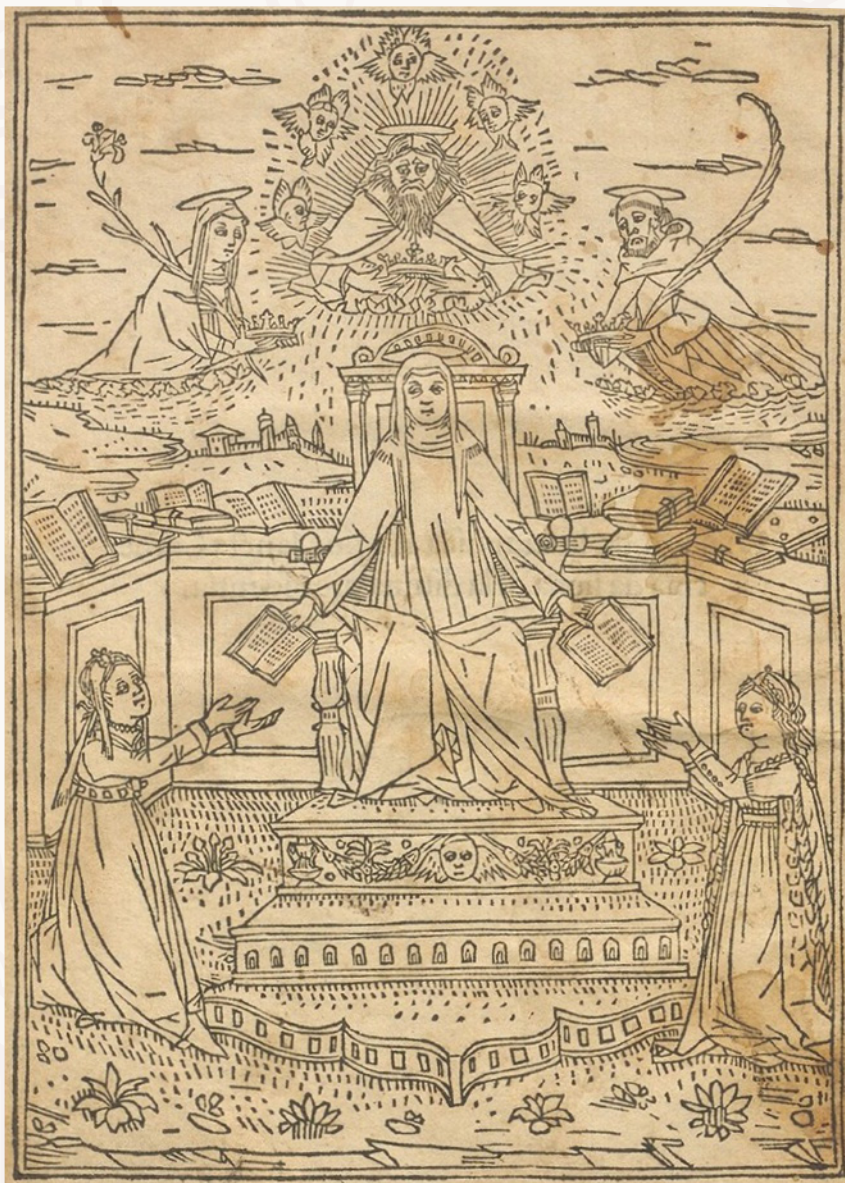


# Observant Reforms and Cultural Production in Europe

## Learning, Liturgy and Spiritual Practice



**RADBOD  
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Edited by  
**Pietro Delcorno  
& Bert Roest**

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edited by

Pietro Delcorno & Bert Roest

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# Observant Reforms and Cultural Production in Europe: Introductory Remarks

*Bert Roest*

The current volume is the outcome of a virtual workshop held in the midst of one of the COVID-19 waves of 2021, and hosted by Radboud University Nijmegen on 10 and 11 June of that year. This workshop was part of a series of meetings by scholars from several different countries involved with the international project network “Observer l’Observance: Diffusion, réseaux et influences des réformes régulières en Europe (fin XIVE – première moitié du XVIe siècle)”.<sup>1</sup> This project network has provided a platform to study the so-called Observant period (ca. 1380-ca. 1520), when many religious orders in Europe went through (at times heavily contested) processes of reform, and a range of new religious orders and religious movements such as the *Devotio moderna* made their presence felt.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the Nijmegen meeting, this research network organized three other international workshops, namely “Les observances régulières: Historiographies” (Clermont-Ferrand, 9-10 June 2017), “The Observance

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1 The real drivers of this network are dr. Cristina Andenna, dr. Marina Benedetti, dr. Sylvie Duval, dr. Haude Morvan, and dr. Ludovic Viallet. See on the network’s activities the website <https://observance.hypotheses.org/>.

2 James Mixson, ‘Introduction’, in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 59 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 1-20; Bert Roest, ‘A Crisis of Late Medieval Monasticism?’, in: *Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. A. Beach and I. Cochelin, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) II, 1171-1189.



Movement: Legal Structures and Political Support in Europe, late 14th – early 16th Centuries” (Weingarten, 29 November – 1 December 2018), and “L’Observance: Entre normalisation et répression” (Rome, École française, 7-8 November 2019).<sup>3</sup> Each of these gatherings zoomed in on a specific angle, namely historiographical traditions and their problems and perspectives; the legal and institutional contexts in which Observant reforms and religious transformation took place; and the way in which Observant reforms encountered resistance but also became itself a normalizing and normative force in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century religious life and society.

This volume focuses on the relationship between Observant reforms and the cultural production in and beyond Observant communities, and on the interconnection of this production with the changing European cultural landscape at the end of the Middle Ages. Its *raison d’être* is the observation, vocalized by Werner Williams-Krapp, Regina Schiewer, Felix Heinzer, and other scholars working on the late medieval world, that many male and female religious communities during the Observant period were remarkably active in scribal activities and other forms of cultural production, and that a huge percentage of the surviving late medieval manuscripts and works of religious instruction can be linked to religious houses involved with the spread of Observant reforms, or with the world of the *Devotio moderna* in the Low Countries that emerged alongside and in interaction with it, so much so that (despite its peculiarities) it can be seen as yet another twig of the reform branch of late medieval Catholicism.<sup>4</sup>

Although this perceived intensification in cultural production has since been qualified for certain regions and congregations, by and large, there seems to have been a differentiated augmentation in a number of literary

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3 The contributions of the first encounter in the meantime have been published in *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome – Moyen-Âge* 130:2 (2018). The contributions of the second encounter will appear in the near future as *L’Observance entre normalisation et répression (XVe-XVIe sec.)*, ed. S. Duval et al. (Rome: École française de Rome, forthcoming).

4 See for instance Werner Williams-Krapp, ‘Observanzbewegungen, monastische Spiritualität und geistliche Literatur im 15. Jahrhundert’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 20:1 (1995), 1-15; Regina D. Schiewer, ‘Sermons for Nuns of the Dominican Observance Movement’, in: *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn A. Muessig, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, 90 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1998), 73-92; Felix Heinzer, ‘*Exercitium scribendi* – Überlegungen zur Frage einer Korrelation zwischen geistlicher Reform und Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter’, in: *Die Präsenz des Mittelalters in seinen Handschriften*, ed. Hans-Jochen Schiewer et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 107-130.

genres and in certain types of artistic, musical, and liturgical output in religious communities and congregations connected with the wider Observant world. Much of this output had a 'pragmatic' or instrumental nature: hence, it did not so much concern a pursuit of literature, art and learning for its own sake, but a literary engagement in service of distinctive religious reform objectives.<sup>5</sup>

The Nijmegen workshop brought together scholars from different countries working in this multidisciplinary field of expertise, to provide a platform where new research on the cultural production of late medieval religious communities could be presented, and to facilitate exchanges about the repercussions of the findings and the questions resulting from them. At a second stage, these scholars were invited to flesh out their presentations, with recourse to the discussions held during the workshop, and to transform them into publishable contributions. The result is this volume, which presents a gamut of new forays into the phenomenon of Observant cultural production, many of which focus on aspects or themes that until very recently have not been central in the scholarly discussion. To provide a background to these new forays into the phenomenon of Observant cultural production, this introduction sketches a concise overview of the predominantly literary aspects of the phenomenon as it has come to the fore thanks to scholarly investigations since the 1980s, prior to introducing the chapters of the contributors. In this way, it hopefully becomes clear to the reader what is the innovative character of the volume, and what remain pressing issues to consider in the future.

## **The cultural output of the wider Observant world**

Scholars working on the Observant world, on late medieval religious life and learning, and on late medieval manuscripts, have pointed to a number of literary genres that during this very period gained in importance, and that more often than not can be directly linked to issues of Observant reform within late medieval religious orders. This is first of all the case with literary genres that are the direct outcome of Observant reform initiatives

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5 This has been studied with regard to the literary output under the label 'pragmatic literacy' (pragmatische Schriftlichkeit). See: Nikolaus Staubach, 'Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Bereich der Devotio Moderna', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25:1 (1991), 418-461.

and Observant identity politics. These genres expound on the necessity of reform and the way in which it should be unfolded, defend the chosen Observant lifestyle against non-Observant opponents in the same order, shield Observant initiatives against outside criticism, or proclaim its many benefits to the world at large.

In this context, we can point, for instance, at a veritable avalanche of Observant reform treatises appearing in this period. These include, to name but a few, *De reformatione religiosorum* issued by the Dominican Johann Nider,<sup>6</sup> the appeal to reform written by the Augustinian Hermit Conrad von Zenn, known as *Liber de vita monastica*,<sup>7</sup> Denis the Carthusian's quite famous *De reformatione claustralium*,<sup>8</sup> the 'sermon' *Collatio de perfecta religionis plantatione* of the Cluniac Jean Raulin,<sup>9</sup> and ultimately the booklet *Libellus ad Leonem X* written by the Camaldolese monks Paolo (Tommaso) Giustiniani and Pietro (Vincenzo) Quirini.<sup>10</sup> These and many other comparable treatises fleshed out detailed reform programs for specific religious orders, or for the world of organized religious life as a whole, and can be traced in many different manuscript configurations and early imprints that emerged in the context of Observant reform projects, but also in the context of attempts by late medieval reform councils (from the Council of Constance to the Fifth Lateran Council) to stimulate or support the reform of religious orders, and therewith bolster the doctrinal and pastoral health of the Church as a whole in the face of multifaceted internal and external threats (decadence, heresy, Ottoman incursions, etc.).

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6 It circulated in manuscript format throughout the fifteenth century and was printed as *De reformatione religiosorum libri tres* (Paris: Ambroise Girault, 1512).

7 See on this work Hellmuth Zschoch, *Klosterreform und monastische Spiritualität im 15. Jahrhundert. Conrad von Zenn (d. 1460) und sein Liber de vita monastica*, BHTh, 75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

8 On this text and other works of monastic reform by the same author, see Denys the Carthusian, *Opera Minora*, 9 Vols. (Cologne: San. Mariae de Pratis, 1907-1909), Vol. VI, as well as their analysis in Dennis D. Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), passim.

9 The work was edited and brought to press for a different audience by Sebastian Brant: *Collatio habita in publico conventu Cluniacensium ordinis sancti Benedicti: ... de perfecta religionis plantatione, incremento & instauratione* (Basel: Johann Bergmann, 1498).

10 Eugenio Massa, *Una cristianità nell'alba del Rinascimento. Paolo Giustiniani e il 'Libellus ad Leonem X' (1513)* (Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2005). See also Ludovic Viallet, 'Social Control, Regular Observance and Identity of a Religious Order: A Franciscan Interpretation of the *Libellus ad Leonem*', *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013), 33-52.

Other literary genres that flourished in this period, and that scholars have linked to Observant reform initiatives and Observant identity politics, are order historiography and hagiographical writings. The competition with non-Observant groups within the same order to claim the legacy of the original intentions of order founders, and the urge to present their reform initiative as a necessary and authentic return to the pristine lifestyle of their order's first beginnings, caused many monks, canons and friars championing Observant reforms to engage in a massive scale in institutional history writing.<sup>11</sup> In this grammatical historical commitment, the envisaged goal, namely to demonstrate that the Observants were the true representatives and inheritors of the original ideals of the order in question, could have peculiar colonializing repercussions. That is to say that, with recourse to fictive creation histories, Observants invented institutional foundations for aligned congregations (enclosed 'second orders' of religious women and various groups of Tertiaries), and therewith could present themselves as the sole legitimate candidates for their spiritual and juridical oversight.<sup>12</sup>

It is likewise among authors connected with Observant or related reformist branches that many new hagiographic ventures were engaged in, to enlist or claim existing *beati* and saints from older periods for their Observant cause (and for their order),<sup>13</sup> to promote the beatification and canonization of new saints from their own circles, and then to use the recent canonization or beatification of their own saints to further propagate the truth of the Observant lifestyle. This expedited a significant wave of new hagiographies of saints and *beati/beatae* associated with or claimed for the

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11 Bert Roest, 'Later Medieval Institutional History', in: *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003), 277-315; Anne Huijbers, "'Observance' as Paradigm in Mendicant and Monastic Order Chronicles", in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 59 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 111-143; Eadem, *Zealots for Souls. Dominican Narratives of Self-Understanding during Observant Reforms, c. 1388-1517*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens – Neue Folge, 22 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Letizia Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca dell'Osservanza con nuova edizione e traduzione a fronte* (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2021).

12 See on these phenomena for instance Alison More, *Fictive Orders and Feminine Religious Identity, 1250-1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

13 Chiara Mercuri, *Santità e propaganda: Il terz'ordine francescano nell'agiografia osservante* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1999).

Observant cause, most notably Bernardino of Siena among the Franciscans and Caterina of Siena, who was ‘appropriated’ by the Dominicans and whose actions and later hagiographical representation played a paramount role in the propagation of Dominican Observant ideals.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, these same saints and *beatil/beatæ* became visually and materially prominent in the iconographical programs in books, murals and altar pieces in Observant churches, and in the reliquaries related to their veneration.<sup>15</sup>

As in many religious orders Observant factions eventually won out, the Observant historiographical and hagiographical representation of the history of orders and saints influenced religious institutional historiography for centuries to come, with lasting repercussions for the manner in which the history of religious orders was written, all the way up to the twentieth century. In that sense, the Observant take-over of order historiography and hagiography created a very enduring master narrative of saintly origins, backlash and decadence, followed by heroic Observant reforms.<sup>16</sup> This take-over also had lasting repercussions for the formats of history

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14 Within the Franciscan order, the Observant hagiographic production surrounding Bernardino of Siena is a case in point. See on this Daniele Solvi, ‘Modelli minoritici della agiografia bernardiniana’, *Franciscana* 13 (2011), 255-289; *Le vite quattrocentesche di S. Bernardino da Siena*, ed. Daniele Solvi, 3 Vols. (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014-2018). More in general on Observant hagiographical models, Idem, *Il mondo nuovo. L’agiografia dei Minori Osservanti* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2019). On the Dominican appropriation of, and hagiographical production on Caterina of Siena, and on the role of Dominican friars such as Raimondo of Capua and Giovanni Dominici in this, see *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco and Beverly Kienle, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); *Virgo digna coelo: Caterina e la sua eredità: Raccolta di studi in occasione del 550° anniversario della canonizzazione di santa Caterina da Siena (1461-2011)*, ed. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Luciano Cinelli & Pierantonio Piatti (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014).

15 Several studies on the representation of Giovanni of Capestrano were included in a theme issue of *Franciscan Studies*: Pavla Langer, ‘Giovanni of Capestrano as novus Bernardinus. An Attempt in Iconography and Relics’, *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017), 175-208; Luca Pezzuto, ‘Prints for Canonization (and ‘Verae Effigies’): The History and Meanings of Printed Images Depicting Giovanni of Capestrano’, *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017), 209-232; Giuseppe Cassio, ‘Saint Giovanni of Capestrano in the Artistic Representations of the Franciscan Family Tree’, *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017), 233-273. See also Machtelt Israëls, ‘Absence and Resemblance: Early Images of Bernardino da Siena and the Issue of Portraiture (With a New Proposal for Sassetta)’, *I Tatti Studies* 11 (2008), 77-114; Roberto Cobianchi, ‘Fashioning the Imagery of a Franciscan Observant Preacher: Early Renaissance Portraiture of Bernardino da Siena in Northern Italy’, *I Tatti Studies* 12 (2009), 55-83; *Storia, conservazione e tecniche nella Libreria Sagramoso in San Bernardino a Verona*, ed. Monica Molteni (Treviso: ZeL, 2010); Roberto Rusconi, *Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2016).

16 One could argue that, at least within Franciscan scholarship, this Observant way of presenting the history of the order lasted up till the late 1960s, and still informed the narrative decisions

writing, including that of subgenres that coupled Observant programs of self-representation with humanist *de viribus illustribus* productions and related classicizing genres, leading for instance to stylized collective biographies of order leaders, order scholars and order saints.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond scholarly attention to the production of texts linked with Observant identity politics mentioned above, there have been investigations of works written by Observant spokesmen for fellow Observants that reflect specifically on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of pursuing forms of cultural production, whether or not in rule commentaries and order statutes. After all, in many orders, the Observance meant (at least in theory) a return to a more humble and ‘poor’ religious lifestyle, and many types of cultural production – book possession and library formation, the pursuit of academic titles and forms of education connected with books and libraries, the embrace of academic genres linked to the push towards academic titles (such as *Sentences* commentaries), investments in manuscript illumination, elaborated liturgical chant, lavish religious illustration cycles in churches and monasteries, expensive liturgical vestments and chalices, etc. – could be seen as counter to the sought-for transformation and ‘purification’ of the religious life.<sup>18</sup> Hence, scholars have encountered texts that detailed the types of education that should be pursued without betraying the Observant cause, and the way in which an Observant life could cohere with acceptable types of learning, liturgical display and the production of books and art works.<sup>19</sup>

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of John R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

17 Anne Huijbers, ‘De viris illustribus ordinis praedicatorum: A “classical” genre in Dominican hands’, *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013), 297-324; Eadem, ‘Dominikus zitiert Ovid. Die humanistische Darstellung berühmter Dominikaner’, *Hagiographica* 25 (2018), 221-250; Claire Taylor Jones, *Women’s History in the Age of Reformation: Johannes Meyer’s Chronicle of the Dominican Observance* (Toronto: PIMS Publications, 2019).

18 Roberto Cobiانchi, *Lo temperato uso delle cose: la committenza dell’osservanza francescana nell’Italia del Rinascimento* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013); Denise Zaru, *Art and Observance in Renaissance Venice: The Dominicans and their Artists (1391- ca. 1545)* (Rome: Viella, 2014); Mercedes Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia en los monasterios de dominicas en Castilla: desde los orígenes hasta la reforma observante (1218-1506)* (Gijón: Trea, 2021).

19 With regard to education, the pursuit of academic titles, the creation of libraries, etc., see for instance Petr Hlaváček, ‘Die böhmischen Franziskaner-Observanten im ausgehenden Mittelalter und ihr Verhältnis zu Bildung und Bücher’, in: *Identités franciscaines à l’âge des réformes*, ed. F. Meyer and L. Viallet, *Histoires croisées* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), 335-362; Idem, ‘Zum (Anti)intellektualismus in Ostmitteleuropa im 15. und

Scholars have noticed that the witnessed intensification of cultural production was by no means limited to the legitimization, defense, characterization or championing of Observant causes. The new religious enthusiasm of religious order branches and congregations involved with Observant reforms led to a huge investment in pastoral activities and forms of activism to help transform Christian society as a whole. For many Observants and propagators of the *Devotio moderna*, the reform of their own order or congregation was part and parcel of a necessary reform of church and society at large.<sup>20</sup>

It is, therefore, no accident, that for many Observants and adherents of the *Devotio moderna*, the sought for transformation of their own religious life went hand in hand with a wider pastoral and social commitment. This could have many different faces, yet it meant in any case a strong increase in the production of vernacular (and Latin) religious texts for the edification of wider groups. First and foremost, Observant movements in mendicant religious orders in particular, which of old had been actively involved in preaching and in the production of a wide range of pastoralia, were at the forefront of what has been called the late medieval preaching revolution: many of the most influential fifteenth-century preachers and many of the most celebrated sermon collections produced in manuscript format and from the 1470s onwards also in print, were the product of Observant hom-

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16. Jahrhundert. Die böhmischen Franziskaner-Observanten und ihr Verhältnis zu Bildung und Büchern', in: *Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichtsschreibung in Nordost- und Ostmitteleuropa. Initiativen, Methoden, Theorien*, ed. Rainer Bendel (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 31-58; Johannes Karl Schlageter, 'Die Distanz der Franziskaner zur Leipziger Universität gegen Ende des Mittelalters', *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 74 (2011), 252-267; Bert Roest, 'Conventual and Observant Positions on Education and the Pursuit of Degrees', in: Idem, *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission, c. 1220-1650: Cum scientia sit donum Dei, armatura ad defendendam sanctam fidem catholicam...*, The Medieval Franciscans, 10 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 146-150. For a more general evaluation of Observant educational pragmatics, see Pietro Delcorno, 'Quomodo discet sine docente? Observant Efforts towards Education and Pastoral Care', in: *A Companion to Observant Reform*, 147-184. The question of access to music and musical instruments is broached in the article by Perina in the present volume, whereas liturgical issues are central in the contribution by Hoefener. For issues of liturgical and iconographical modesty, see alongside of the studies mentioned in footnote 18 also Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit: Women, Liturgy and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Jeffrey Hamburger, 'The Reformation of Vision: Art and the Dominican Observance in Late Medieval Germany', in: Idem, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Book, 1998), 427-467.

20 James Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks between Principle and Practice', in: *A Companion to Observant Reform*, 60-84.

iletic practitioners. These include *reportationes* of preaching encounters, carefully composed model sermon collections for fellow preachers, as well as ‘reading sermons’ meant for devotional and doctrinal self-instruction of religious and lay people.<sup>21</sup> Beyond sermons and sermon-like texts, scholars have pointed at and studied a wide variety of additional instruction texts for religious and lay audiences issued by Observant and *Devotio moderna* authors. These range from mass instruction booklets and confession guides, to prayer manuals, texts of spiritual direction, meditative texts and Passion devotion treatises,<sup>22</sup> including authentic late medieval bestsellers such as those of Thomas a Kempis,<sup>23</sup> Denis the Carthusian,<sup>24</sup> Hendrik Herp,<sup>25</sup> Antonino Pierozzi,<sup>26</sup> and Dietrich Colde.<sup>27</sup>

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- 21 The literature on this is massive. See for instance Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ. Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Anne Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching, and the Coming of the Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction before the Council of Trent*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 117 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004), 52-101; Ian Siggins, *A Harvest of Medieval Preaching: The Sermon Books of Johann Herolt, OP (Discipulus)* (Blumington: Xlibris, 2009); Carlo Delcorno, ‘L’Osservanza francescana e il rinnovamento della predicazione’, in: *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV. Atti del XL Convegno internazionale* (Assisi - Perugia, 11-13 ottobre 2012) (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013), 3-53. See also the contributions of Cécile Caby and Pietro Delcorno in the present volume.
- 22 For the Franciscan production of such materials, see Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction*, ad indicem. For especially Dominican ‘direzione spirituale’, see Gabriella Zarri, *Uomini e donne nella direzione spirituale: (secc. XIII-XVI)* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2016).
- 23 Uwe Neddermeyer, ‘Verfasser, Verbreitung und Wirkung der “Imitatio Christi” in Handschriften und Drucken vom 15. bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts’, in: *Kempener Thomas-Vorträge*, ed. Ulrike Bodeman (Kempen, 2002), 55-83; Nikolaus Staubach, ‘Von der Nachfolge Christi und ihren Folgen: Oder warum wurde Thomas von Kempen so berühmt?’, in: *Ibidem*, 85-104; Ad Poirters, Rijcklof Hofman & Kees Schepers, ‘Thomas a Kempis. 550 Years of Impact’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 91 (2021), 289-292.
- 24 Kent Emery Jr., ‘Denys the Carthusian and the invention of preaching materials’ *Viator* 25 (1994), 377-409; *The Spiritual Writings of Denis the Carthusian: contemplation, meditation, prayer, the fountain of light and the paths of life, monastic profession, exhortation to novices*, trans. & introd. Íde Ní Riain and Terence O’Reilly (Dublin-Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2005).
- 25 Anna Dlabacová, *Literatuur en observantie. De Spieghel der volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de dynamiek van laatmiddeleeuwse tekstverspreiding* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014); Eadem, ‘Transcending the Order: The Pursuit of Observance and Religious Identity Formation in the Low Countries, c. 1450-1500’, in: *Religious Orders and Religion Identity Formation, ca. 1420-1620: Discourses and Strategies of Observance and Pastoral Engagement*, ed. Bert Roest and Johanneke Uphoff, *The Medieval Franciscans*, 13 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 86-109.
- 26 Antonino Pierozzi, *la figura e l’opera di un santo arcivescovo nell’Europa del Quattrocento*, ed. L. Cinelli & M.P. Paoli, *Memorie Domenicane*, 43 (Florence: Nerbini, 2012).
- 27 Dieter Berg, ‘Dietrich Kolde. Volksprediger und Literat’, in: *Idem, Armut und Geschichte. Studien zur Geschichte der Bettelorden im Hohen und Späten Mittelalter*, Saxonia Franciscana, 11 (Kevelaer: Coelde, Butzon &amp; Bercker, 2001), 335-344.



The quite ambitious program of societal reform exhibited by Observant sermon collections, to bring about an equitable and fully Christian commonwealth, free from un-Christian types of behavior (and also ‘cleansed’ from non-Christian groups such as Jews and heretics),<sup>28</sup> found a corollary in the production of concomitant texts to help married couples and Christian households, and even merchants, city governments and rulers to live and act responsibly in the world, in accordance with Christian guidelines.<sup>29</sup>

The new emphasis on modesty and poverty notwithstanding, the recognition of the role of religious learning in a fully Christian society, for which quite a few Observant propagandists reached back to the model of Jerome, who had been both an ascetical eremitical church father, and at the same time an important educator, church historian, exegete and Bible translator, meant that many Observant and *Devotio moderna* houses (re-)embraced forms of Christian scholarship quite quickly, even though the pursuit of academic degrees was often frowned upon, at least until the early sixteenth century. In fact, scholars have discerned a convergence between certain conceptions of humanist scholarship and conceptions of Observant religious life, and it became apparent that religious houses within the Benedict congregations of Melk and Bursfeld, but also Observant houses of other orders (including Cistercian and Camaldolese communities, houses of Augustinian hermits and to some extent also Observant Dominican and Franciscan friaries) over time became linked to more humanist-type

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28 See on this for instance Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons. Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Cynthia L. Polecristi, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy. Bernardino of Siena and his Audience* (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2000); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Pescatori di uomini: Predicatori e piazze alla fine del Medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005); Bert Roest, ‘Giovanni of Capestrano’s Anti-Judaism Within a Franciscan Context: An Evaluation Based On Recent Scholarship’, *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017), 117-143.

29 See for instance Bernadette Paton, *Preaching Friars and the Civic Ethos: Siena, 1380-1480* (London: Westfield Publications, 1992); Letizia Pellegrini, ‘Predicazione osservante e propaganda politica: a partire da un caso di Todi’, in: *La propaganda politica nel basso medioevo. Atti del XXXVIII Convegno storico internazionale. Todi, 14-17 ottobre 2001* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2002), 511-531; Giacomo Todeschini, *Ricchezza francescana. Dalla povertà volontaria alla società di mercato* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004); Letizia Pellegrini, ‘Tra la piazza e il Palazzo. Predicazione e pratiche di governo nell’Italia del Quattrocento’, in: *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV. Atti del XL Convegno internazionale* (Assisi - Perugia, 11-13 ottobre 2012) (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013), 109-133; Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, ‘Pawn Broking between Theory and Practice in Observant Socio-Economic Thought’, in: *A Companion to Observant Reform*, 204-229; Pietro Delcorno, ‘Predicare (contro) la sessualità: Frammenti di un discorso pubblico’, in: *La sessualità nel basso medioevo* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2021), 91-146.

pursuits of arts, theology, natural science, medicine and, as said before, the study of history. This was no doubt partly the result of the fact that these orders attracted talented literate offspring of the new urban elites, for whom a life of literacy and learning went hand in hand with deeply felt religious convictions. All this left traces in late medieval Observant monastic and mendicant book collections, and ensured that reformist spokesmen of different orders, many of whom became efficacious users of the emerging printing press for their pastoral efforts and their propagandist works, became a significant presence in the later fifteenth-century *respublica litterarum*.<sup>30</sup>

When the Observance and related forms of religious reform known for their pragmatic and spiritual literacy, gained a foothold in organized religious life, it drew the attention of potential lay patrons, and of secular authorities on different levels. This aspect, which still needs additional study, means that we cannot see the cultural production of such religious groups independent from the expectations and ambitions of influential outsiders. This could be local authorities keen to have properly Observant religious houses in their jurisdiction, to show urban prestige through their patronage of reformed communities, and eager to engage well-known Observant preachers for Advent and Lenten sermon performances, or lay

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30 Paul O. Kristeller, 'The Contribution of Religious Orders to Renaissance Thought and Learning', in: *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1974), 95-158; Noel Brann, *The Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516): The Renaissance of Monastic Humanism*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1981); Denis D. Martin, 'The *Via Moderna*, Humanism, and the Hermeneutics of Late Medieval Monastic Life', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51:2 (1990), 179-197; Petrus Becker, 'Benediktinische Reformbewegungen und klösterliches Bildungsstreben. Die rheinischen Abteien der Bursfelder Kongregation', *Rottenburger Jahrbuch fuer Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1992), 161-174; Franz Posset, *Renaissance Monks: Monastic Humanism in six Biographical Sketches* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Harald Müller, 'Nutzen und Nachteil humanistischer Bildung im Kloster', in: *Funktionen des Humanismus. Studien zum Nutzen des Neuen in der humanistischen Kultur*, ed. Thomas Maissen and Gerrit Walther (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 191-213; Cécile Caby, 'Al di là dell' 'Umanesimo religioso': Umanisti e Chiesa nel Quattrocento', in: *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L'Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell'Osservanza*, ed. Pietro Messa et al. (Assisi: Porziuncola, 2009), 15-33; Eadem, *Autoportrait d'un moine en humaniste: Girolamo Aliotti (1412-1480)* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018); Eadem, 'Pratiques humanistes et ordres religieux dans l'Italie du Quattrocento: quelques jalons', in: *L'humanisme à l'épreuve de l'Europe (XVe-XVIIe siècle): Histoire d'une transmutation culturelle*, ed. Denis Crouzet et al. (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2019), 197-217. For the somewhat peculiar situation in England, where Observant reforms formally never took hold, see J.G. Clark, 'Humanism and Reform in Pre-Reformation English Monasteries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser. 19 (2009), 57-93.

aristocratic and royal patrons transferring (a part of) their patronage to reformed houses, and bestowing on them religious art, and also claiming space in these houses for private chapels, burials, and forms of commemoration that were not automatically commensurate with the envisaged simplicity of a properly Observant lifestyle. This led to discussions and regulations.<sup>31</sup>

It has been noted that normative works on cultural production written by Observant spokesmen could betray a strong gender bias, in that preachers and spiritual guides could approach women in ways that downplayed intellectual ambitions. This is visible in some Observant sermons to female religious, and in several Observant rule commentaries and statutes written by male clerics and designated for newly reformed female communities.<sup>32</sup> Possibly facilitated by such teachings, we do come across female communities and congregations connected with late medieval Observant reform

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31 Some of which will also be touched upon in the articles of this volume. A famous case in point concerns the murals of fra Angelico in the Observant Dominican friary of San Marco in Florence, under the patronage of the Medici. See on that for instance Magnolia Scudieri, *The Frescoes by Angelico at San Marco* (Florence-Milan: Giunti Editore, 1996). On late medieval monastic patronage and its repercussions more in general, see Jonathan R. Lyon, 'Nobility and Monastic Patronage: The View from Outside the Monastery', in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West, 2: The High and Late Middle Ages*, ed. Alison Isdale Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 848-864. More specific with regard to Observant houses, see for example Ana Maria S. de Almeida Rodrigues, 'The Crown, the Court and Monastic Reform in Medieval Portugal. A Gendered Approach', in: *Queens, Princesses and Mendicants. Close Relations in a European Perspective*, ed. Nikolas Jaspert and Imke Just, *Vita regularis - Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter* (Leipzig: LIT Verlag, 2019), 1-11; Monique Sommé, 'The Dukes and Duchesses of Burgundy as Benefactors of Colette de Corbie and the Colettine Poor Clares', in: *A Companion to Colette of Corbie*, ed. Joan Mueller and Nancy Bradley (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 32-55. In this introduction, I do not touch on issues of Colettine literacy and learning in the context of Observant reforms. See on that Bert Roest, 'A Textual Community in the Making: Colettine Authorship in the Fifteenth Century', in: *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 163-180, and Anna Campbell, 'Creating a Colettine Identity in an Observant and Post-Observant World: Narratives of the Colettine Reforms after 1447', in: *Religious Orders and Religion Identity Formation, ca. 1420-1620: Discourses and Strategies of Observance and Pastoral Engagement*, ed. Bert Roest and Johanneke Uphoff, *The Medieval Franciscans*, 13 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016), 32-47.

32 Aspects of this come to the fore in several sermons for nuns by Stephan Fridolin; see Petra Seegets, 'Lehre für angefochtene und kleinmütige Menschen', in: *Spätmittelalterliche Frömmigkeit zwischen Ideal und Praxis*, ed. Berndt Hamm and Thomas Lentz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 190-195.

movements that lived on a meager diet of liturgical prayers and devotional exercises.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, scholars have noted that, throughout Europe, Observant preachers often collaborated with religious women, and many sermons of preachers have in fact survived thanks to the scriptorial and editorial activities of the women they preached to.<sup>34</sup> In between lengthy diatribes against female sins, Observant orators also hailed pious lay women as domestic teachers, and just as the church father Jerome had presented his female aristocratic Roman disciples with a demanding program of religious education, these preachers likewise could depict their female religious charges in the monastery as learned virgins, therewith catering to the literary and cultural ambitions of the often aristocratic nuns in newly Observant Dominican, Clarissan and Augustinian monasteries, particularly in Italy, Spain and Southern Germany. In these female houses, filled with literate daughters and widows of prominent urban families, several of whom had received a humanist upbringing and were used to function in family networks maintained by letter writing and the exchange of books, many of the mechanisms at play in the identity formation of Observant groups that facilitated the efflorescence of the genres mentioned previously, likewise fueled the production of a diversified body of texts, in environments where religious education and book learning were embraced as a matter of course.<sup>35</sup>

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33 See also the contribution of Koen Goudriaan to this volume.

34 See for instance Thom Mertens, 'Ghostwriting Sisters: The Preservation of Dutch Sermons of Father Confessors in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century', in: *Seeing and Knowing*, 121-141; Cynthia Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women's Convents in Late Medieval Germany* (Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), as well as the contribution of Patricia Stoop to this volume.

35 For context, see Eva Schlotheuber, 'Bücher und Bildung in den Frauengemeinschaften der Bettelorden', in: Eadem, *'Gelehrte Bräute Christi': Geistliche Frauen in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation*, 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 159-178. On the cultural life of Dominican nuns, see Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'The Corpus Christi Devotion: Gender, Liturgy, and Authority among Dominican Nuns in Castile in the Middle Ages', in: *Medieval Intersections: Gender and Status in Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. Katherine Weikert and Elena Crislyn Woodacre (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021), 35-47; Eadem, 'The Art, Visual Culture and Liturgy of Dominican Nuns in Late Medieval and Early Modern Castile', *Memorie domenicane* n.s. 46 (2015), 225-242; Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Reading Nuns at the *Insula Leporum* (Hungary): Traces of Bilingualism in a Late Medieval Dominican Nunnery', in: *Pursuing a New Order, 1: Religious Education in Late Medieval Central and Eastern Central Europe*, ed. Julian Ecker and Pavlína Rychterová (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 169-192, as well as the studies of Claire Taylor Jones and Paula Cardoso mentioned in footnote 47

Just looking at Observant Clarissan houses in the Italian peninsula during the fifteenth century, something connected with my own field of expertise, it is clear that the process of Observance, the collaboration with male spiritual guides, and the involvement of these houses with Observant reforms in other communities, could cause a dramatic increase in copying and translation activities, as well as a noted increase in epistolography, many different types of (at times autobiographical) texts of religious instruction, translations of and commentaries on the rule, convent historiography and hagiographies,<sup>36</sup> prayer texts and devotional poetry, Passion meditation treatises, in-house sermons by abbesses, novice training manuals, and different types of religious art and music.<sup>37</sup>

Scholars recognize that the most 'literate' of these Observant communities, such as Corpus Christi in Bologna, Monteluce in Perugia, Santa Lucia in Foligno, San Lino in Volterra, became places that maintained

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of this introduction. For literacy and the cultural life in other female communities, see also Anna Dlabacová & Patricia Stoop, 'Incunabula in Communities of Canonesses Regular and Tertiaries Related to the *Devotio moderna*', *Quaerendo* 51 (2021), 219-248, and Eva Schlottheuber, *Klostereintritt und Bildung. Die Lebenswelt der Nonnen im späten Mittelalter. Mit einer Edition des 'Konventstagebuchs' einer Zisterzienserin von Heilig-Kreuz bei Braunschweig (1484-1507)*, Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe, 24 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

36 See on these writings within and beyond the Italian peninsula Lucia Sebastiani, 'Cronaca e agiografia nei monasteri femminili', in: *Raccolte di vite di santi dal XIII al XVIII secolo: strutture, messaggi, fruizioni*, ed. Franco Bolgiani and Sofia Boesch Gajano (Fasano di Brindisi, 1990), 159-168; Charlotte Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kate Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2004).

37 For concise and avowedly incomplete overviews of the Clarissan production in all of these and related genres, see Chiara Augusta Lainati, *Temi spirituali dagli scritti del Secondo Ordine Francescano* (Assisi: S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Porziuncola, 1970), ad indicem; Bert Roest, *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform*, *The Medieval Franciscans*, 8 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), 283-345 [=Chapter 6: 'Forms of Literary and Artistic Expression']; Carmela Comparà, 'I libri delle Clarisse osservanti nella 'Provincia seraphica S. Francisca' di fine '500'', *Franciscana* 4 (2002), 169-372. For more general introductions to female involvement with textual production and underlying pedagogical ideals fuelling the production of these texts, see in particular Katherine Gill, 'Women and the Production of Religious Literature in the Vernacular 1300-1500', in: *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. E. Ann Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 64-85; Carolyn A. Muessig, 'The Pedagogical Ideals of Late Medieval Observant Dominican and Franciscan Nuns', in: *Theologie und Bildung im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Tobias Georges, *Archa Verbi, Subsidia*, 13 (Münster i.W.: Aschen-dorff, 2015), 129-150.

scriptoria and nurtured female religious authors and artists of renown.<sup>38</sup> These included Clarissan authors who all have received or are currently receiving new scholarly editions of their works, such the versatile Caterina Vigri (d. 1463),<sup>39</sup> her life-long friend Illuminata Bembo (d. 1496),<sup>40</sup> Girolama of Montefeltro,<sup>41</sup> Smeralda (Eustochia) Calafato,<sup>42</sup> and Camilla

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- 38 Ugolino Nicolini, 'I Minori Osservanti di Monteripido e lo 'Scriptorium' delle Clarisse di Monteluca in Perugia', *Picenum Seraphicum* 8 (1971), 100-130; Ilaria Bianchi, 'La gloria della serafica Chiara e del suo ordine: suor Dorotea Broccardi, copista e miniatrice nel convento di San Lino a Volterra', in: *Vita artistica nel monastero femminile. Exempla*, ed. Vera Fortunati, Biblioteca di storia dell'arte (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2002), 107-113; Jacques Dalarun and Fabio Zinelli, 'Poésie et théologie à Santa Lucia de Foligno. Sur une laude de Battista de Montefeltro', in: *Caterina Virgi. La santa e la città. Atti del Convegno Bologna, 13-15 novembre 2002*, ed. Claudio Leonardi, Caterina Virgi, la santa e la città, 5 (Tavernuzze (Florence): SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 19-43; Ugo Vignuzzi & Patrizia Bertini Malgarini, 'Le capacità linguistiche delle Clarisse dell'Osservanza: qualche anticipazione', in: *Cultura e desiderio di Dio: L'Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell'Osservanza*, ed. Pietro Messa et al. Viator, 8 (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 2009), 35-44; Monika Benedetta Umiker, 'Codici di S. Maria di Monteluca e l'attività scrittoria delle monache', in: *Cultura e desiderio di Dio*, 73-80; Attilio Bartoli Langeli, 'Scrittura di donna. Le capacità scritte delle Clarisse dell'Osservanza', in: *Ibidem*, 81-96.
- 39 For some editions, see: Caterina Vigri, *I dodici giardini. L'esodo al femminile. Con testo originale a fronte*, ed. Gilberto Aquini and Mariafiama Maddalena Faberi, Mistica. Testi e Studi, 2 (Bologna: Gli Inchiostri associati, 1999); Caterina Vigri, *Laudi, Trattati e Lettere*, ed. Silvia Serventi, (Tavernuzze-Florence: SISMELE, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000); Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Antonella degli'Innocenti, (Tavernuzze-Florence: SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000). See also Jeryldene M. Wood, 'Breaking the Silence: the Poor Clares and the Visual Arts in Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly* 48:2 (1995), 262-286; Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, 'Santa Caterina da Bologna e la rivoluzione culturale delle Clarisse nel Quattrocento', *Frate Francesco* 79:1 (2013), 225-235; Serena Spanò Martinelli, 'Caterina de' Vigri between Manuscript and Print: Text, Image, and Gender', in: *The Saint Between Manuscript and Print: Italy, 1400-1600*, ed. Alison Knowles Frazier, CRRS Essays and Studies, 37 (Toronto: CRRS, 2015), 351-378.
- 40 Illuminata Bembo, *Specchio di illuminazione*, ed. Silvia Mostaccio, Caterina Vigri. La Santa e la Città, 3 (Tavernuzze-Florence: SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001).
- 41 Dalarun & Zinelli, 'Poésie et théologie à Santa Lucia', 21-44; F. Regina Psaki, 'Battista da Montefeltro Malatesta', in: *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Katharina Margit Wilson and Nadia Margolis (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2004), 63-64.
- 42 Lucrezia Lorenzini, 'Il monachesimo di Eustochia Calafato nella crisi spirituale del Quattrocento', in: *Atti del XXI Congresso Internazionale di Linguistica e Filologia Romanza: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, Università di Palermo, 18-24 settembre 1995*, ed. Giovanni Ruffino, 6 Vols. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998) VI, 659-666; *Heilige Eustochia Calafato 1434-1485: Quellen zum Leben einer Reformerin im Orden der heiligen Klara von Assisi*, ed. Susanne Ernst (Heiligenkreuz: Stift Heiligenkreuz, 2015).

Battista of Varano (1458–1524),<sup>43</sup> to name but a few and limiting myself to Italy.<sup>44</sup>

By and large, scholars agree that the impetus of reform – of individual religious, of individual communities, of congregations and orders as a whole, but also of society at large, as emphasized in the countless Observant sermon marathons in town and countryside –, as well as a strengthened sense of vocation, and the sense of urgency connected with it, were strong driving force for different types of cultural production. At the same time, this same impetus of reform, and the wish to return to a more genuine and more modest religious lifestyle in accordance with the rule, and ultimately with the commands of Christ in the Gospel, made it difficult to wholeheartedly embrace the material consequences of learning, literary and artistic prowess, unless it could be properly instrumentalized for (an aspect of) the Observant cause. Such qualms became especially cumbersome when these material consequences were substantial, as was the case with library formation, the creation of extensive murals, the commission of expensive altarpieces, liturgical vestments and musical instruments. All that could easily be seen to be in overt discrepancy with the commands of poverty and simplicity that formed the core of the Observant message.

## The content of this volume

Such conflicting elements and related problematical issues connected with the Observant cultural output, but also the genres and types of cultural

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43 For editions of her *Vita Spirituale*, the *Avvertimenti spirituali*, the *Istruzioni al discepolo*, and her *Dolori mentali di Gesù nella sua Passione*, see Beata Camilla Battista da Varano, *Le opere spirituali*, ed. G. Boccanera (Iesi: Scuola Tipografica Francescana, 1958); Beata Camilla Battista da Varano, *Autobiografia e le opere complete*, ed. S. Bracci (Vicenza: Hamsa, 2009). In addition, see S. Battista da Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore. De puritatis cordis. De perfectione religiosorum*, ed. Silvia Serventi, Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, La Mistica Cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente, 30 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2019).

44 Observant Clarissan authors of a comparable renown also hailed from other European regions, witness the printing successes of the massive *Vita Christi* written by Isabel/Elionor Manuel of Villena, and the admiration with which a Humanist Observant Clarissan abbess and author such as the Nuremberg Poor Clare Caritas Pirckheimer was addressed in the writings of Erasmus and other humanists. On the latter, see also Eva Schlotheuber, 'Humanistisches Wissen und geistliches Leben. Caritas Pirckheimer und die Geschichtsschreibung im Nürnberger Klarissenkonvent', in: Eadem, '*Gelehrte Bräute Christi*': *Geistliche Frauen in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 179-204.

production in need of further exploration, were central in many of the presentations during the virtual Nijmegen meeting. Due to the specific expertise of the participants, these coalesced around three larger thematic complexes, namely (1) concrete Observant cultural practices surrounding books and libraries, learning and preaching; (2) Observant liturgical developments and transformations in religious music; (3) aspects of Observant spiritualities and their practical and material consequences.

With some adjustments, the current volume follows the workshop set-up. This means that, under the respective subheading Observant cultural practices: books and libraries, learning and preaching are positioned the panoramic survey 'Which Rhetoric for Which Observance? Provisional Investigations in Fifteenth-Century Italy' by Cécile Caby (Sorbonne Université); the case study 'An Amphibious Identity: Apollonio Bianchi between Observance and Humanism' by Pietro Delcorno (Università di Bologna); the analysis 'Caterina of Siena in the Writings of Observant Poor Clares: Caterina Vigri and Camilla Battista of Varano' by Silvia Serventi (independent scholar); and the essay 'Religious Life and Visual Authority: Library Decoration among Mendicant Observant Orders' by Roberto Cobianchi (Università degli Studi di Messina).

This is followed by four articles focused on aspects of Observant liturgy and the transformations in religious music. This includes an essay on liturgical space by Haude Morvan (Université Bordeaux-Montaigne), entitled 'Observant Reform and Dominican Church Interiors in Italy (15th-16th Centuries)'; an assessment by Hugo Perina (Centre de Recherches Historiques, Paris) on music, namely 'The Organ and the Italian Observance: Discourses Tested by Practices'; a case study by Kristin Hoefener (Universidade Nova in Lisbon), titled 'Female Chant Repertoire in Aveiro's Dominican Convent of Jesus during the Observant Reform (15th Century)'; and the philological investigation 'Towards a Critical Edition of the *Libro del Conorte* of the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534)', by Pablo Acosta-Garcia (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).

Yet another group of articles are arranged around the subheading aspects of Observant spiritualities. This section includes a contribution by Koen Goudriaan (emeritus Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), entitled 'Third Order Convents in Western Flanders: Varieties in Tertiary Observance': the exploratory paper 'Preaching the Observant Reform in Female Communities Related to the *Devotio moderna*' by Patricia Stoop (Universiteit



Antwerpen); and the essay 'Observant Reform and the Cult of New Dominican Saints in the Southeastern Adriatic' by Valentina Živković (Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA, Belgrade) and Ana Marinković (Art History Department of Sveučilište u Zagrebu/University of Zagreb).

Finally, this volume also includes at its very end the article 'Was There an Observant Cistercian Movement? Reform in the Medieval History of the Cistercian Order' by Emilia Jamroziak (University of Leeds). Although this ultimate contribution does not focus on Observant cultural production per se, Jamroziak's enlightening exposition of the historiographical traditions of Cistercian reform, as well as her unprecedented attempt to flesh out a viable approach to the study of Observant reforms in that order, made her contribution too relevant to exclude it from a collection that wants to make available cutting-edge research on the Observant world.

Cécile Caby's opening article focuses on a subgenre of mendicant and monastic preaching not often talked about, namely the speeches or sermons held at (general) chapter meetings in religious orders. These were important moments of self-representation and also occasions to take a stance on issues of order reform, sometimes in an attempt to influence the election of proper reform candidates for leadership positions. Caby shows how such performances at general chapter meetings within the Franciscan, Augustinian and Olivetan orders pushed the message of reform, and also how these ceremonial speech acts were in this very period transformed under the influence of new, humanist rhetorical formats, revealing the intriguing interaction of Observant and contemporaneous humanist discourses of intellectual, religious and cultural reform, and the strategic use of humanist epideictic oratory at (public) occasions that called for emotionally charged persuasion.

Pietro Delcorno follows up on this issue, by discussing the way in which Apollonio Bianchi (d. 1450), a hitherto ignored Franciscan Observant preacher active in Northern Italy, on the one hand developed spectacular and efficacious theatrical homiletic strategies, which we nowadays tend to link to late medieval popular preaching, and at the same time explored new humanist rhetorical formats to address secular and religious authority figures, and to position himself as a militant propagator of the Observant cause. As such, he nearly seamlessly adopted a hybrid cultural *persona*, commensurate with the tasks at hand. For this friar, Observant poverty, humility and pastoral prowess could very well be reconciled with

the elite discourses of high-brow humanism, as came to the fore in a very astute way in his *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia*.

With the article of Silvia Serventi, we move into the world of female Observant writing. More in particular, she shows the order boundary transgressing nature of the works of one of the most influential ‘mothers of the Dominican Observance’, namely Caterina of Siena. Whereas this female religious reformer was very important for the creation of a Dominican Observant female identity, as has been studied in depth by Anna Scattignato, Sylvie Duval, and others,<sup>45</sup> she also became an example and lingering presence, not much noticed in earlier scholarship, in the writings of important Observant Poor Clares, in this case Caterina Vigri and Camilla Battista of Varano. Both were very influential shapers of the spiritual and intellectual profile of the Italian Clarissan Observant world. The inheritance of Caterina of Siena’s mystical language, notably her metaphors, and her narrative motives and sources facilitated these Clarissan authors to develop their own spiritual concepts, some of which in turn again found reception in sixteenth-century Dominican circles. It is an example of complex cross-fertilization that became somewhat of a hallmark of Observant disciplinary and spiritual texts, and shows the importance of order-transgressing approaches of the study of late medieval religious literature.

The appropriation of writing and scholarship in Observant circles meant the emergence of libraries in Observant houses, something alluded at earlier in this introduction. The contribution of Roberto Cobiانchi approaches the setup of these libraries from an angle that until now has not been studied in depth, namely the illustrative programs of these locations, to search for the visual traces of an Observant identity. After all, these Observant libraries developed significantly in the period under discussion, and were first and foremost created with Observant clerical users

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45 See for instance Anna Scattigno, ‘Suggerimenti cateriniane negli epistolari femminili tra Quattro e Cinquecento’, in: *Virgo digna coelo. Caterina e la sua eredità. Raccolta di studi in occasione del 550° anniversario della canonizzazione di santa Caterina da Siena*, ed. Anna Bartolomei Romagnoli, Luciano Cinelli and Paolo Piatti, Atti e documenti, 35 (Rome: Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2013), 545-582; Rita Librandi, Dal lessico delle “Lettere” di Caterina da Siena: la concretezza della fusione’, in: *Dire l’ineffabile. Caterina da Siena e il linguaggio della mistica*, ed. Lino Leonardi and Pietro Trifone, La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente, 5 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2006), 19-40; Sylvie Duval, *Comme des Anges sur terre, les moniales dominicaines et les débuts de la réforme observante* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2015), passim.

in mind. With the caveat that he can only provide a provisional interpretation, Cobianchi makes a convincing case that the decorative schemes in (Franciscan and Dominican) Observant libraries combine the veneration of the canonized saints of their order with a just as strong or even stronger celebration of the scholarly achievements of previous order members. Therewith, these Observant houses claimed for themselves the religious and intellectual legacy of pre-Observant friars, just as the Observants in general claimed to be the real offspring of the order founders, whose ideals they were supposedly restoring.

In a different manner, the organization of space is also central in the article of Haude Morvan. Her study of Dominican liturgical space tackles a complex question that has been a contested issue in international scholarship at least since the works of Jäggi, Bartolini Salimbeni and colleagues,<sup>46</sup> namely to what extent Observant reforms and the concomitant transformation in the liturgical life of religious men and women took hold in the physical and spatial organization of convent churches. Morvan approaches this question with several investigations of the positioning of Dominican church choirs, to conclude in the end that in the cases she studied Observant reforms and subsequent renovations of convent churches do not show a single solution, and that reasons for relocating the choir and to change the choir screen were rather case specific, influenced by local trends, and also in part dependent on the input of artists and especially external benefactors who provided much of the funding. Hence, at least with regard to the setup, location and aesthetic development of church choirs, there does not seem to have been a one-on-one relationship with a specific (Dominican) Observant religious identity.

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46 Lorenzo Bartolini Salimbeni, *Architettura francescana in Abruzzo dal XIII al XVIII secolo* (Rome: Università 'G. D'Annunzio', 1993); Carola Jäggi, *Frauenkloster im Spätmittelalter. Die Kirchen der Klarissen und Dominikanerinnen im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Petersberg: Imhof Verlag, 2006); Valeria Rubbi, 'L'architettura conventuale femminile: il problema di una definizione tipologica', in: *Caterina Vigri, La Santa e la Città. Atti del Convegno, Bologna 13-15 novembre 2002*, ed. Claudio Leonardi (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 259-267; Leonie Silberer, 'Medieval Monastic Architecture of the Franciscan Order. Friaries as Evidence of Written and Unwritten Rules and Ideal Perceptions', in: *Rules and Observance: Devising Forms of Communal Life*, ed. Mirko Breitenstein et al., *Vita Regularis, Abhandlungen*, 60 (Berlin-Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 281-294; Panayota Volti, 'L'architecture mendicante: continuité et innovation', *Memorie Domenicane* 40 (2009), 69-89.

Mendicant churches as liturgical spaces were also venues for the performance of music. And with Hugo Perina, we engage with the complex relationship Observants had with it, particularly when costly instruments were involved. His article points at the role of mendicant orders in the development of the organ, in the context of furious debates about the increasing use of polyphonic music and instrumental accompaniment in the liturgy. He demonstrates that Observant mendicants, as shown in Observant Franciscan and Dominican chapter regulations, the writings of the Dominican Archbishop Antonino of Florence, and the at times belligerent statements of reformers such as Girolamo Savonarola and Ludovico Barbo, were able to create a normative discourse that separated between music that belonged to holy inspiration and music as an expression of profane entertainment. This ultimately facilitated these friars to become active as commissioners, producers and users of organs, and to exploit the presence of the organ in their churches to draw audiences that they could mold to disseminate their ideals of societal reform. And this, in turn, allows modern scholars to re-address the impact of the Observance on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century musical practice.

In a different vein, music is also an important topic for Kristin Hoefener, who charts the chant repertoire in the Portuguese Dominican Convent of Jesus (Aveiro), by analyzing a series of chant books produced by the sisters in their in-house scriptorium. Beyond commenting on the literate culture of this Dominican house, Hoefener investigates what information can be obtained from the chant repertoire produced in the convent in so far as it has survived in the convent library, and to what extent it adheres to the findings about liturgical standardization and 'liturgical Observance' studied by scholars such as Claire Jones and Paula Cardoso.<sup>47</sup> This, at least, seems the case in the apparent serial production of such liturgical works, and it comes to the fore again in a number of processions linked to specific devotions that expressed the Convent's Observant identity, such as the *Salve regina* procession after Compline, and the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin on Saturdays. The enhanced participation in processions

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47 Cf. Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit: Women, Liturgy and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia: PENN, 2018); Paula Cardoso, *Art, Reform and Female Agency in the Portuguese Dominican Nunneries: Nuns as Producers and Patrons of Illuminated Manuscripts (c. 1460-1560)*, PhD thesis (Lisbon: University Nova Lisbon, 2019).

and related devotional activities also expressed itself in the emergence of additional chapels throughout the convent, where specific female saints were venerated, including the Virgin, Saint Caterina of Siena, and Saint Ursula and her virgin companions.

One of the most fascinating female preachers and visionaries connected with the wider Franciscan Observant world was Juana de la Cruz, alias the 'Guitar of God', whose *Libro del conorte* (*Book of Consolation*), which includes more than seventy of Juana's visionary sermons, is scrutinized by Pablo Acosta-Garcia, who is in the process of creating the first critical edition of the work. He analyses the two surviving manuscripts that contain the sermons. By doing so, he puts forward a number of codicological, philological and methodological problems that need solving before a proper understanding of the text is even possible, and he re-addresses the problem of collective authorship in the writing, compilation and use of Juana's *Libro del conorte* in her home community. Acosta-Garcia therefore asks fundamental questions that, beyond their relevance for our understanding of Juana's work and its genesis properly speaking, offer potential venues to tackle problems scholars are often confronted with in the study of authorship and cultural production in female Observant religious houses.

In his evaluation of tertiary congregations in late medieval West-Flanders, Koen Goudriaan shows that the complex and at times conflict-ridden development of this group of Tertiaries to an extent flies in the face of modern scholarly assumptions about interactions between such groups and the Observant Franciscans, and that the available documentation allows for an intriguing caveat with regard to the traditional assignment of Tertiaries to an 'active' life (as opposed to the 'contemplative life' of fully enclosed religious groups). Moreover, he shows that the spirituality developed in the communities of this Flemish group, which points towards a measure of contemplation, was deliberately non-literary. Goudriaan contrasts this with the strong embrace of a vernacular literary culture in other tertiary groups in the Low Countries, in line with the promotion of pragmatic devotional literacy in the world of the *Devotio moderna* with which many of these other Tertiaries were closely aligned. He proposes to see the adversity to book culture as a vignette for the peculiar spirituality of this west-Flemish tertiary group, which seemed to have stayed outside the orbit of the *Devotio moderna*, and which did not really partake in the literary program pushed by the Observants either. Until now, this west-Flemish

tertiary group has remained under the radar, as scholars tend to focus for various reasons on communities with a recognizable literary legacy.

In nearly complete contrast with the non-literary lifestyle of these west-Flemish Tertiaries stands the literary culture described in the article of Patricia Stoop, which fleshes out and contextualizes the order-transgressing nature of Observant-style convent preaching in an analysis of mendicant (and particularly Franciscan) sermons held in Flemish and Dutch communities linked to the *Devotio moderna*. Although many women within this reform movement used the preaching services of confessors and preachers from within their own movement, they also collected sermons from Observant Dominican and Franciscan friars, or invited them to preach in their convents. The sermons of the latter, and the way they circulated are central in this contribution. In addition, it zooms in on the question to what extent these sermons helped disseminate Observant ideas and spiritual concepts into female *Devotio moderna* communities, and therewith, alongside of texts produced within the ambiance of the Modern Devout, might have influenced these women's spirituality.

In their contribution, Valentina Živković and Ana Marinković discuss the appropriation of saints and the cult of new saints in a localized Dominican context, starting from the observation that the study of the diffusion of Observant reform and the study of the promotion of specific saints' cults should go hand in hand. To this purpose, the authors examine specific saints' cults in Observant Dominican friaries in the Dubrovnik and Kotor regions, with reference to international networks of friars, as well as the activities of major agents in and commentators upon this process, such as the sixteenth-century Dominican preacher and hagiographer Serafino Razzi, and with recourse to the visible sources still available to modern researchers. This combination of perspectives and sources, and the concentration on a specific region allows for a proper typology of the cults established, which exhibit a distinctive mixture of cults devoted to universal Dominican Observant saints (such as Vincent Ferrer), and those devoted to local *beatae*, such as the Dominican tertiary and anchoress Osanna from Kotor. Thus, it can be shown how the Dominican Observant reform could take root locally while becoming an integral part of a wider reformist network.

Finally, Emila Jamroziak shows that the history of Observant reforms in the Cistercian order, in fact the first truly organized and institutionalized religious order in Western Christendom, still needs to be written. The

bulk of scholarship on the Cistercian order focuses on the period prior to ca. 1300, and Jamroziak makes clear that this is in various ways a function of a series of scholarly assumptions about a so-called golden age, and concomitant assumptions about the uniformity of the original Cistercian way of life. As a result, later developments and innovations have been almost automatically interpreted as a form of decline, therewith hampering in-depth scholarship on a wide range of reform initiatives, including the highly interesting impact of Observant reforms in the later medieval period. Jamroziak identifies three viable axes of reform that can be fruitfully studied to understand how the Observance touched (parts of) the Cistercian order. In the process, she also shows how some of these developments can only be understood if we recognize the interaction with other movements (such as the *Devotio moderna* and the model of the Carthusian lifestyle), and if we take seriously the role higher education played in some of the most enduring Cistercian reform initiatives.

In many ways, this volume is a testimony of work in progress on topics that need further exploration. Its contributions disclose new aspects of the dynamics of late medieval religious reform, and their manifold societal repercussions. They are offered to the field to provide scholars the opportunity to benefit from the provisional results gained from the investigations undertaken by the authors, and to stimulate the ongoing international discussions on the wider impact of the late medieval Observance, in line with the objectives of the international project network “Observer l’Observance: Diffusion, réseaux et influences des réformes régulières en Europe (fin XIVe – première moitié du XVIe siècle)”. It is my hope that these discussions will not solely reverberate among specialists of late medieval religious culture, but that they also will reach other scholars of the late medieval and early modern world, and can facilitate fertile forms of cross-disciplinary comparison, whether this is a comparison with geographic regions not included in this volume, a comparison with the profile of the cultural production in non-Observant or ‘Conventual’ order branches, or a diachronical comparison with the cultural production in the early Reformation period on all sides of the emerging confessional divide.

I would like to end this introduction with expressing my thanks to several people and institutions. First of all, I would like to applaud Cristina Andenna, Marina Benedetti, Sylvie Duval, Haude Morvan, and Ludovic

Viallet, who were the main drivers behind the international project network “Observer l’Observance”, and therefore laid the foundations for the themes behind the workshops, including the one that resulted in this publication. I also would like to thank my co-editor Pietro Delcorno, who is a shining light in historical scholarship on the Observant world. In addition, I want to underline my debt to the Department of History, Art History and Classics and the Arts Faculty of Radboud University Nijmegen, as well as to the Centre of Medieval Studies of the University of Toronto for the ways they facilitated our activities, and for the scholarly expertise I was able to rely on in the preparation of this volume. I also would like to state my appreciation for the people involved with Radboud University Press, who were willing to take on the publication of our work, and did so with flexibility and enthusiasm. Finally, I want to thank the scholars burdened with the peer-reviews of the individual contributions and the volume as a whole, whose criticisms and suggestions helped to weed-out weaknesses and to strengthen the arguments made in the chapters that follow.

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# Which Rhetoric for which Observance? Provisional Investigations in Fifteenth-Century Italy

*Cécile Caby*

## **Introduction**

Among the many discursive forms implemented by religious orders to construct and exalt the prestige and the perfection of their way of life, particularly in competition with others considered less perfect, there is one that has drawn less attention than others. It concerns the preaching addressed in the first instance to order members at the occasion of specific celebrations gathering fellow friars, significant by their number or by their status in the order. Among such ritual occasions that led to one or more speeches, and among the particular moments that would merit further delineation, and which sometimes also involved lay participants, general and provincial chapters will occupy our attention first and foremost.<sup>1</sup> In fact, their function within the religious orders (for their government and the election

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1 Translation Bert Roest. On the General Chapter as an institution, the point of departure is Florent Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel im hohen Mittelalter. Cisterzienser, Prämonstratenser, Kartäuser und Clunienser*, Vita regularis, 12 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1998). For the Dominicans, see Idem, 'L'originalité des «constitutions primitives» dominicaines', *Divus Thomas* 109:2 (2006) [= *L'origine dell'Ordine dei Predicatori e l'Università di Bologna*], 57-80, and G. R. Galbraith, *The Constitution of the Dominican Order, 1216 to 1360* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1905), Chapter 2.

of superiors), and the attendance they generated provided an ideal opportunity to develop a reflection (and ensuring its publicity) on the state of the order and the means of its growth or reform, as well as on its leaders, their role in the orders' good governance, their qualities, and in reverse, their flaws. It is necessary, for the sake of comprehensiveness, to mention the existence of other occasions when such aspects, or some of them, were vocalized, such as visitations, and the ritual reception of superiors or Cardinal Protectors, yet those will not be studied here.

Generally speaking, this type of preaching to fellow order members has been neglected, as particularly for the mendicant orders much more attention has been paid to their preaching to the populace at large, the importance of which in all respects without doubt has justified such preferential treatment. The few exceptions to this nonetheless show the rich potential of this field of research,<sup>2</sup> notably to investigate how the orders constructed and staged their institutional identity, by privileging certain aspects (modes and mechanisms of government, virtues, illustrious men of the order), and certain choices, thus providing the historian new avenues to understand the complex evolutionary process of Observance in religious orders.

In the context of this contribution, and in the absence of an exhaustive inventory of this type of homiletic performances, I will proceed in a very experimental and provisional manner, by putting forward first of all some initial observations on the essential characteristics of the envisaged source corpus, and following this up in a more in-depth manner with three case studies, chosen equally from Benedictine and from mendicant monastic traditions within fifteenth-century Italy; an essential context considering the issues discussed in this volume, both in terms of the order families in full transformation, and in terms of the oratory practices swept away by the humanist shockwave.

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2 See especially Michael Robson, 'Sermons Preached to the Friars Minor in the Thirteenth Century', in: *Franciscans and Preaching: Every Miracle From the Beginning of the World Came About Through Words*, ed. Timothy J. Johnson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 273-298.

## Signposts for a history of chapter preaching in religious orders (12th-15th centuries)

Even though chapter preaching is widely attested from the late twelfth century onward, for instance in the Cistercian and Victorine orders, modern scholars do not often pay much attention to it, maybe because it is often not mentioned as such in the personal collections of preachers, or in sermon anthologies that contain specimen of this genre.<sup>3</sup> In this regard the classification effort of mendicant friars marks a turning point, which helps, among other things, to isolate within the category of sermons for special occasions those sermons intended for moments related to order governance, and for general and provincial chapter meetings in particular.<sup>4</sup> The corpus on which I base myself here is distinguished by an additional characteristic pertaining to homiletic tastes and practices at the end of the Middle Ages.

From the thirteenth century onward, under the decisive influence of the mendicant orders, this type of preaching had adopted the dominant form of the *sermo modernus*, notwithstanding some nuances and phenomena of hybridization, on the part of monks in particular.<sup>5</sup> In fifteenth-century Italy, one can discern instead a clear transformation in favor of new oratory forms promoted by Humanism; a change that can be perceived both in the mendicant orders, and in some monastic orders for which these types of discourse have been preserved. Simply put, counter to the thematic sermons built on the basis of a biblical theme, a speech in the ‘ancient style’ now became preferable, that is to say conform the models of ciceronian rhetoric or the so-called Second Sophistic School, but also, and especially, in imitation of the way in which the great north-Italian masters of rhetoric in the early fifteenth century, such as Gasparino Barzizza or Guarino of

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3 For a first foray into this issue, see Johan Belaen, Cécile Caby, and Alexis Charansonnet, ‘Prédication en chapitre général et réforme pontificale de la *vita religiosa* au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. À propos des sermons aux chapitres généraux des moines noirs d’Eudes de Châteauroux et Jacques de Furnes’, *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 30 (2019), 37-89.

4 Some examples are given in Cécile Caby, ‘Sienne, 15 août 1462. Prédication en chapitre, ordres mendiants et villes dans l’Italie du Quattrocento’, *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 123 (2021), 339-393: 351-352.

5 For convenience sake, I refer for these developments to *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly M. Kienzle, *Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental*, 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

Verona, proposed to apply these models.<sup>6</sup> This rhetorical transformation of *oratoria sacra* has been underlined and carefully described in a number of pioneering works, such as those of John O'Malley on the preaching at the Roman curia, or those of John McManamon on funerary rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> Yet neither of these scholars have been interested, or only very occasionally, in the role of the religious orders in this rhetorical transformation, let alone in its reception within these orders themselves. From that viewpoint, the works of Carlo Delcorno on the preaching of Augustinian Hermits, or on Franciscan preaching mark an important turning point, in that they underline the extreme variety and fluidity of mendicant oratory formats in fifteenth-century Italy.<sup>8</sup>

Let us be clear: there was not a global and programmed conversion of the religious orders (or certain orders among them) to the new style that from henceforth triumphed in the world of embassies, in the courts and in certain urban republics (such as Florence), but also at ritual occasions in great urban *studia*, where a number of orators who preached in chapter gatherings no doubt had been trained. It nevertheless remains true that the religious orders very quickly seized the social and political opportunities of this new rhetoric adopted in the principal places of power. Moreover, it was the social capital attached to this humanist rhetoric that caused its quick adoption among an elite of friars, often influential in their order and close to circles of political leadership.<sup>9</sup> Several among them very explicitly and

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6 For a definition of humanist rhetoric in the sense adopted in this article, see Clémence Revest, 'Naissance du cicéronianisme et émergence de l'humanisme comme culture dominante: réflexions pour une histoire de la rhétorique humaniste comme pratique sociale', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 125-1 (2013) [<https://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/1192>], with extensive bibliographical references up till 2013.

7 John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome. Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979); John M. MacManamon, *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 1989). I would like to add to this: Lucia Gualdo Rosa, 'Ciceroniano o cristiano? A proposito dell'orazione "de morte christi" di Tommaso Fedra Inghirami', *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 34A (1985) [= *Roma humanistica. Studia in honorem Rev. i adm. Dni Dni Iosaei Ruysschaert*], 52-64.

8 Carlo Delcorno, 'La predicazione agostiniana (sec. XIII-XV)', in: *Gli Agostiniani a Venezia e la chiesa di Santo Stefano* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1997), 87-108; Idem, 'Apogeo e crisi della predicazione francescana tra Quattro e Cinquecento', *Studi francescani* 112 (2015), 399-440.

9 Cécile Caby, 'Pratiques humanistes et ordres religieux dans l'Italie du Quattrocento: quelques jalons', in: *L'humanisme à l'épreuve de l'Europe (XV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. Denis Crouzet, Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, Philippe Desan, and Clémence Revest (Ceyzérieu: Champs Vallon, 2019), 197-

quickly exhibited their understanding of the diversity of genres of public speech made available to them, and the full potential offered by the use of epideictic rhetoric, now dominant at ceremonial occasions. As early as 1419, in answer to a letter by the Augustinian Hermit Andrea Biglia (d. 1435), which voiced complaints about the *surdibus auribus* reception of the speech he had pronounced at the papal court of Martin V, and which he had attached to the letter, the Padua Humanist Sicco Polenton did not hesitate to identify the eloquence of the brother with the art of Cicero, due to which there was no reason to be surprised that it had not succeeded to seduce a public keen on a genre of preaching *allegationibus plenum*.<sup>10</sup>

Reflecting a few years later (before 1430) on his oratory activities in the *Apology* written in his own defense at the behest of the Franciscan Minister General Antonio Massa, Antonio of Rho recalls how he pronounced:

‘...many speeches whether in praise of saints, or at the occasion of patrician burial ceremonies, notably some for the very clement Prince Filippo Maria, Duke of the Milanese, and the Insubri [Lombards], whom I have praised with my eulogies, often in the presence of his senate or in the assemblies of the foremost citizens of that city (...) In these speeches I have avoided word divisions along the style of some our friars, as well as subdivisions and fragments of passages, out of fear to fatigue ears habituated to Cicero. I have also avoided cantilenas that are called rhythms, and which to me sound as if one has in his ears the timid cymbals of young Etrurian girls, or the bells of beggars (...)’<sup>11</sup>

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217; Eadem, ‘Discours académiques et renouvellements des formes de l’éloquence publique dans les ordres mendiants au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle’, in: *Discours académiques. L’éloquence solennelle à l’université entre scolastique et humanisme*, ed. Clemence Revest (Paris: Garnier, 2020), 179-226.

10 ‘Denique ex fine orationis deprehendi, quam surdis auribus auditus sis, qua de re non mirum in modum mirer, cum exoraveris apud homines, quos amplius capatum illud sermonis genus allegationibus plenum, quam Ciceronis ars oblectet.’ Sicco Polenton, *La Catinia, le orazioni e le epistole*, ed. Arnaldo Segarizzi (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d’Arti grafiche, 1899), 97-99: 97. Biglia pronounced his speech between February (when the pope arrived in Florence) and early July 1419, whereas Polenton’s reply to Biglia’s letter dates from 15 July of that year.

