Syracuse (N.Y.), Syracuse University Press, 1990, 41-62; J.C. Brown, 'Monache a Firenze all'inizio dell'età moderna. Un'analisi demografica', *Quaderni storici*, 85, 1994, 117-152.

12 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 60, *Ricordi*, c.1r.

will contain. The complete work is a well-presented and coherent text, without great intellectual pretensions but at the same time not lacking a touch of literary and artistic taste.

Preliminary researches on the contribution of nuns to the genres of historical and hagiographical writing in Italy has show the variety of texts they produced: many *Lives* of nuns and saints, reports of their miracles, convent chronicles, some rare examples of annals, books of "ricordi" and necrologies. My research has specifically covered the group of unpublished Florentine texts consisting precisely of three genres: books of "ricordi", chronicles and books listing deceased nuns.

"Ricordi" or "ricordanze", nearly always written collectively, focus in particular on the nuns who enter and die in the convent. They record the cycles of collective life inside the monastic community, by listing in chronological order the entrance and the death of each one of its members, as boarders, servant-nuns, novices, professed nuns and abbesses. Often they are similar to administrative registers, as they include the income and expenditure of the community. They might provide several annotations both on the everyday life of the convent, and on ceremonies and other special collective moments, or some of the most important events of city public life. Sometimes lay servants, women and men, and occasionally the lists of priors or confessors of the monastery are included in the texts, but these appear as slightly marginal figures. These books contribute to asserting the idea that the monastic community is limited to its strictly female religious component.

Although they can sometimes have a partially analogous structure and content, chronicles must be considered as a different genre. They are the product of a single author, or the result of a collaborative work of more than one nun, and often tend to provide a more complete narration of the history of the convent from its foundation, as in the case of sister Maria Esaltata Ridolfi. As has recently been pointed out by Elissa Weaver, chronicles and "ricordi" share several common formal and thematic features, and it is not always easy to trace a clear line of distinction between them. Nevertheless a decisive element of distinction between the two genres is that they have different purposes[13]. While the primary purpose of "ricordi" was to provide a kind of administrative information,

13 Elissa Weaver, "Le muse in convento", in part. pp.257-264.

chronicles were mainly aimed at celebrating the importance and the local prestige of the monastery within the town.

The third group of writings I have examined is considerably smaller and quite different in its structure and purposes compared with the other two. The "libri delle monache defunte", were in the first place devoted to commemorating all the nuns who died in the convent[14].

2. The functions of monastic commemorative writings

Some of these books, or at least parts of them, were probably read in the convent on special occasions. Often the writers of these texts address the future readers of the books as 'lettrice che verrai'. By reading them, successive generations of nuns would be able to pray for the souls of their ancient sisters, whose memory was placed under the protection of Christ, the Virgin and the saints who were protectors of the convent, invoked on the first page of each book. Texts of this kind, written for the nuns of the community, clearly had a edifying function. As in the collections of *Lives*, the sequence

14 Books of deceased nuns as well as "ricordi" seem clearly to derive from two medieval genres of commemorative writing: *libri memoriales* - books listing all those who were members of a community and died in it - and necrologies - books listing in calendar order all the members who died in a community. Cfr. L.Génicot, *Les généalogies*, in *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental*, ed. L.Génicot, Turnhout, 1975; N.Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*, in *Typologie des sources du Moyen Age*, 1972, and Id., *Les documents nécrologiques*, mise à jour par J.Lemaitre, in *Typologie des sources du Moyen Age Occidental*, ed. L.Génicot, Tourhout, 1985; H.Houben, "La realtà sociale medievale nello specchio delle fonti commemorative", *Quaderni medievali*, 13 (1982), pp.82-97. For some printed examples of necrologies in Italy see: S.Orlandi, *'Necrologio' di S.Maria Novella*, Florence, Olschki, 1955, A.Valentini, *Codice necrologico-liturgico del monastero di S.Salvatore e S.Giulia in Brescia*, Brescia, Tipografia Apollonio, 1887, and A.Facchiano, *Monasteri femminili e nobiltà a Napoli tra medioevo ed età moderna. Il Necrologio di S.Patrizia (secc.XII-XVI)*, Altavilla Silentina, Edizioni Studi Storici Meridionali, 1992. As early as the Middle Ages there are certain necrologies that should not be considered only as liturgical documents. This has been shown by N.Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*, p.24-5, n.9, in referring to the necrology of the *Confrérie de Notre-Dame des Ardents*, which should also be considered as a financial document concerning the use and function of prayers for the dead members of the community.

of the 'ancient mothers' recorded in the convent books provides a varied range of examples for the nuns to follow. In the 'ricordi' of the monastery of the Poor Clares of Santa Maria in Montedomini, the two nuns beginning the book explain that they will record the names of all the virtuous nuns who had lived there, having realised that as a result of the flood of the river Arno, which had ruined the most ancient documents kept in their convent archive, making them almost illegible, some information had been lost for ever:

> In the name of God and of the glorious Virgin Mary, of Saint Francis our Father and Saint Claire our Holy Mother and of all the celestial court of Paradise. We, the present, sister-burser Caterina Buonaccorsi, and Suor Gabriella Rossi at the time of the Reverend Abbess Suor Eugenia del Caccia, have considered that the memory of our past Reverend Sisters would be lost within a few years, since the flood of the year 1357 affected all our Ancient texts in such a way that all the books are barely legible. We have diligently recovered a holy book – R – begun in 1454 where all our Ancient Mothers are noted down. Although this is not the beginning of our monastery which was founded in the year 1311, we have not found where the first Ancients are noted although those we find for the merits we will reveal in this present Holy Book – A – begun this day of the glorious Apostle Saint James. 1570[15].

The importance attributed by writers to the ancient religious women who lived in the convent is even more powerful when they were exceptional women, such as saints or learned nuns. Maria Esaltata Ridolfi, the author of the chronicle of San Giovannino de' Cavalieri, carefully describes the entry in 1574 of the aristocratic girl, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Already regarded as a holy woman in her lifetime[16], Maria Maddalena was to become one of the most famous female saints in seventeenth-century Italy. She died in 1607, was beatified in 1626 by Pope Urban VIII and then canonised in 1669 by Pope Clement IX, an incredibly short period of time compared to the usual procedure. When she entered the monastery as a boarder she was nine years old. In many passages of her book Maria Esaltata describes the life of this saint, who had

15 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 109, *Partiti e ricordi*, c. nn.

16 *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. VIII, Roma, Istituto della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1966, coll. 1107-1131. See also *Tutte le opere di S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, 7 vols., Firenze, 1960-1966.

her first ecstatic experience in the presence of her maternal aunt. Clearly the aunt, Lessandra Buondelmonti, had a special charge of her niece:

> We know very little about what this saintly girl did in the four years she stayed in our Monastery, except that she had her first ecstasy in her little room ... knelt on her bed in the act of putting on her vest with her eyes raised towards heaven, without moving, in ecstasy: at first, the Aunt thought her late in rising from her bed, and touched her shoulder, complaining that she had still not begun to dress, and the good girl sat back down at the voice of the Aunt and without saying a word, began to dress and the Aunt realised what had happened and was unhappy at having aroused her from her contemplation[17].

In order to stress the saint's importance – and by extension the importance of the community – the writer copies several letters written by Maria Maddalena to nuns in the convent after she had left to take the veil in the monastery of S. Maria degli Angeli of Florence[18]. Maria Esaltata is as interested in the extraordinary and charismatic power of the other sisters as in their intellectual activity. She notes of one Maria Vittoria Rossi, on her death in 1691, that 'because she was a Poet she almost always sang and improvised: it was a marvellous thing'[19].

Another exceptional woman, the aristocratic and learned nun, Fiammetta Frescobaldi, receives close attention as a successful writer from the nun compiling the chronicle of the monastery of San Jacopo di Ripoli. The daughter of Lamberto Frescobaldi and Francesca Morelli, she entered this convent, well-known for the nuns' printing activity, at the age of thirteen. Because of an illness that affected her for much of her life, she was free of convent duties and spent all her time reading and writing books. We are told that she translated 118 saints' *Lives* by Luigi Lippomano and Lorenzo Surio from Latin to the Vulgate. One of her works is a very interesting text written in 1575 and dedicated to the prioress of the monastery, Angela Malegonnelle[20]. Her intelligence, her

17 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino*, 60, pp. 116-118.

18 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 60, pp. 184-186, 194-199, 202-205, 207-209, 212-214, 222-224, 233-236, 238-240, 241-242.

19 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 60, cc.518-19.

20 Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze (BNF), ms. C.2,504, Fiammetta Frescobaldi, *Prato fiorito scritto nel Monastero di Ripoli l'anno 1575*. As we read in the title of this volume of 319 pages, the manuscript contains

remarkable memory and her knowledge of many far away places are precisely described in the book as follows:

> Yehsus MCLXXXVI
> Mother Suor Fiammetta Freschobaldi passed from this life to a better life as we believe on the 6th of July, Sunday, at 20 hours in 1586 and was 63 years old of which 50 years and five and a half months were given to Religion and she was a good and devout nun and had been ill for 38 years ... and towards the end of her life had discovered an illness in the right side of her chest which she had hidden for a year without saying anything to anyone and which then opened up on Saint Sebastian's Day and she could no longer keep it hidden and lasted 4_ months. With enormous patience she suffered this terrible illness and all the other illnesses in the same way; because she was a very spiritual nun and delighted in holy teachings; and was visited by the nuns for her modesty and spiritual reasoning because she had been endowed by God with great intelligence and a sharp memory and could talk about anything and understood so well that it seemed that she had been in so many far away places and countries and it was to the marvel and amazement of the people who had been in those places that she could describe all things as they were. Even though she was ill and could not perform her duties like the others she did not fail to do everything she could for the good of the monastery because she procured many spiritual books from her relatives and others in particular 12 books of Lorenzo Surio which are the 12 months of the year and many others

'heroic actions, worthy of being carefully imitated by anyone aiming to benefit from a religious and Christian life. Taken from various Greek and Latin writers by Sister Fiammetta Frescobaldi of the Order of S. Domenico for the comfort of students'. On her writing activity see G. Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine*, t. II-II, 307-8. On the very important printing activity carried on by this convent: V. Fineschi, *Notizie storiche sopra la stamperia di Ripoli, le quali possono servire all'illustrazione della storia tipografica fiorentina*, Firenze, Francesco Mouke, 1781; E. Nesi, *Il diario della stamperia di Ripoli*, Firenze, 1903; M.P. Bologna, 'La stamperia fiorentina del Monastero di S. Jacopo di Ripoli e le sue edizioni', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 20/21, 1883. For a British example of monastic printing activity see J.T. Rhodes, 'Sion Abbey and its Religious Publications in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44, 1, 1993, 11-25, I am indebted to Anne Laurence for this last reference. Another learned nun, Giacinta Fabroni (1578-1647), known for her devout and penitent life as well as for her writing activity, also lived in S. Jacopo; according to her *Life*, composed by a nun of the convent, she wrote some spiritual works that were printed under the name of the Blessed Friar Angelo the Eremit, see ASF, *S. Jacopo di Ripoli*, 24, *Breve racconto della Vita di Suor Maria Iacinta Fabbroni. Raccolta, e descritta da NN Monaca Professa del nostro Convento di San Jacopo di Ripoli.*

> which for reasons of space I will not name and translated into the vulgate with her sharp and elegant intelligence without having ever had a tutor 118 Lives of Saint Gregory and then many other things she put into writing for the use of the sisters...[21]

Listing nuns and focusing on two sacred events such as profession and death, these books also had an administrative purpose. Reading them we realise that the monastic mentality of their writer was constantly occupied by material, if not strictly economic, concerns.

In 1556 Suor Francesca Serafini da Castiglione, the abbess of the Augustinian monastery of Santa Maria of Regina Coeli, began to write a 'libro di ricordi'. She included in her book the names of all the women entering the convent as nuns or boarders and of those who died, the building of convent cells, and the payment of taxes and other expenses. Turning the pages of her book we begin to read some passages that refer to a very specific story: the frequent and long visits to the convent by Giulia de' Medici, illegitimate daughter of Duke Alessandro. We learn that Giulia often visited the monastery – especially before her marriage to Bernardetto de' Medici in 1589 – in the company of other noble women, staying for several days. The abbess's attention is drawn to this routine event for economic reasons. When Giulia – always called 'la Signora' – comes to stay with the nuns she eats and sleeps there and asks for music and amusements, but never pays for anything before leaving. The writer's disapproval of this behaviour is quite evident, even if not explicitly expressed, in the frequency with which she records Giulia's missing payments for food, board and entertainment.

> In this last day of April 1560 I record how the aforementioned Signora from the past 20th of September 1559 until this day has come here almost every day and often has been lodged and for Carnival the lament of David was performed on her commission and the Conception was also performed for eight days but because I was so busy I could not write down the exact accounts but I do know that for the performances we paid 12 *scudi* for the stage and scenery and the meals eaten by the ladies who came with her every day and when Madonna Maria delli Spini and Pietra del Giocondo stayed and her sister-in-law was here for

21 ASF, *S. Jacopo di Ripoli*, 23, *Libro di Croniche segnato A (1508-1778)*, c.137v.

> 2 days with some or all of her entourage and Camilla de Riccialbani was also here and she has still not given us anything[22].

A few pages later, she records Giulia's departure to celebrate Easter with her family, pointing out as usual the expenses they had incurred while she had been there:

> I remember that Signora Giulia this day the 12th of April left to spend Easter at home and in all the time she was here I spent 165 *lire* 8 *soldi* and four *denari* as Suora Luzia Reverenda and I have paid[23].

All the passages about 'la Signora' are centred on the financial burden imposed on the community by her constant presence, a fact which increasingly irritated the abbess. However, there is a perceptible tension between the abbess and Giulia which probably goes beyond financial questions.

Within a few pages of listing these debts, the author died. The nun taking up the duty of writing the book did not provide any further information on Giulia's story, which therefore remains incomplete, and this very original book turns into a simple list of names. As a testimony of the pre-Tridentine permeability of the cloister and its ongoing contact with the family, Francesca Serafini's writing promotes an idea of the convent as much more than a place of devotion and prayer. It is an idea that also has a social and material side, reinforced by the links with important families.

Many commemorative books had a clear administrative function, creating an association between the nun's identity and her economic value to the house. The recording of the entry of a nun into the monastery was often associated with a sum of money and a series of goods of differing value. Sometimes in the 'ricordi' we find full lists of the items brought to the convent by each woman entering as a boarder or novice:

> In the name of God ... a new book will begin where we will record all the girls who in the future will be accepted as Nuns in this monastery

22 ASF, *S. Maria Regina Coeli*, 164, *Libro di ricordi della Camarlinga (1556- 1586)*, c.6v. This passage of Francesca Serafini's book, together with others on Giulia de' Medici's arrivals in the convent, has been published in E. Viviani Della Robbia, *Nei monasteri fiorentini*, 237ff.

23 ASF, *S. Maria Regina Coeli*, 164, c.8v.

and everything which will be taken from each of the girls, or nuns, or servants, will be recorded in the said book[24].

'Everything which will be taken' refers first of all to the dowry which relatives had to give to the convent on the entry of the future nun or boarder. There are few studies on monastic dowries, or at least far fewer than on marriage dowries, but they nevertheless had great economic relevance for the monastery. In the book of Saint Orsola the dowry was defined as 'the most important payment offered to the monastery', along with the sale of houses and the offerings received by the convent[25]. The writer of the 'ricordi' of this convent always recorded the precise amount of the dowry and the modality of its payment:

> 16th October 1672. I record how the aforementioned day M.a Maddalena Serra was dressed as a choir-nun and was given the name of Sor Verginia Vettoria ... and having satisfied the Monastery of what she owed in charity, food and supplies all that is left to be paid is the 200 *scudi* of the additional dowry which are in the hands of Signor Cristofano Berardi, to be paid at the time of her profession[26].

The books often listed, together with the amount of the dowry, all the further expenses and provisions that families had to make for the daughters they intended to send to the monastery. For example, the book of San Piero in Monticelli records that the expenses of eleven nuns entering the monastery in 1611 included the party to be given at the taking of the veil, and the offerings made to the church[27]. The book also includes a range of everyday items – a sort of monastic trousseau – relatives had to provide to make sure the women arrived at the convent fully equipped with everything they needed to start their convent life: essentially clothes and furniture for their cells. At the end of the 'ricordi' of San Silvestro, started in 1555 by the sister-bursar, the writer included – together

24 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 109, *Partiti e ricordi (1484-1764)*, c.1r (second section of the book).

25 ASF, 100, CRS, *S. Orsola*, 51, *Ricordi*, c.1r. On female monastic dowry see: G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città', in part. 361-68. and J. Dahyot-Dolivet, 'La dot des religieuses', *Apollinaris*, 39, 1966, 287-301.

26 ASF, CRS, 100, *S. Orsola*, 52, c.194r. The word choir-nun is used to distinguish a nun who entered the convent taking the solemn vows from one who entered without taking them.

27 ASF, *S. Piero a Monticelli*, 62, c.71v.

with the renting and selling of houses and the payment of taxes –the 'Inventory of the provisions for girls becoming nuns in the monastery of San Silvestro to be made before the profession of the girl': several articles of clothing and underwear, a considerable amount of wool and linen (probably for future clothes), some pieces of furniture – such as a bed, trunk, safe and wardrobe – several kitchen utensils, religious books, small paintings and other items, including valuable objects such as a gold ring or a necklace[28]. Furthermore, other books record the yearly addition to the dowry, usually in money but sometimes even in food (called the 'livello vitalizio'), provided by families in order to soften the supposed rigour of religious life and to guarantee that the standard of living enjoyed by the women before entering the convent was perpetuated thereafter. If each nun had her own value, collectively the lists of generations of nuns' possessions show the community's accumulation of wealth and land. Therefore it is not surprising that the title 'ricordi' given to this type of text is also given to administrative books such as registers of accounts written or commissioned by abbesses, sister-bursers or male administrators, in other words, those responsible for the government and administration of the community.

A Benedictine nun who wrote, around 1597, the long chronicle of the convent of Santa Maria Annunziata, known as Le Murate – Giustina Nicolini – explains that the religious women who founded the convent were to be regarded as models both because of their religious virtues and their ability to set up the monastery without having any land. She writes this in the first pages of her work, dedicated to the abbess and nuns of the monastery:

> ...they deserve to receive from the Lord extraordinary gifts and privileges, not so much for spiritual life as for material life. And without having under the Sun a *palmo* of land that was theirs, they quickly built this beautiful Monastery that we live in today. They confided in heavenly assistance which was always forthcoming and propitious...[29]

28 ASF, CRS, 85, *S. Silvestro*, 55, *Ricordi (1555-1693)*, cc.123v.-124r.

29 BNF, *Cronache del Monastero di Santa Maria Annuntiata dele Murate di Fiorenza, nelle quali si tratta di quanto è successo sino dal principio, si della fondatione e edifitii, come anco di ciascun altro negotio intorno alli ordini spirituali et altre promotioni di governi. a 31 gennaio 1597*, ms. II, II, 509 (XVI cent.), c.nn. A *palmo* is a unit of land measurement.

It is probably her interest in the 'material life' that leads her to underline the direct relation between the nuns' deaths and the common convent properties. She points out how the community was able to appropriate to itself nuns' properties after their deaths[30]. To the convent, their deaths are both a spiritual loss and a material enrichment.

The writers of these commemorative books did not consider it necessary to address the sacred and the economic nature of the monastic experience separately. On the contrary they examined them together as they were concerned with the real costs and material efforts required by religious life, almost completely devoted to prayer and contemplation. In the chronicle of the monastery of Santa Maria in Montedomini the removal of the nuns' corpses in 1600 – described as a marvellous event, celebrated by a great procession of nuns, priests and confessors – is immediately followed by a list of all the expenses related to the removal for reburial[31].

One other important function of monastic 'ricordi' and necrologies was to situate the community within the network of power relations of the broader social context of the city. This was relevant for the honour and prestige of the convent, which had to maintain its recruitment from the daughters of the ruling classes of Florence and Tuscany. If we look at the ways in which the women are defined in these books we see that they are identified by their Christian name, their father's and family name and the religious name acquired on taking the veil. Sometimes their mother's name is also included, as in the 'ricordi' of San Giovannino by Maria Esaltata Ridolfi. There nuns had to prove the four quarters of nobility in order to enter the Military Order of Malta to which the monastery belonged, and hence the mother's lineage was as important as the father's. In the case of particularly prominent houses the linkage

30 BNF, *Cronache del Monastero di Santa Maria Annuntiata*, cc.143r.-144r, chapter LXIII: 'Inheritances left to the Monastery through our Reverend Mother Sister Lorenza Bernardi, and Sister Humiltà Allegri'; or cc. 164r.-166r., chapter LXXV: 'Inheritance of Tommaso Mormorai left to the Monastery through the Reverend Mother Sister Zanobia his sister...' There are examples of books written to commemorate in particular nuns who left legacies to the convents, such as the book of professed nuns of S. Maria and the necrology of S. Prassede, both convents in Milan; see L. Sebastiani, 'Cronaca e agiografia nei monasteri femminili', 161-164.

31 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, *Cronache di monache*, c.18v.

between the community and society is stressed even more strongly by mentioning the grandparents' names. When Anna Maria Bonella entered the monastery of the Poor Clares of San Francesco as a choir-nun, the writer of the 'libro di ricordi' details the identity of Anna Maria's parents and paternal grandparents. This results in a very repetitive passage since all of them belonged to the same family and had the same name:

> First of October 1682. I want to record that we accepted as a Choir-nun Signora Anna Maria daughter of the Illustrious Signore Pietro Bonella of the very Illustrious Signore Pier Francesco Bonella and the Mother of the said Signore Pietro Bonella was called Signora Caterina Bonella of the same branch of the family and the mother of the Signorina [i.e. the nun] Signora Caterina Roncaglia Bonella Manfredi Signori Titular Nobles from Lucca...[32]

The genealogical function of monastic 'ricordi' – here as well as in other texts – deserves some attention. Aimed at providing religious models for women devoted to the monastic life, as well as maintaining an administrative function, the 'ricordi' represent the reconstruction of the genealogy of the religious family living in the monastery. The lists and biographies of nuns, on entry and upon death, constitute the narrative structure of the books and have a function similar to that of the genealogy in family histories[33]. They establish a kind of lineage for the nuns which serves to legitimise the existence of the community through the affirmation of its ancient origins and continuity. Since the convent is a symbolic family this continuity is determined not by blood, but by the spiritual succession of the generations of nuns. Within an Italian society that only allowed women a very marginal role in family descent, the monastery represented an institution whose identity was based on female descent, at least on the symbolic level of the representation of the group.

32 ASF, CRS, 95, *S. Francesco*, 106, *Libro di ricordi, d'accettazione e Dote di Fanciulle per Monacarsi dalle Monache di San Francesco (1633-1807)*, c.224r.

33 G. Spieghel, 'Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative', *History and Theory*, XXII, 1983, 43-62; M. Sot, 'Historiographie épiscopale et modèle familial en Occident au IXe siècle', *Annales ESC*, 33, 1978, 433-449.

Monastic genealogies acquire a fundamental importance in reconstructing the demographic patterns of a significant part of the female population and, as shown recently for the two convents of Le Murate and San Jacopo di Ripoli, they provide a set of data relating to the identity of women which is difficult to find elsewhere, as for instance in family genealogies for instance[34]. It has often been stated that genealogical reconstructions of the families of the Florentine mercantile aristocracy frequently ignored women, adopting a strongly patrilinear order which concentrated on male figures. In such records women occupied at best a marginal role[35]. In relation to these sources monastic genealogies then assume a compensatory function. They recover the memory of women by placing them within the symbolic female genealogy of the new family reconstituted inside the monastery.

3. 'What remains for the convent...'

The importance of monastic commemorative writings for the study of the monastic economic system becomes even clearer when we read a sub-genre of necrology, the 'spropriamenti'. Such books – listing all the nuns who died in the community – contained the post-mortem inventory of everything each nun had left. In the context of the present research they are a very important source since they give a precise idea of the extent of the wealth belonging

34 The use of 'ricordi' for demographic research is of central importance in J.C. Brown, 'Monache a Firenze'.

35 On the position of women in Renaissance Florence see the work by D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Tuscans et leurs familles. Une étude du 'catasto' florentin de 1427*, Paris, 1978, and C. Klapisch, *La maison et le nom. Stratégies et rituels dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris, EHESS, 1990; see also T. Kuehn, *Law, Family, and Women. Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1991. On the dowry system see H. Gregory, 'Daughters, Dowries and the Family in Fifteenth Century Florence', *Rinascimento*, XXII, 1987, 215-37. On women's ideas and experience of the family: S. Strocchia, 'Remembering the Family: Women, Kin, and Commemorative Masses in Renaissance Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLII, 1989, 635-654.

to individual nuns and the personal 'economic space' established and controlled by each of them[36].

According to the rules governing monastic life the convent patrimony had to be administered in common. This ideal of communal life was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent. Professed religious women (as well as men) were not allowed to own anything individually and had to live in poverty. Before entering the religious life they had to renounce their part of the familial patrimony, usually in favour of another member of their family. All the goods they had brought to the convent, or acquired during their monastic life, belonged to the religious community. After their death they were confiscated by the community and became its common property[37]. This exclusion from property was expressed in practice by the vow of poverty, one of the three solemn vows – along with those of chastity and obedience – which had to be professed in order to enter fully religious life. Nevertheless, many female monastic communities were organised around a 'mixed' economic system[38]. This was a widespread practice in female convents, both before and after the Council. It implied that the collective administration of the convent's patrimony co-existed with forms of private management which permitted individual patrimonies controlled by the nuns themselves (or by their families, acting for them).

When nuns died many of their private goods were sold by the abbess within the convent, while others were given as gifts to other nuns and a smaller proportion to people outside the convent. In this way the community took a profit from each single nun's death through the money that remained after having covered the funeral and burial expenses, paid off the nun's debts, taken possession of her credits and sold all her belongings. For their part, individual

36 M. Rosa, 'La chiesa e la città', in part. p. 532.

37 'Povertà' in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, dir. G. Pelliccia and G. Rocca, vol. VII, Roma, Edizioni Paoline, 1983, coll. 245-410 and 'Pauvreté religieuse' in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, dir. R. Naz, t. VI, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1957, coll. 1278-1282.

38 G. Greco, 'Monasteri femminili e patriziato a Pisa (1530-1630)' in *Città italiane del '500 tra riforma e controriforma*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Lucca, 1983, 313-339, in part. n. 24; G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città', in part. 386-393; M. Rosa, 'La chiesa e la città' in E. Fasano Guarini (ed.), *Prato, storia di una città*, vol. 2: *Un microcosmo in movimento (1494-1815)*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1986, in part. 525-533.

nuns could purchase greater comfort or personal items they wanted.

This redistribution of nuns' individual goods was probably a widespread custom, more or less official in monastic institutions, at least in the richest ones. For instance, in the important Benedictine convent of Saint Giulia of Brescia the 'Orders on property' given by the superior in 1644 specifically stated that all goods left after the nuns' deaths would be distributed to the nuns who needed them, according to the will of the abbess[39]. In Florence this process by which the community controlled and appropriated to itself all the individual goods left by nuns, known as 'dispropriamento', was recorded in a specific book of that name. It must be observed that this kind of necrological book is not very common, and until now I have been able to find only four of them[40].

Officially supervised by the abbess and sister-burser, the appropriation of all the nuns' goods (the 'spoglie') by the convent was sometimes expressly required by the Constitutions of the communities. In the case of the Florentine nuns of the Order of Malta the procedures were established in their Constitutions: their book of 'dispropriamento' – begun in 1604 – recorded the 'accounts ... of all the *spoglie*, credits and debts of our dead nuns, as established by our rules and Constitutions'[41]. Unfortunately I have not been able to locate the Constitutions of this convent. Maria Esaltata Ridolfi, in her chronicle, recorded some of the norms set during the celebration of the monastic chapter which she dated around 1622. These norms probably reproduced sections of the Constitutions of the convent. According to what she writes, the sixth statute of the norms, conforming to the Rule of St. Augustine they followed, concerned sick nuns about to die. They were to make an inventory of the belongings left by each at her death, a quarter of which the mother superior could agree to give to other nuns: '...they should carry out their *spropriamento*, that is the inventory of what they hold for their use, and the Superior could give permission to give some things to those and other sisters as long as they are not more

39 Archivio di Stato di Brescia, *Ospedale, S. Eufemia*, b.103, 136, cc.9v.-10r.: 'Ordini intorno alla proprietà'.

40 I have located books of 'spropriamenti' in the archives of the convents of S. Jacopo di Ripoli, S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri, S. Maria in Montedomini and S. Maria di Regina Coeli.

41 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino*, 57, *Necrologico (1605-1807)*, c.nn.

than a sixth part; thus it was established that the Superior could licence the gift of something of little value, but not part of her *spoglie*, that is household goods and other valuables'[42]. Given the ideal or norm of poverty it is no coincidence that such official documents avoid the use of words explicitly relating to the concept of property. Instead they prefer to employ an ambiguous expression, referring to the goods as things found 'next to' the nuns, or in their cells. Nevertheless, the very fact that the redistribution of the nuns' goods was defined as 'spropriamento' indicates that for their authors the idea of property was implicit.

It is clear that one of the primary concerns of the community was to commend their dead sisters' souls to God. One of the first items recorded in the book beneath the name, circumstances of death and moral description of each nun was the amount of money and the belongings left after her death which were to be used as votive offerings for her soul. It may have been the nuns themselves who decided, before dying, to set aside a certain amount of money in order to arrange masses for the salvation of their souls after their deaths. For Caterinangela Guidetti the monastery had to spend 13 *scudi* to order the masses, 'as the late sister wished'[43].

Another concern of the convent was to appropriate to itself the money previously invested by the nuns. It has been pointed out that nuns were involved in financial operations of private investment. Although this was against the principles of communal life, it was also a practical response to the convent's need to balance the books. More precisely, individual nuns and the community participated jointly in these financial speculations, and shared the profit, as has been shown in the case of the female monasteries in the Tus-

42 ASF, CRS, 133, *S.Giovannino*, 60, pp. 327-330: 'Note on the things we have decided about our Rule, according to the will of our Superior, which we wish to follow'. The Augustinian Rule lays down the norm of poverty and common life without referring to how the community disposed of the individual's goods after his death: 'You should not be heard speaking about personal goods; instead everything shall be common to you all. Your Brother prior must distribute food and clothing to each of you, not according to a principle of equality, because you are not all equal in health, but to each according to his need', L. Verheijen, *La regola di S. Agostino. Studi e ricerche*, Edizioni Augustinus, Palermo, 1986, 25-33. See also *Regola monastica e costituzioni delle monache dell'ordine di S. Agostino*, Roma, 1989, in part. chap. 5, 76-79, on monastic poverty.

43 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 57, *Necrologico*, c.5r. ff.

can town of Prato in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of the annual interest coming from deposits in the Monte di Pietà of Florence or the Monte delle Graticole (also called Monte Comune) – usually at the rate of 8 or 9 per cent – 5 per cent was for the nuns and 3 or 4 per cent was for the convent[44]. The investments made by the nuns were mainly drawn from their dowries and the annual income received from their parents for food and personal necessities as an additional dowry (known as the 'sopradote'). The cash element of the 'sopradote' was fixed by the monastery[45]. These investments were an economically convenient operation for both nun and convent. For the individual nuns they were a means of enjoying a secure income; on the other hand, the community was spared their maintenance whilst controlling the nuns' management of their finances and became the direct beneficiary of the deposits after their deaths. Allowing the nuns to contribute to their own maintenance was a way of bringing collective economic benefits to the monastic community.

Financial speculation was often undertaken by parents when women entered the monastery. Often these investments were made on condition that the nuns had no access to the capital, and could only spend the interest. When this condition was established it had to be respected both by the individual nuns and the monastery appropriating the capital after their deaths. The death of Maria Benedetta Pagoli in 1601, 22 years old of which 11 spent in the religious life, brought the monastery of Santa Maria in Montedomini the sum of 200 *scudi*, the amount of a deposit made with the Monte delle Graticole: 'To the Convent remain 200 *scudi* of her additional dowry which are in the Monte delle gratichole on the condition that she could spend the interest but not the Capital'[46]. Credits could be directly inherited by nuns from their parents, as in the case of Aurelia Barbadori. A nun in the monastery of San Giovannino (the maternal aunt of Pope Urban VIII, according to Maria Esaltata Ridolfi's chronicle), she inherited a sum deposited in the Monte delle Graticole as a legacy from her father's step-mother,

44 M. Rosa, 'La chiesa e la città', 529-533.

45 See also M. Rosa, 'La chiesa e la città', 532.

46 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, *Cronache di monache*, cc. 22v-23r.

giving rise to legal action by her brother who wanted to prevent her receiving it[47].

The community appropriated to itself other investments nuns had in houses or shops in various parts of the city, as well as the funds they had with other monastic institutions. The death of Michelangela Angeli in 1649, 62 years old of which 40 spent in religious life, brought the monastery 467 *scudi*, 5 *lire*, 16 *soldi* and 8 *denari*. Much of this sum came from capital deposited in different places: 100 *scudi* with the Jesuits, 100 with the Monte delle Graticole, and 400 with the Monte di Pietà[48]. The deposits in these other institutions could provide interest coming from another form of credit, the *censo*. This was an annual amount of money to be paid for the use of certain goods or properties. Cherubina Gherardi, who died at the age of 22 after 15 years spent in the convent of Santa Maria Regina Coeli, had credit in this form with the Dominican fathers of Santa Maria Novella, an amount of money also from her mother's dowry: 'she leaves credit of 335 *scudi* in the hands of the Reverend Fathers of Santa Maria Novella who keep them in the form of a *censo* along with other credits of hers and these 335 *scudi* consist of her mother's dowry, to be paid to her, and of other money.' She also had other credits with 'various people' and 'the monastery should take them on her behalf'[49]. Loans to the convent itself could also be made by the nuns. Jacopa Bellini was thanked for her generosity. In recording her death in 1629, at the age of 68 years old, 45 of which spent in religion, the writer of the 'spropriamento' pointed out that she had made a loan to the convent some years earlier and 'she also built a room which cost 24 *scudi* and paid the nuns responsible for administration until All Saints' Day and may the Lord reward her'[50].

Apart from strictly monetary questions, the distribution of goods at death respected the nuns' family and personal relationships. Probably this distribution was arranged by the single nun before dying, although the documents do not provide evidence on this point. In fact in many female monastic communities nuns frequently bequeathed informally the goods they had enjoyed during

47 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 60, 148.
48 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, cc.168v.-169v.
49 ASF, *S. Maria Regina Coeli*, 181, cc.30v.-31v.
50 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, cc.88r.-89r.

their life, giving some oral instructions or writing a note, a sort of unofficial will. What is important is that the logic behind the allocation of objects was to some extent based on gratitude and not only on family ties. We should note that the system of distribution shows the existence of a set of values and exchanges of a non-economic nature within the monastic world. This reveals relationships of friendship and mutual assistance between women who had lived in the same convent, and who rendered services within the group.

The list of the 'credits and debts' of Caterinangela Guidetti, who died in 1606 in the convent of San Giovannino de' Cavalieri having spent 4 years and 9 months there, recorded amongst other items a debt of 33 *scudi* owed to her cousin who was living as a nun in the convent and who had been her teacher when she was a novice[51]. Often goods were given to the nuns closest to those who had died; the cloak of Flavia Buonvisi, who died when she was 49 years old after 35 years of convent life, 'the Mother Abbess gave to Suor Appollonia her kitchen companion'[52]. By observing who received the gifts, and for what reason, we can see that their function was mainly to reward help and assistance given, often in cases of illness. When Lodovica Mazzi of the convent of S. Maria di Regina Coeli died in 1678 at the age of 72 years old, her cloak was given to Suor Alessandra 'who had looked after her for many years when she was almost totally blind', while further items were given to two nuns who had acted as nurse and servant respectively[53].

Some of these goods in the end returned to the nuns' families. Since they were possessions or effects of everyday use coming from a place where mainly women lived, they were often left to the women of the family. Certain goods, especially objects of devotion used to furnish the cells, such as religious paintings, crucifixes and prayer-books, were given to relatives who were nuns in other city convents. On the death of Maria Clemente del Rosso, a nun of the monastery of San Giovannino de' Cavalieri who died in 1614 at the age of 32, the following goods were left: a small painted box, a new shirt, and a mirror framed in gold were bequeathed to her sister, a nun in the convent of Spirito Santo; a bell, a ribbon for plaiting hair, various sewing items, a pair of earrings, three new hand-

51 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 57, *Necrologico*, c.5r.

52 ASF, *S. Maria Regina Cœli*, 181, *Registro delle religiose defunte*, c.41r e v.

53 ASF, *S. Maria Regina Coeli*, 181, *Registro delle religiose defunte*, c.45r.

made shirts, a book for learning to write, a crucifix in a ball, two holy images, one representing Jesus's passion, and the other Jesus with the crown of thorns went to two aunts in Prato[54]. Maria Eletta Spini, the abbess of the monastery of the Poor Clares of S. Maria in Montedomini, died in 1646; in addition to the expenses for the funeral, the food to offer to the other nuns, medicines, the redecoration of the cell, and small debts with the nuns, the community gave her niece, a nun in the monastery of S. Maria degli Angeli, a book and two boughs of flowers, a gift that cost 6 *lire*[55].

The last item to be recorded in the 'spropriamenti' was the community's appropriation of the cell where the nun had lived. Built by their parents, the rooms of deceased nuns were to be used by the women of the same family who were going to enter the convent. However, if none of the nuns in the convent were relatives, the cells were sold to the other nuns. In 1633, on the death and expropriation of Maria Camilla Martellini, the community received the money from the cell, which had been sold as all her ancestors who could have taken it had already died: '...since her ancestors are dead, the cell which Suor Maria Camilla Martellini lived in remains to the Convent and has been sold to Suor Maria Caterina Gianfigliazzi for the price of *scudi* 150; of which the whole sum was given to the office of the administrator and therefore the Reverend Sister Maria Verginia Mini was satisfied'[56]. Even if these official sources do not mention it, the so-called organisation of the monastery by cells in practice allowed the nuns to organise their own system of hereditary transmission of private monastic space, although the disposition of the cell had to be left instead to the convent, being regarded as a form of property and therefore forbidden[57]. Nuns disposed of the cells before dying, leaving them to other nuns, parents, friends, servants, or to nuns who had looked after them during an illness. This system of inheritance was based as much on family relationships as on friendships. As a result it often caused long quarrels between the nuns, in particular when spiritual daughters were preferred to blood sisters or nieces.

54 ASF, CRS, 133, *S. Giovannino de' Cavalieri*, 57, *Necrologico*, c.51v. ff.

55 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, *Cronache di monache*, cc.158r.-159v.

56 ASF, CRS, 99, *S. Maria in Montedomini*, 113, c.101v.

57 G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città', 388-98; see also G. Greco, 'Monasteri femminili e patriziato a Pisa (1530-1630)'.

The lists of names and objects, and the lines of arithmetic in the 'libri di ricordi', proffer a clue to understanding the dynamic of the 'spiritual family' within the convent. They invite us to examine the interesting but elusive problem of the interaction of economic and financial interests between the community and the nuns which formed the basis of the economic organisation of the convent. Religious women were able to get round the rule of their exclusion from property and live a life of comfort, enjoying money and a furnished cell, indeed sometimes more than one. This would appear to indicate that the Tridentine reform did not disturb the comfort of their existence, nor intrude upon the financial ordering of the religious life, although further research is necessary to confirm this finding. In any case, the 'libri di ricordi', with their prosaic calculations, are a monument to worldly concerns which co-existed easily with the commitment to spirituality and as such provide a more complex appreciation of women's life within convent walls.

Résumé

Le couvent a longtemps été considéré comme lieu privilégié de la spiritualité plutôt que des préoccupations matérielles. Les chroniques et *libri di ricordi* des couvents florentins à l'époque moderne et post-tridentine révèlent cependant une intense préoccupation à l'égard de l'argent et des biens provenant des familles des religieuses, biens souvent gérés par les religieuses elles-mêmes. Disposant d'une dot et même d'une *supradote*, d'un complément lui permettant d'acquérir les moyens d'existence digne de son rang d'aristocrate, la religieuse qui entre au couvent apporte avec elle du mobilier et des ornements, souvent splendides, ainsi que des ustensiles pour sa cuisine personnelle. Ainsi, à sa mort, tout ce qu'elle possède devait théoriquement revenir au couvent; mais il faut aussi tenir compte des autres membres de la famille qui l'ont suivie au couvent et des soeurs spirituelles qui exigent un legs. Les calculs, les dissensions se rapportant aux biens, constituent alors un élément important du quotidien de la vie monastique féminine.

Writing in the New Spanish Cloister: The Recording of History

ELISA SAMPSON

> Cómo dirá Pater Noster en las horas, la que acaba de sepultar a Píramo i Tisbe en *Diana*[1]? Cómo se recogerá a pensar en Dios un rato, la que ha gastado muchos en Garcilaso? Cómo?
> Pedro Malón de Chaide, *La Conversión de Magdalena* (1588)
>
> (How will she say the Our Father at the right times, she who has come from burying Piramus and Thisbe in the *Diana*? How will she retire to think of God for a moment, she who has spent many on Garcilaso? How?)[2].

The reading of secular literature by ostensibly pious women in the early modern period compromised the discipline that was considered necessary for orthodox spiritual behaviour. The doubts and speculation about heterodoxy to which such reading gave rise naturally extended to any writing undertaken and how this related to profane texts. Both the reading and the writing of texts could be perilous activities. This essay looks at the writing of conventual chronicles by New Spanish women and examines the ways in which their recording of religious history shows strong secular influences. The chronicles of the New World cloister present the possibility not only of studying the relationship between different genres of writing considered more or less suitable for nuns to execute, but place this study in a very specific cultural and geographic context. The

1 *La Diana*, a novel by Jorge de Montemayor was first published in 1559, and re-printed every three or four years until 1585. A second version by Alonso Pérez (1574) and a third by Gaspar Gil Polo (1564) were also very popular. It is not clear which version Malón de Chaide refers to, but the book's immense success is evident.

2 All translations mine

chronicles are complex texts in which 'identity' is fashioned in multiple ways – spiritual (the recording of communities of belief), secular (the history of the New Spanish elite's patronage), institutional (the convent as a social structure) and subjective (the lives of individual nuns). Thus, they pose the questions: *which* history and *whose* past is being written? They do so, moreover, at what is an extraordinarily revealing conjuncture in time and space, the formative years of Spanish rule in the New World. The conventual chronicles examined were designed to narrate the history of the successful implantation of Old World convents. They have as an ideal the model of an immutable institution transported to a different space (the convent as trans-historical, trans-cultural spiritual community) but reveal instead the mutability of the convent and, consequently, the interest of studying its specificity as a New World institution[3].

The New Spanish conventual chronicle, the alleged 'history' of a house of nuns, bears little relation to classical forebears of historical writing such as Tacitus or Thucydides. Rather, it bears a distinct relationship to the kinds of writing found in the diary, the pamphlet and the memoir. Many convent chronicles could in fact be described as collective or cumulative hagiographies intended to immortalise the women and their institution. Indeed, they have recently been posited as an intrinsic part of early modern and Baroque piety[4].

3 See appendix for a complete list of printed and manuscript chronicles used as sources in the paper.

4 See for the Italian context the various essays in Giulia Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al femminile*, Bari, Laterza, 1992 and in Gabriella Zarri (ed.), *Finzione e santità*, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991. For Spain see the work of Alison Weber, particularly *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1990. Of more general interest, Caroline Walker Bynum's ground-breaking work on feminine spirituality, especially *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987.

Hagiography and history

> Qué son las vidas de los Santos, sino un dechado, y un espejo ... para mirar en él nuestras fealdades y vicios, y emendarlos? Pedro de Rivadeneira, *Flos Sanctorum* (1761)[5]

The argument set out above by Rivadeneira that hagiography was an effective didactic tool led to its promotion by the Council of Trent as crucial in the battle for the Christian soul by promoting piety and preserving the faithful Catholic laity from heretical beliefs. The chapter 'Sacrosancti et Oecumenia' in the decrees of the Council of Trent sets out the benefits of encouraging a cult of the saints through their *vidas* in very pragmatic terms:

> ...ad Sanctorumque imitationem vitam moresque suos componant; excitenturque ad adorandum ac diligendum Deum, et ad pietatem colendam[6].

The *vida* was therefore intended for wide consumption, for those who could read and for those who had to listen. Its popularity as well as the official backing it enjoyed must be taken into account when the New Spanish production of this genre is considered. The spiralling number of *vidas* of uncanonised people after 1630 has been connected to competition between different religious orders as well as to the promotion of pious individuals by spiritual directors, religious communities and confraternities[7]. The *vidas* recorded in the various conventual chronicles of Mexico City would seem to confirm the hypothesis that hagiography served these more mundane promotional purposes as well as more legitimate divine ones.

Parayso Occidental (1683), the printed chronicle of the convent of Jesús María by Sigüenza y Góngora, shows very clearly from its formal structure the difficulties inherent in the attempt to unite ha-

5 Quoted in José L. Sánchez Lora, *Mujeres, Conventos y Formas de la Religiosidad Barroca*, Madrid, Fundación Univ., 1988, 377. (What are the lives of the saints but an example and a mirror in which to look at our ugliness and vices and so ameliorate them?)

6 (That they moderate their lives and their habits by imitation of those of the saints, and that they be obliged to worship and love God and to cultivate piety.) Quoted in Sánchez Lora. op. cit., 366.

7 Sánchez Lora, op. cit.

giography and history. Sigüenza addresses the reader in the prologue and reassures her that the verbose and repetitive language usual in hagiographic narratives will be used with restraint. In this respect it is interesting to note that Sigüenza clearly differentiates on the one hand between the history of the foundation proper, which is confined to the first book and told in an impersonal narrative form presenting the sequence of events, and on the other, the second and third books, which are devoted to the *vidas* of exemplary nuns. Sigüenza's chronicle attempts to keep to very tight generic boundaries separating 'history' from 'hagiography', though its author is aware of the constraints his subject matter and its intended (female) audience impose on him:

> ...aunque me huviera sido en extremo fácil embarazar el texto, y ocupar los márgenes de este libro con semejantes cosas [notas], siendo mi asunto el escrivir historia de mujeres para mujeres, claro está que hiciera muy mal en hacerlo así[8].

The more general problem of reconciling hagiography with historical representation is best expressed by Michel de Certeau:

> la combinaison des actes, des lieux et des thèmes indique une structure propre qui se réfère non pas essentiellement à 'ce qui c'est passé' comme le fait l'histoire, mais à 'ce qui est exemplaire'[9].

The strength of hagiographic narrative structure is proved by the very minor changes it undergoes in the chronicles examined. This confirms the formally conservative nature of the classical *vida* and bears out the charge of repetitiveness made by Sigüenza in his description of hagiographic narrative. The continual reference to exemplary events in hagiography can be seen as taking on both the characteristic of repetition and that of immanence. The various instances of humble behaviour on the part of a saintly heroine thus both emphasise her humility while also revealing God's presence

8 *Parayso Occidental*, Prologue. (Though it would have been extremely easy for me to fill the text and run over the margins of this book with similar notes, as my business is to write a history of women for women, it would clearly have been incorrect to do so.) I have modernised the punctuation, accentuation and spelling of both printed and manuscript sources to make reading easier. I have kept to the original spelling in those cases where it is indicative of differences of pronunciation.

9 Michel De Certeau, *L'Ecriture de l'Histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977, 275.

and the power of His Grace in her life, so confirming the 'purpose' of the *vida* to be classically Aristotelian: to amuse the reader or listener while teaching her. One could thus see hagiography as lying at the extreme of historiography, its epiphanic and didactic uses allowing very little room for narrative in the classical *vida*, the work instead becoming an 'exposition' of the saint's life and of the universe itself as God's Book: always already written by God himself who orchestrates all 'events' acting through the saint. Clearly, historical narrative, in the sense of one which tries to establish cause and effect, has little meaning in this context. Where traditional historiographical discourse would attempt to rationalise, reduce to order and present a smooth developmental text, hagiography allows interruptions and lacunae and is random and selective in its narrative.

Despite the issues raised as to hagiography's problematic relation to historiography, the *vida* remains the privileged genre for representing the history of religious women and their institutions and presents the only key available to an understanding of both. The hagiographic form was one with an established tradition and respected 'canon' by the time the New Spanish versions were written, but it remained, perforce, flexible and manipulable to suit the didactic aims pursued through it. These variations came in response to institutional needs and changes and it is their revelation at the level of narrative, in the form of departures from and modifications of the traditional *vida*, that I will now examine. I will begin by looking at the instrumental role of conventual chronicles as apologetic histories of the colonial church before turning to a more detailed analysis of the ways in which the specificity of the New Spanish cloister in terms of race, gender and place is recorded in its histories.

Apologetic histories: the convent and the city

The problem of reconciling spiritual narrative with history is acute in *Trono Mexicano* (1728) and *Parayso Occidental* (1683), the two printed chronicles which were meant not only as didactic works but as apologia for religious orders in the New World and more generally for the Catholic church's proselytising mission in the Indies.

The representation in these chronicles of the consonance of ecclesiastical institutions with the social order that surrounded them can certainly be interpreted as revealing a conservative tendency in hagiography. The chronicle's value in this socio-political sense is made apparent in Agustín de Vetancurt's paean to Mexico City's convents:

> Porque es donaire del valor divino vencer con azucenas, triunfar con rosas, sugetando a Elefantes Demonios con mujeres, Palomas. No hay palabras con que ponderar la magestad con que en ellos [conventos] se celebra el Divino Culto, la música, los olores, la grandeza de sus Templos, limpieza de altares y asistencia en sus coros[10].

The importance of the convent is apparent in the part it played in civic politics at the time. It is interesting to take into account the dispositions of the Council of Trent concerning the building of convents within city walls when reading Vetancurt's description. The Council saw the isolated convent, far from the influence of bishop or priestly authority, to be less respectful of its injunctions regarding *clausura* and orthodoxy. It becomes clear at this point that the motivations behind wanting convents in the centre of cities have become considerably more complex than the Council's concern over the safety of female communities and the strength of *clausura*. In *Parayso Occidental* Sigüenza tells how the first site for the convent of Jesús María was a disastrous choice because it was too removed from the centre and thus not many people came to hear mass there and the nuns found it difficult to attract distinguished preachers whose oration might subsequently be published thus honouring both the preacher and the house. Taking into consideration the convent's role as a house of prayers and celebrations to God, the failure to attract a public caused by being in the periphery of the city can be seen to undermine the entire symbolic value of the institution. The New Spanish convent, unlike its Old

10 *Teatro Mexicano: descripción breve de los sucessos exemplares, históricos, políticos, militares y religiosos del Nuevo Mundo Occidental de las Indias*, Mexico, María de Benavides, 1698. (Because it is the grace of divine valour to overcome with lilies, triumph with roses, restraining elephantine demons with dove-like women. There are no words with which to ponder the majesty of the celebration of the Mass in the convents, the music, the smells, the grandeur of the temples, cleanliness of the altars and the assiduity with which their services are attended.)