11 Antonio da Rho, *Apologia. Orazioni*, ed. Lombardi Giuseppe (Rome: Centro internazionale di Studi Umanistici, 1982), 92-97.

Several lines further down, he describes how he also spoke:

‘..in churches in the manner of religious and, mounted on the pulpit, preached to women and little people. I persuaded them to do penitence for their faults, I glorified virtues, I explained where crimes have been punished and where those who deserve it have been graced and enjoyed eternal life (...)’<sup>12</sup>

Others, who did not feel ready to face this new genre, and yet were aware of its social value, preferred to resort to professional rhetors who could furnish them with their know-how for particular public occasions. There is nothing surprising about the fact that one orator could compose a speech to be performed by another, as mendicant friars had already for a long time shown themselves to be experts in this type of service. The fact that they had to address themselves in turn to specialists of humanist rhetoric, and even more to lay people, underlines the added value and the indispensable character this new type of eloquence had acquired in ceremonial contexts. To limit ourselves to a well-known example, let us recall that Gasparino Barzizza was employed at several junctures by religious people to write for their usage speeches that respected the fashionable stylistic canon: this was particularly the case with respect to a sermon on Saint Francis,<sup>13</sup> composed to be performed by a friar.<sup>14</sup>

Yet by the mid fifteenth-century, the orders could be sure to find within their own ranks orators capable to conform themselves to this new mode of oratory, which provided them with a calling card (and admittedly not the only one) to approach the leading elites, without which their establishments could neither develop themselves nor survive.<sup>15</sup> Hence humanist

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12 Ibidem.

13 *Gasparini Barzizii Bergomatis et Guiniforti filii opera*, ed. Giuseppe Alessandro Furietti (Rome: apud Jo. Mariam Salvioni Typographum Vaticanum in archigymnasio Sapientiae, 1723) I, 45-50. On the speech-writing role of Barzizza, see Clémence Revest, ‘Les discours de Gasparino Barzizza et la diffusion du style cicéronien dans la première moitié du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle. Premiers aperçus’, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 128:1 (2016) [<https://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/2996>].

14 See O’Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 84-85, and Revest, ‘Naissance du cicéronianisme’, the text corresponding with the footnotes 84-87. The manuscript Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 1139, says that this speech on Saint Francis had been delivered ‘a fratre sui ordinis’ (ff. 79v-82r).

15 On the links between (especially Observant) preaching and politics, see Roberto Rusconi, ‘“Predicò in piazza”; politica e predicazione nell’Umbria del ‘400’’, now included in: Idem,

rhetoric penetrated the preaching collections of some of these friars, as well as anonymous collections composed by or for a friar, if not a convent. Quite often the actual innovation is not so much in the typology of speech formats, which retained the principal categories of the great collections from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries while modernizing them (funerary sermons, marriage sermons, thanksgiving speeches, academic speeches, eulogies of saints or princes, etc.), but in the form of the *oratio* adopted in a sometimes systematic fashion. The manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Plut. 89 sup 27, copied in Siena by a Dominican of the local friary, is utterly emblematic in this regard. In this manuscript are copied in a cursive humanist hand various pieces by universally popular authors in this type of rhetorical collections, other pieces that refer back to a Sienese and Tuscan context, but above all a series of anonymous discourses composed between 1435 and 1462 that cover the different formats of *oratoria sacra* (speeches *coram papa*, for the ritual reception of visiting high-ranking ecclesiastics, for the feast of saints, or solemn liturgical feasts, and for university ceremonies).<sup>16</sup>

The most successful discourses circulated at times in rhetorical collections without links to the orders, but typical of the rise of the humanist movement, as even so many master pieces acknowledged to be worthy to circulate among more frequently copied antique or humanist models. Hence, the speech composed for the Dominican provincial chapter of Ancona in 1455 by the Sicilian Dominican Gregorio of Prestomarco (fl. 1451-1474), who had received his formation in Venice and Padua prior to a successful career in his order, is known by a unique surviving copy included in a humanist collection dedicated to the town of Ancona, which had been the topic of particular praise in the discourse of this Friar

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*Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2016), 141-186; Rosa Maria Dessì, 'La prophétie, l'Évangile et l'État. La prédication en Italie au XV<sup>e</sup> et au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in: *La parole du prédicateur. V<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Rosa Maria Dessì and Michel Lauwers (Nice: Z'édicions, 1997), 395-444, and the studies by Letizia Pellegrini, such as 'Tra la piazza e il Palazzo. Predicazione e pratiche di governo nell'Italia del Quattrocento', in: *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013), 109-133; Eadem, 'Prédication et politique dans la péninsule italienne au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle', in: *Preaching and Political Society: From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages / Depuis l'Antiquité tardive jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. Franco Morenzoni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 311-329. See also the upcoming study of Pietro Delcorno on the Franciscain Apollonio Bianchi.

16 For a more detailed description of this manuscript (esp. with regard to academic sermons), see Caby, 'Discours académiques', 199-203.



Preacher.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, some of such celebratory speeches – and those held in chapter meetings of religious orders figure prominently in that category – could be copied in small manuscripts or incunable imprints, destined for wider circulation or to be given as a present, as is occasionally attested by the addition of dedications to prelates or rulers.

In the mendicant orders, chapter meetings most often took place in towns housing the larger order friaries. In the fifteenth century, following the return of the papacy to Rome and the end of the papal schism, it often concerned towns in central and northern Italy, which welcomed such gatherings with pomp and circumstance, deploying all the mechanisms of civic religion. Hence it is not surprising that, in this context, some of the speeches held in chapter – as we just saw in the example concerning Ancona – took the form of a eulogy of the town or its ruler, two speech forms that in fact were in the avant-garde of the humanist oratory revolution.<sup>18</sup>

This is invaluable source material to elucidate a new episode in the relations between mendicant orders and towns (both communes and those with dynastic rulership), all the more important as it is precisely there that a large part of the struggle for influence between different Observant and non-Observant factions within the orders played out. While ready to be discovered, I will not touch upon this category of eulogist chapter speeches here, as both the order and its observant status tend to disappear behind the thanksgiving addressed to the town and its elites, honoring them for their festive reception of such a large assembly of friars. Instead, I want to dwell on another category of chapter speeches, that focused predominantly and explicitly on the order, its good governance, or rather its reform, or alternatively the election of its leader and his officers. This is a category that, counter to the former, is also present in monasticism of the Benedictine

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17 Cited from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3630, ff. 55v-61v (*Oraatio fr. Gregorii Siculi Siracusani, sacrarum litterarum bachalarii Paduani, predicatorum ordinis, habita Anconi* [sic] *in ecclesia cathedrali VI Kl. Iunias M<sup>o</sup>CCCC<sup>o</sup>LV, tempore capituli ad laudem*). On this manuscript, which is an anthology about Ancona realised within the circle of Antonio Costanzi da Fano (1436-1490), see ultimately Felicia Toscano, 'La scrittura latina e greca di Antonio Costanzi da Fano, con osservazioni sul manoscritto Vat. Lat. 3630', in: *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae XXV*, Studi e Testi, 534 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2019), 433-467.

18 Cécile Caby, 'L'Italie des chapitres. Prédication en chapitre et éloge de villes dans les ordres mendiants de l'Italie du Quattrocento', upcoming in *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (2024).

tradition, notably the Camaldolese and Olivetan branches, thereby providing opportunities for comparison.

## **Protecting and glorifying the order: Chapter speech and self-representation of religious orders during the Observant age**

### *A. Unity or Observance, which priority? A Franciscan dilemma*

Let us begin deliberately with an order, that of the Friars Minor, in which reform attempts gave rise to constant tensions, profound differences about the functioning of order government, and finally, to the division of the order into different families.<sup>19</sup> In the background of this tormented history, propaganda was in full swing, giving rise to a considerable body of polemical texts of a different nature: juridical treatises or questions, hagiographical and historical writings, and, naturally, preaching. In this context, chapter preaching provided a privileged occasion of propaganda in favor of one or another way to claim the heritage of Saint Francis. This propaganda was aimed both at the friars present and at the ecclesiastical and lay elites that took part in the public sessions of such chapter meetings (often during great celebratory speeches), the support of whom was absolutely essential for competing order factions.

In 1443, under the pontificate of Eugenius IV, at a moment when the arguments of the ‘terrible war’ that would break out between competing order factions during the subsequent decade were solidifying, a general chapter for all friars was convened at Padua, gathering a large number of participants. The chapter took place under the direction of Alberto of Sarteano, who had been appointed Vicar General of the order by Pope Eugenius IV after the untimely death of the Minister General in February 1442.<sup>20</sup> Alberto was also provincial of the Venice province, and it was in

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19 See on these vicissitudes Mario Fois, ‘I papi e l’osservanza minoritica’, in: *Il rinnovamento del francescanesimo : l’Osservanza* (Assisi: Centro di studi francescani, 1985), 31-105; Pacifico Stella, *Leone X e la definitiva divisione dell’ordine dei minori (OMin.): la bolla Ite vos (29 maggio 1517)* (Grottaferrata: Collegio San Bonaventura, 2001); the collective volume *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013) and the studies of Letizia Pellegrini, in particular: ‘*Observantes de familia*’, in: *Identità francescane agli inizi del Cinquecento* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2018), 87-120; Eadem, ‘Osservanza / osservanze tra continuità e innovazione’, in: *Gli studi francescani. Prospettive di ricerca* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2017), 215-234.

20 See on this chapter Pierre Santoni, ‘Albert de Sarteano observant et humaniste envoyé pontifical à Jérusalem et au Caire’, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge-Temps Modernes*

the latter capacity that he, as he was well-known for his oratory talent, was charged to present the chapter's opening speech. His address, or at least the version that has come down to us,<sup>21</sup> had little in common with the style of the *sermo modernus* still widely used by the friars. It was a discourse – defined in the peroration as *moralem magis quam aut acutam aut excultam aut eruditam orationem* – that conformed quite comprehensively to humanist models, both with regard to its structure (three parts preceded by an *exordium* in the shape of a *captatio benevolentiae*), and with regard to its style and its choice and use of examples from classical antiquity.

Alberto had had many opportunities to master this rhetoric, particularly through his acquaintance with Guarino of Verona and via humanist networks in Northern Italy familiar to him.<sup>22</sup> The main subject of his speech is determined by the principal mission of the general chapter, namely the election of a new Minister General, or in other words a good pastor for the order as a whole. Initially, the orator applies himself to describe the potential candidate as a man of probity, who can become a guardian and a common father in service of the common good of the order.<sup>23</sup> He lists a series of virtues indispensable for a unifying governance

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86:1 (1974), 165-211: 202-206; Lorenzo Di Fonzo, 'Sisto IV. Carriera scolastica e integrazioni biografiche (1414-84)', *Miscellanea Francescana*, 86 (1986), 1-491: 126-131; Stella, *Leone X e la definitiva* divisione, 133-135, as well as the chronicle of Bernardino Aquilano, now accessible in a remarkable new edition by Letizia Pellegrini: *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca dell'Osservanza, con nuova edizione e traduzione a fronte*, ed. Letizia Pellegrini (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2021), 150-155.

21 Bertalot Ludwig, *Initia Humanistica Latina*, Vol. II/1-2, *Prosa* (Tübingen, 1990-2004), n° 17313; Alberto da Sarteano, *Opera omnia*, ed. Franciscus Harold (Rome: Apud Ioannem Baptistam Bussottum, 1688), *Oratio* III, 149-155.

22 A point of departure for information on the preacher remains the slightly dated entry of Enrico Cerulli, 'Berdini Alberto', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 8 (1966), 800–804 (the entries of the DBI are also available online, see: <https://www.treccani.it/biografico/index.html>), the information of which can be updated thanks to Daniele Solvi, 'La missione di Alberto da Sarteano in Egitto (1439-1441) e una lettera di Eugenio IV al sultano', *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia* 72 (2018), 435-456. For his preaching, see Delcorno, 'Apogeo e crisi della predicazione francescana', 460-461, and 467, who mentions the speech *De sanctissimo Eucharistie sermone*, pronounced at the occasion of the 1422 provincial chapter of the Saint Anthony province. Cf. Bertalot, *Initia Humanistica*, II, n° 2853; Alberto da Sarteano, *Opera omnia*, *Oratio* I, 117-136.

23 See on this theme for instance Florent Coste, 'Le silence des agneaux. La normativité pastorale à la lumière de la prédication mendicante sur le Bon Pasteur (Jean 10, 11) aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen Âge*, 129:1 (2017) [<https://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/3509>], and Bénédicte Sère, 'Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis (Jn 10, 11). Le thème du Bon Pasteur au cœur des débats du Grand Schisme', in: *Apprendre, produire, se conduire: le modèle au Moyen Âge*, Congrès de la SHMESP, 45 (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2015), 125-139.

practice – an argumentative thread that runs throughout Alberto’s entire discourse – conversely ruling out tyrannical domination common to lay princely rule. Invoking the authority of Saint Dominic, ‘brother in Christ of our father Saint Francis’, he underlines the dangers of power without flexibility, which would lead to division. The second part is devoted to the means to arrive at such an election of the right candidate (*de adiumentis mediis*), namely the spiritual weapons of charity and peace. He recalls once more the immense task at hand – appointing a *pater communis, pastor ovium Evangelicarum* –, warns against the perils resulting from a bad choice, and invokes as a counter to this once again the importance of charity, peace, concord, truth and unity proclaimed by the institution of the order. These elements constitute the milk with which the Church nourishes its newborn, and the bread with which she nourishes her children. Is it not proof that even the barbarians, who were unaware of the Christian virtues, nevertheless pursued the virtues of peace, concord, friendship, unity, and charity? A case in point – adds the orator – was Scipio Africanus, who had become the object of attention in a recent controversy between Poggio Bracciolini and Guarino.<sup>24</sup>

The third and final part is a type of glorification of the order and its brothers, *progenies Franciscanorum*, or *proles Minorum*, surpassed by no other order, as its diffusion testifies. Alberto calls upon the chapter participants to set their sight on the blessings of divine providence bestowed on them, their predecessors and their saints. Furthermore, he invokes Saint Francis, and he invites Saint Anthony, who is honored by the local friars and the town of Padua, to join his brethren and to preside himself over the chapter meeting (*huic capitulo nostro praesideas, illud regas*). Thus, by virtue of Anthony’s saintly relics, the chapter participants can depart joyfully whereas they had arrived distressed by insurmountable difficulties. He finally exhorts the participants to straighten up and to save their order from disaster and infamy, and to enhance its glory by restoring and rebuilding it. Repeating his exhortations to choose a saintly, peaceful, clement, prudent and just man, Alberto of Sarteano slips in before his conclusion a reference to Pope Eugenius IV, to whom, he says, the friars’ choice will

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24 Recently studied in Davide Canfora, *La controversia di Poggio Bracciolini e Guarino Veronese su Cesare e Scipione* (Florence: Olschki, 2001).

cause either grief or joy. Contrary to these papal wishes, at the end of a heated chapter, where, if we can believe Bernardino Aquilano (who was admittedly very partial to Alberto), participants even came to blows, the chapter electors (among whom were no representatives of friars *de familia*), did not choose the Vicar General. Instead, they appointed the Milanese friar Antonio Rusconi, who incidentally had received the support of the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti.<sup>25</sup>

There survives another speech, pronounced during yet another very large general chapter, gathered at Rome under papal tutelage during Pentecost 1458.<sup>26</sup> Calixtus III (1455-1458), whose pontificate marked another curial stage in the war that pitted the *fratres de familia* and the remainder of the order, actually controlled the chapter from start to finish. Following the death of Minister General Giacomo Boscaglino of Mozzanica, who had been elected at Bologna during Pentecost 1454,<sup>27</sup> the pope organized the appointment of a Vicar General of his choice, namely Giacomo Sarzuela, and secured the transfer of the chapter's meeting place, initially planned for Venice, to Rome. These are all maneuvers that Observant sources, notably Bernardino of Fossa, did not fail to recognize as a pontifical strategy to impose his own candidate.<sup>28</sup>

The chapter's opening speech was pronounced on 20 May 1458 by a certain friar Antonio Conti of Prato.<sup>29</sup> This little-known character, unquestionably a confidant of the deceased Minister General and of the

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25 Sara Fasoli, *Perseveranti nella regolare osservanza. I predicatori osservanti nel ducato di Milano (secc. XV-XVI)* (Milan: Biblioteca francescana, 2011), 32; Eadem, 'Rusconi (Rusca) Antonio', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 89 (2017). For clarity's sake and according to common historiographical usage, I will use anachronistically the term 'Conventuals' for members of Franciscan order who did not join the Observant family (*fratres de familia* or Observants).

26 I have not yet located any surviving speeches connected with the chapter of Milan from the previous year. On the general chapter of Rome, see Di Fonzo, 'Sisto IV', 233, 237-242; Stella, *Leone X e la definitiva divisione*, 154.

27 On this Minister General and his government, the point of departure is Anna Morisi Guerra, 'Boscaglino, Giacomo', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 13 (1971), 166-167.

28 See, for instance, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca*, ed. Pellegrini, 230-237. Bernardino stresses the abundance of gifts the pope bestowed on the chapter. However, one wants to interpret these rewards, a unequivocal and countable trace of them is found in Cesare Cenci, 'Documenta vaticana ad franciscuales spectantia ann. 1385-1492. Pars IV: documenta vaticana ann. 1447-1458', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 93 (2000), 217-243.

29 This speech, listed in Bertalot, *Initia Humanistica*, II, n° 4088, has survived (under benefit of inventory) in two manuscript versions, of which I prepare a critical edition: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.I.201, ff. 65-70; Erfurt-Gotha, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek, MS Ch. B. 239, ff. 167r-171v.

future Minister General Francesco della Rovere, and hence quite favorable to the 'Conventual' community of the order, very clearly stood out for his humanistic oratory talents.<sup>30</sup> He put this rhetorical skill to work at the Araceli in front of his order's chapter participants, the Cardinals and Pope Calixtus III.<sup>31</sup> From the start, the orator puts his discourse under the sign of the emotion generated by the rapid succession of deaths of three Ministers General, without doubt a sign of divine wrath and of the storm the order had passed through. After engaging in a bitter lamentation, the orator yields the floor to the order itself (*mater nostra religio*), which he imagines to appear to him under the features of a venerable bereaved and grieving matron, who bemoans her ungrateful children. It forms the start of a long rant that follows the list of complaints of this mother betrayed by her sons forgetful of their vocation, their profession, their origin, and the life of their founders. Conversely, the old woman, *figura* of the order, describes what would make her happy, in particular the return of all friars to obedience to their common father Saint Francis, as a single body.

Following an ultimate appeal to choose the Minister General without giving in to passions, nor to personal preferences, and by not pursuing individual benefits but the common good, the mother figure disappears out of the orator's sight, marking a return to the present and the reality of the election. The orator then sketches a portrait of the future Minister General, based all the way on an anaphoric deployment of the verb *eligite*, followed by a description of the virtues of the ideal elected person, or, by negation,

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30 I only have been able to collect very limited information on this historical figure, who without doubt should be identified with the brother Anthony who is mentioned as a scribe of the Minister General Giacomo of Mozzanica in the accounting book of the Bologna friary for the 7th of February, 1454 (Bologna, Archiginnasio, MS B 492, f. 68 cit. in *Chartularium studii Bononiensis S. Francisci (saec. XIII-XVI)*, ed. Celestino Piana, *Analecta Franciscana*, 11 (Quaracchi-Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1970), 314). Additional information has to be derived from a few biographical allusions in his *orationes* conserved in the manuscript Erfurt-Gotha, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek, MS Ch. B. 239, ff. 108r-199v (*passim*). In an upcoming publication, I will come back to this collection, the oratory production, and the humanistic style of this friar originating from Prato.

31 The manuscript witness Erfurt-Gotha, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek, MS Ch. B. 239 is dated by the same hand that copied the majority of the speeches of the same orator: 'Habitio Rome 1458 XX<sup>a</sup> maii, per scribam meum magistrum Antonium Contes de Prato in electione generalis ministri magistri Iacobi Sarzuelle. Transcripta ibidem XX<sup>a</sup> decembris 1460 in Sancto Salvatore de Unda, tempore quo ibidem pro ordine procuravi'. The order procurator who resided *ex officio* at San Salvatore in Onda could be Francesco della Rovere, who held that function between ca. September 1450 and September 1461. Cf. Di Fonzo, 'Sisto IV', 258-259.

the vices such a person had to shed. The peroration of this long speech is intertwined with an invocation to Saint Francis, *comunem omnium nostrorum patrem*, and to the Holy Spirit, so that they together may deign to inspire the voters just as efficaciously as Pope Calixtus had been, by choosing the Catalan friar Jaime Zarzuela as their leader. The subsequent exclusion of the friars *de familia* from the voting procedure assured the election of this Catalan friar, yet at the same time the Observants gained the right to vote their own Vicar General. The friars *de familia* defended henceforth first and foremost the autonomy of their way of life. To reuse the very insightful terms of a (hostile) comment on the papal bull *Illius cuius in pace*, a bull of compromise that Calixtus III had issued two years earlier: ‘they hardly care about the Minister General, but have recourse to princes, lords and the common people’ (‘de generali ministro minime curant, sed ad principes, dominos et populum recursum habent...’).<sup>32</sup> Yet their victory was still far from certain, and the main stage was still occupied by the Conventuals, for whom the only valid observance was the one that respected order unity. These same Conventuals cemented their position by claiming to be the exclusive heirs of the order founder.

In yet another sermon, which cannot be contextualized and maybe was just a model sermon for the election of a minister, the same orator proposed an exposition of some sort on the three Franciscan vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. This exposition introduced an exhortation to choose a good pastor, not unlike the capitular discourse from 1458.<sup>33</sup> The chosen hierarchy of the Franciscan vows alluded to is not without significance, for it is to obedience, mentioned in the first place, that the orator attributes the power of the order’s dissemination throughout the world: ‘Could our Seraphic Francis, the general of our army, have gathered in a single profession soldiers from so many different nations, without putting first the capacity

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32 Letizia Pellegrini, ‘Le linee della ricerca’, in: *Fratres de familia. Gli insediamenti dell’Osservanza minoritica nella penisola italiana (sec. XIV-XV)*, ed. Letizia Pellegrini and Gian Maria Varanini, *Quaderni di storia religiosa*, 18 (Verona: Cierre, 2011), 9-25: 13; Fois, ‘I papi e l’osservanza minoritica’, 71-76 (for the politics of Calixtus III).

33 Erfurt-Gotha, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek, MS Chart. B. 239, ff. 157r-161r. Signaled in Bertalot, *Initia Humanistica*, II, n° 14044. A modern hand has added the title *Sermo de tribus votis regule ordinis minorum et de electione futuri pastoris generalis aut ministri provincialis*. I will come back to this sermon at another occasion.

to obey?<sup>34</sup> The vow of poverty is touched upon last, and the orator presents it first and foremost as an object of contemplation and praise, staying far away from the divisive debates over its definition.

*B. The order of Augustinian Hermits, or the peaceful illusion of a continuous history*

The second example that I want to discuss briefly, is taken from the order of Augustinian Hermits, in which unity was somehow maintained, notwithstanding the institutional tensions triggered by the birth of Observant congregations in ways similar to those that ripped apart the order of Friars Minor. Among others, Carlo Delcorno has stressed the role of Augustine as model and acclaimed founder of the Augustinian Hermits, which as such was a papal creation from the mid thirteenth century. He also has pointed at the fluidity of rhetorical forms applied by the Augustinian friars, and notably their early adoption of humanist eloquence.<sup>35</sup> We can in fact credit Andrea Biglia for the composition of one of the first general chapter sermons that adopted a humanist rhetoric, pronounced at the occasion of the Augustinian general chapter of Bologna from 1425.<sup>36</sup> The speech, presented in the form of an admonition on the order's discipline, must have had some resonance, since at least one copy of it, adapted for another mendicant order, is found in what is probably a Dominican sermon collection originating from the Marches (Rimini, Cesena, Forlì).<sup>37</sup>

Within the same Augustinian order consideration might be given to the speech of Paracletto Malvezzi for the chapter of Tolentino and the election of the order General that took place there in May 1459,<sup>38</sup> but

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34 Erfurt-Gotha, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek, Chart. B. 239, f. 157v: 'Potuisset dux exercitus nostri, seraficus Franciscus, tot diversarum nationum copias unum in votum congregare, eorum mentes flectere, ad labores gravissimos perpeti, ad queque aspera substinendum impellere, omnia pericula agredi et fortissimo animo substinere, nisi ad hec omnia perferenda obedientie facultas intercessisset?'

35 Delcorno, 'La predicazione agostiniana', passim.

36 Andrea Biglia, *De disciplina ordinis ammonitio habita in capitulo Bononiensi*, edited in Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Karl A. Gersbach, 'Sermon of Andrea Biglia, OSA, to the General Chapter of Bologna, 1425: *De Disciplina Ordinis Ammonitio*', *Analecta Augustiniana*, 47 (2004), 5-51.

37 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Misc. 55, ff. 15r-23r (cf. Bertalot, *Initia Humanistica* II, 12626): sine nomine, *oratio in capitulo generali*. This copy was unknown to the editors of the text (see previous note).

38 *Fratris Paracliti Cornetani in capitulo generali Tolentini celebrato de eligendo priore generali*: Yale, Univ. Library, MS 188, ff. 104r-110r (not yet consulted). On the preacher, see Claudia



above all to the intense production of speeches for general chapters by the future General Ambrogio Massari (1432-1485).<sup>39</sup> The latter's two rhetorical anthologies conserve in fact a speech on the election of a new General for the general chapter of Bologna in 1470,<sup>40</sup> and another one for an unidentified provincial chapter.<sup>41</sup>

Yet it is another speech, composed by the Augustinian friar Basilio of Riva (1444-1505) for the 1468 Modena chapter of the Observant congregation of Lombardy that I would like to focus on. Having entered the order in 1462, Basilio was still a young recruit when the chapter took place. His performance must have been remarkable considering the speech invitations that he received afterwards, which made him one of the prominent mouthpieces of the congregation.<sup>42</sup> At the Modena chapter, gathered on

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Corfiati, 'Paraceto da Corneto', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 81 (2014), 279-281, and Paraceto Malvezzi da Corneto, *Bucolicum Carmen ad Pium II Papam*, ed. Claudia Corfiati (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2016), both of which refer to older studies. The chapter of Tolentine chose Alessandro Oliva of Sassoferrato (Gabriele Raponi, *Il cardinale agostiniano A. Oliva da Sassoferrato, 1407-1463* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1965) [a re-issue of articles that appeared in *Analecta Agostiniana* 25 (1962), 89-143; 26 (1963), 194-293; 27 (1964), 59-166]; Roberta Monetti, 'Oliva, Alessandro', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 79 (2013), 208-210 [[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alessandro-oliva\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alessandro-oliva_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)].

- 39 On Ambrogio Massari and his oratory production, see: Cécile Caby, 'Ambrogio Massari da Cora, percorso biografico e prassi culturale', in: *La carriera di un uomo di curia nella Roma del Quattrocento. Ambrogio Massari da Cori, agostiniano. Cultura umanistica e committenza artistica*, ed. Carla Frova, Raimondo Michetti and Domenico Palombi (Rome: Viella, 2008), 23-67; Eadem, 'Les discours de *laudibus theologie* de l'Augustin Ambrogio Massari pour le *Studium de Pérouse*', *Annali di storia delle università italiane* 18 (2014), 75-89; Eadem, 'Médecine et astrologie dans deux anthologies rhétoriques mendiantes de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'*Oratio de laudibus medicinae* et le *Principium in legendam astrologiam* d'Ambrogio Massari de Cori († 1485)', in: *Les Savoirs dans les ordres mendiants en Italie (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, ed. Joël Chandelier and Aurélien Robert (Rome: École française de Rome, 2023), 518-530.
- 40 Bertalot, *Initia Humanistica Latina* II, n° 1507. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS Lat. 894, ff. 54r-63v (*Oratio de creando novo generali in generali capitulo Bononie, anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo septuagesimo celebrato habita*), and Paris, BnF, MS Lat. 5621, ff. 89v-97r (*Ambrosii Chorani ordinis divi Augustini de eligendo novo generali Bononie in generali capitulo, anno Domini millesimo CCCC<sup>o</sup>LXX<sup>o</sup> celebrato*).
- 41 Incipit: *Prestantissimi patres, quanquam mihi semper frequens conspectus vester multo iocundissimus et hic locus adagendum amplissimus*: Modena, Bibl. Estense, MS Lat. 894, ff. 197v-208v.
- 42 On Observant congregations in the Order of Augustian Hermits, and the Lombard congregation in particular, see: Katherine Walsh, 'The Observance: Sources for a History of the Observant Reform Movement in the Order of Augustinian Friars in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 31 (1977), 40-67; Giancarlo Andenna, 'Aspetti politici della presenza degli Osservanti in Lombardia in età sforzesca', in: *Ordini religiosi e società politica in Italia e Germania nei secoli XIV e XV*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini and Kaspar Elm, (Bologna: il Mulino, 2001), 331-372.

the third Sunday after Easter, his discourse unfolds from the start as a eulogy of the order of Augustinian Hermits.<sup>43</sup> The *narratio* kicks off by announcing the two characteristics that set this order apart in dignity: namely (1) the excellent lifestyle of its founders and the perseverance which the order had demonstrated in imitating them without falling in decline (ff. 72r-73b); and (2) the wealth of privileges bestowed on the order. In what follows the speech develops as a eulogy of the order's eremitical origins (ff. 74r-76v), and the paternity of Augustine of Hippo as its *fundator et institutor*, settling in passing the debate over this issue with the Regular Canons (ff. 77r-80r). The orator then devotes himself to the historical development of the order, which was spared any suspicion of degeneration. It is against this background that he inserts a procession of the order's saints and their miraculous power (ff. 83r-84v), followed by another parade of its doctors (ff. 84v-85v), authentic jewels of the order, also because by and large they were the order's Priors General, whose names from Giles of Rome (d. 1316) to Paolo Veneto (d. 1449) are ticked off without additional details.<sup>44</sup> He then puts on display for the appreciation of the audience the number of churches, friaries and *studia*, as well as the order's privileges (ff. 85v-86r). Before concluding, the orator pretends to apologize for dwelling on one of the most unique and remarkable members of the order that God recently gave rise to in Lombardy, namely the Observant Lombard congregation (f. 86v). Indeed, the congregation has extended the branches of its renown in various order provinces all the way up to Modena, the city that the speaker briefly eulogizes, and that is privileged to receive within its walls such a gathering – i.e., the friars' chapter – worthy of the Roman Sen-

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43 Bergamo, Biblioteca civica Angelo Mai, MS 264 (A 86), ff. 72r-89r: Basilius de Ripa, *Oratio in capitulo Mutinensi habita 1468* ; Inc. *Si ea tantummodo attenderem, optimi patres, qua materia impresentiarum susceptae gravitatem altitudinem gravitatemque commendant...* See L. Sq., 'Basilius de Ripa', in : *CALMA*, now on line [<http://www.mirabileweb.it/calma/basilius-de-ripa-n-1444-ca-m-1505/161>]. On the chapter, see Donato Calvi, *Delle memorie istoriche della Congregazione Osservante di Lombardia dell'Ordine Eremitano di S. Agostino* (Milan, 1669), 102. The scholar does not mention the speech, which he must have known very well and uses elsewhere as a reservoir of hagiographical references (*Ibidem*, 24, 35, 48).

44 It would be worthwhile to return to these lists, in particular to compare them with those compiled by Ambrogio Massari in the second part (*de sanctis ac beatis huius sacratissimi ordinis* ff. 112v-115v) of his *Defensorium ordinis heremitarum s. Augustini* (Rome: Georgius Herolt, 1482) [ISTC ic00877000], but also in the speech for the election of the Prior General at the chapter of Bologna in 1470 (Modena, Bibl. Estense, MS Lat. 894, ff. 47r-56v: 53v-54v ; Paris, BnF, MS Lat. 5621, ff. 89v-97r : 94v-95v).

ate (f. 87v). The speech subsequently touches upon a gallery of illustrious men from the Lombard congregation, far superior by their holiness to the Ancients (f. 88v), and this then leads to the final peroration (ff. 88v-89r).

This eulogy gathers the order in its complete chronological development since its Augustinian foundation, and the recent Observant congregation features in it as a linear and peaceful progression, and it is a presentation in which all tensions or divisions were as if erased by the benefits of epideictic oratory. It amounts to a strategy of negating ruptures, in line with a period in which the Lombard Observance no longer had to fight for its own existence, and in line with an order where Observant congregations more or less had found an institutional bedding.<sup>45</sup>

### C. *Monteoliveto, or observance without Observance*

The order of Monteoliveto was founded in the mid fourteenth century as a compromise solution for the institutionalization of various, in some cases very radical regular reform movements. Faced by the juridical constraints of an institutionalization under the rule of Saint Benedict,<sup>46</sup> the general chapter saw itself quite precociously as an essential platform of Olivetan identity, therewith proposing a collegial alternative to the abbatial government of the Benedictine rule. Beyond the customary mandate of the general chapter as a body of government and the level where the *ius proprium* of religious orders was formulated, the Olivetan general chapter, usually convening at Monteoliveto, had the task to elect or to reconfirm the Abbot General. In the new order this was a fixed-term appointment, in patent contradiction with the text of the Benedictine rule, yet in accordance with the reformatory tendencies at the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>47</sup>

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45 All things considered, it is possible to link this reading with the one adopted by Letizia Pellegrini in her comparison of the chronicle of Bernardino of Fossa and the *Specchio de l'Ordine Minore* of Giacomo Oddi. See Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca*, ed. Pellegrini, 71-72.

46 For a recent revision of the context of the origins of the order, see Michele Pellegrini, 'La conversione di frate Bernardo. Realtà e memoria delle origini olivetane nella Toscana del primo Trecento', in: *Monte Oliveto 1319-2019. Convegno di studio per il VII centenario di fondazione dell'Abbazia*, ed. Giancarlo Andenna and Mauro Tagliabue, Italia Benedettina, 45 (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte, 2020), 29-70.

47 For these aspects and what follows, see: Cécile Caby, 'Ad pinguisimum montem olivarum devenistis: predicare in capitolo generale a Monte Oliveto nel Quattrocento', in: *Convegno di studio per il VII centenario di fondazione dell'Abbazia, Monte Oliveto Maggiore, 9-10 maggio 2019* (Cesena: Badia Santa Maria del Monte, 2022), 121-141.

The preaching taking place during such chapter meetings is exceptionally well-documented, both by the order customaries, and by the registration, in any case from 1455 onward, of the sermon texts themselves in a three-volume *Liber sermonum*, the first of which covers the years 1455 to 1599.<sup>48</sup> For the fifteenth century, the registered texts are all in Latin, and they use a classicist language and style in conformation with a humanist rhetorical structure, with the exception of the first one, which has a hybrid structure. The orators, all members of the order at the beginning of their career, originated for the most part from elite families in north-Italian towns, such as Ferrara, Verona, Bologna or Milan, where this type of rhetoric had been in use since the beginning of the century.

The topics raised in these speeches are sometimes determined by the composition of the attending public (not only prelates, but also simple monks: in this time period one for each member community), and sometimes by the objective of the gathering: the reform of the order, and more immediately, the election or the reconfirmation of the mandate of the Abbot General. Based on this, we find a recurrent structure in the speeches, which consists of first addressing the prelates, and then the other participants, to illustrate the virtues and the competences of both groups separately, but also to caution them against the vices that threaten these different groups, and by consequence, the order as a whole. In this context sometimes also surfaces the topic of *scientia* and the studies of the friars, which otherwise commonly pops up in discussions about order reform.<sup>49</sup>

Many speeches explicitly address the issue of the election of the Abbot General: every other chapter is in fact devoted to it, whereas the others – barring exceptional circumstances, such as the death of the Abbot General in charge – are convoked to (re)confirm the Abbot in charge after the two first years of his mandate. It is a practice that the orators in

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48 Archivio dell'Abbazia di Monte Oliveto maggiore (from now on AMOM), *Liber sermonum* I.

49 For the Franciscans, see: Letizia Pellegrini, 'Tra *sancta rusticitas e humanae litterae*: La formazione culturale dei frati nell'Osservanza italiana del Quattrocento', in: *Osservanza francescana e cultura tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento: Italia e Ungheria a confronto*, ed. Francesca Bartolacci and Roberto Lambertini (Rome: Viella, 2014), 33-52 and Bert Roest, 'Sub *humilitatis titulo sacram scientiam abhorrentes*: Franciscan Observants and the Quest for Education', in: *Rules and Observance. Devising Forms of Communal Life*, ed. M. Breitenstein et al. (Berlin: LIT, 2014), 79-106. More broadly: Pietro Delcorno, 'Quomodo discet sine docente? Observant efforts towards Education and Pastoral Care', in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James Mixson and Bert Roest (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 147-184.

fact paint in eulogist terms, conversely stigmatizing the drawbacks of the for-life appointments responsible for the decline of other monastic orders. This was an extremely topical issue in the monastic world of the fifteenth century, not least because of the direct relationship between the for-life appointments of abbots and the phenomenon of the commendatory abbot. In 1492 the chapter orator, seeking to reap the admiration of his audience, compared the mon CH010 ks of Monte Oliveto with the Old Testament patriarchs, who lived in tents, without a fixed abode, just as the Olivetan monks, thanks to the *annuas mutationes familiarum* of the latter.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in the course of their speeches, the orators tend to build up and expound on the central aspects of the Olivetan memorial identity, including a glorification of Monte Oliveto and particularly its name, its privileged connection with the Virgin and with the illustrious men of the order family.

Sermon by sermon the Olivetan reform constructed its self-representation around the claim of its exclusive incarnation of monastic Observance. Hence, the orator preaching at the chapter of 1486, following a praise of the growth of the congregation, acclaims its exceptional fidelity to the primitive virtues of *simplicitas, continentia, paupertas, austeritas* and *rigor*. Far better, the congregation had to do nothing more than to reinforce the *regularis sacrosancta observatio*. Nevertheless, many dangers were looming, notably the vice of ambition that had destructed so many towns, republics and congregations. It suffices, continues the orator, to open one's eyes and to look at the most famous regular congregations, such as those of Camaldoli, Vallombrosa, or Cervara, all of which now had fallen into decadence!<sup>51</sup> In the chapter speech of 1488, the comparison with other monastic congregations – this time not mentioned by name – is again used to illustrate the superiority of Monte Oliveto, which merits to be called 'the fertile mountain where God lives willingly'.<sup>52</sup>

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50 AMOM, *Liber sermonum* I, c. 38: 'Illi etiam beati viri in tabernaculis commorati sunt, vos per annuas mutationes familiarum quas facitis, ostenditis velut in tabernaculis degentes, ostenditis in terris neque aliquid proprium habendum esse illi qui divinę philosophię studet, sed semper promovendum non tam de loco ad locum, quam de scientia inferiorum ad scientiam perfectorum'.

51 AMOM, *Liber sermonum* I, cc. 64-70. See Caby, 'Ad pinguisimum montem olivarum devenistis', 137-138.

52 AMOM, *Liber sermonum* I, c. 54: 'Sed ecce iam mundus congregationibus plenus est, quę (ni fallor) religioni debitam ac competentem vitam vivunt. Inter quas nostram Montis Oliveti tenisse impręsentiarumque (aliarum pace dixerim) reor tenere principatum. Quapropter dicere

## Concluding remarks

The sample discussed in this article is no doubt too limited to support any definite and unequivocal conclusions. Nevertheless, it seems already possible to acknowledge how humanist rhetoric, due to its specific characteristics – in particular its ceremonial and eulogist dimensions – helped in staging the orders and their religious observance, founded on a common base of representations. This concerned, first of all, a common base of binary oppositions, in themselves rather stale, but which some recurrent rhetorical effects were able to rehabilitate: on the one side a set of virtues – in particular obedience, unity and concord – associated with good superiors and virtuous subjects worthy of praise, and the description of which should engender admiration; on the other side a group of vices – notably *divisio* – associated with bad superiors and/or rebellious subjects, deserving instead *vituperatio*. Second, it concerned a common foundation of historical proofs, supported by continuities and ruptures in the orders' development, the praise of a golden age of origin (a kind of *mos maiorum* acclimated to a regular context), illustrious order members of the past, but also of the present, and optionally the treatment of polemical and divisive topics and the deploration of the misfortunes of the times (the practice of creating commendatory abbots in the world of monks, and the competition and divisions between multiple factions in the bosom of the mendicant orders).

In this respect, the adoption of humanist oratory practices (as well as other humanist practices, such as the iconic genres of the dialogue or the lives of illustrious men) functioned for the religious orders, or at least for specific groups within them, as a socially efficacious instrument in service of affirmative strategies for a model of religious life that claimed – often in a polemic fashion – the conservation or reactivation of the original *propositum* and its perfection, whether or not this model subsequently triumphed in the guise of an institutionalized Observant movement. These were tools of distinction for ecclesiastical elites, but also for lay elites, capa-

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audeo Montem istum vere pinguissimum, in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare [Psalm 67:16], in quo etiam bonum est nobis esse, si vos, patres conscripti et fratres devotissimi, nullam legem, nullas constitutiones, nullos denique optimos mores a maioribus observatos violatum iri decreveritis, et insuper si quæ religionem augent et conservant, a nostro non erunt collegio aliena'. For other examples, see Caby, *Ad pinguissimum montem olivarum devenistis*, 137-138.

ble of appreciation of this new type of public speech, and in the position to favor those who wielded it. They very often were the tools of the winners of the moment, that is to say of those whose political and social skills (of which the rhetorical devices examined in this paper were a part) contributed (permanently or only temporarily) to relegate others to the necessarily condemnable category of destroyers of unity, or worse still, opponents of perfection.

# An Amphibious Identity: Apollonio Bianchi between Observance and Humanism

Pietro Delcorno

## Introduction

Apollonio Bianchi was a Franciscan Observant preacher, active in the north of Italy, where he died in 1450, the year of Bernardino of Siena's canonization.<sup>1</sup> His profile offers an unusual perspective on the Franciscan Observance in the crucial transition period from the leadership of Bernardino of Siena (d. 1444) to that of Giovanni of Capestrano (d. 1456). The study of Apollonio's life offers a concrete possibility to follow the recent invitation to go 'beyond the dazzle of the halos',<sup>2</sup> that is to overcome once and for all the long-lasting hagio-mythology of the 'four columns' of the Italian

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1 This contribution summarizes and further develops some of the main findings on this friar presented in Pietro Delcorno and Marco Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante: Frate Apollonio Bianchi († 1450)', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 134:1 (2022), 127-164. Unless otherwise stated, translations from Latin and Italian texts are mine. This publication is part of the project 'Lenten Sermon Bestsellers: Shaping Society in Late Medieval Europe (1470-1520)' (project number VI.Veni.191H.018) of the Veni research programme financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

2 Letizia Pellegrini, 'Osservanza / osservanze tra continuità e innovazione', in: *Gli studi francescani. Prospettive di ricerca* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2017), 215-234: 225. See also Letizia Pellegrini, 'Observantes de familia', in: *Identità francescane agli inizi del Cinquecento* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2018), 87-120. As introduction to the Italian Franciscan Observance, see *I frati osservanti e la società in Italia nel secolo XV* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013) and Maria Teresa Dolso, 'L'Osservanza francescana: 'una restaurazione difficile'', *Il Santo* 56 (2016), 7-27.



Franciscan Observance,<sup>3</sup> by recovering the complex dynamics and multiple transformations of this movement. A profitable way to achieve this goal is by investigating also less prominent (and even rather obscure) friars, who were never at the forefront of the movement and yet constituted its actual backbone, the rank and file members active on the ground.<sup>4</sup>

However, the case of Apollonio shows us something more. The fragmentary information about his life and his works allows us to see a friar able to address the crowds with spectacular bonfires of vanities while, at the same time, he composed orations, treatises, and letters following the rules of the humanistic rhetoric, addressing princes and cardinals in the most qualifying cultural forms of his time.<sup>5</sup> Apollonio's consciously hybrid cultural identification was expressed by adopting specific values and discursive practices.<sup>6</sup> Hence, his profile offers an ideal basis to investigate the multifaceted relationship between Observance and humanism (each of

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3 The expression is famously used by friar Mariano of Firenze (d. 1523), in Idem, 'Compendium chronicarum fratrum Minorum', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 3 (1910), 700-715: 707. In Mariano's firmament, the stars are Bernardino of Siena, Giovanni of Capestrano, Alberto of Sarteano, and Giacomo della Marca.

4 Recent studies that go in this direction are: Marco Arosio, *Bartolomeo da Colle di Val d'Elsa, predicatore dell'Osservanza francescana. Uno studio storico-filosofico*, ed. Andrea Nannini (Rome: Aracne, 2017); Pietro Delcorno, 'All'ombra del gigante: il Monte di Pietà nell'azione di Timoteo da Lucca e Michele d'Acqui', in: *Credito e Monti di Pietà tra medioevo ed età moderna: un bilancio storiografico*, ed. Pietro Delcorno and Irene Zavattoni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020), 245-280, and in particular Letizia Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca dell'Osservanza con nuova edizione e traduzione a fronte* (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2021), 13-100.

5 An overview of the works of Apollonio is given in Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 146. On the socio-cultural relevance of the use of these discursive tools, see Cécile Caby, 'Pratiques humanistes et ordres religieux dans l'Italie du Quattrocento: quelques jalons', in: *L'humanisme à l'épreuve de l'Europe (XVe-XVIe siècle): Histoire d'une transmutation culturelle*, ed. Denis Crouzet et al. (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2019), 197-217, Cécile Caby, 'Discours académiques et renouvellements des formes de la parole publique dans l'ordres mendiants au XVe siècle', in: *Discours académiques. L'éloquence solennelle à l'université entre scolastique et humanisme*, ed. Clémence Revest (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020), 179-226, and Clémence Revest, 'Romam veni': *Humanisme et papauté à la fin du Grand Schisme* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2021), 318-322. Revest convincingly underlines how humanism as 'révolution rhétorique' was not only a literary or stylistic phenomenon, but first and foremost the affirmation of 'une convention culturelle dominante (en une culture légitime) appuyée sur un modèle rhétorique mis au service du pouvoir et incorporé dans la matrice des imaginaires sociaux' (ivi, 243). On that, see also the contribution by Cécile Caby in the present volume.

6 In this contribution, I use *identification* as «processual, active term» to clarify that *identity* should not be considered as something fixed and to point out «the agents that do the identifying»; see on that Rogers Brubaker & Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond Identity', *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 1-47: 14.

them already a dynamic phenomenon per se, as we know), a relationship that was marked by appropriations and competition, exchanges and tensions.<sup>7</sup>

The main characteristic of Apollonio is precisely this ‘amphibious’ identity/identification, that is, his capacity to feel at home in two environments and to manage different cultural tools.<sup>8</sup> For other friars belonging to a sort of restricted ‘humanistic aristocracy’ within the Franciscan order, scholars have noted a certain uneasiness when facing the most popular forms of itinerant preaching.<sup>9</sup> According to the sources available, this tension does not emerge in Apollonio.<sup>10</sup> While the historical sources present Apollonio as a popular preacher, able to adopt flamboyant techniques to get the attention of his audience, his most significant text – the *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia* (*Booklet about the superiority of poor life*)<sup>11</sup> – turns out to be a

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7 For an insightful analysis of this relationship, see Cécile Caby, ‘Al di là dell’Umanesimo religioso’: Umanisti e Chiesa nel Quattrocento’, in: *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L’Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell’Osservanza*, ed. Pietro Messa et al. (Assisi: Porziuncola, 2009), 15-33, and Carlo Delcorno, ‘Apogeo e crisi della predicazione francescana tra Quattro e Cinquecento’, *Studi francescani* 112 (2015), 399-440, in part. 428-438. See also Pietro Delcorno, ‘Quomodo discet sine docente?: Observant Efforts towards Education and Pastoral Care’, in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and beyond*, ed. James Mixson & Bert Roest (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 147-184: 158-164.

8 I borrow this metaphor from Peter Burke, who defined mendicant friars, and in particular preachers, as ‘amphibious or bi-cultural: namely men of the university as well as men of the market-place’, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* [1978] (Furham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 109.

9 Delcorno, ‘Apogeo e crisi’, 429 speaks of ‘una sorta di aristocrazia umanista’, with reference to friars such as Antonio of Rho, Alberto of Sarteano, and Lorenzo Traversagni. On the cultural shock that preaching in rural areas may have been for the most learned friars, see Caby, ‘Discours académiques’, 215. However, this issue should not be generalized, since several preachers did not refuse to preach in villages and secondary centers, as attested for Giacomo della Marca and Bernardino of Feltre.

10 Likewise, Antonio of Rho (d. 1450/53) recalls in his *Apologia* how he was accustomed to radically change his rhetorical style according to the different audiences, thus to address princes and urban elites with the new humanist rhetoric, while preaching to the people according to the most consolidated pastoral topics; see on this the contribution by Caby in the present volume.

11 The text has been published, without introduction and comment, in Antonio Salvi, ‘Apollonii Bianchi de vite pauperis prestantia’, *Latinitas* 59 (2011), 246-267 (henceforth: Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*). For an extended comment on it, see Delcorno and Falcone, ‘Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante’, which in its appendix publishes large extracts of this work on the basis of Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Ricc. 779, ff. 334r-344r. The first scholar to call attention to some passages of this text was Remo L. Guidi, *Il dibattito sull’uomo nel Quattrocento: Indagini e dibattiti* (Rome: Tielle Media, 1998), 484, 554, 572, 604. The excerpts are presented without introducing Apollonio nor framing his work properly, as a whole.

sort of manifesto of his own Observant militancy expressed in humanistic forms. Therefore, this text can be compared with other early manifestations of the adoption of the new type of rhetoric for the exaltation of a religious order, such as some of the sermons delivered in the general chapters during the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

In this eulogy of voluntary poverty (indeed, of Franciscan poverty), written between 1441 and 1444, Apollonio suggests a conciliation between religious life and humanism by presenting the Observant preacher as the ultimate outcome of a religious order exalted as the proper home of the *litterarum studia*, a statement all the more significant when placed within the ongoing debate regarding the role of studies within the *fratres de familia*.<sup>13</sup> To support his own claim, Apollonio indicates as the idealized champions of this form of life and of action within society Bernardino of Siena (d. 1444) and Alberto of Sarteano (d. 1450), both still alive when he wrote his text.

In this contribution, I will first summarize the available information about Apollonio's life and sketch his pastoral action as it is described by a contemporary city chronicle. Next, I will focus on the key aspects of the *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia*, particularly those connected with the exaltation of the Franciscan order and of its preachers. Finally, I will consider how *studia humanitatis* are praised in another work attributed to Apollonio, namely his *De virtute colenda (On the cultivation/practice of virtue)*.<sup>14</sup>

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12 See the contribution by Caby in the present volume, in particular for the analysis of Alberto of Sarteano's sermon at the 1443 Franciscan General Chapter of Padua (on which, see note 40).

13 See Bert Roest, "Sub humilitatis titulo sacram scientiam abhorrentes.' Franciscan Observants and the Quest for Education', in: *Rules and Observance. Devising Forms of Communal Life*, ed. Mirko Bereitenstein et al. (Berlin: LIT, 2014), 79-106, and Letizia Pellegrini, 'Tra *sanc-ta rusticitas e humanae litterae*: La formazione culturale dei frati nell'Osservanza italiana del Quattrocento', in: *Osservanza francescana e cultura tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento: Italia e Ungheria a confronto*, ed. Francesca Bartolacci & Roberto Lambertini (Rome: Viella, 2014), 33-52.

14 I will not discuss here the reception history of his works, attested by several humanistic miscellanies copied and disseminated even outside Italy; see Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 147-149 and 153-159.

## An effective preacher: the bonfire in Cuneo

The information about the life of Apollonio Bianchi is scarce and fragmentary, mainly concentrated on the last years of his life, which would not have been particularly long if in the early 1440s he stated that he still lacked the age (as well as the wisdom) to be allowed to discuss in public the possible vices of ecclesiastics.<sup>15</sup> What we know of his life is that he was a citizen of Piacenza, where he spent some time in 1449, and that he died in 1450 at Bobbio in relative proximity of his home town, while he was on his way back from a journey to Rome.<sup>16</sup> Before that journey, at the end of 1449, he had preached during the Advent and Christmas season in Cuneo, while during the Lenten period of 1450, he most probably was in Pinerolo, in the Piedmont area. Apollonio seems to have developed solid links with this north-western area of Italy, since we have also a series of his funeral orations and letters connected with Vercelli, as well as the dedication of one of his treatises, *De virtute colenda*, to the marquis of Monferrato, Giovanni IV Paleologo (d. 1464).<sup>17</sup> This was not the only court with which Apollonio evidently developed contacts. An oration that praises Leonello d'Este (d. 1450) and its accompanying letter to the marquis of Ferrara attest to Apollonio's link with the Estense court, although we do not know in which directions this relationship developed. Still, in this letter Apollonio not only exalts the young marquis as a perfect humanist prince and as disciple of the famous humanist master Guarino of Verona (d. 1460), but the friar declares that he always has put his own *studia litterarum* at the service of the fame of the marquis.<sup>18</sup> By declaring to be able to follow in Guarino's footsteps and to contribute to Leonello's eternal glory with his

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15 'Et quamquam hec ita sint, tamen huiusmodi vitiorum genus utrum usui ecclesiasticis viris habeatur minime meum est disserere, quando quidem mihi nec etas sit ut presummam, nec scientia ut ausim, nec dignitas ut debeam, nec auctoritas ut possim de aliorum vitiis et ecclesiasticorum presertim, si qua sunt, hominum tractare', Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 264.

16 The information on Apollonio's life is presented and discussed in Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 129-138.

17 On these works, see *ibidem* 137-138 and 144-148.

18 'Quae cum ita sint, mihi omnino persuasi dignissimum esse, ut, si quid mihi facultatis studia litterarum contulere, id totum, vel quantumcumque est, (vel erit si tamen sentiam id te dignum, tibi que approbatum iri) ad honestatem nominis tui et gloriam dicare contendam. Quemadmodum et feci nuperrime et saepissime faciam', Apollonio Bianchi, *Epistola ad Leonellum Estensis*, ed. in Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 151.

own writings, Apollonio adopts the forms and system of values of the new culture and shows his self-awareness as a humanist.

While we lack evidence of Apollonio's possible preaching activity in Ferrara, a precious glimpse of his pastoral work is provided by a city chronicle of Cuneo. Tapping into several hagiographical commonplaces, the text depicts an enthralling preaching cycle of friar Apollonio, which is presented as a decisive step for the affirmation of the Observance not only in the city but in the whole Piedmont region.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Cronaca*, in late 1449 Apollonio arrived in Cuneo, where he first preached in the parish church and then, from All Saints to Epiphany, in the (Conventual) Franciscan church of the city.<sup>20</sup> The chronicler summarizes the visible, almost tangible effects of Apollonio's sermons:

'He organized the burning of wigs, dice, playing cards, board games, and chessboards as well as of women's *macagnones* [a type of headgear] in the garden of the friars and pushed people to abandon many useless vanities. Due to his preaching, many young men abandoned the secular life and joined the Observance of saint Francis. Similarly, he led the above-mentioned place of Saint Mary of Angels to the Observance, and it has continued with admirable devotion and holiness until the present day. This was the first friary of the Observance in the whole Piedmont homeland.'<sup>21</sup>

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19 The chronicle recalls a previous eremitical settlement of Franciscan Observant friars outside Cuneo. On the evolution of the presence of the Observant friars in this city, see Grado Giovanni Merlo and Roberto Comba, 'Madonna degli Angeli di Cuneo: Il primo santuario dell'Osservanza in Piemonte', in: *Madonna degli Angeli. Defendente Ferrari, Javarra e altre testimonianze d'arte a Cuneo*, ed. Walter Canavesio et al. (Cuneo: Agami, 1998), 7-13, and Grado Giovanni Merlo, 'Gli inizi dell'Osservanza minoritica nella regione subalpina', in: *Frate Angelo Carletti osservante nel V centenario della morte (1495-1995)*, ed. Ovidio Capitani et al., *Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo* 118 (1998), 19-41.

20 'Tunc enim applicuit Cuneum venerandus et excellens predicator frater Appolonius de Blanchis de Placencia, Ordinis Sancti Francisci de Observancia, qui primum predicare cepit in templo Domine Nostre de Bosco, dehinc in ecclesia sancti Francisci nova, in qua illis diebus ceptum est celebrari et transmutatus fuerat corus; ibique predicavit cum elleganti audientia a festo Omnium Sanctorum usque ad Epiphaniam Domini'; *La più antica cronaca di Cuneo, di Giovan Francesco Rebaccini?*, ed. Piero Camilla (Cuneo: SASTE, 1981), 150. I am grateful to Andrea Giraudo who helped me to access a copy of this text.

21 'Capillos mortuos, taxillos, cartullas, tabullerios et schacherios atque machagnonos mulierum fecit comburi in viridario fratrum, et vanitates plurimas supervacuas deponi fecit; multi juvenes seculo renunciarunt sub eius predicationibus et observanciam sancti Francisci intrarunt.

The bonfire of vanities, the recruitment of friars, and the foundation of an Observant house are the milestones of a well-conceived strategy. The ephemeral effects of a spectacular preaching campaign embodied by the bonfire of vanities served to achieve long-lasting results, mainly the foundation of a friary that consolidated the previously precarious presence of the Franciscan Observance in the city.

In a nutshell, we find here the same key elements as those present in the hagiographical descriptions of the actions of Bernardino of Siena. In those very same years, the canonization process of Bernardino focused on his spectacular bonfires, the wave of religious vocations, and the foundation of Observant friaries – all elements used to measure and certify the extraordinary effectiveness of his preaching.<sup>22</sup> Arguably, like other contemporary friars, Apollonio consciously imitated Bernardino, who is depicted as a supreme model friar and preacher in his *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia*.<sup>23</sup>

In particular, the public burning of the symbols and tools of sin was a dramatic ritual of purification of the city that characterized Bernardino's main preaching cycles. Staging it required a good dose of planning and a firm grip on the crowd, as well as the support of the local authorities. In the specific case of Apollonio's preaching in Cuneo, which likewise included a bonfire of vanities, the objects mentioned by the chronicle reflect two topics that the friar must have touched upon in his sermons. The burning of dice, cards, and game boards is linked with the fight against gambling, while wigs and headgears connect with the critique on the excesses of luxury, and in particular on alleged female vanity.<sup>24</sup> Both are recognizable

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Tandem locum predictum sancte Marie de Angelis ad Observanciam redduxit; que usque in presentem diem continuavit mirabili devocione et sanctitate. Et fuit primum zenobium Observancie in tota patria Pedemontana; ibidem, 150.

22 See articles 12 and 14 (bonfires of vanities), 15 (vocations of new friars), and 16 (foundation of convents) in the canonization process, published in *Il processo di canonizzazione di Bernardino da Siena (1445-1450)*, ed. Letizia Pellegrini (Grottaferrata: Quaracchi, 2009), 331-332.

23 For what concerns the bonfire of vanities, beyond those organized by Bernardino of Siena, among the earliest examples known to me are those promoted by Giacomo Primadizzi (Forlì 1427) and Sante Boncor (Venice 1450); references to the sources and further bibliography on the bonfire of vanity are provided in Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 132-133.

24 On preaching against gambling, see Lorenzo Turchi, 'Perdo et venco': la predicazione osservante sul gioco nel '400', *Antonianum* 93 (2018), 655-670, and Gherardo Ortalli, *Barattieri. Il gioco d'azzardo fra economia ed etica. Secoli XIII-XV* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 208-215. On the sermons against (female) vanities see Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Gli inganni delle apparenze. Disciplina di vesti e ornamenti alla fine del Medioevo* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1996), and

topics of the moral and social proposal promoted by Italian Observant preachers.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that Apollonio shared this pastoral and cultural horizon, and contributed to its affirmation within society.

According to the *Cronaca*, the *pars destruens* about (social) sins was accompanied by a persuasive discourse on the superiority of the Franciscan life, a type of sermon (and personal testimony) able to attract numerous vocations. When successful, as in this case, the message had lasting – and at time destabilizing – effects in an urban context.<sup>26</sup> We do not have Apollonio's sermons about this or other topics. Yet, transfigured in a different form, a discourse on the excellence of the Franciscan life and on the role of the Observance – with its heroes and its own mythology – can be found in the *Libellus*. This text allows us to grasp some of the themes that Apollonio may have developed also in his preaching.

### The eulogy of poverty: the superiority of the Franciscan life

The exaltation of both poverty and culture is at the core of the *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia*, a text dedicated to Cardinal Gerardo Landriani (d. 1445), a powerful prelate, well introduced in humanist networks. In his dedicatory letter, Apollonio declares to have sufficient familiarity with Landriani to put their relationship in the sphere of friendship.<sup>27</sup> In this treatise, Apollonio illustrates how voluntary poverty represents the highest

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Federica Boldrini, *Per la storia delle leggi suntuarie in Italia nei secoli XV-XVI: Il 'Tractatus de ornatu mulierum' di Orfeo Cancellieri* (Modena: Monduzzi, 2019).

25 As an insightful introduction, see Carlo Delcorno, 'L'Osservanza francescana e il rinnovamento della predicazione', in: *I frati osservanti*, 3-53.

26 The disruptive consequences that the tumultuous recruitment of new friars supported by the action and example of charismatic preachers may have caused in some social contexts are shown by the clash in Milan between Bernardino of Siena and Amedeo Landi; see Marina Benedetti, 'Per quisti ribaldi fray se disfa il mondo'. Il contrasto tra Bernardino da Siena e Amedeo Landi', in: *Francescani e politica nelle autonomie cittadine dell'Italia basso-medievale*, ed. Isa Lori Sanfilippo & Roberto Lambertini (Rome: ISIME, 2017), 299-312 and Pietro Delcorno, 'Et zostrabo tecum'. Lo scontro tra Bernardino da Siena e Amedeo Landi: Note sull'edizione dei processi milanesi', *Il Santo* 62 (2022), 325-358. The surviving documentation of the inquisitorial processes that followed this episode are edited in Marina Benedetti and Tiziana Danelli, *Contro frate Bernardino da Siena: processi al maestro Amedeo Landi (Milano 1437-1447)* (Milan: Milano University Press, 2021).

27 See a rich profile in Elisabetta Canobbio, 'Landriani, Gerardo', in: *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 63 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2004), 518-523. Unfortunately, Apollonio did not specify any detail of his relationship with Landriani.

good and the best path to a blessed life. Starting from classical examples of detachment from worldly goods, the text gradually turns into an exaltation of the superiority of the Franciscan *forma vitae*. Therefore, the treatise must be read also as a clear statement of Apollonio's proud belonging to a religious group that he describes as unparalleled in the history of salvation and in contemporary society.

Without analyzing the whole *Libellus*, I call the attention to key passages of this rather elaborated work. When the text exalts the apostolic life as the 'most beautiful and excellent form of life' ('pulchrior queve prestantior vivendi institutio'), Apollonio points out that many tried to be *imitatores* of the incomparable example of the apostles, yet without being able to match it. Neither the regulators of the religious life such as Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Benedict, Bernard, and Dominic, nor the great hermits of the past were able to match that model. Instead, the *pauperrimus* Francis of Assisi 'not only equaled the apostles, but in some way even surpassed them' ('ut non modo apostolis equandus sit, sed etiam quodammodo anteponeendus').<sup>28</sup>

The object of admiration is not only Francis as 'homo novus' and 'alter Christus' (well-known hagiographical themes), but also the 'new family of men who, naked, carry the naked cross under the rule of Francis', as Apollonio says with a strategic use of the present tense.<sup>29</sup> With a significant claim about the perpetual novelty of the Franciscan life, Apollonio adds that, as in apostolic times the Christian religion elicited admiration among the Gentiles, thus the *Ordo Francisci* excited and continues to excite admiration among Christians.<sup>30</sup> The Franciscans are hailed as 'true

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28 Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 256. For the expressions that exalt saint Francis, see note 30.

29 'Mira res certe est novus atque genus hominum eorum qui Francisci sub regulis nudi nudam baiulant crucem', *ibidem*, 256. On this spiritual common place, see Franco Mormando, 'Nudus nudum Christum sequi': The Franciscans and Differing Interpretations of Male Nakedness in Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 33 (2008), 171-197.

30 The whole passage about Francis of Assisi is worth to be considered, also as example of the style of the text, which often proceeds with a series of rhetorical questions: 'Ita, inquam, sanctissime semper religiosissimeque sese habuit in omnibus, ut non tam unus ex apostolis, quam alter, ut ita loquar, Christus videretur e celo in terram venisse, qui novas rursus regulas vite hominum generi daret. An non nova instituta noveque vivendi norme a Francisco tradite sunt, quando quidem non minus apud christianos admirationis habuerit ordo Francisci et habeat in dies quam tum apud gentes christiana habuisset religio? An non novus homo Franciscus, quem sibi homo factus Deus Christus Iesus et quidem multipliciter assimilavit? An non magna est



masters of evangelical philosophy' ('veri evangelice phylosophye doctores'), and poverty is presented as teacher of wisdom, genetrix of virtue, leader and handmaiden of good arts, and mother of temperance.<sup>31</sup>

Next, the *Libellus* exalts the Franciscan life as the most beneficial for humankind, the utmost praise of God, and the greatest honor of the Church. We find here a crescendo of rhetorical questions that well summarize Apollonio's idealized (and ideological) vision of the Franciscan Observance.

'Therefore, where does faith, where does piety, where does justice, where do all virtues, either divine or human, flourish everyday more? Where do all good arts, all honest education, all literary studies, where do all of these thrive more prominently than in the most excellent order of Friars Minor? And indeed, who can be more clever in debating any type of subject? Who are more fervent in exhorting to virtue? Who are more biting in diverting from vices? Who are more harsh in rejecting the dishonesty of heretics? Who are more magnificent in expanding the Christian faith by preaching than the men of this order who performed and still perform [all this]?'<sup>32</sup>

In this programmatic paragraph, the Franciscan primacy in the virtues is joined by a primacy in the *artes*, particularly in 'omnium litterarum studia', claiming that in no other place wisdom abounds more than in the Franciscan order. This cultural excellence, however, is clearly connected with a multifaceted pastoral and social engagement that includes the ability to dispute, exhort to virtue, turn away from vices, fight against heresies, and – to top it all – the ability to spread Christian faith through preaching. In all these tasks, no one has surpassed what the Franciscan friars accom-

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novitas, cum is qui erat et cupidissimus glorie inglorius et avidissimus honoris inhonoratus et deditissimus opulencie inops rerum omnium ultro quidem atque sponte efficitur sua?', Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 256.

31 'Est enim paupertas sapientie magistra, virtutis parens, bonarum artium comes atque adiutrix, ac mater frugalitatis', *ibidem*, 257.

32 'Ubi enim fides? Ubi pietas? Ubi iustitia? Ubi omnes virtutes et divine et humane quotidie magis florescunt? Ubi omnes bone artes, omnes honeste discipline, omnium litterarum studia? Ubi ipsa demum sapientia viget excellentius quam fratrum prestantissimo in ordine Minorum? Etenim quis in omni rerum genere disputare subtilius? Quis cohortari ad virtutem ardentius? Quis acrius a vitii revocare? Quis confutare heresum improbitatem asperius? Quis magnificentius amplificare christianam fidem predicando potest quam huiusce ordinis factitarunt viri et factitant?', *ibidem*, 265. Part of this passage was quoted in Guidi, *Il dibattito sull'uomo*, 554.

plished and still do, as Apollonio says using again very significantly the present tense.

We find here Apollonio's awareness of the importance of his role as a preacher (including its repressive dimension), and of the way in which the Franciscan cultural formation must be ultimately oriented to this mission.<sup>33</sup> The model of a well-educated friar is here close to the position promoted by Bernardino of Siena and then codified by Giovanni of Capestrano, who forcefully advocated for the primacy of pastoral engagement – and in particular of effective preaching – as proper for the Observance and as the ultimate goal of any cultural commitment.<sup>34</sup> Within this conceptual framework, Apollonio expressed a distinct perspective, since he included the *studia humanitatis* as part of the ideal training of a friar. Still, his text allows us to see how these ideas were appropriated and disseminated also by friars who did not belong to the inner circle of the leaders of the Observance, but certainly were not outside the debate that animated the *fratres de familia* in those years. One just needs to think of the letter *De studio promovendo*, sent in 1444 by Giovanni of Capestrano, who was the general vicar of the Cismontane Observance at the time. This letter aimed precisely to overcome the hostility of many Observant friars to the renewed centrality of education in the mission and identity of the Franciscan order. Giovanni of Capestrano had clearly affirmed these elements already in the 1443 constitutions, which presented preaching as the panacea for all pastoral challenges and, on that basis, advocated for the necessity of a solid education within the order.<sup>35</sup> The fact that the *studium litterarum* was still an object of contention at the Observant general chapter in 1455, at least

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33 This position fits well in a tradition that considered preaching as the 'cornerstone of the Franciscan educational project'. See Bert Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education (c. 1210-1517)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 272-324.

34 Beside the literature indicated in note 13, see Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 153-171 and Delcorno, 'Quomodo discet sine docente?', 150-158. See also Pietro Maranesi, *Nescientes litteras: l'ammonezione della Regola francescana e la questione degli studi nell'Ordine (sec. XIII-XVI)* (Rome: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 2000), 207-290, with a useful collection of sources gathered in its appendix. Most recently, on the practical and crucial theme of access to and possession of books, see René Hernández, *Franciscan Books and Their Readers: Friars and Manuscripts in Late Medieval Italy* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2022).

35 For Giovanni's letter see Aniceto Chiappini, 'S. Ioannis de Capistrano Sermones duo ad Studentes et Epistola circularis de studio promovendo inter Observantes', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 11 (1918), 97-131. The passage of the 1443 constitutions is quoted and commented in Delcorno, 'Quomodo discet sine docente?', 152.

according to the tendentious testimony of Bernardino Aquilano, confirms that the position expressed by Apollonio was all but obvious.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, the key goal of the *Libellus* is to praise the superiority of the Franciscan way of life. Getting closer to the end of his text, to further prove this point Apollonio presents two contemporary champions (or living saints) of the Observance. The first is Bernardino of Siena, who is indicated with the classicizing and sophisticated terms of *pater patratus* and *archipredicator*.<sup>37</sup> The description of Bernardino's fame shows how several themes later consolidated by the hagiography were already circulating when he was still alive (as he is clearly indicated here). The *Libellus* underlines Bernardino's reputation for having revived the Christian faith everywhere, and the function of his model sermons, which Bernardino consciously produced as a way to teach his style of preaching.

'So that what I say does not seem to come from affection more than from truth, (...) I cannot but claim the name of him who among Christians has the best and most excellent reputation among all the people of this age, that is the name of that most religious *pater patratus* Bernardino of Siena, who as the most egregious arch-preacher has revived the Christians' faith, which was almost perishing, who day and night, on earth and at sea, everywhere has announced by declamation all that is necessary to salvation, who moreover, has painstakingly codified and still codifies every day his way of preach-

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36 While friar Serafino of Gaeta advocated for the *studium litterarum* within the Observance, Bernardino Aquilano – claiming to express the view of all other friars – rebutted that the *fratres de familia* did not need it, since God was providing them with the vocation of learned men, while they have to focus on the spiritual and devotional life within the Order. See Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano*, 170-171.

37 Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 265. The first expression probably alludes to the function in ancient Rome of the head of the sacerdotal college of *fetiales* in formally declaring war on enemies, as a sort of ambassador (see Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe condita*, I, 24), but also in presiding over pacts and as pacifier, according to the translation provided by Plutarch; see Federico Santangelo, 'The Fetials and Their Ius', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 51 (2008), 63-93, and J.H. Richardson, 'The Pater Patratus on a Roman Gold Stater', *Hermes* 136:4 (2008), 415-425 (I am grateful to Ketty Iannantuono for these references). Apollonio's use may be closer to the latter meaning, perhaps consciously connecting with the occurrence of this terminology in the writings of some contemporary humanists, such as Leonardo Bruni, who defines Guarino of Verona 'tanquam pater patratus' in a letter written in 1440; see Guarino Veronese, *Epistolario*, ed. Remigio Sabbadini, 3 vols. (Venice: a spese della Società, 1915-1919) II, 404.

ing in many volumes of books, so to provide with great care not only for those who are present now, but also for all the posterity.<sup>38</sup>

The second friar mentioned as universally praised by his contemporaries is Alberto of Sarteano, who had a great reputation both for his humanistic and theological culture and for his diplomatic role in Egypt, which was crucial for the participation of the Copts at the Council of Florence and the signing of the union bull of 1442.<sup>39</sup> In the same year, Pope Eugenius IV nominated Alberto general vicar of the Franciscan order, with the aim to get him elected as minister general during the next general chapter, a scheme that failed spectacularly at the tumultuous chapter held in Padua the following year.<sup>40</sup> The choice to place Alberto as a conclusive model in Apollonio's *Libellus* is as significant as are the words used in praising him.