World counterpart, had to be permeable. Given the different priorities the church encountered in its evangelic mission in the New World, the boundaries of female enclosure had to adapt accordingly, the model of enclosed communities in Avila being of little use to the first convents established in cities such as Mexico and Lima.

What these adaptations involved will form the substance of this study, and it is useful to begin by discussing in more detail the symbolic importance of the convent in the New World *polis*. The place the cloister occupied in the imaginary of the city can in part be gauged by the way the male authors describe the motives for the founding of the various convents. For the convent of San José, both Avendaño and Méndez concentrate on the divinely ordained nature of the foundation, producing accounts of St Teresa's desire for such an event, positing the convent as the spiritual child of the saint. The political importance of St Teresa was equally evident in the intrigues and rivalry surrounding the foundation of the first convent of her order in Mexico City. The early years of the seventeenth century were ones in which St Teresa's fame grew. By 1604, Lima had its Carmelite convent and in Mexico potential patrons and founding mothers were numerous. The support and approval of Archbishop Pérez de la Serna who arrived in 1612 in Mexico, having read St Teresa's writings on his Atlantic crossing and believing that he had been saved from shipwreck by her intervention, provided the institutional leverage the foundation attempt had been lacking. San José was to be the archbishop's magnificent *ex voto*, a monument expressing his gratitude to Teresa's divine intercession with the Godhead for his survival[11]. The identification of the archbishop as especial patron of the convent certainly conferred great importance on it, the measure of which is perhaps best given by the fact that in 1618, the year of St Teresa's canonisation, the archbishop named her patron saint of Mexico City. He had already made sure the convent had as its chaplain Francisco Lossa, possibly the most famous 'holy-man' in the Indies at the time because of his friendship with the hermit Gregorio López. The archbishop also ensured that the latter's bones were held in the convent, thus also making it the possessor of the most powerful of relics in that period. These were paraded through the streets during the ceremony

11 Mariana de la Encarnación, *Fundación*, 75, AHCSJ.

of the dedication of the new convent's buildings to spiritual purposes. The continued ecclesiastical and political favour shown towards San José is emphasised throughout its chronicle. As abbess, Bernarda de San Juan enjoyed the patronage of Archbishop Palafox[12]. San José and its inhabitants thus came to symbolise the spiritual aspirations that the church hierarchy had for the entire city and was, as such, the exemplary sign of orthodoxy and the repository of both spiritual fervour as well as wealth in the form of relics, images and saintly nuns from the colonial elite.

The Carmelite foundation of San José is a late one by New Spanish standards and it is interesting to compare the way its foundation is explained and recorded with that of its 'mother' convent, the Conceptionist house of Jesús María from which the founding Carmelite nuns left for San José. Jesús María was originally intended as a foundation to cater for the daughters and female relatives of *conquistadores* who were too poor to marry 'honourably', that is in accordance with their social and racial status. In a very real sense the convent was conceived of as a fortress for Spanish racial and cultural values[13] and this explains the eagerness with which Sigüenza exploits the 'Royal' cachet that the king's patronage confers on Jesús María. It is a curious fact that he should also reproduce the apocryphal story that the presence of Phillip II's illegitimate daughter in the convent is the motive for the Crown's preference; a story which is obviously not considered to detract from, but indeed to confirm, the absolute legitimacy conferred on the convent by royal favour.

The issue of Sigüenza's political position vis-à-vis the Spanish ruling powers becomes more complicated however, for his syncretist approach to Mexican history means he introduces praises to American nature and Aztec culture in order to consolidate his exaltation of Jesús María's nobility as a foundation[14]. The nuns are

12 See *Historia* I.XXII, AHCSJ and f. 72.

13 Cf. Siguenza's opinion of New Spain as overrun with heretics and Jews: 'Inficionada la Nueva España con bastante copia de Hereges y Judíos...' *Parayso Occidental*, 115.

14 For a review of Siguenza's cultural syncretism see Irving A. Leonard, *Don Carlos de Siguenza y Góngora: a Mexican Savant of the Seventeenth Century*, Berkeley, Univ of California Press, 1929 and for a more general review of the syncretist debate and its philosophical implications, Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las Trampas de la Fe*, Mexico, Fondo de

linked in a pre-history to Aztec vestal virgins and Sigüenza dedicates the first chapter of the chronicle to this comparison. By the end of the first book, the one dealing with the political and economic negotiations necessary for the foundation, the crucial role of the convent in New Spain's claim to 'civilisation' is apparent:

> [México, ciudad] ... dignamente merecedora de que en los ecos de la Famahaya llegado su nombre a los más retirados términos del Universo, aún no tanto por la amenidad deleitosísima de su sitio; por la incomparable hermosura de sus espaciosas calles; por la opulencia, y valor de sus antiguos Reyes; por la copia y circunspección de sus tribunales; por las prendas que benignamente les reparte el cielo a sus ilustres hijos; conseguido ser la Cabeza y Metrópoli de la América; cuanto porque a beneficio de éste, y de otros innumerables Templos, con que se hermosea su dilatado ámbito se puede equivocar con el Cielo Empireo, cuando desde ellos, sin intermisión, se le embía a Dios Nuestro Señor el sacrificio, y holocausto de sus debidos elogios, y a donde viven los que los habitan con pureza celestial[15].

Given this fantastic idealisation of civic space, it becomes clear that the description of lavish foundation and profession ceremonies included in all the chronicles are not only an accurate depiction of the Baroque taste for display, but a strategy to affirm economic and political power and the overarching superiority of Spanish culture.

A constant and overriding concern of the chronicle is then to insist upon a public mission to be fulfilled in specific ways which do not violate the private and devotional vocations of the women who profess in the convents. The ability of the chronicle to register this 'openness' of the cloister in its public mission while promoting

Cultura Económica, 1990, especially Part One: 'El Reino de la Nueva España'.

15 *Parayso Occidental*, conclusion to Bk I, ([Mexico, a city] deservedly honouring that her name has reached the remotest parts of the universe on the echoes of Fame. She has become the head and metropolis of America not so much because of the wonderful pleasantness of her location or for the incomparable beauty of her spacious streets, or the opulence and courage of her ancient Kings, or the number and gravity of her courts, or the gifts which heaven has benignly distributed to her sons but thanks to this and innumerable other Temples with which her expansive area is adorned and could thus easily be mistaken for the empyrean heaven, both because of the sacrifice and tribute owing to God which are sent continually to Him from them in the form of praises and because they are inhabited by those who live in celestial purity.)

the private piety of the *devotio moderna* of its inhabitants is perhaps most apparent in the description of public ceremonies. Here the convents are represented not only as 'producers' of saints (as in the hagiography of virtuous nuns) but as repositories of all the power attributed to images and relics in the period. These relics and images, many of which would have been acquired from the Old World and transported to the New, must be considered as playing a role in the accretion of 'orthodoxy' by a particular convent and as presenting it as a purveyor of European Christian culture. Nonetheless, an 'indigenous' production of both these objects is recorded in the chronicles and can certainly be linked to the 'local' character of the cult of saints[16].

What kind of prestige and value did the display of such images bring to the convent? The displayed image signalled not only the cloister's spiritual worth as a repository of such holy objects, but also brought more tangible profits into it by encouraging the pious to make donations and other gifts[17]. The prioress of Sta Catalina's mention of the *Zodiaco Mariano* (1755), a book dealing with the images of the Virgin throughout New Spain, their power and the devotions accorded to them, makes apparent the geo-political dimensions of this issue[18]. *Zodiaco* is clearly a part of New Spain's 'Marian' cult which had expanded rapidly since the sighting of the Virgin at Tepeyac, just outside Mexico City, in 1648. The fact that Our Lady of Guadalupe was first seen by an Indian and that her cult attracted the devotion of both Creoles and Indians and spread throughout the country, affirmed the orthodoxy of the Vice-Royalty in terms which, though of clear religious symbolism, are often 'patriotic' in tone[19].

The account of the foundation ceremony of San José, *Relación de las solemnísimas fiestas que a la dedicación y fundación del*

16 See Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago, Chicago Univ. Press, 1981.

17 Cf. the miracle in the province of Zumpango when a *devoto*'s harvest is saved and he sets up a confraternity in thanks. Sta Catalina, *Crónica*, 68.

18 *Zodiaco Mariano*, Francisco de Florencia SJ, Mexico, Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1755.

19 For an analysis of the birth of Latin American nationalism and its connection to religiosity see David A. Brading, *The First America: the Spanish monarchy, creole patriots and the liberal state 1492-1867*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991.

convento de San José de Carmelitas Descalzas se hizieron en esta muy noble y muy leal ciudad de México, provides a very good example of the complexity of these descriptions of the convents' participation in civic events[20]. The principal interest of the San José account lies in its hermeneutic explanation of the images it describes, whereas this is taken for granted in the other chronicles. Thus, it allows an examination of the relation of the image to moments of political, social and religious display and instruction.

The 'official' nature of the document, in that it is part of an apologetic history of the institution of the female Carmelite order in Mexico is apparent from the introductory paragraph where Europe is described as having travelled to the Indies to adorn them, an ingenious rhetorical inversion of the more usual trope. In this commercial negotiation, Mexico has traded its wealth for the beauties of Europe, but instead of exchange and difference being apparent, this economy functions along the lines of a 'rhetoric of substitution', emphasising similarity and consonance, moving Mexico from the periphery to the geographical centre of a world where she receives and integrates the different European commodities. Interestingly, the passage also acknowledges that 'difference' is more usually proper to the New World, underlining the great *spiritual* power needed to achieve 'sameness':

> Pintó el más lúcido adorno de las calles (en distrito largo) donde se porfía se desafió lo rico con lo discreto, lo galante con lo vistoso, la bizarría y lo pomposo con toda la majestad posible. Para este ostentativo aparato Milan remitió brocados; Toledo, esmero y damsascos; Granada tejió terciopelos, la India bordados, Italia envió pinceles, Roma dio láminas y México, todo a truco de su oro, lo cambió gustosa para ostentar felíz,no tanto sus haberes, *cuanto la bizarría de la correspondencia* más que ingeniosa, que mostraba para lucirlo todo en grata veneración de todo día[21].

20 This account, hereafter *Relación*, is part of the manuscript Chronicle of San José, AHCSJ and a printed version may be found in Manuel Ramos Medina, *Imagen de Santidad en un Mundo Profano: historia de una fundación*, Mexico, Univ Iberoamericana, 1990, Appendix 2, 192-238. All quotations refer to this printed version.

21 *Relación*, op. cit., 93-4 (emphasis mine). (The brightest adornment of the streets (their length and breath) was painted. One could insist that the rich had been challenged by the discrete, the gallant by the seemly, the spirited and pompous by the utmost majesty. For this ostentatious pomp Milan sent brocade, Toledo artistry and damask, Granada wove velvet, India em-

The physical presence of the images that are paraded is shown vividly in the description of the life-size images of Santiago (St James), the saint of the *Reconquista* who had been adopted by the *conquistadores* as patron. His image is described as thrusting through crowds, themselves described as racially heterogeneous, in another affirmation of the foundation as an event erasing difference. Santiago incarnates the victory of the most orthodox of Spanish values, values to be guarded in the new convent.

The conventual community

Given that every pious nun could thus be considered *in potentia* a collection of relics with which to distinguish her house, the fact that the patronage of a convent also formed part of this system by which institutional and political power was displayed becomes indisputable. Again, the family was often the vector through which such display was shown. The 'networks' of prestige and patronage in the convents are most evident at this level, with sisters, nieces, cousins, etc., of a family group professing in the same institution[22]. The scholarly opinion generally held on the family as institution in New Spain is that patriarchal economic and political power was much more limited than in Europe, because of the relatively unstable family structure of most of the population of the colony, its elite included[23]. Superficially, the convent as an institution where the male patrons were able to define racial, social and economic conditions of entry could be seen as a homogenising agent for the most traditional (i.e., patriarchal) values in society[24]. The function

broideries, Italy sent painting brushes, Rome gave canvasses and Mexico, by grace of her gold, transformed it all willingly in order to show happily not so much her possession, rather the *spirit of correspondence* and exchange which was more than simply ingenious and which she exhibited to display it all in pleasing veneration throughout the day.)

22 Cf. the 'spiritual' genealogy linking a nun to her conventual 'daughter' and how this relationship was invoked in court cases over the inheritance of cells etc. studied by Silvia Evangelisti in Florence in the mid-seventeenth century (PhD dissertation in preparation, European Univ Institute).

23 See the introduction to the articles included in *Familia y Poder en Nueva España*, Mexico, INAH, 1991.

24 See Rosalva Loreto López, 'La Fundación del convento de la Concepción. Identidad y Familias en la Sociedad Poblana (1593-1643)' in Aizpuru Gon-

the convent served as a transmitter of male prestige (both in the form of distinguished religious genealogies and magnificent temples) does not mean however that the patriarchal family reproduced itself smoothly in the conventual community, as the chronicles show.

The story of Marina de la Cruz and her daughter (with whom she professed after becoming widowed for a second time) is revealing about the kinds of ties and affection that are licit in the convent. Marina loves her daughter dearly and spends most of her time dressing and ornamenting her. God intervenes and kills the daughter in a particularly bloody and spectacular way:

> Hallábase ésta (Marina de la Cruz) en cierta ocasión componiéndola con singular complacencia, quando demudándosele a aquella las facciones, y atronando todo el convento con desentonadísimos alaridos comenzó a devaratarse a bocados las tiernas carnes, y a herirse con las uñas su hermoso rostro: quebráronsele los ojos, conveliéronsele [sic] los nervios, faltáronle los sentidos, y padeciendo los más fieros síntomás que jamás vieron los mortales en breves instantes, sin podersele administrar sacramento alguno, entre espumarajos y borbozadas de sangre le faltó el alma[25].

Sigüenza y Góngora's comment on worldly affection is a fittingly imperative close to the moralising anecdote:

> ...emplean algunas Esposas suyas todo su anhelo en divertirse con el monstruo de la devoción mundana por cuya causa después de los trabajos que por ello pasaren en ésta vida les espera en lo futuro perpetua muerte[26].

zalbo (ed.), *Familias Novohispanas Siglos XVI-XIX*, Mexico, Colegio de Mexico, 1991, 163-178.

25 *Parayso Occidental*, op. cit., Book II, chapter IX. (On a certain occasion Marina de la Cruz found herself tending to her [daughter] with especial pleasure, when her [daughter's] features were disturbed and deafening the entire convent with cacophonous screams she began to tear handfuls of tender flesh from herself and to disfigure her beautiful face with her nails: her eyes splintered, her nerves tied themselves up, her senses failed her, and suffering the most terrible symptoms ever seen by a mortal, in a few instants, it not being possible to administer any sacrament, between bubblings and frothings of blood, she gave up the ghost.)

26 *Parayso Occidental*, op. cit., *vida* Marina de la Cruz. (Some wives of Christ employ all their will in entertaining the monster of worldly devotion, because of which, after all the troubles they may undergo for it in this life, perpetual death awaits them in the future!)

His later approbation of Marina's adoption of Ynes de la Cruz as a spiritual daughter makes clear that a differentiation of affections is felt to exist and that the convent represents a space where the affective ties of the family are invalid and, on occasion, sinful. Thus, Ynes de la Cruz's vocation is confirmed early in her life when she abandons her mother in the cathedral in order to pray alone[27]. What makes the representation of this very traditional topos of *contemptus mundi* so interesting in the chronicles is how often the temporal ties the nuns are represented as having to throw off are connected to their worldly families, while the conventual histories simultaneously retell the construction of 'spiritual' family structures. The emphasis on the maternal role as vector for affection and for the formation of groups is one of the most obvious examples of this construction and is often linked to the importance of teaching in the community. The *maestra de novicias* clearly occupied a powerful position in so far as the creation of alliances and the knowledge of individual nuns in the convent was concerned. This sort of knowledge of members of the community is invariably represented as intuitive and emotional. Perhaps the most striking and obvious assertion of a conventual 'identity' predicated on this kind of knowledge is to be found in the *Brígidas* chronicle in the grammatical structure through which the narrative construes a plural 'self' that experiences the history (*nosotras*) and a same plural self that reads the history (*nosotras*). It is the coherence of this device throughout the chronicle that gives it its force in terms of a conception of the text being the history of a group as well as of virtuous individuals[28].

27 *Historia*, 2v. See also Méndez's description of the friendship between Ynes and Mariana de la Encarnación as disembodied: 'De dos instrumentos unísonamente templados (dize Plinio) sin que los toque la mano el aire basta para que ambos suenen con melodía uniforme', 4v. (Of two instruments in tune with each other (says Pliny) it is enough that the air move them for them to sound with the same melody, let alone a hand touch them.)

28 This assertion of the convent as 'group' in the narrative structure of New Spanish chronicles falls short of the refined conception of communal history displayed by other conventual chronicles, fashioned-self-consciously by women chroniclers as writings to exalt the community and save it from oblivion. Cf. Silvia Evangelisti, 'Angelica Baitelli, la storica' in Giulia Calvi (ed.), op. cit., pp. 71-95.

The variation of narrative focus to be found in other chronicles however can be attributed to the tension implicit in writing the history of an institution through the history of the individuals who belong to it: a tension made even more apparent because of the biographic component of hagiography. The result of this tension is often an image of the conventual community as *fractured*, divided by the irreconcilable and irreparable oppositions between virtuous individuals and the evil persons who persecute them. This narrative incommensurability is explained by the 'plot' of the conventual history which requires on the one hand the exaltation of a virtuous reforming individual, and achieves its effect by setting this individual in contrast with a recalcitrant community, and on the other hand requires that this virtuous individual be seen to be the perfect example of a community whose own perfection makes it heavenly:

> ...si puede haber cielo en la tierra lo es estos rincones donde el Señor viene a recrear y aliviar las ofensas que le hacen con sus pecados esos ingratos del mundo[29].

The conventual histories use individual stories (*vidas*) to try and create a communal history, but the narrative prominence of these individual histories undermines the sense of community and global narrative coherence that they are intended precisely to generate.

Méndez tries to resolve the contradiction by adducing that God allows the virtuous nuns to be punished by their equally virtuous sister nuns in order to test them and gives biblical precedents for this kind of divine intervention. The problems of reconciling these narrative modes of individual and community history soon become apparent, even given this divine 'excuse' for fracture. A particularly interesting example occurs whenever the case for reform and spiritual purity in the chronicles is structured around the defence of a nun's contemplative and ascetic desires which are contrasted with the mundanity of the community she finds herself in. This usually leads to a reproduction of misogynist topoi on female sociability by the author, regardless of the latter's sex, so that the convent may figure as a space from which to escape the veniality of the female sex to which the aspiring nuns would necessarily be condemned

29 Ynes de la Cruz, *Fundación*, 37. (If there can be heaven on earth, it is in these nooks where the Lord comes to amuse himself and soothe the injuries which the ungrateful cause him with their sins.)

were they to remain outside the cloister. As a logical result, spiritual weakness in the convent is signalled by a reversion to these worldly values. Hence the outcry against ornamented habits, servants and the presence of secular persons in the cloister[30].

The conventual 'family' of the chronicles is not a united one and is ultimately represented as sharing the problems of integration and kinship displayed by its temporal analogue. In the New Spanish context these issues are significantly connected to matters of race and social class. Thus, the representation of 'reform' in the chronicles, with its necessary division of the community into pious and less pious, or good and downright evil, reveals the preoccupation of the authors to associate racial and class values with moral ones.

The chronicles present a discourse about religious orthodoxy by relating the New Spanish case to European archetypes and norms. In so doing, this discourse becomes one about racial and cultural orthodoxy – the enclosed nun coming to symbolise the honour of the Spanish race in the Indies[31]. This makes the Mexican *vida* a very bizarre genre indeed, in a period where any discussion of racial purity was confined to the 'problem' of Indians and their perceived impurity and so was concerned with alterity and not orthodoxy. Because of this particularity the representation of the convent through its chronicle must be considered as an especially important source of information on the process of acculturation in the colony, that is, on the accomodation of Spanish cultural norms to indigenous norms and practices and vice versa.

The establishment of the female enclosed convents took place long after any 'innocence' attributable to the primal encounter of races in the discovery of the New World had been irreparably compromised. The nuns in New Spanish convents were of Spanish race, as was stipulated by their entry requirements, but already there was

30 For an orthodox opinion on the pernicious effects of the world for the nun see Méndez, *Historia*, 62: '...porque más facil es hazer un milagro que remediar el daño que al Religioso de la comunicación secular puede provenir.' (...because it's easier to perform a miracle than to remedy the harm that can come to a monk or nun from contact with the world.)

31 I use honour here in the global sense ascribed to it by José Antonio Maravall when he discusses *honor* as being the defining characteristic of Spanish preocupations with sexual, cultural, political and social orthodoxy in the period. See *La Cultura del Barroco,* Barcelona, Ariel, 1990.

a division between those born in Spain and those born in the Indies, between *gachupinas* and *criollas*. This division begins to be expressed in increasingly racial terms in the chronicles and I will reproduce this terminology, but it should be kept in mind that the difference between *gachupinas* and *criollas* in the convents would have been cultural rather than racial. Indian women were not considered spiritually capable of becoming nuns and it was not until the eighteenth century that the first convent for them was founded. Corpus Christi was for 'pure' Indian women however, a stipulation that renders transparent the conflation of racial purity with religious orthodoxy in the period. To become a nun in New Spain, a woman had to be either 'pure' Spaniard or 'pure' Indian, making clear the perceived spiritual inadequacy of the rest of the racially heterogeneous New Spanish population. Considering that this population make-up would have been reflected in the women enclosed in convents, as nuns, servants, pupils etc., it is not surprising that the reformatory stance taken by many of the virtuous nuns in the chronicles should be interpreted not in terms of religious orthodoxy but of social and racial advancement:

> No faltó quien respirando cólera y sentimiento le propusiese a la Abadesa ser indecentísimo el que una Lega (así la nombraban por no haverle permitido el exercicio del coro) tubiese avilantes de corregir tan imprudentemente a las que si estubieran en el siglo quizás no la recibieran en su familia; ni aún por criada[32].

Marina de la Cruz, despite her Spanish birth, is clearly considered inferior by her sister nuns who also make apparent the internal social hierarchy of the convent by mentioning her status as a *lega* (lay sister).

The socially disruptive effect of the reforming nuns can of course be analysed in relation to family structures within the convent, but reaction to it is also articulated around the axis of race. The nuns of the Conceptionist convent of Jesús María identify Ynes de la Cruz's desires to found a Carmelite convent as intimately

32 *Parayso Occidental*, 75. (Not surprisingly, someone resentful and vindictive suggested to the Abbess that it was completely indecent that a servant nun (they called her that because she was not permitted to pray in the choir) should be so bold and so imprudent as to correct those who if they were in the World would not perhaps receive her into their family, not even as a servant.)

connected to her status as a *gachupina* in a convent overwhelmingly made up of *criollas*. Ana de San Miguel, abbess at the time of the breakaway, goes further and presents a global interpretation of the privileges enjoyed by *gachupines* in New Spain. Clearly, what is at stake may nominally be religious orthodoxy, figured as greater austerity, but there are a host of political interests, figured as racial purity, also involved. Ana de San Miguel's comments are made during the period when Archbishop Pérez de la Serna became the patron of the would-be Carmelites and clearly refer to the power this *gachupín* archbishop has and his decision to bestow his favour on his fellow Spaniards.

> ...paréceme se van componiendo ya las cosas de la fundación de carmelitas. Esta gente de España tiene su estrella en las Indias. Ynes de la Cruz es gachupina y ha de salir con la fundación. No hay sino retirarnos nosotras y allá se lo haya ella y las que la siguieren...[33]

The abbess' identification of the political rather than spiritual reasons for Pérez de la Serna's behaviour is confirmed by his comment to the founding mothers when they try to refuse the grand entrance ceremony he has planned for their entry into the convent:

> Ya comienzan mis carmelitas a hacer hipocrecías, váyanse ahora a descansar que tiempo les queda para hacer muchas finezas...[34]

He classifies their disingenousness as 'hypocrisy', saying that they will have opportunity enough in which to display their orthodoxy as Carmelites and all the austerity this implies, but for the moment the politics of the occasion, not spiritual etiquette, is the preeminent concern.

An extended aside by Méndez on racial politics which is presented as an explanation of Ana de San Miguel's remarks quoted

33 Mariana de la Encarnación, *Fundación*, 70, AHCSJ. (It seems that things are working out for the foundation of the Carmelite convent. These Spanish people have their lucky star in the Indies. Ynes de la Cruz is *gachupina* and will get her foundation. There's nothing for us to do but retreat and leave it to her and those who follow her.)