‘...the most excellent brother, rather father Alberto. He, who is called of Sarteano, acted admirably not only among the Christians, yet also among Ethiopians and barbarians as well as the infidels.

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38 ‘At hec ne ex affectu potius quam ex veritate deprompta esse videantur, facere equidem nequeo (...) quin isthic usurpem nomen illius de quo apud christianos melior vel optima omnium qui agunt evum opinio habetur, illius, inquam, religiosissimi patris patrati Berardini Senensis, qui utpote archipredicator egregius fidem christianorum prope defunctam suscitavit, qui dies et noctes, qui terra et mari, qui ubique quod omnium pertinet ad salutem declamando adnuntiavit, qui denique permulta librorum volumina suo genere dicendi elucubravit atque etiam elucubrat quotidie, ita ut non solum iis qui sunt praesentes, sed omni quoque posteritati summopere consular’, Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 265. On Bernardino, see *A Companion on Bernardino of Siena*, ed. Letizia Pellegrini (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

39 A comprehensive profile of this important friar is still lacking, yet a good entry point is provided in Pierre Santoni, ‘Albert de Sarteano observant et humaniste envoyé pontifical à Jérusalem et au Caire’, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge-Temps Modernes* 86:1 (1974), 165-211 and Daniele Solvi, ‘La missione di Alberto da Sarteano in Egitto (1439-1441) e una lettera di Eugenio IV al sultano’, *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 72 (2019), 435-456. On friar Alberto's relationship with the humanism, see Daniele Solvi, ‘Sapientiae amatores’: Alberto da Sarteano e gli antichi’, in: *Dulcis labor: Studi offerti a Maria Luisa Chirico*, ed. Claudio Buongiovanni et al. (Santa Maria Capua Vetere: DilBec Books, 2022), 237-247. Solvi points out that Alberto's epistolary, while advocating for the importance of the *studia humanitatis*, connects the references to classics to key concepts of the Observant pastoral and social engagement – in a way thus not too distant from Apollonio.

40 On the 1443 general chapter, see Pacifico Stella, *Leone X e la definitiva divisione dell’Ordine dei Minori (OMin): la bolla Ite vos (29 maggio 1517)* (Grottaferrata: Quaracchi, 2001), 133-135, and the vivid (and tendentious, as always) description provided by the chronicle of Bernardino Aquilano, available in Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca*, 150-155. On the important opening sermon that friar Alberto preached in Padua, adopting a humanist rhetoric, see the contribution by Caby in the present volume.

Therefore, I want everyone to know that these very things were obtained not through physical strength nor the abundance of weapons, yet through the strength and power of speech. Indeed, [Alberto] of Sarteano has such great ingenuity, equal elegance, non-minor fluidity that truly he is so skillful in both Latin and Greek that, if you hear him speaking Greek, you would assume he does not know Latin, and if you hear him speaking Latin, that he does not know Greek. Likewise in other languages and writings he possesses identical skills.<sup>41</sup>

If Bernardino revived the faith of Christians as a great preacher *ad intra*, Alberto is exalted for his triumphs *ad extra*, for the diplomatic and political mission carried out successfully – also in this case, according to Apollonio – thanks to his oratory, the ‘*potentia dicendi*’. As orator, he is also praised for his elegance and command of both Latin and Greek, in full conformity with the words that Apollonio uses elsewhere to praise Alberto’s teacher, the renowned humanist Guarino of Verona.<sup>42</sup>

The *Libellus* ends with an idealized exaltation of the Franciscan life. The biblical promise ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5:3) refers here properly to the (Observant) Franciscans. It closes a text that, while starting with general remarks about the frugality of ancient philosophers and rulers, gradually turns to a powerful praise of the superiority of the *forma vitae* of the friars. This perfect model of religious life was established (or even better, according to the text, brought on earth) by Francis of Assisi and now is embodied (and rejuvenated) by Bernardino of Siena and Alberto of Sarteano, and by Apollonio himself, who claims to ‘speak as an expert among that most joyful company of poor’.<sup>43</sup>

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41 ‘Ratio eque par me abducit a commendatione magnorum illorum virorum Minorumque factorum que, ut aiunt, prestantissimus frater imo pater Albertus, is qui Sarcianensis dicitur, non modo inter christianos, verum et inter Ethiope et barbaros quousque et infideles mirabiliter gessit. Hinc tamen velim quisque sciat has ipsas res non viribus corporum aut armorum copiis, sed vi atque potentia dicendi confectas fuisse. Etenim Sarcianensi huic grave ingenium inest, par elegantia, non minor dissertitudo, quippe qui lingue et grece et latine adeo peritus est ut si grece loqui audias, nescire latinum putares, si latine, grecum ignorare crederes. In aliis item linguis litterisque identidem se habet’, Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 266.

42 ‘Habes etenim imprimis dissertissimum illum quidem et grece et latine lingue peritissimum Guarinum...’, Apollonio Bianchi, *Epistola ad Leonellum Estensis*, 151.

43 ‘Fateor ergo tamquam expertus in his letissimis collegiis pauperum’, Apollonio Bianchi, *De vite pauperis prestantia*, 266.

Before turning briefly to a second work of Apollonio, it is important to note that, beside the contents of this text, equally illustrative of his mindset is that this proud claim of Franciscan excellence is written by abandoning the forms of the scholastic treatise and by adopting instead the style of humanistic oratory. This is visible in the syntax, which often imitates the Ciceronian style,<sup>44</sup> in the epideictic oratory consisting of exaltations and expressions of admiration (and to a lesser extent of *vituperatio*), in the frequent use of preterition and anaphoric questions, in the refined lexical choices (as *pater patratus*), and the insistence on concepts such as oratorical elegance or eternal fame.<sup>45</sup> Together with the predilection for classical references (and even more than that),<sup>46</sup> these choices characterize the text, and distinguish it from other contemporary works on Franciscan identity.

This rhetorical form makes the *Libellus* a manifesto not only of the possible encounter between humanist culture and Franciscan Observance, but – at least in the intentions of its author – also of the role that the friars must play in a broader process of cultural renewal. In this perspective, this text is the symbol of Apollonio's twofold self-identification, as an Observant friar and as a member of the *res publica litteratum*.

### ***Studia humanitatis* as path towards a virtuous life**

While I do not discuss here neither structure and aims of *De virtute colenda*, nor the reason why this treatise can safely be attributed to Apollonio Bianchi, I recall only a key passage of this text, which reinforces the cultural position we found expressed in the *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia*.<sup>47</sup> The treatise is a broad (and at times confusing, at least in its overall structure) reflection on the *studium* of virtue as the only path to a blessed

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44 At time, Apollonio literally copied the syntax of some sentence by Cicero; see Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 144 and 151. On the importance of writing 'à la manière de Cicéron' and on the key role of figures such as Gasparino Barzizza (d. 1431) in this cultural process, see Revest, '*Romam veni*', 237-297 and the contribution by Caby in the present volume.

45 On these features, see also the contribution by Caby in the present volume.

46 The accumulation of classical quotations or *exempla* per se may be a reaction to humanism more than an actual participation in its cultural horizon, as pointed out by Delcorno, 'Apogeo e crisi', 429 and Remo L. Guidi, 'Non si è Umanisti perché si citano di continuo i classici: il caso di fra' Bernardino Busti', *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 126 (2021), 335-365.

47 On this text, its dissemination, and the attribution to Apollonio, see Delcorno and Falcone, 'Tra prassi umanistica e autocoscienza osservante', 144-148.

life and eternal fame. As such, it presents itself as the ‘art of good living’ (‘ars bene vivendi’).<sup>48</sup>

The most compelling passage of a text otherwise quite monotonous in its learned references is where the author underlines the necessity and the benefits of the *studia humanitatis*. He states that ‘in them there is both the elegance of behavior, the most beautiful and ordered form of life, the excellence of speaking and acting with great knowledge and pertinence, no less joy, equal decorum, greater and more splendid glory; in fact, they [the *studia humanitatis*] suit so much human nature and they bring such delight to the soul that we seem close to the blessed life’. And he adds that, among other things, the *studia humanitatis* ‘expel every error and ignorance’, show how to live according to truth and wisdom, ‘teach reason to cultivate virtue’, and have the power to transform the soul.<sup>49</sup>

Later on in the text, after exalting the power of eloquence and praising rhetoric as a precious treasure for the common good of society, Apollonio magnifies once again the *studia humanitatis* with a string of rhetorical questions:

‘What activities underpin human lives most beautifully? The *studia humanitatis*! Through what can one most easily acquire the immortality of glory? Through the *studium humanitatis*! What do we seek more, or which soul harbors doubts about whether we must apply ourselves to so many and so splendid studies, when no ordered form of life, no expertise of knowledge, no art without them can rightly deserve to be joyful and praiseworthy?’<sup>50</sup>

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48 Antonio Salvi, ‘Apollonii Bianchi de virtute colenda’, *Latinitas* 59 (2011), 321-357: 330. Also in this case, the text has been published without any introduction or comments.

49 ‘Quod si omnem doctrinam capessere nequimus enitendum est omnino ut studia percipiamus ea que humanitatis vocantur. Est enim in his et morum elegantia, pulchior et compositor vivendi institutio, et dicendi agendique scientior peritiorque prestantia, non minor iucunditas, par decus, maior nonnunquam et splendidior gloria, maxime autem sunt hominum nature propria et tantam animi oblectationem afferunt ut proximi ad beatam vitam videamur. Primum quidem pellunt errorem omnem atque ignorantiam, tum lumen veri videndi exhibent, tum probande sapientie, tum virtutis colende rationem edocent, postremo, quod omnium est magnificissimum atque splendidissimum, mortalium animos ex sede et statu potis sunt movere ad odium, ad iram, ad amorem, ad commiserationem et clementiam’, *ibidem*, 334.

50 ‘Que enim pulcherrime vitam hominum instituunt? Studia humanitatis! Quid per quod glorie immortalitas solet facillime acquiri? Ob studium humanitatis! Quid igitur percunctamur aut quousque animus est in dubio utrumne tantis tamque preclaris debeamus incumbere studiis,

The definition of the *studia humanitatis* remains elusive in the text, yet – assuming that he is its author – this vagueness does not diminish the value of Apollonio’s speaking openly in their favor and in defining this type of education as a privileged path to the blessed life and as a way to provide people with the necessary tools to reject errors and to embrace truth and virtue. Does this discourse apply also to friars? This treatise does not have any reference to the Franciscan life. One may wonder to what extent these affirmations were intended by Apollonio primarily as a sort of pass to distinguish himself and to be well received in humanist circles or at courts. Still, finding this type of affirmation as part of the self-fashioning of a mid-fifteenth-century Franciscan Observant friar remains important, – even more so considering the inner debate in the order that I have already recalled.

## Conclusion

The same friar who included pyrotechnic bonfires of vanities in his preaching cycles was able in his writings to master forms and themes belonging to humanist discursive culture. While many points about Apollonio remain elusive, his network of relationships and his writings highlight the complex interplay between humanistic culture and mendicant orders in the midst of the fifteenth century. Going beyond the small group of better known ‘humanist friars’, a figure like Apollonio shows how humanist practices were rapidly gaining space among some of the friars, who recognized the usefulness of these distinctive cultural and social features. This phenomenon confirms that humanist eloquence was gaining momentum by attracting growing sectors of the professionals of public oratory. At the same time, we find in the *Libellus* an active appropriation of these rhetorical tools by a friar able to use this type of discourse to promote the social and cultural project of the Observance. And when the pastoral mission required it, he had no problem in embracing the contemporary novelties represented by the dramatic form of preaching proposed by Bernardino of Siena, without much recourse to humanist rhetorical finery, with its focus on socio-

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quando quidem nullum vivendi genus, sciendi nulla peritia, nulla ars sine iis iocunda esse laudarique posse iure mereatur?’, *ibidem*, 335.



religious topics and its spectacular collective rituals. The hybridization between these two worlds was perhaps not particularly sophisticated, yet in this case quite conscious and effective. Overall, in his texts Apollonio deliberately presents himself both as a lover of the *studia humanitatis* and as a proud member of the Franciscan family.

Within the debate about poverty and the role of studies in the Franciscan order, the *Libellus de vite pauperis prestantia* shows how a culturally equipped but not prominent friar positioned himself on strategic issues to define the profile of the Observance, in particular in relation to the forms of eloquence necessary for an effective presence in society. Bernardino of Siena's model of oratory, although admired and arguably imitated on the pulpit by Apollonio himself, should not overshadow how other forms of public oratory found space within the same Observance. Several friars (how many remains an open question for scholars) were fully aware that mastering different forms of eloquence had become a priority in the complex social and cultural Italian landscape. The profile and ideas of a friar like Apollonio thus shed lights on these dynamics, allowing us to look at them in a certain sense not from the center but from the periphery. This is a viewpoint equally essential to understand the unfolding of complex and changing socio-cultural issues, such as the affirmation of humanistic practices and the processes of re-definition of the Franciscan Observant mission and identity.

# Caterina of Siena in the Writings of Observant Poor Clares: Caterina Vigri and Battista of Varano

*Silvia Serventi*

## Introduction

The letters of Caterina of Siena (Caterina di Jacopo di Benincasa) saw a substantial manuscript dissemination in various female monastic houses, both within miscellanies and in more organic collections that figure among the most important witnesses of the letters in question.<sup>1</sup> Caterina of Siena's letter collection was one of the first Italian works to be printed: In 1492 a first collection of 31 letters appeared with Fontanesi in Bologna, and in Venice an edition comprising 368 letters was issued in 1500 by the Venetian printer Aldo Manutius. Hence it is not surprising that the letter collection of the Siennese saint had a considerable influence during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century: Anna Scattigno has traced its presence in several female Dominican letter collections by, for instance, Osanna of Mantua, Tommasina Fieschi, Domenica of Paradiso and Caterina

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance three florentine manuscripts, two from the monastery of S. Brigida, also known as 'Il Paradiso' (P<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>4</sub>), and one from the monastery of Niccolò in Cafaggio (F<sub>1</sub>): Cf. Caterina of Siena, *Epistolario. Catalogo dei manoscritti e delle stampe*, ed. M. Cursi, A. Dejure & G. Frosini, *Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Antiquitates*, 54 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo, 2021), 95-96, 130-132, 144-145. R<sub>4</sub> contains a single letter by Caterina together with two sermons by Giordano of Pisa and other writings.

de' Ricci,<sup>2</sup> whereas Gianni Festa has underlined the importance of the Catherinian model in the Dominican hagiography from the same period.<sup>3</sup> Specific borrowings of some Catherinian images can still be found during the sixteenth and seventeenth century in the works of the Florentine Carmelite nun Maddalena de' Pazzi, who used some metaphors of specification that Rita Librandi has identified as the most commonly used characteristic of Catherinian language by mystical writers.<sup>4</sup> The first scholar who drew attention to this aspect of the style of the saint was Giovanni Getto. Since then, Giovanni Pozzi has dwelled on the particular links between mysticism and metaphorical language.<sup>5</sup> Metaphors of specification are particular insofar as they comprise two constituting terms, of which the more abstract one is specified by a more concrete one, as in, for example, 'the lamp of the heart'. Precisely this is one of the most frequently used metaphors in the works of Caterina of Siena, who applied it in various letters, developing it on the basis of the evangelical parable of the ten virgins:<sup>6</sup> just as the lamp has to be open at the top and closed at the bottom, the human heart has to accept illumination by God and be insensitive to terrestrial seductions. The image must have struck Maddalena de' Pazzi, who used it in one of her letters, just as she availed herself of other metaphors of this type present in the Catherinian letter collection, such as the metaphor 'worm of

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2 See A. Scattigno, 'Suggerimenti catheriniane negli epistolari femminili tra Quattro e Cinquecento', in: *Virgo digna coelo. Caterina e la sua eredità. Raccolta di studi in occasione del 550° anniversario della canonizzazione di santa Caterina da Siena*, ed. A. Bartolomei Romagnoli, L. Cinelli & P. Piatti, Atti e documenti, 35 (Rome: Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2013), 545-582.

3 G. Festa, 'Il modello catheriniano nell'agiografia femminile domenicana tra Quattro e Cinquecento', in: *Virgo digna coelo*, 449-488.

4 R. Librandi, 'Una storia di genere nelle scritture delle mistiche: connessioni e giunture metaforiche', in: *Storia della lingua e storia. Atti del secondo Convegno ASLI (Catania, 26-28 ottobre 1999)*, ed. G. Alfieri, Associazione per la storia della lingua italiana, 2 (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2003), 319-335, and Eadem, 'Dal lessico delle "Lettere" di Caterina da Siena: la concretezza della fusione', in: *Dire l'ineffabile. Caterina da Siena e il linguaggio della mistica*, ed. L. Leonardi & P. Trifone, La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente, 5 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2006), 19-40.

5 G. Getto, *Saggio letterario su S. Caterina da Siena* (Florence: Sansoni, 1939); reprinted in Idem, *Letteratura religiosa del Trecento* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), 109-267, and G. Pozzi, 'Il linguaggio della scrittura mistica: santa Caterina', in: *Dire l'ineffabile*, 3-18.

6 They can for instance be found in letters 23, 79, 112, 360, according to Tommaseo's numbering. Cf. Caterina of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. U. Meattini (Milan: Edizioni Paoline, 1987), and *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, ed. S. Noffke, 4 Vols. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000-2008). From now on, the numbering of the letters will be preceded by a 'T', to indicate the numbering of Tommaseo.

self-love'. The Carmelite nun did not hide the influence of Caterina Benincasa, in fact she addressed her directly in her autobiography.<sup>7</sup>

## The influence of Caterina of Siena on the feminine Franciscan Observance

Shortly after her death in 1380, the promotion of the cult of Caterina of Siena became linked with the birth of the Dominican third order. Moreover, the most avid promoters of the Dominican Observance were very devout spiritual sons of Caterina, such as Raimondo of Capua and Tommaso Caffarini.<sup>8</sup> In subsequent decades, especially after Caterina's canonization in 1461, her figure would continue to be a fundamental model for the Dominican Observance, as well as for several 'women of Savonarola', such as Domenica of Paradiso and Caterina de' Ricci.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of her thought was not confined to the boundaries of the Dominican order family, and is also detectable in the orbit of the Franciscan Observance. Starting from the 1420s, the Poor Clares in Italy were no longer predominantly copyists or recipients of works, but became authors themselves. As Bert Roest has pointed out, this occurred shortly after the promoters of Franciscan Observant reform began to manifest themselves in the world of female monasticism.<sup>10</sup>

The two most significant Clarissan figures in this context, who at the same time turned their monasteries into centers for the diffusion of reforms and into places of literary and artistic production, were Caterina Vigri, known as the saint of Bologna, and Battista of Varano.<sup>11</sup> Like other

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7 Cf. L. Quadri, *Una fabula mystica nel Seicento italiano. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi e le Estasi (1609-1611)* (Florence: Olschki, 2020), 136, 248-249.

8 Cf. G. Zarri, 'Catherine of Siena and the Italian Public', in: *Catherine of Siena. The Creation of a Cult*, ed. J.F. Hamburger & G. Signori, *Medieval women: texts and contexts*, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 69-79, and S. Nocentini, 'Lo «scriptorium» di Tommaso Caffarini a Venezia', *Hagiographica* 12 (2005), 79-144.

9 See T. Herzig, *Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

10 B. Roest, *Order and Disorder. The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform*, *The medieval Franciscans*, 8 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), 304-307.

11 See J.M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality. The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and K.G. Arthur, *Women, Art and Observant Franciscan Piety. Caterina Vigri and the Poor Clares in Early Modern Ferrara*, *Visual and material culture, 1300-1700*, 2 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

members of the Franciscan second order, both came from aristocratic families, and had received a humanist upbringing. Indeed, Caterina Vigri had spent her youth at the Ferrara court of the Este family,<sup>12</sup> whereas Camilla, who later would adopt the name Battista, was the daughter of Giulio Cesare, lord of Camerino, a city from the Marches closely aligned with the neighboring court of the Montefeltro family from Urbino.<sup>13</sup> The humanist upbringing of the latter has become particularly evident after the discovery, in 2009, of a Latin version attributable to her of the *Trattato della purità del cuore*, a work until then only known in the vernacular.<sup>14</sup> For both Poor Clares, even more important than such a humanist upbringing, was the influence of some of the most well-known Franciscan Observant friars: Caterina Vigri of Bologna was particularly devoted to Bernardino of Siena, whom she considered to be a ‘new Saint Paul’, and in honor of whom she also wrote a Lauda;<sup>15</sup> whereas the conversion of Camilla Battista of Varano accelerated after hearing a sermon by Domenico of Leonessa, one of the most important friars from the second generation of the Franciscan Observance.<sup>16</sup>

## Caterina Vigri

Caterina Vigri, one of the writers most decidedly influenced by Caterina of Siena, is the author of the *Sette armi spirituali*, a work with a substantial manuscript dissemination and which was printed in Bologna by Azzoguidi between 1473 and 1475, contemporaneous with the *Libro della divina dottrine* of the Siennese saint, nowadays better known as the *Libro della divina*

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12 See *Dalla Corte al Chiostro. Santa Caterina Vigri e i suoi scritti*, ed. Clarisse di Ferrara, P. Messa & F. Sedda, Viator (S. Maria degli Angeli (Assisi): Edizioni Porziuncola, 2012).

13 See *Un desiderio senza misura. Santa Battista Varano e i suoi scritti*, ed. P. Messa, M. Reschiglian & Clarisse di Camerino, Viator (S. Maria degli Angeli (Assisi): Edizioni Porziuncola, 2010).

14 Both versions are edited in Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore. De puritate cordis. De perfectione religiosorum*, ed. S. Serventi, *La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente*, 30 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2019).

15 See Caterina Vigri, *Laudi, trattati e lettere*, ed. S. Serventi, *Caterina Vigri: La Santa e la Città*, 2 (Tavernuzze (Florence): SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000), lauda XI, 26-28, and S. Serventi, ‘Una lauda di santa Caterina da Bologna in onore di san Bernardino’, *Lettere Italiane* 52 (2000), 429-437.

16 A. Gattucci, ‘Riforma e Osservanza nelle Marche’, in: *I Francescani nelle Marche: secoli XI-II-XVI*, ed. L. Pellegrini & R. Paciocco (Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): Silvana Editoriale, 2000), 66-83.

*providenza*, or *Dialogo*. Francesco Sberlati has noticed that Caterina Vigri took from Caterina of Siena both particular linguistic forms, such as synonymic dittology, and specific images.<sup>17</sup> One of the most interesting ones is that of the anvil, which appears both in the *Sette armi spirituali* and in another treatise produced in the Bolognese Clarissan monastery that probably is also a work by Vigri. In the *Sette armi spirituali*, she offers herself as an ‘infernal anvil’, in that she asks for her own damnation if that could bring forth God’s glory, and serve to pay the debt of all sinners.<sup>18</sup> In the other work the anvil is an image of Christ on which the soul is forged:

‘Fra l’ancluçene e’ l martelo / se fabrica el belo vaselo. E nota queste tre cosse: çoè el vaselo si è l’anima, el martelo si è el diavolo e l’ancluçene si è Ihesu Christo benedecto, nel quale se de’ reposare l’anima quando è batuta e fabricata dal diavolo con le soe temptatione e colpi ch’el flagela l’anima.’<sup>19</sup> (With the anvil and the hammer is made a beautiful vase. And remark the following three things: namely that the vase is the soul, the hammer is the devil and the anvil is the blessed Jesus Christ on which the soul has to rest when it is beaten and shaped by the devil with his temptations and the blows with which he hits the soul.)

The starting point of this short work is derived from two verses from *Lauda 68* of Jacopone of Todi, in which the Franciscan friar invites brother Giovanni della Verna to support his illness with patience.<sup>20</sup> Yet the interpretation of the anvil as Christ and the vessel as the soul is probably derived from Caterina of Siena, who used this imagery in her *Dialogo* and

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17 F. Sberlati, ‘Tradizione medievale e cultura umanistica in Caterina Vigri’, in: *Caterina Vigri, la Santa e la Città, Atti del Convegno (Bologna, 13-15 novembre 2002)*, ed. C. Leonardi, Caterina Vigri: La Santa e la Città, 5 (Tavernuzze (Florence): SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 91-114, reprinted as ‘Caterina, o dell’asceti mistica’, in: F. Sberlati, *Castissima donzella. Figure di donna tra letteratura e norma sociale (secoli XV-XVII)*, ed. L. Orsi (Bern-New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 63-94.

18 Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. A. Degl’Innocenti, Caterina Vigri: La Santa e la Città, 1 (Tavernuzze (Florence): SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000), 52 (IX 20).

19 Caterina Vigri, *Laudi, trattati e lettere*, ed. Serventi, 130 (treatise 8).

20 Jacopone of Todi, *Lauda*, ed. M. Leonardi (Florence: Olschki, 2010), 144 (lauda 68, vv. 7-8).

in several letters,<sup>21</sup> for instance in letter 161 to Nella of Nicolò Buonconti and Caterina of Gherardo di Nicolò:

‘Ine [sul legno della croce] portò egli e’ pesi delle nostre iniquitadi; ine si fabricarono come ancuine sotto il martello: e così è fabricata l’anima nelle pene di Cristo per mezzo del fuoco della sua carità.’<sup>22</sup> (‘There [on the wood of the cross] he carried the weight of our iniquities; there they are shaped with the anvil under the hammer: and thus the soul is made in the pains of Christ by means of the fire of his love.’)

The seventh chapter of Vigri’s *Sette armi spirituali* takes up another image that likewise can be found both in the work of Jacopone of Todi,<sup>23</sup> and in the letters of Caterina of Siena, such as in her address to Ristoro di Piero Canigiani, explicitly citing Saint Bernard.<sup>24</sup> The passage in Vigri’s *Sette armi spirituali* reads:

‘O carissime sorele, ricordove quello che dice santo Bernardo, cioè che soto lo capo spinato non se convene li membri dillicati. E però se volite esser non sollamente membri de Christo, ma etiam vere serve e spoxe, convenite andare per la via spinoxa, seguitando le sue vestigie.’<sup>25</sup> (‘O beloved sisters, remember what Saint Bernard says, namely that delicate members do not fit under the head covered by spines. Hence if you want to be not only members of Christ, but also his true servants and brides, it behoves you to seek the road of spines, seeking his footsteps.’)

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21 Cf. Caterina of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. G. Cavallini (Siena: Cantagalli, 1995), 71 (chapter XXVI), and the letters T 29, T 76, T 77, T 161, T 188, T 301, T 315, T 318, T 329, T 378.

22 Caterina of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. Meattini, 617 (T 161).

23 Cf. Iacopone of Todi, *Laude*, ed. Leonardi, 100 (lauda 48, vv. 41-42): ‘Nullo membro ce par bello / star so’ lo capo spinato.’

24 It concerns letters T 38, T 86, T 217, T 258, T 356. The explicit reference to Saint Bernard can be found in T 258, which reads: ‘unde dice santo Bernardo che non si conviene che sotto el nostro capo spinato stieno i membri dillicati’.

25 Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Degl’Innocenti, 37 (VII 100). This passage constitutes the so-called ‘dottrina della beata Caterina da Bologna’ which also can be found in Caterina Vigri, *Laudi, trattati e lettere* ed. Serventi, 69-72 (treatise I.1).

As it calls to mind the image of the crucifix, the citation expresses in a concise and visual manner the invitation to imitate Christ on his road of suffering. Not by accident, the citation is taken from a sermon by Saint Bernard composed for the Feast of all Saints, to express that only the way of removal from comfort leads to paradise.<sup>26</sup> In the course of the treatise the ‘thorny road’ (*via spinosa*), which for the Poor Clare was the privileged way to follow Christ’s footsteps, is defined as the ‘road of the enamored cross’ (*via della innamorata croce*).<sup>27</sup> This last expression, probably taken from Ugo Panziera,<sup>28</sup> and which was also used by Battista of Varano,<sup>29</sup> cannot be found in Caterina of Siena. Yet the latter does write in several letters that Christ ran to the cross as a person enamored with the salvation of men, and in letter 260, addressed at several Sienese prisoners, she writes that Christ has smitten his enemies climbing on horseback on the wood of the cross.<sup>30</sup> A similar image can be found in the *Specchio della Croce*, a work written by the Dominican Domenico Cavalca between 1330 and 1342, from which the Sienese saint probably drew inspiration. There as well Christ is described as a knight who climbed on the cross as if it was his horse to save those he loved. If the identification of Christ on the cross with the figure of a lover was due to the Dominican, the comparison made between the body parts of the crucified and those of a young knight is obtained from the sixth chapter of Bonaventura of Bagnoregio’s *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, dedicated to the memory of the passion of

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26 Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones*, in: S. Bernardi *Opera*, vol. V, ed. J. Leclercq & H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1968), 368 (*Sermo* 5, 9 *In festivitate omnium sanctorum*): ‘Pudeat sub spinato capite membrum fieri delicatum’. The same citation can be found in § 4, 5 of Saint Bonaventura’s *Vitis mystica*. Cf. *La letteratura francescana*, vol. III, *Bonaventura: la perfezione cristiana*, ed. C. Leonardi (Milan: Fondazione Valla, 2012), 146.

27 Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Degl’Innocenti, 33 (VII 88) and 58 (X 14).

28 He used it two times in his *Lettera mandata a pie religiose per confortarle al perfetto stato di innamorate della croce*. Cf. *Mistici Francescani. Secolo XIV* (Milan: Editrici Francescane, 1997), 781 & 783. This letter was known to Vigri due to its presence in one of the manuscripts of *Corpus Domini* in Bologna: Cf. S. Serventi, ‘I trattati e le lettere come specchio della cultura di Caterina e delle consorelle’, in: *Dalla Corte al Chiostro. Santa Caterina Vigri e i suoi scritti*, 157-176 (at 171).

29 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Istruzioni al discepolo*, ed. M. Reschiglian, *La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente*, 28 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2017), 227 (VIII 8).

30 Cf. letters T 97, T 184, T 225, T 259, T 260, T 337, and T 342.



Christ.<sup>31</sup> Just as the lover wears colored clothing, Cavalca writes, so Christ was clothed in purple, and instead of a garland, he carried on his head the crown of thorns, and wounds instead of roses in his hands, whereas he had his side open to show his heart, instead of an open purse to show his money. Furthermore, Cavalca cited Saint Bernard, just as Bonaventura had done:

‘Onde dice santo Bernardo: Guarda, o anima, il tuo sposo con il capo inchinato per te salutare; la bocca chiusa per te baciare; le mani stese per te abbracciare; i piedi confitti per te co stare; il lato aperto per il suo cuore a te dare; e tutto il corpo disposto per te amare.’<sup>32</sup> (‘Therefore, says Saint Bernard: look, o soul, at your spouse who inclines his head to greet you, has his mouth closed to kiss you, his hands extended to embrace you, the feet pierced to stay with you, his side open to give you his heart, and his whole body prepared to love you.’)

In fact, this passage is not found in the works of Saint Bernard, but it is evidently one of those famous citations that was disseminated during the late medieval period with an association to a famous name to grant it *auctoritas*.

If we shift our gaze from the writings of Vigri to those produced in the ‘workshop’ of her Bolognese Corpus Domini monastery, the importance of Caterina’s letter collection as a model manifests itself in two letters structured in way resembling those of Caterina of Siena: Both letters state at the start that the sender desires a change in the soul of the recipient, expressed in terms that resemble those in the Catherinian model, where, after the initial greeting, normally is found the formulation ‘with the desire to’. Likewise, the object of desire is also put forward in a way nearly identical to the source, in so far as the writer wishes that her fellow sister let herself to be burned by divine love, which is the bond that joins God with man,

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31 Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, *Opuscoli spirituali* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1992), 364 (*De perfectione vitae ad sorores*, chapter VI, § 10): ‘Vide, inquit Bernardus, caput Christi, inclinatum ad osculandum, brachia extensa ad amplexandum, manus perfossas ad largiendum, latus apertum ad diligendum, totius corporis extensionem ad se totum impendendum’.

32 Domenico Cavalca, *Specchio della Croce*, ed. T.S. Centi (Bologna: EDS, 1992), 254-257 (chapter 32).

and which is the true chain that kept Christ pinned to the cross.<sup>33</sup> In the writings of Caterina of Siena the image of the ‘bonds of love’ abound, and in some of her letters it is confirmed that only love kept Christ on the cross, not the nails, nor the wood, nor the rock on which the cross was fixed.<sup>34</sup> Vigri, in turn, in a prayer recommended for novices and included by her in the *Sette armi spirituali*, prays to God in the name of the same love that caused him to be tied to the column and to sustain punishments for the salvation of mankind.<sup>35</sup>

### Battista of Varano

The Passion was also a deeply felt theme of Battista of Varano, the author of *Dolori mentali di Gesù nella sua Passione*, and who in a passage from her autobiography had asked God to make her whole life a Good Friday.<sup>36</sup> More in particular, she expressed the image of the inadequate nature of the instruments of the crucifixion without the voluntary choice of the cross in her *De puritate cordis*, composed between 1499 and 1501. She did this in a fashion very similar to what Caterina of Siena expressed in letter 102 to Raimondo of Capua: ‘né chiovo era sufficiente a tenerlo confitto e chivellato, se l’amore ineffabile che egli aveva alla salute nostra non l’avesse tenuto’. (‘nor would the spike have been sufficient to keep him fixed and pinned to the cross, if the ineffable love he had for our salvation had not kept him in place’). In fact, Battista Varano writes:

‘Et sicut potentiam divinam non erant sufficientes clavi illi cruci tenere affixam sine amore, ita impossibile est sine Dei amore vota nostra illesa custodire.’<sup>37</sup> (‘And just as the nails on that cross were not sufficient to keep the divine power affixed to it without love, thus it is impossible to keep our vows intact without the love of God.’)

33 Caterina Vigri, *Laudi, trattati e lettere*, ed. Serventi, 172-173 & 178 (letters 1 & 3).

34 See letters T 38, T 91, T 102, T 129, T 136, T 142, and T 246.

35 Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Degl’Innocenti, 28 (VII 66). Francesco Santi has drawn attention to this passage in ‘Di un Dio che obbedisce ai chiodi. Caterina Vigri e la tradizione francescana’, in: *Caterina Vigri. La Santa e la Città*, 177-86 (at 182).

36 See Camilla Battista of Varano, *Le opere spirituali*, ed. G. Boccanera (Jesi: Scuola Tipografica Francescana, 1958), 59 (*La vita spirituale*, chapter XVII).

37 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 24 (§ 41).

This motive is also found in Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*, completed in 1374.<sup>38</sup> It is unlikely that Caterina of Siena knew the work of this Dominican later turned Carthusian, as it was predominantly disseminated in Italy during the sixteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Yet the work was probably known by the Poor Clare Battista of Varano. It is in any case significant that the manuscript tradition of Ludolph of Saxony's work was intertwined with that of Caterina's oeuvre: a codex containing the second part of the *Vita Christi* dedicated to the Passion, nowadays kept in the Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio of Bologna,<sup>40</sup> was illuminated by Cristoforo Cortese, the artist to whom in all probability have to be ascribed the miniatures in some of the most important manuscripts of the works of Caterina of Siena.<sup>41</sup>

A further indication of Battista of Varano's acquaintance with the writings of the Sieneese saint is the resumption of an image found both in Caterina's letters and in her *Dialogo*:<sup>42</sup> In Battista of Varano's *Istruzioni al discepolo*, written around the same time as *De puritate cordis*, the Poor Clare recommends the intended reader to always have the heart kindled by divine love 'perché alla pigniatta che bolle non si appressono le mosche, ma a quella che è tiepida vi si aniegano. Dalla anima che bolle del divino amore si fugge lo demonio e le immonde cogitationi' ('For flees do not approach a boiling put, but will jump in a tepid one. Both the devil and bad thoughts flee from a soul boiling with divine love').<sup>43</sup> Again in this case Varano's model Caterina Benincasa could have found in Cavalca the simile between the fly trying to enter the saucepan and the devil harassing the soul, for it appears among the notable sayings of an antique father in

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38 Ludolphus de Saxoniam, *Vita Christi*, 2 Vols. (Paris: Palmé, 1865/Facsimile Edition Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 2006-2007), 640 (II, 63).

39 See G. Picasso, *Tra Umanesimo e 'devotio'*. *Studi di storia monastica raccolti per il 50° di professione dell'autore*, ed. G. Andenna, G. Motta & M. Tagliabue, Scienze storiche, 67 (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1999), 67.

40 It concerns MS A. 121 (first half 15th cent.). See *Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio. Bologna*, ed. P. Bellettini, Le grandi biblioteche d'Italia (Fiesole: Nardini, 2001), 170-173.

41 See S. Fumian, 'Cristoforo Cortese e i Domenicani a Venezia: di alcuni manoscritti cateriniani', in: *Le arti a confronto con il sacro. Metodi di ricerca e nuove prospettive di indagine interdisciplinare. Atti delle giornate di studio (Padova, 31 maggio-1 giugno 2007)*, ed. V. Cantone & S. Fumian (Padua: CLEUP, 2009), 101-109.

42 Letters T 128, T 172, T 287, as well as Caterina of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. Cavallini, 241-242 (chapter XC).

43 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Istruzioni al discepolo*, ed. Reschiglian, 215 (*Sesto ricordo*, § 13).

the third part of Cavalca's vernacularizing of the *Vite dei Santi Padri*.<sup>44</sup> The image must have had a wide dissemination, as it can also be found in the letter written by the Augustinian Simone Fidati of Cascia to Tommaso Corsini in 1336.<sup>45</sup> Battista of Varano in addition uses several metaphors of specification that she might have found in the writings of the sienese saint, such as the bed of the cross and the blight of sin.<sup>46</sup> The first of these is a typical form of mystical language, and can also be found in Angela of Foligno's *Memoriale*, where it is connected with the motive of nudity,<sup>47</sup> something also taken up by our Clarissan author. In the conclusion of her *Ricordi di Gesù*, we read in fact: 'Recordate che Dio te vole sola sola, nuda nuda, nel letto della croce' ('Remember that God wants you alone, alone, naked, naked, in the bed of the cross'),<sup>48</sup> an expression in which can be grasped an echo of the adage 'Nudus nudum Christum sequi', derived from Saint Jerome and later disseminated within Franciscan circles.<sup>49</sup> The second metaphor is found in Varano's *Trattato della purità del cuore*, where, developing the theme of the knowledge of God and oneself, the Poor Clare writes that, once the soul is illuminated by the fiery lightning bolt of divine love, it burns and consumes in itself 'all blights of its defects'.<sup>50</sup> This image, which dates back to Gregory the Great,<sup>51</sup> was a trope of religious

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44 Domenico Cavalca, *Vite dei Santi Padri*, ed. C. Delcorno, 2 Vols. (Florence: Edizioni del Galuzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2009), II, 958-959 (third part, chapter 18), where he translates Pseudo Rufino, *Vitae Patrum*, lib. III, n. 204, in: *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 Vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1841-1865), LXXIII, col. 805.

45 See Simone Fidati of Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana; Tractatus de vita christiana; Epistulae; Laude; Opuscula*; Giovanni of Salerno, *Tractatus de vita et moribus fratris Simonis de Cassia*, ed. W. Eckermann, *Corpus scriptorum Augustinianorum*, 7/8 (Rome: Augustinianum, 2006), 254 (*Epistula quinta*).

46 See Caterina Benincasa's letter T 152 for the simile of the bed of the cross and letter T 80 for the blight of guilt.

47 *Il "Liber" della beata Angela da Foligno, ed. in facsimile e trascrizione del ms. 342 della Biblioteca Comunale di Assisi, con quattro studi*, ed. E. Menestò, 2 Vols. (Spoleto, CISAM, 2009-2010), I (*Trascrizione del ms. 342 della Biblioteca Comunale di Assisi*, ed. F. Verderosa), 8: 'nuda irem ad crucem', and 42: 'crux est tua salus et tuus lectus'.

48 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Le opere spirituali*, ed. Boccanera, 139 (*Ricordi di Gesù*).

49 Cf. G. Miccoli, *Francesco d'Assisi: realtà e memoria di un'esperienza cristiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1991), 188. It was also used by an Augustinian contemporaneous with Caterina Benincasa, namely Girolamo of Siena, *Epistole*, ed. S. Serventi (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004), 166 (letter III, § 34).

50 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 71 (§ 117).

51 See Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. R. Étaix, *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 291 (Liber II, Homilia XXXIII, 4): 'Quid, fratres mei, esse dilectionem credimus nisi ignem? Et quid culpam nisi rubiginem?'

language, as shown in its parodic use by Giovanni Boccaccio in the tale of *Ser Ciappelletto*, and it is also found in Domenico Cavalca's *Specchio de' peccati*.<sup>52</sup>

Yet the consonance between the saint of Camerino and the Siense saint goes beyond the retrieval of images or specific metaphors, and concerns common themes that stand at the basis of their thought, such as the meditation on the suffering of Christ on the cross and the desire to take part in this suffering by entering in his wounds. It is a theme with various facets which for both authors starts from their interpretation of the evangelical passage in which Christ on the cross asks for a drink, all the way to the analogy between the wounds of the crucifix and the holes in rock formations where doves make their nest. In a letter to the prior of Montoliveto, Caterina of Siena invites the addressee to become a 'mangiatore e gustatore dell'anime, imparando dalla prima dolce Verità che per fame e sete che aveva d'ansietato desiderio della salute nostra, gridava in sul legno della santissima Croce, quando disse *Sitio*' ('an eater and taster of souls, learning from God, who is the first sweet Truth, who, because of the hunger and thirst he had from the desire filled with anxiety for our salvation, cried on the wood of the cross, saying *Sitio*').<sup>53</sup> Battista of Varano, in turn, develops this theme especially in *De puritate cordis*, where she puts the following words in Christ's mouth:

'O amatores crucis, ego pastor bonus, ego Dominus, Pater et Redemptor vester, sitio salutem animarum. Si diligite me, afferte ori meo sitienti vinum optimum salutis animarum, non mirratum vestrae expectationis premii.'<sup>54</sup> ('O lovers of the cross, I the good pastor, your Lord, Father and Redemptor, I am thirsty for the salvation of souls. If you esteem me, offer to my thirsty mouth the best wine of the salvation of souls, not mixed with your desire of reward.')

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52 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decamerone*, ed. V. Branca, 2 Vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), I, 1 (§ 43), and Domenico Cavalca, *Specchio de' peccati*, ed. M. Zanchetta (Florence: Cesati, 2015), 223 & 327.

53 See Caterina of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. Meattini, 1312, T 8. The same interpretation is found in letter T 12.

54 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 94 (§ 143.III).

The Poor Clare could have found this interpretation in fourteenth-century literature, for instance in works by Caterina of Siena, Domenico Cavalca, Bianco of Siena or in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*,<sup>55</sup> but it cannot be ruled out that she obtained it from the common source of these authors, namely the Augustinian commentary on Psalm 68. While commenting on verse 11 in the context of fasting, Saint Augustine refers to the thirst of Christ on the cross, that is to his zeal to save humanity, and this is linked to a verse cited slightly earlier: ‘Zelus domus tuae comedit me’ (‘The zeal of your house devours me’).<sup>56</sup> Battista follows the same route, and before speaking about Christ’s thirst to save souls, she makes the inflamed soul that burns with zeal for the house of God, that is to say for his neighbor, pronounce these words of the psalm. Continuing in her meditation, the saint of Camerino affirms that what the faithful can do to quench Christ’s thirst, is to offer oneself as beverage, and to take in oneself some of the bitter vinegar by meditating on the Passion. The memory of the Passion is indeed a central theme for Battista, who considers it to be ‘un’arca del tesoro celeste’ (‘an ark of celestial treasure’) and the most important of the spiritual arts.<sup>57</sup> It concerns a characteristic theme among Observant Poor Clares, as becomes clear from the preference Vigri had for it as well, and for whom ‘la memoria della Passione’ is the fourth spiritual weapon.<sup>58</sup> In Caterina of Siena this particular expression cannot be found, because in her writings the term ‘passion’ was not used to indicate the suffering of Christ. Nevertheless, it is clear that for her this is also a central motive: for she repeatedly invites her interlocutors to exercise themselves in the memory of the crucifix or in that of the blood of Christ crucified. As can be read in the letter she wrote to the merchant Marco Bindi, for her the death of Christ

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55 See chapter 33 of Domenico Cavalca’s *Specchio della Croce*, as well as Bianco of Siena, *Laudi*, ed. S. Serventi (Rome: Antonianum, 2013), 1340 (*Indice tematico*), and *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, chapter 79 in: *Mistici Francescani. Secolo XIV*, 930. For the Latin text of the latter, see Iohannis de Caulibus, *Meditationes vite Christi olim S. Bonaventuro attributae*, ed. M. Stallings-Taney, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, 153 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

56 Aurelius Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, LXVIII, 11, in: *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Migne, XXXVI, col. 851 (§ 14): ‘Et de cruce cum diceret, Sitio, fidem illorum quaerebat... Sed illi homines quid propinarunt sitienti? Acetum.’

57 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 61 (§ 103).

58 Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Degl’Innocenti, 10.

is the largest gift that man has received from God, and the reminiscence of it transforms the bitterness of sin and suffering into something sweet.<sup>59</sup>

In the same letter Caterina of Siena adds that when we reflect in a serious manner on our offenses against our Creator, we would agree that we merit a thousand hells ('degni siamo di mille inferni'). This figure of speech, which recurs also elsewhere in her letter collection, can be found both in the *Trattato della purità del cuore* and in the *Meditatione sopra la Cantica di Salomone*, a recently discovered work that also can be attributed to Varano.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the theme of bitterness becoming sweet is re-used by Saint Battista in *De puritate cordis*, where, while extolling the workings of the Holy Spirit she addresses God as follows: 'Nam quos magis diligis, frequentius permictis affligi atque vehementius torqueri, ut amarescant illis terrena et tu solus dulcis appareas' ('For you permit those who you love more to be afflicted and more vehemently tormented, so that the world becomes bitter to them and only you appear sweet to them').<sup>61</sup> As said earlier, another image related to the crucifix that experienced great fortune and which we find in both female authors, is the link between the wounds of the crucified and nesting holes in the rocks. The source for this are the *Sermones super Cantica* of Saint Bernard, who interprets in this way the cavity into which the dove, the beloved of the Song of Songs, is invited to make its nest.<sup>62</sup> Whereas this motive was sufficiently widespread to be present in the *Glossa al Cantico*,<sup>63</sup> in Siense authors contemporaneous with Caterina of Siena such as the Jesuate Bianco of Siena and the Augustinian Girolamo of Siena,<sup>64</sup> as well as in many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century mystical

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59 Caterina of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. Meattini, 1602 (letter T 13): 'Abbate memoria del Sangue di Cristo crocifisso; e ogni amaritudine vi tornerà in dolcezza, e ogni gran peso vi tornerà leggero.' Cf. also letter T 169.

60 See Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 75 (§ 122), and 111 (Appendix).

61 Ibidem, 56 (§ 98).

62 Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones super Cantica Cantorum*, in: S. Bernardi Opera, ed. Leclercq & Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses), II, 148-153 (sermo 61).

63 *Glossa Ordinaria*, Pars 22: *In Canticum Cantorum*, ed. M. Dove, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, 170 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 181.

64 Bianco of Siena, *Laudi*, ed. Serventi, 957 (lauda XCIX, vv. 8-9), and Girolamo of Siena, *Adiutorio*, in: *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, ed. Ildefonso di San Luigi, 24 Vols. (Florence: Cambiagi, 1770-1789) I, 101.

authors,<sup>65</sup> it seems that its treatment by our two female authors differs. While Caterina of Siena avoids the reference to the image of the Song, and instead compares the rib cage of Christ to an ‘open shop’,<sup>66</sup> a shop filled with spices, or rather filled with mercy, Battista adheres to the source and cites in Latin the biblical reference:

‘Anima santa, [...] nella quale è la purità gioconda, la columba del Spirito Santo nidificante nelli forami della pietra [...] Gli forami della pietra, nelli quali fa il suo nido questa columbina pura, sono le piaghe di Cristo. *In caverna maceriae*, cioè nella piaga del costato.’<sup>67</sup> (‘Holy soul [...] in which joyous purity resides, the dove of the Holy Spirit nesting in the holes of the rock [...] the holes in the rock in which that pure dove makes its nest, are the wounds of Christ. *In the cavern of the wall*, namely in the wound of his side.’)

In the writings of the Sienese saint, the emphasis is on the motive of blood and on the table represented by the cross: in chapter 88 of her *Dialogo*, Caterina specifies that God represents the table, that the Son is the food, and that the Holy Spirit is the server, and affirms that Christ remained on the cross ‘blissful and painful’ (‘beato e doloroso’), because even while suffering as a human being, his divine spirit could not sustain punishment, to conclude that he who sustains his own cross with the ardor of charity experiences a ‘fattening pain’ (‘dolore ingrassativo’). This expression again seems to resonate in the works of Battista, who in her *Dolori mentali di Gesù nella sua Passione* invites the readers to feed themselves with the poisoned food of the Passion, and in her *Ricordi di Gesù* she speaks about ‘the fat pastures of suffering’ (‘pascui grassi del mal patire’).<sup>68</sup>

For both mystics the love for the crucified is contrasted with a ‘holy hate for oneself’ (‘odio santo di sé’), which is born from a profound understanding of the self. Caterina of Siena often turns to this theme, both in her letters and in her *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, where she writes

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65 See *Scrittrici mistiche italiane*, ed. G. Pozzi & C. Leonardi (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 741 (*Lessico dei termini mistici*, s.v. *Caverna*).

66 Caterina of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. Meattini, 1624 (letter T 163). See also letters T 112 and T 273.

67 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 21 (§ 33).

68 Caterina of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. Cavallini, 208; Camilla Battista of Varano, *Le opere spirituali*, ed. Boccanera, 137 (*Ricordi di Gesù*), 146 (*Dolori mentali*).



that humility is born from a ‘cognoscimento e odio santo di sé medesimo, cioè della propria sensualità’ (‘a knowledge and holy hatred of the self, namely one’s own sensuality’).<sup>69</sup> Likewise, in the writings of Battista of Varano, this theme is linked to that of humility: speaking about the final moments in the life of the Franciscan friar Pietro of Mogliano, she writes that he was ‘full of holy hatred for himself’ and compared him to Saint Jerome for his profound contrition.<sup>70</sup> At the end of *De puritate cordis*, she weaves a veritable eulogy of this sentiment, the value of which many do not understand:

‘Odiū sanctū, dulce et delectabile, tuam ignorant dulcedinem, qui inter lutum negligentiarum semper in vita spirituali iacent.’<sup>71</sup>  
(‘Holy hatred, sweet and delightful, those who always remain in the dirt, negligent in their spiritual life, do not know your sweetness.’)

In the vernacular this expression becomes a veritable oxymoron, namely ‘lovable hatred’ (‘odio amabile’), presented as the foundation of true perfection. For both female authors, the struggle with one’s own egoism must lead to acting only ‘for the honor of God and the spiritual wellbeing of one’s neighbor’ (‘per l’onore di Dio e la salute del prossimo’). This is a veritable refrain of the Sienese saint, present in many of her letters and in the preface to the *Dialogo*,<sup>72</sup> and one that can again be found several times in Battista of Varano’s *Trattato della purità del cuore*.<sup>73</sup> Just as frequent in the works of Caterina of Siena is the adjective ‘ansietato’, which means ‘filled with trepidation’, which is normally linked to desire, and which can be found everywhere in the *Dialogo* and also with great frequency in her

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69 Caterina of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. Cavallini, 160 (chapter LXIII). See also letters T 30 and T 169. The expression also appears in the works of Domenico Cavalca, who connects it to the confession of one’s own sins. See Domenico Cavalca, *Specchio de’ peccati*, ed. Zanchetta, 217.

70 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Il felice transito del beato Pietro da Mogliano*, ed. A. Gattucci, *La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente*, 11 (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2007), 8 (chapter I, § 35).

71 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 98 (§ 148).

72 See for instance letters T 2, T 6, T 8, T 11, T 16, as well as Caterina of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. Cavallini, 1: ‘Levandosi una anima ansietata di grandissimo desiderio verso l’onore di Dio e salute dell’anime.’

73 Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 9 (§ 10), 11 (§ 14), and 83 (§ 133).

letter collection.<sup>74</sup> An echo of the expression ‘anxious desire’ can likewise be found in the writings of both Clarissan authors: it appears at the end of Vigni’s *Sette armi spirituali*, where she deplors the fact that she has not sought with all her heart to ensure that all creatures recognizes her nothingness,<sup>75</sup> and it pops up three times in Varano’s *Meditatione sopra la Cantica di Salomone*.<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

The use of specific expressions and metaphors, as well as the identity of motives and sources, show how profoundly the footprint of Caterina of Siena was traceable among the Poor Clares of the fifteenth century. The Catherinian writings, diffused widely in manuscript format and in print, could easily have influenced the Poor Clares of the Observance, who found embedded in them the patristic tradition, enriched by the mysticism of Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure. This tradition had already been elaborated by the Dominican Domenico Cavalca, who, having absorbed more the Augustinian and monastic than the scholastic and Thomistic tradition, had focused on the passion of Christ and on the possibility to order and heal one own passions through the contemplation of the cross.<sup>77</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Cavalca was still read by Bolognese Poor Clares in the sixteenth century, as is clear from the presence of the 1524 edition of his *Specchio della Croce* in the library of the Corpus Domini monastery.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, it can be noted that in the course of the sixteenth century the Dominicans themselves became attentive readers of the writings of Battista of Varano, as can be glimpsed from two manuscripts containing her *Istruzioni al discepolo*. In one case the work was transcribed by the Dominican friar Domenico Baglioni together with spiritual works by Ignazio Manardi, while in another case the work was inserted in

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74 See for example letters T 8, T 35, T 63, T 83, T 96, T 100, and T 102.

75 Caterina Vigni, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. Degl’Innocenti, 57 (X 12).

76 Now edited in an appendix to Camilla Battista of Varano, *Trattato della purità del cuore*, ed. Serventi, 109-113 (at 110 and 112).

77 See C. Casagrande, ‘Specchio di croce». Domenico Cavalca e l’ordine degli affetti’, *Comunicazioni Sociali* 2 (2003), 221-230.

78 S. Spanò Martinelli, ‘La biblioteca del “Corpus Domini” bolognese: l’inconsueto spaccato di una cultura monastica femminile’, *La Bibliofilia* 88 (1986), 1-23 (at 11).

a letter of the bishop Vincenzo Ercolani, and as a result was erroneously attributed to him by the copyist Timoteo Bottonio.<sup>79</sup> The road sketched by Varano, which invites the reader not to judge God and one's neighbor, but rather forces the reader to know himself and to purify his own heart by meditating on the benefits received and in particular on the Passion of Christ, would see an ongoing reception also among the new orders of the Counter Reformation, as is shown by the many Oratorian manuscripts that transmit the works of the saint of Camerino, or the edition of Varano's *Dolori mentali* in conjunction with the works of the Theatine Lorenzo Scupoli.<sup>80</sup> Filippo Neri likewise had a manuscript with the works of Battista Varano, today conserved in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana of Rome under the signature F.24, whereas Cardinal Federico Borromeo even engaged in a transcription of her *Vita spirituale*, *Dolori mentali* and *Ricordi di Gesù*, all of which can be read in his hand in manuscript G 17 inf. 3 of the Milanese Biblioteca Ambrosiana.<sup>81</sup>

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79 See M. Bucur , 'Camilla Battista Varano da Camerino: Istruzioni al discepolo. Dos dominicos testigos de un texto de espiritualidad franciscana a principio de la edad moderna', *Memorie Domenicane* 32 (2001), 291-311.

80 From 1593 onward, Varano's *Dolori mentali* were issued several times together with Scupoli's *Combattimento spirituale*. Cf. G. Zarri, *Libri di spirito. Editoria religiosa in volgare nei secoli XV-XVII*, La storia e le storie (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2009), 188.

81 S. Serventi, 'Camilla Battista da Varano', in: *Autographa* II.1, *Donne, sante e madonne (da Matilde di Canossa ad Artemisia Gentileschi)*, ed. G. Murano (Imola: La Mandragora, 2018), 103-109 (at 104).

# Religious Life and Visual Authority: Library Decoration among Mendicant Observant Orders

*Roberto Cobianchi*

## **Introduction**

Due to extensive renovation and changes in use, many friaries restored or intentionally built during the fifteenth century in order to house Observant mendicant communities have been heavily altered over the centuries. Despite this, traces of painted and sculpted ornamentation can still be found in many cloisters, chapter houses, and friars' cells, testifying to a well-established use of images among Observant communities that extended far beyond the boundaries of their churches. Compared to the churches, the monasteries were primarily (but not exclusively) intended to be used and lived in by the friars, and their decoration may provide evidence of the religious communities' self-identity in a way plausibly different from that shown by the art produced for their churches.

Well before the growth of the Observant reform movements in the early fifteenth century, cloisters, chapter houses and refectories of mendicant houses had been traditionally decorated with painted and sculpted images. Along the secluded walls of a cloister, it was not unusual to find narratives, often unfolding the life of the order's founder. The authority of such a long tradition inside the Franciscan order, for instance, was carried on among Observant communities of the fifteenth century, as demonstrated by the cloister of Sant'Angelo, Milan, which had mural paintings depicting the life of St Francis as well as that of St Bernardino of Siena, who had

established the Observant community in Milan and had accepted the old church of Sant'Angelo for his fellow friars.<sup>1</sup>

The cloister of San Marco, Florence, and that of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa, both prominent Dominican Observant foundations, were decorated by a few images with a strong didactic meaning. Didactic is also the display of figures in the capitals of the loggia of Santa Oliva, Cori, a house for a community of friars belonging to the Augustinian Observant Congregation of Lombardy.<sup>2</sup> In a more monumental way, around 1515-1520, the cloister of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Gravedona, also belonging to members of the Augustinian Observant Congregation of Lombardy, received illustrations on the external walls with busts of Augustinian saints, the Redeemer, the Doctors of the Church, and the Evangelists.<sup>3</sup>

Like cloisters, chapter houses were spaces customarily used for a visual celebration of the order. Good examples are the Cappellone degli Spagnoli at Santa Maria Novella, Florence, and the chapter house at San Nicolò, Treviso, frescoed by Tommaso of Modena. Similarly, the Observant congregations decorated their chapter houses. Well known is Fra Angelico's *Crucifixion and Saints* at San Marco, Florence. The *Crucifix with the Virgin Mary and the saints John, Sebastian, Vincent Ferrer, Peter Martyr and Crispiano* that features in the chapter house of the Dominicans at Taggia, is perhaps a less known example. This painting by Giovanni Canavesio was paid for by a layman, Giovanni Arnaldi, who had a burial place in the cloister in front of the door leading to the chapter house.<sup>4</sup> Because of their funerary function, cloisters and chapter houses were also sometimes accessible to the laity, but far less so were other communal areas of a friary.

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1 The cycle, now lost, was started in 1486 and had to be frescoed 'cum istoria Sancti Francisci cum conformitatibus domini nostri Iesu Christi, pure et sine curiositate', see Edoardo Rossetti, 'Una questione di famiglie. Lo sviluppo dell'Osservanza francescana e l'aristocrazia milanese', in: *Fratres de familia. Gli insediamenti dell'Osservanza minoritica nella penisola italiana (sec. XIV-XV)*, ed. Letizia Pellegrini and Gian Maria Varanini, Quaderni di Storia Religiosa, 18 (Caselle di Sommacampagna (Verona): Cierre, 2011), 101-165, at 123-127.

2 Fabrizio Biferali, *Ambrogio Massari, Guillaume d'Estouteville e il chiostro figurato di Sant'Oliva a Cori* (Tolentino: Centro Studi Agostino Trapè, 2002).

3 Alessandro Rovetta, 'S. Maria delle Grazie a Gravedona e la cultura osservante nell'Alto Lario', *Arte Lombarda* 76/77 (1986), 89-100, at 97-98 and footnote 27 at 100.

4 Presumably at the same date Canavesio executed the *Crucifix with St Dominic* in the refectory.

## The monastic library

For reasons of feasibility, I have confined my comparative investigation to Dominican, Franciscan and Augustinian reformed male communities, limiting the search for traces of visual 'authority' inside their religious houses to one specific space, functional and deeply symbolic at the same time: the monastic library. As we shall see, during the fifteenth century the architectural features of libraries developed much more substantially than those of cloisters, chapter houses and refectories. Consequently, a new imagery might also have been purposely fashioned for them.

For monastic communities to possess and store books was a necessity since the time of St Benedict's *Rule*.<sup>5</sup> Famous is the monastic proverb 'claustrum sine armario est quasi castrum sine armamentario' ('a cloister without a book-case is as a castle without an arsenal').<sup>6</sup> In a broader sense, the monastic library coincides with the collection of books housed in the monastery itself. Apart from those used in the liturgy, books were read aloud in the refectory, or individually for personal studying. According to their specific use, books could be stored in different ways and places. Choir books, for instance, were likely to be kept in the sacristy.

More and more medieval libraries of the mendicant orders (thirteenth to fifteenth century) became 'reference libraries' for communal usage.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the location and actual appearance of these reference libraries is not easy to assess, as *libraria* and *armarium* could either have been a cupboard or a room of variable size.<sup>8</sup>

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5 See Diana Gisolfi and Staale Sinding-Larsen, *The Rule, the Bible and the Council, the Library of the Benedictine Abbey at Praglia* (Seattle: Published by College Art Association in association with University of Washington Press, 1998).

6 See Hubert Silvestre, 'A propos du dicton «claustrum sine armario est quasi castrum sine armamentario», *Medieval Studies* 26 (1964), 351-353.

7 Donatella Nebbiai, 'Le biblioteche degli ordini mendicanti (secc. XIII-XV)', in: *Studio e studia: le scuole degli ordini mendicanti tra XIII e XIV secolo*, Atti del XXIX Convegno di Assisi (Assisi, 11-13 ottobre 2001) (Spoleto: CISAM, 2002), 221-270. With regard to usage and storage of books, as was established by the legislation of both Dominican and Franciscan orders, see Pietro Maranesi, 'La normativa degli Ordini mendicanti sui libri in convento', in: *Libri, biblioteche e letture dei frati mendicanti (secoli XIII-XIV)*, Atti del XXXII Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 7-9 ottobre 2004) (Spoleto: CISAM, 2005), 171-263.

8 Expressions to be found in documents such as *libraria conventus* (by the Dominicans of Cividale del Friuli), or *armarius esterior* (by the Franciscans of Bologna) as opposed to *armarium interius* (the first term referring to the books that could be given on loan) or again *libraria publica* as opposed to *secreta* in the inventory by Giovanni of Iolo from 1381 of the library of the Sacro

In his 1972 book entitled *The Architecture of the Monastic library in Italy 1300-1600*, James O’Gorman linked the ‘real flowering of monastic libraries and library architecture in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries’ to ‘Observantism’,<sup>9</sup> dividing the plan-design of Renaissance libraries into two categories, the ‘basilica type’, with a nave and two aisles separated by columns, and the ‘hall type’. With regard to the first category, O’Gorman did pay special attention to the library in the friary of San Marco, Florence, a center of Dominican Observant reform, rebuilt after 1438. The library, that opens to the corridor of the dormitory on the first floor of the second cloister, was presumably designed by Michelozzo and completed by 1444, but it was rebuilt after an earthquake in the 1450s. As O’Gorman noted, here the library is ‘no longer an insignificant area as it is in the St. Gall exemplar. In plan, internal spatial organization, and external mass, it has become one of the most important parts of the architectural complex. In fact, it is second only to the church itself.’<sup>10</sup> The San Marco library can be considered a prototype for later Renaissance monastic libraries, including the Malatestiana,<sup>11</sup> Cesena, and that of San Domenico,<sup>12</sup> Bologna.

The records of the annual provincial chapters of the Franciscan Observants of the province of Bologna, the most complete series of acts of this sort to have come to us, show that between 1467 and 1522 libraries are mentioned on several occasions, as they were in this period under construction in Parma, Forlì, Castellarquato, Modena, Mirandola and Cotignola. In 1467 the friars planned to adapt as a library the ‘old refectory’ in their friary in Parma,<sup>13</sup> while a few years later, in 1471, they expressed the intention to enlarge the same library, by taking over either two

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Convento, Assisi, do refer to the access and the consultation of the books, but not to the actual space where the books were kept. The word *armarium* is used more often than *libraria*.

9 James F. O’Gorman, *The Architecture of the Monastic Library in Italy 1300-1600* (New York: New York University Press for the College Art Association of America, 1972), 10.

10 Ibidem, 4.

11 Lorenzo Baldacchini, *La biblioteca Malatestiana di Cesena* (Rome: Editalia, 1992).

12 Venturino Alce, *La biblioteca di S. Domenico in Bologna* (Florence: Olschki, 1961).

13 *Atti Ufficiali della Provincia osservante francescana di Bologna*, ed. Fr. Diego Guidarini, Fr. Bruno Monfardini, and Fr. Giambattista Montorsi, 4 Vols. (Bologna: Edizioni Francescane, 2003) I, 14: ‘Quod libraria Parme ampliatur, vel fiat in refectorio veteri secundum quod videbitur p. Vicario cum discretis loci’; it was also stated ‘Quod libraria Forliuij fiat in loco convenientiori pro dispositione p. Vicarii cum discretis loci et aliquibus de locis proximioribus’.

or three cells from each side of the dormitory.<sup>14</sup> In 1502, the friars allowed the enlargement of the Parma library towards the small garden.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, nothing more is known of this library, and nothing has survived as the friary was demolished in 1546.

As very rarely friars of the same Observant province of Bologna made declarations about images and building decoration, it is remarkable that in 1513 they prohibited excessive and extravagant painted decoration inside their libraries. Nevertheless, they did allow a degree of discretionary freedom to the provincial vicars: 'In the first place it has been determined that the libraries henceforth are not painted, nor should other unnecessary and extravagant things be done, except perhaps at the head or in the middle and with the consent of the father vicar provincial'.<sup>16</sup> I am unaware of statements of this sort by any other Observant congregation or religious order for the fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

During the fifteenth century the Franciscan monastic library was fundamentally a communal reference library (often located on the first floor of the house), used by the community and in some instances by lay scholars or humanists. Where a *studium* existed, the access and the use of the library was intertwined with its activities. As a matter of fact, the word *studium* itself in contemporary fifteenth-century documents may sometimes indicate the library as the physical space where books were stored, read and perhaps copied. If and how such rooms may have been decorated has remained an almost unaddressed question.

## The Dominicans

The white plastered walls and vaulted ceiling of the library at San Marco, Florence, were pointed out as unusual by O'Gorman, who noticed that the suitable color for a library was green. The original green color has sur-

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14 Ibidem, I, 19: 'Item elongetur libraria Parme versus dormitorium capiendo duas vet tres cellas ex utroque latere ipsius dormitorij elevando solarium totius dormitorij veteris ad equalitatem novi dormitorij, dummo Petrus Maria edificet'.

15 Ibidem, I, 48: 'Item concessum est quod Parme possit ampliare locus librarie versus orticellum, si modo fratres habent modum...'

16 Ibidem, I, 58: 'Primo determinatum est quod bibliothecae de cetero non pingantur, nec alia superflua et curiosa fiant, nisi forte in capite et medio bibliothecae et de consensu p. Vicarii provincie'.



vived in the Malatestiana library in Cesena, and that of San Domenico in Bologna. Yet, recent restoration has demonstrated that walls and ceiling of the library at San Marco were also painted in green.<sup>17</sup> Green being a color that, according to Marsilio Ficino ‘comforts the sight more than any other and cheers it up in a healthy manner’.<sup>18</sup>

The library of another prominent Dominican observant foundation, that of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa, seems to show a high degree of simplicity, being mainly finished with white plaster, with only the ribs of the vaulted ceiling and the moulding of the triple window emphasized by a striped black and white pattern enriched by a simple gothic leafy decoration. A radiating sun surrounds the central key stone on each bay of the ceiling. Being of the ‘hall’ type, the library was built together with the sacristy between 1445 and 1452, thanks to the financial support of the brothers Emanuele and Lionello Grimaldi Oliva.<sup>19</sup> Such prestigious patronage is repeatedly stated by the coat of arms of the Grimaldi family painted on the carved corbels supporting the vaulting of the ceiling. The rather unassuming painted embellishment of the library was nevertheless part of a larger decoration program that encompasses the entire monastery. The presence of the library seems to have been visually announced on the ground floor of the first cloister where, above the door leading to the second cloister and the main staircase, was depicted *St Dominic inviting to silence*. With the right index finger on his mouth in a gesture of silence, and the discipline (a bunch of thin sticks for scourging) on the left, the saint is shown next to an open book, contextually inviting the friars to study. Further along, to the left side of the door leading from the upper loggia into the library’s vestibule, a monochrome depicts *Job, Solomon and David*, each unfolding an inscribed scroll. If indeed, because of the written words, the three Old Testament figures seem to indicate the caducity of

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17 See Magnolia Scudieri, ‘La Biblioteca di San Marco dalle origini ad oggi’, in: *La Biblioteca di Michelozzo a San Marco tra recupero e scoperta*, ed. Magnolia Scudieri & Giovanna Rasario (Florence: Giunti, 2000), 9-43, at 24. Furthermore, on the symbolic meaning of the color green see Magnolia Scudieri & Michele Ciliberto, ‘Un’ipotesi per il verde’, in: *La Biblioteca di Michelozzo a San Marco tra recupero e scoperta*, ed. Magnolia Scudieri & Giovanna Rasario (Florence: Giunti, 2000), 45-48.

18 *Marsilii Ficini De vita libri tres* (Basel: apud Ioannes Bebelius, 1529), 84: ‘... color viridis visum prae caeteris foveat salubriterque delectet’.

19 Costantino Gilardi O.P. & Sara Badano, *Genova. Santa Maria di Castello* (Genoa: Sagep, 2014), 9-10.

mankind,<sup>20</sup> they must be understood also in relationship with the close-by carved image of *St Jerome sitting in cathedra*, displayed on the architrave of the door. Jerome, clothed in his cardinal outfit, does not only stand for his position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but also shows his status as a scholar, engaging the brotherhood to devote itself to study and obtain knowledge in spite of the transience of worldly things. On the internal architrave of the library's door is a relief showing *St George defeating the dragon*, the patron saint of Genoa.

Even though in Genoa the library's walls were probably never painted green, this use is documented in 1572 by the Dominican scholar Serafino Razzi (1531-1613) for the libraries of three other Dominican houses, namely Sant'Andrea (San Domenico), Faenza, San Giovanni in Canale, Piacenza, and San Nicola, Imola. The library at Piacenza was 'con tre navi in volta, e tutta verde' ('with three vaulted naves, and all in green'),<sup>21</sup> while the other two libraries are also recorded to have had an image of Thomas Aquinas *in cathedra*. Razzi stated that 'The library at Faenza, placed in a convenient place, that is in the middle of the dormitories, with vague paintings adorned, and with walls tinted with green, holds twenty-one benches on each side. And at one end you see a Saint Thomas reading in a chair, with this Latin verse above: 'To which the divine volumes give the name of angelic'.<sup>22</sup> It is known that the decoration of this room was executed between 1508 and 1510. The library at Imola also had at the end of one wall a fresco depicting Thomas Aquinas *in cathedra* with a Latin *titulus* stating Thomas' superiority among doctors.<sup>23</sup> The date of this, now lost fresco is unknown. The use of green monochrome may have been a well-established practice to be found in cloisters, and perhaps even more

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20 Ennio Poleggi, *Santa Maria di Castello e il romanico a Genova* (Genoa: Sagep 1973). The phylacteries shown by the characters read respectively: 'SIMUL IN PULVERE DORMIENT(UR) ET VERMES APERIENTUR EOS' (Job 21); 'MEMORARE NOVISSIMA TUA ET IN AETERNUM NON PECCABIS' (Ecclesiastes 7); '(ET) RELINQUENT ALIENIS DIVITIAS SUAS/ ET SEPULCHRA EORUM DOMUS ILLORUM (IN AETERNUM)' (Psalms, 48: 11-12).

21 O'Gorman, *The Architecture*, 71, cat. 46.

22 Ibidem, 48, cat. 16: '[...] posta in luogo comodo, cioe' nel mezzo de dormitorij, con vaghe pitture adornata, e con pareti tinte di verde, tiene ventun banco per lato. Et intesta di lei si vede dipinto un san Tommaso in cattedra che legge, con questo verso latino sopra 'Cui dant angelicum divina volumnia nomen'.'