34 Mariana de la Encarnación, *Fundación*, 92. (My carmelites already begin to behave hypocritically –go now and rest, you'll have plenty of time in which to behave preciously.)

above, reveals the political and racial situation both inside and outside the cloister to be enormously complex:

> (Entre aquí un paréntesis advirtiendo aquí las razones de ésta Madre Abadeza [Ana de la Concepción] que sin duda las dijo o apasionada o sin alguna advertencia; porque no es de persona de talento dezir que la gente de España tiene en las Indias su estrella. Su estrella tiene en las Indias, o en España, quien en una y otra parte obra religiosa y ajustadamente. Y el abuso y división entre los de una y otra nación quisiera yo ver fuera de las Religiones sin que se andubiessere [sic] parando en si es criollo, o cachupín [sic]. Sea lo que fuere. Conóscanse de cada uno los méritos y según su bueno o malo proceder désele el premio o prémiesele con el castigo. que no es justo que el pobrezito que biene de España, pierda y lo miren con ojeriza solo por ser de la otra parte del charco si por sí merece, que le hagan bien. Y en la Religión es ésta una polilla que cunde mucho con grande estrago de las almas y es una división con que el demonio ha ganado mucho. Y contención de Indias o España, de ésta o la otra tierra es cumplirse al pie de la letra lo que la mística Doctora de la Iglesia N Me Sta Teresa de Jesús dize: que es pelear sobre si ésta o aquella tierra son buenas para adobes o para tapias. Dejemos tierras, con todo Religioso y Religiosa hablo, los que hemos profesado el ollar y poner debajo de nuestros pies al mundo y sus vanidades y pues así es, qué nos importa el que ésta o la otra tierra sean malas? No lo seamos nosotros que lo demás poco importa y los que han renunciado las honras no hagan punto de honor el haver nacido en buena o mala tierra. Y acabemos de desengañar que lo mejor es procurar con perfección caminar a nuestra verdadera patria que es el cielo y darle infinitas gracias a Dios N S por que nos trajo a tierra donde conociésemos y confesásemos su santo nombre) Este ha sido el paréntesis. Bolvamos a la historia...[35]

35 *Historia*, 11. ((Here I'll open a parenthesis explaining the reasons which led this Abbess to say, in an undoubtedly passionate and unguarded way, that people from Spain find their lucky star in the Indies. Whoever behaves in a godly and religious way will find their lucky star either in the Indies or in Spain. I would like to see the insults and discord between those of one nation and the other banished from [the realm of the] Religious Orders where no notice should be taken if one is *criollo* or *cachupín*. Whatever one is. The merits of each person should be judged and according to their good or bad behaviour they should be given a reward or rewarded a punishment. It's unjust that the poor little man that comes from Spain loses out and is borne a grudge only because he comes from across the water. If he deserves it, he should be treated well. And in Religious Orders this [kind of prejudice] is a worm that eats away at many souls and is a cause of fracture. [Through it] the devil has gained strongly. Arguing about the Indies and Spain, setting one country above the other, is to fulfil to the letter what the mystical doctor of the church St Teresa says: that it's like arguing

Méndez's opinions are an elaboration of the 'democratic' argument to be found in apologetical works on America in the period; that all people, no matter where born, are equals spiritually. Crucially, he does not argue for their equality outside the cloister. The existence of 'buena o mala tierra' is not questioned, difference in these matters clearly being admitted. The convent thus becomes the utopic homeland ('nuestra verdadera patria') where this difference is dissolved in the same way as other worldly attachments in affirmation of the Catholic church's true universalism.

At this point it becomes clear that the belief in the racial difference existing between *gachupines* and *criollos* held great currency and that it was used throughout the arguments about laxness and reformation in the convents to support opinions about the spiritual inferiority of *criollo* nuns. Although Ynes does not explicitly mention the racial values at issue in the foundation attempt, Mariana de la Encarnación's reporting of the Carmelite prelate's words make these transparent:

> Que mientras que él fuese prelado no consentiría fundasen convento de religión que profesa tanta perfección criollas regalonas y chocolateras[36].

Consequently, it is useful to consider the two charges of which the prelate accuses the *criollas*: *regalonas* and *chocolateras*. The first is connected to the nefarious effect the climate of the Indies was believed to have on its inhabitants, making them lazy and morally lax, spoilt and inclined to pleasure. The second charge is a refined version of the first, chocolate at this point being considered

over whether one land or another is better for building with bricks or with tiles. Let's try and forget countries – I speak to every monk and nun, those of us who have promised to crush and stamp beneath our feet the World and its vanities. And if this is true, what does it matter to us that this or that country is bad? Let us not be bad ourselves. Nothing else matters much and those who have renounced honours should not make it a point of honour to have been born in a good or bad country. Let's stop deceiving ourselves and acknowledge that the best thing is to seek to walk in perfection towards our true nation which is heaven and to give infinite thanks to God for bringing us to a land where we know and worship His holy name.) This has been the parenthesis, now let's return to the history...)

36 *Fundación*, 70-71, AHCSJ. (That while he was prelate he would not consent to the foundation of a convent that professes to be so perfect by spoilt chocolate-guzzling *criollas*.)

a drink of indulgence and luxury, consumed primarily by women of the New Spanish elite[37]. The misogynist assumptions underlying both charges are obvious: the *criolla* in this argument is a woman of excess. This excess of sexuality is precisely what the perfect Carmelite does not signify and as a result of the cultural specificity of the arguments put forward, the *criolla* is thus not a Carmelite because of what is classed as her 'racial' difference.

As de la Peña observes using one of his preferred metaphors for the foundation attempt, the materials in New Spain are of a different nature:

> [aquellas virtudes] ... con que se sirvió el autor de la Gracia de fabricar en el Nuevo Mundo nuevos géneros de piedras preciosas que transportar desde aquellas partes a la corte celestial de la triunfante Jerusalén[38].

Not many of the chronicles share his optimism about this New World nature's adaptability to divine purposes; at least not when they seek to affirm the 'purity' of the nuns concerned, a 'natural' purity which is inevitably tied to the body, its chastity and its race. Nevertheless, when the 'stakes' of difference are considered lower, the *vidas* reveal surprising customs specific to New Spanish society. Thus, the smoking that goes on in Nra. Sra. de las Nieves, and which is given up like chocolate during fasts:

> ...en todos los ayunos de pan y agua y otros de su devoción se abstenía de tomar tabaco, guardando en la celda la caja de polvos desde la noche antes del ayuno hasta el día después de él, en que en tomando el chocolate embiaba por ella[39].

37 For more on these racial commonplaces see Solange Alberro, *Del Gachupín al Criollo: o de cómo los Españoles de México dejaron de serlo*, Mexico, Colegio de Mexico, 1992. Cf. the opinion that chocolate was an aphrodisiac and the references made in many Inquisition trials to its being prepared by women in order to cast love-spells by feeding it to men.

38 *Trono Mexicano*, op. cit., xi. (Those virtues which the Author of Grace used to make new types of precious stones in the New World in order to transport them from there to the celestial court of the triumphant Jerusalem.)

39 Brígidas, *Crónica*, op. cit., 188. (In all the bread and water fasts and others she kept she abstained from taking tobacco, keeping the box of powder in the cell from the night before the fast until the day after, at which point she would send for it while drinking her chocolate.)

Gerónima de la Asunción, the founding mother of the Carmelite convent of Manila, whose spiritual opinions are recorded by Bartolomé de Letona in his *La Perfecta Religiosa* (1622), acknowledges the differences between peninsular women and those born in the Indies, but points out that where such a difference has led to a change in practices, the *criollo* nuns cannot be accused of laxness:

> En las Indias casi desde la fundación de sus Monasterios de cien años a ésta parte, ésta en uso tener criadas casi todas las Religiosas con sabiduría, consentimiento y licencia de sus Prelados; que muchos de ellos y los más han sido y son doctos, zelosos y temerosos de Dios. La razón en que ésta permisión se funda parece que es que los referidos decretos Apostolicos se hizieron a vista de los monasterios de Europa donde las mujeres son de más robusta salud y en sus comunidades en el refectorio se les administra guisada la comida y la cena y lo demás necessario para la vida humana. Todo lo qual por la mayor parte falta en las mujeres de ésta America, y en sus Monasterios, que no tienen tanta providencia ni tanta salud y todos los dias muy de mañana necesitan de desayunarse y sino tubieran criadas, fuera muy difícil el seguir las Comunidades del Coro y otros ejercicios con la puntualidad y exemplo con que siguen[40].

Apart from making clear that many of these procedures perhaps considered 'relaxed' are in fact permitted by learned prelates, Gerónima also points to the different financial status of the convents in Spain and in the Indies as an explanation. Her mention of these factors means that the polarities of what was considered a monolithic 'racial' difference are opened up and relativised into a cultural difference. This movement is confirmed in her comments on fasting:

40 (Ever since the foundation of monasteries in the Indies one hundred years ago, it has been normal practice for nearly every nun to have servants. This with the knowledge, consent and permission of the prelates, many of whom have been learned, zealous and God-fearing. The permission was justified by explaining that it seems that the said Apostolic decrees were made for European monasteries where the women are more robust and have their food seasoned at lunch and dinner as well as being given everything else necessary for life. All of which the women of this America lack, both in themselves and in their convents, neither having so much providential charity nor health and having thus to eat breakfast very early every day and if they were not to have servants it would be difficult to follow the religious hours of the choir and other exercises with the requisite punctuality and exemplarity they do.)

> En las Indias hay costumbre legítima de comer todos en las Quaresmas y demás dias de ayuno huebos y cosas de leche. Con que la prohibición que de estas cosas pone aquí la Regla no obligará en este Reyno ni en los demás donde huviere semejante costumbre. Y más diziendo la Regla que las Monjas guarden la costumbre de la Región[41].

The Carmelite rule is thus in theory adaptable to regional and cultural differences, so these cannot be regarded as determining religious orthodoxy. The impossibility however of separating the cultural significance of the practices described from their religious one is manifest in the racial terminology which becomes the chief tool of definition of *all* practices in the chronicles. The intellectual difficulty of assimilating the difference of the New World to the European model, hagiographic or otherwise, bears out Nathan Wachtel's general comments on the process of acculturation[42]. Wachtel identifies three spheres in which the process takes place with increasing success; the mental, the material and the biological. The accommodation to intellectual models of religious spirituality clearly belongs to the most difficult sphere, and this is born out by the hagiographic 'uniformity' of the New Spanish chronicles in matters theological. The quotidian reality of the cloister clearly presents a very different arena for acculturation, apparently less problematic because it seems to require no structural or representational change of the hagiographic model, its presence consisting only of an addition of detail, which is not considered to involve a transformation or modification of form.

Food in the convent is perhaps the most obvious example of an appropriation of difference by the dominant model which seems to be initially unproblematic and which eventually reveals itself as marking significant moments of cultural negotiation. Thus, Ynes de la Cruz is said to spike her soup with *chile* as a penance while all the food that appears miraculously in the chronicles is the food of New Spain; a mixture of Iberian and indigenous dishes and foodstuffs. The only occasion when this appropriation becomes difficult

41 (There is a legitimate custom in the Indies that everyone eats eggs and milk products during Lent and on other fast days. Thus the prohibition written into the Rule will not apply to this Kingdom or to any other where there is a similar custom. Especially if the rule declares the nuns should keep the customs of the region.)

42 *Vision of the Vanquished: the Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes*, London, Harvester, 1977.

is when it takes on a significance that lifts it from the sphere of the material into the mental in Wachtel's terminology. Thus, in his description of the food the Capuchins eat, de la Peña also simultaneously reveals the New Spanish specificity of the community and the cultural/spiritual value signified by such difference from the European model. The nuns eat bread rather than *tortillas*, marking their distance from the Indian community apparent. Their vegetables, which include boiled cactus leaves (*nopales*) takes them further away from their Spanish model, though their insistence on no seasoning brings them closer to what is figured as the 'purity' of the European model not only at the level of palate but of morals:

> Sin ningún cuidado en los sazones, que sólo miran al regalo, y apetito del gusto, y no a la necesidad de la naturaleza[43].

The consumption of chocolate in the New Spanish cloister presents an even more vivid illustration than that of spices of the multivalent signifying power of everyday practices in the convent because of its loaded associations with feminine sexuality. Several of the nuns in the two chronicles are described as drinking only chocolate and not eating any food *as a penance*[44]. It is not surprising therefore to find Gerónima de la Asunción attempting to defend the substance:

> ...el chocolate nautural y ordinario es bebida y así no quebranta el ayuno ni deroga a la piedad christiana ni al merecimiento ni al intento que tubo la Iglesia en instituir ayuno...[45]

It is interesting that she defends 'chocolate natural y ordinario' because several of the references to its use in the chronicles also make use of this defence, saying the chocolate they refer to is not the luxurious and spiced drink usual but a more primitive and simple version. The impossibility of rescuing chocolate for ascetic signifying purposes however is signalled by the new rule added to

43 *Trono Mexicano*, op. cit., 65. (With complete disregard for seasonings which are only concerned with pleasure and the appetite of enjoyment and not with the needs of nature.)

44 *Parayso Occidental*, 90, 191.

45 Op. cit., Bk 2. (Natural ordinary chocolate is a drink and so neither breaks fast nor abrogates Christian piety nor the worthiness nor the intention of the Church in instituting fasting.)

the Carmelite's vows: the nuns promise not to drink chocolate, thus at once affirming their austerity and the 'purity' of their spiritual archetype.

The assumption that the recording of these everyday practices requires no representational or structural change in the chronicles must be qualified however by taking into consideration the linguistic difference of the *vidas* and how even this is revealing of their specifically American provenance. The manuscript writings, by the nuns rather than their male compilers, continually exhibit 'difference' at the lexical level of spelling as well as that of vocabulary[46]. This linguistic dimension of the problem of difference was an identifiable source of anxiety in the period. *Criollos* were supposed to speak a verbose and antiquated Spanish which had similar associations to the climactic effects attributed to the Indies; lassitude and effeminacy – emphasising the difficulty of recognising the 'sphere' of signification in Wachtel's terms along which to place the 'value' of practices described in the chronicles[47].

The convent and spirituality

For the New Spanish nuns, access to spiritual knowledge was overwhelmingly expressed through the trope of *docta ignorantia.* This had a long European tradition behind it in explaining the way God might speak through the mouths of those of his flock (children, women and, in the colonies, Indians) for whom divine or theological knowledge was otherwise unthinkable. Here the Divine

46 The erratic spelling in the *Brígidas*' chronicle makes clear that linguistic difference would have been apparent at the level of pronunciation. This chronicle also points out the difference between New Spanish linguistic usage and the European Spanish one at the level of vocabulary: '...hallandose sin el amparo de su Amo, *como bulgarmente se dise, aqui en Yndias*, echaron mano de ellas para socorrer sus nececidades bendiendo y enseñando muchos de los mejores paños.' Op. cit., 118, emphasis mine. (Finding themselves without the protection of their master, *as is vulgarly said here in the Indies*, they resorted to selling and exhibiting the best material in order to solve their problems.)

47 Cf. Solange Alberro, op. cit. This characterisation probably also owes something to the criticisms levelled at indigenous languages at the time; that they lacked abstract terms (which were of course absolutely necessary for orthodox religious thought).

(male) voice spoke through the female body, the woman remaining 'ignorant' throughout. Extreme examples of the empowerment the trope provided *per se* as an assertion of access to the spiritual are abundant in the chronicles and they invariably posit a male audience as the arbiter of such learning, the female conventual community because of its 'natural' ignorance not being a sufficient guarantor of such 'unnatural' female knowledge. Although it is clear that this trope of male voice/female body dramatises women's anomalous position in relation to language and knowledge at the time, the passage into writing that many spiritual women undertook in the recording of their own and others' *vidas*, I would argue, allows for considerable manipulation of the trope.

One of these strategies simply involves a politic deployment of reticence when describing spiritual matters. In this way, the 'orthodoxy' of their content is assured by differentiating them from the 'disreputable' mystical model of feminine spirituality. The conventual history certainly wishes to lay claim to the sanctity of its nuns, but does not narrate the content of this access to knowledge, though it often narrates its effects; miracles, prophecies, etc. This evasiveness is invariably linked to issues of language. The use of correct spiritual terminology and vocabulary is asserted, but never reproduced in the chronicles:

> Dióla el Sr a conocer en la oración abstractivamente muchos misterios; el de la Encarnación, pues como si fuera muy versada en Teología, explicaba la hipostática unión con un raro modo y con aquel lenguage con que Dios habla a las almas[48].

The miracles and prophecies which I have described as the 'effects' of such spiritual knowledge have a very strong presence in the chronicles, many becoming fully-fledged anecdotes with all the narrative attractiveness the term implies. Their inclusion in the chronicles is continally justified not by their ability to please, but by appeals to their ability to teach through verisimilitude. It is their demonstrable 'truth' as stories, something which is clearly much more difficult to claim for an interpretation of a vision or for a

48 *Trono Mexicano*, op. cit., 138. (The Lord gave her abstract knowledge of many mysteries through prayer; that of the Incarnation, (she spoke of) as if she were well versed in theology, she explained the hypostatic union in a particular way and in the language that God uses to speak to souls.)

theological explanation given by an ecstatic nun, which authorises their presence[49].

In a marked example of how deftly the chronicles 'manage' a spirituality that was often characterised as unruly, and yet could serve the religious advancement of the convent well, the chronicle of Sta Catalina represents its community as understanding such access to spiritual knowledge on the part of an individual nun, but also aware of how an 'ignorant' audience would construe such a spectacle. The ecstatic nun is thus hidden from the rest of the convent. The public rumour (that most 'ignorant' of audiences) of this nun's saintliness is such that guards have to be placed around her body at her funeral. To please the crowd, the nuns manipulate her corpse, lifting its arm so that it blesses the multitude in a clear illustration of the community's understanding of sanctity's political benefits. The chronicle excuses this spectacular behaviour and more generally the inclusion of so many *miracula* in this nun's hagiography by reference to the 'solidity' of her spiritual experience:

> Aunque somos tan hijas de N P Sto Domingo no miramos más que la virtud sólida; quiso nuestro Señor calificar la de ésta sierva con milagros patentes[50].

Where women are privy to spiritual knowledge about each other, it is usually through the relationship of 'spiritual' mother-daughter

49 For an eloquent explanation of the 'risks' involved in representing such spirituality for apologetic purposes see de la Peña's comment in *Trono Mexicano*: 'Aunque lo substancial de la virtud no consiste en visiones, raptos, revelaciones y profecías, porque siendo sentimientos extraordinarios puede mezclarse en ellos algún engaño, y fuera liviandad de corazón el dar luego crédito a esas cosas, también es temeridad el condenarlas sin suficientes indicios y despreciarlas, quando los efectos que dejan y causan en el alma son virtuosos y humildes, y los fines son santos.' Op. cit., 197. (Although the substance of virtue does not consist of visions, raptures, revelations and prophecies, which because they are extraordinary sensations may become mixed with falseness, and thus giving credence to such things would be a sign of facile faith, it is also weak to condemn them without sufficient proof and to despise them when the effects that they have on the soul are virtuous and humble and the purpose holy.)

50 Sta Catalina, *Crónica*, op. cit., 46. (Though we are such true daughters of St Dominic that we do not concern ourselves but with solid virtue; nevertheless, our Lord wished to ennoble this servant with patent miracles.)

relations, exclusivity being their defining characteristic. In the overwhelming majority of *vidas* in the chronicles however, it is an outside male, the confessor, who has privileged knowledge of the spiritual subjectivity of the nun. This reticence over the knowledge of spirituality in the community which functions perfectly well at the level of the hagiographic narrative poses serious problems for historical representation in the chronicles. That of Sta Catalina makes this very clear; the nuns in question confided only in their confessors, in the orthodox manner, but the death of these men, compounded with the lack of 'curiosity' over such affairs (itself also orthodox) on the part of the other nuns, means there is a profound lack of information in the community about its members as spiritual 'subjects'[51]. A nun might have various confessors throughout her life and this changing nature of the confessional relationship also meant it gave rise to intermittent records.

Most of the material to be found in the chronicles is the fruit of such a relationship between women writers and their spiritual 'fathers'; either as key authoritative texts in the form of spiritual hand books or didactic treatises written by men, or as actual confessors. It is important to stress the reciprocal nature of this relationship, for it is here that any protection or preservation of a 'space' for female religious expression may be found. The negotiation involved in the formation of the female spiritual subject in the confessional is almost always managed through the production of writing in these chronicles.

Trono Mexicano provides the most developed analysis of the role of the confessor and of the nature of the intellectual relation between a nun and authoritative texts written by men. At a formal level, this means that the chronicle includes *vidas* of the important confessors in the convent, and at a theoretical one, it provides an interpretation of what the role of 'male' intervention in the confessional relationship should be. The power of the confessor in

51 'De ésto pasó mucho; ha habido poca curiosidad en saberlo porque estas siervas de Dios lo comunicaban con sus confesores y ellos han callado y muerto, sin saber las que quedamos cosas que en sus espíritus pasaban, con nuestro Señor', Sta Catalina, *Crónica*, op. cit., 78, *Vida* of Antonia de San Juan. (Of this, there was much; there's been little curiosity to know of it because these servants of God told it to their confessors and they were silent and have died. Those of us still here remain ignorant of the communication with Our Lord that happened in their souls.)

spiritual terms rests precisely in his Knowledge; itself gendered as male. The virtuous confessor in *Trono Mexicano* is thus a man who knows how to deploy both his temporal and spiritual power over the nun wisely. The confessor's greater trust in the representation of spirituality constituted by exemplary acts rather than interior experience itself mirrors the more general narrative move in the chronicles where praxis rather than speculation becomes the focus of histories of female spirituality. Interestingly, *Trono* uses the metaphor of the journey to describe the confessional relation. The devout nun, travelling to the New World of Paradise needs an accurate compass, a mechanism not subject to movement or change itself, pointing always to the North, the reference point of all journeys:

> ...acrisolaron sus perfecciones en la mística vida, ayudadas del timón y norte de los buenos consejos de sus confessores[52].

Travel narrative, the picaresque and comedy

Given the insistence on the confessor's importance as a stabilising force and guide, it becomes clear that any kind of movement outside the enclosure of the home or the convent in this period was considered a dangerous activity for women. The obstacles encountered by travelling women in particular were especially acute. This is made apparent in Alonso Andrade's comments in his treatise on the Virgin (1642), his opinion being that there is but the slightest distance separating the pilgrim from the prostitute; a slip in virtue mimicked by a corresponding slip in language: 'de romera a ramera hay poquisima distancia'[53].

Travel narratives as a genre are very much connected to the discovery of the New World and constitute a kind of writing that one could think of as being totally different from hagiography. Never-

52 *Trono Mexicano*, op. cit., vii. (They refined their perfection in mystical life aided by the rudder and North of the good advice given by their confessors.)

53 Quoted in Julio Caro Baroja, *Las Formas Complejas de la Vida Religiosa:Religión, Sociedad y Carácter en la España de los Siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Akal, 1978, 190. (From pilgrim woman to prostitute there is but little distance.)

theless, despite the fact that movement was clearly such a dangerous activity for women both morally and physically, the chronicles retell the transatlantic journeys undertaken by women whose virtue was unimpeachable. In a curious version of the relationship of time and speed to distance, the spiritual mathematics of nuns' journeys allows the representation of their movement to consider these variables while bracketing the question of place. Nuns in the chronicles certainly travel, but they effectively go nowhere for it is precisely by acknowledging no change in the matter of place that the New World's difference is neutralised and its religious (and political, racial and social) orthodoxy asserted in terms of its asymmetry to the Old World[54].

The narrative model being used here is that of the pilgrimage. An enlightening explanation of the importance of place in such a kind of journey is given in the remarks attributed to the abbess of Sta Catalina on her being offered decorations for the convent:

> Quién a visto que los pasajeros que caminan ligeros al termino donde van, busquen comodidades en los oficios y ventas? Pues nuestra casa es una venta donde estamos de camino para el fin que deseamos, que es lo eterno[55].

Place, in this case the cloister itself which is figured as an inn on the route to heaven, is clearly of no importance on the journey to salvation. Nevertheless, it is crucial to represent movement in this Christian eschatology because of its inexorably teleological nature. Each of the chronicles provides very detailed topographical information of the founding mothers' movements. The itinerary on arrival in New Spain is an established one: Veracruz, Puebla, the Shrine of Guadalupe and then Mexico City and certainly takes on

54 Cf. Anthony Pagden on the logic of substitution: '...the process of reducing distance by direct substitution was an enduring feature of most early European efforts to steady the initially vertiginous experience of being in a "new world"': 'Ius et Factum: text and experience in the Writings of Bartolomé de las Casas', *Representations*, Winter 1991, pp. 147-162. Cf. also the idea of the 'place' in hagiography as *non lieu* in Michel de Certeau, op cit., p. 287 'Il renvoie les lecteurs à un "au-delà" qui n'est ni un ailleurs ni l'endroit même où la vie de saint organise l'édification d'une communauté.'

55 St Catalina, *Crónica*, 127. (Who can imagine that passengers travelling light to their destination should seek comfort in hotels and inns? Well, our house is an inn on our way to our destination which is eternity.)

the value of pilgrimage with the visiting of holy 'sites' and relics in convents along the way. The geographical detail provided (however exact) remains, as Michel de Certeau puts it, a 'backdrop' against which the comedy of the nuns' immutably constant desire for salvation is played out[56].

What this would lead one to expect, in a philosophically rigorous working out of this 'geography of the sacred', would be a representation of travelling involving no 'experience' of such movement and change on the part of its subjects. The nun, as ultimately innocent woman, would always be the dupe of the experience of travel which she would never experience *as* experience, her innocence turning it into events, places, things that happen to her but do not affect her. The chronicles certainly gesture at this in the emphasis on the enclosed nature of the journeys the nuns undertake. They move from covered coaches to ships' holds, staying overnight in convents and keeping to their liturgical 'hours' in a representation of continual 'enclosure' emphasised by the insistence that their veils prevent them both from seeing and being seen. Thus in the sermon that de la Peña uses as a source for *Trono Mexicano*, during the journey as the group crosses the Sierra Morena, the confessor accompanying the nuns encourages them to look out at the view because of its beauty. They refuse to lift their veils, saying they will see everything in heaven. As compensation for their sacrifice, the nuns are rewarded with a much more significant sight, which refers them to a place in the geography of the sacred rather than that of Spain: a vision of the Virgin[57]. In a similar rhetorical strategy, the nuns are represented as exempt from the usual 'female' constraints on travel; they have no special demands and do not endanger the efficient progress of the expedition. In fact, they are not women, but that most hardy traveller of all, a male apostle: 'unas mugeres varoniles, verdaderas Apostolicas'[58]. The

56 Cf. op. cit., p. 285: 'L'histoire du saint se traduit en parcours de lieux et en changements de décors; ils déterminent l'espace d'une "constance".'