23 Ibidem, 63, cat. 30: 'La libreria e xv banchi per lato, in capo di cui e' un san Tommaso, con questo verso nella cattedra 'Inter Doctores gloria prima Thomas'.'

significantly, in secular study rooms. An example being the little 'alcove' created inside the so called 'Golden room' of Torrechiara castle, where are depicted Virgil, Terentius, Hercules and Samson. Yet, the iconography of these mendicant libraries was somehow new, and designed in reference to the specific use of the room.

The primacy granted to Thomas Aquinas in Dominican Observant libraries is confirmed in the friary at Taggia, a newly founded Dominican Observant house established in 1460. Here, between 1485 and 1487, the construction of a library built as a spacious room with an umbrella vaulted ceiling was started on the first floor of the cloister.<sup>24</sup> Focal point of the library is the *Vision of St Thomas Aquinas*, signed by the painter Ludovico Brea and dated 1495. The commission probably went to Brea because he had already worked for the same Dominican community, painting on behalf of the prior of Taggia the altarpiece for the high altar of the church, as well as several other altarpieces commissioned by lay patrons. A sense of trust in the painter, as well as an appreciation for his artistic qualities, must have guided the friars in their commission. Even though Thomas Aquinas is not *in cathedra*, but represented at the feet of a crucifix flanked by the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, an inscription praises the theological accomplishments of the *doctor angelicus*. Coming from Christ are the words, written in gothic lettering, 'thoma bene scripsisti de me' ('Thomas you have written well about me'),<sup>25</sup> with reference to the crucifix that in a vision spoke these words to the saint.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Massimo Bartoletti, *Il convento di San Domenico a Taggia*, (Genoa: Sagep, 1993). The phases of construction of this foundation are well documented. By 1479 the refectory and the north wing of the cloister's ground floor had been complete, and by 1482 the chapter house on the south wing had been constructed. The church itself was consecrated in 1490. Work was financed by lay patrons' bequests, as well as by some local municipalities which provided wood from their forests.

25 The Latin verb 'scripsisti' is misspelled with two i's.

26 Thomas' praying hands at the level of his heart correspond to the position of 'respectful conversation', as it is described in *De modo orandi (The modes of prayer)*, a book written by a Dominican friar from Bologna at the end of the thirteenth century, in which a particular meaning is assigned to nine different bodily modes of prayer. This book was a source, for instance, to many of Fra Angelico's frescoes in San Marco, Florence: Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Between Text and Image: The Prayer gesture of Saint Dominic', *History and Anthropology* 1 (1984), 127-162; William Hood, 'St. Dominic Manners of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico's Frescoes at S. Marco', *Art Bulletin* 68 (1986), 195-206.

Occupying the central lunette and a substantial portion of the wall below, this central image is surrounded by other lunettes around the room portraying beatified Dominicans. Even though these frescoes were not executed by Ludovico Brea, but by an assistant,<sup>27</sup> they develop a coherent iconography aimed to celebrate the Dominican order through its illustrious members, but not its saints, following a visual tradition the Friars Preachers had previously established in their chapter house at Treviso.<sup>28</sup> Noticeable is the lunette facing the *Vision of Thomas Aquinas*, in which the *Man of Sorrows* is flanked by Blessed Giovanni Dominici and Antonino Pierozzi, two Dominican friars, later cardinal and bishop respectively, who had strongly contributed to the Observant renewal of the order. They represent the contemporary achievement of the Dominican order's scholarly authority within its long and prestigious history.

The culmination of this scheme was reached at about 1480 with the decoration by Antonio of Fabriano of the library at San Domenico, Fabriano.<sup>29</sup> This old foundation too had joined the Observant reform in the fifteenth century. The library, a spacious rectangular room with a barn-like wooden ceiling, is located above the refectory. As a matter of fact, it was actually newly created in the fifteenth century, by dividing with a floor the height of the pre-existing refectory into two levels, therefore in size and plan the room was not strictly speaking a new Renaissance library. It was made suitable for the new function by the opening of matching windows on the facing long walls, and, above all, its purpose was made immediately recognizable via a new painted decoration. A large mural, occupying most of the wall at one end of the room, displays an extraordinary eulogy of the Dominican order, hierarchically organized around Christ and exhorting the friars to the mandate of preaching (**fig. 1**); a message clarified by the written words in capital lettering coming from Christ's mouth 'PREDICATE EVA(N)GELIUM OM(N)I CREATURE' ('Preach the Gospel to every creature'; Mark 16:15, **fig. 2**). Christ is seated on a rocky hill set in a landscape with a lake. Beneath the figure of Christ, in the painted

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27 See Bartoletti, *Il convento*, 30.

28 Andrea Bellinelli, *Tempio di San Nicolò e Capitolo dei Domenicani Treviso* (Ponzano: Vialinello, 1998).

29 See Fabio Marcelli, 'Note biografiche e committenza', in: *Antonio da Fabriano eccentrico protagonista nel panorama artistico marchigiano*, ed. Bonita Cleri (Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): Pizzi, 1997), 31-47, at 40-44, as well as the catalogue entry at 136-138.

frame, a fragmentary inscription reads 'SEDEBAT IN MONTE IESU [...]BAT POPULUS' ('Christ sat on the mountain [and preach]ed to the people'), with reference to the image above. To the left and right, as if they were fulfilling Christ's mandate, St Thomas Aquinas and Blessed Albertus Magnus are portrayed as scholars in their study, deeply concerned with activities that are of primary importance for a successful preacher: Thomas is enumerating his argument with the gesture of the *computatio digitorum*, and Albertus is writing (fig. 3 and 4). Remarkable is the fact that the identity of Albertus Magnus was later altered into that of Blessed Costanzo of Fabriano, who had died in Fabriano in 1481, by deleting Albertus's name originally written in the frame below, and writing Costanzo's name on the border of the desk. A *maniculus* pointing to the new name was also added in the fresco. Costanzo of Fabriano had been a tireless Observant reformer of the Dominican order, who had also been prior of the friary at Fabriano in 1440 and 1467.<sup>30</sup> The *maniculus*, a *marginalium* frequently used by medieval scholars in manuscripts to point out a passage within a text, was added, together with the nearby inscription, by a hand far less skilled in painting than that of Antonio of Fabriano, perhaps a member of the Dominican community of Fabriano. Thus, here too, the link with a contemporary member of the order shows how the Dominicans were promoting the memory of Observant reformers.

Furthermore, two medallions, in the spandrel of the painted arches, contain the half figures of St Peter Martyr with the inscription 'PETRUS MARTIR DOCTOR ET VIRGO', and St Vincent Ferrer with the inscription 'DOCTOR VIRGO ET PREDICATOR'. Within two smaller medallions in the horizontal frieze above the arches are also the busts of two Dominican popes: Innocent V and Benedict XI.

Together with the many inscriptions, the large number of books depicted provide a clear indication of the room's function. The library was entered via a door on the wall facing the large mural, so that it was immediately visible to the friars coming in, but on the way out the brothers were also visually reminded of their literary duties by an image of St Dominic reading from a book, painted in a lunette above the door.

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30 See Roberto Rusconi, 'Costanzo da Fabriano, beato', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 30 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1984), 396-398.

## The Augustinian Observant Congregation of Lombardy

Learning and studying had been central activities also among the Hermits of St Augustine.<sup>31</sup> At their chapter meeting of 1324, held in Montpellier, it was recommended to the friars to keep the library/books of each cloister as if they were a treasure.<sup>32</sup> In the wake of such recommendations, in the fifteenth century the presence of a reference library became customary as well in the houses of the Augustinian Observant Congregation of Lombardy, which originated in Crema in 1439 and promptly expanded into North and Central Italy.<sup>33</sup> From a collection of rules established by the general chapters of the Congregation held between 1450 and 1515, we are informed about the use and custody of books, including the fact that ‘The friars cannot commute, sell or donate the books granted to them for their private use; the offenders are deprived of the granting of books for private use and can consult only those intended for common use in the library of the monastery where the books are chained’.<sup>34</sup>

The Congregation of Lombardy offers a rather homogenous field of investigation and an exemplary opportunity for comparison with the other mendicant orders, as several of their libraries have survived, starting from

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31 With the Constitutions of the General Chapter of Regensburg in 1290, the Hermits had already established rules for the acquisition, use and preservation of books, and each house had to have a library and a brother librarian; the topic is summarised by Federico Gallo, ‘La biblioteca di S. Maria Incoronata in Milano’, in: *Clastrum et armarium. Studi su alcune biblioteche ecclesiastiche italiane tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, ed. Edoardo Barbieri and Federico Gallo (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010), 61-133, at 66-67.

32 See Balbino Rano, ‘Agostiniani’, *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, I (Milan: Paoline, 1974), coll. 278-381, at 351-352.

33 Raffaella Seveso has discussed the decoration of the library at Brescia, stating that ‘dopo l’insestimento della Congregazione Osservante nei singoli conventi riformati, uno dei primi interventi sia la costruzione proprio della Libreria. Questo avviene a Milano, presso S. Maria Incoronata, a Brescia, a Crema, a Cremona’. Raffaella Seveso, ‘La biblioteca del convento bresciano decorata da Giovan Pietro da Cemmo’, in: *Società, cultura, luoghi al tempo di Ambrogio da Calepio*, ed. Maria Mancaroni Zoppetti and Erminio Gennaro (Bergamo: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 2005), 311-331, at 325.

34 Gallo, ‘La biblioteca di S. Maria Incoronata in Milano’, 70-71: ‘Non concedatur aliquis liber conventus ad usum privatum alicuius fratris nec cum alio libro commutetur aut vendatur vel donetur. Nec frater aliquis concessos ad usum suum similiter vendere presumere aut donare vel commutare sine licentia prioris Congregationis et prioris et capitulo conventus illius cuius liber ille. Contrafacientes usus illius libri privetur et ad usum comunem bibliotece conventus cuius est liber concatenetur.’

the well-known one of Santa Maria Inconronata at Milan, built in 1487.<sup>35</sup> Being of the basilica type, the library retains most of its fresco decoration, consisting of a sequence of lunettes housing medallions with portraits of illustrious members of the order, accompanied by their names, several series of scrolls with inscriptions on the aisles' walls, as well as a radiating sun with the monogram of Christ shining at the center of the vaulted ceiling of each of the nine bays. Entering the library (from the friary) the first pair of lunettes shows, for instance, Andrea Biglia (d. 1435),<sup>36</sup> and Paolo Veneto (d. 1428),<sup>37</sup> two members of the Augustinian order who had died not long before the foundation of the building. On the last bay we find the portrait of Alessandro Oliva of Sassoferrato (d. 1473),<sup>38</sup> the friar and later cardinal, who had codified the modalities of studies to be introduced in the Congregation of Lombardy. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer has suggested that originally an image of St Augustine may have been painted on the end-wall of the central nave, opposite to the library entrance. It is impossible to confirm this, as the wall was almost completely demolished to open a window. Notably, the library's walls were painted green.

In the friary of Sant'Agostino, Crema, the 'mother house' of the Observant Congregation of Lombardy,<sup>39</sup> the library was an almost independent building consisting of a rectangular room on the first floor of the cloister, with windows on the north and south walls. Following local fashion mainly to be found in secular palaces,<sup>40</sup> the room had a plafond with

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35 Patron of the library had been the Augustinian Paolo of San Genesio. On the library see Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, 'Umanesimo a Milano. L'Osservanza agostiniana all'Inconronata', *Arte Lombarda* 53/54 (1980), 232-240, and Eadem, 'Novità sulla decorazione della Biblioteca di S. Maria Inconronata a Milano', *Arte Lombarda* 86/87 (1988), 195-234. See also Gallo, 'La biblioteca di S. Maria Inconronata in Milano', 75-80.

36 The image is accompanied by the inscription 'Magister Andreas de Bilis Mediolanensis doctor elegantissimus'.

37 The image is accompanied by the inscription 'Magister Paulus de Venetiis ... doctor profundissimus disputator'.

38 The image is accompanied by the inscription 'Magister Alexander de Saxoferato Sancte Susanne Presbiter cardinalis Doctor Theo (logiae?) Philosophus Academicus (?)'.

39 Chiara Corsetti, 'La libreria del Sant'Agostino di Crema', *Insula Fulcheria* 43 (2013), 261-272; EAdem, 'Biblioteche o no: la conservazione del patrimonio librario tra la Milano del Quattrocento e le case di Osservanza di Lombardia', *Percorsi Agostiniani* 7:14 (2014), 249-258.

40 See Lidia Ceserani Ermentini, *Tavolette rinascimentali. Un fenomeno di costume a Crema*, (Bergamo: Bolis, 1999); Paola Venturelli, 'Tavolette da soffitto a Crema: maestri, personaggi e qualche caso', in: *Rinascimento Cremasco. Arti, maestri e botteghe tra XV e XVI secolo*, ed. Paola Venturelli (Milan: Skira, 2015), 91-109.

painted wooden panels to be dated well into the fifteenth century.<sup>41</sup> As noted by Carlo Piastrella, they do not depict only Augustinian saints, but also biblical scholars (*magistri sacrae pagine*), as well as other friars of the Augustinian order who had reached high ranks in the Church, and those who had obtained a particular distinction due to their intellectual qualities.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, in the early sixteenth century, the Venetian humanist Marcantonio Michiel recalls that in the same library ‘el compartimento de verde, chiaro e scuro’ (‘the green, light and dark compartment’) had been painted by Gian Pietro of Cemmo, the same painter known to have frescoed, at about 1507, the refectory.<sup>43</sup> The partition of different shades of green, presumably a sort of trompe-l’oeil decorative pattern that embellished the library, was therefore executed a few decades after the ceiling had been decorated, indicating that the room was revamped in the up to date fashion of the beginning of the new century.<sup>44</sup>

With regard to its painted decoration, the library of San Barnaba, Brescia, is the most outstanding of all surviving libraries in the Augustinian Congregation of Lombardy.<sup>45</sup> Built in the 1470-80s, it is entirely frescoed on the walls. An inscription on the entrance wall, above the door, gives the year 1490, taken by scholars as the beginning of the phase of decoration undertaken by the painter Giovanni Pietro of Cemmo, who completed the work started some years earlier in green grisaille by a different painter, perhaps Apollonio of Calvisano.<sup>46</sup> I cannot analyze here in detail

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41 Despite the collapse in 1792 of part of the roof, a substantial number of these panels has survived in situ.

42 Carlo Piastrella, ‘Le tavolette da soffitto della biblioteca del convento di Sant’Agostino di Cremona’, *Arte Lombarda* 146/147/148 (2006), 227-236, at 231.

43 *Notizia d’opere di disegno*, ed. Iacopo Morelli (Bassano, 1800), 55: ‘In la Libreria *el compartimento de verde, chiaro e scuro*, fu dipinto dall’istesso’. Together with the refectory, the same artist plausibly decorated the cloisters and other parts of the friary.

44 Maria Luisa Fiorentini, Laura Radaelli, ‘L’ex convento di S. Agostino’, *Insula Fulcheria* 20 (1990), 9-49.

45 The house of San Barnaba had been overtaken by the Observant Congregation in 1456. The library consists of a large rectangular room located on the first floor of the building; see Gaetano Panazza, *Il convento agostiniano di San Barnaba a Brescia e gli affreschi della libreria* (Brescia: Ed. La Scuola, 1990), and Valerio Terraroli, ‘Un grande cantiere pittorico di fine Quattrocento. La Libreria, le allegorie agostiniane e due pittori’, in: *Il salone “da Cemmo” a Brescia. Dalla Libreria agostiniana alla sala concerti del Convento*, ed. Valerio Terraroli (San Zeno Naviglio: Grafos, 2015), 101-124.

46 See Mario Marubbi, ‘Note in margine a un restauro: gli affreschi del refettorio di Sant’Agostino a Crema’, *Insula Fulcheria* 11 (1989), 51-68.



the extremely complex iconography, but together with the authority of St Augustine, the celebration of the order through its illustrious members is a central theme. On one wall are depicted those friars who had made the Augustinian Hermits prominent because of their knowledge, on the opposite wall those who had done it due to their saintly life. The enterprise was interrupted presumably because of lack of funding, but the iconography must have been fully developed at the time work started in the 1480s.<sup>47</sup>

## The Franciscan Observants

The necessity of books among Franciscan Observant communities is documented since a very early stage of the reform movement.<sup>48</sup> Representative is the *scriptorium* established by Bernardino of Siena in the late 1420s in the friary at La Capriola, that Bernardino himself directed and supervised. There Bernardino wrote his texts and his own writing was copied by his collaborators. After Bernardino's death in 1444, his personal books, consisting mainly of his own work, remained in the Siena house, safely housed in a room especially constructed for this purpose called *libreria parvula*. It was built next to the cell Bernardino had used in his life time, even though in the friary already existed a library room.<sup>49</sup>

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47 Seveso, 'La biblioteca del convento bresciano', 325 and 330-331.

48 On the complexity of the production of Franciscan books see Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli, 'Scrivere (e leggere) il libro francescano', in: *Scriptoria e biblioteche nel basso medioevo (secoli XII-XV)* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2015), 179-211; the author has pointed out that 'Sarà il Quattrocento, sarà in particolare l'Osservanza a cambiare in qualche modo le cose e a creare, almeno in alcuni casi, un vincolo innegabile e forte, anzi una sovrapposizione evidente fra insediamenti francescani e luoghi di copia...', 188-189.

49 See Rossella De Pierro, 'Lo scriptorium di san Bernardino nel Convento dell'Osservanza a Siena', in: *In margine al progetto Codex. Aspetti di produzione e conservazione del patrimonio manoscritto in Toscana*, ed. Gabriella Pomaro (Pisa: Pacini, 2014), 29-105, at 30-31. The existence of a library is proven by the fact that in 1446, in order to make Bernardino's books available, the friars were given permission by the *Signoria* to move them into the library room, making sure they would be chained to the *plutei*. Subsequent to the enlargement of the friary, we know that in the 1490s the library room was on the first floor of the west side, above the refectory, but whether it had any sort of decoration is unknown. A room to store books, together with a scriptorium is also documented in the Observant cloister of Monteripido, Perugia, where Bernardino had established a *studium generale* between 1431 and 1436, but again we do not know where it was located. Furthermore, at Santa Maria delle Grazie at Montepandone (Ascoli Piceno), Giacomo della Marca founded a conspicuous library of which we know the books' content, but nothing about where and how the manuscripts were housed. One page of the inventory of the late fifteenth-century library of the friary of San Bernardino, L'Aquila, has

In the 1480s the architect Francesco of Giorgio included a library among the requirements for a well-planned Franciscan Observant friary, together with cloisters, dormitories, guest houses, refectories, infirmaries, and other sorts of rooms needed for storage.<sup>50</sup> A frieze from the late 1470s with medallions depicting Franciscan saints and blessed interspersed with acanthus leaves, used to run around a room located on the first floor of the Franciscan Observant house of Santa Croce in Fossabanda at Pisa.<sup>51</sup> Only the figures of St Francis, Anthony of Padua, Louis of Toulouse, Bonaventura of Bagnoregio and Bernardino of Siena are easily recognizable. The function of the room is not documented, but due to its location, size, shape, and kind of decoration one can speculate it to be the library. The frescoes have been attributed to Zanobi Machiavelli, a pupil of Benozzo Gozzoli who settled in Pisa circa 1472, and worked there until his death in 1479. It is no coincidence that Zanobi Machiavelli painted also two altarpieces for the church of Santa Croce in Fossabanda.<sup>52</sup>

The foundation and decoration of the library of the Franciscan Observant house of San Bernardino, Verona, seems to be in open contrast with any requirements for simplicity. Patron of the library was Leonello Sagramoso, and construction was already on-going in 1496, while the fresco decoration, attributed hypothetically to Domenico Morone, is dated 1503.<sup>53</sup> The spacious rectangular room is entirely frescoed. A sort of *Sacra conversazione* features on the short wall opposite to the entrance door;

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also survived (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS I. H. 38, f. 1), but nothing is known about how and where books were stored.

50 Francesco di Giorgio Martini, *Trattati di architettura ingegneria e arte militare*, ed. C. Maltese, 2 Vols. (Milan: Il polifilo, 1967) I, 236-239.

51 Licia Bertolini Campetti, 'Resti di affreschi nell'ex convento di S. Croce in Fossabanda', *Antichità pisane* 3 (1974), 25-28. On the church and friary see Angelo Eugenio Mecca, *Il convento di S. Croce in Fossabanda e l'Osservanza francescana a Pisa* (Pontedera (Pisa): C. L. D. Libri, 2011). The frescoes were detached and are now on display at the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa.

52 *Madonna and Child with Saint Francis, Anthony, a pope and Ranieri* (Pisa, Museo di San Matteo) and the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts).

53 For the history and decoration of this sumptuous room, see Alessandra Zamperini, 'Committenza aristocratica e iconografia francescana nella biblioteca di San Bernardino a Verona (parte prima)', *Annuario storico zenoniano* 19 (2002), 51-66; Eadem, 'Committenza aristocratica e iconografia francescana nella biblioteca di San Bernardino a Verona (parte seconda)', *Annuario storico zenoniano* 20 (2003), 79-103; Eadem, 'La Libreria Sagramoso di San Bernardino di Verona e qualche ipotesi per Domenico Morone', in: *Storia, conservazione e tecniche nella Libreria Sagramoso in San Bernardino a Verona*, ed. Monica Molteni (Treviso: Zel Edizioni, 2010), 11-33.

the Virgin Mary with the infant Christ on her lap is surrounded by the Franciscan saints canonized up to that time, including the five Franciscan Martyrs of Morocco, sanctified in 1481. The patrons, Leonello Sagramoso and his wife Anna are presented to the Virgin and Child by St Francis and St Clare respectively. The celebration of the Franciscan order is amplified on the remaining walls via the full-length portraits of its members, illustrious either because of their sanctity or their knowledge (fig. 5 and 6). The concepts expressed by the imagery, certainly devised and approved by members of the Observant family, are presented via an extraordinary decorative richness that seems to personify the ideal target at which the 1513 injunction mentioned before was aimed.<sup>54</sup> Proofs of a direct connection between this statement and the Veronese decoration that had just been completed do not exist, but so much *superfluitas* was certainly to be quickly known within the Franciscan Observant family. Even though the remark forbidding excessive decoration in libraries may still have reflected the concern of some friars, by the early sixteenth century the insistence shown by Franciscan Observant documents against excesses seems to have become a rather formal action, behind which lies a very different reality accepted by a good part of the Observant family.

## Conclusion

With respect to the authority of images, my considerations are based on a still limited number of cases, and therefore I can only attempt a provisional interpretation. As a space of communal life libraries are, within a religious house, a particularly suited place to express self-identity. More than cloisters, chapter houses, and refectories, in early Renaissance mendicant houses libraries became a 'new' space for 'new images'. The decorative schemes adopted are only partially based upon earlier traditions, like the fourteenth-century chapter house frescoed by Giovanni of Modena for the Dominicans at Treviso, yet they are innovative in the sense that the celebration of the canonized saints of the order is accompanied, sometimes overshadowed, by a celebration of the scholarly achievements of its members.

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54 See above, footnote 16.

Even though similarities can be noted, for instance, with the decoration of the Greek and Latin libraries in the Vatican Palace, realized between 1474 and 1477, and opened to the public by the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV in the early 1480s,<sup>55</sup> where images of ancient philosophers and of Christian theologians are displayed within lunettes around the rooms, classical philosophy or classical themes are never referred to in the imagery devised for the libraries under investigation. The focus being the intellectual achievements expressed by every single order, rather than a humanistic approach to texts and scholarship.

The decoration of libraries to be found in Dominican, Augustinian and Franciscan foundations seems to have progressed in a similar way from the mid fifteenth to the early sixteenth century, moving from a rather restrained use of images to reach an extremely lavish and ostentatious decoration. Despite the role and expectations of private patrons, which need to be assessed more in-depth, the creation of a new iconography, centered around a growing number of portraits of illustrious and learned members of the orders in question, was a choice of the religious communities. It is not a coincidence, that in the same period of time the Observant religious houses discussed here were re-thinking their identity and writing numerous texts about the illustrious members of their own orders.<sup>56</sup> The presence, among the portraits, of friars who had been instrumental to the reform movements of the fifteenth century is a direct response to the recent history of the orders, which prompted an iconographic innovation that found in the library its ideal space for visualization. In the future the iconographic choices used for other religious spaces, such as, for instance, the refectory of the Franciscan Observant house at Gandino, or the sacristy of the Dominicans of Santa Maria della Rosa at Calvisano, should also be examined in consideration of the iconography developed for libraries.

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55 *Le origini della Biblioteca vaticana tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento*, ed. Antonio Manfredi (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2010).

56 This has been researched for the Dominicans by Anne Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls. Dominican Narratives of Self-Understanding During Observant Reforms, c. 1388–1517* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2018). For the Franciscans see Clare Lappin, *The Mirror of the Observance: Image, Ideal and Identity in Observant Franciscan Literature, c. 1415–1528*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2000). For the Augustinians see Mario Sensi, 'L'osservanza agostiniana: origini e sviluppi', in: *Angeliche visioni. Veronica da Binasco nella Milano del Rinascimento*, ed. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Emore Paoli, and Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016), 71-140.

With regard to the artists involved, it emerges that the same painters working in the churches were also employed for the internal decoration of the friaries. Within the Augustinian Congregation of Lombardy, for instance, the same artist, Giovanni Pietro of Cemmo, worked for several houses belonging to the Congregation,<sup>57</sup> suggesting a high degree of centralized control exerted by the Congregation over the decoration of its houses, a pattern not uncommon also among the Dominicans and the Franciscans.

## Illustrations



Fig. 1: Antonio da Fabriano, Library decoration, Fabriano, San Domenico (photo Roberto Stelluti, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>]).

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57 At Brescia and Cremona, and perhaps at Santa Maria delle Grazie at Gravedona.



Fig. 2: Antonio da Fabriano, Library decoration, Christ seated on the mountain, Fabriano, San Domenico (photo Roberto Stelluti, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license).



Fig. 3: Antonio da Fabriano, Library decoration, St Thomas Aquinas, Fabriano, San Domenico (photo Roberto Stelluti, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license).



Fig. 4: Antonio of Fabriano, Library decoration, Blessed Albertus Magnus later modified to Blessed Costanzo of Fabriano, Fabriano, San Domenico (photo Roberto Stelluti, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license).



Fig. 5: Master of the Sagramoso Library, Sagramoso Library, Nicholas of Lyra and Marco of Viterbo, Verona, San Bernardino (photo Lotze, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license).



Fig. 6: Master of the Sagramoso Library, Sagramoso Library, Tommaso of Frignano and Pietro Aureoli, Verona, San Bernardino, Biblioteca Sagramoso (photo Lotze, made available by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, under a Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license).





# Observant Reform and Dominican Church Interiors in Italy (15th-16th Centuries)

*Haude Morvan*

## Introduction

In a sermon on Exodus pronounced on March 5th 1498, two months before his execution, Savonarola criticized the members of the clergy who chatted about wine and roasted capon during masses, and who did not wish to have their choir isolated from the laity by high walls, because they wanted to glimpse women from their stalls.<sup>1</sup> Even if Savonarola dealt with clerics and religious in general, and not with Dominican friars in particular, his sermon shows that questions related to liturgical space were of concern to Observant Dominicans. However, if Savonarola condemned in his sermons and treatises excessive expense and decoration in convents,

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1 Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci, 2 Vols. (Rome: A. Belardetti, 1955), Vol. 1, 261 (predica IX): 'Fa' ora el tuo figliuolo prete o sacerdote, fallo grande prelato, andate ora alle dignità della Chiesa. È grande pericolo, ti dico io. Frati miei, abbiatevi cura. Stanno là li sacerdoti, in coro, e non tengono silenzio: non si debbe cianciare nel luogo delle orazioni e dell'offizio. Dice santo Augustino: *in oratoria nemo aliquid agat nisi ad quod factum est unde et nomen accepit*. Non vogliono li sacerdoti le tende nè el muro alto attorno al coro: fatelo suso alto, cittadini, chè li sacerdoti non hanno a vedere le donne per chiesa, quando sono in coro. Stanno là, e cicalano, e l'uno ragiona di fiaschi di trebbiano e di buoni capponi cotti, l'altro dice: - *Domine, labia mea aperies*. - Pensa che officio è quello. Quell'altro sta là a dire la messa presto presto, l'altro sta con la concubina. Questo è il rubo, ti dico io, pieno di spine: la chierica piena di peccati. A questi tali dà poi noia la scomunica, sono fatti molto scrupolosi questi sacerdoti!'

he never gave any precise indication about an ideal location and form of Dominican choirs,<sup>2</sup> nor did the chapters of the Observant congregations.

At the time of Savonarola, liturgical space was being profoundly modified in Italy. In Dominican churches until then, as required by the 1249 General Chapter, the friars' choir and the main altar were isolated from the nave by a screen (called 'intermedium'), to make the friars' movements between convent and choir invisible from the nave.<sup>3</sup> In Dominican churches, as in many ones belonging to other religious orders, space was divided in three areas: the nave for the faithful, the choir for the religious community (divided itself between professed friars' and lay friars' choirs), and the sanctuary with the main altar. This division corresponded to a symbolic hierarchy that was the subject of numerous liturgical and theological commentaries, such as that of Richard of Saint-Victor, later quoted by Guillaume Durand and Jacobus of Voragine.<sup>4</sup>

This division of the church was gradually abandoned in the early modern period. Choirs were relocated in the apse behind the main altar (in such a position, they are called 'retro-choir'), and this was often coupled with the removal of the rood screen. This new layout, in which the main

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2 For artistic theory in Savonarola's writings, see Alessio Assonitis, *Art and Savonarolism in Florence and Rome*, PhD dissertation (New York, Columbia University, 2003).

3 *Acta Capitulorum generalium ordinis praedicatorum*, Vol. 1 (*Ab anno 1220 usque ad annum 1303*), ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, 3 (Rome: in domo generalitatis, 1898), 47: 'Intermedia que sunt in ecclesiis nostris inter seculares et fratres sic disponantur ubique per priores quod fratres egredientes et ingredientes de choro non possint videri a secularibus vel videre eosdem. Poterunt tamen aliquae fenestre ibidem aptari ut tempore elevationis corporis dominici possint aperiri'. For Dominican architectural norms, see Gilles Gérard Meersseman, 'L'architecture dominicaine au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Législation et pratique', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 16 (1946), 136-90; Bernard Montagnes, 'L'attitude des Prêcheurs à l'égard des œuvres d'art', in: *La naissance et l'essor du gothique méridional au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 9 (Toulouse: Privat, 1974), 87-100; Gabriella Villetti, 'Legislazione e prassi edilizia degli Ordini Mendicanti nei secoli XIII e XIV', in: *Francesco d'Assisi, chiese e conventi*, ed. Renato Bonelli (Milan: Electa, 1982), 23-31, repr. in Gabriella Villetti, *Studi sull'edilizia degli ordini mendicanti* (Rome: Gangemi, 2003), 19-30; Richard A. Sundt, 'Mediocris domos et humiles habeant fratres nostri: Dominican Legislation on Architecture and Architectural Decoration in the 13th Century', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 46 (1987), 394-407; Costantino Gilardi, 'Ecclesia laicorum et ecclesia fratrum: Luoghi e oggetti per il culto e la predicazione secondo l'*Ecclesiasticum officium* dei frati predicatori', in: *Aux origines de la liturgie dominicaine: le manuscrit Santa Sabina XIV LI*, ed. Leonard E. Boyle and Pierre-Marie Gy, Collection de l'École française de Rome, 327 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004), 379-443; Panayota Volti, 'L'explicite et l'implicite dans les sources normatives de l'architecture mendicante', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 162 (2004), 51-73.

4 See for example Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, Millenio medievale, 6 (Testi, 3), 2 Vols. (Florence: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), Vol. 2, 1291.

altar was placed between the faithful and the religious community, spread across Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, it was initially adopted in Italy in many monastic, mendicant and canonical churches from the fifteenth century onwards, long before it became more widespread elsewhere.

Retro-choir arrangements and rood screens' removal in Renaissance Italy are complex phenomena, dependent on many factors.<sup>5</sup> Three are often mentioned: in the first place, the new aesthetic ideals promoted by Italian Renaissance architects; in the second place, a rising devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, increasingly often kept outside Mass in a tabernacle on the main altar; in the third place, lay patrons' hold on the presbytery. However, there are many other factors, related to local situations. Regarding the Dominicans, I highlighted in a recent article that, in many cases, the renovation of the choir and presbytery was not incentivized by an architect or an external patron, but by the friars themselves. Their purpose was usually to make more room for the faithful in the nave and also, in some cases, to facilitate lay devotion to the Blessed Sacrament or to some relics located in the main altar.<sup>6</sup> The new spatial organization generated some practical issues, related in particular to the visual participation to the Mass from the choir. The main altar, often topped by a high tabernacle, created a barrier between the religious community and the celebrant, and largely hid the latter from the religious. Some tabernacles included apertures in their lower part, to ensure that the religious could at least glimpse the Eucharistic elevation from their stalls. The suppression of the rood screen had other consequences on the friars' daily liturgy: it often involved the relocation of the entrance door to the choir, since this door should be invisible from the

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5 Two papers sketched provisional overviews of this phenomenon: Marcia B. Hall, 'The Tramezzo in the Italian Renaissance, Revisited', in: *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. Sharon E.J. Gershtel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 215-32; Sible de Blaauw, 'Innovazioni nello spazio di culto fra basso Medioevo e Cinquecento: la perdita dell'orientamento liturgico e la liberazione della navata', in *Lo spazio e il culto: Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, ed. Jörg Stabenow (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), 25-51.

6 Haude Morvan, 'The Preachers and the Evolution of Liturgical Space in Italy. Thirteenth to Sixteenth Century', in: *The Medieval Dominicans. Books, Buildings, Music and Liturgy*, ed. Eleanor J. Giraud and Christian T. Leitmer, *Medieval Monastic Studies*, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 135-165.

nave, so that the religious could not see women, or be seen by them when entering their choir, as required by the 1249 General Chapter regulation.

While this profound change in church interiors was underway, the Observant reforms, initiated in the late fourteenth century in several religious orders, were reaching an age of maturity and institutional organization.<sup>7</sup> How did the Observant Dominicans welcome the modernization of churches' layout? The Observant Franciscans *sub vicariis* and the Benedictine Observant congregation of Santa Giustina explicitly preferred the traditional organization, where the choir was located in front of the main altar.<sup>8</sup> The chapter of the Observant Franciscan province of Bologna, held in 1501, mentioned the church of San Francesco in Cotignola for its unusual retro-choir, and made it very clear that this peculiar layout was not to be considered customary.<sup>9</sup> The Benedictine congregation of Santa Giustina, at least until the 1570s, likewise remained attached to the former model in which choir stalls were located in front of the altar. Deliberation about the reconstruction of Santa Giustina in Padua in 1520 thus asserted: 'Item et altare maius statuatur in capite capellae majoris prout est consuetudo congregationis nostrae'.<sup>10</sup>

In the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Dominican legislation, though, nothing was said about the choir and altar placement, either in the general

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7 For an overview on Dominican Observant reforms in Italy, see: Sara Fasoli, *Perseveranti nella regolare osservanza: i predicatori osservanti nel ducato di Milano, secc. XV-XVI* (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2011); Sylvie Duval, 'Comme des anges sur terre': *les moniales dominicaines et les débuts de la Réforme observante*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 366 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2015); *Il convento di Santa Maria delle Grazie a Milano. Una storia della fondazione a metà del Cinquecento*, ed. Stefania Buganza and Marco Rianini, *Memorie Domenicane*, 47 (Firenze: Nerbini, 2016); Anne Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls: Dominican Narratives of Self-Understanding during Observant Reforms, c. 1388-1517*, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens. Neue Folge*, 22 (Berlin - Boston [Mass.]: De Gruyter, 2018).

8 Haude Morvan, 'The built environment as a mirror of community. Some reflections on architectural norms in Observant settings', in: *Les réformes de l'Observance en Europe (XIV-XVI siècles). Régler, éduquer et contrôler la société chrétienne*, ed. Cristina Andenna, Marina Benedetti, Sylvie Duval, Haude Morvan and Ludovic Viallet, forthcoming.

9 Quoted in Roberto Cobiainchi, *Lo temperato uso dele cose. La committenza dell'Osservanza franciscana nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, *Medioevo francescano. Arte*, 2 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2013), 26: 'De voluntate R. p. Vicarii generalis fr. Ludovici de la Turre ac totius Capituli provincialis conclusum est quod corus ecclesie nostre Cotignolle stet post altare maius prout nunc est: sed quod nullus amodo corus sic fiat, nisi de licentia et assensu capituli provincialis'.

10 Quoted in Natale Baldoria, 'Andrea Briosco ed Alessandro Leopardi architetti. La chiesa di Santa Giustina a Padova', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* 4 (1891), 180-203, at 188.

chapters<sup>11</sup> or in the chapters of the Observant congregations in Italy.<sup>12</sup> The congregation of Lombardy, created in 1459, was the first Observant congregation of the Order of Preachers. It included all reformed friaries in Italy, that were by then independent from the provincial priors, and answered only to a General Vicar and to the General Master. In 1493, Savonarola founded the short-lived congregation of San Marco, independent from the congregation of Lombardy. It was then diluted in the larger Tusco-Roman congregation in 1496, at the behest of Pope Alexander VI, great enemy of Savonarola.<sup>13</sup>

Though Dominican chapters did not rule on the question of choir placement, can we nevertheless highlight some specific tendencies when observing individual Observant and non-Observant Dominican churches? When dealing with church interiors, were the reformed friaries more conservative than others, or did they adopt a ‘modern’ arrangement of the choir and altar at the same time as the ‘Conventual’ friaries?

### **Traditional or modern liturgical layout in Observant Convents**

For the thirteenth-century Dominican Master General Humbert of Romans, architectural uniformity was an ideal: it should embody the unity of the order.<sup>14</sup> However, this wished-for uniformity, desired by Humbert of Romans, was far from being effectuated in Renaissance Italy.

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11 The 1505 General Chapter reminded that the friars must sing the antiphon *Salve Regina* after Compline, repeating with exactly the same words the thirteenth-century *Ordinarium* by Humbert of Romans: while they sing, the friars must walk out the choir in pairs, and bow to the image of the Crucifix located on the rood screen that separates the choir from the lay church. *Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis praedicatorum*, Vol. 4 (*Ab anno 1501 usque ad annum 1553*), ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert, *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, 9 (Rome: In domo generalitia, ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. De Propaganda Fide, 1901), 29. In 1505, though, some Italian churches’ interior included no more a rood screen, and some modifications in the execution of the procession were therefore necessary. However, the General Chapter did not mention them.

12 Raymond Creyten and Alfonso D’Amato, ‘Les actes capitulaires de la Congrégation dominicaine de Lombardie (1482-1531)’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 31 (1961), 213-306; Raymond Creyten, ‘Les actes capitulaires de la congrégation toscano-romaine O.P. (1496-1531)’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 40 (1970), 125-230.

13 See the introduction in both papers mentioned in the previous footnote.

14 *Humberti de Romanis Opera de vita regulari*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier, 2 Vols. (Rome: Marietti, 1956, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Vol. 2, 5: ‘Nos ergo qui sub unius magistri obedientia sumus, sub unius professionis voto vivere dicimur. Justum est autem ut nos qui hujusmodi unitatem habemus, ‘uniformes in observantiis canonicae,’ id est regularis, ‘religionis inveniamur.’ Sic nimirum

Some Observant Dominican houses adopted very late a retro-choir arrangement: San Marco in Florence is one such case. The convent (initially a Benedictine monastery) was given to the Observant friars of Fiesole by Pope Eugenius IV in 1436. Michelozzo was appointed by the Medici to renovate the sanctuary in 1438. The apse was rebuilt larger in 1438-39, and consecrated in 1443 by Pope Eugenius IV. New stalls were installed to house the friars, isolated from the laity by a choir screen. A door was inserted at the center of the screen, which was flanked by two altars on the side of the nave, and probably topped already in 1439 by a crucifix (we know the one sculpted by Baccio of Montelupo in 1496). In addition to the choir screen, an other wall was built in the nave to separate the men from the women; yet this partition was suppressed in 1563 (**fig. 1**).<sup>15</sup> The mid-fifteenth-century internal layout of San Marco is well known thanks to several sources, including the chronicle written before 1457 by Prior Giuliano Lappaccini,<sup>16</sup> and a drawing by Giorgio Vasari the Younger (1562-1625), which is a copy of an older drawing made during the second half of the sixteenth century, but anyway after 1563, since it does not show the wall dividing men from women (Uffizi, A 4861). The work in the apse was completed while Antonino Pierozzi was both Prior of San Marco (1439-44) and Vicar General of the Observant friaries in Italy (1437-1446): he

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invenitur apud approbatas religiones ejusdem professionis quod summam uniformitatem in exterioribus praetendant non solum in observantiis, sed etiam in habitu, et in aedificiis, et in aliis quibusdam. In quo cum gemitu quodam considerandum est quantum in hoc adhuc distamus ab illis. Habent namque ecclesias et officinas ejusdem formae, et eodem modo dispositas: nos autem fere quot domos tot varias formas et dispositiones officinarum et ecclesiarum habemus.’

- 15 Janet Cox-Rearick, ‘Fra Bartolomeo’s St. Mark and St. Sebastian with an angel’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 18:3 (1974), 329-354, esp. 340-42; Hans Teubner, ‘S. Marco in Florenz: Umbauten vor 1500. Ein Beitrag zum Werk des Michelozzo’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 23 (1979), 239-272; Sally J. Cornelison, ‘Relocating Fra Bartolomeo at San Marco’, *Renaissance Studies* 23:3 (2009), 311-334.
- 16 The chronicle by Giuliano Lappicini has been published by Morçay: Raoul Morçay, ‘La cronaca del convento fiorentino di San Marco: La parte più antica, dettata da Giuliano Lappaccini’, *Archivio Storico Italiano* 71:1 (1913), 1-29, at 12-13: ‘Et sic ceperunt reparare et reaedificare dictam Tribunam, in qua collocaverunt chorum novum cum pulpitis et armariis oportunitis, ubi ex tunc fratres semper dixerunt officium divinum diurnum pariter et nocturnum; feceruntque dictam Tribunam augmentari ita ut altera Tribuna praedictae minor copularetur, ubi fabricatum est altare majus totum de lapidibus sectis et politis. (...) et chorus qui erat in medio ecclesiae reductus fuit per ejus transversum, id est per longum brachii ecclesiae pro viris laicis, et reliquum corpus ecclesiae pro usu mulierum. Et sic triplex distinctio apparuit. Prima est chorus seu oratorium fratrum, reclusum, tanquam a laicis separatum; secunda est chorus laicorum in secunda parte ecclesiae; tertia est ecclesia inferior, quae dicitur mulierum, ubi fuerunt erecta quattuor altaria et ubi facta fuerunt sedilia pro audientia confitentium mulierum.’

certainly played a key role in the arrangements for strict separation between friars, men and women in the church.<sup>17</sup>

The church underwent many modifications after Antonino's death, partly due to the wish of the friars and patrons to enhance the devotion to his relics. During the first quarter of the sixteenth century, it was twice planned to completely reconstruct the church. Neither of the projects came into effect. The first one, commissioned in 1512 by Prior Santi Pagnini to the architect Baccio d'Agnolo, presents a Latin cross plan with a retro-choir.<sup>18</sup> Around 1520, two more ambitious projects were drawn by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, probably at the request of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (future Pope Clement VII), archbishop and actual ruler of Florence, after the Medici had returned to rule Florence and while the canonization of Antonino Pierozzi was underway.<sup>19</sup> One of the drawings shows a church with a basilica plan: a single nave is flanked by side chapels vaulted with cupolas, and terminates in a rectangular apse. The altar is located at the entrance of the apse, so the choir stalls would have been installed behind. The other drawing presents a far less usual plan. The area for the laity is a circular space with radial chapels, all set in a square plan. This part of the church communicates through a short corridor with a semicircular choir where the stalls and the altar are located in a way that remind the *cavea* and the stage of a roman theatre. If this project of making the church a vast mausoleum to the glory of St Antonino (and of the Medici family) had succeeded, San Marco would have become a radically new building, where the articulation of the liturgical spaces would have been

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17 For the interest of Antonino as archbishop in developments in liturgy, lay devotion and church interior, see: Lorenzo Fabbri, 'Culmen templi. Antonino Pierozzi a Santa Maria del Fiore', in: *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459). La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo nell'Europa del Quattrocento. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici (Firenze, 25-28 novembre 2009)*, ed. Luciano Cinelli and Maria Pia Paoli, *Memorie domenicane. Nuova serie*, 43 (Florence: Nerbini, 2012), 495-508. More generally, for the relationships between Antonino and visual arts, see Sally J. Cornelison, *Art and Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2021), 15-16 (with overview of older bibliography).

18 Cornelison, *Art and Relic Cult*, 80-81.

19 Mauro Mussolin, 'La promozione del culto di Sant'Antonino al tempo di Leone X e Clemente VII e i progetti di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per la chiesa di San Marco', in: *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459). La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo nell'Europa del Quattrocento. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici (Firenze, 25-28 novembre 2009)*, ed. Luciano Cinelli and Maria Pia Paoli, *Memorie domenicane. Nuova serie*, 43 (Florence: Nerbini, 2012), 509-532; Cornelison, *Art and Relic Cult*, 85-89.



profoundly modified. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the opinion of the friars about Sangallo the Younger's projects. In at least one case, the reconstruction of the choir and presbytery by lay patrons in Renaissance Florence did not please the religious community: the Servite friars of the Santissima Annunziata manifested discontent when their choir was to be relocated at the center of a rotunda, according to a project launched in 1444 and completed in 1481.<sup>20</sup> The opinion of San Marco's friars about projects such as the ones drawn by Sangallo would surely have had less to do with their magnificence than with their capacity to maintain or not a strict seclusion from the laity, as required by order regulations.

Finally, a funerary chapel for St Antonino, sponsored by the powerful Salviati family, was built in San Marco's transept in 1582-89, without changing the general organization of the church.<sup>21</sup> The choir screen was suppressed only in 1678. The altar was then moved toward the nave, and the choir stalls were newly located in the apse, behind the altar. It seems that such a modification had been already planned in 1630 by a lay patron, but was rejected by the friars.<sup>22</sup> According to the testimony of the historian of Florence churches Giuseppe Richa, who wrote in the middle of the eighteenth century, the modifications were carried out in 1678 to update the church according to the modern taste: for him, the old church was in disarray due to the position of the choir, which made the building less magnificent, and made professional artists suffer.<sup>23</sup>

One century before, the incompatibility of rood screens with new aesthetic taste was already a key factor in the rearrangement of the church

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20 Beverly Louise Brown, 'The Patronage and Building History of the Tribuna of SS. Annunziata in Florence: A Reappraisal in Light of new Documentation', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 25 (1981), 59-146. See also: eadem, 'Choir and Altar Placement: a Quattrocento Dilemma', *Machiavelli Studies* 5 (1996), 147-180.

21 Cornelison, *Art and Relic Cult*, part II.

22 Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine, Divise ne' suoi Quartieri*, 10 Vols. (Florence: Viviani, 1754-62), Vol. 7, 136: 'ma due rispetti trattennero i religiosi dall'acconsentire a' liberali inviti del Senatore predetto, cioè la riverenza de i medesimi alla memoria de' Medici, che ne erano stati i Fondatori; e la gelosia di non perdere il Coro antico, a essi carissimo'.

23 Ibidem: 'Questi motivi però cessati essendo nel 1678 sì per la permissione, e gradimento del Granduca, sì per la mormorazione de' Professori dell'Arte che malvolentieri soffrivano quell'ingombro del Coro vecchio, da' medesimi padri si principò la nuova tribuna colla direzione di Pier Francesco Silvani Architetto, che levò il muro del tramezzo, e in eminenza tirando innanzi l'Altar Maggiore, comodamente addatò per Coro lo spazio, che molto restava dietro'.

of the Conventual Dominicans in Florence, that is Santa Maria Novella. Work was instigated and financed by Duke Cosimo de' Medici in 1565, and conducted quickly in one year by his architect, Giorgio Vasari. The purpose was to create a unified church interior, by eliminating the rood screen, transferring choir stalls to a location behind the high altar, white-washing the walls and creating uniform nave altarpieces.<sup>24</sup> Vasari wrote in his autobiography that the rood screen took away all beauty ('toglieva tutta la sua bellezza') from the church.<sup>25</sup>

By 1566, the two Dominican churches in Florence looked very different. The Observant one, San Marco, was no more divided by the transverse wall that once separated men from women, but the main altar was still hidden from the laity by a screen that isolated the friars' choir. The Conventual church, on the contrary, offered (and still offers) a clear view on the new tabernacle above the altar, while the friars were seated in a retro-choir in the *cappella maggiore*.

Are the Florentine churches representative of two different spatial concepts that Observants and Conventuals might have been following in sixteenth-century Italy? The situation is not that simple. In San Domenico in Bologna, one of the convents of the Observant congregation of Lombardy, new stalls decorated with the intarsia technique (wood inlay) were ordered in the second quarter of the sixteenth century to be located in a traditional setting, that is in front of the main altar. The rood screen was even rebuilt in 1550, and was only removed in 1625, when the stalls were moved into a new apse (**fig. 2**).<sup>26</sup>

However, whereas the traditional position of the stalls and the rood screen were maintained in San Domenico in Bologna as in San Marco in Florence until the seventeenth century, other Observant communities were quick to adopt a modern arrangement. This was the case, for instance, in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. In 1492, Duke Ludovico Sforza com-

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24 Marcia B. Hall, 'The Ponte in S. Maria Novella: The Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974), 157-173; eadem, *Renovation and Counter-reformation. Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce. 1565 - 1577* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Roberto Lunardi, 'Ristrutturazione vasariana di S. Maria Novella', *Memorie domenicane* 19 (1988), 403-419.

25 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Paola Barocchi and Rosanna Bettarini, 11 Vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1966-1987), Vol. 6, part 1, 406.

26 Venturino Alce, *Il coro di San Domenico in Bologna* (Bologna: Parma, 1969).

missioned the reconstruction of the apse where he had chosen to be buried with his wife Beatrice d'Este, who died in 1497. The sources do not allow us to know where the tomb, the friars' stalls and the altar were supposed to be located in the initial project, which was designed very likely by Bramante. The most recent studies conclude that the stalls were located most probably in front of the main altar, and the tomb behind it (so poorly visible from the nave).<sup>27</sup> However, the stalls were moved behind the altar very quickly, in 1510 (**fig. 3**). In the end, Ludovico Sforza was not buried in Milan, since he was made prisoner by the French king Louis XII and died in Loches in 1508. The tomb already realized for him and his wife by Cristoforo Solari was moved in 1564 to the Certosa of Pavia.<sup>28</sup>

In some cases, as in Vicenza, the reasons for the relocation of the friars' choir behind the main altar are well documented. The friary of Santa Corona in Vicenza was founded around 1270 to house relics of the Passion. It passed to the Observance in 1463. Over time, the church had become too small for the numerous pilgrims and in 1478, therefore, work was undertaken following the friars' decision to enlarge the apse and remove the rood screen, in order to make more room for the faithful in the nave.<sup>29</sup> The choir was relocated behind the main altar at the same time. A new crypt was designed to facilitate access to the relics: the sanctuary and choir were thus located above the crypt, in a higher position than the nave.<sup>30</sup> The new arrangement was completed by 1520 when the relics were solemnly transferred to the new crypt. A compendium of the friary's history, written

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27 Bruna Ciati, 'Il coro', in: *Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milano*, ed. Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua and Carlo Bertelli (Milan: Banca Popolare di Milano, 1983), 214-223. Not all scholars agree on the initial location of the choir in Santa Maria delle Grazie. Some argue that it was already behind the altar before 1510. The debate has been synthesized by Luisa Giordano, who concluded that the choir did not move behind the altar until 1510: Luisa Giordano, 'In capella maiori: il progetto di Ludovico Sforza per Santa Maria delle Grazie', in: *Demeures d'éternité: Églises et chapelles funéraires aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. Jean Guillaume (Paris: Picard, 2005), 99-114.

28 Roberta Battaglia, 'Le 'Memorie' della Certosa di Pavia', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, 3.Ser. 22:1 (1992), 85-198.

29 See document of January 1479 transcribed in Joanne Allen, *Choir Stalls in Venice and Northern Italy: Furniture, Ritual and Space in the Renaissance Church Interior*, unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Warwick, 2009), 300.

30 For the renovation of the sanctuary in Santa Corona, see Giovanni Lorenzoni and Giovanna Valenzano, 'Pontile, jubé, tramezzo: alcune riflessioni sul tramezzo di Santa Corona a Vicenza', in: *Immagine e ideologia: Studi in onore di Arturo Carlo Quintavalle*, ed. Arturo Calzona (Milan: Electa, 2007), 313-317 and Allen, *Choir Stalls in Venice*, 158-166.

in 1706 by Father Gondisalvo Della Chiesa, explained that the choir had already been moved behind the main altar before the translation.<sup>31</sup>

The foregoing consideration of Dominican churches in Renaissance Italy suggests a varied landscape. When they were renovated, the choir was re-located in either a traditional position, that is to say in front of the main altar, or a modern one, behind the main altar. In each case, the reasons were specific, and friaries did not follow a uniform movement, even inside the same province or the same reformed congregation. In most cases, the transformation of church interior was a long process, which implied several steps. In San Marco in Florence, for example, even though the screen that separated lay men from women was removed in 1563, the choir screen and the old arrangement of the stalls were maintained.

### **A Case of local emulation? Observants and Conventuals in Viterbo**

A different situation from that we have described in San Marco can be observed in a friary that yet belonged to the same Tusco-roman congregation, namely Santa Maria della Quercia, on the outskirts of Viterbo. In this case, it is likely that an emulation effect with the other Dominican church in the town played a role. In Viterbo, the choir was indeed relocated behind the altar at around the same time by the Conventuals (Santa Maria in Gradi) and the Observants (Santa Maria della Quercia). Both apses were rebuilt to accommodate a retro-choir at the very end of the fifteenth century, but because of a lack of precise chronological data, it is difficult to know which reorganization came first and may have influenced the other. The particu-

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31 Gondisalvo Della Chiesa, *Breve e compendiosa relazione di quanto a forza di studiosa diligenza si è potuto rinvenire di memorabile nell'antichissimo monistero di S. Corona di Vicenza dalla fondazione sino al di d'oggi*, Rome, Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Predicatori, XIV, Liber D, 363-364: 'Ma perché la chiesa riusciva troppo angusta a capire il numero delle persone, che concordevano all'adorazione, fu stimato meglio ingrandirla trasportando il coro, qual era in mezzo alla chiesa, conforme l'uso antico, dietro all'altar maggiore, che stava dove ora è la scala del coro, fabricando la capella grande, come ora si vede; finita la fabrica fu trasferita la spina con quel pezzo di croce nella catacomba o sotto coro, dove tuttavia si conserva. Questa translazione si fece con grande solennità l'anno 1520.' This document contradicts Joanne Allen's opinion, who wrote that the choir and altar would have been exchanged only in 1663: Allen, *Choir stalls in Venice*, 163-164.

lar organization of Santa Maria della Quercia's interior may also have been influenced by an Augustinian church, Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome.

Santa Maria della Quercia is a votive church whose construction began in 1470 next to the city of Viterbo to worship a miraculous image of the Virgin. The original plan was very simple: it consisted of a three-nave church terminating in a rectangular apse.<sup>32</sup> This apse housed the main altar, with the miraculous image of the Virgin, enshrined in a tabernacle commissioned to Andrea Bregno in 1490. In 1496, the church was given to the Observant Friars Preachers of the Tusco-Roman congregation. This body was newly created by pope Alexander VI to undermine the influence of Savonarola, by adding fourteen friaries to the four ones of the former San Marco congregation, created by the Florentine reformer in 1493. From 1498 onward, the apse of Santa Maria della Quercia was extended to house the friars' choir (**fig. 4**). Work was completed around 1511, when new intarsia stalls were realized by Domenico di Zanobio del Tasso and Giuliano di Giovanni called 'il Pollastra'. An altar for the daily masses of the friars was set up at the end of the apse, in a niche, while the main altar with the miraculous image remained at its original place, outside the new apse (**fig. 5**).<sup>33</sup> According to Chrysa Damianaki, it is clear that the addition of a larger apse to house the choir was not planned from the beginning, since the tabernacle realised by Andrea Bregno before this addition is only sculpted on one side (**fig. 6**).<sup>34</sup>

This particular arrangement in Santa Maria della Quercia, with two altars in the presbytery, was conceived to adapt the votive church to the necessity of the religious community, leaving the main altar and the miraculous image of the Virgin it contains visible and accessible to the laity. It can be compared to another church that houses a miraculous image of the Virgin, namely Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. During the fifteenth century, the Augustinian friars' choir was moved into the apse, to be placed between two altars. The first one, the most monumental, was located at the

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32 Roberta Lorusso, 'Santa Maria della Quercia à Viterbo', *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* 40 (2002), 85-96.

33 Such a disposition is described in the Apostolic Visit carried out in 1583 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Congr. Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Ap. 108, ff. 231-232).

34 Chrysa Damianaki, 'Andrea Bregno e il tabernacolo di Santa Maria della Quercia a Viterbo', in: *Andrea Bregno. Il senso della forma nella cultura artistica del Rinascimento*, ed. Claudio Crescentini and Claudio Strinati (Florence: Maschietto, 2008), 333-355.

crossing of the transept and was topped by a tabernacle sculpted by Andrea Bregno (the same artist who worked at Santa Maria della Quercia) that enshrined an image of the Virgin.<sup>35</sup> The second altar was set up against the wall of the apse. The choir stalls were moved to the right transept in 1508, when Pope Giulio II asked Bramante to enlarge the apse to create a burial chapel for Cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Girolamo Basso della Rovere. The stalls were then brought back to their location in the apse in 1559.<sup>36</sup>

The solution adopted in Santa Maria della Quercia can also be compared to the other Dominican church in Viterbo, Santa Maria in Gradi. Almost nothing remains of the medieval church, entirely rebuilt on its foundations by Nicola Salvi in the eighteenth century, and today badly damaged. However, archival documents, archaeological surveys and comparisons with other churches have though consented Claudio Varagnoli to propose a restitution of the church's layout before 1736.<sup>37</sup>

The medieval church rebuilt by Nicola Salvi in the eighteenth century had been erected during the thirteenth century: it presented originally as a three nave building, with a transept as large as the nave that terminated in a rectangular apse flanked by two smaller lateral apses. The central apse hosted on its left side an important monument: the tomb of Pope Clement IV. The apse was then extended, to host the friars' choir (**fig. 7**). This work, which started during the second half of the fifteenth century and ended only in 1546, is known thanks to a chronicle written around 1616 by Friar Giacinto dei Nobili.<sup>38</sup> As explained by the author himself, it is a shorter version ('Cronica compendiata') written in Italian, based on a

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35 Thomas Pöpper, 'Andrea Bregnos Hochaltarädikulen in Santa Maria del Popolo (Rom) und Santa Maria della Quercia', in: *Arredi di culto e disposizioni liturgiche a Roma da Costantino a Sisto IV*, Atti del colloquio internazionale (Istituto Olandese a Roma, 3-4 dicembre 1999), ed. Sible de Blaauw, *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 59 (2000), 251-278.

36 Christoph Luitpold Frommel, 'Giulio II e il coro di Santa Maria del Popolo', *Bollettino d'Arte* 112 (2000), 1-34.

37 For a restitution of the medieval church, see: Francesco Gandolfo, 'La vincenda edilizia', in: *Santa Maria in Gradi*, ed. Massimo Miglio (Viterbo: Università degli Studi della Tuscia, 1996), 41-93 and Claudio Varagnoli, 'S. Maria in Gradi a Viterbo, dalla chiesa duecentesca al progetto di Nicola Salvi', *Palladio* 40 (2007), 5-26.

38 Giacinto dei Nobili, *Cronica compendiata di Santa Maria in Gradi di Viterbo*, Rome, Archivio della Provincia Romana (Santa Maria sopra Minerva), F.IV.11.

longer chronicle written by the same Giacinto dei Nobili in Latin, unfortunately now lost.<sup>39</sup>

According to this source, we know that the main apse of Santa Maria in Gradi was extended during the second half of the fifteenth century: it is likely that this new apse was intended from the beginning to house the friars' choir. The construction of new stalls began in 1505, but progress was delayed by the damage inflicted by the soldiers of Charles V, who burnt the friary's timber in 1527. In 1546, the new choir was finally installed in the apse.<sup>40</sup> The main altar, originally located at the crossing of the transept, was then moved to the East, to be relocated at the entrance of the apse, and newly consecrated in 1547.<sup>41</sup> The original location of the choir, before the sixteenth century, was unusual: the main altar was located at the crossing of the transept, and not in the apse, as was more common. As a result, the choir occupied two bays of the nave (**fig. 7**). According to me, this unusual organization was due to the presence of the tomb of Clement IV in the apse: the friars tried to encourage a devotion to this pope, and thus they had to provide the laity access to the main apse.<sup>42</sup> Unlike in Santa Maria della Quercia, Santa Maria in Gradi's friars did not add a second altar in the apse.

Unfortunately, Giacinto dei Nobili said nothing about a rood screen. A screen, or *intermedium*, was made mandatory by the thirteenth-century constitutions, so it is likely that such a structure existed in the medieval

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39 For the chronicles on the convent of Santa Maria in Gradi, both preserved and lost, and especially for the two chronicles by Giacinto dei Nobili, see Emilio Panella, 'Cronaca antica di Santa Maria in Gradi di Viterbo: perduta o mai esistita?', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 65 (1995), 185-233.

40 Giacinto dei Nobili, *Cronica compendiata*, 22: 'Il coro fu incominciato da Frati l'anno 1505 per levare il vecchio, che stava tra le tre colonne più vicini all'Altar maggiore. Ma nell'anno 1527 essendo condotti li travi, tavole et altro legname necessario per l'armature, etc di detta fabrica, furon tutti abrugati dalli soldati, che andarno al sacco di Roma, onde convenendo di novo provvedere si trattene l'opera sino al'anno 1546, in cui fu totalmente compito di edificare.'

41 Ibidem, 11: 'Consacrò anche questo Pontefice [Alessandro IV] l'Altar maggiore et pose in quello molte reliquie de Santi, le quali nel trasportar detto Altare un poco più su verso il novo Coro furon trovate l'anno 1547'.

42 Haude Morvan, 'Architecture dominicaine et promotion de nouveaux saints: autour de la tombe de Clément IV à Santa Maria in Gradi (Viterbe)', *Bulletin Monumental* 171:2 (2013), 99-106; eadem, 'Sous les pas des frères'. *Les sépultures de papes et de cardinaux chez les Mendicants au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 389 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2021), 197-207.

Santa Maria in Gradi.<sup>43</sup> The reason of the enlargement of the apse is not mentioned by Giacinto dei Nobili, but it was very probably motivated by the need to make more room for the laity in the nave.

In both Dominican churches in Viterbo, the apse was extended at the same time. Work in Santa Maria in Gradi was carried out slower: even if it was completed after the one in Santa Maria della Quercia, it started before. It is therefore likely that the Observant friars who settled in Viterbo in 1496 were aware of the ongoing project carried out in Santa Maria in Gradi to relocate the choir behind the main altar in a longer apse. However, no second altar for the exclusive use of the religious community was planned in Santa Maria in Gradi, unlike in Santa Maria della Quercia. The Observant friars were very probably also influenced by other churches, such as Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome.

The transformation of the interiors of these two Dominican churches did not happen in isolation. Even if it did not always come with an extension of the apse, the relocation of the choir to a location behind the main altar was common to many churches in the Viterbo diocese during the sixteenth century. Thanks to an Apostolic visitation to this diocese from 1583, we have an overview of choir positions in all monastic, mendicant and canonical churches. In addition to Santa Maria in Gradi and Santa Maria della Quercia, the choir stalls most often were located behind the main altar: this was the case in the churches of the Capuchins (Sant'Antonio da Padova), the Observant Franciscans (Santa Maria del Paradiso), the Servites (Santa Maria della Verità) and the Carmelites (Santa Maria del Monte Carmelo).<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the choir was still located in front of the altar in the collegiate church of Santi Angeli and in another Carmelite church (San Giovanni Battista).<sup>45</sup>

The choices made for the construction and furnishing of the choir between 1498 and 1511 in Santa Maria della Quercia shows little impact of the convent's membership of an Observant congregation. They were rather

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43 See above note 3.

44 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Congr. Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Ap. 108. Vincenzo Cultello, Bishop of Catania, was appointed visitor of the diocese of Viterbo by Gregory XIII in April 1583. He referred to a 'chorus post altare maius, undique septus' in Santa Maria della Verità (f. 128v), Santa Maria in Gradi (f. 136r), Santa Maria del Paradiso (f. 179), Santa Maria del Monte Carmelo (f. 217v), Sant'Antonio da Padova (f. 226v).

45 Ibidem, f. 58r and f. 187v.



led by a local movement of modernization of church interiors, and by the presence of a highly worshiped image, which implied that lay access to the tabernacle had to be reconciled with conventual liturgical practice. The solutions adopted were influenced by both local and Roman models.

## Conclusion

It was at first seducing to think that the Observant Dominicans would have adopted a unified option for the choir placement in their churches, as some Observant Franciscan and Benedictine congregations did at the same time, by warning that a traditional stalls' position, that is in front of the main altar, was more appropriate than a modern retro-choir. However, the case study of Viterbo and the other examples referred to in this essay highlight a more complex picture. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Dominican regulations made no mention of the choir position. When considering the churches themselves, there can be discerned a significant variety in the actual choir position. It can be asserted that the Observant communities participated in the general movement of modernization of the ecclesiastical space no less and no more than the Conventual Dominicans and other regular communities in general.

It should be borne in mind that Observant reforms did not represent a uniform movement: different interpretations of what meant living *de observantia* coexisted. San Marco in Florence and San Domenico in Bologna may have been more eager, at least in a first instance, to follow the thirteenth-century choir screen regulations than other friaries that instead adopted more quickly modern tendencies spreading across Italy.

When they chose to relocate their choir into the apse and to remove the screen, the motivations of the Dominican communities discussed in this article were in each case specific: in some cases, it was the necessity to make more room for the laity, in others, to facilitate the coexistence of the friars' liturgy with the lay devotion to a relic or a miraculous image, such as in Santa Corona in Vicenza and in Santa Maria della Quercia in Viterbo. Although it is not always possible to document these discussions, choices were doubtless often made in consultation with artists and external benefactors. In the end, even if the initial conditions were comparable, the solutions that were adopted were sometimes different. The retro-choir gradually adopted in most of the churches limited the visibility of the Eucharist

for the members of the religious communities. They generally solved the issue by commissioning tabernacles or altarpieces with openings in their lower part to ensure visual access to the main altar,<sup>46</sup> but the friars in Santa Maria della Quercia chose instead to have their own altar in the apse.

The aesthetic motivations behind some church renovations seem to have come rather from external patrons than from the religious communities themselves. It was the case, for example, in Santa Maria Novella and in the projects by Sangallo the Younger for San Marco. In San Marco, the late removal of the choir screen was maybe less the mark of an Observant agenda than the consequence of aborted projects, designed by the friars themselves or by external patrons. In the final instance, the renovation of a church depended on material and financial circumstances, and could thus be implemented long after the project initially arose.

Whether they were initiated by the Dominican friars or by external patrons, the process of transformation of early modern church interiors was influenced by a network of local trends and emulation processes. For this reason, the provisional observations presented in this essay will need to be refined by conducting more systematic surveys.

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46 See examples referred to by myself: 'The Preachers and the Evolution of Liturgical Space' and by Donal Cooper, 'Revisiting the Umbrian retro-choir. Plurality and choice in the medieval Franciscan church interior', in: *Spaces for friars and nuns. Mendicant choirs and church interiors in medieval and early modern Europe*, ed. Haude Morvan, Collection de l'École française de Rome, 578 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2022), 81-152, esp. 150.

## Illustrations

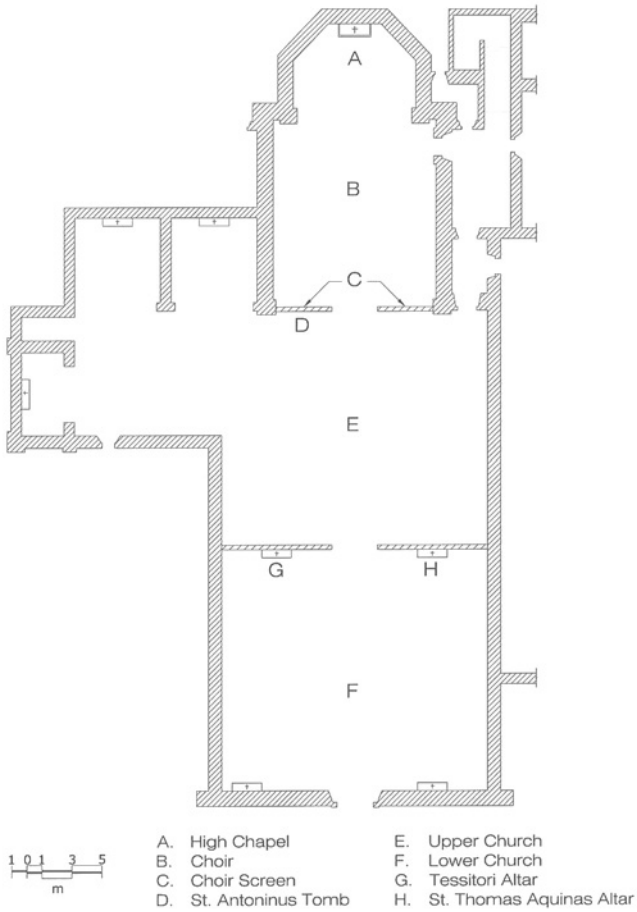


Fig. 1: Florence, San Marco, plan of the church in the second half of the fifteenth century (published in Cornelison, 'Relocating Fra Bartolomeo at San Marco' and eadem, *Art and Relic Cult*).

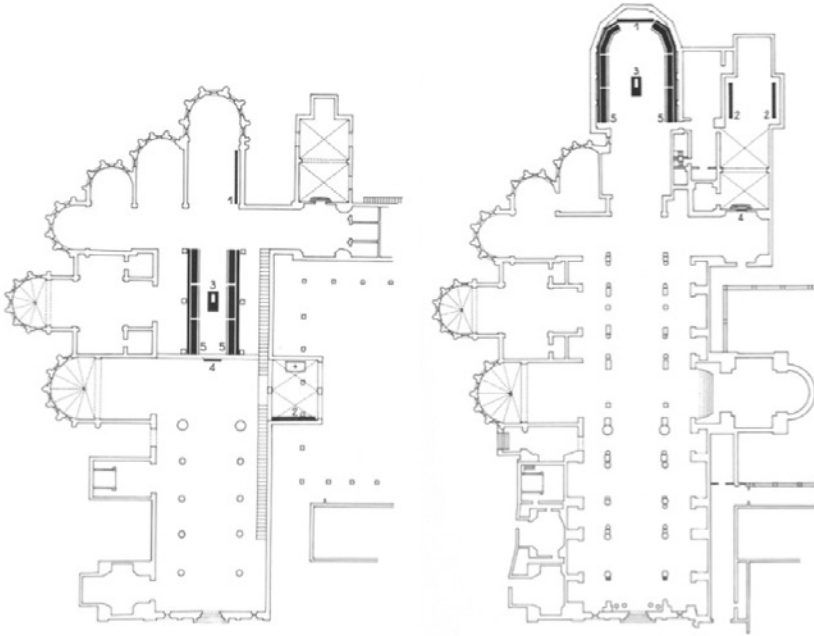


Fig. 2: Bologna, San Domenico, plan of the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with successive choir placements (n. 5).  
 From Alce, *Il coro di San Domenico*.



Fig. 3: Milan, Santa Maria delle Grazie, main apse with the stalls (photograph: Haude Morvan).

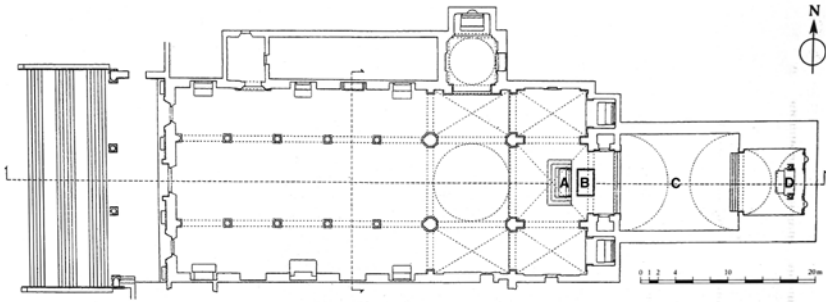


Fig. 4: Viterbo, Santa Maria della Quercia, plan of the church after 1496 (from Lorusso, 'Santa Maria della Quercia').