57 Rodrigo García Flores Valdés, *Sermon en las honras funebres que hizo el religiosisimo convento de S Phelipe de Jesus de Madres Capuchinas de Mexico a la Vble Madre Sor Theresa Maria de Guzman, Abadesa que fue y Fundadora de dicho Convento*, Mexico, Francisco Ribera Calderon, 1707, 246r.

58 Op. cit., 24. The 'strong woman' is a particularly resonant and apposite symbol for these nuns, whose evangelic and 'political' role in Spain's

function of this kind of description is to make clear that the huge distances covered in the journeys elapse outside historical time, the nuns never entering the world, Old or New, but transporting their cloister and its special 'time' to a different place[59].

Despite the considerable strength of this hagiographic narrative imperative, the chronicles also exhibit the influence of a radically different mode of writing about journeys; the travel narratives mentioned earlier, which deal with precisely the same itinerary from Old Spain to New Spain. The *Brígidas'* chronicle is perhaps the most open to influences of this sort, devoting a whole chapter of its narrative to description of the journeys undertaken by the founding mothers. A considerable amount of attention is devoted to circumstantial detail, the personality of the accompanying men, the kind of places chosen to sleep in overnight, the weather. Perhaps the most blatant modification of the hagiographic genre is the explanation of the foundation's enforced postponement due to war breaking out between England and Spain. The nuns are forced to remain in Cádiz for four years and are only eventually able to embark because of the danger of an invasion of the city. This situation is clearly translatable into hagiographic terms; the nuns as potential martyrs, the prey of evil heretics. Although this is gestured at in the chronicle, what seems to interest the nuns writing their history is more an explanation, along the lines of cause and effect (though the ultimate 'explanation' is of course divine) and an interpretation of individual reactions in very 'naturalistic' terms.

The New Spanish conventual chronicles may have wanted to affirm that the 'place' was new, not the institution, but this very

empire-building finds an ennobling model in the Biblical *mujeres varoniles*, Judith and Deborah. The comparison also makes the male author's interpretation of the Spanish mission in the Indies transparent; the chosen people being led to wildernesses they then evangelise.

59 Cf. also the ability of the very presence of the nuns to 'neutralise' the stereotypically unvirtuous masculinity of sailors, thus making the ship less of a ship and more of a continuation of the cloister: 'Los marineros parecían escogidos, pues no oyeron las Religiosas una palabra descompuesta. Rezaban tres veces al día el Rosario de Nuestra Sra, aún las coplas que cantaban, como acostumbran, eran de disparates que causaban risa y no ofendían sus oídos.' La Enseñanza, *Crónica*, 79. (The sailors seemed chosen, for the nuns did not hear a word of innuendo. They prayed the rosary three times a day and even the songs they sang were jocular and made them laugh rather than offended their ears.)

recognition of place meant a compromise of hagiographic form. At points, the parallels to be drawn between exemplary women (*ave raris* by the period's own definition) and strange monsters of the New World are too tempting for the male writers, who use such a happy conjunction to display their learning by comparing the nuns to monsters in Pliny and other classical writers[60].

One might, as a result of this, posit that an important part of hagiography's status as a 'popular' genre in the period involved its permeability to other narrative forms in vogue at the time. It is in the narration of a host of what may be termed 'domestic' miracles that the chronicle most tellingly deploys a kind of 'naturalism' that has been linked to the rise of the novel. There are tales of overflowing honey pots, miraculously dampened fires, meals that cook themselves, etc. The best example of this kind of narrative dexterity comes in the form of a marginal note by Mariana de la Encarnación to Méndez's chronicle, supplying the story of a miracle he did not include:

> siendo nobicia tenía a su cargo el corral de las gallinas y estando un día haciéndoles salbado llamaron la campana para comulgar (y como havía de ser la que [oraba] en el acto de communidad) dióse más prisa para acavar con la ocupación dio el gallo en meterse [en] el lebrillo de salbado estorvándola a que lo acavase incorporar [sic] y afligida dióle con el cucharón en la caveza y quedo muerto, la pobre nobicia le metió la caveza en el salvado y se fue a comulgar pidiendo a Dios la vida del gallo, con gran fe de que lo havía de alcanzar así que salió del coro fue a ver su difunto y hallólo muy brioso paseando todo el corral[61].

The chronicles also include episodes which have a great affinity to the picaresque genre and are exclusively about women cheating their husbands with the help of the nuns. The most interesting example of how these new narrative forms can take hold and to some

60 Sta Clara, *Crónica*, op. cit., unpaginated.

61 *Historia*, marginal note to 81v. (as a novice she was in charge of the chicken run and one day as she gave them bran the bell rang for communion. As she was meant to be praying at the service, she hurried in order to finish but the cockerel ran into the sack of bran, preventing her from closing it. Anxious, she hit him on the head with the ladle and he dropped down dead. The poor novice stuck his head in the bran and went to communion, asking God for the life of the cockerel, with great faith that she would be granted it. When she came out of the choir, she went to see her deceased and found him strutting spiritedly the length of the run.)

extent deform the *vida*, or rather how it can accommodate them and support incoherence in its spiritual 'plot' is given in the picaresque miracle concerning Ynes de la Cruz the founding mother of the first Discalced Carmelite convent in Mexico City and a nobleman who becomes her *devoto*. The nobleman in question tries to rape a noblewoman but she manages to lock him in a room and go for help. His capture and death are certain until he calls on Ynes and she appears and lets him out of the room[62]. The almost total autonomy of this episode from the moral tone of the rest of the *vida* is astonishing and provides a very clear example of how the conventual chronicle as a narrative form could be manipulated by its writers to record all sorts of stories and histories.

The influence of popular cloak-and-dagger romantic comedies can also be traced in the chronicles, though in this case they affect description rather than action. Most often this influence is felt in descriptions of the demonic, which when not figured as grotesque is usually comic. A classic example is provided in the *vida* of Marina de la Cruz, where the devil is described as a lover who climbs over rooftops to visit his beloved and can be seen silhouetted against the night sky in all his finery:

> Aparecíase otras vezes como un Mancebo paseando por las azoteas y especialmente por la de la torecilla que le servía de celda y como los que pasaban por la calle hiziesen reparo en aquel vulto, que a la luz de la luna y de las estrellas les parecía galan en estremo y cargado de plumas y relumbrones, comenzaron a escandalizarse y a murmurarlo...[63]

As well as these extended narrative moments, the very language of the *vidas* militates against any ahistoricism of form and produces a very convincing representation of geographic and social specificity. There is a consistent use of diminutives and of specific

62 *Historia de la Fundación etc*, 52, AHCSJ and Margarita de San Juan, *Relatos extraordinarios etc*, 142, AHCSJ.

63 *Parayso Occidental*, 90v. (Sometimes he appeared as a young man, wandering along the balconies, especially the one of the little tower which she used as a cell. The people in the street who noticed his shape, which in the moon and star light seemed to them clearly to be that of a courting lover, laden with feathers and lace, were scandalised and began to gossip...)

vocabulary which marks the *vidas* unmistakably[64]. The reporting of humorous speech is especially successful at producing this effect. For example, Bernarda de S Juan's advice on how to get rid of the devil, which she gives to a novice: 'Que cuando vinieran estas tentaciones le dijera al sarnoso; Cómo te fue con San Miguel?'[65]

This use of derisive humour seems to give more information on the diabolic within the convent than many of the contemporary theoretical tracts can provide. Similarly, the scandalous figure of the demon lover cited earlier as clambering over the convent walls is so effective precisely because he challenges the barriers keeping the nuns from the world and vice versa. Nevertheless, in these writings it is the nuns themselves and not only their demons that breach the convent walls and break the cloister. Their adventures provide narratives that suggest very complex ways of thinking about, and overturning, the simple oppositions enclosed/free, male/female and New/Old. They show the writing nuns as women who, without ever directly challenging the cloister, yet really were (within its limits) free.

64 The use of diminutives may be linked to St Teresa's employment of them and the status of her writing as a source of inspiration for many of the writing nuns.

65 *Historia de la Fundación etc*, 82. (That when these temptations came upon her she should say to the mangy devil: how did you get on with St Michael?)

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Sta Catalina de Sena: Crónica

The archive of this convent consists of only one volume, a transcription made by the nuns of various original manuscript texts which have since been lost.

The main text is the *Libro de Memorias* belonging to Beatríz de las Vírgenes (1620-1663) who was prioress of the convent six times. On two occasions, the *vidas* of nuns recounted in Beatríz de las Virgenes' book are supplemented by the information contained in Alonso Franco y Ortega's *Historia de la Provincia de Santiago en México: orden de Predicadores en la Nueva España* (1645).

Convento de Nuestra Senora de las Nieves: Crónica (Brígidas)

The chronicle consists of one volume, divided into five sections and covers the period 1739-1783. It is possible to identify the various authors of the sections as follows:

A: María Catalina de la Concepción [copies the original Spanish chronicle dealing with the foundation of the mother house in Vitoria (Basque Country) and includes a *vida* of St Bridget];

B: Benita Francisca de San José;

C: Isabel Antonio de San Miguel [principal author writing 100 pages of what is a 230 page document];

D: Inés Joaquina del Sr Sn José [taking dictation from C];

E: possibly María Antonio de San Pedro [telling of C's death].

Fray Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa *Crónica suscinta del convento de Sta Clara de México en dos cuadernos. Primer cuaderno: desquisiciones cronológicas por Fr ... Segundo cuaderno; descripción del voraz incendio acaecido en la Iglesia y Convento de Sta Clara*

de Mexico (1755). The only text extant is the second book mentioned in the title, containing the description of the fire.

Printed sources

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Résumé

Au seizième siècle, des religieuses espagnoles ont fait la traversée de l'Atlantique pour s'établir dans le Nouveau Monde. Elles ont apporté avec elles des formes d'écritures -chroniques et hagiographies surtout- provenant des traditions européennes. Mais même si elles considèrent le couvent comme un lieu immuable, les conditions nouvelles introduisent des changements perceptibles dans leur petit monde. Le présent article considère ce que les chroniques et les hagiographies sont susceptibles d'offrir comme sources historiques et comment elles peuvent nous permettre de pénétrer les mentalités et le monde socio-culturel de ces femmes nouvellement enracinées dans un pays où s'affrontent païens et chrétiens.

A Nun and Her Letters: Mother Ana de Jesús (1598-1621)

CONCHA TORRES

In 1603, a group of five nuns left their convent in Salamanca and embarked on a journey that was to take them across the Pyrenees into France, where they founded a main house in Paris (to be the centre of a future network of convents), and thence into the Spanish Netherlands. Some years later, some of the same group of women were to establish houses at Köln and Cracow, thus carrying the reform of Saint Teresa of Avila into North-Eastern Europe. The story of the remarkable journey and the activities of these women have never been described. Yet their adventures and initiatives raise many questions. Were they sent or, if not, what prompted them to go? How did they view their work? How did women who entered one of the most enclosed of religious orders reconcile the way of life to which they aspired with the life of the traveller and continual uprooting and starting over again? What kind of hardships did they face? What were their relationships with each other, their father confessor, and the elites of the societies they entered?

This essay tries to answer some of these questions through the correspondence of a Spanish Carmelite nun, Ana de Jesús (1545-1621). She was the leader of the group of five nuns who embarked on this odyssey and the correspondence she maintained with several people between 1598 and 1621 will form the basis of this study.

A letter written by a nun is both an 'ego document', a personal testimony, and a commentary which reflects on the institution of which she is a part. The Catholic church has always demonstrated some reluctance to open up such sources to public use. In particular, only limited access has been allowed to the archives of convents, monasteries and abbeys, often rich sources for the historian,

and the only way to study these institutions. The historian or researcher has been viewed as an intruder seeking to violate the privacy of the cloister. Times are perhaps changing and a greater openness is becoming the order of the day. Certainly, we are now aware of considerable collections of letters emanating from the cloister. Amongst the most remarkable published in Spain has been the correspondence between Philip IV and Sor María Jesús de Agreda[1]. This is a good example, since it is that of a nun who was to become the principal counsellor of the King after the fall from power of the prime minister, the Count Duke of Olivares.

Few convent archives lack series of correspondence. The Discalced Carmelites, the order studied in this essay, have a long tradition of letter writing. Saint Teresa herself was an active correspondent. These letters have on occasions been collected for publication by the fathers of the male Carmel, mostly in editions conspicuous for their lack of scholarly criteria, introductions, commentaries or bibliography.

The collections published so far have been devoted to the outstanding members of the order, that is, in the case of the Carmel, to the Spanish nuns who founded houses in France and Flanders in the first twenty years of the seventeenth century: Ana de Jesús (1545-1621), Ana de San Bartolomé (1549-1626), Beatriz de la Concepción (1569-1643), Isabel de los Angeles (1565-1644) and Leonor de San Bernardo (1577-1639). Though the most importants letters of the first are only now in press[2], Julian Urkiza[3] has published the writings of Ana de San Bartolomé, and Pierre Serouet[4] the others. Obviously, given that the nuns writing these letters were themselves foundresses, the letters are documents of exceptional value.

1 C. Seco Serrano (ed.), *Cartas de Sor María Jesús de Agreda, Epistolario Español*, Vol. IV, Madrid, 1958.

2 See Concha Torres, *Ana de Jesús. Cartas (1598-1621). Religiosidad y vida cotidiana en la clausura femenina del Siglo de Oroitalics*, Eds. Universidad de Salamanca, 1994. This edition includes the fifty-three letters of Ana de Jesús kept in the archive of the convent of Brussels.

3 Julián Urkiza, *Obras completas de la Beata Ana de San Bartolome*, 2 vols., Monumenta Historica Carmeli Teresiani, Roma, 1981-85.

4 Pierre Serouet, *Une Carmélite espagnole en France. La mère Isabelle des Anges (lettres)*, Paris, 1956. *Lettres choisies de Beatrix de la Conception*, Bruges, 1967. Leonor de San Bernardo, *Lettres (1634-1638)*, Paris 1981.

The letters of Ana de Jesús do not often touch on matters of great political significance even though she was in contact with the governors of the Low Countries. Rather, in most cases they consist of reports to the benefactors of the convents about the activities of the nuns. They provide a description permitting the reconstruction of a complete framework of daily life within the convent, which would be quite difficult to ascertain otherwise, since the cloister is not readily permeable. They are direct testimonies to the experiences of the nuns and to the problems of their times, making many references to the main actors of the day, and they give very useful autobiographical information. If, then, in some ways they can be considered ego documents, at the same time they constitute the chronicle of the convent itself and its relationships with the outside world.

Recently, important and pioneering work has been done in drawing together all the extant ego documents of the Northern Netherlands between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. The heavy preponderance of male writers of letters, diaries and memoirs and the very feeble presence of women writers until the last century were noted[5]. If a similar exercise was conducted for the Southern Netherlands, the presence of the convent correspondence might alter the balance. The nuns were women writers.

The letters emanating from convents embody the feelings and personal wishes of women living in an enclosed situation, with a particular view of the world. Their perceptions were often narrow. Sometimes their ideas and views were acquired from other persons – not least from their father confessors. The role of the father confessor and the influence he exercised over his spiritual daughter within the convent was of deep concern to Saint Teresa[6]. She saw such figures as capable of both manipulation and ill advice. Many, she considered, encouraged their charges to believe they had had visions or were over anxious to secure for themselves the reputation of spiritual director to acknowledged saints[7].

5 Ruud Lindeman, Yvonne Scharf and Rudolf Dekker, *Ego documenten van Noord-Nederlanders uit de zestiende tot begin negentiende eeuw. Een cronologische lijst*, Rotterdam, 1993.

6 See Teresa De Jesus, Modo de visitar conventos, cap. 39.

7 See A. Weber, 'Saint Teresa, demonologist' in A. Cruz and M. Perry (eds.), *Culture and Control in Counter Reformation Spain*, Minneapolis, 1992.

Many convent letters are, of course, simple expressions of courtesy between religious people, without any other content, and repetition prevails. A consciousness of repetition and routine is however important. Routine is one of the main features of the enclosed life. It makes convent discipline easy to implement, even though convents were considered by churchmen as difficult places to control. This view, held by seventeenth-century male clergy, sprang from the fact that the religious community was formed by a group of enclosed women who were not directly subordinated to a man's authority but to the interior rules and the routine of the house[8]. A feeling of routine (which is also the measure of time for the nuns) is easily noticeable in some letters, with phrases like: '...y como que cumpliré mi promesa, que cada día la vuelvo a hacer...' (1608), '...que no nos ha sucedido nada desde que salimos de España...' (1618) or expressions such as '...en todos los maitines', 'en cada Cuaresma...' and so on[9].

When letters are written by a nun, it is often prudent to make a second, 'between the lines' reading. 'Privacy' is an unknown word in the conventual life. Indeed, theoretically the nuns were not permitted to maintain a private correspondence, a prohibition clearly often waived. The mother superior was authorised by the rules to open all letters and to punish nuns seeking to send letters without her permission[10]. Evidence suggests that a majority not only wrote letters but found various ways to ensure their correspondence arrived safely and without censorship to its destination. One way to do this was to give letters to family members, or to other people visiting the convent and request that they see to their despatch.

The following pages review the correspondence of Ana de Jesús, which is important mainly for the personality of the nun herself. She was very significant in the process of expansion and was in her

8 See Mariló Vigil, *La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, 1986, 230-233.

9 Translations of texts quoted will be given in the footnotes: '...and I carry out my promise, and everyday I do it again...' (1608); '...that nothing has happened to us since we left Spain...' (1618)

10 Teresa De Jesus, Constituciones de la Orden Descalza, 1581: '...y si alguna fuera osada a recibir o dar algunas cartas y leerlas sin licencia de la Madre Priora, o cualquier cosa enviare fuera, o lo que le han dado retuviera para sí...'

own esteem the spiritual heiress of Saint Teresa. Even if some aspects of her life are still obscure, she was a major figure within the Discalced Carmel in the seventeenth century, and the 53 letters that remain bear witness to her life and work[11].

Who was Ana de Jesús? The importance of her letters

Ana de Jesús was born in 1545 and died in 1621. She has been considered the most loyal disciple of Saint Teresa and one of the main supporters of her reforms[12]. After the enormous task of reforming the Carmel on new, austere lines and the constitution of the Discalced branch by Saint Teresa, it was necessary to find somebody within the order who could perpetuate the new style of conventual life established by the founder mother. Ana de Jesús was chosen for this. Hers was a late vocation by the standards of the day. She was 25 years old on entry. She led a very turbulent and intellectually demanding life once she entered the cloister[13]. She founded several houses in Spain, and had a close friendship with Saint John of the Cross. She was selected to be the founder mother in France and the Low Countries and was used as an advisor by the rulers once established there. Why was she chosen to lead expansion and why was the Carmel chosen by the monarchy for the 'colonisation' of the Low Countries?

The reasons are not fully explicit. Probably, the selection of the religious order preceded other considerations and was the crucial factor. Inside the order, Ana de Jesús was the outstanding member at that precise moment. The Discalced Carmel had the advantage of being a reformed order, following strictly the Tridentine decrees. The order was well known in Spain for its effectiveness, dynamic internal expansion and for the writings of the two founder saints: Saint Teresa and St. John of the Cross, both of whom had immense

11 Kept in the archive of the Carmelite convent in Brussels. Section: 'Libros Manuscritos'; manuscript books entitled 'Anne de Jésus: lettres et écrits' and 'Anne de Jésus: lettres'.

12 Together with Ana de San Bartolomé (1541-1626), the other important figure of the Spanish Carmel in Flanders, who was in permanent controversy with Ana de Jesús.

13 The majority of the girls who took the vows in seventeenth-century convents were around 15-18 years old, or even younger.

influence. In addition to these advantages, the Carmel was perhaps selected by the rulers because it was a new order, and hence unlikely to create distrust amongst a population recently rent by deep religious conflict. It was quintessentially Spanish and so a means of reinforcing the Spanish presence in the Southern Netherlands. One should perhaps also acknowledge that the austerity of the Discalced Carmel had already become legendary within Teresa's lifetime. They were therefore perhaps regarded as 'cheap', with minimal demands.

Mother Ana's life (embellished by the exaggerations and fantasies typical of saint's *Lives* of the epoch) could have been the subject of one of these glorious Baroque hagiographies so widely used by the religious orders in the seventeenth century[14]. In fact this did not happen. Despite her relevance to the spread of the Carmel, Ana de Jesús was first to become a contentious figure within the order, and then was largely forgotten.

She was born in 1545 in Medina del Campo (Valladolid), of a lower middle-class family. She took her vows in the convent of Salamanca in 1571, where she met Saint Teresa for the first time. From 1575 she was the founder of several convents in Spain (Beas, Granada, Madrid). Between 1586 and 1590, she was involved in an important conflict involving the entire Carmelite order. The genesis of the conflict lay in 1562, when Saint Teresa obtained a special permission from the Pope to make the Constitutions of the new Discalced Carmel. These new Constitutions were published in 1581 and remained valid until 1588, when Nicolás Doria was nominated father-general of the Carmel. He was much more conservative than his predecessors, and undertook a further reform of the Constitutions, trying to cancel out those points introduced by Saint Teresa, which in his view impeded the centralisation of the government of the order. Father Doria succeeded in submitting the nuns to the control of the fathers of the same order, something that Saint Teresa had always tried to avoid because it robbed the female Carmel of the autonomy she deemed essential for their proper fulfilment.

14 According to such hagiographies every religious order needed a hero whose virtues were greater than those of the other saints, and served as an example for the members of the order. See Sergio Bertelli, *Ribelli, libertini e ortodossi nella storiografia barocca*, Firenze, 1973.

Some prioresses, with Ana de Jesús amongst the leaders, requested that the Pope re-confirm the Constitutions of 1581. The Pope gave this confirmation in 1590. Even when the Vatican took this step, however, Ana de Jesús enjoyed no personal victory. She was punished by her order, confined in the convent of Madrid for three years. Other members of the order who supported Ana de Jesús were punished in the same way. This controversy made her a contentious figure within the order.

Despite the judgements made of her inside the Carmel, Ana de Jesús remained a person of significance. She was involved in some of the central processes of seventeenth-century history: Spanish rule in the Low Countries, the Counter-Reformation activity of the Spanish clergy and the reform of the Carmel. Moreover, she established relationships with some of the protagonists of these processes: Saint Teresa and the archdukes. Perhaps the choice of this woman to spearhead the push into France and the Netherlands was a deliberate attempt by her order to deflect her from her efforts to retain intact the Constitutions gained by Saint Teresa and to silence her by ensuring that she was perpetually occupied outside her native Spain. This can be no more than a plausible guess. Another factor influencing the choice may have been that she had secured a reputation for persistence in pursuit of her principles and hard-headedness. This clearly was more important in the work of expansion than a reputation as a mystic. Endurance and adaptation were critical to success.

The collected letters of Ana de Jesús

The 53 collected letters of Ana de Jesús kept in the archive of the Carmelite convent in Brussels range over the period 1598 to 1621, that is to say, they are widely distributed over the religious life of this nun. These chronological boundaries are also important because they fall within the limits of the most severe Counter-Reformation activity undertaken by the Spanish monarchy in the wake of the Tridentine decrees[15]. These dates also demarcate the

15 1598 to 1621 also marks the regency of Archduke Albert and the reign of Philip III. This was the sole period in early modern times in which the Southern Low Countries were an independent territory whilst also maintaining a Spanish connection.

spread of the Discalced Carmelites from Spain over Europe, itself a significant part of that activity. The letters include detailed description of how the process developed, the reactions of the people responsible for it and the participation of the rulers.

There are assertions like: '...hacemos tanto bien en estos estados que desde que entramos en ellos tratan los enemigos de hacer las paces...' (1609) or '...todos dicen que es milagro y que con nosotras vino la paz, y que así fue en Francia, y con esto crecen los católicos y disminuyen los herejes...' (1609)[16]. Obviously, when political events are positive, Ana de Jesús makes a link with the issue of the foundations. God is pleased. When she talks about 'peace', she is probably referring to the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), established by Archduke Albert with the Flemish nobility in order to keep these provinces under the Spanish Crown. There are also sentences which reveal the response of the Flemish people to the new foundations: '... y si tuviese monjas que me pudieran ayudar, ya estuvieran hechas otras fundaciones en las mejores ciudades de estos estados, que mucho lo quieren en Amberes, Lovaina y Gante...'[17]. In short, more houses were sollicited and the women were unable, because of their numerical weakness, to respond to all the requests.

The discovery of these letters of Ana de Jesús has been important because they alone constitute an authentic testimony by the nun herself. In contrast to the majority of the members of the Discalced Carmel, she did not write her autobiography and she was even opposed to the fact of writing: '...respondía que nunca había escrito nada y no le faltaban ejemplos vivos si los querían seguir, porque ella sólo deseaba estar escrita en el libro de la vida, que no deseaba tuvieran memoria della...'[18].

16 '...we are doing so much good in these states, that, since we came the enemies tried to make peace...' (1609); '...everybody says that it is a miracle, that we brought peace, and it was like that in France, and with this, the Catholics are increasing and the heretics decreasing...' (1609).