Fig. 5: Viterbo, Santa Maria della Quercia, Andrea Bregno's tabernacle and apse (photograph: Haude Morvan).



Fig. 6: Viterbo, Santa Maria della Quercia, Andrea Bregno's tabernacle seen from the choir stalls (photograph: Haude Morvan).

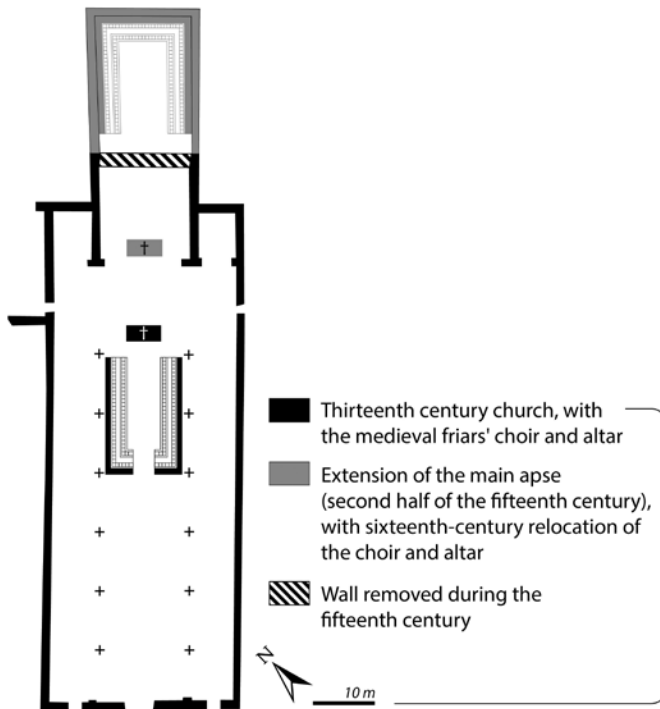


Fig. 7: Viterbo, Santa Maria in Gradi, restitution of the medieval plan by Claudio Varagnoli, reworked by the author with successive choir and altar placements (drawing by Sylvain Ducasse).



# The Organ and the Italian Observance: Discourses Tested by Practices

*Hugo Perina*

## **Introduction**

‘Catholic protesters have impeded the concert of the organ specialist Anna von Hausswolff in the church of Notre-Dame de Bon Port [...]’ This tweet from Tuesday 7 December 2021 illustrates a rather unexpected relevance (one has to recognize it) of managing organ practices in the Latin Church.<sup>1</sup> It is nearly impossible for us not to connect this group of protesters in Nantes (France) – subsequently associated with the integralist Catholic movement – with Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) and his virulent sermons against the excesses of a softened clergy and of Florence as a whole, igniting the bonfires of vanities in that town at the end of the fifteenth century. The diocese of Nantes had allowed Anna von Hausswolff’s performance in one of its churches in town of ‘a rather sober organ concert lasting one hour, without text, projection or choreography, and in which nothing was counter to the faith or morals.’<sup>2</sup> Judged as overly lax by a group of believers, ‘some advanced on social media that her concert in a church

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1 Translation Bert Roest. See on this episode Kevin Grethen & Anne Augié, ‘À Nantes, des catholiques intégristes empêchent la tenue d’un concert du Lieu unique’, *Ouest-France*, 07/12/2021. URL : <https://www.ouest-france.fr/pays-de-la-loire/nantes-44000/nantes-des-catholiques-empechent-la-tenue-d-un-concert-2a77173c-57a2-11ec-98d9-226f24a3b94d>.

2 Press release of the diocese of Nantes published on its website on 7 December 2021. URL : <https://diocese44.fr/concernant-un-concert-dorgue/>.



would have been ‘blasphemy’, with the ‘complicity of some erring priests’.<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, Savonarola, overwhelming the clergy with reproaches for its villainy, its concubines and its love of wealth, succeeded in the removal of the bust of famous organist Antonio Squarcialupi from Santa Maria del Fiore – the seat of the bishop – where he had worked for several decades.

The strict observance of a religious rule and the technical innovation constituted by the organ seem *a priori* incompatible and paradoxical. In addition to this, poverty might forbid to commission such an expensive instrument. Hence what kind of attitude should one adopt in the face of a new practice – that of the organ – while respecting religious discipline during a period in which the instrument was not commonly in use in churches? To what extent did the Observance and the mendicant orders in general impact the development of the organ in the Italian Church?

Italian humanists and reformers shared a vocabulary of *renovatio*, *reformatio*, and *reflorere*.<sup>4</sup> These two movements, if it is allowed to describe them in this way, sought to draw from a bygone age the ingredients of an actualization that was supposed to redress and relaunch the course of contemporary life (intellectual life for the former and religious life for the latter group). The references were taken either from pagan antiquity (in case of the humanists), or from the Church fathers and order founders (in case of the reformers), yet in both instances it concerned seizing exemplary figures who, by means of contrast, allowed for a judgment of contemporary society.<sup>5</sup> The Observance (of the rule, the evangelical message, vows, etc.) was as much a religious discipline as a societal project that significantly exceeded the convent walls.<sup>6</sup> Musical practice was not a core issue within Observant normative discourses, but as cement of the liturgical and communal life, it became part of the parameters taken into account by the Observant projects of reform. Singing and organ playing created a communication

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3 Adrien Toffolet, ‘Deux concerts d’Anna von Hausswolff annulés à Nantes et Paris, après des pressions d’extrémistes catholiques’, *France inter* (web site), 8 décembre 2021. URL: <https://www.franceinter.fr/societe/deux-concerts-d-anna-von-hausswolff-annules-a-nantes-et-paris-apres-des-pressions-d-extremistes-catholiques>.

4 Ronald Witt, ‘Francesco Petrarca and the Parameters of Historical Research’, *Religions* 3 (2012), 699-709 (at 699).

5 *Ibidem*, 700.

6 James Mixson, ‘Observant Reform’s Conceptual Frameworks between Principle and Practice’, in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 60-84 (at 78).

between sacred space and public space, constituted by the (clerical) choir and the (lay) assembly of believers, whereas at the same time the Observants tended to re-enforce the separation of the two through architecture and church furniture.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the Observants did not take efficient control of these ‘instruments of communication’, even when the pedagogical and sensitive scope of music might have served in a meaningful way their reformatory interests. Girolamo Savonarola did try to curb recourse to polyphony in favor of simple and popular monodic tunes, for which he sometimes also wrote the words. Yet he did not manage to have a lasting influence on Florentine musical practices, the development of which resumed almost immediately after his execution in 1498.

Even though, throughout the Middle Ages, the theological nuances were infinite, since Augustine the principal theoretical problem posed by the use of music in the liturgy remained more or less the same: on the one hand, music could be useful to touch the heart of believers and make it compliant with the Holy Spirit, yet on the other hand, it could become an end in itself and transform into harmful entertainment. Augustine formulated this conundrum as follows:

‘So I waver between the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which, as I know from experience, can accrue from singing. Without committing myself to an irrevocable opinion, I am inclined to approve of the custom of singing in church, in order that by indulging the ears weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion. Yet when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess that this is a grievous sin...’<sup>8</sup>

Does liturgical music take part in the salvific plan, or does it mislead the Christian community? The use of the organ can only be studied in connection with polyphonic chant, both because liturgical chant became

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7 Haude Morvan, ‘The Built Environment as a Mirror of Community. Some Reflections on Architectural Norms in Observant Settings’, in: *Régler, éduquer et contrôler la société chrétienne. Les réformes de l’Observance en Europe (XIVe-XVIe siècles)*, ed. Cristina Andenna, Marina Benedetti, Sylvie Duval, Haude Morvan, and Ludovic Viallet (Rome: École française de Rome, forthcoming).

8 Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), 239 (Book 10, chapter 33).

more complex in tandem with organ music, and because the majority of the rules applied to the the use of the organ in cathedrals and convents initially took aim at singing. To the musical preoccupations can be added the issue of the organ's price and the choice of a mendicant community to purchase it while its rule – and *a fortiori* its observance – advocated austerity and poverty. Hence it is first of all necessary to examine the evolution of the discourses surrounding musical conventions produced with a normative and reformatory intent, in order to better contextualize the professional practices linked to the organ. These prescriptions should then be confronted with the concrete engagement of friars as organists, organ builders and sponsors of organs between 1400 and 1550 in Italy, where this instrument enjoyed a particular popularity. The many contradictions between discourse and practice allow for a better understanding of the relationship between the Observance and the society in which it unfolded, while measuring the scale of the development of the organ in Italian churches during the Renaissance.

## Norms and reforms

In 1469, the Observant Franciscan chapter of Bolsena forbade the construction of organs in churches of the order, as such an expenditure was considered an insult to poverty. The same chapter required friaries that already had an organ to sell their instrument, with the exception of the four largest Observant churches, namely San Francesco of Mantua, Santa Maria in Aracoeli (Rome) and Santa Croce of Florence.<sup>9</sup> Regulations like these notwithstanding, the mendicants – and the Franciscans in particular – were very important in the history of medieval Italian organ production, and devoted themselves to this production earlier than monks and canons.<sup>10</sup> Throughout its history, the Franciscan order counted several musical theoreticians,<sup>11</sup> as well as renowned composers, such as Costanzo Por-

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9 Mario Levri, *Gli organi di Mantova – ricerche d'archivio* (Trent: Biblioteca PP. Francescani, 1976), 36.

10 Oscar Mischiati, 'Vicende di storia organaria', in: *Storia della musica al Santo di Padova*, ed. Pierluigi Petrobelli and Sandro Durante (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1990), 159-179 (at 159).

11 Cf. Peter V. Loewen, *Music in Early Franciscan Thought*, *The Medieval Franciscans*, 9 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013).

ta (1528-1601) and Francesco Maria Delfico (teacher of Zarlino).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there is no indication that the acquisition of organs was interrupted within Italian Franciscan circles after this edict from 1469. The strictures imposed by the Observants are indicative of the importance of controlling the sound of the organ and, by extension, of the religious community as a whole, constituted by a shared aural musical experience. This type of prohibition also assumes a breach of the chain of social practices connected with the instrument, from the organ builder to the organist, through the organ blowers and all the financial contributors to the project's commissioning. Leaving aside the reformatory ideal, the four basilicas not touched by the 1469 prohibition were also the places most capable of anchoring the Observant friaries into contemporary society, due to their artistic allure. A religious order could not easily pass up such an anchoring opportunity.

In answer to the moral questions of his time, Antonino of Florence (1389-1459), disciple of the Dominican reformer Giovanni Dominici, and subsequently bishop of Florence, condemned in his *Summa confessionalis* (III, 8, *De citharizantibus*) musicians who played ballads on church organs:

‘If a musician has played his instrument (*citharizavit*) during illicit gatherings, or if he has played ballads on church organs, I deem it a mortal [sin] for the player and the person who makes him play.’<sup>13</sup>

Hence the bishop did not condemn the use of the organ in general, but rather a certain type of music performed by Florentine organists. He likewise warned his spiritual sons against listening to songs (*canzoni*), ballads (*ballate*) and *strambotti* when the only goal was sensual pleasure.<sup>14</sup> Thomas de Vio (1469-1534), master general of the order of Preachers in 1508, cardinal in 1517 and subsequently bishop of Gaeta in 1519, composed a com-

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12 Jessie Ann Owens, ‘Music and the Friars Minor in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Italy’, in: *I Frati minori tra '400 e '500. Atti del XII Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 18-19-20 ottobre 1984* (Assisi: Università di Perugia- Centro di Studi Francescani, 1986), 169-188 (at 178-179).

13 ‘Si musicus citharizavit ad congregationes illicitas, vel in ecclesia in organis pulsavit ballatas, puto mortale in pulsante, et procurante.’, in: Antonino of Florence, *Summa confessionalis* (Lyon: Benoit Boyer, 1564), 312.

14 ‘Se arai aperte l’orecchie a udire [...] canzone e ballate e strambotti, canti e suoni, per piacere solo della sensualità [...], il tuo talento naturale non sarà moltiplicato in bene esercitarlo, mal per te.’, in: *Lettere di Santi e Beati fiorentini raccolte ed illustrate dal canonico Antommaria Biscioni* (Milan: Silvestri, 1839), 290-291 (letter XI).

mentary on the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas between 1508 and 1520 that picks up the very same distinction and condemns borrowings from profane music. His commentary later was meant to serve as a foundation for the discussions of liturgical music by the participants of the Council of Trent. In his treatment of the second article of *Quaestio* 92 of the *Secunda secundae*, Thomas de Vio ‘asks if playing frivolous secular melodies on the organ during ecclesiastical offices is a mortal sin (...) for the melody distracts from specific matters, and the sound which by one is applied to a frivolous matter, can be applied by another to a spiritual matter, as is shown’.<sup>15</sup>

Thomas here puts his finger on a great difficulty for anyone who wants to distinguish between the sacred or profane nature of a melody deprived of its text. The ballads condemned by Antonino of Florence were undoubtedly identifiable by their dancing quality, a uniquely viable criterium — apart from any text — to exclude a type of music from ‘sacred’ repertoire. Beyond the exclusion of profane repertoire, the commentary on the *Summa theologica* by the bishop of Florence presents several instruments made of metal (including the organ) as good fruits of the earth. He writes in book I, i, 6 chapter VII, par. 1: ‘If she [the Earth] had not contained in its bosom these natural treasures and these hidden powers, how would it have been possible to derive from her the metals, such as gold, silver, tin, bronze, copper, iron and lead, that serve for the fabrication of delicate musical instruments, such as organs, the flute, cymbals and church bells?’<sup>16</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the presence of the organ in churches did no longer really stir up a debate in the early sixteenth century, but that its use could still be challenged.

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15 ‘An pulsare in organis inter officia ecclesiastica sonos secularium vanitatum sit peccatum mortale. Quia sonus abstrahit a materia hac vel illa et sonus qui ab uno applicatus est ad materiam vanam, potest ab altero applicari ad materiam spiritualem, ut patet.’, quoted in: Oscar Mischiati, ‘Il Concilio di Trento e la polifonia. Una diversa proposta di lettura e di prospettiva storiografica’, in: *Musica e liturgia nella riforma tridentina (Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, 23 settembre – 26 novembre 1995)*, ed. Danilo Curti and Marco Gozzi (Trent: Provincia autonoma di Trento – Servizio Beni Librari e Archivistici, 1995), 19-30 (at 19).

16 Raoul Morçay, *Saint Antonin. Fondateur du couvent de Saint-Marc. Archevêque de Florence. 1389-1459* (Tours: Mame, 1914), 341.

Rather than banning the organ, the general chapter of the order of Preachers held at Naples in 1515 circumscribed its use:

‘That it is not allowed under any pretext to play profane vanities, both because the sound of organs nowadays is part of the solemnity of the divine cult — and mixing in something profane and vain is clearly superstitious — and because, just as according to the sacred canons secular singing is forbidden in church, secular (instrumental) music is likewise illicit, even though both could be applied for a sacred purpose.’<sup>17</sup>

This passage brings to mind the condemnations of Antonino of Florence and other authority figures for whom the permeability of so-called sacred music by so-called profane music posed a danger. The ‘vanity’ some musicians exhibited in the liturgy – to listen to the formulated prohibitions – was sometimes counterbalanced by proclaiming the words prior to the organ part, in order to ensure the intelligible and ‘meticulous’ transmission of the text: ‘That each time when something is about to be played on the organ [...] the chanter first recites (*sine nota*) out loud [the text of the prayer] and that he recites it carefully (*morose*).’<sup>18</sup> The stimulation of musical sensibilities did not exclude the faithful’s understanding of important passages, which for the Dominicans was an important issue: ‘Likewise we declare with regard to Easter vespers that the chanters begin by saying ‘Kyrie’, that the organ responds, and that, for the benefit of the devotion of the people, the latter rise while understanding what is intoned.’<sup>19</sup> The same preoccupations resurface during the subsequent two Dominican general chapters:

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17 ‘Ut non permittantur ullo modo vanitates saeculares sonari, tum quia sonus in organis est pars hodie solemnitatis divini cultus, cui profanum et vanum aliquid admisceri constat superstitiosum esse, tum quia sicut secundum sacros canones cantus saecularis est inhibitus in ecclesia, ita et saecularis sonus, licet utrumque possit ad sacram applicari materiam.’, in: *Monumenta ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum historica*, IX. *Acta capitulorum generalium*, Vol. IV., ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert (Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1901), 136.

18 ‘Ut quandocumque contingerit in organo pulsari aliquid [...], cantor sine nota alta voce et morose dicat illa’, *Ibidem*.

19 ‘Idem dicimus in vesperis paschalibus, quod cantores incipiant iliam dictionem “Kyrie”, organum illud subsequatur, et hoc pro devotione populi, ut intelligens, quod inchoatur, assurgat’, *Ibidem*.

(Bologna, 1523): ‘We order, that where it is habitual to play the organ, the symbol of faith, which in mass is chanted with organs, is never played completely or in part on any solemn liturgical feast to avoid that we seem to obfuscate the faith which we are held to profess publicly and preach to the people, due to the modulations of the organ [...] To ensure the efficacy of this order, and that it is inviolably adhered to, we command that, when it happens, priors and the choir of convents are barred from office.’<sup>20</sup>

(Lyon, 1536): ‘Furthermore, we order that nobody is presumed exempt from choir whether by day or by night by reason of any office, degree or dignity, even though it is possible to provide dispensation to prelates, together with lectors, preachers, and students when they are performing their other duties, or because of other reasonable legitimate impediments. Likewise, we order that on feast days, when the organ is played, the friars sing the complete *Credo* and *Gloria in excelsis* either unaccompanied together, or alternating with the organ, and by no means is it permitted that everything is performed by the organ. Instead, the verse of the organ must be spoken by a friar, and heard by the choir in a distinct and understandable manner.’<sup>21</sup>

By superimposing the text on the music of the organ, the Dominicans managed to reconcile the Word with the ‘delight’ of the music. In fact, the pleasure of hearing the music made the heart more receptive to the Word, and in this way could serve the evangelizing mission of the Friars

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20 ‘Ordinamus, quod ubi est consuetudo pulsandi organa, nunquam symbolum fidei, quod in missa cantatur organis, vel ex toto, vel ex parte pulsetur in quovis etiam solemnī die, ne fidem quam profiteri palam tenemur et populo praedicare, sub modulis organorum videamur occultari. [...] Ut autem ordinatio praedicta efficaciam habeat, mandamus praesidentibus conventuum et choro sub poena absolutionis ab officiis suis ipso facto incurrenda, ut hanc ordinationem inviolabiliter servant.’, Ibidem, 184.

21 ‘Ordinamus praeterea, quod nullus praesumatur exemptus a choro tam die quam nocte ratione cuiuscumque officii, gradus vel dignitatis, poterit nihilominus praelatus cum lectoribus, praedicatoribus et studentibus actu sua officia exercentibus vel aliis legitime impeditis rationabiliter dispensare. Item ordinantes mandamus, quod diebus festivis, dum pulsantur organa, fratres cantent totum credo et gloria in excelsis vel secum vei cum organis aalternatim, et nullatenus permittant totum ab organo decantari. Versiculus vero organi ab uno fratre distincte et intelligibiliter audiente choro dicatur.’, Ibidem.

Preachers. Thus, in their liturgy the organ obtained the status of a vital instrument for the salvation of the people of God.

Several reformers reflected on the musical practices of their order, usually to argue for limitations or restrictions. The study of contracts for the acquisition of organs nevertheless clearly shows that the use of these instruments was already too deeply ingrained for such restrictions to be truly observed. As James Mixson underlines in his article 'Observant Reform's conceptual framework', each reform discourse linked to the Observance was in some way 'encapsulated' in its congregation.<sup>22</sup> For that reason, it is not appropriate to consider the Observance in a univocal manner. Moreover, the relative disinterest in music by the great Observant figures is striking. They were much more concerned with images. The Observant Franciscan Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444), known to have performed the *laudi* of Jacopone of Todi, often preached on the basis of images known to the Sienese people, from the *Maestà* of Simone Martini to the fresco cycle painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo pubblico.<sup>23</sup> Citing Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, the preacher affirmed the primacy of sight over hearing (here in the context of witch burnings): 'you will remember better what you will see than what you will hear'.<sup>24</sup> Much could be said in response to this hierarchization of the senses. Singing occupied an important place in the medieval arts of memory, and the consistent development of the organ in Renaissance Italy speaks for itself. The sound (of organs, church bells, urban trumpets) was not a completely negligible factor in the Observant reform project of Christian society either. In fact, both Ludovico Barbo and Savonarola expressed their opinion with regard to the organ. Although they did not necessarily have anything to do with each other, both men can be considered as the product, as well as the source for an appeal to conversion throughout the Church via different means.

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22 Mixson, 'Observant Reform's Conceptual Frameworks', 70.

23 Patrick Boucheron, "Tournez les yeux pour admirer, vous qui exercez le pouvoir, celle qui est peinte ici." La fresque du Bon Gouvernement d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 60 (2005/6), 1137-1199 (at 1197).

24 Bernardino of Siena, *Le prediche volgari. Predicazione del 1425 in Siena*, ed. Ciro Cannarozzi, 2 Vols. (Florence: Rinaldi, 1958) I, 192. Cf. Pietro Delcorno, "Quomodo discet sine docente? Observant Efforts towards Education and Pastoral Care", in: *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson & Bert Roest (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 147-184 (at 167-168).



The Benedictine monk Ludovico Barbo (1381-1444) initiated from Padua the Congregation of Santa Giustina, and in 1409 launched a reform that persisted until the end of his mandate in 1437. He established strict rules regarding organs. First of all, the abbeys were forbidden to acquire new instruments; secondly, the communities already in the possession of an organ could keep it, on the condition that they only used it during great feasts; finally, it was forbidden for monks to devote themselves to practicing the organ or any other instrument.<sup>25</sup> Ludovico Barbo sent Gomezio di Giovanni (1419-1439) — his closest disciple — to the Badia Fiorentina, which at that time had almost fallen into ruin. The new abbot took sixteen monks with him and restored the observance of the rule of Benedict in the Badia Fiorentina as well as in the monastic compound situated in the heart of Florence.<sup>26</sup> Yet as early as 1440 – just three years after the mandate of Barbo and one year after the end of Gomezio’s abbatiage – the Badia Fiorentina commissioned a new organ. This ‘inobservance’ of the Benedictine reform explains in part the insistence with which the congregation reiterated the call for austerity in the adornment and the decoration of its churches, notably during the chapters of Praglia (1464) and Polirone (1467).<sup>27</sup> It demonstrates equally how difficult it was to implement a genuine reform in the socio-cultural domain, where the organ crystallized simultaneously the culmination of an improvement of techniques and an evolution of esthetic sensibilities.

The return of Savonarola to Florence in 1489 marked a change in the way of life of the Florentine people. The new regime did not persecute musical life with the same force as the visual arts, yet it did come under scrutiny.<sup>28</sup> First of all, Savonarola objected to the use of polyphony in religious services, commenting on the entertainment it provided during performance of the liturgy, and the difficulties it caused to understand the text, due to the use of counterpoint, completely in line with the Augustinian paradigm presented in the introduction. He also drew on the (apparently) numerous cases of intoxication and bad behavior of singers during

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25 Anne Leader, *The Badia of Florence: Art and Observance in a Renaissance Monastery* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 50.

26 *Ibidem*, 4, 7.

27 Morvan, ‘The Built Environment’, in press.

28 André Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982 (3rd Edition)), 394.

religious offices. Organists were not put in the same category.<sup>29</sup> Savonarola loved to recycle profane tunes, for which he composed pious verses, and he considered the simple musical forms of *laudi* suitable.<sup>30</sup> Polyphony somehow pertained to modernity, and the return to monodic chant or more basic forms of polyphony reflect the wish to connect with an old tradition. The comprehensibility of liturgical texts wished for by this Dominican reformer became part, a few years later, of the norms promulgated by the general chapter of his order (referred to earlier). In his 1496 Lenten sermons, Savonarola re-affirmed his preference for traditional liturgical chant and for certain well-known hymns and sequences, such as *Ave maris stella*, or *Veni Creator*.<sup>31</sup> In addition, his sermons on Job state: ‘And yet it is said that *canti figurati* in church are more harmful than useful, as for those who need to pray and contemplate God with their mind and intellect, *canti figurati* do nothing else than distract the senses and the ear.’<sup>32</sup> Still in an Augustinian spirit, he reproached the people of Florence from his pulpit in the cathedral on 4 March 1495: ‘You only want to play the organ, and you only go to church to hear organs.’<sup>33</sup> This condemnation reinforces the idea that the organ was part of the familiar auditory landscape of the Florentines and that its appeal could even surpass that of the liturgy. All the same, as said earlier, Savonarola succeeded in having the bust of the great Medici organist Antonio Squarcialupi moved from the organ gallery to the cathedral’s sacristy.<sup>34</sup> Outside Florence, the friary of San Domenico of Prato came in 1496 under the control of the reformers of the congrega-

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29 Franck A. D’Accone, *Music in Renaissance Florence: Studies and Documents* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), 328.

30 Chastel, *Art et humanisme*, 393.

31 D’Accone, *Music in Renaissance Florence*, 313.

32 ‘E però si dice che li canti figurati sono più presto nocivi nella chiesa, che utili, perché quivi si debbe orare e contemplare Dio colla mente e coll’ intelletto e e’ canti figurati non fanno altro che dilettere il senso e l’ orecchio.’, in: Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Giobbe*, 2 Vols. (Rome: Ridolfi, 1957) II, 393. Cited from D’Accone, *Music in Renaissance Florence*, 314.

33 ‘Voi volete pure sonare organi: voi andate alla chiesa per udire organi...’, Sermon from 5 March 1495, held at Santa Maria del Fiore. Cited from Pier Paolo Donati, ‘Corpus dei documenti sulla manifattura degli organi in Italia dal XIV al XVII secolo, III: documenti dal 1481 al 1499’, *Informazione Organistica: Bollettino della Fondazione Accademia di Musica Italiana per Organo di Pistoia* n.s. 35 (2014), 67-131 (at 86).

34 Gabriele Giacomelli, ‘Organi e simboli del potere a Firenze dalla repubblica al principato’, in: *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Musica Sacra: In occasione del centenario di fondazione del PIMS: Roma, 26 maggio – 1 giugno 2011* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), 1061-1073 (at 1066).

tion of San Marco, and its organ was ceased to be used, at least until 1501, that is to say three years after Savonarola's death (1498). This survival of *piagnoni* ideas encountered opposition from the *Otto difensori* of the town of Prato, who asked in a letter to the master general of the Dominicans, Vincenzo of Castronovo di Lombardia, to permit the transfer of the organ from San Domenico to the church of the Augustinians, who did not have such an instrument and wished to use it. The *Ceppo* paid for the transfer and the Augustinians took responsibility for the payment of the organist.<sup>35</sup> On the whole, the mendicants were leading actors in the development of the organ in Italy. It was therefore also more expected of them to produce a guideline of some sort, yet its prescriptions were inevitably challenged by the performance, by the friars, of occupations linked to the organ, even though there are not many informative sources concerning the specific case of the Observants.

### Professional practices

Fra Andrea dei Servi designed his first organ for the Santissima Annunziata church in Florence in February 1379 under the supervision of Francesco Landini, to replace a first organ dating from 1299.<sup>36</sup> The organ designed by fra Andrea was built by another friar, Domenico of Siena, and financed directly by the prior general of the Servites, Andrea of Faenza.<sup>37</sup> The contract involved reveals not only an early openness on the part of the Servites to the use of the organ in church, but also a technical and financial investment in its design. Among the organ builders for whom information about their order allegiance is known, the Dominicans are represented most often.<sup>38</sup> During the period in which the *piagnoni* still left their mark from San Marco, the other Florentine friary, Santa Maria Novella, shone by its splendor with regard to organs, thanks to fra Bernardo of Argentina (alias

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35 Renzo Fantappiè, *Organari, organisti e organi a Prato. XIV-XX secolo* (Prato: Società pratese di Storia patria, 2012), 43.

36 Raffaele Taucci, 'Fra Andrea dei Servi, organista e compositore del trecento', *Rivista di Studi Storici sull'Ordine dei Servi di Maria* 2 (1935), 73-108/1-35 [independent article page numbering], 8, 12.

37 *Ibidem*, 9.

38 The friars Bernardo of Argentina, Ambrogio of Jacopo Siri, Giovanni of Alemagna, Tommaso of Cortona, Pietro of Lorenzo Nencini, Pietro of Bicola da Siena, Riccardo of Chiavelli da Camerino and Vincenzo of Palermo.

Bernardo of Alemagna), who originated from Strasbourg and entered Santa Maria Novella in 1501, where he died in 1556. His production was concentrated in Florence, but was not limited to mendicant churches, which reveals a great liberty in the face of potential pressures from Observants within fra Bernardo's own order (see the list at the end of this article). In his sermon on the Book of Haggai, performed on the first of November 1494 from the pulpit in the cathedral of Florence, Savonarola, prior to urging his fellow friars to get rid of their paintings, addressed himself to monks and nuns. To the first he launched a call for manual labor, following the example of their predecessors ('lavorate con le mani vostre come facevano gli antichi monaci'), and the second he advised to renounce polyphony ('lasciate i canti figurati') in order to better lament their faults.<sup>39</sup> He went after polyphony while encouraging manual labor. While on the one hand, the construction of organs (as a form of labor) could be licit, on the other hand the performance of chants that ordinarily presupposed organ accompaniment was not. It is difficult to gauge how friar organists or organ builders could successfully perform their art with such partially contradicting injunctions. Moreover, the work in question put forward the problem of salaries and, hence, enrichment, of which the commissioning of an organ was a clear expression.

Beyond the particular case of the friars, organ builders in their role as artisans were not struck with infamy by the ecclesiastical authorities. The texts of Antonino of Florence and Savonarola spared them, preferring to go after the choice of repertoire of organists. The surviving statute had as a result, on the one hand, that religious were not forbidden the construction of organs and, on the other hand, that some builders could maintain sufficiently privileged relations with this or that community to obtain burial rights in their church. The participation of friars and secular priests in the professions of organ builder and organist confirms rather well the legitimacy of the craft. The mendicants distinguished themselves both as patrons and as craftsmen. Panayota Volti has demonstrated their role in the building domain, by means of several examples of Franciscan architects who

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39 1 November 1494, 'Sopra Aggeo', in: *Scelta di prediche e scritti di fra Girolamo Savonarola. Con nuovi documenti intorno alla sua vita*, ed. Pasquale Villari and Eugenio Casanova (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1898), 61-62.

relied on the exhortation to work found in their rule.<sup>40</sup> That rule also gave a friar already trained in a craft the possibility to continue working in it. Several Dominicans distinguished themselves in the artisanal domain as well. In Perugia, fra Bartolomeo di Pietro worked as a painter and master glazer between 1366 and 1420, and he received a salary, even when he worked for his community on the *finestrone* of San Domenico. Several other Dominican master glazers were active during the fifteenth century in the Marches, and they were given leeway to travel in the context of their artisanal activities. Joanna Cannon has identified other friar-artisans in Tuscany, yet it is not possible to grasp how much money these Dominicans received for their work, as the payments received included the cost of the primary materials.<sup>41</sup> The Dominicans probably did not escape entanglement between artisan milieus and friaries. On the sociological level, the (Franciscan) Observance attracted from the second half of the fifteenth century sons of noble families, who brought to the communities their culture and artistic sensibilities.<sup>42</sup> Hence what position to take, when the practice of different crafts seemingly existed since the foundation of the orders, and when the friars themselves came from milieus instructed in the arts?

The organ began to disseminate in Italy predominantly from the end of the fourteenth century onward. The transmission of the profession of organist in the period under consideration relied on a tradition of some hundred years, and the training for and practice of this profession engaged a number of religious from the start. In response to the increasing sophistication of polyphony, the principal singers needed to have capacities of reading and performing that necessitated a proper formation. The art of singing *cantus figuratus* (i.e. polyphony) went hand in hand with the organ, for the keyboard was useful for supporting the singers. The transition to polyphony implied a greater preparation and provided the advantage

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40 Panayota Volti, 'Chapitre II. Le projet d'implantation', in: *Les couvents des ordres mendiants et leur environnement à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2003). On line. URL: <http://books.openedition.org/editions-cnrs/5765>; *Bullarii Franciscani epitome et supplementum quattuor voluminum priorum*, ed. Conrad Eubel (Ad Claras Aquas: Quaracchi, 1908), 226 (*Regula fratrum Minorum*, De modo laborandi, V).

41 Joanna Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches: Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2013), 310-312.

42 Anna Maria Amonaci, *Conventi toscani dell'osservanza francescana* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1997), 38.

of choice to communities with regard to the 'style' they wanted to give to their liturgical celebrations. As dialogic forms (*alternatim*) developed, organ playing had to be perfected, in order to ascend to the level of complexity of the sung parts. However, the opposition to polyphonic chant by some Observants such as Barbo reduced considerably the need for organ accompaniment. The same reformer also forbade his monks to play the organ themselves, for the reason that this activity was overly profane.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, the Santissima Annunziata in Florence included a musical formation in the novitiate and became a remarkable and early music center (from the fourteenth century onward), in part thanks to the figure of fra Andrea dei Servi, who has been studied in detail by Raffaello Taucci.<sup>44</sup> Outside Florence, the Servites also provided several organists to churches beyond their community, such as the Carmelite church of San Martino in Bologna.<sup>45</sup> Starting from the fifteenth century, the Annunziata friary often employed two organists simultaneously, and several of them were recruited from the friars' own ranks.<sup>46</sup> The majority of organists listed by Franck D'Accone had the title frate. The others could have been lay people, in accordance with the general tendency that the number of lay performers grew along with the professionalization of the art of organ playing. The involvement of clerics and friars nevertheless represented a financial advantage for the various institutions that had to pay organists. In fact, the accumulation of functions like chaplain or canon with that of organist (or chanter) allowed the patron to save on payments, starting with housing costs. In fact, these functions were often taken up simultaneously. That

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43 Leader, *The Badia of Florence*, 50.

44 Florence, Archivio di Stato, *Camera del Comune*, 1378; Taucci, 'Fra Andrea dei Servi', 6, 7.

45 Friar Cristofalo da Bologna (1 June-4 September 1484), friar Benedetto da Bologna (1 November 1491-1 June 1492). Bologna, Archivio di Stato, 127/3609, Libro di entrate 1464-1493, ff. 29v, 35v, 37r, 43r.; Bologna, AS, 126/3608, Rendite 1466-1480, f. 69, published in Oscar Mischiati, 'L'organo della basilica di S. Martino di Bologna di G. Cipri', *L'Organo, Rivista di Cultura Organaria e Organistica* 1 (1960), 249.

46 Piero d'Andrea Vaiaio (November 1445-May 1456); friar Biagio d'Alberto da Firenze (mid December 1450-end of December 1471); friar Bernardo di Luca da Firenze, pupil of Biagio (mid June 1471-August 1480, and October 1490-April 1493); Bernardino di Messer Iacopo (January-March 1480); Piero di Giovanni d'Arezzo (November 1485-January 1486); friar Benedetto d'Antonio da Bologna (September 1483, and April 1486-July 1488); Bartolomeo da Pavia (August 1486); the Augustinian friar Alessandro da Bologna (April 1486-mid March 1492); friar Girolamo d'Antonio da Bologna (27 June 1487-April 1488). D'Accone, 'Sacred music in Florence', 321.

being said, great musical centers such as Santissima Annunziata did no longer accept the candidature of clerics if they did not have an adequate training, and they were no longer paid to work as organist or chanter. This Florentine friary was without a doubt the most active mendicant community in the domain of music. The other friaries sometimes had recourse to external musicians while at the same time training their own musicians and craftsmen who excelled beyond their community.

### **Sponsoring and poverty**

The association between mendicants and artistic sponsorship is far from evident. I have been able to create a database collecting building and repairing fees for circa 650 Italian organs, and to identify in most cases who were the commissioners of such operations. What remains indeed is the question of poverty in confrontation with these huge expenses. Since 1336, the Franciscans had the right to accept presents (even presents of great value), on condition that they were transformed into goods that benefited the community as a whole, such as books for the convent library.<sup>47</sup> Henceforth, gifts received could very well be destined for the construction of an instrument that benefitted everybody. Mendicant friaries developed in towns, just like the organ, and for that reason mendicant communities were well-situated to become familiar with the instrument and to get to know craftsmen able to produce it (see the circular diagram at the end of the article). Italian Franciscan churches were behind some 40 organ commissions, whereas Augustinian ones counted for some 30 of them. Other mendicant churches of Dominicans, Servites and Carmelites were also important clients, but to a lesser degree. Finally, some ten Benedictine abbeys (among which several female monasteries) also commissioned instruments. Most frequently, the sales contracts name the community as legal person. Where this is not the case, they mention the prior or the guardian who represented the community. The commissions undertaken at the initiative of these superiors marked without doubt their intent to portray a united front to their community, which also had a right of scru-

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47 Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15, 26.

tiny at the convent level. But there was also scrutiny at the provincial level, as can be illustrated with the Observant Franciscans from Tuscany, where the provincial vicar could ask for the accounts of friar craftsmen in order to check for abuses and superfluous expenses.<sup>48</sup>

A communal commission took place within a well thought-out liturgical context. In the *Liber consiliorum* of the Dominican Santa Maria di Castello friary of Genoa, the motivation to place an order for a new instrument — when the previous one had become unusable — was ‘to help the choir and for the devotion of the people’ (*pro adiutorio chori et pro devotione populi*).<sup>49</sup> We find here the same concern about the gathering of believers as in the previously cited passage from the 1523 Dominican general chapter. In the same period, San Pietro Martire, an Observant friary erected at Murano in the fifteenth century, finalized the rebuilding of its church ravaged by a fire in 1472. The consecration took place in 1511, but the friars only cared to have an organ constructed in 1520. The terminology used had no reservation whatsoever concerning the justification to obtain an organ, nor any concern for poverty or soberness:

‘After our church was finished and consecrated, an organ was missing, to make it more proper and majestic. Hence the friars of our friary of San Pietro Martire of Murano congregated in chapter in the priory of father Floriano of Brescia agreed with the organ master Gianbattista Facchetti of Brescia in the following manner...’<sup>50</sup>

The modest size of the organ (ten feet) resulted in a likewise reasonable price (140 ducats), and the contract provided for a discount of twenty ducats by the maker ‘for the love of God’. The visual and ornamental dimension of the instrument was not disregarded: ‘the friars, in their turn,

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48 Anna Maria Amonaci, *Conventi toscani dell'osservanza francescana* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1997), 41.

49 Maurizio Tarrini, ‘Organari del Rinascimento in Liguria: I – Giovanni Torriano da Venezia’, *L'Organo, Rivista di Cultura Organaria e Organistica* 36 (2003), 107-225 (at 114).

50 ‘Doppo terminata e consacrata la nostra chiesa, mancava alla medesima un organo per renderla più decorosa e maestevole, convennero perciò li frati del nostro convento di San Pietro martire di Murano capitolarmente congregati nel priorato del padre Floriano da Brescia, con Gianbattista Fachetti da Brescia maestro d'organi nel modo seguente...’, Venice, Archivio di Stato, *Corporazioni religiose soppresse*, S. Pietro Martire di Murano, busta 29, published in Denise Zaru, *Art and Observance in Renaissance Venice. The Dominicans and their Artists (1391 — ca. 1545)*, trans. Sarah Melker (Rome: Viella, 2014), 50-51.



commit themselves to realize a casing [for the organ] with all elements that will contribute to its adornment and its beauty'.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, counter to what one might have expected, Giovanni Battista Facchetti was not an organ builder associated with Observant circles. His production was more typified by great assignments for the cathedrals of Reggio Emilia (1514), Milan (1515), Asola (1517), Crema (1525), Piacenza (1539), Cremona (1542), and Genoa (1552). One should add to this the organs of San Petronio in Bologna (1528) and San Pietro in Rome (1530). Yet the painter who decided to realize the shutter pictures based on the theme of the Annunciation (see **fig. 1 & 2**) was linked to the lay branch of the Dominican Observance. As Denise Zaru has demonstrated, Girolamo Bonsignori painted the two canvasses destined for the organ shutters of San Pietro Martire between 1508 and 1520, with the help of the funds provided by fra Gianmaria Conti in 1511 at the moment of his entry in the order of Friars Preachers.<sup>52</sup> The chosen subject matter had nothing original. One could always evoke the legendary association of the city of the Doges with that particular biblical event, with recourse to the legendary foundation of Venice on the feast of the Annunciation in 461, just as it was done for Florence, which celebrated its urban new year on 25 March. I also think that this particular scene lent itself perfectly for a composite division over two similar vertical rectangles, due to restrictions imposed by the support structure. Whether open or closed – in this particular case, as the canvasses had colored scenes, it is reasonable to assume that they were installed on the interior side of the shutters (the exterior side being usually painted in grisaille), but it is impossible to prove this without traces of the hinges – the organ shutters necessitated that the represented scene could be divided in two equal and coherent parts. Full-bodied portraits of saints were another often-used solution for the very same reason.

From the start of the sixteenth century, the visual and aural presence of the organ in sacred spaces clearly no longer posed a problem within Observant circles. The chanted office remained a key issue, which manifested

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51 'E li sudetti Frati s'obligarono di fare la cassa, con tutte l'altre cose, che all'ornamento e bellezza della medesima concorressero...'; Zaru, *Art and Observance*, 51.

52 Girolamo Bonsignori, *Annunciation*, Organ shutters, 2,80x1,80 m, Verona, Museo G B Cavalcaselle. Place of origin: Organ of S. Pietro Martire in Murano. Cf Zaru, *Art and Observance*, 175-182.

itself in the recruitment of singers and organists able to teach singing to the novices or the brothers. Between 1486 and 1488, the Augustinians of Santo Spirito in Florence paid a salary to Carlo de Burgis to teach plain chant and polyphony to novices.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the Franciscans of the Arca di Sant'Antonio in Padua, the administrative body responsible for the upkeep of the Basilica and the monastery, by the mid sixteenth-century added teaching responsibilities to the tasks of the chapel master, to instruct 'little brothers' to 'sing in groups',<sup>54</sup> just around the time that the construction of a new organ was finalized by fra Vincenzo Colombo. All the same, in Franciscan circles the Observant discourse that pitted poverty against the acquisition of organs seemed to have had an impact on several friaries, such as the Observant house of Santa Maria di Fontecastello in Montepulciano, which only obtained an organ in 1743.<sup>55</sup> Among the Franciscans, the commissioning of organs remained a sensitive topic, even though, over time, they proved themselves to be very important patrons of the arts. Their tradition of commissioning art works started with a papal bull issued by Innocent IV, which allowed the friars to spend alms for such purposes.<sup>56</sup> As the Observance did not in all cases generate a full breach of unity between Observants and other friars of the same order, it is not always possible to clearly identify the orientation of the patrons. Nevertheless, the important number of commissioned organs shows that the Observance did not constitute an efficacious obstacle to the diffusion of the instrument, but that it rather questioned its use.

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53 Florence, Archivio di Stato, C.R.S. 127, Santo Spirito 1, Libro campione A.A., 1475-1494, f. 118 v, Cited in Frank A. D'Accone, 'Some Neglected Composers in the Florentine Chapels, ca. 1475-1525', *Viator* 1 (1970), 263-288 (at 276).

54 'Ogni giorno feriale [...] insegnare alli fratini [...] e starvi insegnando per spazio di ore due al giorno, così per insegnare, come per cantare in compagnia', found in Oscar Mischiati, 'Profilo storico della Cappella Musicale in Italia nei secoli XV-XVIII', in: *Musica sacra in Sicilia tra rinascimento e Barocco, atti del Convegno (Caltagirone, 10-12 dicembre 1985)*, ed. Daniele Ficola (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1988), 23-46 (at 40).

55 Renzo Giorgetti, *Organi ed organari a Montepulciano* (Florence: Giorgio & Gambi, 1994), 33.

56 Bram Kempers, *Peinture, pouvoir et mécénat. L'essor de l'artiste professionnel dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, trans. Daniel Arasse & Catherine Bédard (Paris: Gérard Monfort, 1997), 38.

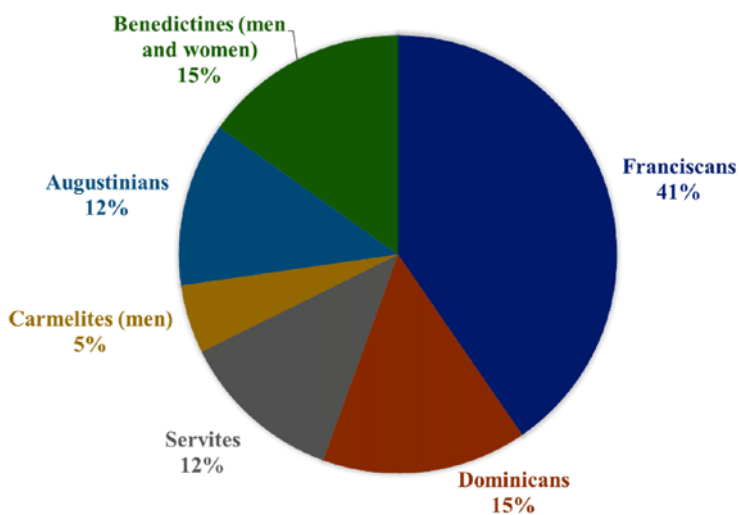
## Conclusion

The Observance as a reform movement, concerned with communal discipline centered on the rule, tried to create a proper regulatory framework for the organ. As it entailed a considerable expense, the acquisition of a new instrument was necessarily a community decision that could be in conflict with the many calls for simplicity and the soberness reiterated by Observant leaders. The more or less imagined return to an original rule (dating back about two centuries) raised the issue of the absence of regulations about organs in these texts, written in a period when the instrument was not yet widely disseminated. In the fifteenth century, various ecclesiastical institutions found themselves obliged to regulate the use of the organ, precisely because it became an essential instrument in solemn liturgical celebrations. Rather than forbidding the instrument, the Observants tried to limit its use, without really slowing down its development. They could have been tempted to fight actively against the instrument in the name of poverty, in order to distinguish themselves from other religious congregations, but by and large the friars encouraged or allowed the formation of musicians and valuable artisans. The 'secularization' of these métiers – connected with the professionalization of organists and organ builders – doubtlessly helped to put the organ beyond the range of interference of Observant movements. Whether one forbade or promoted it, the organ was indicative of a certain conception of community, and as such every order, Observant or not, was forced to reflect on the place it wanted to grant it. To the extent that cultural production could be exploited in service of Observant ideals, the organ contributed in its own way to the reputation of the communities using it, precisely because it was capable of stirring up emotions and convert souls. Letting an organ sound or keeping it silent remained, during the Renaissance as today, a question that could lead the whole Church to take a stand, leading it eventually to be at odds with the rest of the city.

## The production of friar Bernardo of Argentina

Town	Church	Client	Year
Florence	S. Pancrazio	Vallombrosians	1520
Florence	Duomo		1523
Impruneta	S.M. dell'Impruneta		1528
Florence	SS. Annunziata	Servites	1529
Florence	S. Pier Maggiore		1531
Fiesole	Duomo S. Romolo		1532
Florence	Duomo		1532
Imprunteta	S.M. dell'Impruneta		1535
Empoli	Collegiata S. Andrea		1536
Florence	Duomo	Opera del Duomo	1537
San Giovanni Valdarno	Basilica S.M. delle Grazie		1537
Fiesole	S.M. Primerana		1538
Florence	Duomo ( <i>in cornu Epistolae</i> , cantoria Donatello)	Opera del Duomo & Cosimo 1°	1542
Florence	S. Spirito	Augustinians	1551
Florence	S.M. Novella	Dominicans	1553

ORGAN COMMISSION BY ORDER



## Illustrations



Girolamo Bonsignori, *Annunciation*, organ shutters, 2,80m x 1,80m, Verona, Museo G.B. Cavalcaselle, chiesa S. Francesco al Corso. Place of origin: organ of S. Pietro Martire in Murano. Reproduced under a Creative Common licence (CC BY-SA 4.0).

# Female Chant Repertoire in Aveiro's Dominican Convent of Jesus during the Observant Reform (15th Century)

*Kristin Hoefener*

## Introduction

Founders and patrons, prioresses and sub prioresses, novice mistresses and *cantrices*, scribes and illuminators: women have shaped, in many ways, the foundation of the Dominican convent of Jesus (Convento de Jesus) in Aveiro, Portugal. This article covers the convent's musical universe, which can only be reconstructed today through the analysis of an essential collection of chant books produced by the sisters themselves, and the study of conventual buildings and conserved artworks.<sup>1</sup>

First of all, the chant repertoire of Aveiro's Dominican sisters is approached by focusing on the local environment of the monastery, Aveiro's development, and the city's connections to the Portuguese aristocracy, especially to noble women. Second, this article intends to show how the foundation of Aveiro's new Dominican convent of Jesus in 1461, closely linked to the previous foundation of the Friars Preachers in 1423, Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia, were both tied to the Observant reform move-

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1 This research is connected to the program RESALVE and funded by the European Commission's program Horizon 2020: 'The Revival of Salve Regina. Medieval Marian chants from Aveiro: musical sources, gender-specific context, and performance' (Grant Agreement n° 101038090).

ment in Portugal. Similarly, as the friars, the sisters established their convent with new buildings, equipment, books, and liturgical practices.

To illustrate this process, the last part of the article will explore the practices transmitted in the liturgical books, in particular various offices in honor of Mary and female saints. As can be seen, the objective here is not to compare the practices and repertoire with those of other houses or the entire order but instead to concentrate on the microcosm of Aveiro's convent and its chant repertoire.

### **Aveiro in historical context**

The earliest mention of Aveiro,<sup>2</sup> located fifty kilometers southeast of Porto, is found in a donation charter, indicating that Countess Mumadona Dias donated “*terras alavario et salinas*” to the monastery of Guimarães in 959.<sup>3</sup> In the eleventh century, in the wake of the Reconquest from the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula towards the south, the land around Aveiro became the domain of one of the most powerful noble families of the region, the Ribadouro family.<sup>4</sup> Egas Moniz, a member of this family – who was first the tutor, then the principal personal and military advisor to the first Portuguese king Afonso I – created with his second wife

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2 In the tenth century, the mouth of the river Vouga started to transform from a large bay into a lagoon and the river estuary continued to undergo significant changes from the fifteenth century onward, affecting the coastline. As a result, this territory started to get exploited for salt production. Maria da Conceição Freitas & César Freire de Andrade, ‘Evolução do litoral português nos últimos 5000 Anos: alguns exemplos’, *Almadan* 2:7 (1998), 64-70 and Rosário Bastos, *O Baixo Vouga em Tempos Medievos: do preâmbulo da Monarquia aos finais do reinado de D. Dinis*. PhD thesis (Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 2004).

3 Transl. ‘land of Alaveiro and salt flats’. Following da Rocha Madahil, the next steps in the evolution of the toponym were: ‘Alaveiro’ (1047), ‘Aaveiro’ (1131), and finally, the present name ‘Aveiro’ (1216). Its settlement and economic development were mainly connected to fishing and salt production that brought wealth to Aveiro, especially in the later Middle Ages, when the salt was exported to the Nordic countries. António Gomes da Rocha Madahil, ‘Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, doc. 1 da Coleção da Colegiada de Guimarães’, in: *Milenário d’Aveiro. Colectânea de Documentos Históricas*, v. 2 (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1959), 1-6. See for a discussion of the name also Maria João Branco, *Aveiro Medieval* (Aveiro: Edição da Câmara Municipal de Aveiro 1991), 11-13.

4 The region between the Douro and Minho (Entre Douro e Minho), see *ibidem*, 13. To list only a few important members of this family connected to Aveiro: Monio Ermiges (1050-1107), his son Egas Moniz, tutor of Afonso Henriques, later his advisor when he became king Afonso I of Portugal (ca. 1080-1146), Teresa Afonso of Celanova, Egas’s wife (ca. 1111-1171), Mem Moniz (1075-1154) and Lourenço Viegas (ca. 1111-ca. 1160).

Teresa Afonso of Celanova a tight network of monastic communities.<sup>5</sup> They either founded or financially supported several monastic communities in the wider area around Aveiro: three Benedictine monasteries,<sup>6</sup> three houses of Regular Canons,<sup>7</sup> and two Cistercian monasteries.<sup>8</sup> The ensuing decline of the Ribadouro family in the thirteenth century was mainly due to the absence of male descendants which led to the dispersion of their property.<sup>9</sup> During this entire period, we have no records of new monastic foundations in Aveiro itself or in its immediate vicinity; the city mainly evolved around the older Church of St Michael.<sup>10</sup> In 1306, King Dinis I (1261-1325), grandson of Alfonso X of Castile brought the, now dispersed, former territories of the Ribadouro family under royal control.<sup>11</sup>

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- 5 Especially women's convents were often founded by aristocratic or royal families, as places of familial *memoria*, and as appropriate locations for providing an education for the female family members. E. Ennen, *Frauen im Mittelalter* (Munich: C.H. Beck 1991), 75.
- 6 In Paço de Sousa (Cluniac since 1090, and which contains the grave monuments of Mem and Egas Moniz), see Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa et al., *Ordens Religiosas em Portugal, Das Origens a Trento – Guia Histórico*, 3rd ed. (Lisbon: Viros Horizonte, 2016), 53-54, and José Augusto de Sotto Mayor Pizarro, *Linhagens medievais Portuguesa, Genealogias e Estratégias (1279-1325)*, 3 Vols. (Porto: Centro de Estudos de Genealogia, 1997) I, 446; in Pendorada (Cluniac since 1080), see Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens religiosas*, 63-64, and in Arouca (Benedictine since 1085/95), which was transformed into a double community under abbess Toda Viegas (1114-1154). Later, it became exclusively female. Sancho I passed Arouca's patronage to his daughter, D. Mafalda, who introduced the Cistercian customs in 1224 (approved by Pope Honorius III in 1226), see *ibidem*, 121-123.
- 7 In Tuias, founded by Egas Moniz and Teresa Afonso c. 1140, which was settled later on, in 1173, with Benedictine nuns, see Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens religiosas*, 85; in Vila Boa do Bispo, probably founded by Monio Viegas' brother Sisnando between 999 and 1020: *ibidem*, 199 and in Cárquere, founded by Afonso Henriques in 1131, see Adelino de Almeida Calado (ed.), *Cronica de Portugal de 1419* (Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro, 1998), 3-84.
- 8 The monastery in Tarouca was founded ca. 1110 as Benedictine and reformed in 1144. S. João was the first masculine Cistercian foundation in Portugal – see Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens Religiosas*, 104-105 – and the monastery in Salzedas was donated by Teresa Afonso between 1152 and 1168. There were two monasteries called Salzedas (in Argeriz) and Salzedá; the latter was abandoned in the thirteenth century when a new abbey was constructed in Salzedas – see Maur Cocheril, *Routier des abbayes cisterciennes du Portugal* (Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Centro Cultural Português, 1978), 95-109.
- 9 Sotto Mayor Pizarro, *Linhagens medievais*, 446.
- 10 Until the sixteenth century, Aveiro only consisted of the parish of St. Miguel with one main church, <https://digitarq.adavr.arquivos.pt/details?id=1082830> [last accessed: 05/02/2023].
- 11 The royal family participated in the development of salt production and trade in the fourteenth century, especially João's I son Pedro (1392-1449), who initiated the construction of Aveiro's first city walls. Branco, *Aveiro medieval*, 13.



The Portuguese royalty provided from the beginning protection and funding for the Dominican order, and, over time, they strengthened their legitimacy through the foundation of Dominican monasteries. Moreover, they became an active supporter of Observant reforms of the existing Franciscan and Dominican communities in the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> A case in point are the policies of King João I, who politically and financially supported the development of the Dominican order in his realm,<sup>13</sup> which included support for the onset of the Observant reforms.<sup>14</sup> On top of this, he was actively involved with the process of creating a Portuguese Dominican Province, which was formed in 1418.<sup>15</sup>

A total of twelve Dominican monasteries were founded in Portugal in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; only three of these were female convents (São Domingos das Donas in Santarém, Corpus Christi in Vila Nova de Gaia near Porto, and São Salvador in Lisbon).<sup>16</sup>

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12 Ana Maria S. de Almeida Rodrigues, 'The Crown, the Court and Monastic Reform in Medieval Portugal. A Gendered Approach', in: *Queens, Princesses and Mendicants. Close Relations in a European Perspective*, Vita regularis - Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter, ed. Nikolas Jaspert and Imke Just (Leipzig: LIT Verlag, 2019), 53.

13 For instance, by donating Batalha and Benfca to the Dominicans and by financing their construction. Saul António Gomes, *O mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitoria no seculo XV* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1990), 3-34.

14 The Observant reform in Portugal was influenced by the ideas of Raymond of Capua and supported by the Roman papacy. See Cardoso, 'Unveiling Female Observance: Reform, regulation and the rise of Dominican nunneries in late medieval Portugal', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 12:3 (2020), 367a, and Rodrigues, 'The Crown', 56. For a more general view, see Sylvie Duval, *Comme des Anges sur terre, les moniales dominicaines et les débuts de la reforme observante* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2015), 77-80, 99.

15 Saul António Gomes, 'Os Dominicanos e a Cultura Em Tempos Medievais: O Caso Português', *Biblos, Revista Da Faculdade de Letras Da Universidade de Coimbra* 7 (2009), 264-266.

16 Kristin Hoefener, 'Women writing for the liturgy: manuscripts from the Jesus Convent in Aveiro (1476-1529)', in: *Culture and music in the Iberian Peninsula (c. 1100-c.1650) / Cultura y música en la península ibérica (c.1100-c.1650)*, Iberian Early Music Studies 6, ed. Eva Esteve, John Griffith and Francisco Rodilla (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2022), 85.

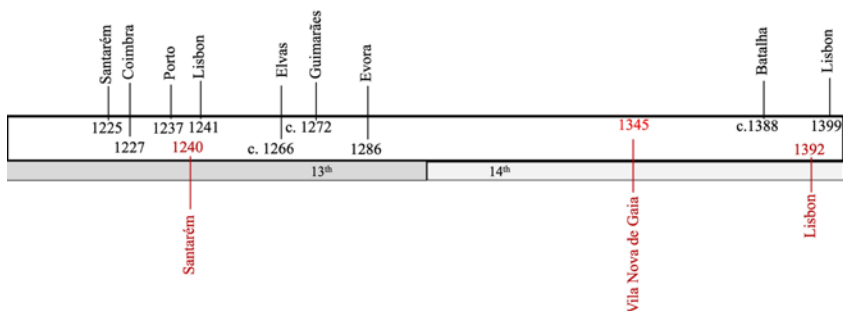


Fig. 1: Dominican foundations in Portugal (thirteenth-fourteenth c., women's convents in red)

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, during the period of Observant reform, there was a significant increase in the number of foundations of Dominican convents, twenty-two in total, including twelve additional female Dominican houses.<sup>17</sup>

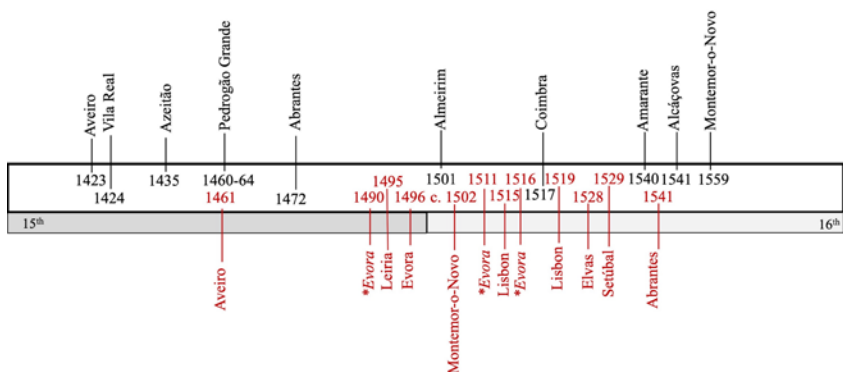


Fig 2: Dominican foundations in Portugal (fifteenth-sixteenth c.)

The Portuguese Dominicans began to join the Observant reform movement at the end of the fourteenth century, starting with the friary São Domingos de Benfca in Lisbon in 1399 (fig. 1). Among the three oldest

17 Nine (5 for friars and 4 for nuns) Dominican monasteries were founded in the fifteenth and 13 (5 for friars and 8 for nuns) in the sixteenth century. Evora's convents, marked with an \* merged in 1516. Hoefener, 'Women writing for the liturgy', 86-90.

female houses, São Salvador in Lisbon, founded in 1392, was the first attempt of a female community to affiliate itself with the Observance in the 1430s, but then it gave up and returned to its previous state.<sup>18</sup> The implementation of the reform process in Portugal was a long and challenging process that continued until the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Aveiro's first Dominican monastery, the friars' Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia, was founded as a reformed house by Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, in 1423.<sup>20</sup> In the following years, the patronage was passed on from Pedro to his brother Duarte and then to Duarte's son who later became king Afonso V of Portugal. When the new female Convent of Jesus was created in the immediate vicinity of Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia, they similarly implemented the Observant reform from the beginning and benefitted from patronage of noble families, both local and royal.

### **Aveiro's Convent of Jesus during the foundation period**

A small group of noblewomen, including Mecia Pereira and Beatriz de Leitão,<sup>21</sup> were instrumental in the creation of a religious community in Aveiro in 1458,<sup>22</sup> which eventually evolved into the Convent of Jesus, receiving papal approval from Pope Pius II in 1461.<sup>23</sup> Not long after that, in 1472, Princess Joana, daughter of the royal couple Afonso V and his first wife Isabella of Coimbra, joined the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro as an

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18 Paula Cardoso, *Art, Reform and Female Agency in the Portuguese Dominican Nunneries: Nuns as Producers and Patrons of Illuminated Manuscripts (c. 1460-1560)*, PhD thesis (University Nova Lisbon, 2019), 46.

19 Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 45 and idem, 'Unveiling female observance', 367-370.

20 The monastery was first called Nossa Senhora da Piedade but rapidly changed its patronage into Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia, to distinguish the monastery from that of Azeitão with the same name. Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens Religiosas*, 388.

21 Beatriz was married to Diogo de Ataíde and they served together under Prince Pedro and Isabella of Urgell before she retired as a widow with her daughters to Aveiro.

22 Aveiro was then governed by, among others, count Sancho of Noronha (?-1471), married to Mecia de Sousa. Branco, *Aveiro medieval*, 14, Rodrigues, 'The Crown', 53, 59, and Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens Religiosas*, 397.

23 Vasconcelos e Sousa, *Ordens Religiosas*, 397. There is also an argument for 1465, because only then did the first sisters make their profession, followed by the cloistering ceremony. See for the discussion about the date Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 45.

‘associated’ sister while living near the monastery.<sup>24</sup> In 1485, King João II granted Joana the administration of the town of Aveiro, which included the reception of several donations, and which generated an income that also benefitted the convent’s further development.<sup>25</sup>

Under prioress Maria de Ataíde (1482-1525), the convent became a thriving community. During the entire period of the foundation and the establishment of the Observant reform, the Convent of Jesus had a flourishing scriptorium where the sisters copied and illuminated liturgical manuscripts for their own use.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 3: Aveiro, Convent of Jesus, view from the upper liturgical choir (photo by the author).

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24 Joana was born in 1451 and served as regent for her father in 1471. However, she was not allowed to take her vows, because her family would not let her become a fully professed nun in view of potential foreign marriage alliances. Rodriguez, ‘The Crown’, 60.

25 Rodriguez, ‘The Crown’, 61, and António Gomes da Rocha Madahil, *Princesa Santa Joana. Do senhorio temporal da vila ao padroado espiritual da cidade e da diocese de Aveiro* (Aveiro: Arquivo do Distrito de Aveiro, 1996), 7-8.

26 On their manuscript production, see Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 103-108.

Both Felix Heinzer and Werner Williams-Krapp have pointed out the correlation between religious reforms and the use and production of books in the Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> This can also be observed in Aveiro's Convent of Jesus, which had an outstanding literary culture, and where most of the sisters were trained in copying and using liturgical books.<sup>28</sup> In the convent's constitutions, written between 1510-1529 by *freyra* Margarida Pinheyra, we can see that some of the sisters were probably familiar with both Latin and Portuguese, although it remains difficult to determine 'the form and degree of Latin fluency'.<sup>29</sup> The Augustinian rule, for instance, which is included in the constitutions' manuscript on f. 1r-84r, was written in Latin with a Portuguese glossary, whereas the rules of professions were entirely in Portuguese (*modo de fazer profizam*).<sup>30</sup> The book culture of the foundational period, when everything there was new – sisters, buildings, relics, artworks, and, of course, books – reveals also the convent's Observant profile. The quasi-serial production of books, as for instance Aveiro's processionaries for their own convent or for others, is one of such typical features.<sup>31</sup>

Do the liturgy and the chant repertoire reflect this newness and provide indications about distinctive characteristics of the Observant movement? In her study on German Observant convents, Claire Taylor Jones has drawn attention to the problems of liturgical Observance, the main

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27 See, more generally, Felix Heinzer, 'Exercitium scribendi – Überlegungen zur Frage einer Korrelation zwischen geistlicher Reform und Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter' in: *Die Präsenz des Mittelalters in seinen Handschriften*, ed. Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 175, and more specifically linked to the Observant reform Werner Williams-Krapp, 'Observanzbewegungen, monastische Spiritualität und geistliche Literatur im 15. Jahrhundert', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 20:1 (1995), 1-2. Even more specifically on Observant reforms and the production of liturgical and devotional books in Italy and Spain, see Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'Compline and its Processions in the Context of Castilian Dominican Nunneries', in: *Life and Religion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Flocel Sabaté (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 254.

28 Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die Literatur des 15. und frühen 16. Jahrhunderts*, Teilband 1: *Modelle literarischer Interessenbildung* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 13-18, as well as Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 84-86, and idem 'Unveiling female observance', 376.

29 Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit: Women, Liturgy and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia: PENN, 2018), 75. Jones speaks here about the use of German in sister-books, but the parallel is valid as well for the Portuguese convent in Aveiro.

30 Museum of Aveiro, COD 18, f. 161v: 'Este lyvro da regra e constitucoens. Estorya de nosso padre sancto Agostinho. he do mosteiro de Ihesu. Escreveo a Marguarida Pinheyra freyra do dito convento et mosteiro.'

31 Michel Huglo, 'Production en série de livres liturgiques. L'exemple des processionnaires datés d'Aveiro', *Gazette du Livre médiéval* 47 (2005), 14-20, and more generally Williams-Krapp, *Die Literatur*, 15-18.

issue being the regular attendance of the hours in the choir.<sup>32</sup> In early Dominican monasteries, male and female communities had distinct liturgical practices,<sup>33</sup> but how did this change in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? Others, like Paula Cardoso, have pointed to the ideals of strict late medieval Observant rules and vows of poverty, a truly communal life, the strict enclosure of nuns, and the standardization of the liturgy. The main concern here is the standardization.

### **Liturgy and chant repertoire in the Convent of Jesus**

The liturgical practices as reflected in the written chant sources will be addressed in the following. As the convent discussed here implemented the Observant reform right at its foundation, the chant books from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were produced for the daily use in this formative period. Seventeen liturgical chant books from this time period have survived in the convent's library: six antiphonaries, two graduals, seven processionaries, and two breviaries.<sup>34</sup>

- Antiphonaries: Museum of Aveiro ANTF 23-25 (1482-1500), ANTF 26 (1488), ANTF 27 (1480-1490) and ANTF 29 (1482-1525).
- Graduals: Museum of Aveiro ANTF 28 (1480-1490) and ANTF 31 (1476-1500).
- Processionaries: Museum of Aveiro ANTF 4 (1489), ANTF 8-9 (1489), ANTF 19 (1489), ANTF 38 (1480), ANTF 39 (1489) and ANTF 40 (1480-82).
- Breviaries: Museum of Aveiro ANTF 34 (1476-1525) and ANTF 35 (1478).

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32 Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*, 88.

33 Kristin Hoefener, 'Salve regina in late medieval Dominican communities', in: *Marian Devotion in the Late Middle Ages: Image and Performance*, ed. Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky and Gerhard Jaritz (Milton Park: Routledge, 2022), 106-109.

34 Other liturgical sources from the Convent of Jesus are to be found in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal in Lisbon. Although Costa recounted eleven liturgical sources from Aveiro (CD1-11), the shelfmarks have been changed recently. Armenio da Costa Junior, *Mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro. Tesouros musicais: ofícios rimados e sequências nos códices quatrocentistas*, PhD thesis (Aveiro: University Aveiro, 1996).

The oldest books are two breviaries and the temporal part of the gradual (31), which were probably written in the 1470s. The sanctoral part (28) can be dated to the 1480s. The six antiphonaries can be seen as an ensemble produced roughly between 1480 and 1500. ANTF 23-25 are temporals and form an ensemble that was written between 1482 and 1500 by the prioress Maria de Ataíde herself.<sup>35</sup> ANTF 26 (Summer part), 27 (Winter part) and 29 (Commune sanctorum and diverse saints' feasts) form the sanctoral part; they were probably written in the 1480s, although 29 cannot be dated precisely. Maria de Ataíde was identified as scribe for sanctorals 26 and 27; ANTF 26 was co-written with the mistress of novices, Isabel Luís.<sup>36</sup>

The relatively large number of processionaries from the 1480s underlines the considerable book culture and production in the Convent of Jesus under Maria de Ataíde, especially during the period of Princess Joana's patronage.<sup>37</sup> The serial production of books – intended to be carried in several copies during processions – was one of the characteristics of the transmission of the Observant reform.<sup>38</sup> Two processionaries were copied around 1480, one of them by Leonor de Menezes (ANTF 40). Four processionaries (ANTF 8, 19, 4 and 39) were copied in 1489 by Isabel Luís, one every five to eight weeks, which gives us an indication of how long it took for a dedicated scribe in a monastic context to complete a liturgical book of this kind.<sup>39</sup> Another book (ANTF 9) by sister Isabel Luís cannot be precisely dated; but was most probably produced in that time period. The series of dated processionaries copied by Isabel Luís and ANTF 9 have almost identical content, but the layout of the chants and pages is dissim-

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35 The scribes from the Convent of Jesus have been studied by Paula Cardoso. See Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 195 and also Gilberto Coralejo Moiteiro, *As dominicanas de Aveiro (c. 1450-1525): Memória e identidade de uma comunidade textual*, PhD thesis (Lisbon: University Nova, 2013).

36 Cardoso, 'Unveiling female observance', 376.

37 Solange Corbin, *Essai sur la musique religieuse portugaise au Moyen Age (1100-1385)* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1952); and Huglo, 'Production en série', 14-20.

38 Williams-Krapp calls this period "the end of the scriptographic era", Williams-Krapp, *Die Literatur*, 13. Nevertheless, the era of handwriting continued much longer for liturgical books, often into the seventeenth century. Kristin Hoefener, 'Beatissimus Eucharius: Ein Eucharius-offizium des 17. Jahrhunderts aus St. Matthias in Trier', in: *Digitale Rekonstruktionen mittelalterlicher Bibliotheken*, ed. Sabine Philippi and Phillip Vanscheidt, Trierer Beiträge zu den Historischen Kulturwissenschaften (Wiesbaden: Reichert 2014), 99-117.

39 ANTF 8 is dated June 22, ANTF 19 August 6, ANTF 4 September 18, ANTF 39 November 28.

ilar, the shift increased with the number of pages. Moreover, ANTF 9 has some additional chants on f. 113r-118v.

The important number of processions illustrates the particular importance of processions in this Observant convent, often linked to occasions for celebrating the Virgin Mary and taking place at the margins of the liturgical hours, such as the Office for the Virgin before Matins (or between other hours), the *Salve regina* procession after Compline, or the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin on Saturdays.<sup>40</sup> Mercedes Pérez Vidal has argued that in Castilian nunneries processions in general were not only carried out in the church or the liturgical choir, but also in other chapels situated elsewhere in the cloister, outside the church.<sup>41</sup> Even if the practice of virtual Jerusalem pilgrimage is not something the sisters engaged in,<sup>42</sup> perambulating through altars or shrines of important saints for earning indulgences or deepen their spirituality seems to have been part of the intensification of religious life in Dominican Observant convents. In the Convent of Jesus, the sisters likewise added more and more chapels for processions and devotional practices behind the liturgical upper choir and throughout the entire cloister. There is for instance a chapel of Our Lady of Conception right behind the upper choir with several niches holding statues of saints Anthony of Padua, Francis of Assisi, Pedro of Taboiera, Sebastian and Cordula (**fig. 4**) as well as two paintings of St. Gerald of Braga and Mary Magdalene flanking the main altar.<sup>43</sup> The presence of these material objects provides indications about the specific devotional practices in the Convent of Jesus.