17 '...If I could have some more nuns to help me, some other foundations would have been established in the major towns of these states; so that they are sought in Antwerp, Leuven and Ghent...'

18 '...she answered that she had never written anything, that she had living examples if she wanted to follow them, because she only wished to be written in the book of life, and she did not want to leave a memory of herself...' Archive du Carmel Déchaussé de Bruxelles, 'Teresa de Jesús María:

We find references to her letters in the sole biography that we can consider to have a certain authority, that written by Angel Manrique in 1631[19]. Given the controversial position of this nun within the Carmel, the reading of her own version of events helps to clarify some aspects of her life and the daily life of the community of which she was a part. The letters have some points in common. In fact, there is much repetition in the subjects treated and in the appearance of individuals. The chronological framework, 23 years, is quite wide. The majority of the letters were written between 1602 and 1612; the main expansion activity of the order in France and Flanders took place in these years, with the foundation of a great number of convents[20]. The number of addressees (five) however is both small and striking.

Who were the people to whom Ana de Jesús wrote? Above all, two nuns, Beatriz de la Concepción (12 letters out of 53) and Juana del Espíritu Santo, the sister of the first, and one father, Fray Diego de Guevara (17 letters). Beatriz de la Concepción was the habitual companion of Ana de Jesús and present with her in all the foundations in France and Flanders. She was her closest friend, standing in the same relationship to Ana de Jesús as the latter did to Saint Teresa. The letters addressed to her are the most 'relaxed', intimate and personal: they are the only ones in which we find expressions like '...que haré sin la mi Beatriz...' or '...que siempre ando tristísima de verme sin mi verdadera hija...' (1608)[21].

These phrases come from letters written between 1608 and 1609. This was a trying year. Ana de Jesús was attempting to build up the foundation in Mons, the second in Belgium after Brussels. The difficulties involved in this enterprise were mainly material. The accommodation in which to establish the convent was inade-

breve compendio de las virtudes de la Venerable Madre Ana de Jesús', Dossier VI.1, Ms.

19 This biography was commissioned by the Infanta Isabel in 1630. It is probable that Manrique used the letters to write his biography because he introduces some texts coming from the epistles. Probably, the convent allowed him to use the letters as a primary source because of the commission.

20 Among other, the foundations of Paris (1604), Pontoise (1605), Dijon (1605), Brussels (1607), Leuven (1607), Mons (1608), Tours (1608), Bourdeaux (1610), Antwerp (1611).

21 '...what will I do without my Beatriz...', '...I am always very sad to be without my true daughter...' (1608).

quate (despite the patronage of the aristocracy): '...hasta tener asentado el convento, no sé cuándo será, porque no se halla casa para Madama ... a los modos que Dios ha tomado para hacer él sólo esta fundación, grandes fatigas me questa...' (1608) or '...o si viese mi Madre lo que el demonio procura estorvar en esta fundación, y con la fatiga que se va haçiendo...' (1609)[22]. Adequacy seems to have meant the provision of the most basic needs. The conditions for a house to serve as a religious house had been stated by Saint Teresa: '...la casa jamás se labre, si no fuera la iglesia, ni haya cosa curiosa, sino tosca la madera; y sea la casa pequeña y las piezas bajas, que cumpla a la necesidad y no superflua...'[23]. These conditions were observed in the majority of the Spanish foundations, but not in those established outside Spain.

These letters were written to Beatriz de la Concepción, who had remained behind in Brussels as mother superior. They show clearly how miserable the nun was at being alone and far away from her friend. A sense of great loneliness prevails. The personal difficulties Ana de Jesús faced are emphasised in her writings. This is something new in the convent literature. Personal feelings intrude upon the narrative. The letters endow Ana de Jesús, the religious 'heroine', with a human face. Moreover she implies there are many more difficulties than those she recounts, as is clearly shown in expressions such as: '... estoy tan aflijida con un disgusto que ha tenido aquí Juan de Torres que no estoy para decir más...'[24]. This nun does not try to hide how uncomfortable and complicated the issue of the foundations was, and such testimony is in direct contrast to the Baroque hagiographical model wherein the founder saint was presented as brave, noble, tireless, tough and endowed by God with a huge amount of supernatural talent to achieve his pur-

22 '...I do not know when the convent will be settled, because we cannot find a suitable house for Milady...the way in which God is carrying out this foundation, makes me weary of it...' (1608); '...if you could only see how the devil obstructs this foundation and with what a hardship it is to persist...' (1609).

23 Teresa De Jesus, Constituciones, 1581: '...the house does not have to be richly worked, excluding the church, without unusual things, but current wood; the house must be small, with small rooms; it has to include the necessary and not the superfluous...'

24 '...I am so sad with the trouble that Juan de Torres has got here, that I can't say anymore...'

poses[25]. This is not the impression that Ana de Jesús conveys in her letters. On the contrary, damp, cold and other physical discomforts in ill-prepared buildings clearly served to depress both the mother superior and the founding sisters.

Juana del Espíritu Santo was the younger sister of Beatriz de la Concepción. The letters addressed to her were mainly written between 1616 and 1618. At that time she was in the convent at Salamanca, the mother house, to which she had returned from Belgium, where she had been with Ana de Jesús and her sister. These letters talk about ordinary matters such as the sending of various objects and commodities: blankets, material for habits, candles, confessional and spiritual manuals, Spanish books, grammars, among others. These requests are somewhat puzzling. Why were such articles not acquired on the spot? Transportation of such objects would seem costly and highly inconvenient. Surely the Spanish establishment in the Netherlands would have been prepared to provide such necessities? Was the movement of goods one way of maintaining a close link with the Spanish mother house, or were the nuns hesitant to make demands of their benefactors?

The letters to Juana del Espíritu Santo were written in the last years of Ana de Jesús' life. They make a major point of describing her illnesses, bad health and constant physical suffering. She conveys her pain and the indignities it imposed upon her in a very realistic manner, with sometimes repellent descriptions of sickness: '...no es posible estar en un punto desnuda, por estos suelos me echan y me levantan como descoyuntada; arto padecen las que me ayudan y peso más que un cuerpo muerto...' (1617); or: '...miren en qué estado está su pobre Madre, que para echar la bendizión no puedo menear la mano! Echósela con el corazón, que ha más de tres años que no me persino...' (1616)[26]. Often, along with the de-

25 On Baroque hagiographies see: Jesús Imirizaldu, Monjas y beatas embaucadoras, Madrid, 1977 and Bertelli, Ribelli, libertini e ortodossi. On hagiographies in general, see Rudolph Bell, *Holy anorexia*, Chicago, 1985; F. Chiovaro (ed.), *Histoire des Saints et de la Sainteté Chrétienne*, vol. VIII, Les Saintetés Chrétiennes 1546-1714, Paris, 1987; D. Weinstein and R. Bell, *Saints and Society. The Two Worlds of Western Christendom*, Chicago, 1982, Gabriela Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500*, Torino, 1990 and id., *Finzione e santitá tra Medievo ed etá moderna*, Torino, 1991.

26 '...it is not possible to be naked, they put me on the floor and they stand me up; it is vey hard for those who help me, since I weigh more than a dead

scription of the pain the nun gives the remedy or placebo. It seems that Mother Ana was suffering from a kind of arthritis, and she notes that she is taking one of the medicines used at the time: '... el remedio que me escribió el dotor Paz que es nuestro médico: tomé azúcar con vino tinto, que me abrasó...' (1616)[27].

The frequent references to her health, given with much Baroque rhetoricism, would not surprise the reader if Mother Ana was not a nun. Indeed, it is unusual to find descriptions of physical suffering in Carmelite writings since there was a free-will acceptance of suffering implicit in their acceptance of a cloistered life dedicated to God, whose will to impose pain and hence to test the moral strength of the individual was recognised. In women's writing generally (letters, spiritual diaries and meditations) a preoccupation with health often surfaces. Elisabeth Strouven, an almost contemporaneous holy woman in Maastricht, living outside the convent but dedicated to good works, used her illnesses in the manner of a divine prompt-system: 'If I recover from this illness it will be God's will that I do so...'[28]. Ana de Jesús implies no such strategy. Her descriptions carry no messages. However, coupled with the recorded references to the cold and damp of the premises, and the pains of travelling, they add another dimension to our perception of the travail of this fraught figure.

Fray Diego de Guevara is the third of the frequent addressees. We do not know very much about him. He was an Augustinian and a founder and traveller from his native Spain like Ana de Jesús. The letters run from 1602 to 1621, bearing witness to a long friendship and spiritual relationship between them. The nun writes to this priest about her spiritual doubts. She also gives him advice. She makes comments about the problems that she discovers in founding new establishments, and quite often criticises the actions of the fathers-general of her own order. Her letters prompt reflection on why Ana de Jesús chose a father of the Augustinian order as her correspondent.

body...' (1617); '...look at the condition of your poor Mother, to see I can't bless you since I can't move my hand! I bless you with my heart, that I have not been able to cross for myself for the last three years...' (1616)

27 'The remedy prescribed by Doctor Paz, who is our doctor: I took sugar with hot wine and this burnt me...' (1616)

28 F. Koorn, 'Elisabeth Strouven, la donna religiosa' in Giulia Calvi, *Barocco al femminile*, Roma-Bari, 1992, 127-152.

Obviously the tension between Ana de Jesús and the fathers of the Carmel, whose claims to authority over the female houses she had so vigorously countered earlier in her life, persisted. Saint Teresa herself had a close spiritual friendship with the Augustinian Fray Luis de León and Ana de Jesús may have been emulating her model in this respect. Certainly, the letters addressed to Fray Diego de Guevara touch on the most complex issues of her religious life: the undesirability of the control of the male over the female order and the reform of the Constitutions of Saint Teresa. The first issue was polemical and also delicate. The letters demonstrate that she had not abandoned her position as a firm defender of the nun's independence as stated by Saint Teresa[29].

There are other less frequent addressees, among them the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia. She was the favourite daughter of Philip II, who decided to marry her to her cousin, Archduke Albert of Austria, and make them regents of the Low Countries, trying in this way to find a solution to the permanent state of war in which this part of the Spanish realm was living. They were both deeply religious and concerned with the situation of the recently divided states[30]. They were firm supporters of new foundations in their territories and maintained a close relationship with the nuns, particularly Ana de Jesús, appointed personally by the Infanta to found the house in Brussels. There is a small group of letters addressed to the Infanta, and their tone leaves no doubt that there was a respectful and close relationship between them. At the same time, there are a few letters kept in the convent of Brussels in which Isabel declares her particular concern for the religious conflicts. She is conscious that the Spanish Netherlands were the northern Catholic frontier and her interest in the spread of the Discalced Carmel in the Low Countries is central to her concern to enhance the spiritu-

29 On this conflict see: Teresa Silverio De Santa, *Historia del Carmelo Descalzo en España, Portugal y América, vols. VIII-X*, Burgos, 1935-52; O. Steggink, *La reforma del Carmelo Descalzo Español*, Roma, 1965; I. Moriones, *Ana de Jesús y la herencia Teresiana*, Roma, 1968; P.M. Garrido, *Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz y los Carmelitas Españoles*, Madrid, 1982 and J. Smet, *Los Carmelitas. La historia de la Orden del Carmen*, Madrid, 1987.

30 By the time of their marriage, the Archduke had already received the order of priesthood and the Infanta had always expressed her wish to enter a convent as a nun. The marriage was clearly for political reasons and was probably sterile for the same reasons.

ality of the area: '...que a muchos días que os he deseado aquí y ver en estos estados, hijas de la Madre Teresa de Jesús, que espero no me negaréis el venir a fundar aquí un monasterio...'[31].

What remains unsaid in Ana de Jesús' correspondence? The majority of the letters were sent between 1607 and 1612, that is to say, the period in which the foundations in Flanders were established. It is curious therefore that there is no mention of the other nun who has been considered the founder of the Flemish Carmel, Ana de San Bartolomé. She was, in fact, the opponent of Ana de Jesús on the issue of the relationship between the female and male Carmel, but we have only secondary references to this conflict since none of the nuns involved discussed these problems in their collected letters[32]. Was this a pragmatic policy of the nuns, trying to avoid questions that could interfere in the effectiveness of the expansion process? Can we see this caution as a distrust in the confidentiality of their correspondence? If the letters were to fall into the wrong hands, they may not have wanted to write things that could be misundertood or used against them by the fathers-general of the order. Even so, Ana de San Bartolomé managed to criticise Ana de Jesús quite strongly in her work *Defensa de la herencia Teresiana*[33], trying to present herself as the sole spiritual heiress of Saint Teresa. Given the intensity of commitment of both women to their points of view, it is difficult to believe that they worked well together. Perhaps the convent as a locus of personal friction and faction which emerges in the writings of Saint Teresa was simply taken for granted? This seem odd given the emphasis in Teresa's writings that within every house there would be an exemplary nun or group of nuns in conflict with those of less intense commitment, a trope which received expression in the Spanish hagiographical tradition and which was, as Elisa Sampson shows, exported to the New World.

31 Archive of the Carmelite convent in Brussels, 'Libros Manuscritos', manuscript book 'Isabelle Claire Eugénie'. '...that for so many years I wish you were here, the daughters of Mother Teresa de Jesús, that I hope you will not refuse to come here to found a convent...'

32 Those of Ana De San Bartolome have been transcribed and published by Julian Urkiza, Rome, 1985; there are 667 letters in total, in which there is no reference at all to Ana de Jesús.

33 Ana De San Bartolome, Defensa de la Herencia Teresiana, 1623 in J. Urkiza, op. cit.

On spiritual issues, there is relatively little in this correspondence. Ana de Jesús must be placed within the framework of Baroque spirituality, in the second period of the Spanish mysticism. This second wave of mysticism, called 'Mística del Recogimiento'[34], was based more on self knowledge than on external manifestations of union with God. The spiritual life of Ana de Jesús was thus much more discreet and introspective. In the letters she gives mainly spiritual advice to her correspondents: '...mire yja mía, que en el zielo es donde nos emos de gozar y no donde a buelta de cabeza se desapareze lo que queremos...'[35]. She does not describe her visions or other supernatural phenomena; not, at least, in these documents. This would not have been the place to do so: in many ways this makes the correspondence even more interesting, since the nun on her knees or in spiritual ecstasy gives way to a more comprehensible figure, committed for a large part of her time to the mundane minutiae of daily life.

This daily life is frequently mentioned in terms of sufference and deprivation: '...y andamos tales de frío que hoy ha quemado Leonor su manto...'[36]. Numerous items were regularly sent from Spain to Flanders and vice versa, with an amazing quantity of objects required. But if the amount of objects demanded is surprising, even more surprising is the reason they were asked for (if we only knew it): would it not have been easier to carry these items from one place to another? Would not the dowries and the money coming from the Crown have been generous enough to cover these material needs? Were the nuns ashamed to demand such comforts from the Crown, which appears to have been the pay-master of expansion?

34 'Mysticism of quietness' is probably the closest translation. On this issue see Melquiades Andres, Los Recogidos: nueva visión de la mística española, Madrid, 1976 and F. Pons, Místicos, beatas y alumbrados, Valencia, 1991. For a general survey on the Spanish mystics see A. Cilvetti, Introducción a la Mística española, Madrid, 1974. For the specific topic of the mystic in the Low Countries see Pierre Groult, *Les mystiques des Pays-Bas et la littérature espagnole du XVIème siècle*, Louvain, 1927; Jean Orcibal, *La rencontre du Carmel thérésien avec les mystiques du Nord*, Paris, 1959; id., *Saint Jean de la Croix et les Mystiques Rheno-Flamands*, Paris, 1966.

35 '...look my daughter, it is in heaven where we have to rejoice, it is not where we look back and what we want now disappears...'

36 ...And it is so cold that today Leonor has burnt her cloak...'

Questions of money lead to yet another issue. Who was the guiding force behind the process of expansion? The correspondence gives some clues. The archdukes and the Brussels court were seen to give positive encouragement, whilst the fathers of the Carmel itself were seen as an obstacle to the advancement of the foundations: '...mas si Vuestras Mercedes no traen monjas de allá la fundación de Amberes es imposible hacerse...' (1608)[37]. On the other hand, the archdukes were considered the principal benefactors: '...a los frayles ya les tengo casa y quanto han menester sin que Sus Altezas les den nada, que como ya nos dan a nosotras, no se les puede pedir más ni lo tienen, que viven con arta necesidad...' (1610)[38].

According to the official papers kept in the Belgian archives[39], the money often came from the Crown. The Crown appears to have ceded privileges which would bring in money rather than money directly from royal coffers: '...se podría pedir al colegio de la Compañía que de a las Descalças los çinco mil ducados de renta que en las sententias han adjudicado los juezes...'[40].

Can one argue on this basis that the female Carmelites were more actively supported by the Spanish establishment than the male order? Certainly, the male Carmel followed the expansion of the women's houses in the Netherlands, and there was frequently a gap of several years between the foundation of a female house in a city and that of a male one. There were of course fewer religious alternatives open to women. The correspondence suggests that these nuns were actively supported by a great part of the Flemish

37 '...but if Your Honours do not bring the nuns with you, it will be impossible to found in Antwerp...' (1608)

38 '...I have a house for the friars and whatever they need, Their Highnesses do not have to give anything, since they give to us so much, and we cannot ask for more, because they live in a great need ...' (1610).

39 Unfortunately, the source described does not explain a great deal about the methods of financing used in the establishment of new foundations.

40 Archives Générales du Royaume, 'De Fray Iñigo de Brizuela al Rey Felipe III' (1620): Secrétairerie d'Etat et de Guerre, 488, ms:'...we could ask the college of the Society of Jesus to give to the Carmelites the five thousand ducats of the rent that have been awarded by the judges in the sentences ...'

nobility, and also by the Spanish nobility established in Flanders[41]. Perhaps they interpreted the Carmel as an affirmation of Spanish identity. But above all social considerations and relationships with power there lies the enormous concern of Ana de Jesús with the preservation of the true spirit of Saint Teresa and her reform.

The most personal letters, mainly those addressed to Beatriz de la Concepción, are couched in a language permitting some appreciation of Ana de Jesús' personal feelings. They can also be contrasted with forms of women's writing originating outside the convent. There are few seventeenth-century Spanish manuscript sources written by a woman expressing personal feelings, and letters written by one woman to another are even more exceptional. Records from this period show women as characters without any spiritual, emotional or personal needs, obviously incapable of showing their own feelings (and unauthorised in most cases to do so)[42]. Women in convents appear to have had much more freedom and greater possibilities to write and to develop an intellectual life both barely inconceivable outside the cloister.

We are now aware that close friendships between nuns were a feature of Baroque religious life[43]. Saint Teresa was especially concerned by the consequences that close friendships could have for daily life within the convent; she used to call such friendships 'humor de melancolía' (melancholy humour)[44]. Bearing in mind the severe conditions of cloistered life in Carmelite convents, and the austerity of their foundations (outstripping other convents of the same period) the resort to the friendship of another nun may seem understandable. Close friendships certainly existed, and a strong emotional bond can be discerned in letters between nuns. The letters from Ana de Jesús to Beatriz de la Concepción are a

41 Names like Arenberg, Berlaymont or Arschoot on the Flemish side, or Zuñiga and Lerma (the Duke of Lerma was the prime minister of Philip III) among the Spanish.

42 Misogyny is one of the common characteristics of the sources from seventeenth-century Spain. Major examples are the works of Quevedo, Calderón de la Barca, Gracian and so on.

43 Perhaps a few were of an explicitly sexual character. The best known example of lesbianism is Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts*. The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy, New York, 1986. This work demonstrates how difficult such relationships could be in the convent.

44 Stated in great detail in her works, especially Camino de perfección, chap. 4.

good example of this intimate style of writing: '...crea que estamos echizadas la una con la otra, que el día que no hablo con vuestra reverencia no puedo vivir...'[45].

The use of the word 'hechizada' (bewitched) at a time when the Inquisition was carefully scrutinising everyday life is very striking. It might even be considered dangerous. Ana de Jesús, indeed, had some problems with the Inquisition[46]. So the use of a proscribed word like 'hechizada' is almost an act of boldness. However, reviewing other collected letters from members of the Carmel we can ascertain that a confidential style is frequently employed. This is arguably a part of Saint Teresa's inheritance too. Even Ana de San Bartolomé, the opponent of Ana de Jesús, who had a different spiritual approach, sometimes employs this familiar style of writing: '...Dios la quiere mucho y no la desamparará jamás, y la Virgen la ayudará. Yo no puedo nada, lo que pudiera me tendrá tan hermana y amigable como si estuviera conmigo...' (1617)[47].

In her letters Ana de Jesús declares her concern for the lack of privacy of her correspondence: '...que es temeridad decir en carta lo que se desea, y así soy sienpre corta con quien más deseo...'; or, '...la carta que mencioné a Vuestra Paternidad se quemó y bien hizo en no preguntar por ella, como en haber roto las que importaban...' (1610)[48]. Saint Teresa also complained about this problem on several occasions. The worries of Ana de Jesús were concerned with confidentiality, but she also wished her letters to have their in-

45 '...you have to believe that we are bewitched one to the other, and the day that I cannot speak to you I cannot live...'

46 Ana de Jesús published three of the major works of Saint Teresa, without final permission from the Inquisition: El Libro de la Vida, Camino de Perfección and Las Moradas. The Inquisition Court retained these works from the death of Teresa (1582) and finally authorised publication in 1587. This was done after a number of disputes between the Court and Ana de Jesús, who was closely watched afterwards.

47 'De Ana de San Bartolomé a Ana de la Ascensión' (1617) in Julián Urkiza, Obras completas de la Beata Ana de San Bartolomé, Vol. II, Epistolario, Roma, 1885. 'God will love you a lot and will not abandon you, and the Virgin will help you. I can't do anything, if I could, you would have me so close and friendly as if you were with me...'

48 '...that it is rashness to say in a letter what I wish, and in this way, I am always brief to who I love more...'; '...the letter that I mentioned to Your Fatherhood was burnt, and you did well not to ask for it, and to destroy those which were important...' (1610).

tended effect. She had good reason to be anxious. All her correspondence with Saint Teresa has disappeared. This concern for confidentiality contravened the Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites, which expressly stated that to maintain a secret correspondence with the outside world without permission was a severe infraction, to be punished with abstinence from communion[49]. It would seem from the evidence, however, that in the case of these founder mothers the rules of Saint Teresa were interpreted relatively freely. What proportion of any nun's correspondence has survived can only be a matter of speculation. Almost nothing is known about the mechanism of censorship. In the case of Ana de Jesús what remains can be no more than a fraction of her letters. Here we have a group of 53 letters, a small number compared to those preserved for other members of the same order. We may suspect the presence of the censor's hand concerning the disappearance of Ana de Jesús' letters, but can prove nothing. There are two elements which allow us to suspect the action of censors: the chronological discontinuity of the letters (for some years there are many, for others none) and the complete lack of letters for the main years of conflict between Ana de Jesús and the fathers-general. Both these elements can be taken as an indication of the possibility that her correspondence has been censored.

Obviously the value of a nun's correspondence is immensely enriched if supported by chronicles, official papers and autobiography or hagiography. That said, as personal testimonies to day-to-day issues and concerns, to feelings which cannot readily be expressed elsewhere, they are unique. They show that women in convents could develop certain skills unthinkable for women in secular life: the possibility of expressing judgements on religious matters, to talk about the individuals of their time and to state their opinions through writing which can be considered private, even if sometimes this privacy was infringed. Through these details, the cloister becomes less impermeable for the historian, the nun more human, her community a living organism and the whole business of expansion gains immediacy from the details of damp and cold, of upheaval, loneliness and physical pain.

49 Constituciones del Carmelo Descalzo, 1583. Chap. 53, 'De más grave culpa'.

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Résumé

Dans cet article nous nous sommes penchée sur l'usage des Recueils de lettres comme source documentaire pour l'histoire de l'Eglise, et plus précisement, pour l'histoire de la femme religieuse.

La production épistolaire au XVIIème siècle était très abondante, et est particulièrement bien préservée dans les archives espagnoles, ce qui a permis aux historiens d'en bénéficier largement. Dans les archives privées on trouve également de nombreuses collections de lettres qui méritent pour leur grand nombre et leur richesse une consultation approfondie. Dans ce cas, il est souhaitable d'inclure les archives des couvents de clôture. Pour comprendre le monde de la femme religieuse au XVIIème siècle, il faut compter sur ces sources privées, surtout si l'on veut établir un contraste avec l'information tirée des documents officiels de l'Eglise catholique.

Après avoir fait une étude sommaire de 53 lettres d'une Carmélite espagnole, fondatrice en France et aux Pays-Bas au début du XVIIème siècle, nous pouvons revendiquer ce rôle indispensable des Recueils de lettres dans l'historiographie de l'Eglise. Notre protagoniste, Anne de Jésus (1545-1621) est considérée comme une des plus fidèles héritières de Sainte Thérèse, et comme figure indispensable dans l'expansion du Carmel Déchaussé en France et aux Pays-Bas entre 1600 et 1621. C'est elle qui écrivit ces 53 lettres envoyées à plusieurs membres de son ordre en Espagne et en Flandre, mais aussi aux personnages influents de la cour archiducale de Bruxelles et des différentes villes dans lesquelles les Carmélites allaient s'installer.

L'étude menée ici ne montre bien évidemment pas la valeur que ces lettres ont, mais a cependant le mérite de revendiquer l'usage des recueils dans l'historiographie. L'information tirée de ces douments est privée et même très subjective parfois, mais ces textes ont l'avantage d'être des témoignages de la vie quotidienne des religieuses. Cet aspect personnel et privé, avec autant de références à la quotidienneté, est essentiel pour la confrontation avec les sources officielles qui traitent des grandes questions de la Contre-Réforme catholique, où l'on trouve des références à la vie religieuse, mais presque jamais à la vie des religieuses.

Nuns, Entrepreneurs, and Church Welfare in Italy

ALICE KELIKIAN

'Politics and the pulpit', wrote Edmund Burke, 'are terms that have little agreement. No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity.' In Italy, papal intransigence during unification put Catholic officialdom and the secular state immediately at odds, but the ultramontane campaign against the Piedmontese patriots was not waged by quiet suasion. With religious force firmly opposing the liberal revolution after 1860, the pastoral mission took on a vexing and seditious tone. Not only did Pius IX uphold his unconditional claim to temporal power, but he also excommunicated Victor Emmanuel II as well as the king's cabinet and chief administrators. The Vatican's vociferous hostility to the Risorgimento ineluctably altered the contours of representative government in the new nation and compromised the legitimacy of the constitutional monarchy. The dynastic defenders of national unity, for their part, provoked an apostolic backlash that, in a Catholic society, would represent the primary challenge to parliamentary liberalism in the late nineteenth century.

One of the grand themes of modern Italian history has been the inability of the Risorgimento to create a civic culture and a community with common concerns. Scholars tend to focus on the unevenness of development, on the North-South problem, on the narrowness of the governing class, or on the exclusion of the poor from parties and parliaments. Yet few talk about the disaffection of the church in this regard, nor do they explore the attempts made by the clergy and laity to win the masses in the fight against ideologies imported from abroad. Rather, they give us a Catholicism which is part of high politics, played out by popes and prime ministers at the expense of the true believers.

Viewed from the top, perhaps this image of Rome's two pretenders, divorced from the social and political realities of their clienteles, may have some validity. It is indeed true that the papacy and the episcopate never accepted the legitimacy of unified Italy until the third decade of twentieth century. But understood from the side of the laity, the characterisation looks quite different. Bishops, priests, and members of the charitable congregations were actively engaged in parish relief, in education, and in pious works; the clergy meant to integrate the flock into their underworld, which during the *fin de siècle* had become increasingly female. Beneficence was used as an instrument against liberalism, as a tool for the strategies of rural enterprise, and finally, as the means for the Catholic revival under fascism. In this sense, church welfare served both religious and secular ends, admittedly in traditionally observant areas of the kingdom and especially in Lombardy and Venetia.

Catholicism in the South presents a dramatically different picture, as Leone Carpi took great pains to detail in 1878. The orders languished after the government appropriated their properties[1]. Pastoral networks were loose, disseminated, and penniless in the lower parts of the peninsula. The former Kingdom of Two Sicilies accounted for only 3,659 parishes of 18,042 in all of united Italy. Low diocesan numbers in rural settlements and poorly funded bishoprics did not alone explain popular indifference to organised religion. Although the Neapolitan bishops remained above reproach, sacerdotal misconduct and temerity compromised the reputation of Southern parish priests, who became the butt of bad jokes. Regarded as licentious, greedy, and insubordinate in public belief, curates brought into discredit lesser-churchmen as a whole, especially since a good number of those in secular service played fast and loose with their vows of celibacy. Many clerics, moreover, still had Bourbon loyalties, and some managed to transgress the new law of the land. Over half the ecclesiastics convicted in Italian

1 For the protests of the twenty-one Neapolitan bishops against the confiscations see, Sulla giustizia e necessità della più ampia attuazione dei decreti del 17 febbraio intorno la soppressione degli ordini religiosi. Discorso per l'Abate Bartolommeo De Rinaldis, Naples, 1861, 65-93.

criminal courts during 1874 served the church in the meridional provinces[2].

In the North, women constituted the mainspring of the clerical machine: they both dispensed and received church welfare. They also represented the majority of practicing Catholics on the peninsula and the islands. Nuns in the charitable orders occupied an anomalous position in Italy at the turn of the century. Because lay careers for the most part remained blocked to women during liberalism and fascism, conventuals in education and social work played a larger professional role, enjoyed a greater measure of autonomy, and possessed more agency than would any other group of their gender until well after World War II. Albeit within an austere, hierarchical, strictly segregated environment, female religious operated in the public sphere through the vehicle of organised religion.

Other European states faced the opposition of the church, but only in Italy was that institution synonymous with the Holy See[3]. Italian liberalism had attempted to force renovation and reform, but it erred in equating nationalism with anticlericalism on the terrain of the Vatican. As a result, the religious settlement in the new kingdom more closely resembled that of anticlerical France under the Ferry Laws than it did that of Restoration Spain, where the church played a leading role in public education and social services. Racked by the reluctance of the papacy to accept the legitimacy of the liberal state, united Italy went on to annex half the Papal States, confiscate ecclesiastical property, ban pilgrimages, and force priests into military service. It suppressed the mendicant and contemplative orders, closing down over 4,000 religious houses. Cesare Cantù, the Lombard publicist, exaggerated to parliament in his lament that the government gave women the right to dispose of themselves in brothels, but not to shelter themselves in convents[4]. The repressive measures, in fact, hampered male religious more than the female congregations, who could underscore their social utility in hospi-

2 Leone Carpi, L'Italia Vivente. Aristocrazia di nascita e del denaro - Borghesia - Clero - Burocrazia, Milan, 1878, 391-400.

3 Adrian Lyttelton, `An Old Church and a New State: Italian Anticlericalism 1876-1915', European Studies Review, XIII, 1983, 225.

4 Sulla soppressione delle communità religiose e l'incameramento dei beni ecclesiastici. Discorso di Cesare Cantù al parlamento italiano, Piacenza, 1865, 63.

tals, orphanages, mental homes, and other sites of welfare work. The makers of Italy also subjected parochial schools to lay legislation, which meant that members of the teaching orders had to pass qualifying exams in order to obtain professional certification. The new law code of 1865 recognised civil marriage and repudiated the validity of canonical ceremonies[5].

Pius IX did his best to preserve the moral isolation of the governing class. His 1864 Syllabus of Errors asserted that Catholicism and liberalism were mutually exclusive. When in 1870 army troops finally occupied Rome, the church found its abundant recompense for the loss of ecclesiastical estates and revenues. By divesting the Holy See of landed wealth and secular power, Italy's liberal patriots unintentionally eliminated the symptoms and the symbols of its decadence. The proclamation of papal infallibility allowed the pontiff to unite the church behind his extreme assertions. In 1871 the Pope declared that it was not 'expedient' for the faithful to participate in parliamentary elections[6]. The *non expedit* kept ultramontanists away from the polls and postponed the formation of a clerical party. Until the twentieth century, observant Catholics could vote or run for office only at the municipal level.

Because of such papal prohibitions, activists in the religious orders put politics aside and turned to welfare work as the instrument with which to penetrate the lower reaches of civil society. Popular Catholicism gathered new strength, especially in the North, and apostolic activities widened in scope. Clergy and laity banded together to found parochial schools, subsidise mutual-benefit associations, set up rural confraternities, and provide leisure facilities in company towns. Much of the money for these developments admittedly came from the landlords, the manufacturers, and the aristocratic ladies who had always run charitable organisations. But under the next two pontiffs and under pressures from the left,

5 Carlo Carassai, `Le corporazioni religiose', Nuova Antologia, XXXI, 1896, 437-472; Bolton King and Thomas Okey, Italy To-day, London, 1901, 256-262; Arturo Carlo Jemelo, Chiesa e Stato in Italia negli ultimi cento anni, Turin, 1949, 248-260; Martin Clark, Modern Italy: 1871-1982, London, 1984, 82-83.

6 Christopher Seton-Watson, Italy from Liberalism to Fascism 1870-1925, London, 1967, 59. The non expedit was reaffirmed in 1877, so Catholics could not sit in parliament; see S. William Halperin, Italy and the Vatican at War. A Study of Their Relations from the Outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War to the Death of Pius IX, Chicago, 1939, 460-461.

Christian social reformers separated from such sponsors in an attempt to compete for the allegiance of the masses.

Liberals expected that Pius' death in 1878 would augur well for conciliation. But during his pontificate almost half the dioceses in Italy had been packed with bishops on the side of intransigence. When the conclave elected Archbishop Giacchino Pecci from Perugia as Leo XIII in 1878, the breach between the papacy and the liberal regime widened still more[7]. Francesco Crispi, the freemason from Sicily who became prime minister in 1887, made matters worse. He outlawed begging for alms in open air, built the monument to Victor Emmanuel II on the site of Paul III's tower, and unveiled the statue of Giordano Bruno in the Campo de' Fiori.

Perhaps the greatest victory for Italian anticlericalism was the Opere Pie legislation, which in 1890 placed all private beneficent institutions under state control[8]. The reform whittled down some 22,000 charitable agencies to fewer than 7,000, it excluded the clergy from the management of all trusts, and it widened lay control over the congregations. Bishops publicly denounced the decree, which allowed government to overrule the founders' bequests and divert gifts. The Pope put forward his New Deal and rallied Catholics behind the social question with the 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*; he endorsed 'confessional' trade unions and mixed corporations, rather than public intervention, to improve the conditions of the poor. The Crispi law then, had three important consequences for the Christian social movement, coupled as the statute was with the pontificate of Leo XIII. First, it impelled Catholics to gain control of municipal government in order to administer parish relief, it brought some urban ecclesiastics to the side of social reform, and finally, it spurred the laity to undertake welfare work[9].

Public policy and apostolic directives met and modified one another. The enduring conflict between church and state ultimately pushed Catholicism to find news ways of summoning its own latent strength: when the religious orders lost their grip over traditional charity, they looked to less conventional forms of welfare to keep their hold on society. The provincial Catholic bourgeoisie, especially in areas experiencing rapid demographic growth, financed

7 King and Okey, Italy To-day, 33-53.

8 Giovanni Spadolini, L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98, Florence, 1955, 237.

9 Clark, Modern Italy: 1871-1982, 105-106.

the first foundations that sought to protect those living on the edge of industrial society or to provide working-class pupils with devotional instruction. The population of Terni, for example, doubled after the great steelworks was founded in 1884 to meet the navy's needs[10], the bishop, along with a technician newly arrived in town, helped the Sisters of Bambino Gesù circumvent the restrictive legislation that had closed down their convent and open a school to educate poor girls and the children of religiously-observant company employees[11]. In Northern Italy, some female congregations made an alliance with entrepreneurs, whose paternalist culture in textiles adumbrated the kind of industrial assistance nuns, lay sisters, and parish priests undertook in the 1930s. The orders worked in tandem with management to run nurseries, hospitals, dormitories, orphanages, soup kitchens, and recreational clubs. In this way, fascist dictatorship performed the opposite role of parliamentary liberalism. Mussolini's regime occulted its ideological interests and totalitarian ambitions in order to gain popularity and consolidate consensus.

Historians of medieval and early modern Europe have examined relations between work, gender, and religion for communities such as the Cistercians and the Umiliati. But specialists of the modern period have neglected these themes despite the revival of religious congregations devoted to labour and discipline in Italy after unification. This essay on Italian nuns, Catholic welfare, and textile entrepreneurs studies the role of the female orders in promoting the strategies of light industry from 1890 to 1940. It concentrates on the most conspicuous form of church aid to capitalists, the *convitto operaio*. The company boardinghouse, which had counterparts in France, Spain, and even early industrial America, stands out in Italy if only because of the longevity of the institution: at Campione del Garda, the Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice remained in business from 1897 until 1970, although the staying power of these Italian Salesians was certainly the exception[12]. Used on a small scale by silk

10 Istituto Centrale di Statistica, Popolazione residente e presente dei comuni. Censimenti dal 1861 al 1971, Tomo 2, Rome, 1977, 314.

11 Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Segreteria di Stato, 1891, rubrica 12, fasc. 2, protocollo 2932, letter of Bishop Antonio Belli, 24 July 1891.

12 Carlo Simoni, `Il padrone, il vescovo e il prete. La gestione del temp libero in un villaggio operaio durante il fascismo', Annali della Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, 1, 1985, 241; Carlo Simoni, Campione saul Garda.

mills during the nineteenth century, the *convitto* faded away during the agricultural depression of the 1880s; it resurfaced in cotton manufacture at the turn of the century, and extended to wool in the inter-war period. First, the Ursulines and the Canossiane, then the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and, finally, the Salesians involved themselves in the redemption and protection of unmarried factory workers[13]. Economic and moral motives reinforced one another in this Catholic brand of corporate paternalism. Recruiting cheap and docile migrant labour made sense to mill owners; protecting the virtue and morals of young women appealed to the brides of Christ. Nuns who joined welfare sisterhoods tended to move down the social ladder as the female orders expanded into the twentieth century. The Ursulines, the Society of the Sacred Heart, and Canossiane drew their novitiate from the urban and small-town bourgeoisie; the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the Salesians, and the smaller orders attracted postulants from a lower social level and often rural settlements. Many girls of limited means in the welfare congregations joined as lay sisters before the age of eighteen, which was the standard time of entry in the more prestigious houses.

From the last decade of the nineteenth century up until World War II, religious houses turned their attentions to parishioners in manufacturing as well as in agricultural employments in an attempt to win over the lower reaches for Catholicism. Having circumvented repressive legislation after unification, nuns in outdoor relief benefited from and contributed to the Catholic revival in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They resurrected the female teaching and charitable orders, particularly during the years of the fascist dictatorship. The 1871 census reported more than 29,000 nuns[14]. This number dropped slightly by the next official head count. The ranks of the female religious grew from 28,424 in 1882 to 40,564 at the turn of the century, whereas those of the male or-

L'esperienza di un paese-fabbrica tra memoria e progetto, Brescia, 1984. The Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice was founded by S. Giovanni Bosco and S. Maria Mazzarello in 1872; on Don Bosco and the Italian Salesians, see H. L. Hughes, The Catholic Revival in Italy, 1815-1915, London, 1935, 49-66.

13 Maddalena di Canossa founded the Figlie di Carità, or Canossiane, at Verona in 1808.

14 Carpi, L'Italia Vivente, table, 390-391.

ders or in secular service dropped from 103,161 to 89,329 over the same period[15]. By 1921, 71,679 women had joined the orders, and in 1936, over 100,000 nuns could be found, more than half of them living in the North and most of them working in education, nursing, and welfare[16]. The majority of novices chose sisterhoods with pastoral commitment instead of the contemplative communities. The fact that marriage was no longer an option for many rural women after World War I only in part explains this transformation. Nearly all these new recruits came from a generation inspired by the teachings of Leo XIII. Members of the congregation of the Suore Operaie della Santa Casa di Nazareth, an order founded in Brescia by Don Arcangelo Tadini a decade after *Rerum Novarum*, went so far as to take off their wimples and join the assembly line for the early morning shift. And the number of those entering the diocesan priesthood continued to decline: in 1936, clergymen numbered little over 41,000, down from nearly 69,000 in 1901.

Superior in social influence to secular authority, the church did more than keep the faith[17]. In addition to administering the seven sacraments, it touched the everyday concerns of parishioners in upper Italy through pastoral, educational, and welfare services[18]. As traditional property relations became increasingly de-personalised in the 1890s, it was the country curate more than the liberal landlord who sheltered the flock from the alien forces of the market and the state. The Opera dei Congressi helped sympathetic peasants get low interest rates for land purchase. By the turn of the century, this lay organisation boasted 3,900 parish committees which ran rural cooperatives concentrated in the North. The Opera fell back upon a league of nearly 600 Catholic credit banks, the majority in the Veneto, which protected small tenants and propri-

15 Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, Direzione Generale della Statistica, Censimento del Regno d'Italia al 10 febbraio 1901, Vol. I, p. 29 and Vol. V, p. 124, Rome, 1904.

16 Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Istituto Centrale di Statistica, Censimento della popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 1 dicembre 1921, Vol. XIX, Rome, 1928, 184-187; Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d'Italia, VIII Censimento generale della popolazione 21 April 1936, Vol. IV, Rome, 1939, 662-676.

17 Carlo Bon-Compagni, La Chiesa e lo Stato in Italia, Florence, 1866, 177-178.

18 Carpi, L'Italia Vivente, 401-402.

etors from usury[19]. In the textile towns that dotted the landscape of the North, local convents worked with management to run hostels and thus provide safe shelter as well as religious routine to single working women. The values preached by the clerics reflected the values of politicians and employers: labourers learned the virtues of obedience and resignation at the altar as well as in the factory and farm[20].

Already during the pontificate of Leo XIII, clergy and laity had banded together to found parochial schools, set up rural confraternities, and provide leisure facilities in company towns. They hope to revive Catholicism through the agency of the charitable organisation. In the case of the *convitto*, which depended upon a company to provide living quarters and salaries, this also meant reliance on the rich for resources. Yet the *visite pastorali* completed by the bishops in the late nineteenth century show scant signs of more overt parish involvement with management, at least in the immediate aftermath of the agricultural depression. During the first *visita pastorale* of Archbishop Andrea Carlo Ferrari, conducted in the Milanese from 1895 to 1901, few priests gave affirmative responses to the specific question of church participation in factory surveillance, although a number of houses did provide religious training as well as offer evening supervision[21]. Indeed, many clerics throughout Lombardy complained that employers in rural industry failed to observe religious holidays, and this lament persisted in the next decennial *visite*. Further east, the Bishop of Vicenza Antonio Feruglio reported no sisters in the service of manufacturers in the period 1895-1905, though the Suore delle Poverelle from Bergamo, the Salesians, and the Canossiane were all involved in welfare work and elementary education[22].

Polemics between church and state abated in the twentieth century, largely in response to the challenge of socialism. Giovanni

19 Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Segreteria di Stato, 1897, rubrica 12, fasc. 2, Memoria sull'azione Cattolica in Italia (dal Congresso di Torino al Congresso di Fiesole); Clark, Modern Italy: 1871-1982, 86-87.

20 Filippo Crispolti, `I Congressi e l'organizzazione dei cattolici in Italia,' Nuova Antologia, XXXII, 1897, 661-686.

21 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della I Visita Pastorale di Ferrari.

22 Mariano Nardello (ed.), La visita pastorale di Antonio Feruglio nella diocesi di Vicenza, Rome, 1985.

Giolitti, prime minister of the day, killed a controversial divorce bill in parliament, and Pius X reciprocated by relaxing the prohibitions on national elections and placing lay activities under the control of bishops. This development led to closer and more centralised collaboration between the episcopacies, sympathetic businessmen, and the charitable orders, at least in areas of more recent industrial development. Although church surveillance in the old silk mills of Como remained virtually non-existent throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Ferrari's second pastoral visit reported nuns on the bankrolls of local silk shops in the Alto Milanese. The Apostole del S. Cuore from Alessandria operated two dormitories near Legnano and near Monza[23]. In a hamlet not far from Lecco, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul from Vercelli ran an orphanage to furnish the Cramer and Muller mills with teenage workers; they also supervised a boardinghouse for 200 girls recruited by parish priests in Bergamo and the Brianza[24]. *Convitti* for girls working in cotton mills, as well as orphanages run by lay sisters and subsidised by employers, figured more prominently during Ferrari's third *visita pastorale*. On the eve of World War I, then, company paternalism sorted well with formal religious practice.

The *vicariati* of Incino, Legnano, Luino, Monza, and Busto Arsizio reported the Suore di Maria Bambina, the Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, the Apostole del S. Cuore di Gesù, and the Figlie della Carità operating company facilities for migrant female labour in cotton and silk shops[25]. These sisters targeted working girls living on the margins of industrial society as their charges and provided them with a safe social world away from home; parish priests from other dioceses also recruited boarders, often from homes with troubled histories. Above all, the Marian congregations hoped to keep unmarried labourers in light industry insulated from the in-

23 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della II Visita Pastorale di Ferrari, Parrocchia di S. Vittore Olona, 27-28 November 1907; Parrocchia di Brugherio, 23 February 1909.

24 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della II Visita Pastorale di Ferrari, Parrocchia di Germanedo, 8-9 October 1907.

25 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della III Visita Pastorale di Ferrari, Parrocchia di Germanigna, 24 October 1910; Parrocchia di S. Domenico, 21-22 September 1912; Parrocchia di Castellanza, 13-14 September 1913; Parrocchia di S. Vittore Olona, 20-21 April 1913; Parrocchia di Incino Erba, 23 October 1913.

fluence of a politicised, urban proletariat. The orders insisted upon purity and piety as a condition for bed and board; all *convittrici* recited psalms, sang hymns, and took catechism in their free time. Religious observance gave unity and uniformity to the residential homes. Holy Communion, strict silence on the shop floor, and chapel attendance figured as part of the daily routine. Admittedly within the bounds dictated by the company and the convent, single working women were able to participate in an all-pervasive female community. Earnings were put towards the creation of trousseaus.

The advantages to employers seem obvious enough. The ruralisation of Italian industry, particularly in textiles, during the latter part of the nineteenth century attested to entrepreneurial rationality rather than the backwardness of the manufacturing community[26]. For businessmen in consumer goods, on both locational and economic grounds, rural manufacture made sound sense, and Catholicism came as part of the package. Employers wished to enhance Italian competitiveness on external markets. They sought to keep wages down, create a stable labour force, and avoid the spread of socialist unionism by integrating established religion into social control. But their attempts to create a more comprehensive company culture were intermittent and inconsistent before World War I.

None of the Lombard textile manufacturers had the vision or the ambition of Alessandro Rossi, who saw Catholicism as a sort of civil religion for the workers in a producer state[27]. Senator Rossi, the chief spokesman for wool producers in the 1880s and the pioneer of a distinctively Venetian model of development, had personal ties to the provincial Catholic world: his brothers both became men of the cloth, his daughter, Sister Alessandrina Rossi, bankrolled the Salesians in Schio, and he himself attended seminary in Vicenza before going to work in his father's factory at the age of seventeen[28]. As a matter of course, Rossi looked to the religious orders to educate and to socialise the children of his employ-

26 Roberto Romano, La modernizzazione perifica. L'Alto Milanese e la formazione di una società industriale 1750-1914, Milan, 1990, 260-274.

27 Guido Baglioni, L'ideologia della borghesia industriale in Italia liberale, Turin, 1974, 232-308.

28 Ferruccia Cappi Betivegna, Alessandro Rossi e i suoi tempi, Florence, 1955, 35-36; Emilio Franzina, Vicenza, Storia di una città, Vicenza, 1980, 435-436. On the `modello veneto' of development, see Giorgio Roverato in Silvio Lanaro (ed.), Il Veneto, Turin, 1984, 213-227.

ees. This collaborative effort between the industrialist and nuns finally acquired the form of a veritable family venture, since he came to rely only upon novices that were relatives by marriage. Rossi encouraged his female cousins by affinity to enter a local charitable order, to take on his surname as theirs under vows, and then to go on to superintend his company schools and nurseries, in which some 1,500 children were enrolled. In 1888 his three 'giovani suore', who oversaw a staff of twenty-five teachers, took home silver medals from the Ministry of Education for excellence in instruction[29].

Church connections predisposed Alessandro Rossi to Catholicism, but so did his industrial version of a vision of harmony and hierarchy. Rossi berated the breach between the papacy and state, and he backed the formation of a clerical party for political rather than confessional motives. But he believed that neither public intervention nor church intercession could solve the social question, for welfare fell flatly in the private domain of management[30]. Rossi proved no pushover when it came industrial relations. In 1865, Fedele Lampertico reported that operatives at Lanificio Rossi worked a 12-14 hour day[31]. When in 1890, teenage weavers at the satellite shop in Pieve first agitated for overtime restrictions, then complained about a foreman, and finally undertook job action for better wages and the forty-hour week, Rossi assumed a hard line and made no concessions. Production resumed the next day with defectors at the looms. The employer dismissed his labour troubles as the primitive play of 'ingenuous boys, ignorant in the ways of the world,' incited to undertake job action by an outside rabble-rouser[32]. Rossi used the 'innocent' walkout to teach the adoles-

29 Biblioteca Civica di Schio, Archivio Alessandro Rossi, Copialettere, 5/1887-1/1889, carta 384, A. Rossi to Professor Paolo Boselli (Minister of Education), 1 September 1888. Rossi's son Gaetano married into the Kechler family, and Suor Maria Rossi who taught at Piovene was born Kechler; Francesco Rossi wed the sister of Suor Nina Rossi (née Garbin) from Arsiero; Giovanni Rossi's sister-in-law Maria Bozzotti became Suor Maria Rossi at the Schio school.

30 Silvio Lanaro, `Nationalismo e ideologia del blocco corporativo-protezionista in Italia', Ideologie, 2, 1967, 68-69.

31 Cited in Giovanni Mantese, Storia di Schio, second edition, Schio, 1969, 535.

32 Biblioteca Civica di Schio, Archivio Alessandro Rossi, Copialettere, 11/1890-1/1891, carta 157, dated 9 August 1890, but really 9 July 1890.

cents on strike a lesson: half had to wait six months before they could return to work[33].

Rossi exhibited greater tolerance towards the devotional exigencies of pious employees, allowing workers to take time out for morning mass and to observe church feasts and holidays no longer recognised by the state[34]. Religious worship and the rural household went hand in hand. Rossi meant to preserve the integrity of the Christian family, dismissing women with children so that mothers could better attend their brood and hiring instead girls who had finished the fifth form[35]. Even when he built a new quarter of Schio on the model of Verviers in Belgium to house one thousand employees, he hoped to project the somnolence of inurbanity. Even the landscape architecture recalled the countryside. Every home in the complex had a plot of land to remind the workers of their peasant roots. Rossi meant to keep the virtues of the village community and the solidarity of the farming family intact, while ridding the rustics of their aversion to the factory system[36].