Indeed, the chant repertoire and potential local features can be linked to the veneration of specific female saints. It could also be claimed that the feast calendar and resulting chant practice are strongly connected to

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40 This procession could also be held on Sundays after Compline, as described for Santo Domingo de Lekeitio. See Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La liturgia procesional de Completas en el ámbito de los monasterios femeninos de la Orden de Predicadores en Castilla', *Hispania Sacra* 69:139 (2017), 81-99.

41 Pérez Vidal, 'Compline', 265-72.

42 Kathryn M. Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimage in the Convent. Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout : Brepols, 2011).

43 The chapel and its decoration can be dated to the second half of the seventeenth century. I want to thank José Antonio Cristo and the curators of the Museum of Aveiro for the opportunity to study the manuscripts and the conventual space during my research in November 2021 and for our most stimulating discussions.



conventual space and its use for liturgical and devotional practices. In fact, new cults led to the importation, compilation, or new composition of either offices or particular chants.

Which feasts in the new manuscripts occupy a special place within the liturgy of Aveiro's sisters? As significant patron figures or other local saints were celebrated in representative and non-standard liturgical feasts, this can be seen particularly well in the sanctorale part of the antiphoners such as ANTF 26, 27 and partly 29. In what follows, some observations will be made about Marian offices and other offices in honor of female saints from these sources.

As Dominicans have always defined themselves as being protected by the Virgin Mary,<sup>44</sup> this veneration is clearly reflected in their liturgical calendar. The earliest Dominican calendar, which is very similar to the Roman calendar,<sup>45</sup> comprises the following Marian feasts: Purification on February 2, Annunciation (initially known as *Annuntiatio Dominica*) on March 25,<sup>46</sup> Assumption on August 15, Nativity on September 8, and, from the fourteenth century onwards, Visitation on July 2 and Sanctification (with an octave *simplex*) on December 8.<sup>47</sup> The feast of the Sanctification,<sup>48</sup> the Dominican version of the feast of the Conception, can for instance be found in an early Portuguese source from 1320 in the diocese

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44 Hoefener, 'Salve regina', 106-25.

45 See William R. Bonniwell, *A History of the Dominican Liturgy, 1215-1945* (New York: J. F. Wagner, 1945), 227.

46 All these feasts were *totum duplex* (the highest rank). Assumption and Nativity had an octave *simplex*.

47 After a dispute, the Dominicans chose to call the feast *Immaculata Conceptio Mariae* rather than *Sanctificatio Marie Virginis*, defending the theological thesis of Mary's release from original sin only after Anna's conception. Based on Thomas Aquinas's response in his *Summa*, they put forward the explanation of the Sanctification before Mary's birth while still in the womb. Ulrich Horst, *Dogma und Theologie. Dominikanertheologen in den Kontroversen um die Immaculata Conceptio*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens, NF 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 4-18 and Bonniwell, *A History*, 227-231.

48 The feast of the Sanctification was present in England from the eleventh century and was introduced in France in the twelfth century, with the Vespers cycle *Gaude mater ecclesia*. The earliest notated version is found in the twelfth-century manuscript Annecy, Grand séminaire, MS without shelf mark, f. 1v. See the very thorough study of the situation in France by Marie-Bénédicte Dary, 'Saint Bernard et l'immaculée conception: la question liturgique', *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 13 (= 74) (2002), 220-225, as well as Solange Corbin, 'Miracula Beatae Mariae semper Virginis', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 10 (1967), 418.

of Coimbra.<sup>49</sup> The following Marian offices are present in Aveiro's antiphoners:

**The office for Assumption** (ANTF 26, f. 70r-80v)

Vespers: A *Tota pulchra es amica* (5162)<sup>50</sup> and AM *Ascendit Christus super celos* (0374)

Matins: A1 *Exaltata es sancta Dei genitrix* (2762) and R1 *Vidi speciosam* (7878)

Lauds: A1 *Assumpta est Maria* (1503)

The chants for the feast of the Assumption in ANTF 26 are the common chants for this feast, and their melodies present only minor variants. In this manuscript, the feast is decorated with three illuminations (dated to 1488) by Isabel Luís in the lower margin, showing a group of three scenes: the Dormition of the Virgin, The Virgin's tomb, and the Assumption.<sup>51</sup>

**The office for Nativity** (ANTF 26, f. 93-102r)

Vespers: AM *Hec est regina virginum* (3002)

Matins: A1 *Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea* (2547) and R1 *Hodie nata est beata virgo* (6854)

Lauds: A1 *Nativitas gloriose virginis* (3850)

The chants for the Nativity are the common chants for this feast, including their melodies. They share the same material with the Assumption for Matins, the antiphons A4-6 of the second nocturne: *Emissiones tue paradisi*, *Fons ortorum puteus* and *Veniat dilectus meus*.

**The office for Conception** (ANTF 27, f. 14r-22r)

The feast's rubric says *In festo conceptionis beatissime virginis Marie* instead of the older denomination *Sanctificatio*. Looking at the date of this antiphoner – between 1480 and 1490 – this coincides exactly with the period of 1481-84, when Dominican regulations followed for a short period

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49 Cardoso 'Unveiling female observance', 377. The cycle was also in use for the feast of the Conception in Braga (Braga, Arquivo da Sé, Ms. 028, f. 221v, 16th c.).

50 This and the following are CANTUS ID numbers, see <https://cantus.uwaterloo.ca/>.

51 See for her detailed study of the illuminations of ANTF 26 Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 197-200.

the doctrine of the Immaculate conception,<sup>52</sup> and this would explain the divergent office cycle for the feast.<sup>53</sup>

Vespers: A *Exultet plebs fidelium* and AM *O mater egregium*

Matins: A1 *Adest lectus floridus* and R1 *Novum tabernaculum*

Lauds: A1 *Orbem terre Dominus*

The chants for this feast have only been attested in two sources from Aveiro (Aveiro ANT 27 and BNP LC 140) and in an antiphoner from the Convent Paraiso in Evora.<sup>54</sup> It is likely that Evora's antiphoner was imported from Aveiro. As Solange Corbin mentions, the melodies are compiled from other Dominican offices.<sup>55</sup>

### **The office for the Purification** (ANTF 27, f. 82r-92r)

Vespers: A *O admirabile commercium* (3985) Prosa *Inviolata* for R *Gaude Maria* (6759) and AM *Cum inducerent puerum Iesum* (2011)

Matins: A1 *Benedicta tu in mulieribus* (1709) and R1 *Adorna thalamum* (6051)

Lauds: A1 *Symeon iustus et timoratus* (4951)

The chants for the Purification are the common chants for this feast, including their melodies.

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52 After 1484 they returned to their previous, non-immaculist position. Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 60. Another indication of the specific celebration of the feast of the Conception, maybe even outside the time slot of 1481-1484, could be the inscription 'Maria concebida sem pecado' on a fifteenth-century fountain in Aveiro, mentioned by Domingos Mauricio dos Santos, *O mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro*, Publicações Culturais 65, 2 Vols. (Lisbon: Public. Culturais, 1963) I, 58-59.

53 Solange Corbin, 'L'office de La Conception de La Vierge: À Propos d'un Manuscrit Du XVème siècle, du Monastère Dominicain d'Aveiro, Portugal', *Bulletin Des Études Portugaises* 13 (1949), 53.

54 For Solange Corbin, *ibidem*, 49-51, the chants were *unica*. Costa Júnior was able to identify the same office in the antiphoner BNP, LC 140, f. 153v. Costa Júnior, *Mosteiro de Jesus*, 146-149. See also Cardoso, *Art, Reform*, 59-61.

55 Corbin, 'L'office de La Conception', 55.

**The office for Annunciation** (ANTF 27, f. 110r-119r)

The feast's rubric says *In annunciatione dominica*.

Vespers: A *Ave Maria gratia* (1539) and AM *Orietur sicut sol* (4195)

Matins: A1 *Ecce virgo* (incipit) and R1 *Missus est Gabriel* (7170)

Lauds: A1 *Missus est Gabriel angelus* (3794)

The chants for Annunciation are the common chants for this feast, including their melodies.

**The office of the Presentation** (ANTF 29, f. 108v)

The feast's rubric says *In festo presentationis beatissime virginis Marie*; it is a fragment that starts with the Vespers antiphon *Fons hortorum redundans gratia* (missing the end).

Other Feasts for female saints in the sanctoral parts of these antiphoners are for the Eleven Thousand Virgins (ANTF 26, f. 118v-128r), St. Cecilia (ANTF 26, f. 156r-165v), St. Catherine (ANTF 26, f. 169v-174v, ANTF 29, f. 82v-86r), St. Lucy (ANTF 27, f. 22r-24r; ANTF 29, f. 67r-68v, add. f. 119r), St. Agnes (ANTF 27, f. 48r-55v), St. Agatha (ANTF 27, f. 92r-100v), as well as St. Caterina of Siena (ANTF 27, f. 143v-148v, 162r-163r) and St. Elisabeth (ANTF 29, f. 86r-90r). Those of St. Caterina of Siena and the Eleven Thousand Virgins will be briefly examined next.

**The office of St. Caterina of Siena** (ANTF 27, f. 143v-148v)

The St. Caterina office starts with the rubric *Sancte Katherine de Senis officium a papa Pio secondo editum* and the Vespers antiphon *Inmortali laude Catherina virgo senensis*. Following her hagiographer, Raimondo of Capua,<sup>56</sup> Caterina of Siena (1347-1380) joined 1363 a lay group of Dominican *mantellatae* and became a leading figure in the "observant dynamic

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56 Raimondo of Capua, *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis, Acta Sanctorum III Aprilis 30* (Antwerp: Société des Bollandistes, 1675), col. 853a-959b, and for an English translation, see *The Life of Catherine of Siena by Raymond of Capua*, ed. & trans. Conleth Kearns (Wilmington: Glazier, 1980).

of (re)creating tradition”.<sup>57</sup> St. Caterina’s writings and the actions of her disciples were an inspiration for the Observant reform, especially in female houses of the Dominican order, which considered her a spiritual mother and themselves as heiresses of St. Dominic’s spirituality.<sup>58</sup> St. Caterina’s vita spread very quickly from Italy to other Dominican provinces like Teutonia.<sup>59</sup> Shortly after her canonization in 1461 by Pope Pius II, Caterina of Siena’s cult was formed.<sup>60</sup> The feast and the office *Inmortali laude*, whose authorship can be attributed to Tommaso Schifaldi,<sup>61</sup> were approved by the Dominican general chapter in 1473.<sup>62</sup>

Aveiro’s convent was founded in the year of Caterina’s canonization and started producing manuscripts in its scriptorium in the 1470s. The antiphoner ANTF 27 can be dated between 1480 and 1490 when Caterina’s feast was relatively new to the order. So, the recording of the liturgical office *Inmortali laude* shows a difficulty in the reordering and selection of chants typical of early transmission periods:<sup>63</sup>

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57 Alison More, ‘Dynamics of Regulation, Innovation, and Invention’, in *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 88.

58 Claire Taylor Jones, ‘Catherine of Siena as a Creative Impulse for the German Dominican Observance. The Vita, the Third Order, and the Liturgy’, in *Kreative Impulse und Innovationsleistungen religiöser Gemeinschaften im mittelalterlichen Europa*, ed. Julia Becker and Julia Burkhardt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2021), 111.

59 Anne Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls: Dominican Narratives of Self-Understanding during Observant reforms, C. 1388-1517*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 208.

60 Pope Pius II is mentioned as the author of three hymns in honor of St. Caterina. Giuseppe Bernetti, ‘S. Caterina negli scritti di Pio II’, *Caterina di Siena* 18:1 (1967), 16-20. See also the article by Joan Barclay Lloyd, ‘St. Catherine of Siena’s tomb and its place in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome: Narration, Translation and veneration’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 83 (2015), 134. Caterina of Siena was declared *doctor ecclesiae* in 1970 by Pope Paul VI, together with Theresa of Avila. Duval, *Comme des Anges*, 77 and 105.

61 Claire Taylor Jones, ‘Catherine of Siena as a Creative Impulse for the German Dominican Observance. The Vita, the Third Order, and the Liturgy’, in *Kreative Impulse und Innovationsleistungen religiöser Gemeinschaften im mittelalterlichen Europa*, ed. Julia Becker and Julia Burkhardt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2021), 112.

62 See the discussion of the date of the April 29 feast (the feast of Peter Martyr falls on the same day) and its moveable nature (first Sunday in May), *ibidem*, 129.

63 See for the study on the transmission of the office *Inmortali laudes* *ibidem*, 128-149.

	Aveiro, Mun. Museum ANTF 27	Additions ANTF 27	Complete office
	<b>FIRST VESPERS</b>		
V1A	Inmortali laude Catherina virgo senensis		Inmortali laude Katherina
V1AM	Virginis Catherine hec dies		Virginis Katherine hec dies
	<b>MATINS</b>		
MI	Christum regem regum		Christum regem regum
MA1	Admirabilem Dei nostri		Admirabilem Dei nostri
MA2	Misericordia		Misericordia
MA3	Christianos quidem		Christianos quidem
MR1	<del>Katherina virgo</del> <sup>64</sup>	Nihil huic virgini	Katherina virgo
MR2	<del>Virtutis ac eternum</del>	Sapientia atque	Virtutis ac eternum
MR3	<del>Summis enim virgo</del>	Vitam Catherine	Summis est enim
MA4	-		Mirificam virginis
MA5	-		Vulnerum enim
MA6	-		Perpetue laudi
MR4	-		Divina hec virgo
MR5	-		Felix ea virgo
MR6	-		Preconia tuarum
MA7	-		Nulla unquam
MA8	-		Semper sancte
MA9	-		Eternum hec virgo
MR7	-		Nihil huic virgini
MR8	-		Sapientia atque
MR9	-		Vitam Katherine

64 The three following responsories (MR1-3) were barred. MR1 is annotated in the lower margin with 'Responsórios estão no fim deste liuro' [responsories are at the end of this book]. Indeed, one can find on folios 162r-163r the three notated responsories: *Nihil huic virgini*, *Sapientia atque doctrina* and *Vitam Catherine innocentissimam miracula illa*.

	Aveiro, Mun. Museum ANTF 27	Additions ANTF 27	Complete office
	<b>LAUDS</b>		
LA1	Omnipotenti virgo		Omnipotenti virgo
LA2	Exaltabunda celi		Exaltabunda celi
LA3	Divinis namque		Divinis namque
LA4	Rerum omnium		Rerum omnium
LA5	Laudavit Catherina		Laudavit Katherina
LAB	Maxima est Catherina		Maxima est Katherina
	<b>SECOND VESPERS</b>		
V2AM	O virgo maxima		O virgo maxima
	<b>LAUDS/VESPER (octave)</b>		
LAB	Det Catherina frui nos		Det Katherina frui nos
VAM	-		Ad sedes regni

Table 1: Text incipits of the office *Immortali laude* (Aveiro ANTF 27 and other sources after Jones).

Nearly everywhere Caterina of Siena's cult was closely intertwined with the promotion of Observant reforms.<sup>65</sup> As in many other places, the original office was shortened to only one nocturn for Matins in Aveiro in order to not overcharge the liturgical Eastertime. Several of the melodies were identified by Terry Brown as borrowings from offices for Peter Martyr, Thomas Aquinas and Vincent Ferrer.<sup>66</sup>

### **The office for St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins** (ANTF 26, f. 118v-128r)

A final example consists of St. Ursula's office *O felix Germania*, named after the Magnificat antiphon from the First Vespers, which is transmitted in one antiphoner. The office for the Feast of St. Ursula on October 21 is notated under the rubric *In festo undecim millium virginum* and it starts

65 Raimondo of Capua, *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, 244.

66 Terry Brown, *Songs for the Saints of the Schism, Liturgies for Vincent Ferrer and Catherine of Siena*, PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1995, 72-75.

with the antiphon for Vespers *O quam pulcra virginum* (4069). This antiphon is borrowed from the virgins' common. The office continues with more specific chants, which are explored below. St. Ursula and her companions form a group of saints whose cult spread mainly via monastic communities and was closely related to the massive excavations of relics carried out between 1155 and 1164 in Cologne.<sup>67</sup> In the thirteenth century, the Dominicans promoted the cult not only through material relics but also via an abundant hagiographic production. These texts were mainly destined to be read or sung during Matins or in the refectory on the feast day of a saint or a group of saints. Dominican authors such as Jean of Mailly, Vincent of Beauvais, Barthelemy of Trent, and Roderic of Cerano all contributed hagiographic texts to Cologne's cult of Eleven Thousand Virgins.<sup>68</sup> The cult of Cologne's virgins is documented in Aveiro above all by the presence of a liturgical office in the main part of the antiphoner ANTF 26. Another indication is to be found in a Ritual from Aveiro (COD 15, written in 1491), where *Sancta Ursula et sodalibus* are named at the end of a litany on f. 30r-32v. The existence of their relics in Aveiro is not documented; however, it is most likely. Indeed, in the chapel of 'Our Lady of Conception' right behind the monastery's upper choir, is displayed a sculpture of St. Cordula, one of Ursula's companions (**fig. 4**).<sup>69</sup> So, it could be argued that Cordula's relics must have been present in the convent, possibly at the time of the foundation, when the office was copied in the antiphoner.

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67 Kristin Hoefener, 'From St Pinnosa to St Ursula - The Development of the Cult of Cologne's Virgins in Medieval Liturgical Offices', in *The Cult of St Ursula*, ed. Jane Cartwright (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), 61-91, and more recently Kristin Hoefener, *Kultgeschichte als Musikgeschichte: Offizienzyklen zu Ehren der heiligen Ursula und der elftausend Kölner Jungfrauen* (Paderborn: Schöningh/Brill, 2022), 1-37.

68 Jacobus of Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1264-67) was the best known and most widely disseminated text that comprised a detailed life of the eleven thousand virgins. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. and comm. Rainer Nickel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), 269; Alain Bourreau, *La Légende Dorée*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004), and Barbara Fleith, *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Legenda Aurea* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1991), as well as the critical edition Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998).

69 Cordula has been venerated as Ursula's companion starting from the thirteenth century. Gertrud Wegener, 'Der Ordinarius des Stiftes St. Ursula in Köln', in *Aus Kölnischer und Rheinischer Geschichte* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung H. Wamper, 1969), 131.





Fig. 4: Aveiro, Convent of Jesus, St. Cordula statue, 17<sup>th</sup> c. (photo of the author).

The office in honor of the Eleven Thousand Virgins *O felix Germania* was created in the thirteenth century and is transmitted in numerous liturgical manuscripts of Cistercian origin.<sup>70</sup> Its compilation from the older cycle and the addition to the liturgical books in Aveiro display the effort to enrich the liturgy here during the Observant reform of the fifteenth century. Narrative passages and laudations alternate in the texts of this liturgical office. Twenty-five of the texts for Vespers, Matins and Lauds are versified; the antiphon of the Magnificat *O flos campi* is in prose. The cycle *O felix*

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70 For the critical edition and analysis see Hoefener, *Kultgeschichte als Musikgeschichte*, 213-248, 352-367, 415-439 and for a text analysis idem 'O felix Germania: un office liturgique cistercien en l'honneur des vierges de Cologne. Étude des interrelations entre textes et melodies', *Textus & Musica* 3 (2021), 8-14.

*Germania* is freely inspired by the prose passion *Regnante Domino* (IV, 22) when it brings together the glorification of the heavenly Jerusalem, Britannia, Germania, Rome, and Cologne.<sup>71</sup> Only the opening antiphon and the chants for the little hours Terce, Sext, and None are chants from the common of virgins with texts borrowed from Matthew 25 (Table 2, right column, marked in grey). The following table shows the text incipits of the Cistercian version (13<sup>th</sup> c.) and the shorter version from Aveiro:

	Morimondo Paris, BnF n.a.l. 1412 13 <sup>th</sup> c.	Aveiro, Municipal Museum ANTF 26 15 <sup>th</sup> c.
	<b>FIRST VESPERS</b>	
V1A	-	O quam pulcra virginum casta
V1R	O felices hostium virginum casta	O felices
V1AM	O felix Germania	O felix Germania tam decoro
	<b>MATINS</b>	
M I	Regem virginum Dominum	Regem regum Dominum
MA1	Nova bella virginum dominus elegit	Nova bella virginum dominus elegit
MA2	Pugnant sexu fragiles	Pugnant sexu fragiles
MA3	Beata milicia	Fortiores hostibus femine
MA4	Non armis sed animis	-
MA5	Fortiores hostibus	-
MA6	Unus enim spiritus	-
MR1	Deonoto fuit nata	Regi Noto fuit nata
MR2	Virgo desiderium	Virgo desiderium
MR3	Dum statutum nuptiis	Dum statutum nuptiis
MR4	Apparatu navium	-
MA7	Sponsi currit in odore	Sponsi currit in odore
MA8	Ut rose tot milia	Ut rose tot milia
MA9	His celestis paradisus	Hiis celestis paradisus

71 The passion *Regnante domino* was written ca. 1100. See the edition in Joseph Klinkenberg, 'Studien zur Geschichte der Kölner Märtyrerinnen', *Jahrbücher des Vereins von Alterthumsfreunden im Rheinlande* (1889), 79-95, (1890), 105-134 and (1892), 130-179, and the list of manuscripts in Wilhelm Levison, 'Das Werden der Ursula-Legende', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 132 (1927), 90-98.

	Morimondo Paris, BnF n.a.l. 1412 13th c.	Aveiro, Municipal Museum ANTF 26 15th c.
MA10	Digne gaudent homines	-
MA11	Iste regi glorie	-
MA12	Que dum piis	-
MR5	Visionis Ursule	Visionis Ursule
MR6	Opportuni temporis	Opportuni temporis
MR7	Navigantes inde sursum	Isti flores hodie
MR8	Sanctis Rome visitatis	-
MA13	Gaudeat ecclesia	Digne gaudent homines
		Iste regi glorie
		Que dum piis mentibus
MR9	Ad locum certaminis	Ad locum certaminis
MR10	Isti flores hodie	Iste sunt terribiles
MR11	Iste sunt terribiles	O felices virgines
MR12	Beata vere mater	
	<b>LAUDS</b>	
LA1	Sol novus ab insula	Sol novus ab insula
LAB	Benedictus es rex glorie	
LA2 (I)	He puelle regie	Hii sunt flores
LA3 (III)	Muliebrem ad ornatum	Istarum collegio
LA4 (VI)	Hii sunt flores	In odore tuo Christe
LA5 (IX)	Istarum collegio	Gustaverunt et viderunt
LAB		Benedictus es rex glorie
	<b>SECOND VESPERS</b>	
V2A1	O quam pulchra	-
V2A2	Quid in istis	-
V2A3	In odore tuo Christe	-
V2A4	Gustaverunt et viderunt	-
V2 AM	O flos campi	O flos campi
ad tercia		Prudentes virgines aptate
ad sexta		Adducentur regi virgines
ad nonam		Veniente sponso que

Table 2: Text incipits of the office *O felix Germania* (Paris NAL 1412 and Aveiro ANTF 26).

Table 2 clearly shows the compilation technique of cutting chants from the older monastic office in order to bring it into the Dominican form, which differs mainly in the Night Office where there are three nocturns of each three antiphons and three responsories, as opposed to the monastic form of six antiphons and four responsories in the first and second nocturn and one antiphon plus four responsories in the third nocturn. Table 3 demonstrates these shifts within the series for Matins and Lauds:

	Paris n.a.l. 1412	Aveiro ANTF 26
	<b>MATINS</b>	
<b>Noct1</b>	A1-A2-A3-A4-A5-A6 R1-R2-R3-R4	A1-A2-A5 R1-R2-R3
<b>Noct2</b>	A7-A8-A9-A10-A11-A12 R5-R6-R7-R8	A7-A8-A9 R5-R6-R10
<b>Noct3</b>	A13 R9-R10-R11-R12	A10-A11-A12 R9-R11-RfromV1
	<b>LAUDS</b>	
	A1-AB-A2-A3-A4-A5	A1-A4-A5-A3fromV2- A4fromV2-AB

Table 3: Series of antiphons and responsories of the office *O felix Germania*.

The process of compilation may have shuffled the texts around, but except for the antiphons with *commune* material (V1A, and the three antiphons for the little hours), there is only one text variant for the first Matins responsory *Regi Noto fuit nata*, which reads in the earlier sources *Deonoto fuit nata*. The melodies are almost consistent with the older cycle, including the mentioned responsory.

The elaborate nine-line Magnificat antiphon *O felix Germania* (fig. 5) celebrating the group of female saints from Cologne, was chosen for its musical qualities and stylistic consistency. Unlike the Cistercian melody, small noticeable differences consist in note groupings, and the higher octave is reached here two times (*Colonia* and *que tesau*ro), whereas the Cistercian version only gets to it one time (*Colonia*).



Fig. 5: Antiphon for First Vespers *O felix Germania* (Museum of Aveiro, ANTF 26, f. 119r).

The three tercets of the *O felix Germania* antiphon (1-3, 4-6, 7-9) have the form aab-aab-ccb and mix goliardic verse with octo- or hexasyllabic verse (8p, 8p, 6p). The rhyme form is abc-abc-ded.

- 1 O felix Germania
- 2 tam decoro germine
- 3 virginum ornata
- 4 beata Colonia
- 5 pretioso sanguine
- 6 martirum dicata
- 7 vere iuste tu letaris
- 8 que thesauro super aurum
- 9 nobili ditaris

Although the melody of the antiphon seems, at first sight, relatively ornate, its melodic gestures are rather simple (fig. 5). The melody is in the mode of F plagal, feeling more centered and defined to the listener, while the earlier Cistercian versions were transposed to C plagal.<sup>72</sup> In all different versions, the lower, plagal space is deployed only in phrases 1, 3, and 7 to equalize the rather long melody by counterbalancing the high part. The melody reaches its peak in phrases 4 and 8, emphasizing *Colonia* and *que thesauro* and highlighting the place of martyrdom and the veneration of the virgins' group. Alongside the undulating and conjunct motion, the melody exhibits a triad movement on *decoro* and several ascending and descending leaps of fourths and fifths, as for example in *virgini, vere iuste, letaris que* and *ditaris*. The melody follows the structure of the text as it is divided into three periods ending on the *finalis* F. The tonal accents of the rhymes are expressed in the melody by high notes<sup>73</sup> (*ornata, Colonia, letaris*), the melismas (*Germania, germine, sanguine, dicata, ditaris*), or by the tension of the semitone (*aurum*). At times, the antiphon's melody seems to take on a life of its own, unfolding more freely and producing a solemn effect.

## Conclusion

Aveiro's convent of Jesus is the perfect example of how royal support helped to establish a particular Dominican house in Portugal. Princess Joana and the founding generation of sisters established a reformed convent with an outstanding literary culture, and where the sisters were trained in copying and using liturgical books. The book production also reveals the constitution of a liturgical library for the sisters' daily offices.

The findings of this article provide some indications about the community's Observant profile and suggest that it is possible to shape the liturgy, especially when new convents are founded. The feast calendar is always

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72 In a system of chant classification, *modus* or *tonus* designate a melodic category, numbered with Latin ordinals (1-8), for four primary categories (D, E, F and G), each of which is subdivided into authentic (high) or plagal (low). Charles Atkinson, *The Critical Nexus* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 97-98. The F mode consists of a medieval scale of *fg aa bb cc dd ee ff* which is composed of two tetrachords, *f-bb* (an augmented fourth) and *cc-ff* (a fourth). Transposing this mode to C allows for the introduction of a *b*-flat and the use two equal tetrachords. Hoefener, 'O felix Germania', 19.

73 See in fig. 5 where high notes are framed, melismas underlined and where the semitone is encircled.

linked to relics and local patronage, as is the choice of feasts to be celebrated. After examining the series of preserved antiphonaries from Aveiro, it became clear that the presence and choice of offices for the various Marian feasts, especially that of the Conception, reflect both the customs of the Dominican order and the specificities of the Convent of Jesus. Thus, the office of St. Caterina of Siena is not only the 'signature' of a reformed convent, but the difficulties with its shortening and the variants of her name (Katherina/Catherina, see table 1) illustrate the process of introducing a new office into the liturgical manuscripts.

Furthermore, the fact that the office for St. Ursula and her companions has been imported and compiled into one of the few specific offices of these liturgical books reveals that it occupied a special place in the convent of Jesus. Some of the chants and devotional practices were specific to this convent and probably linked to the conventual space outside the upper choir. The veneration of the above-mentioned St. Cordula, as a member of the group of Cologne's virgins, was most certainly a good choice for a female convent in the making. And this is emphasized by the office *O felix Germania* which reflects the cult of the entire group of virgins-pilgrims-martyrs, and not only a single virgin.

In fact, the Jesus convent in Aveiro is a suitable example of the interplay between collective elements, such as the group cult of the Cologne virgins, and more individualistic facets of the sisters belonging to an aristocratic milieu. The historian Sylvie Duval has underlined the social function of Observant convents or congregations of women with a certain autonomy.<sup>74</sup> This phenomenon can be observed in the aristocratic convent of Aveiro, especially when it was under the patronage of Princess Joana. Not only in Aveiro, Caterina of Siena's ideas particularly inspired the Dominican sisters. When the sisters sang the office on her feast day, they listened as well to the account of her life or her mystical texts during that day.

By strictly applying the regular Observance and thus limiting the interaction between the convent and the town (due to the implementation of full enclosure and the divestment of property), the sisters might have lost influence on the society of the surrounding towns. Nevertheless, they formed a robust community that linked Aveiro to the other reform con-

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74 Duval, *Comme des Anges*, 540-45.

vents in Portugal. They maintained their spiritual influence on the inhabitants of Aveiro via small openings nearby the convent's entrance where people could seek guidance and help. Last but not least, one could listen to the sisters perform liturgical chant seven times a day and during Matins at night in their upper, enclosed choir. There was always the possibility of experiencing the chants from the central church, which was situated beneath the sisters' choir stalls.<sup>75</sup>

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75 I would like to dedicate this article to my parents, absent and present.





# Towards a Critical Edition of the *Libro del Conorte* of the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534)<sup>1</sup>

*Pablo Acosta-García*

## **Introduction**

‘And when the Lord gave her this grace, she would first enter a state of ecstasy in the place where that grace came upon her, and the nuns would take her in their arms and place her on a bed. And then, after a little while, they would see signs in her showing that she could see the Lord. [...] And, while she was in ecstasy, she could be heard to call Him, like someone who sees another from afar and wants that person to come closer, and the voice of this blessed one could be heard when she was in ecstasy and could see the Lord and

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1 This chapter has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 842094. It also has received funding from the Spanish *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación* (MICINN) projects ‘Los límites del disenso. La política expurgatoria de la monarquía hispánica (1571-1584)’ (PGC2018-096610-B-I00) and ‘Catálogo de santas vivas (1400–1550): hacia un corpus completo de un modelo hagiográfico femenino’ (PID2019-104237GB-I00). I would like to thank Jessica Boon, Patricia Stoop, María José Vega, Pietro Delcorno, Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, Victoria Cirlot, Eva Schlotheuber, and the organizers and participants of the workshop ‘Observant reforms and cultural production in Europe’ (Radboud University Nijmegen, 9-11 June 2021) for their generous comments on my presentation on Juana de la Cruz, which helped enhance the quality of the article.

was calling Him. And to see the movements that she made with her arms, because her soul was not detached from the body.<sup>2</sup>

This first hagiographic source of Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534) describes a series of events that became part of the daily life of the nuns of the Convent of Santa María de la Cruz in the early sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The woman described in this extract, the abbess of the convent, Juana herself, had been preaching ecstatically in public for thirteen years.<sup>4</sup> Her six-hour performances had become famous in the Kingdom of Castile; lying on a bed and waving her arms about expressively, occasionally showing the round marks of the stigmata, Juana would explain episodes of sacred history and recount feasts in Heaven before ever larger audiences. Christ, along with many other biblical characters, would engage in dialogue and even sing through her mouth, with revelations of apocalyptic images, expositions of theological topics, and commentaries on the contents of the Bible.<sup>5</sup>

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2 These words are from *Vida y fin de la bienaventurada virgen sancta Juana de la Cruz*, fols. 27v-28r (henceforth *Vida y fin*), preserved in the Royal Library (Real Biblioteca) of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, catalog number K-III-13, ed. María Luengo Balbás and Fructuoso Atencia Requena (2019), published in the 'Catálogo de santas vivas' ([http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Juana\\_de\\_la\\_Cruz](http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Juana_de_la_Cruz), accessed on 15 January 2022), hereafter *Vida y fin*. The English translations are mine.

3 The convent was located in Cubas de la Sagra, part of the Archdiocese of Toledo in the Kingdom of Castile. For an updated bibliography and a study on this hagiographic source as a convent chronicle, see Pablo Acosta-García, 'Radical Succession: Hagiography, Reform, and Franciscan Identity in the Convent of the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)', *Religions* 12 (2021), 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030223>.

4 This duration is repeated in several sources; according to Inocente García Andrés, the testimonies of the Apostolic Process are unanimous on this point (see his *El Conhorte: Sermones de una mujer. La Santa Juana (1482-1534). Introducción, teología y espiritualidad*, PhD dissertation (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1996), 146 [accessible online: <https://summa.upsa.es/details.vm?q=id:0000030260&lang=en&view=main>, accessed on 18 January 2022], hereafter *Conhorte 1996*). See also, Juana de la Cruz, *El Conhorte: Sermones de una Mujer. La Santa Juana (1481–1534)*, ed. Inocente García Andrés, 2 Vols. (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española - Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1999) I, 135 (hereafter *Conhorte 1999*); *Vida y fin*, fol. 31r, and below, where the same information is mentioned in the quotation from the so-called *Libro de la casa* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS/9661). On Juana in the context of medieval female preachers, see Bert Roest, 'Female Preaching in the Late Medieval Franciscan Tradition', *Franciscan Studies* 62 (2004), 149-154, and Carolyn Muessig, 'Women as Performers of the Bible: Female Preaching in Premodern Europe', in: *Performing the Sacred: Christian Representation and the Arts*, ed. Carla M. Bino and Corinna Ricasoli (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 116-139.

5 On the audience and the characteristics of her performances, see the description in *Vida y fin*, f. 27v. On her stigmatization, see Pablo Acosta-García, "En viva sangre bañadas": Caterina da

Around thirteen years later, more than seventy of her visionary sermons were compiled in the massive *Libro del conorte* (also commonly known in English as *Book of Consolation*).<sup>6</sup>

This article constitutes a first effort to organize the materials, reflections and unresolved questions that have emerged from my recent years of study of Juana de la Cruz and the *Conorte*. If all goes according to plan, this will culminate in both the first critical edition of the text and a monograph on the transcription and collection of her sermons.<sup>7</sup> Since this is research in progress, some of the questions that I raise here are still subject to development and discussion. I would, however, like to offer some preliminary reflections on the material evidence of this case in order to highlight specifically the need for a re-evaluation of the codices containing the *Conorte* and also of the discourse containing the actual words uttered by Juana. In the first part of the paper therefore, I present the two different manuscripts that include Juana's sermons and revisit their implications in the history of Juana's canonization process in order to address certain codicological, philological and ideological issues that need to be urgently re-considered before a hermeneutic reading of the text can take place. In the second part,

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Siena y las vidas de María de Ajofrín, Juana de la Cruz, María de Santo Domingo y otras santas vivas castellanas', *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 33 (2021), 165-170, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4580499>.

6 The bibliography on Juana since the groundbreaking works of Ronald E. Surtz, *The Guitar of God. Gender, Power, and Authority in the Visionary World of Mother Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) and *Writing Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain: The Mothers of Saint Teresa of Avila* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) is immense. In particular, the research pieces published by María del Mar Graña Cid, Ángela Muñoz Fernández, Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, and Jessica Boon that I quote in the pages that follow have been of great importance. There is a partial English translation of the sermons: Juana de la Cruz, *Mother Juana de la Cruz, 1481–1534: Visionary Sermons*, ed. Jessica Boon and Ronald E. Surtz; trans. Ronald E. Surtz and Nora Weinerth (Toronto-Tempe: Iter Academic Press-Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016). As I reiterate below, the order and arrangement of the sermons is different in each of the codices, which affects their numbering: the Vatican codex (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congr. SS. Rituum Processus 3074) has 71 sermons (last rubric, fol. 718v); the El Escorial codex (Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, manuscript J-II-18, hereafter the El Escorial codex) has 72 sermons (last rubric, fol. 444r). There is another transcribed sermon in the so-called *Libro de la casa* (Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS/9661), fols. 61v-67r. In the pages that follow, whenever a sermon is identified by its number, it follows the numbering of *Conborte* 1999.

7 Additional results of this research will be published in the forthcoming monograph Pablo Acosta-García, *Liturgy and Revelation in the Book of the Conborte by the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534)* (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

I try to identify what we understand by the *Conorte* or, in other words, what we know and do not know about its collective writing, compilation, and use by the community of the Convent of Santa María de la Cruz.

Before beginning my analysis, it is worth sketching out the Observant context in which Juana's charismatic activity unfolded. Her convent and its reform was part of the general campaign of the Catholic Monarchs to reform the religious communities of Castile at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, the energetic Franciscan Observant Provincial, was chosen to reform all the female religious houses in the realm.<sup>9</sup> The historical situation at the time was so complex, varied and changeable that it is difficult to grasp and explain as a whole or make generalizations about it, so that the reform process as it affected the female religious houses should certainly be understood in terms of individual cases.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, two broad, complementary developments can be mentioned. First there was a process of progressive monasticization of *beatas* and houses of tertiaries and which obviously affected Juana's community,<sup>11</sup> and second, there was support for strong female religious leaders

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8 For the late medieval reformist movements of religious life in Castile, see José García Oro, 'Conventualismo y observancia. La reforma de las órdenes religiosas en los siglos XV y XVI', in *Historia de la Iglesia en España*, ed. Ricardo García-Villoslada, 3 Vols. (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1980) III.1, 211-290. For the Catholic Monarchs' reform, see Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmo y España* (Mexico: FCE, 1996 (1937)), 1-83 and José García Oro, *Cisneros y la reforma del clero español en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos* (Madrid: CSIC, 1971).

9 On Cardinal Cisneros, see José García Oro, *El cardenal Cisneros. Vida y empresas* (Madrid: BAC, 1992) and Joseph Pérez, *Cisneros, el cardenal de España* (Madrid: Taurus, 2014). On the reform of the female houses, see García Oro, *Cisneros y la reforma*, 253-254.

10 García Oro, *Cisneros y la reforma*, 171-172. For a revision of the concept of reform in Castile, focused on the Dominican case, see Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La reforma de los monasterios de dominicas en Castilla: agentes, etapas y consecuencias', *Archivo dominicano* 36 (2015), 197-237.

11 See Ángela Muñoz Fernández, *Beatas y santas neocastellanas. Ambivalencias de la religión y políticas correctoras del poder (siglos XIV-XVII)* (Madrid: Dirección General de la Mujer, 1994), 30-31, and Idem 'Iberian Women in Religion and Policies of Discipline. Dissent in the Archbishopric of Toledo in the 15th to Early 16th Centuries: The Heaven of Juana de la Cruz', in: *Strategies of Non-Confrontational Protest in Europe from the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, ed. Fabrizio Titone (Rome: Viella, 2016), 195-217; and Laurey Braguier, *Servantes de Dieu. Les beatas de la couronne de Castille (1450-1600)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2019), 363-384. On the monasticization of Juana's community, see María del Mar Graña Cid, 'El cuerpo femenino y la dignidad sacerdotal de las mujeres. Claves de autoconciencia feminista en la experiencia mística de Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534)', in: *Umbral, Imago, Veritas. Homenaje a los profesores Manuel Gesteira, Eusebio Gil y Antonio Vargas Machuca*, ed. Secundino Castro Sánchez, Fernando Millán Romeral, and Pedro Rodríguez (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 2004), 309-310.

via the cultivation of charismatic gifts and prophecy.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, some of these women would help Cisneros with his reform plans, the most famous being those of two stigmatics similar to Caterina of Siena: the Dominican tertiary María de Santo Domingo and Juana de la Cruz herself.<sup>13</sup>

To better illustrate the role of women prophets in the Cardinal's reform, one of the measures he devised to support this leadership may perhaps be highlighted. Between 1502 and 1512, Cisneros commissioned the publication – in some cases, the translation – of the writings of the most famous late medieval female European mystics. This unprecedented campaign involving the dissemination of hagiographies and/or treatises of major visionary figures with different religious profiles, such as Catherine of Siena, Angela of Foligno, and Mechthild of Hackeborn (especially important for the composition of the *Conorte*) founded what we may call the age of the Castilian *sante vive*.<sup>14</sup>

This was the context when Juana was proclaimed abbess in 1509, the year that coincides with the beginning of the reform and subsequent monasticization of her convent of Franciscan tertiaries.<sup>15</sup> According to chronicles and certain testimonies from her canonization process, the religious house was not subjected to enclosure during Juana's life, while the community was granted the benefice of the parish church attached to the convent and began to receive rents. Through the grace of Cisneros and the

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12 Cisneros' support of mystic phenomenology as a way of promoting radical religious change had very deep roots which have been well studied. See, for example, Pedro Sainz Rodríguez, *La siembra mística del Cardenal Cisneros y las reformas en la Iglesia* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1979). For a case study, see Jodi Bilinkoff, 'A Spanish Prophetess and Her Patrons: The Case of María de Santo Domingo', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992), 21-34, and also her article 'Charisma and Controversy: The Case of María de Santo Domingo', in: *Spanish Women in the Golden Age: Images and Realities*, ed. Magdalena S. Sánchez and Alain Saint-Saëns (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 23-35.

13 See Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, 'La construcción de la santidad en María de Santo Domingo: la imitación de Catalina de Siena', *Ciencia Tomista* 140 (2013), 141-159.

14 I have worked extensively on this publication campaign. See Pablo Acosta-García, 'On Manuscripts, Prints and Blessed Transformations: Caterina da Siena's *Legenda maior* as a Model of Sainthood in Premodern Castile', *Religions* 11:33 (2020), 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010033>; Idem, 'Women Prophets for a New World: Angela of Foligno, 'Living Saints', and the Religious Reform Movement in Cardinal Cisneros' Castile', in *Exemplarity and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Maria Morrás, Rebeca Sanmartín & Yonsoo Kim (Leiden, Brill: 2020), 136-162; Idem, 'Santas y marcadas: itinerarios de lectura modélicos en la obra de las místicas bajomedievales impresas por Cisneros', *Hispania Sacra* 72:145 (2020), 67-80. <https://doi.org/10.3989/hs.2020.011>.

15 *Conborte* 1999, 65.

support of Pope Julius II, the abbess took on certain responsibilities normally undertaken by a parish priest, especially those concerning pastoral care, which included public preaching.<sup>16</sup> As a result of the burning of the convent's archives and library during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the consequent disappearance of most of the documentation relating to it, our knowledge of the preaching activity of the abbess comes mainly from four quite different sources:<sup>17</sup>

- a) The various hagiographies of the abbess, especially the first, *Vida y fin*, which as I have recently pointed out, should be read as a collective chronicle of the reform;<sup>18</sup>
- b) The testimonies given during the diocesan process of beatification and canonization (1613-1617), and the apostolic processes in Toledo (1619-1620) and Rome (1621-1731);<sup>19</sup>
- c) The *Libro de la casa* (hereafter *Book of the House*), a collection of some of the para-liturgical traditions and customs of the convent that are particularly associated with Juana, and are preserved in a copy from the seventeenth century;<sup>20</sup>
- d) The two manuscripts of the *Conorte* whose sermons were compiled before 1525: one in the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de

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16 On the privilege granted by Cisneros, see *Conhorte 1996*, 27, plus the transcription of the documents in 'Apéndice 2º', 519-526, and also *Conhorte 1999*, 55-64. For the rule followed after 1509, see Graña Cid, 'El cuerpo femenino', 309-310 and Acosta-García, 'Radical Succession', 8-9.

17 '[El convento] sufrirá las consecuencias de los avatares históricos y políticos del país, como, invasión de las tropas francesas, desamortización de Mendizábal o su destrucción en la Guerra Civil, siendo destruidos, no sólo, su fábrica, sino también su biblioteca y su archivo.' (<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/autoridad/7165>, accessed on 15 January 2022). This list could be completed with the documents collected for the reopening of her canonization cause at the beginning of the twentieth century: Jesús Gómez López, 'Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534) 'La Santa Juana': Vida, obra, santidad y causa', in: *La clausura femenina en España: actas del simposium: 1/4-IX-2004*, ed. Francisco Javier Campos and Fernández de Sevilla, 2 Vols. (Madrid: Real Centro Universitario Escorial-María Cristina, 2004) II, 1223-1250.

18 Acosta-García, 'Radical Succession'.

19 See *Conhorte 1996*, 143-145; *Conhorte 1999*, 131-147, and Gómez López, 'Juana de la Cruz', 1249-1250.

20 The *Libro de la casa y monasterio de Nuestra Señora de la Cruz* (Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS/9661) is known by this name because it bears an ownership mark on fol. 1r which reads: 'Este libro es de la casa y monasterio de Nuestra Señora de la Cruz [...]', in other words, that it was originally kept in the convent library belonging to Juana's community. The approximate date of composition (seventeenth century) is in the *Inventario general de los manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional - Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2000) XIV (nos. 9501-10200), 112.

El Escorial, catalog number J-II-18, and the two volumes in the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, catalog number Congr. SS. Rituum Processus 3074.<sup>21</sup>

## The extant codices and the process of canonization

These two manuscripts of the *Conorte* are the only ones to survive of what we may assume was a wider historical circulation, at least within the convent walls.<sup>22</sup> As can be deduced from the annotations added to the margins of the El Escorial codex by the Franciscan friar Francisco de Torres (1523-1580),<sup>23</sup> it was taken to the Convent of San Juan de los Reyes (Tledo), where it was probably kept during the lifetime of the abbess (d. 1534), and where he annotated it in 1567-1568.<sup>24</sup> According to García Andrés, the volume was probably moved later to the Convent of El Escorial when the Royal Library collection was being built during the reign of Philip II (d. 1598).<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the origin and migration of the Vatican manuscript is not as complex, because we know for certain that this was a copy that was sent directly to the Vatican from the library of the Convent of Santa María de la Cruz in Cubas de la Sagra in 1665, during the second stage of Juana's canonization process.<sup>26</sup> In the pontifical documentation, the abbess at the time (who had lived in the cloister since about 1618) declared under oath that the documents sent to Rome (a late copy of the first hagiography of Juana, now lost, plus the Vatican codex) were the only ones that she had ever seen in the convent library.<sup>27</sup> It is also made clear that this particular manuscript was venerated by the nuns, who considered it to be 'the authentic one', which is an important point for what follows.<sup>28</sup>

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21 On these two manuscripts, see *Conhorte 1996*, 179-185 and *Conhorte 1999*, 69-74.

22 Two examples: the first, in a passage from the *Libro de la casa* quoted in full further down in this article, while talking about the apotropaic powers of the *Book*, one of the next generation of nuns in the convent states that '... during storms, the abbess [*la prelada*] orders the holy book or its copies [o sus traslados] to be brought out' (my emphasis). The second, in *Conhorte 1996*, 147, García Andrés paraphrases the words of a nun who again uses 'the *Book* or its copies' to drive demons away from a dying nun.

23 See *Conhorte 1996*, 100-102 and *Conhorte 1999*, 70 and 100-116.

24 *Conhorte 1996*, 101 and *Conhorte 1999*, 70.

25 *Conhorte 1996*, 186-187 and *Conhorte 1999*, 70.

26 *Conhorte 1996*, 151; *Conhorte 1999*, 69-70 and 141-142.

27 *Conhorte 1996*, 171 and *Conhorte 1999*, 162.

28 *Conhorte 1996*, 151 and *Conhorte 1999*, 142.



Furthermore, the Vatican codex is very likely to be the same manuscript that two very important hagiographers of Juana, Antonio Daza and Pedro Navarro, read when they were writing their respective hagiographies of the abbess.<sup>29</sup> As I go on to show, both codices have been dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, based on a very superficial analysis of the script, the information contained in the colophon and (in the case of the El Escorial manuscript only) the annotations mentioned above.<sup>30</sup>

In 1999, García Andrés compiled and edited the historical vicissitudes of Juana's canonization process and the El Escorial manuscript respectively in a published excerpt of his PhD dissertation, presented three years earlier.<sup>31</sup> At that time, García Andrés was not only one of those mainly responsible for reopening the cause for canonization of the abbess, but had also been its vice-postulator since 1996.<sup>32</sup> In his dissertation, he explicitly stated that he hoped that his work would serve to unblock the cause, which had been stalled since the eighteenth century for the simple reason that it was not possible to prove that the text of the sermons contained in the *Conorte* were *authored* by Juana, at least in the form shown in the Vatican manuscript.<sup>33</sup> The argument about the authenticity of Juana's writings became crucial to the achievement of her canonization from the second phase of the process (1664-1679), when the cause started to be regulated

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29 *Conhorte 1996*, 171-172 and 189.

30 For a superficial comparison of the material characteristics of both codices, see *Conhorte 1999*, 71-72. The Royal Library of the Convent of El Escorial gives 1509 as 'publication date' (<https://rhemecat.patrimonionacional.es/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=738>, accessed on 16/12/2021), which follows Julián Zarco Cuevas, *Catálogo de los manuscritos castellanos de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial*, 2 Vols. (Madrid: Imprenta Helénica, 1924-1929) II, 99: 'letra de 1509', which extracts this information from the colophon. There it is stated that the book was 'written' ('escribiose', El Escorial codex, fol. 454v) in 1509. On the composition date of the *Book*, see *Conhorte 1996*, 192-194.

31 *Conhorte 1996* and *Conhorte 1999*, respectively. On the three historical phases of the process of canonization, see *Conhorte 1996*, 149-154 and *Conhorte 1999*, 139-169.

32 Gómez López, 'Juana de la Cruz', 1250.

33 See especially the following statements not included in *Conhorte 1999*: 'Finalmente, el presente trabajo pretende servir para el desbloqueo del proceso de canonización de una mujer que, desde el instante de su muerte y de forma ininterrumpida, ha sido proclamada como Santa, ya que fueron los escritos la causa de que los procesos no llegaran a feliz término' (*Conhorte 1996*, 8), and 'Los pasos siguientes serán: lograr la aprobación de los escritos, del *Conorte*, por parte de Roma; y después, preparada la correspondiente *positio*, alcanzar el reconocimiento del culto' (*Conhorte 1996*, 516).

by the Apostolic Constitution of Urban VIII, 'Caelestis Hierusalem Cives' (1623-1634).<sup>34</sup>

This change in the judicial framework of the cause is essential to understanding its subsequent transformations, since in order to prove the abbess's reputation of sanctity, the Sacred Congregation of Rites needed to examine not only the writings *about* the Servant of God (for instance, hagiographies of her), but also *her own writings*, which in this case and for this purpose only, had been collected together in the convent library of Santa María de la Cruz in 1665. This, as indicated above, happened around the same time that the Vatican manuscript was sent to Rome, constituting the heart of the discussion between postulators and promoters of the faith until the process was blocked in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Reading García Andrés' excellent summary of the development of the debate between the postulators and the promoters of the faith is like witnessing a true battle of dialectics, with both sides employing concepts and arguments more typical of literary scholars than theologians, but both seeking to clarify one main question: was there any way of proving beyond any doubt that the sermons contained in the Vatican manuscript were the original words spoken by the abbess?

The initial strategy of the postulators in the second phase of the canonization process (1664-1679) was to prove that the *Conorte* contained her *original* words.<sup>36</sup> There was, however, a constant gap that was never explained between her ecstatic preaching and the text, which was reinforced by different sources talking about nun-scribes remembering the sermons by heart and writing them down later, instead of Juana de la Cruz dictating them herself. This gap between preaching and text proved to be an insurmountable obstacle,<sup>37</sup> and the process was put on hold for some thirty years.

In the third phase of the process (1702-1731), the postulators followed a different strategy. Since the Vatican Codex was the main obstacle to demonstrating Juana's reputation for sanctity, they followed the path

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34 *Conhorte* 1996, 150; *Conhorte* 1999, 141.

35 See above, n. 26.

36 *Conhorte* 1996, 150-153.

37 On this issue, see the defense written by José Coppons on behalf of the Franciscan Order, especially *Conhorte* 1999, 145.

recently opened up by the promoters of the faith, who were trying to invalidate the manuscript as a text that reliably reflected Juana's discourse.<sup>38</sup> That strategy also failed, because it was clear to the promoters of the faith that Juana's sermons were an unavoidable issue to be resolved on the path to sanctity. The final answer from the promoter of the faith at the time, given in a rescript of the Congregation issued on 20 September, 1729 was crystal clear: 'Non posse procedi ad ulteriora, nisi exhibeatur libri originales'; in other words, if the Vatican codex was not the original transcription of the sermons, the original had to be found before proceeding further.<sup>39</sup> The process was completely blocked until almost two centuries later, when García Andrés, whose interests were both scientific and religious, announced that he had found a second source for the *Conorte* following the indications of some Franciscan friars who knew of the location of a second copy in the Royal Library of El Escorial.<sup>40</sup> In both his PhD dissertation and the later introduction to his edition, García Andrés considered that this codex was 'the first and original [manuscript] that collected the sermons of Juana de la Cruz'.<sup>41</sup> His reasons for this assertion rested mainly on three arguments:<sup>42</sup>

- a) The first concerns the aforementioned marginalia in the El Escorial Codex, which allow us to place it at an early date. This copy is heavily glossed by two well-known Franciscans, and also heavily censored by a third anonymous individual. The first of these annotators was Fray Francisco Ortiz (1497-1545), a Franciscan who was considered a heretic by the Inquisition because of his links to the heresy of the *Alumbrados*, which dates its circulation therefore to the first half of the sixteenth century, most probably during Juana's lifetime.<sup>43</sup>
- b) The second concerns its form, which García Andrés describes (with good reason) as 'unpolished, less elaborate, and using a less careful

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38 *Conhorte 1996*, 153-155 and *Conhorte 1999*, 147-148.

39 *Conhorte 1996*, 172.

40 See *Conhorte 1996*, 6, where he states that he had visited the Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in 1976, just one year before Ronald Surtz (*The Guitar*, XI). In fact, the works that Surtz published during the 1990s marked a real rebirth in studies on Juana de la Cruz after the time that had elapsed since the process for her canonization.

41 *Conhorte 1996*, 189 and *Conhorte 1999*, 73.

42 *Conhorte 1996*, 187-188 and 514-516.

43 *Conhorte 1996*, 90; *Conhorte 1999*, 95.

syntax'.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in general, the Vatican manuscript contains longer versions of the sermons, alterations, and what seem at first sight to be sentences and/or glosses added to the main text.

- c) The third concerns their ordering. García Andrés also points out, following Surtz, that these textual differences are not only visible in the composition, but also in the slightly different organization of the two codices. He attributes these changes to some 'expert [clerical] hand' ('mano de algún experto'), who would have taken the primitive textual version from the El Escorial manuscript and transformed it into a longer one.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of the massive and timely two-volume edition of the text contained in the El Escorial Codex provided by García Andrés in 1999, together with the poor material condition of the Vatican manuscript, part of the scholarship on Juana de la Cruz has generally privileged the first source.<sup>46</sup> In my view, this is a praxis that we should hold in abeyance (or at least be aware of) when interpreting Juana's words. My preliminary comparison of the two manuscripts has highlighted the need to collate both texts in any hermeneutic approach since, as we already knew from the works of Surtz, the Vatican version occasionally contains information that is missing from its counterpart.<sup>47</sup>

For a good example of this, in a recent article on Juana de la Cruz's *cancionero*, I edited from one of the sermons a song that the Lord sang to His mother, the Virgin Mary, thereby demonstrating that the Vatican manuscript contained unpublished verses and that any reconstruction of a more complete version of the song would need to take both codices into account. Apart from the new material, the Vatican codex also has some

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44 *Conhorte* 1999, 71: 'tosca, menos elaborada, de sintaxis menos cuidada'.

45 *Conhorte* 1999, 73.

46 In a 'Note on the Text' that precedes his famous essay on Juana's theology, Surtz, *The Guitar*, considers it more difficult to read because of its poor material condition but, as his work suggests and as has been confirmed by Jessica Boon in private correspondence, he always cross-checked both versions. On the other hand, García Andrés asserts that, as a result of the heavy censorship, it is impossible to read some of the sermons in the El Escorial manuscript, which means that it is essential to consult the Vatican manuscript in order to transcribe the text of the Sermon on the Trinity (*Conhorte* 1999, 74).

47 *Conhorte* 1996, 188-189.

lacunae at this point, so that it is only possible to fill in the blanks when the text of both manuscripts is taken into account:<sup>48</sup>

Vatican codex, fol. 13v	El Escorial codex, fol. 21v	Reconstruction
[...]miga, [...]e contentaste. Tú so[...]mada escogida entre millares. Tú sola, mi rreyna, en quien yo rreyné e moré. Tú sola, mi esposa, de[...]o me pagu[...]. [...] escogida, de q[...]é. Tú sola, mi enamorada, con quien mucho me deleité. Tú sola, mi paloma, con quien yo mucho folgué. Tú sola, la más santa, que e fallado ni fallaré.	Tú sola, mi amiga, tú sola me contentaste. Tú sola, mi amada, escogida entre millares. Tú sola, my rreyna, en quien yo rreyné y moré.      Tú sola, la más santa, que e hallado ni hallaré.	[Tú sola, mi a]miga, [tú sola m]e contentaste. Tú so[la, mi a]mada, escogida entre millares. Tú sola, mi rreyna, en quien yo rreyné e moré. Tú sola, mi esposa, de[ quien y]o me pagu[é]. [Tú sola, mi] escogida, de q[uien yo me ...]é. Tú sola, mi enamorada, con quien mucho me deleité. Tú sola, mi paloma, con quien yo mucho folgué. Tú sola, la más santa, que e fallado ni fallaré.

Returning to García Andrés’ words about the *original* manuscript, I would remind the reader here that the Spanish editor is intentionally adopting the technical vocabulary used in the process of Juana’s canonization dealing with the canonical issues of the *authenticity* and *originality* of her hypothetical words, projecting them onto the case that is still open, and hoping to unblock it with his new findings. In fact, as I have shown, the problems about *reportatio*, dictation, and authority that I am studying are reflected and explicitly discussed in the documents of the canonical process.

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48 See Pablo Acosta-García, ‘El cancionero revelado de la abadesa franciscana Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534). Edición y comentario’, *Studia aurea* 15 (2021), 505, which contains an erratum in note 10, which transcribes the verses from the Escorial Codex instead of from the Vatican codex. ‘You alone my friend / You alone made me happy/ You alone my beloved, / Chosen from among thousands. // You alone, my queen, / in whom I reigned and dwelt, / You alone, my bride / Are the one / by whom I was captivated. // You alone, my chosen one, / Of whom I ... / You alone, my beloved, / In whom I greatly delighted. // You alone, my dove, / With whom I had much joy, / You alone, the saintliest / that I have found or ever will.’ (I thank Janet Dawson for the English translation of the reconstructed version of the song).

## What is the *Conorte*?

‘There follow some songs that, it seems, the Lord himself sang sometimes, and to which his servant [the abbess] responded. And we [nosotras] could hear Him. Well, there would be around forty of us there, and often fifty. And I say fifty because we were frequently close to that number. And at other times, more than one hundred and fifty came.’<sup>49</sup>

I provide fresh evidence here to support the theory of the collective authorship of the sermons.<sup>50</sup> This text heads a group of five chants intoned by Juana during her ecstasies, using different voices (mainly that of the Lord) while singing. The songs are copied in the same hand as the rest of the Vatican manuscript.<sup>51</sup> As we can see, the Spanish feminine plural ending of *nosotras* (‘E *nosotras* lo oíamos’) is unambiguous. The transcriptions were probably made by a single nun, but on behalf of a group that considered these revealed songs sufficiently important to be written down and remembered. The problem that arises here is how we should interpret this collective subject with respect to the written codification of Juana’s preaching and the different stages of the *Conorte*’s composition. A first approach to this should be to discuss the traditional view that one of Juana’s fellow nuns, María Evangelista, was the sole redactor of her preaching.<sup>52</sup> Her importance in the convent is particularly apparent in a passage from the *Book of the House*, in which, after Juana’s death, one of the next generation of nuns has the following vision:

‘A nun [...] once [s]aw María Evangelista, who was already deceased, enter through the door of the church with the book that she wrote called the *Holy Consolation of the Sermons that the Lord Preached*

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49 The original paragraph is edited in Acosta-García, *El cancionero revelado*, 511.

50 The collective authorship of the *Conorte* has been suggested and discussed by Graña Cid, ‘Encarnar la palabra’ and Jessica A. Boon, ‘Introduction’, in *Mother Juana de la Cruz, 1481–1534: Visionary Sermons*, ed. Jessica A. Boon and Ronald E. Surtz, trans. Ronald E. Surtz and Nora Weinerth (Toronto-Tempe: Iter Academic Press-Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016), 15–16.

51 For an edition of the songs and the original annotation in Spanish, see *Ibidem*.

52 On María Evangelista, see *Conhorte 1996*, 179–186 and *Conhorte 1999*, 20–27. I thank Patricia Stoop for recommending the use of ‘redactor’ here.

*Through the Mouth of our Holy Mother Saint Juana*, who said it was gold, and in the other hand, a green cross. And this lady, María Evangelista, did not know how to write, and the Lord graciously granted her the gift of writing so that she could write this holy book [...]. The Lord preached for thirteen years, and this holy book was written [from sermons preached] only in the last two. The Lord bestowed upon it [the book] many blessings and virtues against demons and storms [...]. And during storms the abbess [*la prelada*] orders the holy book or its copies to be brought out, and the storm has often been seen to subside.<sup>53</sup>

The main aspect that I would like to comment on is the role that tradition assigns to María Evangelista, who had already passed away in this vision. We read that she ‘did not know how to write and the Lord graciously granted her the gift of writing so that she could write this holy book.’ This statement captures two general tendencies in the Cubas community: the first is that they tended to follow the model of sanctity established in the earliest versions of the hagiography of Caterina of Siena, namely her *Legenda maior*. So, in the above passage, María Evangelista’s sudden ability to write seems to mirror the episode in which God miraculously granted Caterina of Siena the same ability.<sup>54</sup> The main implication of this hagiographic *topos* would be that the gift of prophecy of the illiterate Juana is used to form a counterpoint to the miraculous skills of one of their own nuns, María Evangelista, as a scribe and copyist. Following from this, the second general tendency of the Cubas community hagiographies is to refer to María Evangelista as the sole person responsible for transcribing the sermons of Juana.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, the hagiographies of Juana state that the abbess would preach in sessions lasting about six hours.<sup>56</sup> According to two fellow nuns who had known María Evangelista while she was alive, the latter had ‘such a faithful and retentive memory that when the sermon was finished, she immediately

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53 *Libro de la casa*, fols. 20r–20v.

54 See Acosta-García, ‘On manuscripts’, 9–12.

55 This second issue concerning the *originality* of the sermons in terms of their transcription is extremely important from the second stage (1664–1679) of the cause for canonization onwards, see above.

56 *Vida y fin*, fol. 28r and fol. 31r.

wrote it down'.<sup>57</sup> This superhuman capacity is based, again, on the belief anchored in the collective memory of the convent that this nun was the female evangelist who divinely transcribed Juana's words.<sup>58</sup> On this particular point, I agree with both Graña Cid's and Boon's notion of María Evangelista as the iconic figure established in the collective memory of the convent as the one and only scribe, transcriber, and writer, even though there is sufficient textual evidence to allow us to talk about the communal effort of a number of nuns.<sup>59</sup> It is very likely, in fact, that María Evangelista shared both this writing skill and her role as copyist with some of the nuns of the Convent of Santa María de la Cruz.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the strongest indication supporting this is the long passage in the *Conorte* about the actual creation of the book. In this passage, the nuns declare that they were collecting the words of their abbess following the orders of 'some prelates': 'And He [the Lord] even said (and it was done as He promised), that he would give us light and memory in order to retain them [Christ's words] and write them down. We beseeched [Him], because we were ordered by

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57 According to the hagiography by Pedro Navarro (1659). See the original context in Acosta-García, 'Radical Succession', 239-240.

58 See for instance one of the testimonies in the Apostolic process in *Conhorte 1996*, 147.

59 On María Evangelista as just one of the redactors, see Boon, 'Introduction', 16.

60 Graña Cid, 'Encarnar la palabra: oralidad, lectura y escritura en las profetisas castellanas del Renacimiento', *Estudios eclesiásticos* 91:358 (2016), 597. On this point, see also the compilation and discussion of sources in *Ibidem*, 597-603, where she sets out the major evidence for collective literacy in the convent. In addition to the annotation that heads Juana's *cancionero* (see above), these pieces of evidence are found in other areas: a) hagiographical writing, such as Antonio Daza, *Éxtasis y revelaciones de la bienaventurada Virgen Santa Juana de la Cruz, de la Tercera Orden de nuestro Seráfico Padre S. Francisco* (Zaragoza: Lucas Sánchez, 1611), fol. 61v, which mentions, together with Evangelista, two other amanuenses: Catalina de San Francisco and Catalina de los Mártires ('Las religiosas que escribieron ese libro, fueron, la madre Soror María Evangelista [y esta la que más escribió y a quién sin saber leer, ni escribir, dio nuestro Señor esta gracia...], Soror Catalina de San Francisco, se llamó la segunda, y Soror Catalina de los Martyres la tercera, de lo qual hay tradición y es pública voz y fama en el Monasterio de la Cruz...'), see Graña Cid, 'Encarnar la palabra', 597, n. 43; b) the following fragments of *Libro de la casa* in which revelation and literacy are associated with different nuns, not specifically with Evangelista: fol. 13v: 'Hijas mías, gozaos contino/ en la esperanza de mí,/ y en papel de pergamino/ mis palabras escribid,/ por que si alguien las pidiere/ para las trasladar,/ y si deboción tubieren,/ se las podades prestar...'; and fols. 16v-17r; c) some testimonies found in her canonization process and their interpretation by the theologians: *Conhorte 1999*, 138, 145, 149, 158, 159 in contrast to those that only mention María Evangelista: *Conhorte 1999*, 136-137; d) the passage discussed next in the *Book* where the first person feminine plural pronoun is used to explain the transcription of the sermons.



certain prelates to do it [retain what we had heard from Him and write it down].<sup>61</sup>

In short, the narrative of the *Conorte* indicates that the codification of Juana's preaching in writing was authored by various nuns belonging to her community (*nosotras*), which is also supported by various testimonies given during the canonization process and by the hagiographies written about her. Far from being exceptional, this kind of group authorship associated with recollections of charismatic preaching was common in nunneries across Europe from at least the thirteenth century. For instance, think of the famous article by Margarete Hubrath about the community of Helfta, and the composition of Mechthild of Hackeborn's *Liber specialis gratiae* (which, not by chance, was one of the earliest printed books by Cardinal Cisneros to support his reform),<sup>62</sup> or, for a period chronologically contemporary with Juana's activity, the Italian visionary preachers brought to light by Gabriella Zarri and others.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, as Zarri has said, late medieval and early modern sermon collections by women's religious communities 'constitute something more than a clue, and show some similarities that allow us to deduce a shared practice'.<sup>64</sup>

My own view is that Juana's sermons are best understood when we consider them as part of the wider context of Observant cloisters in which *scrittura comunitaria* was common practice.<sup>65</sup> The model of composition of the *Liber specialis gratiae* and later compilations of convent sermons in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are useful for discussing possible tasks and processes underlying the creation of the *Conorte*. The various studies of these practices by Dutch nuns carried out by Mertens and Stoop, for example, depict highly complex processes involving the memorizing,

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61 *Conborte* 1999, 1473, briefly discussed in *Conborte* 1996, 189-190. See also Boon, 'Introduction', 15.

62 Margarete Hubrath, 'The *Liber specialis gratiae* as a Collective work of Several Nuns', *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft* 11 (1999), 233-244.

63 The form of prophetic preaching identified by Gabriella Zarri in Italian convents of the period coincides with Juana's; see her 'Places and Gestures of Women's Preaching in Quattro- and Cinquecento Italy', in: *Charisma and Religious Authority: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching, 1200-1500*, ed. Katherine L. Jansen and Miri Rubin (Turnhout, Brepols: 2010), 177-193.

64 *Ibidem*, 186.

65 On the *scrittura comunitaria*, see Gabriella Zarri, 'La scrittura monastica', in: *Letras en la celda. Cultura escrita de los conventos femeninos en la España moderna*, ed. Nieves Baranda Leturio and María del Carmen Marín Pina (Madrid-Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2014), 53-54.

drafting, editing, copying, ordering and codification of oral performances that could apply to Juana's case.<sup>66</sup> Comparisons provide us with a silent, untold context, which, when combined with textual analysis, could give us richer insights into and understanding of what the abbess said, or may have said. Once collective authorship is accepted, the next stage is to try and understand how group work of this kind developed in the convent of Santa María de la Cruz during Juana's lifetime and afterwards.

When reflecting on this, we should also bear in mind that the sermons collected in the *Conorte* are very different in terms of form and length. Regarding length, for instance, some pieces in the Vatican Codex, such as the sermon 'Santa fe católica, ley de la Trinidad',<sup>67</sup> are very short and provide a marked contrast to the longer ones (such as the eighteen folios or so of the sermon on the Resurrection of the Lord).<sup>68</sup> Such variations must surely point, in the first place, to some kind of process of sifting through the contents of the material actually preached and second, to the transformative process of transcription and later copying, in which the contents were selected and rearranged in a new order. Some of the shorter sermons in the book could be considered as corroborations of this. Take sermon 31, for example, which the transcriber (or transcribers) claims to be a summary of seven sermons preached on different days of the week.<sup>69</sup> This explicitly stated manipulation of the text should lead us to suspect that, in most cases, some unspecified intervention may have affected the collection as a whole, especially the ordering of the sermons according to the liturgical calendar. A major change concerning the general ordering, for example, might be due to the amalgamation and rearrangement of sermons preached on the same feast day, but in different years. This would affect our appreciation of

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66 See for example, Thomas Mertens, 'Ghostwriting Sisters: The Preservation of Dutch Sermons of Father Confessors in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century', in: *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe 1200-1600*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 121-141; Patricia Stoop, 'Nun's Literacy in Sixteenth-Century Convent Sermons from the Cistercian Abbey of Ter Kameren', in: *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanon, Veronica O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 185-195, and Idem, 'Female Authorship in the Augustinian Convent of Jericho and the Translation of Conrad of Saxony's *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis* in Sermons by Maria van Pee and Janne Colijns', *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 42:2 (2016), 248-268.

67 Vatican codex, 407v-409v.

68 Vatican codex, 294v-312v.

69 Vatican codex, 427v-429v. To be more precise, at the beginning of the sermon, the transcribing nun states: '[I] summarize some of them here ('escribo aquí en breve algunos de ellos')'.

the contents of the particular liturgical cycle, because the apparent homogeneity of the *Conorte* gives the impression that the sermons were preached in the course of 1509, whereas it was impossible, for many reasons, for the collection to reflect only that one year.<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

I would like to say by way of conclusion that the survival of a corpus of more of seventy sermons by Juana de la Cruz is such a truly rare phenomenon, not only in the Kingdom of Castile but also at the European level, that it deserves a complete reappraisal. The key issue outlined in this article is the pressing need to re-examine the extant documents, regardless of certain modern attempts, associated with the reopening of the canonization cause, to prove or disprove the *authenticity* and *originality* of the written words. The main conclusion arising from my summary of the process for canonization presented here is that 'Juana's writings' became a major stumbling-block in her canonization process after 1665 and that the need to validate them became a matter of urgency. As stated, in the eighteenth century, the postulators argued that the sermons were not the originals, written, dictated, or even authored by Juana, and so could not be affected by Urban III's decretals. The promoters of the faith stated that it was necessary to find the hypothetical original of the *Conorte*, which blocked the cause until it was reopened in the twentieth century, thereby determining our use and understanding of the sermons. The desperate search for an *original* however was the only way to unblock the cause.

A necessary conclusion arising from the foregoing is that the status of these two codices in the history of Juana's sermons is far from clear. At this stage of my research, one of the essential questions is what should be regarded as 'the original' in a collection of sermons that has unquestionably been heavily tampered with by a community of nuns, and when written codification of preaching involves the memorizing, writing, copyediting, and organization of the materials. The final products of these performative

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70 The sources generally agree on the duration of Juana's preaching activity, although the information about the dates and methods of composition of the *Conorte* is inconsistent, which is a question that requires a closer examination that I am unable to undertake here. For 1509 as the date of redaction, see Boon, 'Introduction', 16, n. 59.

metamorphoses conceal multi-layered, multi-authored re-creations that tend to be perceived by later users as a single unit, or, as in this case, two different versions of a liturgically ordered book of sermons. Therefore, if we want to look at the *Conorte* from the correct philological perspective, we should go back to the eighteenth-century arguments of the promoters of the faith and consider it as a sermon collection that was compiled following an imprecise, largely unknown method of transcribing and organizing the materials. Due to the lack of surviving codices from the convent library, apart from the Vatican manuscript, we do not have the possibility of studying scribal practices within the convent walls in any depth. Nevertheless, we can compare what we do know about the making of the *Conorte* with similar European communities of nuns in Europe contemporary to Juana de la Cruz and her community.

Finally, apart from a few exceptions such as Surtz and Boon, interpretations of Juana's sermons have – especially since the publication of the 1999 edition by García Andrés – generally used the text of just one of the surviving codices: the El Escorial manuscript. In the case of the *Conorte*, this means interpreting a single version of two quite dissimilar texts and assuming that the Vatican copy is the least reliable of the two. In my view, an essential preliminary step has been missed: gaining an understanding of the status of the Vatican manuscript and its countless variations in the history of the transmission of the sermons. In order to clarify this issue – at least to some extent – we should return to a material analysis of the sources and make further efforts to open up access to the second version of Juana's sermons to scholars. This is only possible through a critical edition or a complete collation, which includes a comparison of both texts, and which I will undertake in the near future.



# Third Order Convents in Western Flanders: Varieties in Tertiary Observance

*Koen Goudriaan*

## **Introduction**

A panorama of late medieval religious reform and concomitant cultural production in the Low Countries would not be complete without due attention to the rich and variegated manifestations of the Third Order of St Francis in this densely urbanized corner of Europe. Obviously, this is a topic that cannot be exhausted within the compass of a single article. It is the goal of this contribution to present the case of a particular group of Tertiary convents in Flanders against the background of flourishing Tertiary life as a whole. The peculiar character of these convents, which are poorly documented in general, is illumined by the content of a manuscript kept at Bruges, which will be presented first. They have a clear sense of identity, which is founded in the specific trajectory of their history, characterized both by approach towards and distancing from the Observant Friars Minor. Their spirituality is portrayed, with a specific focus on two aspects: the balance they try to strike between labor and liturgical life, and their aloofness from literary culture. At the end, an effort is made to assign them their proper place in the general picture of the history of the Third Order in what is now Belgium and the Netherlands.

## The Bruges manuscript and the Tertiary convents of West-Flanders

As point of departure, I take a manuscript which is now kept in the State Archives (Rijksarchief) at Bruges, but which probably does not originate from that town.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of its content, in which a Tertiary convent in the Flemish town of Ypres is taking precedence over a group of kindred religious houses, it may be surmised that it was composed in a convent of Franciscan Tertiaries in Ypres in or soon after 1570.<sup>2</sup>

The manuscript contains four different texts:

- an annotated translation into Dutch/Flemish of the bull *Personas vacantes* (1413), issued on behalf of six Tertiary convents in West-Flanders (pp. 1-18);<sup>3</sup>
- a translation of the bull *Supra montem* with which pope Nicholas IV in 1289 chartered the Franciscan Tertiaries (pp. 19-27);<sup>4</sup>
- ‘other statutes’ to implement this rule, decided upon by various chapter meetings and approved by local bishops. These statutes do not constitute a systematic code, but appear rather as a loose chain of – undated – chapter decisions (pp. 28-42);
- a text entitled *Memorie* (memorial), which contains a short report on the history of the Third Order of St Francis in Ypres and a few adjacent towns, continued until 1570 (pp. 43-53).

In theory, the first one of these four texts may originally have stood apart; the other three certainly belong together from the start.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Bruges, Rijksarchief, Cumulus Ecclesiasticus inv. 824 [hereafter: Bruges MS]. Elementary description: a parchment register measuring 196 x 155 mm and consisting of four irregular quires. It shows standard lay-out with a decorated initial and rubrication. The manuscript is paginated, not foliated.

2 Marc Carnier, *De communauteiten van tertiariissen van Sint-Franciscus: Monasticon. I: De grauwezusters*. Bibliografische Inleiding tot de Belgische Kloostergeschiedenis vóór 1796 (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2002), 297, assigns it to the Ypres convent, probably rightly so. At page 45 the bull *Supra montem* is referred to, ‘maer die bulle en is hier niet onder de brieven van tconvent van Yper’ (‘but the bull is not found here among the charters of the Ypres convent’).

3 More on this bull below.

4 For the Latin original see *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. H. Sbaralea and C. Eubel, VII vols. (Rome: Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, 1759-1908) IV, 94-97.

5 The first text coincides with the first quire, but the remaining three texts are not coextensive with the quires.

Together, these four texts reveal a clear-cut sense of identity founded in the peculiar history of the group of convents to which it refers.<sup>6</sup> Although the insertion of *Supra montem* shows awareness of the Third Order at large, the real starting point is the bull *Personas vacantes*,<sup>7</sup> as both the manuscript as a whole and the historical narrative in the *Memorie* start with it. This bull was issued by pope John XXIII in 1413 on behalf of a group of convents of male and female Tertiaries in West-Flanders, situated in the towns of Furnes, Nieuwpoort, Ypres, Poperinge, Diksmuide and St Winoksbergen (Bergues Saint Winoc).<sup>8</sup> The pope confirms a set of rules they had adopted in order to live together as a congregation, the most remarkable being that these Tertiaries on their entry take the vows of poverty, obedience and purity. They are not enclosed, but are allowed to go out on strict conditions. Their habit is regulated meticulously, but it is dominated by grey – hence the customary name of ‘Grey Sisters’ for the female members – in order to express their poverty and simplicity. The dress code also provides for situations in which they have to go out. The Tertiaries are expected to do honest labor in order to win a livelihood; the proceeds of their labor are consumed in the community. In case of necessity, however, they are allowed to go out begging. Those who are capable of doing so say – not sing – the full Canonical Hours, but members who have difficulty in learning them, may content themselves with lesser forms of prayer, such as the Hours of Our Lady or even a simple series of Paternosters. Superiors must be diligent to strike a balance between work and prayer. The bull reveals the existence in several of the six towns mentioned of both male and female convents. Men and women have separate overarching chapter meetings, although a male Superior Minister is functioning as the head of all of these convents.<sup>9</sup> The chapter meetings of both branches are visited by delegates

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6 The identity of Tertiaries as revealed by their textual culture has been investigated by Alison More, ‘Religious Order and Textual Identity: the Case of Franciscan Tertiary Women’, in: *Nuns’ Literacies in Medieval Europe: the Antwerp Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O’Mara, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 43-59. Her approach is not applicable to the case at hand, however, exactly because a textual culture is lacking, as will be argued in the following.

7 Lucas Wadding, *Annales Minorum IX* (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 3rd Ed., 1932), 653-657.

8 Note that this last town, and several of the towns mentioned in the following as well, belong to France nowadays.

9 Bruges MS, 13.



of corresponding gender.<sup>10</sup> Finally, these Tertiaries are allowed to choose a visitator from an approved order, but remain under the jurisdiction of the local bishop, which for this part of Flanders is the bishop of Théroutane. Although the bull presupposes that these convents had already been in existence for some time, nothing about their previous history is known.<sup>11</sup> Neither is much information available on the vicissitudes of individual convents during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> The participation of male convents soon seems to have come to an end, as did the functioning of a Superior Minister.<sup>13</sup> As a group, they grew from the original six to 27 in 1487; by that time, they were known as the Chapter of St Catherine.<sup>14</sup>

One of the convents joining this chapter along the way was St Catherine's at St Omer (1430).<sup>15</sup> Probably, this convent soon acquired a leading position such as even to lend its name to the group as a whole. The important harbor town of St Omer happened also to be the seat of an influential convent of Friars Minor. In 1408 this had been reformed after the example of the Observant convents of Touraine,<sup>16</sup> an event which started the glorious advance of the Observance Movement in the Low Countries. The history of the Tertiaries in this region took a fateful turn in 1448, when an internal conflict occasioned pope Nicholas V to subject them to the Observant Friars Minor by the bull *Apostolicae sedis gratiosa benignitas*. The vicar-provincial of the Observants now had to appoint the visitator, whose jurisdiction was enlarged at the cost of the local bishop.<sup>17</sup> No doubt the Observants of St Omer were the driving force behind this move.

Two comments are in place here. Marc Carnier has put forward the general idea that in fifteenth-century Flanders the flourishing of Tertiary

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10 This is remarkable, because the female convents of the Chapter of Utrecht, to be discussed later, were represented by their confessors.

11 Walter Simons and Paul Trio, 'Begijnen, begarden en tertiariessen in het middeleeuwse Ieper', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 4 (2001), 118-167, in particular p. 143 with note 102.

12 The scarce documentation is listed in Carnier, *Communauteiten*, nos. 19, 37, 49, 56 and 65.

13 A Superior Minister is still mentioned in the bull *Apostolicae sedis gratiosa benignitas* (see note 17).

14 Jérôme Goyens, 'Chapitres des soeurs grises hospitalières en Flandre 1483-1528', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 14 (1921), 199-208; Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 20-23.

15 Wadding, *Annales Minorum* X (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 3rd Ed., 1932), 559-560; Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 21, note 26.

16 P. Gratien, 'Le grand schisme et la réforme des Cordeliers à Saint-Omer', *Neerlandia Franciscana* 5 (1922), 5-15; 143-180; John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968; Reprint 1998), 382; A. Derville, *Histoire de Saint-Omer* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1982), 97.

17 *Bullarium Franciscanum* n.s. I, 606-607, no. 1194.

life was due mainly to the influence of the Observant Friars Minor; according to him, the formation of congregations from among them took place within the framework of the Franciscan provinces.<sup>18</sup> In the light of the developments presented here, this appears to be open to correction, at least as the Chapter of St Catherine is concerned.<sup>19</sup> The role the Observants came to play within that chapter is secondary. It is probably because of his overall approach that the really innovative point of the 1448 bull, the subjection of the Tertiaries to the Observants, escapes Carnier's notice.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, referring primarily to the Conventuals, Bert Roest has remarked that we must not take it for granted that the Franciscans were eager to engage in *cura monialium*.<sup>21</sup> However, at least in the Low Countries, the Observants showed considerable ambition to take responsibility not only for Poor Clares but for female Tertiaries as well. This is not only evident in the case of the Chapter of St Catherine, but may also be observed for example with respect to a group of Tertiary convents around St Catherine's Vale at Hasselt in the diocese of Liège.<sup>22</sup>

The intrusion of the Observants did not remain uncontested, however. Both in the diocese of Liège and in Flanders the Observants met with much opposition. In a remarkable move, pope Sixtus IV let himself be persuaded by the archdukes Maximilian and Mary to issue the bull *Iniunctum nobis desuper* (1481), in which he declared several privileges granted the Observants in the past to be null and void, forbidding them henceforth to interfere with the Tertiaries.<sup>23</sup>

Still, this was not the end of the story. A serious quarrel broke out within the bosom of the Chapter of St Catherine about the choice of a visitor. *Personas vacantes* had left the Tertiaries free to pick their visitor from whichever approved order they liked, and the 1481 decision of pope

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18 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 16.

19 It may be true for two other chapters discussed by Carnier, those of the Hospital Sisters and of the Sisters of the Cell.

20 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 21.

21 Bert Roest, *Order and Disorder. The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 62-67; for the Observants: p. 220.

22 Koen Goudriaan, 'Het klooster Maagdendries en de Moderne Devotie in Maastricht', *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg* 155 (2019 [2020]), 57-121, in particular 79-80. Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 565-566, observes the same tendency in Italy but ascribes much of it to papal strategy.

23 *Bullarium Franciscanum* n.s. III, ed. José Maria Pou y Martí (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia S. Bonaventurae, 1949), no. 1433.

Sixtus IV had restored them in that freedom. Nevertheless, at a meeting in Bruges in 1487 the majority of the convents of St Catharine decided to subject themselves to Observant visitation again.<sup>24</sup>

Now, the salient point in the *Memorie* of the Bruges MS is that it does not mention the 1487 decision at all. It is no coincidence that the Ypres convent was not represented at Bruges.<sup>25</sup> The decisive turning point according to the *Memorie* is exactly the 1481 bull that denied the Observants any authority over the Tertiaries.<sup>26</sup> After that date the convents of the Ypres group seem not to have participated any more in the dealings of the Chapter of St Catherine. The *Memorie* consistently presents their history in function of *Personas vacantes* as reinterpreted by the 1481 bull of Sixtus IV. Pride of successfully having withstood the encroachment of the Observants runs through the whole of the narrative. This victory is represented as having the effect 'that the sisters should not be harassed and troubled in following their old way of life'.<sup>27</sup> Instead of adopting the lifestyle imposed by the Observants, they managed to stick to their own observance. Unfortunately, the *Memorie* does not tell us what the changes would have been if the Observants had got their way.

Finally, in 1570 a new conflict between the Friars Minor and the Tertiaries broke out. It was occasioned by the issuing in 1568 by pope Pius V of a *breve* entitled *Itaque inter*, by which he again subjected the Tertiaries to the First Franciscan Order, Observant as a whole by now.<sup>28</sup> This was the outcome of a general policy followed by the popes after the Council of Trent,<sup>29</sup> which also had repercussions in the Low Countries. We are informed in much detail about the enormous upheaval this measure caused in the diocese of Utrecht.<sup>30</sup> The report on this affair with which the

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24 Goyens, 'Chapitres', 204-208; Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 22.

25 List of participants: Carnier, *Ibidem*.

26 Bruges MS, 47-52.

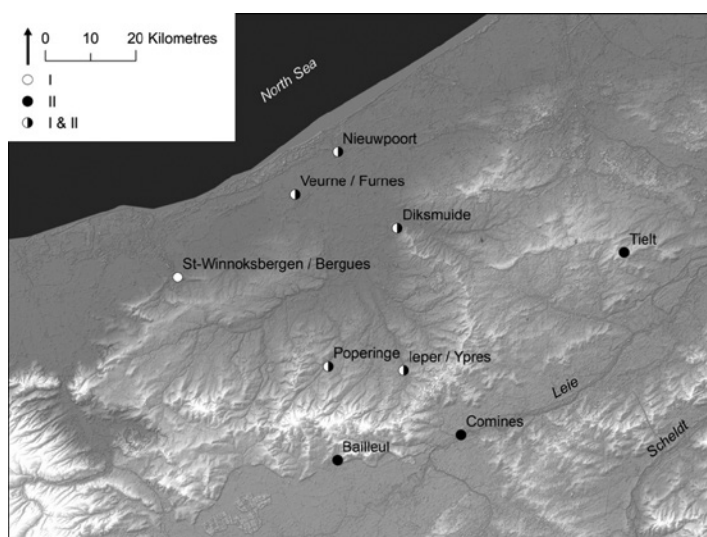
27 *Ibidem*, 50: 'datmen de zusters in huerlier oude manierre van leven niet quellen noch turberen en zoude'.

28 Wadding, *Annales Minorum* XX (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 3rd Ed., 1933), 568-571.

29 Hildo van Engen, *De derde orde van Sint-Franciscus in het middeleeuwse bisdom Utrecht. Een bijdrage tot de institutionele geschiedenis van de Moderne Devotie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 149.

30 Koen Goudriaan, 'De derde orde van Sint Franciscus in het bisdom Utrecht. Een voorstudie', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 1 (1998), 205-260, in particular 210-216. Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 148-156.

*Memorie* ends is rather succinct.<sup>31</sup> Eight convents in Flanders laid the case before the Secret Council of the Habsburg Low Countries, and as it was clear that this high college of state was in favor of the Tertiaries, the Friars Minor did not further pursue their case. It is only at this occasion that the *Memorie* gives a list of the convents of the Ypres group: they are located in Ypres, Furnes, Nieuwpoort, Diksmuide, Bailleul, Poperinge, Comines and Tielt. It may be observed that this group largely coincides with the six convents with which the Chapter of St Catherine had started in 1413. In the case of the Tertiaries in Utrecht, their resistance was directed specifically at two grievances: the enclosure imposed on those convents which so far had not adopted it, and the policy of the Friars Minor of forcefully transplanting people from one convent to another, which was quite contrary to what the Tertiaries were accustomed to.<sup>32</sup> These same issues may have been at stake in Flanders in 1570, too, and even in the earlier conflict, but the *Memorie* is silent about it.



I. *Personas vacantes* (1413)

II. *Bruges Memorie*

Image created by Peter J. Brown, Radboud University Nijmegen, using data from the Copernicus Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and Natural Earth.

31 Bruges MS, 52-53.

32 Goudriaan, 'Derde orde', 213; Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 49-150.

## Liturgy and labor

Efforts to identify the peculiar type of spirituality characteristic of the Tertiaries of the Ypres group must take as point of departure the indications given by the bull *Personas vacantes* in combination with the statutes registered in the Bruges manuscript. Of course, from a methodical point of view there is some risk in relying too much on sources of a normative type. But apart from the fact that other sources are practically non-existent, the spiritual life described in the 1413 bull reflects a practice that had crystallized already to a certain degree and now was submitted to the pope for codification. Moreover, the tenacity with which the convents under discussion clung to it warrants that they continued to identify with the type of spirituality contained in it.

In analyzing the spirituality adopted by the Ypres Tertiaries I refer to the definition of this concept as developed in the Nijmegen school of Spirituality Studies and expounded by Kees Waaijman. Spirituality touches upon the inner center of a person, in which he is 'open to the transcendent dimension'.

'It is here that the person experiences ultimate reality. [Spirituality studies] explore the discovery of this core, the dynamics of its development, and its journey to the ultimate goal. It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent.'<sup>33</sup>

Whether or not the ultimate goal of the religious life is formulated in mystical terms, an approach like this one highlights the slow transformation of the religious person implied in such a life. This means that not only the endpoint, but also the means to reach it are worthy of attention. Both the journey and the equipment with which to go the road matter. For the historian this has the advantage that he/she is provided with a general framework of interpretation for the analysis of specific forms of regular observance governing religious life in community.

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33 Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality. Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), 4, adopting a definition given earlier by Ewart Cousins.

The bull *Supra montem* through which the Third Order was approved originally in 1289, was directed towards lay people conducting an enhanced religious life, but without vows. However, as we have seen already, *Personas vacantes* presupposes that its addressees take the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity from the start. Quite a lot of articles contained in the statutes are directed towards the implementation of the vows, especially of poverty. The prohibitions on possessing even the slightest item of private property are severe. Transgression is punished with fasting on water and bread and exclusion from communion. It is not allowed to own money through the mediation of third persons, on penalty of incarceration. By handling money sisters equal a Judas or a Simon the Magician. A sister found to have coins in her room is committing a deadly sin; if she dies in it she is not allowed to be buried in consecrated earth.<sup>34</sup>

The Ypres Tertiaries are not enclosed, however. *Personas vacantes* presupposes that they may go out, by differentiating between the habit to be worn inside the house and the dress for going out. But it is also true that the statutes narrowly circumscribe the use to be made by the sisters of their freedom to leave the convent. They never go out alone. In town, they only visit the houses to which they are dispatched. If they are sent to another town in matters concerning the convent, they have to present themselves immediately on arrival to the *mater* of the local convent, who has to supervise them during their stay instead of the mother of their own convent.<sup>35</sup>

Great score is set to the celebration of the liturgy, the series of statutes starting with this topic. The sisters are expected not to neglect the canonical hours. Matins are celebrated every night and those who fail to attend them run the risk of being disciplined. Each sister shall read the Vigils of Nine Lessons once a week.<sup>36</sup> But building on the allowance given in *Personas vacantes* for reduced forms of prayer, the statutes replace the Vigils by 15 Paternosters and 15 Ave Maria's for those sisters who are unable to read. Silence has to be observed from Compline to Prime.<sup>37</sup> The 'meestrigghe' (mistress) of the novices shall assemble daily both the novices and the younger and unexperienced sisters in order to train them in the liturgy.<sup>38</sup>

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34 Bruges MS, 35-36.

35 Ibidem, 38-39.

36 The extended form of Matins with nine readings from Scripture.

37 Ibidem, 28-30.

38 Bruges MS, 40.

The rules set for labor are intriguing because of their brevity. The basic prescriptions contained in *Personas vacantes* are the obligation for every member of the convent to do decent labor in order to win a livelihood both for him- or herself and for the community, and the injunction to the superior to divide time between prayer and labor in such a way as neither to extinguish devotion nor to induce the inmates to harmful laziness.<sup>39</sup> The bull does not specify, however, which type of labor is meant. In the Flemish translation inserted in the Bruges manuscript, the corresponding article is superscribed 'labor within the house'.<sup>40</sup> But in the stipulations with respect to the dress worn outside the possibility transpires that sisters leave the convent for doing their job. Do we have to assume that they left the convent in order to tend the ill? The statutes say that the *mater* shall not allow the sisters to go out singly to any house in town, 'nor to the ill'.<sup>41</sup> This could mean that they had license to visit the ill only two-by-two. But the implication could as well be that they were forbidden to visit the ill altogether. Positive evidence on the type of work they did is lacking almost completely. We only know that in 1458 the Tertiaries of Furnes did manual labor, including the washing of altar cloth.<sup>42</sup> In sum, before rushing to the conclusion that these West-Flemish convents were 'active' in the sense of geared towards charitable work, we must bring to mind that the Ypres region in the Later Middle Ages was the seat of a flourishing cloth industry. Perhaps the proper context for the labor done by the Tertiaries has to be sought for here.

### Actives versus contemplatives?

This brings us to the question how to categorize this specific branch of the Third Order. The present contribution relies heavily on the useful repertory published by Marc Carnier on the Grey Sisters of Belgium under the auspices of the National Archives at Brussels.<sup>43</sup> By 'Grey Sisters' Carnier understands the Tertiaries with an 'active' style of life, following the

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39 Wadding, *Annales Minorum* IX, 655.

40 Bruges MS, 9.

41 Ibidem, 40.

42 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 516.

43 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, passim.

common distinction between ‘contemplative’ female religious orders that are devoted to prayer, meditation and study, and ‘active’ ones orientated towards various types of charity and social care, and to teaching. A separate, much smaller, volume on the contemplative Tertiaries of Belgium was planned but not executed.<sup>44</sup>

The majority of the convents of Grey Sisters in the repertory is found in the historical county of Flanders. In accordance with his general approach, Carnier subsumes them under the Franciscan province of Francia.<sup>45</sup> They belong to three chapters: the Chapter of St Catherine, a Chapter of Hospital Sisters numbering 24 convents in 1483, and a Chapter overarching a much smaller group of Sisters of the Cell. In Carnier’s arrangement of subject material a certain amount of ‘path dependence’ – to borrow a term from economic history – has played a role. In the first place, in grouping together exactly these three chapters, Carnier is heir to two important publications from the early twentieth century. In 1921 Jérôme Goyens edited written reports on chapter meetings of the Hospital Sisters at Wisbecq in 1483 and of St Catherine at Bruges in 1487 in such a way as to suggest that these meetings united the same group of convents.<sup>46</sup> Three years later, Henri Lemaître published a survey of convents in Belgium and the adjacent part of Northern France with – what he supposed to be – a call for nursing tasks, among which all three aforementioned chapters were represented.<sup>47</sup> Carnier distinguishes more clearly between the three Chapters but adopts from his predecessors the general idea of grouping them together.

Secondly, in composing his volume on the Grey Sisters, Carnier adopts the standard binomy of ‘active’ and ‘contemplative’ orders, as does the ‘Bibliographical Introduction to Belgian Monastic History’ series to which his volume belongs.<sup>48</sup> He himself, for that matter, is well aware of the dif-

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44 Ibidem, 5-6 (Preface).

45 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 18-27.

46 Goyens, ‘Chapitres’. Goyens found his documents in the Provincial Archives of the Friars Minor, which may have influenced his way of presenting them. Source criticism is necessary, but this is not the place to pursue this point.

47 Henri Lemaître, ‘Les soins hospitaliers à domicile donnés dès le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle par des religieuses franciscaines, les soeurs noires et les soeurs grises. Leurs Maisons’, *Revue d’histoire franciscaine* 1 (1924), 180-208.

48 Bibliografische inleiding tot de Belgische kloostergeschiedenis vóór 1796 (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1996 - ). See also Craig Harline, ‘Actives and Contemplatives. The Female Religious of the Low Countries before and after Trent’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995), 541-567, focusing on the Early Modern Era.



difficulties involved when it comes to the application of this simple opposition to the complex life of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>49</sup> And although the binomy has much practical value, it is not without ambiguity as well as of anachronism. As Giles Constable has made clear, the use of the Mary and Martha metaphor for the contemplative and the active life exhibits an infinite range of varieties.<sup>50</sup> If applied to the evaluation of manual labor, it is possible, indeed, to subsume this under the category of the active life. This happens for instance in the context of an opposition between monks singing the Office in choir and lay brethren doing agricultural work. But one also finds the conviction that manual labor – in contrast to works of mercy – is a help rather than a hindrance for contemplation.<sup>51</sup> In the orbit of the *Devotio moderna* it was customary for women's convents to combine spinning and weaving, indoor activities accessible even to cloistered women, with prayer and meditation, inserting these activities in a contemplative style of life.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from this, a neat division between two overarching types of religious orders, the one active, the other contemplative, is nowhere found in medieval sources. In papal or episcopal privileges allowing convents to adopt an ecclesiastically approved rule – either the Third Rule of St Francis or the Rule of St Augustine – we do find stipulations to adjust their new canonical status to their customary charitable activities if they wish to continue them. Cases in point are those of the Flemish Hospital Sisters in 1458 and of the Sisters of the Cell in 1474.<sup>53</sup> But in cases like these it is never suggested that by this transformation they came to belong to an overarching category of 'active' orders.

With respect to the Chapter of St Catherine, Carnier himself voices his doubts as to whether it is right to subsume it under the active category. He finds almost no trace of care for the ill and observes that the convents

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49 As transpiring in his Preface: Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 5.

50 Giles Constable, "The interpretation of Mary and Martha" in: Idem, *Three studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge Mass: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-141.

51 Cf. the case of the Cistercian monk Idungus cited in Constable, 'Mary and Martha,' 85.

52 Anne Bollmann, "Mijt dijt spinnen soe suldi den hemel gewinnen." Die Arbeit als normierender und frömmigkeitszentrierender Einfluss in den Frauengemeinschaften der *Devotio moderna*, in: *Normative Zentrierung = Normative Centering*, ed. R. Suntrup and J.R. Veenstra (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2002), 85-124.

53 *Bullarium Franciscanum* II, ed. José Maria Pou y Martí (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia S. Bonaventurae, 1939), no. 552; resp. III (1949), no. 571.

under discussion rather lived from manual labor and rents.<sup>54</sup> We might add that the importance attached to liturgical life points to a 'contemplative' rather than to an 'active' profile.

### Literary culture?

One important domain of spirituality so far has not been touched upon with respect to the Tertiaries of the Ypres region. The theme of the 2021 Nijmegen conference included cultural production as an important aspect of Observant reform. In his opening address, Bert Roest referred to the well-known thesis of Werner Williams-Krapp, according to which there is a close connection between late medieval monastic reform and the intense flourishing of devotional literature produced during that period.<sup>55</sup> As a matter of fact, this characteristic of late medieval religious life is conspicuous by its absence from the spirituality of the Ypres group. The series of statutes inserted in the Bruges MS ends with an article that is flatly discouraging with respect to the reading of books:

'No convent of sisters shall allow the use of the Bible or the New Testament in Flemish or Walloon. The sisters shall not be curious or desirous to possess or read new books. Rather they should train themselves in exercising obedience, meekness, patience, humility and in cultivating good inner devotion. With the knowledge and consent of the Mother some may have common good old devout books, for example of the Passion of Christ. Nevertheless, they should not be too much attached to reading, but rather to doing and living well.'<sup>56</sup>

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54 Carnier, *Communauteiten*, 23.

55 Werner Williams-Krapp, 'Observanzbewegungen, monastische Spiritualität und geistliche Literatur im 15. Jahrhundert', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 20 (1995), 1-15.

56 Bruges MS, 42-43: 'Datmen in gheen convent van suesteren toe en late tghebruijck van Vlaem-schen oft Walschen Bijbel, oft oock het nieuwe testamente. Ende dat de zuesters niet curieux noch begheerlick en zijn van nieuwe boucken thebben, of te lesen, maer meer huerlier zelven pooghen toeffenen inde exercitien van obediencie, zaechmoedicheijt [sic], patientie, otmoe-dicheijt [sic] ende in goede inwendighe devocie. Zulken nochtans bij wete ende consent van de Moeder mueghen hebben ghemeene oude goede en devote bouxkens, als van de passie ons Heeren en dierghelijcke, alsoo nochtans datse up dlesen niet te seer staen en moeten maer meer up tdoen en wel leven.'

It is quite possible that this particular article is late and reflects a reaction to the Reformation. Its position at the end of the statutes is an indication for this. But it does not stand alone. Its negative attitude towards the consumption of religious literature is underscored by the complete absence of evidence for literary activity in the West-Flemish convents under discussion right from the start in the early fifteenth century. In order to evaluate this observation properly, it is necessary to confront the findings for the Ypres group with those on other groups of Tertiaries in the Dutch-speaking parts of the Low Countries.

The best known group of Third Order convents in this region so far are those belonging to the so-called Chapter of Utrecht. It is also the most important group, which even near its end, around 1570, still numbered 82 convents, mainly situated in the central parts of the corresponding diocese.<sup>57</sup> The Chapter of Utrecht belonged to the wider movement of the *Devotio moderna*. From the start and right till the end it remained outside the sphere of influence of the Observant Franciscans.<sup>58</sup> A much smaller, though still important, group of kindred convents can be located in the diocese of Liège. These Tertiary women in due time came to be associated with the so-called Chapter of Zepperen of male Tertiaries.<sup>59</sup> Though their history is less well-studied so far than the history of the Utrecht Tertiaries and the situation in the diocese of Liège is slightly more diffuse than in the north, it seems justified to consider the Zepperen Tertiaries as a southern extension of the *Devotio moderna* that started in the Northern Low Countries.<sup>60</sup>

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57 For a list of convents see Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 411-414.

58 For the occasional tensions between these Tertiaries and the Friars Minor see *Ibidem*, 111-121; 148-156.

59 Marcel Haverals, 'Het Sint-Hiëronymusveld en de congregatie van Zepperen (1425-1460). Een bijdrage tot de kennis van de verhouding Begarden-Tertianen in het bisdom Luik' (Unpublished licentiate's thesis, Louvain, 1968). Available at <https://worldcat.org/ILL/AE/jVPQfJuo8>. See also Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 344-350.

60 Goudriaan, 'Maagdendries', 70-73; 77-80.



Distribution of Chapters of Tertiaries in the Low Countries. Source image: Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic, Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Edited by Peter J Brown, Radboud University Nijmegen.

The spiritual profile of the Modern Devout Tertiaries of Utrecht and Zeperen has much in common with that of the Ypres group as we have come to know it, including the importance attached to manual labor, in which economic and spiritual motives are interlaced. There is one important difference, however. Central to the religious life of the Utrecht and Zeperen sisters was an intense vernacular literary culture. Literary historians have charted by now the astonishing variety of literary genres produced by the Modern Devout.<sup>61</sup> The way they used to handle written texts as tools for

61 An important vehicle for these studies is the periodical *Ons Geestelijk Erf*. Cp. The portrait of Thom Mertens by Kees Schepers in *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 90:3/4 (2020), 205-210.

spiritual formation has been analyzed under the heading of ‘pragmatic literacy’.<sup>62</sup> Already before 1400 Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen wrote the treatise *De libris teutonicalibus* in defense of the reading of religious books by lay people (to which the Tertiaries belonged according to canon law), although he also applied considerable cautiousness in order to avoid the suspicion of heresy.<sup>63</sup> On behalf of the Tertiaries of the Chapter of Utrecht a translation campaign was launched in the early days of their existence.<sup>64</sup> Tertiary convents invested energy and capital in the building of libraries. Among preserved Dutch manuscripts with a monastic provenance those related to the *Devotio moderna* are preponderant, accounting for over 70% of the 1132 items. The heritage of convents of female Tertiaries covers 21% (239 manuscripts, only 18 of which from outside the *Devotio moderna*).<sup>65</sup>

These findings are in sharp contrast with those for the convents of the Ypres group. Among the fifteenth- or sixteenth-century manuscripts that have been transmitted no one can be traced to one of these convents. This suggests that the article in the statutes quoted above which dissuades from reading spiritual texts reflects an attitude towards literary involvement that was not at all new in the age of the Reformation. Aloofness from the handling of books may be taken as an important clue to the peculiar spirituality of these West-Flemish Tertiaries.

By the way, this is a trait which the convents of the Ypres group shared with those of the Chapter of St Catherine from which they had branched.

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62 This concept was introduced in *Devotio moderna* studies by Nikolaus Staubach, ‘Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Bereich der Devotio moderna’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), 418-461.

63 Gerhard Zerbolt of Zutphen, *Was dürfen Laien lesen? De libris teutonicalibus / Een verclaringhe vanden duytschen boeken*, ed. Nikolaus Staubach and Rudolf Suntrup (Münster: Aschendorff, 2019).

64 Kees, Schepers, *Bedwinghe op Cantica Canticorum, bewerkende vertaling van Glossa Tripartita super Cantica. Editie en teksthistorische studies* (Doctoral thesis Groningen, 1999; Edition Louvain: Peeters, 2006); Geert Warnar, ‘*Tleven ons heren Jhesu Christi*: Readers and Dutch Devotional Literature in the Fifteenth Century’ in: *Saints, scholars and politicians. Gender as a tool in Medieval Studies. Festschrift ... Anneke Mulder-Bakker*, ed. Mathilde van Dijk and Renée Nip (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 25-41; Sabrina Corbellini, ‘Een oude spiegel voor nieuwe maagden,’ *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 80 (2009), 171-198; José van Aelst, *Vruchten van de passie. De laat-middeleeuwse passieliteratuur verkend aan de hand van Suso’s Honderd Artikelen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 62-92. A survey in: Koen Goudriaan, ‘East and West in the *Devotio moderna*? A critical reexamination’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 90:3/4 (2020), 330-362.

65 Census: Karl Stooker and Theo Verbeij, *Collecties op Orde. Middelnederlandse handschriften uit kloosters en semi-religieuze gemeenschappen in de Nederlanden*. 2 Vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 1997). Calculations: Goudriaan, ‘East and West’, 344-345 and breakdown in Table IV on p. 349.

These, too, are absent from the census of Middle Dutch manuscripts with a monastic provenance.<sup>66</sup> This observation, in its turn, elicits two points of commentary. It may be no coincidence that no interaction or exchange is recorded between the Tertiaries of West-Flanders – those in the Ypres group and those that continued to adhere to the Chapter of St Catherine – and the Tertiaries in the Chapter of Utrecht, as was the case with the convents which came to be subsumed under the Chapter of Zepperen. This amounts to saying that the Flemish convents were outside the orbit of the *Devotio moderna*.

Secondly, apparently no connection exists between the influence of the Observants and the abstention of reading culture as practiced in some Tertiary convents. This characteristic is shared by the convents of St Catherine, which submitted to the Observants, and the Ypres convents, which did not. Additionally, the Observant Friars Minor of the Northern Low Countries managed to start a small number of Tertiary convents of their own, alongside those of the Chapter of Utrecht. These Tertiaries, sometimes entitled Barefoot Sisters, did leave behind a (small) number of manuscripts.<sup>67</sup>

### **A matrix of Tertiary spiritualities**

It is time to pull the strings of the argument together. But before coming to a conclusion, a brief remark must be inserted on one particular characteristic of the West-Flemish Tertiaries: their taking the three vows. It is difficult to measure the impact of this specific tool on their spiritual life, due to lack of evidence for the convents under discussion, extremely low profile as they are. Remarkably, with their early adoption of the vows (1413) they were far ahead of other categories of Tertiary convents in the Low Countries. At the foundation of the Chapter of Utrecht (1399/1401), the participating convents were obliged to take the vow of chastity; the two other vows were

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66 Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op Orde*, Vol. 2.

67 For this category of convents see Goudriaan, 'Derde orde', 237-238; Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 166. The convents involved are situated in the following towns (with reference to the digital census *Monasteries in the Netherlands until 1800*: <https://geoplaza.vu.nl/projects/kloosterlijst/en/>): Alkmaar (A12); Enkhuizen (E13); Haarlem (H18); Harderwijk (H35); Hoorn (H89); Leiden (L20 and L28), and Schiedam (S08). For the relevant manuscripts, see: Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde*, nos. 437; 698-701; 743-744; 750-751.

added only gradually, a process which took the largest part of the fifteenth century.<sup>68</sup> The situation for the Tertiaries of Liège is less clear. A leading convent in this area, St. Catherine's Vale at Hasselt, implemented the vows from the start (around 1440), but explicitly after the model of the Flemish Tertiaries, not of the Chapter of Utrecht to which it was more akin in other respects.<sup>69</sup> In general, the vows were introduced in Flanders more quickly than in the regions more thoroughly influenced by the *Devotio moderna*.

This contribution tried to illustrate the rich variation in Tertiary life in the late medieval Low Countries, highlighting in particular a small group of convents in the Westernmost corner of historical Flanders. If we enter the variation in a matrix, one cannot escape the impression of a certain amount of arbitrariness in the spread of the variables. Focusing on literary culture in the case of the Tertiaries of Ypres and region and in the Chapter of St Catherine, it now appears that a style of spirituality which points more to contemplation than to action not necessarily entails the cultivation of literacy.

Category	Start	Observants	Three Vows	Enclosure	Active/Contemplative	Literary Culture
Ch. of St Catherine	1413	increasingly	yes	no	contemplative (?)	no
Ypres Group	1481	no	yes	no	contemplative (?)	no
Ch. of Hospital Srs	1447	from the start	yes	no	active	no
Ch. of Cell Srs	1474	from the start	yes	no	active	no
Ch. of Utrecht	1399	no	1, later 3 vows	partly	contemplative	yes
Tertiaries of Liège (Zepperen)	ca. 1460	combatted	partly ?	partly	contemplative	yes
Holland Barefoot Sisters	ca. 1466	yes	?	?	contemplative	yes

68 Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 214-231.

69 Goudriaan, 'Maagdendries', 75-77.

In 1517 pope Leo X united all Franciscans under the umbrella of Observantism with the bull *Ite vos in vineam*.<sup>70</sup> This was a triumph for the claim of the Observant branch of the Friars Minor to represent the proper way of observing the Franciscan lifestyle. Around these same years efforts were made to adjust also the Third Order convents to the interpretation of Franciscanism advocated by the Observants. In the *breve Inter cetera* pope Leo X replaced *Supra montem* as the charter to regulate Tertiary life by a new set of rules, which not only incorporated recent developments such as the increased tendency to adopt both the three vows and enclosure, but also tied the Third to the First, by now Observant, Order.<sup>71</sup> Although this particular measure appears to have had little impact,<sup>72</sup> throughout the sixteenth century a program of making the Third Order conform to the Friars Minor remained on the ecclesiastical agenda.

However, the conclusion to be drawn from the material presented here is that the historian would do well in keeping some distance to the normativity implicit in the claim of Observantism. That will enable him to gain a clearer sight of the varieties in observance recognizable in the rich religious life of late medieval Tertiaries. One of the variables at work was exactly literary culture: often it was fostered as an element of devotion, but it could be opposed or thwarted as well.

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70 Wadding, *Annales Minorum XVI* (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 3rd Ed., 1933), 49-55; Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 583-585.

71 I consulted *Inter cetera* in the edition *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, ed. Laerzio Cherubini, vol I (Lyon: Arnaud, 1692), 619-621.

72 Van Engen, *Derde orde*, 32-33.





# Preaching the Observant Reform in Female Communities Related to the *Devotio moderna*

Patricia Stoop

## Introduction

The majority of the late medieval vernacular sermons from the Low Countries has been preserved from monastic houses, many of them female, related to the *Devotio moderna*, which in itself was, of course, an Observant reform movement.<sup>1</sup> The women within this reform movement — and particularly those living in convents of canonesses regular of St Augustine that adhered, formally or informally, to the Chapter of Windesheim, the monastic branch of the *Devotio moderna* — could make use of the excellent preaching services of confessors and preachers from within their own order. Several of these sermons have been recorded, often by the sisters themselves. Good examples are the sermons by Godevaert Kemp (1370-1449), Willem Storm (ca. 1414-1478), Jan Storm (before 1425-1488), and Paul of Someren (before 1425-1503), which were preached in the Brussels convent of Jericho and written down by Maria of Pee (ca. 1435-1511), Barbara Cuyermans (d. 1507), Janne Colijns (ca. 1454-1491), and Anne

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1 The *Devotio moderna* has been at the center of scholarly attention for many decades. The number of publications is endless. For a recent introduction, see Anna Dlábačová and Rijcklof Hofman (eds), *De Moderne Devotie. Spiritualiteit en cultuur vanaf de late Middeleeuwen* (Zwolle: WBooks, 2018).

Jordaens (d. 1491).<sup>2</sup> Adriaen Mant (d. 1460), a sister in Diepenveen, the motherhouse of the female branch of the Chapter of Windesheim, copied down the sermons that Beernt Arborstier initially preached for the canons regular of Sint-Salvator in Sneek between 1449 and 1454.<sup>3</sup> In Deinze near Ghent, the sisters of Sint-Margaretha committed the sermons that their rector and confessor Joris of der Salen preached in their convent between 1451 and 1480 onto paper. They are preserved in a mid-sixteenth-century copy written by Johanna Braem.<sup>4</sup> The late medieval tradition of preserving sermons by confessors of their own order extended far into the early modern period. Catherine Wouters, canoness regular of Sint-Elisabeth of Mount Sion in Brussels, wrote down the sermons Nicolaas of Winghe (d. 1552) preached in her convent, and the sermons Henricus Reyniers (d. 1571) preached between 1556 and 1560 in the convent of Sint-Salvator of Mount Thabor in Mechelen were written down by Elisabeth of Houte.<sup>5</sup> In Jericho, the sermon writing tradition continued until well into the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

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- 2 These sermons are preserved in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MSS 1683-87, 4287, 4367-68, 15130, II 298, and IV 402, and Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902. See Karel Stooker and Theo Verbeij, *Collecties op orde. Middelnederlandse handschriften uit kloosters en semi-religieuze gemeenschappen in de Nederlanden*, Miscellanea Neerlandica, 15-16, 2 Vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 1997) II, nos. 215, 218-219, 225, 230, and 234-235; Maria Sherwood-Smith, Patricia Stoop, Daniël Ermens and Willemien van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons preserved in Manuscripts from before 1550*, Miscellanea Neerlandica, 29, 7 Vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 2003 and 2008) I, 275-282, 389-408, 410-454, 611-612, and 620-646; IV, 440, 462-464, 502, and 522-523; and V, 247-275; and Patricia Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie. De zusters uit het Brusseelse klooster Jericho en de preken van hun biechtvaders*, Middelieuwe Studies en Bronnen, 127 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013).
  - 3 Deventer, Athenaeumbibliotheek, MSS 101 D 13 KL, 101 D 14 KL, and 101 F 16 KL. See Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, nos. 385-387 and Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* V, 149-184.
  - 4 Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 644 (dated ca 1550). See Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, no. 267, and Bas Diemel, *Daer es leven sonder sterven. Memoria en gemeenschapsvorming in Windesheimer kringen uit de laatmiddeleeuwse Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1350-1550*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Universiteit Gent, 2011), esp. 298-330.
  - 5 Respectively in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 516 and Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Cat. 1693. See Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, nos. 245 and 926. The convent of Thabor in Mechelen is not to be confused with the convent in Sneek where Beernt Arborstier preached.
  - 6 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 13.690 contains sermons from the period 1635-1714. See Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 16-17 and 423-424 (no. 36). The prologue to this sermon collection has been published in Patricia Stoop, 'The Writing Sisters of Jericho: Authors or Copyists?', in: *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson, *Sermo: Studies on Patristic, Medieval and Reformation Sermons and Preaching*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 275-308.

However, the interests of female inhabitants in convents adhering to the *Devotio moderna* were not limited to sermons preached by their own confessors. Several convents — of canonesses regular, tertiaries, and sisters of the Common Life alike — also collected sermons by Dominican or Franciscan friars, or invited Observant mendicants to preach in their convents.<sup>7</sup> These women thus played an important role in the distribution and circulation of Observant ideas. In this article, I will explore how Observant Reformers and their sermons circulated in the Low Countries. For the sake

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7 Women from other religious denominations also were interested in sermons by mendicant — mostly Franciscan — preachers. Mariken die Berc of Oesterwijck, a beguine in Diest, for example, owned a manuscript containing, among many other texts, a cycle of sermons preached by an anonymous Friar Minor, likely in the beguinage (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 3047, fols. 10r-116r). Jenneken of den Eechout, ‘kerkmeesteresse’ [‘churchwarden’] of the beguinage in Molenbeek, owned a large manuscript (Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 3646-48) with the sermons of Frans Vervoort (ca. 1490-1555). She bequeathed it to the Benedictine abbey of Vorst after her death. In his capacity as the nuns’ confessor, the Franciscan friar Martinus of Turnhout (*alias* Martinus van der Keele; d. 1540) gave twenty-six sermons halfway the sixteenth century to the Urbanist Poor Clares in Louvain (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Néerl. 40, fols. 35v-56v and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Series Nova 12795, fols. 198r-290v; the latter copy is written by Mariken vanden Brant of Breda). Balthasar of der Heyden (*alias* De Merica or De Meryaca) preached on several occasions in the same convent. Twenty-eight of his sermons on the Passion of Christ, preached between 1565 and 1567, are preserved in Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 3039; a sermon on *Cantica canticorum* is kept in Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 490. Sint-Truiden, Instituut voor Franciscaanse Geschiedenis, MS a 14 contains a cycle of sermons on *Cantica canticorum*, likely preached for the Urbanist Poor Clares in 1559-1561. A cycle of sermons by Lucas of der Heyden on the same occasion has been preserved from the beguinage of Molenbeek (Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 685). Whether the Sint-Truiden manuscript and this copy from Molenbeek contain the same text is not clear at this moment. In the 1560s, the Franciscan friar Johannes Mahusius (ca. 1503-1577) preached in the Cistercian Abbey of Ter Kameren (La Cambre) near Brussels. The nuns noted down fifty-seven of his sermons – twenty-nine on the ‘the twelve articles of Christian faith’, a sermon on the hymn *Veni creator spiritus*, and twenty-seven sermons on the *Pater Noster*. The original copies from Ter Kameren do not exist anymore. The extant copies stem from the Benedictine monastery of Vorst (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MSS 3665-66 and 4297-98). This latter abbey also owned sermons by, among other preachers, Hendrik Pippinck (ca. 1524-ca. 1580), provincial of the *Provincia Germaniae Inferioris* in 1564-1568 and later guardian in Mechelen (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MSS 3986-89 and 4289-96). See Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, nos. 203, 205, 401, 762-763, 765-767, 1242-1243, and 1247-1248. For the collections of sermons by Johannes Mahusius, see also Patricia Stoop, ‘Nuns’ Literacy in 16th-Century Convent Sermons from the Cistercian Abbey of Ter Kameren’, in: *Nuns’ Literacies in Medieval Europe. The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O’Mara and Patricia Stoop, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 293-312, and Patricia Stoop (in collaboration with Emily Mariën), ‘Johannes Mahusius’ preek op het Onze Vader als gedragsregel voor de cisterciënzerinnen van Ter Kameren’, in: *Geest in letteren gespiegeld. Essays voor Thom Mertens II*, ed. Kees Schepers, John Arblaster, Veerle Fraeters and Patricia Stoop. Special issue of *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 91:1-3 (2021), 184-217.

of conciseness, I will limit myself here to Middle Dutch sermons that have been handed down from Observant Friars Minor.<sup>8</sup>

If we look at the circulation of sermons by Observant Franciscan friars, we observe two trends.<sup>9</sup> The first is that the sermons of certain preachers circulated relatively widely through the Low Countries, independent of the place where they had been preached. And the second is that sermons were preached by mendicant friars within modern devout communities, where their sermons, alongside the ones by the convents' own confessors (which were mentioned above), were written down by the inhabitants of those convents. Generally speaking, those sermons stayed within these communities as so-called *Hausüberlieferung*.<sup>10</sup> In what follows I will give a few examples of both tendencies.

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8 As I will focus on sermons by the (Observant) Franciscan friars in the remainder of this essay, I will only shortly mention the sermons preached by prominent Observant Dominicans in female convents related to the *Devotio moderna* here, as they are referenced in Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons*. They mainly are preserved from Brussels. Johannes van Namen (d. ca. 1475/6), founder and first prior of the convent of Observant Dominicans in Brussels, preached in 1466, 1471, 1472, and 1474 in the Brussels convent of Jericho (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 4287, fols. 192r-196v and Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902, fols. 40v-44v, 175v-179r, and 188v-192r; see Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 406; and V, 254, 265-266, and 268). Possibly he also preached in the convent of Sint-Elisabeth op de berg Sion in Brussels (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 15419, fols. 18r-19r; see Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* VI, 512). The subpriors of the Dominicans, brother Aert *alias* Arnoldus? (in 1466) and brother Petrus (between the end of 1466 and 29 september 1467), also came regularly to Jericho to preach. Additionally, a sermon by brother Egidius and two anonymous Dominicans have been written down by the canonesses from Jericho (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 1683-87, fols. 121v-128r; Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 4367-68, fols. 310r-330v; and Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902, fols. 5r-10v, 12r-17r, 23v-27v, 172r-175v, 186r-188v, 192r-196v, 201v-207v, 212r-227v, and 235r-240v; see Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 279-280, and 452-454; V, 249-251, 264-265, 267-271, and 273. See also Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 272-273. From the convent of Nazareth in Geldern two sermons (the so-called *Kölner Klosterpredigten*) by *Meister Gerard* have been preserved. His identity is uncertain. See Freimut Löser, 'Predigen in dominikanischen Konventen. "Kölner Klosterpredigten" und "Paradisus anime intelligentis"', in: *'Paradisus anime intelligentis'. Studien zu einer dominikanischen Predigtsammlung aus dem Umkreis Meister Eckharts*, ed. Burkhard Hasebrink, Nigel F. Palmer, and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2009), 227-264 (esp. 235).

9 Sermons by Franciscan Observant preachers in the Low Countries are also shortly discussed in Bert Roest, 'Franciscans between Observance and Reformation: The Low Countries (ca. 1400-1600)', in: *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005), 409-442 (especially on 417-422).

10 Thom Mertens explains the term *Hausüberlieferung* as follows: 'was bedeutet, daß die Texte im betreffenden Haus selbst verfaßt und nicht außerhalb dieses Hauses überliefert wurden'. See Thom Mertens, 'Ein Prediger in zweifacher Ausführung. Die Kollationen des Claus von

## Circulation of Observant Franciscan sermons

The most famous Observant Franciscan preacher in the Low Countries was Johannes Brugman (ca. 1405-1473).<sup>11</sup> He played a large role in introducing the Observance in Brabant from 1447 on, when he chased the Conventuals out of the friary in Mechelen and shortly thereafter became the friary's new guardian. From 1458 onwards he was involved in founding Observant houses elsewhere in the region. He must have been such an ardent and eloquent preacher that a Dutch expression still refers to him. Someone who 'praat als Brugman' ('speaks like Brugman') is very well-expressed and persuasive. Although his proverbial eloquence is not entirely reflected in the extant versions unless in his frequent use of *exempla* and images from everyday life and his intense use of adhortations, his sermons were disseminated very widely throughout the Low Countries. His sermons have been preserved in no less than sixteen manuscripts. Although fourteen of them mainly contain so-called *Streu-Überlieferung* — that is one or two individual sermons per manuscript — two codices contain larger cycles.<sup>12</sup> The first manuscript, Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1301, contains seven sermons and the scheme of a sermon, and originated in the convent of canonesses regular of Sint-Agnes in Maaseik, one of

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Euskirchen', in: *Predigt im Kontext*, ed. Volker Mertens, Hans-Jochen Schiewer, Regina D. Schiewer, and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 421-432 (there 422).

- 11 For an extensive biography of Johannes Brugman, see Frederik A. H. van den Hombergh, *Leven en werk van Jan Brugman O.F.M. (± 1400-1473). Met een uitgave van twee van zijn tractaten* (Groningen: Wolters, 1967); Benjamin De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi*, 3 Vols. (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1974) I, 65-102; Nico Lettinck, *Praten als Brugman. De wereld van een Nederlandse volksprediker aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen*, Verloren Verleden, 5 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999); and 'Johannes Brugman (Johannes Brugman/Jan Brugman, ca. 1400, Kempen-1473, Nijmegen)', in: Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, 'Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th century. A Catalogue in Progress' [<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>; accessed 11 July 2022]. De Troeyer also provides an overview of Brugman's works. Editions of his sermons are available in *Jan Brugman. Verspreide sermoenen*, ed. Am. Van Dijk, Klassieke Gallerij, 41 (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1948) and *Onuitgegeven sermoenen van Jan Brugman o.f.m.*, ed. Petrus Grootens, Studiën en Tekstuutgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 8 (Tiel: Lannoo, 1948).
- 12 The transmission of Brugman's sermons in these two manuscripts has been analyzed in Thom Mertens, 'The Sermons of Johannes Brugman OFM († 1473). Preservation and Form', in: *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson, *Sermo: Studies on Patristic, Medieval and Reformation Sermons and Preaching*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 254-274.

the many female houses that followed the Windesheim regulations.<sup>13</sup> The second, Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Neerl. 14, contains no less than 23 sermons attributed to Brugman.<sup>14</sup> It was most likely copied in the male convent of Korsendonk near Turnhout which belonged to the Chapter of Windesheim. Interestingly, sermons in both collections are addressed to a mixed audience of 'bruyten in Christo Jhesu' ('brides in Jesus Christ'; Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Neerl. 14, sermon 8), 'lieve meechden' ('dear virgins'; Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1301, sermon 2) or 'susteren' ('sisters'; Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Neerl. 14, sermons 9-10), or 'lieve brueders' ('dear brothers'; Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Neerl. 14, sermon 3), or more generally, of 'lieve kijnder' or 'mijn kijnderkens' ('dear children' or 'my children'; Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Neerl. 14, sermon 12 and Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1301, sermon 1). This gives the impression that both the Maaseik canonesses and the Korsendonk canons collected Brugman's sermons from several places, but more research is needed to be able to make more conclusive statements about this.

As far as we can deduce the manuscripts' provenances from colophons and ownership inscriptions,<sup>15</sup> the other manuscripts with the *Streu-Überlieferung* also belonged to modern devout communities.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the collection mentioned above, the canonesses regular of Sint-Agnes in Maaseik owned a second codex with two long sermons by Brugman, which did not occur in the Ghent manuscript.<sup>17</sup> Another codex was owned

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13 For a short description of the manuscript and the sermons therein, see Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* V, 362-366.

14 See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 38-50; III, 1453; and IV, 101-102.

15 The following manuscripts contain no clues as to their origin: Aerdenhout, dr. Gerard Jaspers, MS z.s.; Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MSS I F 51 and I G 25; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 F 31; Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk 223. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk 239 and San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS HM 1048 belonged to religious women, respectively Sister Jan Everwijns and Sister Elisabeth of Oldenbarnevelt (the Leiden manuscript), and Sister Mechtel Pijls. It is unclear in which communities they lived.

16 The only exception to this rule is Cologne, Historisches Archiv, MS GB oct. 71 which was owned by the beguines of the Ronde Begijnhof in Amsterdam. See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* V, 488-493. The manuscript description in the *Repertorium* was made before the Cologne archive collapsed in 2009. It is unclear what happened to the manuscript at that time.

17 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 73 H 31. See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* II, 887-889 and V, 34-35. The first sermon in

by the canonesses regular of Nazareth in Geldern (nowadays just across the border in Germany).<sup>18</sup> Three other copies were owned by, respectively, the Sisters of the Common Life of Sint-Ursula (Brandeshuus) in Deventer, and the communities of tertiaries of Sint-Gertrudis in Bockum near Krefeld, just across the border in Germany as well, and of Sint-Agnes in Elburg near Kampen and Zwolle, so in the heart of the area where the *Devotio moderna* came into existence.<sup>19</sup> Particularly interesting is Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk 222. The manuscript cannot be located — according to the *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta* it stems from Holland, perhaps Delft — and contains only one small excerpt from a sermon by Johannes Brugman (fols. 50r-51r). It is, however, the only codex that shows explicitly that Brugman actually preached in women's communities, in this case in the tertiary convent of Sint-Elisabeth in The Hague: 'Johannes Brugman mijnre broeder heeft dit navolgen gepredict in die capelle van sinte Elijsabetteten [...] cloester inden Hage int jaer ons heren M CCCC ende LVIII' ['Friar Minor Johannes Brugman has preached the following in the chapel of the convent of Sint-Elisabeth in The Hague in the year 1458'; fol. 50r].<sup>20</sup>

Brugman's sermons display a clear Franciscan spirituality, and he is the only preacher of whom a sermon on St Francis of Assisi in Middle Dutch has been preserved.<sup>21</sup> In this sermon he sets the 'banierdrager des oversten conincs' ['standard-bearer of the highest king'; fol. 107v], who is signed by

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this manuscript in The Hague (an adaptation of a sermon by Ubertino of Casale (1259–ca. 1329) is transmitted in the collection that is now kept in the Ruusbroecgenootschap as well. The second sermon has no parallel transmission.

18 Cracow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, MS Germ. Qu. 1085. See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* V, 547-548.

19 Deventer, Athenaeumbibliotheek, MS 101 D 12 KL (hs. I,66); Brussels, Bibliotheek van de Bollandisten, MS 678; and Weert, Gemeentemuseum, Minderbroederscollectie MS 26. See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 59-60; III, 1405 and 1448; IV, 419; V, 142-149; and VI, 465-471.

20 See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* III, 1440 and VI, 25-27; and <https://bnm-i.huylgens.knaw.nl/tekstdraggers/TDRA000000000863> [accessed 12 April 2022].

21 The full — albeit incomplete — version of this sermon occurs in Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, MS Neerl. 14, sermon 21 (fols. 107v-111v). An excerpt of it is preserved in Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek (UvA), MS I F 51 (fols. 312r-316v). The only other fragment of a sermon on the occasion of the Feast of St Francis in Middle Dutch is attributed to Johannes Tauler, in Utrecht, Museum Catharijne Convent, MS RMCC H 1 (fols. 141v-142r). See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 49-50; IV, 22-23, 101; and VI, 416. For the edition of Brugman's sermon, see *Onuitgegeven sermoenen*, ed. Grootens, 258-264.



God ‘metten vijf zegelen der heiliger vijf wonden ons heren ihesu christi’ [‘with the five seals of the holy five wounds of our Lord Jhesus Christ’; fol. 108v], as an example for spiritual people, in the sense that they should, like St Francis, dislike all earthly things and burdens and despise all worldly comforts from friends and relatives. In sermon 1 (Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, MS Neerl. 14, fols. 1r-8r) Brugman praises Francis’s affection for the Christ child for whom he made a manger:

‘Och, hoe grote begeerte hadde die heilige vader Franciscus tot deser geboerten des jongen kijndekens van Bethleem, doen hi die cribbe maecte, daer hi dat ewangeli voer sanck op den kerstnacht, daer die goedertieren heer hem gheweerdichden in te comen.’ (fol. 7r)

[‘Oh, how St Francis longed for the birth of the young child of Bethlehem, when he made the crib to which he sang the gospel on Christmas Eve, where the good Lord deigned to come in.’]

In passing, Brugman also expresses his own admiration for the founder of his order:

‘Daer was corts een man bi ons, die seide dattet een sijnlike devocie was, die sinte Franciscus doen hadde, doen hi die cribbe maecten. Mer hadde ic daer geweest, ic woude sijn knecht geweest hebben, opdat ic de vuericheit hadde moegen ghenieten myns lieven vaders ende vanden cleynen kijnde verblyden.’ (fol. 7r)

[‘There was also a man with us for a short period, who said that it was a sensory devotion, which St Francis had when he made the crib. But if I had been there, I would have been his servant, so that I could have enjoyed the passion of my dear father and rejoice about the little child.’]

In sermon 3 in the same codex (fols. 15r-24v), the manger features again, this time in the story of the Nativity. In this case, the manger and the stable in which Christ lies, surrounded by the ox and the ass as St Francis

arranged it in Greccio in 1223, function as a token of victory of poverty over the vanity of the world and temptations of the flesh.<sup>22</sup>

Another central and recurrent motif in the sermons is how ‘onse heer Jhesus, coninc der glorien, heeft alle die teeken en sijnre moegentheit ende clearheit verborghen, ende hem in armoeden ende snoetheiden ende in menichvoldighen cruce verduystert’ [‘our Lord Jesus, king of glory, hid all the signs of his power and splendor and surrounded himself with darkness in poverty and nullity and in all manner of crucifixions’; fol. 19r], so that humankind could relate to him, receive him, acknowledge him, and follow his example. Other central virtues that are often repeated are purity, humility, simplicity, voluntary poverty (the renunciation of earthly goods, which in Brugman’s view is particularly relevant for monastics), austerity, penitence, and Christ’s suffering and the importance of emulating it. It is very important, in Brugman’s eyes, that people should be ‘recht als beslabde kijnder, die in der koeken lopen, daer men niet op en acht’ [‘like children with bibs walking in the kitchen, but to which no-one pays attention’], in other words, so humble and modest that they are almost unnoticeable.<sup>23</sup> Although Brugman seems to push all these virtues a bit more to the extreme than I have seen in other sermons, all of them seem appropriate for any man or woman living under a monastic rule, and in that regard they are easily transferrable to any religious context.

### Observant Franciscan sermons and the printing press

A second preacher whose sermons circulated relatively widely — especially in the Southern Low Countries — was Hendrik of Santen (fl. 1487-1493). Little is known about him apart from the fact that was guardian in Mechelen in 1487 and probably again from the second half of 1488 onwards until his death in 1493 (in the meantime he was commissarius in the Observant province of Cologne).<sup>24</sup> Part of his sermons, *Die collacien vanden*

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22 See *Onuitgegeven sermoenen*, ed. Grootens, 40, 43, 58. – St Francis is also mentioned in the manuscript on fols. 29v-30r and 35r.

23 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 F 31, fol. 8r. See *Onuitgegeven sermoenen*, ed. Grootens, 120.

24 De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* I, 141-156. See also P. Mattheus Verjans, ‘P. Hendrik van Santen († 1493). Een mystieke minderbroeder (i)’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 4 (1930), 196-204. See also ‘Henricus de Zanten (Henricus Xantis/Hendrik van

*ervverdigen vaders broeder Henricus van Santen, gardiaen van Mechelen*, have been printed — likely posthumously but a date is unknown — by Jan Seversz in Leiden.<sup>25</sup> The collection that deals extensively with contemplative life ('scuwende leven'), was reprinted twice in Antwerp by Hendrik Eckert of Homberch. The first edition was probably printed around 1510; the second around 1515.<sup>26</sup> Although the Ghent copy of Homberch's second edition of Hendrik of Santen's sermon collection belonged to a Sister Mary,<sup>27</sup> it is hard to tell whether and to what extent the printed copies circulated within convents of the *Devotio moderna*: ownership inscriptions are seldom mentioned in (online) catalogues of early printed books.

Interestingly however, Santen's sermons on contemplative life also circulated in manuscript before they were put to the press and continued to do so thereafter, and at least two — but most probably three — manuscripts that contain the cycle (or part thereof) stem from female modern devout communities. The oldest manuscript, Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 895 — dated in 1500 (fols. 61r-291v) and 1503 (fols. 1r-60v) —

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Santen, d. 1493'), in: Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, 'Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th century. A Catalogue in Progress' [<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>; accessed 11 July 2022].

- 25 This first edition by Jan Seversz has been preserved in at least two copies: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 228 G 11 and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Maatschappij Nederlandse Letterkunde (KL), 1497 G 35. See *Netherlandish Books. Books Published in the Low Countries and Dutch Books Printed before 1601*, ed. Andrew Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby, 2 Vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), no. 27368.
- 26 *Die collacien vanden eerverdigen vaders broeder Henricus van Santen, Gardiaen van Mechelen* (Antwerp: Henrick Eckert van Homberch, s.d.). The edition that was probably printed around 1510 is preserved in five copies: Antwerp, Minderbroeders (shelfmark unknown); Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Preciosa A 2250; Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, INC A 1.529; London, British Library, C.110.a.18; and Washington D.C., Library of Congress, BV4830.H4 [<https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2021rosen1119>; accessed 14 April 2022]. See *Netherlandish Books*, ed. Pettegree and Walsby, no. 27369 and <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/editions/410067> [accessed 14 April 2022]. (The information in the Universal Short Title Catalogue is not entirely identical with the data given in Pettegree and Walsby. I follow their inventory here). The 1515-edition is also preserved in five copies: Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, BIB.ACC.005782/3; Darmstadt, Technische Universität, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, W 3196/110; Cologne, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek, AD+S836; and Xanten, Stiftsbibliothek, shelfmark unknown. *Netherlandish Books*, ed. Pettegree and Walsby mentions a 1515-copy in the British Library in London as well, but I cannot find any traces of that in their online catalogue.
- 27 The ownership inscription on the title page of Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, BIB.ACC.005782/3 reads: 'Dit boexken hoort toe zuster Maria' ['This booklet belongs to Sister Maria']. See <https://books.google.be/books?vid=GENT900000058535&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [accessed 14 April 2022].

was owned by the canonesses regular of Sint-Luciendal in Sint-Truiden (located in what is nowadays the province of Limburg in Belgium). Most likely it was (partially) copied there as well.<sup>28</sup> Hendrik of Santen's *collacien* on contemplative life — here divided into two parts — occurs at the end of the codex on fols. 273r-288v.<sup>29</sup> The much younger manuscript The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 73 F 28 (dated around 1550), contains only an excerpt of Hendrik of Santen's sermon (on fols. 12r-14v) and belonged to the canonesses regular of Sint-Agnes in Maaseik who also owned the two manuscripts with Brugman's sermons that were discussed before.<sup>30</sup> That Brussels, Stadsarchief, MS 2915 (dated ca. 1500) also most probably originates from modern devout circles can be deduced from the further contents of the codex. Santen's sermons (fols. 262r-276r) are preceded by two sermons by Alijt Bake (d. 1455) who was the prioress of the convent of Galilea in Ghent, one of the thirteen houses of canonesses regular that officially belonged to the Chapter of Windesheim.<sup>31</sup> The codex also contains sermons and excerpts from treatises by the famous authors Jan of Ruusbroec (d. 1381; *Die geestelijke brulocht* [*The Spiritual Espousals*] and *Vanden seven sloten* [*The Seven Enclosures*]), Thomas a Kempis (d. 1471; *De imitatione Christi*, book II, ch. 12), and the Observant Franciscan friars Dirc Coelde of Münster (ca. 1435-1515) and Hendrik Herp (d. 1477; *Spiegel*

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28 The ownership inscription at the first (unfoliated) page of the book reads: 'Dit boeck hoert toe den cloester van Sinte Luyciendaele gheleghen buyten der goeder stadt van Sintrude' ['This book belongs to the cloister of Sint-Luciendal, located outside the good town of Sint-Truiden']. The manuscript is a composite volume, written by several scribes. The colophon on fol. 250r mentions a female scribe: 'Ghescreven inden jaer xv' van eender religioeser wies naeme ghescreven moet wesen in den boeke des levens JH, rusten moet sij inden ewigen vrede' ['Written in the year 1500 by a religious person whose name must be written in the book of life JH; may she rest in eternal peace']. She was also the one who wrote the ownership inscription at the beginning of the manuscript. Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, no. 1147 suggest that the scribe was a man, and possibly the confessor of Sint-Luciendal. They are most likely drawing — wrongly in my opinion — on the colophon on fol. 60v which refers to Petrus Dorlandus (d. 1507), the author of *de Historie van S. Joseph* (fols. 1r-60v) and the *Historia perpulchra de Anna Sanctissima* (fols. 62v-110r).

29 Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* V, 246-247.

30 Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op orde* II, no. 812; Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* II, 852-853.

31 R. Th. M. van Dijk, *De constituties der Windesheimse vrouwenkloosters vóór 1559*, *Middeleeuwse Studies*, III, 2 Vols. (Nijmegen: Centrum voor Middeleeuwse Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen) I, 29; Wybren Scheepsma, *Deemoed en devotie. De koorvrouwen van Windesheim en hun geschriften*, *Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen*, 17 (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997), 20 and especially appendix I, 222-231.

*der volcomenheit* [*The Mirror of Perfection*], ch. 1-12), who were all highly influential within the *Devotio moderna*.<sup>32</sup> Although the colophon makes it abundantly clear that the manuscript was written by a man, which could indicate a male provenance as well,<sup>33</sup> an epistle intended for a religious sister indicates that the book indeed was written for use in a female convent.<sup>34</sup>

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32 Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I, 731-734. Hendrik Herp and Dirk Coelde of Münster were also important figures in the Franciscan Observant movement. Herp was the founder and first guardian of the Observant convent of Boetendael in the Foret de Soignies near Brussels, that came into being in 1467 under the auspices of Isabella of Portugal, duchess of Brabant. Coelde of Münster was the convent's guardian between 1502 and 1508. Both were eminent and prolific preachers and authors. Herp's most famous work is the mystical treatise *Spiegel der Volcomenheit*, and Dirc Coelde is particularly known for his highly popular *Der kerstenen Spiegel* [*The Mirror for Christians*], which was published multiple times after 1477. The *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* mentions only one vernacular sermon by Herp (Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902, fols. 17r-23v), which actually has to be attributed to Michael of Lyra (see below). Of Dirc Coelde of Münster only three sermons are mentioned in the *Repertorium*. Two of them are preserved in the codex that is discussed here (Brussel, Stadsarchief, MS 2915, fols. 71r-88v). The third sermon can be found in San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, 103597. The *reportatio* was written 'uytten monde van' ['from the mouth of'] Dirk Coelde of Münster by an anonymous scribe at the flyleaf at the back of *Tboeck vanden leven ons heeren Jhesu Christi* (*Book on the Life of Jesus Christ*), printed by Gheraert Leeu in Antwerpen in 1487. Dirk Coelde of Münster preached it on Good Friday 1488 (o.s. 1487) in St Gudila's church in Brussels: 'Dit was aldus bescreven te Bruesselle uytten monde van brueder Dierick van Munster, minderbruer vander observancien van Bootendale, int jair ons heren dusent cccc lxxxvii opten goeden vrydach voir den paesschen lxxxviii des nachts int predecken vander passien in sentthe Goedellen kercke' ['This was thus written in Brussels from the mouth of Friar Dirc of Münster, friar minor of the Observance of Boetendaal, in the year of our Lord 1487 [n.s. 1488], on the Good Friday before Easter 1488, at night during the preaching of the Passion in the church of St Gudila']. The sermon deals — not very unexpectedly given the occasion — with Christ's crucifixion. Very interestingly it is written from the perspective of Christ himself. The sermon is presented as a letter written by Christ to 'redelijcken creaturen' ['reasonable creatures']. For Hendrik Herp, see De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* I, 108-123, 'Henricus Herpius/Harpus (Hendrik Herp, ca. 1400 near 's-Hertogenbosch-1477 Mechelen)', in: Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, 'Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th century. A Catalogue in Progress' [<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>; accessed 11 July 2022], and especially Anna Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie. De Spiegel der volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de dynamiek van laatmiddeleeuwse tekstverspreiding*, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen*, 149 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014) and the bibliographical references therein. For Dirk Coelde van Münster, see De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* i, 196-245, and 'Dietrich Colde/Kolde/Koelde (d. 1515)', in: Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, 'Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th century. A Catalogue in Progress' [<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>; accessed 11 July 2022].

33 Fol. 234v: 'Spect om gods wille enen Ave Maria voer die gheene die dit van minnen screef, want hi noch arm van doechden bleef' ['For God's sake, speak an Ave Maria for the one who wrote this out of love, for he remained poor in virtues'].