Rossi tried to harness the spirit of Protestantism to the letter of Catholicism. Although the senator lobbied high tariff walls as a national necessity in 1887, there was one strategy this protectionist openly wanted to import from over the Atlantic. Religious reverence in the United States left an indelible impression on Rossi: he thought it more responsive to the needs of industrial society than conventional religiosity, with its antiquated cults, confraternities, and catechisms[37]. This self-styled Christian paternalist wanted to make sure workers stayed away from Marxist materialism, which he associated with avarice and alienation, but the dogmas and mendacities of church doctrine did not meet the devotional demands of the modern world. Rossi looked to the ideology of perfectionism to

33 Silvio Lanaro, Nazione e Lavoro. Saggio sulla cultura borghese in Italia 1870-1925, Padova, 1979, 144-145.

34 Biblioteca Civica di Schio, Archivio Alessandro Rossi, Copialettere, 1/1870-3/1871, carta 90, Alessandro Rossi to the Bishop of Vicenza, 12 March 1870.

35 Biblioteca Civica di Schio, Archivio Alessandro Rossi, Copialettere, 11/1890-1/1891, carta 54, 27 May 1890.

36 Silvio Lanaro, Società e ideologie nel Veneto rurale (1866-1898), Rome, 1976, 53-57.

37 Lucio Avagliano, Alessandro Rossi e le origini dell'Italia industriale, Naples, 1970, 89-91.

diffuse morality and to eliminate idleness among operatives on his payroll. The entrepreneur penned the preface to the Italian edition of William Ellery Channing's *Personal Education* and distributed the conservative Unitarian's tract to workers and their children at the mills[38]. Rossi also commissioned Cesare Cantù to write *Portafoglio d'un operaio.* The book, first published in 1871, tells the story a Neapolitan worker who dreams of emigrating to America, but instead finds serenity in the textile industry of Northern Italy. The journey civilises the Southerner: he escapes the pauperism of the English proletariat and the drunkenness of the French mob with the help of a good wife, a compassionate employer, and personal piety. The novel preaches the gospel of courage and resignation, labour and dignity[39].

Indeed, orthodox Catholicism presented a problem to a good many manufacturers. Carlo Caprotti's initial hesitancy about the compatibility of church doctrine with the business ethic became absolute antipathy when his sister joined a convent rather than marry for the betterment of the firm. 'You want to win paradise by reciting psalms and paternosters,' he wrote Maria, 'and I instead by racking my brains about the looms. You genuflect, while I work my head and struggle against the competition.'[40] The Cotonifico Cantoni opened a boardinghouse in the late 1870s at Bellano, and one decades later at Castellanza[41]. Nuns functioned as guardians, but management refused to let their lodgers observe church holidays. Organised religion was tolerated during leisure time so long as it did not disrupt production in the mills.

38 Guglielmo Channing, Della educazione personale o della coltura di se stesso, Padova, 1870; Adrian Lyttelton, `The Rise of the Industrialists', unpublished paper, 1987, 30; on religious communities in Schio, see Ermeneglio Reato, `Schio 1866-1915: Profilo Socio-religioso' in Giovanni Fontana (ed.), Schio e Alessandro Rossi. Imprenditorialità, politica, cultura e paesaggi sociali nel secondo ottocento, Vol. I, Rome, 1985, 508-509.

39 Cesare Cantù, Portafoglio d'un operaio, fourth edition, Milan, 1883.

40 Roberto Romano, I Caprotti. L'avventura economica e umana di una dinastia industriale della Brianza, Milan, 1980, 240; cited also in Lyttelton, `The Rise of the Industrialists', 29.

41 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della III Visita Pastorale di Ferrari, Parrocchia di Castellanza, 13-14 September 1913; Roberto Romano, `Il cotonificio Cantoni dalle origini al 1900,' Studi Storici, XVI, 1975, 483.

Cantoni's paternalism had no positive side. The Legnano orphanage financed by the cotton manufacturer recruited homeless girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen. This shelter took in parentless teenagers on the condition that they work for free for five years; after a full day of factory labour, the residents attended school, recited prayers, and learned home economics until ten in the evening[42]. The Cramer and Muller hospice was staffed by the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul, who provided factory surveillance and devotional instruction, but management ran it as a lay institution with no mandatory mass[43]. Although the Northern entrepreneurial class in cotton and in silk manufacture first underwrote confessional welfare schemes, few employers apart from Alessandro Rossi fully understood the political trajectory of discipline grounded in the heritage of indigenous religious culture.

Perhaps because of the hesitations of industry, especially in the aftermath of World War I, the development of Catholic welfare was a slow and discontinuous process. Thus far this essay has surveyed one stage in its complex development. It started as an uneasy but efficient alliance between individual entrepreneurs and the local religious orders inspired by *Rerum Novarum*. The agricultural crisis of the 1880s accentuated the need for industrial development, but most employers in Italy sought to avoid the spread of socialism associated with such growth.

Company paternalism in the nineteenth century initially sorted well with old hierarchies within the local parishes. With the help of the parish priest, textile firms in the North were able to recruit church-goers to work in their mills. In the 1920s, however, this complicity fell apart. The contours of company control began to shift from a closed, local paternalism to accommodate an open, competitive labour market. As a result of the transformation of class relations, management failed to provide the kind of job security to workers which cements loyalty to the church. The growth of proletarian parties, moreover, pushed the Christian social movement away from mild reform and forced confessional unions to strike for better wages and conditions. After World War I, 'white' leagues were vying with socialist organisations for the loyalties of labour,

42 Roberto Romano, `Il cotonificio Cantoni dalle origini al 1900', Studi Storici, XVI, 1975, 487.

43 Archivio Storico Diocesano Milanese, Atti della II Visita Pastorale di Ferrari, Parrocchia di Germanedo, 8-9 October 1907.

especially in textiles and in the sweated trades. In 1918 Benedict XV cancelled the *non expedit*, a move which allowed for the foundation of Italy's first Christian democratic party, the Partito Popolare Italiano. Such developments integrated Catholics into political life further still, but also alienated the urban ecclesiastics. Relations within the church hierarchy became more fractious as a result.

During Mussolini's dictatorship, by contrast, Catholic paternalism ascended as an adjunct to the central state. But after the Concordat of 1929, parish relief, paradoxically, tended to compete with the organisational strategies of fascism rather than complement them. The financial convention paid off the Pope for lands lost, and the treaty set up the sovereignty of the Holy City[44]. Church circles operated under prohibitions as far as sport was concerned, for athletics became a fascist monopoly in 1931. Otherwise, the activities of the Catholic youth, student, and adult escaped the control of the state. Much has been made of the novelty of fascist welfarism as the tool for mass consent, but the *dopolavoro* aimed to incorporate the urban working class into the regime's social services. The fascist recreational circles never touched the poor in the periphery, and certainly did not include the women. Even though most largish companies subscribed to party-sponsored afterwork activities, in rural industry recreation remained the responsibility of those who supervised the boardinghouses and the schools. Many textile firms relied upon the religious, a large number of whom were Salesians in the 1930s, to stabilise the labour force in an industry that remained over seventy per cent female[45]. The nuns, however, received their mandate from the mother houses rather than from management to save the souls of single working girls; they offered religious training and domestic surveillance to keep their charges safe for Catholicism more than for capitalism.

The *convitto operaio* run by the Salesians in Brescia during the dictatorship bears this point out nicely. The Lanificio di Manerbio, which became part of Marzotto group in Valdagno during 1930, opened a residential institute the year of the takeover[46]. The Figlie

44 D. A. Binchy, Church and State in Fascist Italy, Oxford, 1941, 223-272.

45 Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d'Italia, VIII Censimento generale della popolazione 21 April 1936, Vol. IV, Rome, 1939, 575.

46 Archivio Vescovile di Brescia, S. Visita Pastorale della Parrocchia di S. Lorenzo Martire, Vicariato di Manerbio, fatta il giorno 22 mese marzo anno 1936 da S. Ecc. Mons. Giacinto Tredici.

di Maria Ausiliatrice ran a home for about 200 adolescents recruited by priests from Bergamo, Milan, and Udine to work in the manufactory, which employed over 1,200 workers[47]. The nuns kept daybooks of their activities which were deposited annually at the mother house and span from 1930 to 1940. While the records deal primarily with religious observance and popular piety, the routine of the residents after work and the relations of the congregation with the larger community are also chronicled. Despite the occasional appearance of the employer or the *podestà,* the workers lived in an closed, devotional world insulated from the realities of the regime as it was from proletarian practice in the cities. Because the economic crisis caused the boardinghouse to expand and to contract continually, the depression receives almost weekly notice in the diaries. But government, politics, and fascist recreational circles are absent from the everyday concerns of these women: secular authority receives nearly no mention in the ten-year diary. Other 'cronache' kept by Salesian sisters in Lombard boardinghouses also pay scant attention to political authority.

Diversions remained devotional. The amateur theatre productions of the *convittrici* came from the Bible and Marian dogma, not the cult of the Duce. The state holidays the girls observed were celebrations of saints suppressed by liberalism; the didactic lessons they learned derived from catechism. Lay worship stayed confined to the rosary and novenas. Practices such as these gave the church a position by which to regain its hold over welfare and morality. Rather than create a centre of gravity for low culture on the peninsula, the dictatorship subdued its totalitarian ambitions in order to consolidate consensus among more traditional elements of society, including rural women in the North. Like liberalism, fascism had limited leverage in much of Italy.

In some respects, female religious involved in welfare work actually increased their sway during the dictatorship. The Salesians certainly benefited from the semi-voluntarist nature of associational life during the 1930s. After Marzotto imposed shorter hours on the *convittrici* of Manerbio, the nuns opened a *scuola di rammendo* to

47 Archivio Aziendale Marzotto, scatola 22, fasc. 2, Manerbio, corrispondenza diversa, Gaetano Marzotto to Avv. Cherubini, Secretary of the Fascist Industrial Union of Brescia, 7 May 1930. I owe a debt of gratitude to the late Professor Piero Bairati, who gave me access to the Marzotto archives.

take up the slack and this included women from surrounding communities[48]. In 1934, the Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice began to operate as a *mensa* for all Marzotto employees in the zone. At the request of management and the *podestà,* the nuns began that year a *scuola di buona massaia,* with obligatory classes in sewing and catechism[49]. In 1936, the pupils from the town put on a crafts show, and by then most *massaie* had joined the *Confraternità dei devoti di Maria Ausiliatrice*[50]. When in 1937 the number of *convittrici* dropped to 30, the nunnery ventured into vocational training so that all the sisters could stay on the company's payroll. Forty fourteen-year-old girls enlisted in each class of the apprenticeship programme, which prepared teenage church-goers for the *reparto menda* of the Lanificio[51]. This sort of diversification of activities kept the Salesians in business right up until the war throughout much of Lombardy and parts of Piedmont and Venetia. The boardinghouse run by Olcese at Campione in the Bresciano followed a different pattern, one involving much greater collaboration between the bishop, management, and local representatives of the regime, but with a similar range of apostolic enterprise on the part of the Salesian sisters[52].

Although one might expect that fascism appropriated the pastoral duties of the church, in fact the situation is more complex. In Italy religious associations flourished during the 1930s and enrollments in parochial secondary schools trebled. Mussolini's regime may have claimed credit for introducing patriotic pastimes and social services to the urban working classes, yet in traditionally Catholic areas, and especially among women unprotected in the

48 Archivio Aziendale Marzotto, scatola 23, fasc. 1, Manerbio, corrispondenza 1933, Emilio Antonioli to Gaetano Marzotto, 8 June 1933, and Emilio Antonioli to Gaetano Marzotto, 2 October 1933.

49 Biblioteca Archivio Luigi Micheletti, Fondo Convitto Suore Marzotto Manerbio, entry of 22 January 1934.

50 Biblioteca Archivio Luigi Micheletti, Fondo Convitto Suore Marzotto Manerbio, entry of 12 April 1936.

51 Biblioteca Archivio Luigi Micheletti, Fondo Convitto Suore Marzotto Manerbio, entry of 5 March 1937.

52 Archivio Vescovile di Brescia, S. Visita Pastorale della Parrocchia di Campione, Vicariato di Tignale, fatta il giorno 15 mese luglio anno 1935 da S. Ecc. Rever.ma Mons. Giacinto Tredici; Carlo Simoni, `Il padrone, il vescovo e il prete. La gestione del tempo libero in un villaggio operaio durante il fascismo.'

workplace, most of these responsibilities devolved upon nuns practicing old-fashioned philanthropy. When the economic depression and fascist dictatorship predetermined the strategies of labour and management in light industry, employers reverted to an updated brand of paternalism to enforce discipline and guarantee stability on the shop floor. The congregations approached the problem of labour discipline and surveillance in a more systematic way. Welfare provision from the missionary orders had become more centralised by the mother houses as well as more autonomous from individual employers.

The 1890s saw the foundation of regional subcultures in Italy, and throughout much of the country the prevalent one was Catholicism. When anticlerical government sought to curb its power institutionally, as during the Crispi reform, the church became more aggressively involved in social work. By the Giolittian period, the relationship between church and state had evolved into one of mutual accommodation, but this development enervated the activism of the laity at the local level. Paradoxically, during the economic crisis in the 1930s, Catholic strategies were returned to their pre-war course: the years of Mussolini's dictatorship might well be seen as a continuation of Leo XIII's strategy to conquer civil society at the expense of the state. The Marian congregations did encourage conformity, yet their influence in the welfare and in the education of women made the church a dominant force in the cultural sphere and ultimately, frustrated fascist attempts at social control. The practices of female religious may help to explain the continued dominance of popular piety after World War II, when Catholic power became assimilated into the apparatus of high politics on the peninsula.

Résumé

La papauté et l'épiscopat n'acceptèrent jamais la légitimité de l'Italie après l'Unification. Du point de vue du peuple cependant, l'Eglise ne cessait pas d'offir des services sociaux essentiels à la société, y compris l'assistance sociale, l'éducation, les oeuvres pieuses et des initiatives nouvelles telles que les dortoirs destinés à abriter les jeunes filles venues de la campagne afin de travailler dans les nouvelles industries textiles urbaines. Les exécutrices de ces programmes de soins et de secours étaient essentiellement et de plus en plus des femmes originaires du Nord.

La bienfaisance est devenue un instrument permettant à l'Eglise de survivre et de maintenir son pouvoir sous l'Etat libéral. Elle lui a permis de connaître une renaissance sous le régime fasciste.

En principe, la législation relative aux oeuvres pies (*Opere pie*) de 1890 place sous contrôle de l'Etat toutes les opérations privées de bienfaisance, mais ceci n'a servi qu'à inciter les agences catholiques à exploirer des directions nouvelles et moins conventionnelles (crèches, hospices spécialisés, soupes populaires, cercles récréatifs). Ces initiatives dans toute leur diversité sont examinées ici, tout en considérant les relations entre religieuses et bourgeoisie.

In Memory of Agnes Hochberg

LUISA PASSERINI

I first met Agnes when she came to Turin to do interviews with feminists there and included me in her interviewees. I re-read that interview recently, since we are engaged in transcribing and editing all the tapes she left, and remembered the comments that a friend of mine, Piera Zumaglino, and myself had made about Agnes. We had been struck by the fact that she had chosen what we considered to be the crucial point, both theoretically and historically, of neo-feminism, and that she seemed to understand so much of the whole story, in spite of being so much younger and foreign. While we were talking to each other praising Agnes' brilliancy and intuition, Piera made one of her sudden remarks that expressed vividly what we both had been feeling: "E poi è troppo simpatica!", Piera, one of the most interesting figures in Italian feminism and herself an amateur oral historian, saw Agnes other times and let her use her very rich archive on the history of Turinese feminism.

Piera died almost two years ago; her interview with Agnes will remain as a precious testimony of her work and ideas. Agnes' way of interviewing was particularly productive, because she understood a lot but had an ingenuous and at the time profound approach to questions and to people. Of course she made some minor mistakes – I am now talking from the point of view of oral history's techniques, remembering when in New York City Agnes came to see me (I was a visiting professor at NYU), very upset because in the course she was following at the Columbia Oral History Office, Ron Grele's teaching had shown that some of her interviewing did not respect the golden rules of the trade. But that was quickly corrected, and the deep interest Agnes had for her subject surfaced in

her interviewing. I think she was given a great contribution to the history of feminism by producing testimonies that tell us so much about the life and thought of women in and after the feminist movement.

Agnes and I had met professionally, so to say, and that side of the relationship developed very well. When I arrived at the EUI, Olwen assumed with her typical generosity that I would become Agnes' first supervisor while she continued to help her in all sorts of ways. Agnes and I discussed a lot some central questions, like the forms of transmitting the idea and practice of consciousness-raising from one country/situation to another, questions that made her project a truly innovative one. But a friendship also developed, and it was a pleasure for both to share parts of daily life, friends, meals, attitudes. Last August Agnes would advise me to go jogging very early in the morning, so that work could start with the impression of "having already done something", therefore with a certain calm and detachment. I could follow the idea only to the extent of taking an early walk, but it worked, it still does. Similarly, I carry with me many of the things she said and thought and did. It is lacerating that she, the younger one, should go first and leave her work interrupted; as far as it is in our power, we'll do our best to make it known and accessible to others.

OLWEN HUFTON

Agnes and I arrived at the Institute simultaneously. With a Tempus grant guaranteed for only one year, she explained to me that she wanted to study consciousness raising in Italy, France, America and possibly England during second wave feminism and then to compare Hungary where nothing had happened. She had a goal: to see how it had been done. In twenty minutes of conversation it became clear that A'gi was a brilliant linguist, very sensitive and clever and very political. She cared about independence, both personal and national, about her country, and about women. It also became clear that she knew next to no western history and had not been given anything approaching a western historical formation.

Like all students from the former eastern bloc, a critical polemical approach had not been part of her training. But she was certainly prepared to work. We began by narrowing the subject to Italy and America – still breathtakingly wide – and she worked on a set of questions and she read. She prepared a questionnaire and travelled to interview Italian women who had been part of the feminist movement. For her second mission she went to Washington as part of an exchange visit and there began a new voyage of discovery. When Tempus grants were not renewed the next year she managed to get an award from the new School in New York for students from countries 'in the transition'. In America she discovered Jewish relatives and was able to explore her own Jewish identity. With New York, vibrant and restless, she had her own love affair. When Tempus came up with some further funding she returned to start another year and to organise her transcripts.

I do not think I have ever met anyone who so encapsulated the phrase the personal is political. She had so much wit, charm, integrity, a dash of melancholy, and one of disciplined anarchy. She had a fundamental mistrust of the state and politicians of all shades. But Hungary was her native land and she felt there was much to be done. Sometimes she feared that her travels and experiences might isolate her from her friends back home who had not had them. She was in fact at a conference in Budapest, translating a paper, when she had her fatal heart attack.

Those of us who knew her will never forget her and we were the richer for knowing her. Next year on the anniversary of her death we will hold the Agnes Hochberg Memorial Colloquium by which time her transcripts will be ready and we can share her work. I think that is the best way we can honour a remarkable person.

ELISA SAMPSON

As to my own 'standpoint', the following aspects are fundamental in order for me to understand my positions:
– the place where I was born (the general context of Hungary, belonging mostly to the Eastern 'block', its history, the current changes taking place).
– the time when I was born (1964, when a slow relaxation of the Party begins)
– the people among whom I was born (the closer context of the family; problems around definition of class belonging in an officially classless society; lack of religion, but belonging to a religious minority, severely persecuted in a preceding period)
– my own sex and gender, and consequently my socialization, in an officially non-discriminating society
– my upbringing, education offered and compulsory, chosen and pursued voluntarily on personal initiative
– my culture, and later my culture as opposed to others
– my work experience, my 'choices' and my opportunities
– geographical, intellectual mobility
I presume that ideally 'all' that happens to me will effect in one way or another my whole being, all my previous experiences transformed into my personal consciousness. As a consequence, my standpoint is not something eternal and static but rather a frame of mind constantly in the making.

These comments come from notes A'gi wrote to herself and which were later used by her in a paper entitled *The Necessity of Dynamic Definitions in Feminist Movements.*

This is one of my favourite photographs of A'gi, though there are certainly better ones of her. This image captures all of A'gi's energy and strength, and all of her melancholy – her capacity for self-reflection. It holds them in her smile, the way she leans forward slightly. There is defiance and daring, but not without self-mockery. There is the flirtation of someone who chose their clothes and jewelry with great care. And there is gentleness, vulnerability.

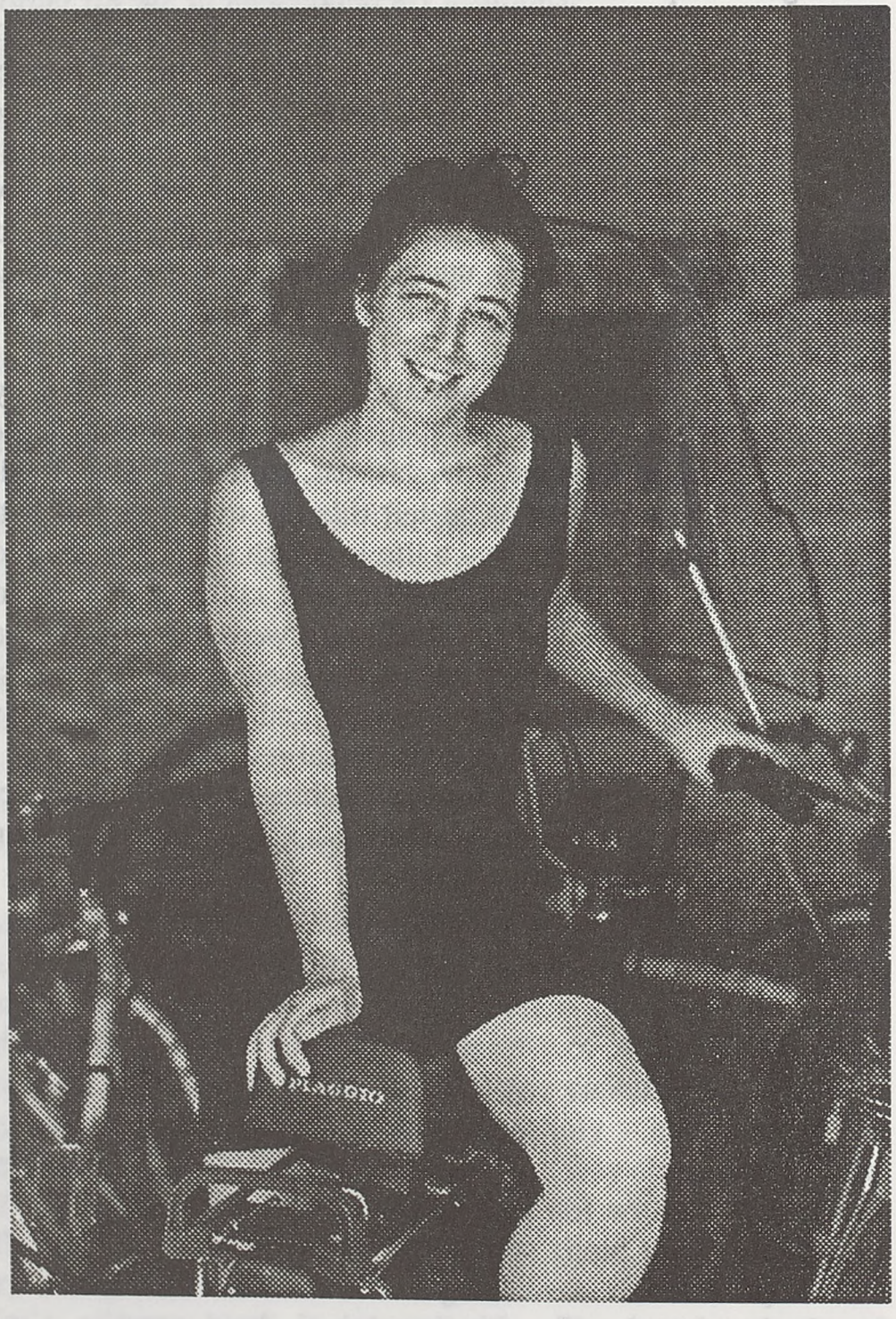
A'gi's address book is interminable. She has hundreds of friends, of lives she has touched. We were so many to have loved her, known her, been infuriated, amazed, charmed by her. One of her friends, Pierre, describes how he met A'gi. He was on a driving

holiday in the summer in Hungary when he came to a cross-roads. There were two people hitching – one of whom was A'gi – she smiled at the car as he slowed down to turn and he described 'having' to stop – such a smile was impossible to ignore.

A'gi is this for me also, someone who took me out of my "road", made me stop by the very force of her presence, and traveling, after knowing her, was never quite the same. She was someone who devoted her entire affection, energy and intelligence to each thing she did, each person she befriended. To be fixed in such a way, to be given so much of someone's attention and care is extraordinary, occasionally uncomfortable, never easy but always miraculous – something that defies convention, routine, the business of everyday life.

A'gi's life seems to me to have been marked by intensity – in her emotions, her politics, her beliefs, her doubts. Her mother described A'gi's birth to me – it was fast, painless – as if A'gi were impatient to begin living. A'gi left this life quickly too – but what she lived was lived strongly – a life in which six languages spoke in her, as many countries touched her and cultures fascinated her, where her jewishness and her femininity were the very fibre of her feelings and thoughts, where each spice used in a dish was instantly recognisable to her, where the misery and injustice of this world moved her to political action, to personal reflection.

One of A'gi's greatest gifts was teaching me this impatience; the way she lived this emotion meant vitality, discovery, learning, communication, creativity.



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