34 'Dese epistel waert eender suster te Dyepenven' ['This epistle was for a sister in Diepenveen'] (fols. 102v-109v). The same epistle occurs in Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek UvA, MS I G 35, fols. 139r-141v [see <https://bnm-i.huylgens.knaw.nl/tekstdragers/TDRA00000002244>;

As is clear from the previous, Hendrik of Santen's *collaties* on contemplative life were quite successful and circulated relatively widely, especially in the southern part of the Low Countries. However, 'die vader ende gardiaen van Mechelen' ['the father and guardian of Mechelen'] also preached on other topics and occasions. These sermons are only preserved in manuscript. To what extent they circulated within the female branch of the *Devotio moderna* is not so clear. The provenance of the manuscripts containing Hendrik of Santen's sermons for the Feast of Corpus Christi (*Sermones de Sacramento Altaris*) — Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MSS 1268-69 (fols. 196r-232v) and 2805-09 (fols. 128r-171r) — is nowhere to be found.<sup>35</sup> The sermon on St Barbara that likewise can be attributed to him in The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 H 17 was copied by Sister Anthonnie of Burgundien. Although Anthonnie mentioned that she had been in her convent for over seven years at the moment that she finished her work on St Anna's Eve (25 July) in 1503, she unfortunately did not reveal in which convent she lived.<sup>36</sup> The last manuscript containing sermons by Hendrik of Santen, however, can be attributed to a modern devout female community. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Series nova 12847, belonged — according to its seventeenth-century ownership inscription — to the Brussels convent of Sint-Elisabeth op de berg Sion (canonesses regular).<sup>37</sup>

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accessed 28 June 2022] and The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 F 12, fols. 33r-66v [https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/teksten/TEXT000000007892; accessed 11 July 2022]. See also *Jan van Ruusbroec 1293-1381*, ed. Albert Ampe et al. (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1981), no. 70.

- 35 Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* I 167-169 and 349-351. Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 1268-69 contains six sermons whereas Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 2505-09 only has four.
- 36 'AB. Item dit boeck was volscreven int jaer ons heeren xv<sup>e</sup> ende iii op sinte Annen avent, ende het heft ghescreven suster Anthonnie van Borgundien ende si wasser over seven jaer. Amen' ['AB. This book was completed in the year 1503 on St Anne's Eve, and Sister Anthonnie of Borgundien has written it and she was there for over seven years'; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 H 17, fol. 126r].
- 37 Fol. 268v: 'Desen hoort toe de library van Sinte Elisabeth op den bergh Sion in Brussel' ['This belongs to the library of Sint-Elisabeth op de berg Sion in Brussel']. According to the *Repertorium*, four sermons (on fols. 221r-224r, 229r-236v, 245v-248v, and 267v-268v) can be attributed to Hendrik of Santen. See Sherwood-Smith, Stoop, Ermens and Van Dijk, *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons* VII, 530-535. De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* I, 151-153 attributes seven sermons to him.

## Observant Franciscans preaching in female communities

Another Observant friar whose sermons were printed, which implies that there was a larger audience for them, was Lucas of der Hey (*fl.* 1508-1520).<sup>38</sup> About him even less is known than about Hendrik of Santen. In 1508 he finished a Middle Dutch translation of James of Milan's *Stimulus divini amoris* (*Dat boeck van den prickel der minnen*) which was printed by Jan Seversz in Leiden on 25 August 1511 and reprinted by Hendrik Eckert of Homberch in Antwerp on 22 January 1519, so by the same printers who published Hendrik of Santen's sermons on contemplative life (and particularly Eckert of Homberch put far more work by Observant Franciscans into print).<sup>39</sup> In 1515 Lucas of der Hey preached two sermons for the canonesses regular of Mariëndal in the Brabantine city of Diest. A few years later, on 24 February 1518, he preached on indulgences for the canonesses of the convent of Sint-Agnes (alias the 'Grote Convent') near Emmerich, just across the border in modern-day Germany.<sup>40</sup> In response to this sermon, one of the sisters asked for a more extensive explanation on indulgences:

'Int iaer ons heren dusent vijftien hondert ende achtyen op sinte Mathijs dach was ic broeder Lucas vander Heyde begheert van die deuote ioncfrouwen ende maechden des grote convents binnen Embrick van sint Augustijns oorde dat ik hen | doen woude een sermon vanden aflaten, want in dien tijt waren in die eigen stat grote aflaten tot hulp ende reparacie van die kerck van sinte Peters binnen Romen. Ic dede hair een sermoen ende naet sermoen so quam een deuote joncfrou tot mijn vanden selfden conuent dye noch grot

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38 De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* i, 25-26.

39 Jan Seversz's 1511 edition is extant in nine copies. Of Homberch's 1519 edition six copies have been preserved. See *Netherlandish Books*, ed. Pettegree and Walsby, nos. 16383 and 16384. See also Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie*, 219-224.

40 The Sint-Agnes convent was the most important monastery in Emmerich. For that reason, it was also called the 'Grote Convent'. See Archief St. Agnietenklooster in Emmerik en St. Ursulenklooster in Neder-Elten (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, LTK 617:1-2) [<https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/repositories/2/resources/178>; accessed 1 July 2022]. See also *Schwesterbuch und Statuten des St. Agnes-Konvents in Emmerich*, ed. Anne Bollmann and Nikolaus Staubach, *Emmericher Forschungen. Schriftenreihe zur Stadtgeschichte*, 17 (Emmerich: Emmericher Geschichtsverein, 1998).

verstant begeerde van den affaet te weten ende si badt mijn of si mijn mochte drie vragen vanden affaet vragen. Ick seyde haer ia. Neemt ghi die ghedaente van een dochter. Ick sal annemen dye form ofte ghedaente van een vader. Al ben ic dat onwaerdich ende vraecht mijn, ick sal u antwoert gheuen dat ick dese materien uitspreken mach tot gods eer ende tot profijt van alle mensen.’ (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KW 228 G 17, fols. A1v-A2r)

[‘In the year of our Lord 1518 on Saint Michael’s day I, brother Lucas of der Hey, was asked by the devout ladies and virgins of the Grote Convent in Emmerich of the order of St Augustine, that I would do them a sermon on the indulgences, because at that time there were great indulgences for aid and rehabilitation in that city from the church of St Peter in Rome. I gave them a sermon, and after the sermon a devout lady came to me from the same congregation who wanted to gain great insights on the indulgence, and she asked me if she could ask me three questions about the indulgence. I told her yes. Take on the appearance of a daughter. I will take on the shape or appearance of a father. Even if I am unworthy of this, but if you ask me, I will answer you in order to utter these words for God’s honour and the benefit of all people.’]

Lucas of der Hey’s explanation resulted in the *Boecxken lerende hoe dat een mensche zijn ghebet ordineren sal om aflaten te verdienen* [*Booklet of how a man will ordain his prayer to earn indulgences*], which eventually was printed by Jan Seversz in Leiden.<sup>41</sup>

The two sermons Lucas of der Hey preached in Mariëndaal in Diest were published together, again by Jan Seversz in Leiden in 1517. The book is preserved in two copies: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KW 228 G 20 and Heverlee, Abdij van Park, H125.<sup>42</sup> The title page already indicates the metaphors Lucas of der Hey used to stimulate the canonesses’

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41 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KW 228 G 17. See *Netherlandish Books*, ed. Pettegree and Walsby, no. 14824. For the digital copy, see <https://archive.org/details/ned-kbn-all-00003210-001/page/n12/mode/2up> [accessed 1 July 2022].

42 *Netherlandish Books*, ed. Pettegree and Walsby, no. 14823 only mentions the copy in The Hague. This copy has been digitized: <https://archive.org/details/ned-kbn-all-00003212-001/mode/2up> [accessed 30 June 2022]. The Heverlee copy is mentioned in Ernest Persoons,



spiritual life: ‘Hier beghint den spinrocken ghegeven voer een nyeuwe iaer den religiosen joncfrouwen van Mariendael binnen Diest mitten naycorf gegeven by broeder Lucas vander Hey minoer [sic] [‘Here begins the distaff given for a new year to the religious ladies of Mariendaal within Diest together with the sewing basket, given by brother Lucas of der Hey, friar minor’; fol. 1r]. The first sermon on the ‘spinrocken’ [‘distaff’] was preached on New Year’s Day in 1515 (o.s. 1514), the feast-day of the Circumcision of Christ. Drawing from Luke 2. 21 — ‘postquam impleti sunt dies octo, etc.’ [‘after eight days were accomplished, etc.’]<sup>43</sup> — Lucas of der Hey aimed to teach his readers how they could circumcise themselves spiritually and conform their souls to Christ. The text that is discussed more extensively by Anna Dlabáčová, is divided into three main parts: first, the perfect way in which the distaff that forms a figure of the crucified Christ is made; secondly, the way the thread is drawn from the distaff — eluding on how to follow Christ; and, thirdly, the way the cloth is made from the yarn which symbolizes the perfection of those who are engaged in following Christ’s example.<sup>44</sup>

The second sermon was preached to the sisters of Mariëndaal on the occasion of Candlemas (2 February) 1515 (o.s. 1514) and supposedly ‘van dye selue broeder Lucas overgeset vanden latijn in duyts te profijt van alle menscen’ [‘translated by the same brother Lucas from Latin into Dutch for the benefit of all people’; fol. 29v]. It explains the virtues of the Virgin Mary by the characteristics of a sewing basket in reference to Jeremiah 24. 1: ‘Die heer heeft mijn ghe-toont ende siet voer die tempel waren ii coruen vol vygen’ [‘The Lord shewed me: and behold two baskets full of figs, set before the temple of the Lord’]. Again, by laying out three aspects of the basket that should be observed — first, the matter or substance of which the basket is made; second, its shape; and third, the fact that it is wide and round — the sermon explains how the ‘devote herten’ [‘devout hearts’]

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‘Prieuré de Val-Notre-Dame, à Diest’, *Monasticon Belge*, IV-5, ed. Andrée Despy-Meyer (Liège: Centre National de Recherches d’Histoire Religieuse, 1971), 1337-1343.

43 The full verse in the Douay-Rheims Bible reads: ‘And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.’

44 Anna Dlabáčová, ‘Spinning with Passion. The Distaff as an Object for Contemplative Meditation in Netherlandish Religious Culture’, *The Medieval Low Countries* 5 (2018), 177-209, especially 187-192.

should follow Mary's purity, humility, obedience, steadfastness and other virtues, including her suffering and her choice to be in poverty with her child instead of in abundance.

For his sermons, Lucas of der Hey chose two metaphors that were very visual, and therefore could be remembered well, which will have made it easier for the nuns to meditate and contemplate on the sermons' content as well as to reminisce their message.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, by using images with which the nuns were very familiar — the distaff and the sewing basket — were everyday tools used for manual labor in female monastic communities — the priest made an ultimate conjunction between the monastic device of *ora et labora*, prayer and handicraft, so that by reading and contemplating on these two sermons both would go literally hand in hand. Moreover, he put the *imitatio Christi* and the *imitatio Mariae* at the heart of the matter and made the values related to those the goal of the pure Christian life.

Just as Lucas of der Hey preached to the canonesses regular of Mariëndaal in Diest, his colleagues preached half a century earlier, in the 1460 and 1470s, in other churches and female monasteries.<sup>46</sup> Specifically the canonesses regular of the Brussels' convent of Jericho, which — like Boetendael — had been founded at the instigation of the Duke of Brabant Philip the Good (1396-1467) and his wife Isabella of Portugal (1397-1471) were interested in the preaching services of several prominent Friars Minor of the Observance of Boetendael near Brussels. Particularly struck by the sermons of Dionysius of Holland, who had been the leader of the house of Observant friars in Haarlem in Holland before he became Hendrik Herp's successor as second guardian of Boetendael,<sup>47</sup> Mergriete of Steenberg

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45 For the importance of strong images for meditative reading and mnemonic purposes, in particular in relation to Middle Dutch sermons, see Thom Mertens, 'Scripted Allegoresis and Inventive Reading of Middle Dutch *Jhesus Collacien*' (forthcoming), who refers to important publications by Barbara Newman, Mary Carruthers, and Niklaus Largier (footnote 20). Relevant for the relationship between *memoria* and sermons is also Kimberley A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice. Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, *Sermo: Studies on Patristic, Medieval and Reformation Sermons and Preaching*, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

46 See also footnotes 7 and 32.

47 M. Hoeben, 'Dionysius van Holland (1459-1475). Persoon en werk', Unpublished MA Thesis (Louvain: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1969); Archangelus Houbaert, 'Minderbroederkloosters in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden. Kloosterlexicon. 9. Boetendael', *Franciscana* 30 (1974), 82-95 (there 83, 94). Five of Dionysius of Holland's sermons have been edited in Guido

(d. 1504), *conversa* in Jericho, decided to copy the seventeen sermons which Dionysius had preached in the Brussels convent between 31 January and 14 May 1475 and her fellow sister Elisabeth of Poyle (d. 1499) had written down:<sup>48</sup>

‘Dese man was alsoe luter ende recht godminnende dat hi mijn herte wonderlijke zere bewechede ende recht raecte se, dat ic ghevoelde die woerde Davids daer hi seet: ‘Dat woert gods es als een vierich schielt’ (Proverbia 30. 5?), ende noch dat hi seet: ‘Lieve here, dijn woert heeft mijn herte verlicht ende het is een lanteerne minen voeten ende een claer licht minen toepaden.’’ (Psalm 118(119). 105; prologue Mergriete of Steenberghe, ll. 58-63)<sup>49</sup>

[‘This man was so pure and upright in his love of God that he moved my heart wondrously and touched it so directly that I felt the words of David when he says, ‘the word of God is as a fiery shield’, and again when he says, ‘Dear Lord, thy word has brought light to my heart, and it is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.’.]

Dionysius particularly focused his sermons on the *vita activa*. He repeatedly stressed that working from a sincere intention and true faith aims to bring the soul to heaven after death. That this message appealed to a lay sister who spent most of her time working cannot be a real surprise.

The sermons are preserved in Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902, fols. 44v-171v and form the basis of a sermon collection which spans the

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Defloor, ‘Vijf onuitgegeven sermoenen van Dionijs van Hollant OFM uit het manuscript U.B. Gent, nr. 902. Een tekstuitgave met inleiding, aantekeningen en glossarium’, Unpublished MA Thesis (Ghent: Universiteit Gent, 1960).

48 Elisabeth was clearly interested in Observant spirituality. She also copied Hendrik Herp’s *Spiegel der volcomenheit* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 2136). See Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 103 and 403-404. The manuscript as well as the relationship between Jericho and Boetendael is extensively discussed in Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie*, 123-135.

49 The prologue of Mergriete of Steenberghe is published in Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 450-451. The line numbers refer to this edition. The prologue has also been published (followed by a translation in English) in Thom Mertens, ‘Ghostwriting Sisters. The Preservation of Dutch Sermons of Father Confessors in the Fifteenth and the Early Sixteenth Century’, in: *Seeing and Knowing. Women and Learning in Medieval Europe 1200-1550*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 121-141. The translation of the citations from Mergriete’s prologue have been taken from this publication.

full liturgical year, although that initially was not Mergriete's intention: 'Want ick en hadde maer voerghenomen te scriven die sermoene van den eerwerdeghen gaerdiaen brueder Dyonijs of Hollant, der welker ic hebbe xvii' ['For I had intended to write only the sermons of the reverend guardian, Brother Dionysus of Holland, of which I have done seventeen'] (prologue Mergriete of Steenberg, ll. 56-58). However, soon after completing the copying of Dionysius' sermons Mergriete decided to add the sermons by the provincials and guardians Michael of Lyra (a sermon which prior to Mergriete's copying was redacted by Barbara Cuyermans, the convent's writing mistress), Hendrik Berninck (ca. 1396-1492), brother Leo, and an anonymous friar.<sup>50</sup> She also copied twelve sermons by prominent Observant Dominicans as well as six by Jericho's confessor Jan Storm and his brother Willem, who was a canon regular in the convent of Bethlehem in Louvain.<sup>51</sup>

In the sermon for the second Sunday of Advent and the Immaculate Conception of Mary on 8 December preached by Michael of Lyra (Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902, fols. 17r-23v), we (finally) find one of the few explicit references to keeping the observance. The sermon that discusses the individual judgement after one's death ('particulaer oordeel') and the general judgement at the end of times ('generael oordeel'). It stresses the importance of confession and outlines the immense pain of hell and purgatory. By pointing out the risk of ending up in purgatory, the sermon encourages the sisters to keep to their rule, observance and vows, to take their duties in the choir seriously, and, above all, to observe the seven hours of prayer carefully and to avoid recklessness in that:

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50 For Michael of Lyra, see Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 274, and Defloor, 'Vijf onuitgegeven sermoenen van Dionys van Holland', 19. Hendrik Berninck was an influential enforcer of the Observance. He was involved in the foundation of several houses, in Gouda (1439), Leiden (1445) and Antwerp (1448). He was vicarius-provincial of the province of Cologne between 1456 and 1459, and guardian of Boetendaal between 1475 and 1477. See Houbaert, 'Minderbroederkloosters in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', 83 and 94; De Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia franciscana neerlandica ante saeculum xvi* I, 128-138; J.A. De Kok, *Acht eeuwen minderbroeders in Nederland. Een oriëntatie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 94, 103, and 105; and 'Henricus Berninck (Hendrik Berninck, ca. 1396-1492)', in: Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, 'Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th century. A Catalogue in Progress' [<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>; accessed 11 July 2022].

51 For a more extensive discussion of the manuscript and the sermons therein, see Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*, 271-300, 340-345, and 456-458. For the sermons by the Observant Dominicans, see footnote 8.

‘Hierom moghen wij wel voer ons sien in tijts ende pinen ons re-  
gule, observancie ende belofsten nauwe te houden, neerstich sijn  
ten chore ende bovenal sorchvoldich in onse ghetijden. Want van  
eenen persoen lesen wij dat hi XL jaer int vaghevier moeste berren  
omdat hi sijn ghetijden roekeloes plach te lesene.’ (fol. 18r)

[‘This is why we must look ahead in time and make efforts to keep  
our rule, observance, and vows closely, be steadfast in the choir and  
above all careful in keeping our hours. For we read of one person  
that he had to burn in purgatory for forty years because he used to  
read his hours recklessly.’]

Later in the same sermon Maria is set as an ‘exempel kerstelijcs levens’ [‘an example of Christian life’] for nuns, and it is stressed again how the women should uphold the convent regulations and observance. The sermon also encourages them to follow Mary by practicing virtues and focusing on humility, by repenting for their sins and maintaining abstinence, and by renouncing personal property and protecting their virginity. As in the sermon by Lucas of der Hey, the *imitatio Mariae* is a central point. Michael of Lyra’s sermon is — very much like the sermons by the other Observant Franciscans in Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 902 — focused on the practical aspects of monastic life. The observance of the monastic rule and thus the return to the essence of monasticism are high on his list of priorities.

### **Concluding remarks**

On the basis of sermons in the Dutch vernacular, we can conclude that the Franciscan friars of the Observance had quite some impact, especially in the Southern Low Countries. Particularly the Observant Friars Minor from the strongly interconnected friaries in Mechelen and Boetendael (situated a bit south of Brussels) had a large influence. Many of the sermons they preached were preserved from convents of canonesses regular, tertiaries, and sisters of the Common Life which adhered to the Chapter of Windesheim. In many instances, these were written sermons that — via manuscript as well as early printed books — ended up in those convents; in other cases, the friars actually visited those women’s convents. In all these

monasteries, the Franciscan sermon material is kept hand in hand with sermons and devotional texts from other religious orders. It is clear that the Franciscan Observant voice is amply preserved and valued, perhaps as an alternative, complementary tone with a stronger emphasis on observing the practical aspects and the everyday virtues of religious life than on contemplation and prayer, aspects that also were central to monastic life. Without doubt, it was seen as a valuable addition to the texts from Windesheim circles and the spirituality preached by their own confessors. Apparently, in the Low Countries, the spiritual values of the different Observant movements were, despite their own accents, the intensity with which they were preached, and the mutual rivalries, sufficiently close to each other to cross the boundaries of religious orders with the greatest of ease.



# Observant Reform and the Cults of New Dominican Saints in the Southeastern Adriatic

*Ana Marinković and Valentina Živković*

## Introduction

The research on the historical currents of the Observant reform, its diffusion in the earliest stages, as well as its periodical local and global revivals throughout the following two centuries, is inextricably linked to the study of the promotion of cults of saints. Building on the types of sainthood preferred by and partially formed in Mendicant circles (notably living saints, but also local saints), the Observant friars supported veneration of their contemporaries, creating thus an array of local *beati* whose cults frequently gained wider recognition.<sup>1</sup> This paper is examining the appearance and diffusion of saints' cults among the reformed Dominican order in the southeastern Adriatic, that is, in the territory of Dubrovnik and Kotor from the first reformist attempts at the end of the fourteenth century to the Observant efforts united with the post-Tridentine ambience in the later sixteenth century. In addition to crucial texts by Serafino Razzi (who also described devotional objects and images), the analysis is mainly conducted

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<sup>1</sup> On the late-medieval turn in the models for sainthood see: André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1981).



with recourse to visual sources that bear witness to the local introduction of new Observant cults.<sup>2</sup>

The region between Dubrovnik and Durrës, encompassing the cities of Kotor and Ulcinj, was leading in the Observant movement in the eastern Adriatic, while in Dalmatia to the north the introduction of reforms was belated and geographically limited (Čiovo, Stari Grad - Hvar).<sup>3</sup> Following the chronology of local developments in friaries pertaining to the southern part of the Dominican province of Dalmatia, which eventually seceded to form an independent Observant group (later Congregation), the appearance of Observant cults will be contextualised in relation to the wider reformist networks spreading from Venice and Florence, but also from Buda, and indirectly from Naples. Leaving aside the question of local Observant promotions of universal cults, such as St Nicholas and the Holy Cross – marked nevertheless by a strong Dominican tradition – this article focuses on the cults of major Dominican figures strongly promoted by the Observant reform (Caterina of Siena and Vincent Ferrer), as well as on the cults of Observant Dominicans of a rather local significance (Marcolino of Forlì, Guido of Naples and the local *santa viva* Osanna from Kotor).

### **The first wave of the reform and the cults of Dominici's circle**

The first steps of Dominican Observant reform in the Eastern Adriatic took place in Dubrovnik. As early as 1397 the Senate of the Republic of Dubrovnik wrote both to the Dominican general chapter held in Frankfurt and to Giovanni Dominici as the vicar of the Lombard province of reformed friaries with the request to send several Observant friars to Dubrovnik to introduce the reform.<sup>4</sup> The answers are not known, but it seems that Dominici – seen his already developed network involving friars of the southeastern Adriatic provenance – reacted to the request and

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2 A particularly important study of the relation between visual arts and the Dominican reform is Denise Zaru, *Art and Observance in Renaissance Venice. The Dominicans and Their Artists (1391 - ca. 1545)* (Rome: Viella, 2014).

3 On the Dominican communities in the eastern Adriatic see: Stjepan Krasić, *Dominikanci: povijest Reda u hrvatskim krajevima*, (Zagreb: Hrvatska dominikanska provincija/Nakladni zavod Globus, 1997). On the Dominican Observance in Dubrovnik see: Stjepan Krasić, *Congregatio Ragusina Ord. Praed. (1487-1550)* (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1972).

4 Krasić, *Dominikanci*, 23-24. The friary was founded in 1225 and is the earliest attested Dominican friary in the eastern Adriatic.

instigated a short-term reformist spark in the Ragusa friary. In fact, among Dominici's closest friars-collaborators in two Venetian communities (San Zanipolo and San Domenico) formed in the early 1390s, there were two friars from the southeastern Adriatic: Hieronymus of Dulcinium (Ulcinj) and Johannes of Durachium (Durrës). Whereas Hieronymus died in 1397 with no documented ties to his native region, the sources for Johannes are abundant yet contradictory, referring to him both as the bishop of Kotor (1375-1397) and as the provincial of Dalmatia (sporadically from 1392 to 1397).<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the slight historiographic confusion, Johannes was definitely active in the region during the events that led to the Ragusan government's plea to Dominici, and it is plausible that he represented the long arm of Dominici's reformist movement in the southeastern Adriatic. It should be underlined that Dominici was appointed archbishop of Dubrovnik in 1408,<sup>6</sup> but it seems that he never visited his diocese, and that his connections to Dubrovnik and the surrounding region were always mediated through his collaborators.

As stated above, the diffusion of the Observant reform was closely linked to the promotion of new saints, and thus one can find the traces of Dominici's circle in Dubrovnik also in the form of devotion to new cults of *beati* closely related to the new ideal of sanctity promoted by the great reformer. Two of them, Marcolino of Forlì (died 1396) and Guido Maramaldi of Naples (died c. 1391), were frequently referred to as the founders of the Ragusan friary in the older literature. Serafino Razzi, a learned friar from the convent of San Marco in Florence and one of the most prolific Dominican authors with an insider's familiarity with the Dominican past in Dubrovnik and Kotor, was first among the Dominican authors to report this legend in the late sixteenth century in his *Storia di Raugia*. In the detailed description of the architecture, artworks and devotional objects in the Ragusan friary, Razzi mentions (nowadays lost) depictions of the

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5 On the episcopate of Johannes of Durachium see: Daniele Farlati, *Illyrici sacri*, VI: *Ecclesia Ragusina cum suffraganeis, et ecclesia Rhiziniensis et Catharensis* (Venice: Sebastiano Coleti, 1800), 453; Lenka Blehova Čelebić, *Hrišćanstvo u Boki (1200-1500)* (Podgorica Cetinje: Pobjeda - Narodni muzej Crne Gore - Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2006), 53; on the provincialate see: Stjepan Krasić, 'Regesti pisama generala dominikanskog reda poslanih u Hrvatsku (1392-1600)', *Arhivski vjesnik* 17:1 (1975), 162-163, 165-166.

6 Stjepan Krasić and Serafino Razzi, *Povijest Dubrovačke metropolije i dubrovačkih nadbiskupa (X. - XVI. stoljeća)* (Dubrovnik: Biskupski ordinarijat, 1999), 125.

two friars high up on the pillars surrounding the high altar.<sup>7</sup> Marcolino, a modest friar whose early cult was strongly supported by Dominici, and Guido, a famous preacher with a clear reformist profile, were both active in the period of the early diffusion of the reform, and thus the origins of their cults in Dubrovnik should be related to the initial period of Observance, that is, around the year 1400.<sup>8</sup> As the Ragusan friary was founded in the early thirteenth century, the two friars certainly could not have been its founders, but considering that they were related to the efforts for its reform, that fact was possibly later interpreted as its (re)foundation. Such an assumption is supported by the mention that Guido actually preached in Dubrovnik before becoming the general inquisitor for the Kingdom, and conforms to the framework of generally strong connections between Naples and Dubrovnik.

The placement of depictions of the two friars in the centre of the friary's church presbytery, as well as the creation of the local founding legend, suggest that the initial Observant reformist momentum influenced artistic commissions in the Dubrovnik church, and that the memory of the associates of Giovanni Dominici was woven into that process. It is interesting that Razzi believed that there was some confusion about the Neapolitan *beato*, and suggested that Guido of Naples was mistaken for another *beato* from Dominici's circle, that is, Roberto of Naples, who likewise was a reformist friar sent by the Dominican master general Raymund of Capua to Venice with Dominici, and who fitted extremely well into the

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7 'Fondatori di questo convento narrano, che furono il beato Guido da Napoli & il beato Marcolino da Forlì. Onde amendue sono dipinti ne i pilastri della Cappella maggiore, su ad alto. Ma io credo, che habbiano iscambiato da Ruberto à Guido. Impero chè non ritrovo tra i beati nostri questo Guido, ma si bene il beato Ruberto da Napoli, che fù contemporaneo del beato Marcolino, e venne à predicare in queste bande.' See: Serafino Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa: scritta nuovamente in tre libri preceduta dagli appunti biografico-critici del Pr. Lodovico Ferretti, O.P.; con introduzione, note e appendice cronologica del Prof. G. Gelcich* (Dubrovnik: Editrice Tipografia Serbo-Ragusea A. Pasarić, 1903), 206-207; Ana Marinković, 'Kultovi dominikanskih svetaca i njihova ikonografija do Tridentskog sabora', in: *Dominikanci u Hrvatskoj*. Exhibition catalogue, ed. I. Fisković (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2011), 169; Igor Fisković, 'Prilozi poznavanju gotičkoga graditeljstva u Dubrovniku', *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 35 (2011), 28.

8 On Marcolino see: Serafino Razzi, *Vita dei santi e beati del sacro ordine de frati predicatori, così huomini, come donne. Con aggiunta di molte vite, che nella prima impressione non erano* (Florence: Giacinto Passaro, 1672), 484-486. Early Dominican authors had no information on Guido's life, whose popularity spread only after papal confirmation of the cult in 1612.

picture Razzi was trying to delineate.<sup>9</sup> Further research could help discern the identity of the Neapolitan Dominican friar depicted in the Ragusan church, though both possibilities equally attest to the importance of the lost wall painting in the context of an early presence of Observant reform in Dubrovnik. Razzi's suggestion that it was plausibly Roberto who was depicted together with Marcolino, is indicative of Razzi's reformist agenda in Dubrovnik, relying on the memory of Giovanni Dominici.

Razzi had an exceptionally significant role in the diffusion of the Observant and post-Tridentine reforms to Dubrovnik and Kotor in the period from 1587 to 1589, when he held the office of vicar of the Ragusan Congregation of Observant friaries, as well as vicar of the Ragusan archdiocese during a period of *sedis vacantia*.<sup>10</sup> Among his strategies of promoting and strengthening the reform, which included preaching (he was invited to preach during Lent of 1589 in Kotor) and active institutional involvement (consolidation of the Ragusan Congregation), Razzi strongly focused on the production of hagiographical texts. He not only wrote *vitae* of many early modern holy men and women of the Dominican order, but also included in his hagiographical compendium short biographical notes on many early Observant *beati*, including Marcolino and Roberto.<sup>11</sup>

Marcolino's life and cult represent an important source for the later Observance in more than one way, as can be gauged from important essays by Daniel Bornstein, which accentuate the significance of Marcolino's saintly figure for the lay devotion.<sup>12</sup> Marcolino was born circa 1317 and died in 1397 in the Dominican convent of San Giacomo in Forlì. Some 50 miraculous healings are attributed to him *post mortem*. As a very

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9 'Il beato Ruberto Napoletano, essendo stato uno de'primi restauratori della vita regolare in Italia; finalmente pieno d'anni, e di meriti passò à miglior vita nel convento di San Domenico di Vinezia, essendo all'hora Priore di Chioggia, l'anno di nostra salute 1393 [...]', Razzi, *Vita dei santi e beati*, 231.

10 On Razzi's sojourn in Dubrovnik and Kotor, see: Lodovico Ferreti, 'Appunti biografici-critici', in: Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa*, 6-52; Idem, 'Fra Serafino Razzi', *Memorie Domenicane* 20 (1903), 168-173, 211-216, 310-318, 361-366, 421-432, 456-464.

11 'Il Beato Marcolino da Forlì [...] la cui vita scrisse il beato Giovandomenico Cardinale, in una sua lettera à Raimondo Capuano generale dell'ordine, fu huomo semplice, retto, casto, & humile [...]', Razzi, *Vite dei santi e beati*, 231.

12 Daniel Bornstein, 'Dominican Friar, Lay Saint: The Case of Marcolino of Forlì', *Church History* 66:2 (Jun. 1997), 252-267; Idem, 'Marcolino da Forlì: taumaturgo locale e modello universale', in: *Vita religiosa e identità politiche. Universalità e particolarismi nell'Europa del tardo medioevo*, ed. S. Gensini (Pisa: Ospedaletto, 1998), 263-286.

modest friar who spent all his life in the Dominican convent in Forlì, he dedicated his life to charity and prayer. After his death, he was acclaimed a saint by the people of Forlì, and Giovanni Dominici sent a commission in Forlì to investigate the case of his local veneration. On the basis of the commission report, Dominici informed master general Raimondo of Capua of the opinions surrounding Marcolino's death and miracles. Dominici likewise wrote a *Vita del Beato Marcolino da Forlì* according to an Observant model of sanctity. As per this model, Marcolino's *umiltà* had a special value. Bornstein concluded that Dominici's narrative was directed towards laymen and the Dominican order of Tertiaries, as a special concern of Tommaso di Antonio Caffarini, who included Dominici's letter to Raimondo about the veneration of Marcolino in his *Historia disciplinae regularis instauratae in coenobiis Venetis Ordinis praedicatorum*.<sup>13</sup> The interest that the core of the Dominican Observant movement in Venice showed for this local friar is not surprising, considering that Marcolino, without being an active member of the mobile Observant network, embodied the most important virtues of the reformed order from the very start of its diffusion.<sup>14</sup>

After this short but apparently intensive episode of Observant efforts in Dubrovnik had run its course, the first long-term results of the reform in the eastern Adriatic can be traced in the 1430s, when new reformed convents started to be established. The first of these was the Dalmatian Observant Dominican friary dedicated to the Holy Cross, which was founded on the island of Čiovo in 1432 by Fra Nikola Milinović from Trogir, who had studied in Venice and decided to introduce Observant reforms in his homeland.<sup>15</sup> The friary of Čiovo was soon followed by the Dominican

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13 Vincenzo Folli, 'Il Beato Marcolino da Forlì in una lettera del B. Giovanni Dominici', *Memorie Domenicane* 39 (1922), 20-27; Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident*, 470-472; Elio Montanari, 'Il dossier agiografico sul beato Marcolino da Forlì', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 65 (1995), 315-509; Bornstein, 'Dominican friar, lay saint', 261.

14 The nineteenth-century Dominican author Vincenzo Marchese reported that many friars had responded to Raymund of Capua's call for reform, enumerating Marcolino among the most important ones: 'dall'Italia, il Padre Tommaso di Siena, il Padre Tommaso Aiatamicristo di Pisa, il Padre Girolamo da Foligno, il Beato Marcolino da Forlì, e altri assai, ma innanzi a tutti il Beato Giovanni Dominici fiorentino, religioso del convento di Santa Maria Novella,' Vincenzo Marchese, *Scritti vari*, 2nd Ed., 2 Vols. (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1860) I, 55.

15 Stjepan Kراسić, 'Dominikanski samostan Sv. Križa na otoku Čiovu (1432.-1852.)', *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 31:1 (1991), 79-85; Haude Morvan, 'Arte medievale in Dalmazia: notizie dall'Archivio generale dei frati predicatori', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome-Moyen Âge* 128:1 (2016), 1-20.

Observant friary founded in 1437 in Dubrovnik's suburb of Gruž. In the context of saintly patronage, it should be mentioned that the friars planned to dedicate the church in Gruž to St Nicholas, but after experiencing a revelation in a dream, the donor of the land for the new friary suggested to dedicate it to the Holy Cross instead, similarly to the Čiovo friary.<sup>16</sup>

Following the founding of the reformed friary in Gruž, where the friars inclining to the Observance gathered, it took another three decades for the remaining friars of the main Dubrovnik friary to accept Observant reforms. The process was initiated by the Ragusan Senate in 1459, eager to reform the friary with a clear political motivation. The goal of the Republic was to form a group of reformed Dominican houses that would be exempt from the authority of the Dalmatian Dominican provincial, and eventually to detach these houses from any authority related to the Venetian territories.<sup>17</sup> In those efforts, the Senate was supported by two extremely well-connected friars from Dubrovnik: Serafino de Bona and Tommaso de Basilio. Initially, the reformed group covered the territory of the whole Dalmatian Province, and thus in 1474 Serafino was appointed *vicarius conventuum reformatorum Dalmatie*, whereas in 1475 Tommaso became *vicarius generalis conventuum reformatorum Sancti Dominici de Ragusio, Sancte Crucis de Gravosio, Sancti Nicolai de Catharo et super monasterio Sancti Michaelis de Ragusio*.<sup>18</sup> The group of Observant friaries, now limited to the southern part of the coast, included three houses in Dubrovnik (two male and one female) and one in Kotor. Although the first reference to the friary of Kotor as Observant dates to 1475, it can be presumed that the reform took place earlier, most probably around 1460, in the same wave with Dubrovnik and Durrës, considering that the Dominican friars from the three cities had extremely strong ties.

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16 Stjepan Krasić, 'Dominikanski samostan sv. Križa u Gružu (1437-1987). Povijesni pregled', *Croatica Christiana periodica* 11:20 (1987), 185-186.

17 Krasić, *Congregatio Ragusina*, 83-90; Idem, 'Hrvatska dominikanska kongregacija (1508-1587)', *Bogoslovska smotra* 41:2-3 (1971), 294-297; Ana Marinković, 'La diffusione dei culti ungheresi tra i domenicani di Dubrovnik (Ragusa) nel tempo di Mattia Corvino', *Nuova Corvina* 20 (2008), 169-178.

18 Krasić, 'Regesti pisama', 177. On the friary of St Nicholas in Kotor, founded in 1266, see Stjepan Krasić, 'Nekadašnji dominikanski samostan Sv. Nikole u Kotoru (1266-1807)', *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 28:1 (1989), 129-141.

## Universal Observant cults in the second wave of the reform

During this period of renewal of the Dominican Observant network in the cities of the southeastern Adriatic, several new cults propagated by the reformed Friars Preachers appeared in Dubrovnik and Kotor: in the first place St Caterina of Siena and St Vincent Ferrer, whose cults were eagerly propagated by the Observants. The appearance of the cult of Caterina of Siena in Kotor can be interpreted in two contexts: the protection against plague epidemics, as well as the promotion of the Observant reform. The fresco painting in St Anna's church,<sup>19</sup> which unfortunately has not survived unscathed, was most probably completed after the plague outbreak of 1467.<sup>20</sup> St. Caterina is represented in full figure on the eastern wall next to the main apse, and she is turned in a slight half-profile towards the main altar and towards Christ, who appears on the top-right corner of the fresco (**fig. 1**). Caterina is shown with golden stigmata, today visible only as golden flames on her black shoes. Although the cult of *la mantellata senese* is linked to the Observant Dominicans in Kotor, in the church of St Anna the fresco originated from a private votive commission, as confirmed by the inscription in the vernacular: S[VET]A KATAR[INA] MOLI SA R[A] BU T[VOIU] [KA]TAR[INU] (*St Caterina, pray for your servant Katari-na*).<sup>21</sup> In Dubrovnik, St Caterina is represented in the vault medallion of the eastern cloister wing, built in the 1460s, next to the medallion repre-

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19 During its history, the church changed its dedication several times – first it was dedicated to St Martin, and at the end of fifteenth century to St Veneranda. On a wooden inscription in the church wall from 1853 it is called *ecclesia S. Anne*, see: Milka Čanak-Medić, *Arhitektura Nemanjinog doba II. Crkve u Polimlju i na Primorju* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture SR Srbije i Arheološki institut, 1989), 177-200; Jovan J. Martinović, 'Oko ubikacije i dedikacije crkve Svetog Martina u Kotoru', *Godišnjak Pomorskog muzeja u Kotoru* 50 (2002), 427-436.

20 On plague epidemics in Kotor, see: Vladimir Bazala, 'Calendarium pestis I', *Acta historica medicinae pharmaciae veterariae* 1 (1962), 51-61.; Miloš Milošević, 'Zdravstvena kultura u Boki Kotorskoj za vrijeme mletačke vladavine', in: *Pomorski trgovci, ratnici i meceni. Studije o Boki Kotorskoj XV-XIX stoljeća*, ed. Miloš Milošević (Belgrade: Podgorica, 2003), 248-261. According to fresco inscriptions denoting Caterina of Siena as a saint, the terminus *post quem* of the fresco would be 1461, when Caterina was canonized, see: Valentina Živković, 'Freske iz XV veka u kotorskoj crkvi Svete Ane. Ikonografska analiza', *Zograf* 28 (2000-2001), 133-138.

21 On a variety of complex visual and textual messages in the church of St Anna, see: Valentina Živković, 'The Healing Power of Images and Words: Venetian Influence on the Veneration of Saints in Fifteenth-Century Kotor', in: *Saints, Miracles and the Image Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, ed. S. Cardarelli and L. Fenelli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 131-145.

sending St Catherine of Alexandria. As she is not represented in the scene of her stigmatization, but as a Dominican nun with a lily, her identification relies on the pairing of two homonym saints (**fig. 2**). As shall be argued below, three Ragusan depictions of a Dominican nun either in a stigmatization scene or adoring the Crucifix refer to Blessed Margaret of Hungary, with whom Dubrovnik had special ties. The above-mentioned two St Caterina representations in Kotor and Dubrovnik are the sole preserved fifteenth-century images of the saint in the respective cities. Nonetheless, they attest to the appearance of her cult immediately after the reform of local Dominican communities, and also shortly after her canonization in 1461.

Although Vincent Ferrer himself did not join a reformed Dominican branch, due to his strong sense of humility and repentance, he became very popular among the Observant friars. The beginnings of the promotion of the cult of Vincent Ferrer in the southeastern Adriatic are connected to the missionary activities of another Dominican Observant friar, blessed Giovanni of Pistoia, who acquired an aura of exclusivity in promoting the cult of Ferrer from the very start of his missionary endeavors in the mid fifteenth century. He spread the glory of Ferrer 'ovunque si distesero i confini delle sue Pellegrinazioni; cioè per tutta l'Italia, e specialmente nella Toscana, ne' fioritissimi Regni di Napoli, e di Sicilia, e fino nella Dalmazia'.<sup>22</sup> Giovanni's dedication to his great predecessor was such, that in Sicily he preached that all male newborns should be named Vincenzo, and all girls Vincenza. The materials used for the preparation of this sermon were sent to him in 1463 by Pietro Ranzano (1426/27–1492/93), a Dominican friar from Palermo, who wrote the *Vita* of Ferrer for the preparation of his canonization in 1455.<sup>23</sup> A step forward in creating Fra Giovanni of Pistoia's

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22 Fr. Antonino Teoli, *Storia della vita, e del culto di S. Vincenzo Ferrerio dell'ordine de'predicatori* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de Caporali, 1735), 537.

23 *Acta Sanctorum, Aprilis, collecta, digesta, illustrata a Godefrido Henschenio et Daniele Papebrochio e Societate Iesu*, Tomus I, *quo priores x dies continentur*, ed. J. Carnandet (Paris-Rome: Victor Palme, 1865), 477-529. On Pietro Ranzano, see Ferdinando Attilio Termini, *Pietro Ranzano, umanista palermitano del sec. XV* (Palermo: Libreria editrice Ant. Trimarchi, 1915); Idem 'Ricostruzione cronologica della biografia di Pietro Ransano', *Archivio storico siciliano* n.s. 41 (1916), 81-104; Antonio Barilaro, 'Pietro Ranzano, vescovo di Lucerà, umanista domenicano di Palermo', *Memorie domenicane* n.s. 8:9 (1977), 1-197; Bruno Figliuolo, *La cultura a Napoli nel secondo Quattrocento. Ritratti di protagonista* (Udine: Forum, 1997), 87-276 (at 100-101);



unique role as promoter of the Ferrer cult was the creation of a legend, according to which Giovanni was identified with the miraculously resuscitated child from the *post mortem* version of Ferrer's most famous and most intriguing miracle.<sup>24</sup>

The exact year of Giovanni of Pistoia's arrival in Kotor is unknown, but it undoubtedly occurred during the period of plague epidemics in the second half of the fifteenth century. In his *Vita del beato Giovanni da Pistoia*, Razzi described the mission of his predecessor who had come to Kotor to preach: 'As the plague caused the great massacre in Kotor in Dalmatia, where this blessed man preached outside the city gates in an open place and with a license, he, moved to compassion by such a great mortality, ordered that supplications be made for three days, and on the third day, due to his merits and the devout prayers of the people, the pestilence subsided'.<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that the eighteenth-century scholar Daniele Farlati, author of the extensive eight-volume *Illyricum sacrum*, inserted the activity of Giovanni of Pistoia in Kotor in the narratives of conversion of the Orthodox population (*schismaticorum conversio*) in the village of Bogdašići near Kotor in 1455.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to discern Farlati's sources for stating that Giovanni arrived to Kotor at the exact moment of conclusion of Ferrer's canonization process. If we, however, decide to trust Farlati's sources, then we should ascribe also the early appearance of numerous references to Ferrer in Dubrovnik in the 1460s to the local diffusion of the cult instigated by fra Giovanni's preaching.

In Dubrovnik's friary, there was a booming period for St Vincent's cult after the Observant reform of 1460: the saint is represented on the pulpit relief in the church created shortly thereafter (**fig. 3**),<sup>27</sup> and a private altar

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Nadia Zeldes, 'The Last Multi-Cultural Encounter in Medieval Sicily: A Dominican Scholar, an Arabic Inscription and a Jewish Legend', in: *Conflict and Religious Conversation in Latin Christendom: Studies in Honour of Ora Limor*, ed. I. J. Yuval and R. Ben-Shalom (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 191-220.

24 Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

25 'Facendo la grandissima strage la peste, in Catara terra di Dalmazia, dove questo beato predicava fuori delle porte della città, in un luogo aperto, e patente, mosso a compassione di tanta mortalità, ordinò, che per tre giorni si facessero le supplicazioni, e il terzo giorno per i meriti suoi, e le devote orazioni di quel popolo, cessò la pestilenza', Razzi, *Vite dei santi*, 280-281.

26 Farlati, *Illyrici Sacri VI*, 467-468.

27 On the complex issue of dating the pulpit with reference to the representation of Vincent as a saint with a halo, and Margaret as *beata* with rays, see: Marinković, 'La diffusione dei culti ungheresi', 170.

with a polyptych altarpiece in the sacristy was dedicated to him by the Catalan consul in 1470 (unfortunately lost). Moreover, he was represented as well on the semi-capital in the ladies' gallery inserted between the Dominican church and the church of St Sebastian, built after the plague of 1466. (**fig. 4**) The latter example is also an indication of the manifold nature of the cult of St Vincent: in addition to symbolising the reform of discipline promoted by the Observant branch of the Dominican order, the saint was also venerated as a special intercessor in times of plague. This role of St Vincent is especially accentuated in Venice, but prominent also in Dubrovnik and Kotor.

Around 1484 another private altar dedicated to St Vincent Ferrer was constructed in the Ragusan Dominican church by Nikola Bakrović, father of the Dominican friar Vinko (Vincent). The altar was erected as a votive offering for the saint's alleged role in ending the epidemic of 1481-83. The same votive acknowledgment was repeated just a few years later, after the severe plague of 1486-87, when the new altarpiece for the High altar was dedicated to St Vincent. The commission reflects once again the double nature of the cult: it can be interpreted as a votive commission related to the severe plague epidemic of 1486/7, but also as a symbolic celebration of the official confirmation of the new Observant Congregation with the new patron saint.<sup>28</sup> The polyptych – as an exception to contemporary iconographic practice in Dubrovnik – featured the figure of St Vincent (and not the Virgin) in the central field, and the contract also mentions *hystorie*, that is, miracle scenes in the predella. In addition, a large wooden statue of St Vincent has been preserved and kept in the Dubrovnik Dominican church until the present day (**fig. 5**). In 1490 the Friars Preachers of Kotor commissioned a similar wooden statue of the saint, whereas in 1495 they contracted the leading Ragusan painter Božidar Vlatković to paint an altarpiece dedicated to St Vincent Ferrer (**fig. 6**).<sup>29</sup> It should be underlined

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28 For the detailed contract for the altarpiece, see: Jorjo Tadić, *Grada o slikarskoj školi u Dubrovniku XIII-XVI*, 2 Vols. (Belgrade: Naučna knjiga, 1952) I, 303; see also: Marinković, 'Kultovi dominikanskih svetaca', 165.

29 The contract with Vlatković is published in: Tadić, *Grada* I, 332-333. On the statue see: Kruno Prijatelj, 'Kotorski kip sv. Vinka', *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske* 3 (1967), 201-203; Valentina Živković, 'San Vincenzo Ferrer. Qualche nota sul culto del predicatore domenicano apocalittico che salva dall'eresie e dalla peste', in: *Immagini della predicazione tra Quattrocento e Settecento*. Crivelli, Lotto, Guercino, ed. G. Capriotti and F. Coltrinari (Milano: Silvana editoriale, 2017), 47-55.

that the friars of Kotor specifically asked that their new altarpiece should be made on the model of the new Ragusan polyptych. None of the two altarpieces have survived, but the similarity of the two wooden sculptures is indicative of the coordinated commissions related to the cult of the great preacher.

The Dominicans of Kotor and Dubrovnik had a somewhat different fate after 1487, when the latter finally managed to establish the Observant Congregation and secede from the Dalmatian province, uniting the three reformed houses in the territory of the Republic of Dubrovnik: St Dominic in Dubrovnik, the Holy Cross in Gruž, and the newly established St Nicholas friary on the island of Lopud (1482). Ragusan friars (and the government) received strong support from the Hungarian court, which encouraged the Dominican Observant reform in Dubrovnik and the separation of the Ragusan Congregation from the province covering the territory of Venetian Dalmatia. Hungarian interest was surely politically motivated, considering that the Republic of Dubrovnik nominally obeyed the Crown of St Stephen between the mid fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. The support to the Ragusan Observant friars was also reflected in the veneration of several Hungarian dynastic saints in the Dominican friary in Dubrovnik. Among them, the depiction of the stigmatization of Blessed Margaret of Hungary on the pulpit in the Ragusan church dates from the period immediately after the Observant reform of 1460. The image of the Dominican nun adoring the Crucifix on the vault medaillon of the matroneum built after 1466 plausibly reflects the iconographical program of the pulpit, accompanied with the mentioned image of St Vincent Ferrer on the console capital (**fig. 7**). Finally, the medallion with the image of a Dominican nun praying in front of the Crucifix in the northern wing of the cloister, built in 1479-1482/3, can directly be related to the return of the friars Serafino and Tommaso in 1479, after consolidating the Dominican *studium generale* in Buda, and identified as the Hungarian nun (**fig. 8**).<sup>30</sup>

Even though the friary of Kotor was not included in the newly established Ragusan Observant Congregation, the cult of St Vincent Ferrer that flourished in both cities remained a strong connection between the communities in Dubrovnik and Kotor. The role of Serafino Razzi in

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30 Marinković, 'La diffusione dei culti ungheresi', 171.

documenting, refreshing and promoting the cult of Ferrer at the end of the sixteenth century is crucial. A special devotion of Serafino Razzi to the Valencian preacher is revealed in his two works *Storia di Raugia* and *Vita di Osanna*. In his *Storia di Raugia* the Florentine Dominican dedicated a long passage to the statue of St Vincent, where he explained how the friars kept the statue covered and locked in a closet, only unveiling it during the holiest church holidays, when it could be seen covered with silver ex-voto offerings. Razzi added that in 1588 he himself had placed around the neck of Ferrer's statue a chain with a cross (made in the Dominican convent of San Paolo in Orvieto) containing several relics, including one of Thomas Aquinas and a fragment of the *lignum crucis*.<sup>31</sup>

The roots of Serafino Razzi's devotion to the Ferrer cult are to be found in his youth, around the time that he decided to dedicate his life to the Dominican order. An important event related to the cult of Ferrer occurred in 1551 when young Serafino, still a Dominican novice, was sent from the Florentine convent of San Marco to the convent of San Vincenzo in Prato. The reason for this journey was the feast day of the titular of the Prato monastery. There he attended the mystical ecstasy of Caterina de' Ricci, *la sposa di Giesù Christo nell'estasi della Passione*, which left such a strong impression on him that he asked to be taken as her spiritual son (*di prenderlo per figliuolo spirituale*).<sup>32</sup> This event is believed to have confirmed his commitment to the Dominican order, as well as his desire to write and edit hagiographies of famous Dominicans.<sup>33</sup>

Razzi's attempts to strengthen both the cult of Ferrer and that of a local Observant *beata* are made manifest in his hagiographic endeavors on behalf of Osanna from Kotor (1493-1565), the Dominican tertiary and anchoress who converted from Greek-Orthodoxy to Catholicism. In his *Vita della reverenda serva di Dio la madre suor Ossanna da Cattaro, dell'ordine di*

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31 'La tengono quei padri coperta, e serrata dentro un'armario, e si scopre nelle principali feste, e si vede tutta da capo a' piedi, coperta di voti d'argento, a i quali aggiunse l'autore di quest'opera, l'anno 1588. e gli pose al collo una bellissima Croce, lavorata in San Paolo d'Orvieto in Toscana, dentro di cui sono alcune sacre reliquie, e specialmente una di san Tommaso d'Aquino, & un poco di legno della Croce di nostro Signore', Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa*, 142.

32 Serafino Razzi, *La vita della reverenda serva di dio, La madre Suor Caterina de' Ricci, Monaca de Venerabile Monastero di S. Vincenzio di Prato* (Lucca: Per Vincentio Busdraghi, 1594), 27.

33 On Razzi and Caterina de' Ricci see: Anna Scattigno, *Sposa di Cristo. Mistica e comunità nei Ratti di Caterina de' Ricci. Con il testo inedito del XVI secolo* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2013).

*San Domenico*, published in 1592, Razzi presents Osanna as an *umile serva di Dio* and *santa viva*. Her ascetic penitence, visions, mystical experiences and prophecies were the stages of her spiritual ascension.<sup>34</sup> In her hagiography, Razzi assigned a significant role to the cult of Vincent Ferrer and emphasized his role as a personal protector to whom Osanna addressed her prayers, but also as a special protector of the entire city, together with the traditional patron saint of Kotor, St Tryphon.

## Conclusion

In the Dominican order, in which reforms ultimately did not lead to unbridgable divisions, Observant and non-Observant factions by and large venerated the same saints, and this is especially true of Caterina of Siena and Vincent Ferrer. Nevertheless, the dedication of churches and altars, as well as the iconography of liturgical and devotional objects and architectural decoration, when put in the context of local efforts regarding the reform of particular communities, represent a clear indication of support for Observant reforms through the promotion of specific cult of saints. Concrete connections, such as the local presence of Dominici's network, the activity of itinerant Observant preachers (Giovanni of Pistoia, Serafino Razzi), or foreign support for the reformed friaries (from the courts of Hungary and Naples) delineate more precisely the channels of spreading both the new cults and the reform. Following the 'institutional' commissions introducing the new saints, however, there were several private commissions that attest to the wider spread of the Observant cults at an early stage. Unlike the discussed local occurrences of cults whose Observant context is clearly detectable, it is difficult to grasp the Observant background of the unique pre-Baroque appearance of St Antonino in the region in an altarpiece from the Dominican church of St Nicholas in Kotor. St Antonino Pierozzi (1389-1459), Dominici's disciple and later archbishop of Florence and vicar general of the Observant Dominicans, was depicted in the altarpiece most

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34 Serafino Razzi, *Vita della reverenda serva di Dio la madre suor Osanna da Cattaro, dell'ordine di San Domenico. Scritta da Serafino Razzi dell'istesso Ordine, e Provincia Romana* (Florence: Nella Stamperia del Sermartelli, 1592). On Osanna as a *santa viva* see Valentina Živković, 'Non possedè cosa che del mondo fusse. Suor Osanna, la santa viva di Cattaro', in: *Sante vive in Europa (secoli XV-XVI)/Santas vivas en Europa (siglos XV-XVI), Saggi per Gabriella Zarri*, ed. A. Bartolomei Romagnoli, *Archivio italiano per la Storia della Pietà* 33 (2020), 235-254.

probably commissioned by the confraternity of the leathermakers around 1545 (**fig. 9**).<sup>35</sup> The saint is depicted flanking (paired with the locally popular St George) the central figure of St Bartholomew, the obvious patron of the confraternity, while the reasons for the unconventional choice of a locally less known reformist saint remain unknown.

The role of Serafino Razzi in propagating Observant cults, not only as a preacher, but primarily as the author of hagiographies and other texts, was as substantial in the southeastern Adriatic as it was in Italy. His reinvention and promotion of Observant figures such as Marcolino and Guido, Vincent and Osanna was carried out locally and vigourously, making Razzi's works not only the most important source for Observant cults but also the apex of devotion to Observant saints in Dubrovnik and Kotor. It is important to note that among the mentioned cults, only that of Osanna concerned a local person, whereas the other ones had either only indirect relations to the local community (Marcolino and Guido in Dubrovnik) or no specific relation at all, except for the personal link of their propagators (Vincent in Kotor and possibly in Dubrovnik, Margaret in Dubrovnik). The appearance of the cult of Margaret of Hungary accurately reflects the double background of the Observant devotion in the Ragusan community: that of reformist efforts to set a model for religious discipline and that of political priorities to institutionally distance the houses from Venetian influence. Notwithstanding the local political exigencies and expected particularities, the appearance and diffusion of new cults in the Observant communities of the southeastern Adriatic corresponded to the general framework of reformist devotional practice and thus were an integral yet distinctive part of the wider reformist network.

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35 Valentina Živković, 'The Sixteenth-century Altar Painting of the Cattaran (Kotor) Fraternity of Leather-makers', *Balkanica* 40 (2010), 75-84.

## Illustrations



Fig. 1: St Caterina of Siena, wall painting, church of St Anna in Kotor, after 1467 (photo Dejan Palibrk).



Fig. 2: St Caterina of Siena, medallion in the cloister vault, Dominican friary in Dubrovnik, 1460s (photo Tomislav Turković).



Fig. 3: Pulpit in the church of St Dominic in Dubrovnik, after 1460 (photo Tomislav Turković).





Fig. 4: St Vincent Ferrer, semi-capital in the matroneum in the church of St Dominic in Dubrovnik, after 1466 (photo Antun Baće).



Fig. 5: Wooden statue of St Vincent Ferrer, church of St Dominic in Dubrovnik, ca. 1487 (photo Tomislav Turković).



Fig. 6: Wooden statue of St Vincent Ferrer, from the Dominican church of St Nicholas in Kotor (presently in the cathedral treasury), 1490 (photo Stevan Kordić).



Fig. 7: Blessed Margaret of Hungary (?), medallion in the matroneum vault, church of St Dominic in Dubrovnik, after 1466 (photo Antun Baće).



Fig. 8: Blessed Margaret of Hungary, medallion in the cloister vault, Dominican friary in Dubrovnik, 1479-1482/3 (photo Tomislav Turković).



Fig. 9: Altarpiece from the church of St Nicholas in Kotor (presently in the cathedral) depicting St Antonino Pierozzi, ca. 1545 (photo Zorica Čubrović).

# Was There an Observant Cistercian Movement? Reform in the Medieval History of the Cistercian Order

*Emilia Jamroziak*

The concept of reform defined Cistercians as a religious order across its history to the present day. It has been also central to the historical interpretations of the Cistercian order's development and its place in ecclesiastical history. More broadly, across medieval history, the concept of reform is not a stable one and recent work on reforms in the early and high Middle Ages made it abundantly clear how it has been created textually and performatively. These debates are relevant for the reinterpretations of reform in the Cistercian context.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, there has been an absence of the concept of Observant reform in the context of Cistercian historiography, despite that it was a phenomenon that can be clearly observed in a variety of contexts. Whilst there was no Observant movement within the Cister-

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1 For the recent historiography of the concept and practice of reform pre-twelfth century see: Julia Barrow, 'Ideas and Applications of Reform', in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 3: *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 345-362; Steven Vanderputten, 'Monastic Reform from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century', in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism*, ed. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) I, 599-617.

cian order in the way it existed in the mendicant world, it was clearly part of its culture in the later Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup>

## Reform and its conceptualization

This absence of the concept of the Observant reform can be explained by the problematization of reforms as a defining idea in the history of the order. The historiography of Cistercian reforms has been vested in the debates on the origins of the order, processes of institutionalization and definition of practice and identity. It resulted in the focus on the twelfth century as the period when the reforms took place and defined the Cistercian order. One of its consequences has been a relative lack of research on post-1300 Cistercian history, especially in Anglophone scholarship. In German-language historiography, there are far more studies regarding the later Middle Ages with a focus on individual communities and networks of reform linking different types of religious institutions, but this approach tends to be regional rather than vested in the perspective of the order. Female Cistercian communities are also more systematically studied in relation to the ideas of reform, manuscript culture, knowledge production, and spirituality.<sup>3</sup>

The debates over the origins of the Cistercian order that erupted in the early 2000s were an important step in deconstructing the myth of origins that shaped all previous interpretations of Cistercian history.<sup>4</sup> Particular

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2 One of the measures of this absence, is the fact that the *International Medieval Bibliography* currently does not list a single publication on the subject of Observant reform and Cistercian order, but there are 273 articles listed in the database that examine various aspects of Observant reform across other religious orders.

3 See for example: *Zwischen Klausur und Welt. Autonomie und Interaktion spätmittelalterlicher geistlicher Frauengemeinschaften*, ed. Eva Schlotheuber & Sigrid Hirbodian (Ostfildern: Thorbecke Verlag, 2022); *Rosenkränze und Seelengärten: Bildung und Frömmigkeit in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern*, ed. Britta-Juliane Kruse (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015); Henrike Lähnemann, 'Der Medinger "Nonnenkrieg" aus der Perspektive der Klosterreform. Geistliche Selbstbehauptung 1479-1554', *Ons geestelijk erf* 87:1-2 (2016), 91-116; Eva Schlotheuber, 'Die Zisterzienserinnengemeinschaften im Spätmittelalter', in: *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. Franz Felten & Werner Rösener (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 265-284.

4 An excellent summary of these debates and Martha Newman's own perspective on the Cistercian reform of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and practices created by "charismatic texts", see: Martha G. Newman, 'Text and Authority in the Formation of the Cistercian Order: Re-assessing the Early Cistercian Reform', in: *Reforming the Church before Modernity: Patterns, Problems and*

constructions of origins – as defining what the Cistercian order was for the rest of its medieval history – were central to the Golden Ages and Decline as well as Ideal and Reality models of interpretation. For the first of these models, the original or early shape of the Cistercian order (usually defined as pre-1200) was understood as not to be changed and thus various alterations to monastic practice and institutional changes were described as decline. Whilst the second model was more nuanced about what the “original form” was, it also understood the origins as the location of the “ideal”, which could never be fully realized in social, political and economic reality. These models stressed the centrality of reform for every new monastic form, but ultimately each of these monastic forms was described as somehow failed before being superseded by a more “advanced” type. Increasingly, scholars of monasticism and religious orders have been questioning the linear model of monastic history – in which there is a succession of models of religious life taking over – and are calling for a new, not yet specified, structure of monastic history.<sup>5</sup> This can be an important stimulus to reshape approaches to the post-1300 Cistercian history too.

What constituted Cistercian reform in the twelfth century was the subject of very intense debate and covered several areas. The strict following of the Rule of St Benedict and rejection of local customaries were central to it. The early narrative texts, especially different versions of the *Exordium*, indicate an identity based on a uniform set of ideas and principles. Historians explored this uniformity through a different understanding of what this standardization was within the living institution of the order as well as individual communities. Because Cistercians were the first religious order *sensu stricto*, a new type of structure in the Latin Church that influenced later developments. The most successful interpretation model of its structural formation has been the one based on the Weberian notion of the routinization of charisma. It has accounted for the success of

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*Approaches*, ed. Christopher M. Bellitto and Louis I. Hamilton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 173-198; Gert Melville. ‘Justifications of Monastic Reform in the Central Middle Ages’, in: *The Creation of Medieval Northern Europe: Christianisation, Social Transformations, and Historiography. Essays in Honour of Sverre Bagge*, ed. Leidulf Melve and Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (Oslo: Dreyer Forlag, 2012), 44-57.

5 *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticisms: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020).

the Cistercian model, the development of a distinct monastic practice and culture, as well as the practical framework of the order. Gert Melville, who formulated this interpretation fully, singled out the *Carta Caritatis* (and its different versions) as the central element of the process which created a stable, trans-regional, monastic organization.<sup>6</sup>

‘With the *Carta Caritatis*, the Cistercians had set in the place of an individual charismatic founder a comprehensive text whose contents expressed the community’s will as law. Here they captured all the validity that was otherwise to be found in the charismatic himself. The text was now the embodiment of the charismatic ideal. [...] In content, the *Carta Caritatis* systematically and comprehensively encompassed all the needs for regulation faced by what was soon a community of abbeys that, though widely dispersed, had its own identity.’<sup>7</sup>

The early texts of Cistercian monasticism remained an important point of reference in all reform programs in the medieval and post-medieval history of the order, but an understanding of these reforms as an actual return to the original state as described in the *Carta Caritatis* has plagued the historiography of the Cistercian order for most of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

## Uniformity and its historiography

The study of uniformity as a distinct feature of the Cistercian reform had several separate versions and they are useful for the understating of the possibility of interpreting late medieval reforms and the role of Observance in Cistercian culture. Firstly, a very specific model of Cistercian uniformity as the goal of monastic reform and the key characteristic of the order was

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6 Gert Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism. Its History and Forms of Life*, transl. James D. Mixson (Athens, OH: Cistercian Publications, 2016), 146-157; see also for a wider perspective: Stephen Jaeger, ‘Charismatic Body-Charismatic Text’, *Exemplaria* 9 (1997), 117-137.

7 Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism*, 147-148.

8 For the summary of these debates, see: Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 205-209; Emilia Jamrozak, ‘Zisterzienserstudien in Großbritannien - ein kleines Forschungsfeld mit Großen Fragen’, *Cistercienser Chronik* 124:3 (2017), 535-548.

formulated by some economic historians in the mid-twentieth century. These studies explored in detail, usually using specific case studies, a highly uniform economic organization of each monastery within the Cistercian network. Whilst these studies emphasized the highly profitable nature of this design, which enabled significant surplus production, some authors went as far as suggesting a kind of proto-capitalistic model.<sup>9</sup> In this type of interpretation, there were very strong echoes of Weberian rationality as perfected within western monasticism. Moreover, it enabled historians to discuss monastic institutions without any references to their religious function. Regardless, whether the authors claimed intentional design or “accidental success”, surplus production and accumulated wealth were interpreted as eroding the original mission of apostolic poverty encoded in the twelfth-century reform. This model of interpretation incorporated several existing ideas that essentialized uniformity, but also made reform “unavoidable” because of the corrupting nature of the monastic reality of generating a surplus.<sup>10</sup> Whilst it is an outdated interpretation, it is useful in rethinking the concept of resources – material and intangible in the context of Cistercian Observant culture.

Secondly, a further model that was fundamentally vested in uniformity as the essence of Cistercian reform, but focused on very different evidence, was that of architectural and artistic homogeneity. It originated from the 1950s concept of the “Bernardine plan”, which is an interpretation of evidence from the monastic church of Himmerode Abbey, a daughter house of Clairvaux. The monastic church at Clairvaux, as intrinsically connected with St Bernard, was understood as the model for at least the daughter houses of Clairvaux if not, to some degree, for all other Cistercian monastic churches for the rest of the century. The so-called Bernardine model

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9 For the discussion of this strand of historiography see: Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 183-185; for examples of this approach see: Richard Roehl, ‘Plan and Reality in a medieval monastic economy: the Cistercians’, *Journal of Economic History* 29 (1969), 83-113; James Madden, ‘Business Monks, Banker Monks, Bankrupt Monks: The English Cistercians in the Thirteenth Century’, *The Catholic History Review* 49 (1963), 341-364; Klaus Wollenberg, *Die Entwicklung der Eigenwirtschaft des Klosters Fürstenfeld zwischen 1263 und 1632 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Auftretens moderner Aspekte* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984); Bernhard Nagel, *Die Eigenarbeit der Zisterzienser. Von der religiösen Askese zur wirtschaftlichen Effizienz* (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 2006).

10 For an overview of the Cistercian economy and its historiography see: Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 183-207.



created a very influential research agenda which tested how far twelfth-century Cistercian churches across Christendom followed or failed to follow this design.<sup>11</sup> A much greater variety of architectural designs of Cistercian monastic churches, which was also interpreted as a loss of authenticity, resulted in prolonged disinterest among art historians in the post-1300 art and architecture of the order.<sup>12</sup> A second important source of visual uniformity interpretations has been the *Carta Caritatis Prior* and the *Exordium Parvum* and the first volume of the *Statuta* of the Cistercian General Chapter that provided a copious amount of evidence for prescriptions against particular precious metals, fabrics and types of glass used in the monastic churches, especially liturgical objects. Whilst the new edition of the *Statuta* by Chrysogonus Waddell exposed much of the chronology of these “rules” as creations of the 1930s edition of the *Statuta* and invalidates the idea that the Cistercian order had a highly specific and prescriptive plan about what liturgical spaces and furnishings should look like, by the late twentieth century, a concept of aesthetics emerged that accommodated a much broader spectrum of visual programs of Cistercian churches.<sup>13</sup> This idea that Cistercian reform was about visual uniformity, in a very specific way has been deconstructed further by Maximilian Sternberg’s thesis, arguing persuasively that a particular model of Cistercian architectural simplicity was heavily influenced if not outright created by the way in which

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11 For a full analysis of the “Bernardine model” and its impact on research see: Alexandra Gajewski, ‘Another Look at the Cistercian Architecture. Part One: The Idea of Cistercian Architecture as a Mirror of Its Times’, *Cistercium Mater Nostra* 4 (2010), 9–20.

12 In German-language scholarship, a very important turning point in interpreting late medieval Cistercian material culture in the context of liturgy and memorial culture has been Annegret Laabs, *Malerei und Plastik im Zisterzienserorden. Zum Bildgebrauch zwischen sakralem Zeremoniell und Stiftermemoria 1250 – 1430* (Petersberg, Imhof Verlag, 2000). More recently, Michael Carter, *The Art and Architecture of Cistercians in Northern England, c. 1300–1540* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019) has been the first systematic study of English Cistercian material culture in the later Middle Ages, but it has received a rather hostile reception from the conservative art historians in the United Kingdom.

13 Alexis Grélois, ‘Tradition and Transmission: What is the significance of the Cistercian General Chapters’ Statutes? (twelfth to the fourteenth century)’, in: *Shaping Stability: The Normation and Formation of Religious Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Krijn Panter and Abraham Plunkett-Latimer (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 205–216. The re-edition of volume 1 of the *Statuta* also invalidated ideas about the highly prescriptive nature of the Cistercian attitude towards “art”. *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Forges: Cîteaux, 2002) replaced *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, Vol. I: *Ab anno 1116 ad annum 1220*, ed. Josef-Maria Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933).

particular French monastic churches were renovated and photographed in the post-Second World War period making its visual form evoking modernist architecture.<sup>14</sup> The process of deconstruction of the uniformity paradigm in the visual culture of the Cistercian order offers an important starting point for placing Observant culture within a late medieval context that was no less “authentic” than the twelfth-century one.

Thirdly, a most recent interpretation of Cistercian order and uniformity offers a very different model of interpretation of what “Cistercianness” was whilst allowing to depart from binary modes, typical for previous paradigms. The shift toward liturgy as the core of Cistercian identity and the actual center of striving for uniformity is part of a wider turn towards interdisciplinary liturgy studies as a central aspect of research on monasticism and medieval religious culture more broadly.<sup>15</sup> Concepts of shared identity in the Cistercian context, have been based on Brian Stock’s notion of textual community, and recently, some scholars focused very productively on the role of exempla in the formation of Cistercian novices and the education of monks and nuns.<sup>16</sup> One of the key products of such approaches is conceptualizations that turn away from exclusively institutional formulations of the Cistercian order, towards concepts such as *Zisterziensität/Cistercianity* or *Cisterciannes*.<sup>17</sup> These are also very useful

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14 Maximilian Sternberg, *Cistercian Architecture and Medieval Society* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013). See also Maximilian Sternberg, ‘Vorreiter der Moderne? Rezeptionen der Zisterzienserbaukunst im 20. Jahrhundert’, in: *Die Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. Georg Mölich, Norbert Nussbaum, and Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017), 45-62; the key publication that connected Cistercian architecture to modernism was Lucien Hervé, *Architektur der Wahrheit. Die Zisterzienserabtei Le Thoronet*, trans. Martin Richter (Berlin: Phaidon, 2001), originally published in Paris in 1956.

15 It has been marked by a growing number of large, interdisciplinary projects, digitisation of large corpora of liturgical manuscripts and a new framing of liturgy as central to what monasticism was in the medieval context. For example ‘Cistercian Horizons’ <http://cistercianhorizons.fsch.unl.pt/>.

16 Brian Stock, *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Emmie Rose Price-Goodfellow, *Teaching by Example: Cistercian Exempla Collections before Caesarius, 1178-1220* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2022); Martha G. Newman, *Cistercian Stories for Monks and Nuns: The Sacramental Imagination of Engelhard of Langheim* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

17 Holger Sturm, *Beschriebene Zisterziensität: Das ‘Exordium Magnum Cisterciense’ des Konrad von Eberbach unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung des ‘Codex Eberbacensis’* (Mainz: Patrimonium Verlag, 2020), 284-85; Price-Goodfellow, *Teaching by Example*, 156-158.

terms for understanding the culture of the Observant reform in the Cistercian order and I shall return to them shortly.

### **Cistercian dimensions of Observant reform**

As I have stressed in the opening section, there was no institutional, formalized Observant movement within the Cistercian order. It was a diffused, but clearly observable set of processes, trends and patterns that show similarities to the Observancy in the mendicant context, and to regional processes of reform within the Benedictine Congregations of Melk and Bursfelde.<sup>18</sup> The issues of uniformity discussed previously had also a bearing on the late medieval conceptualizations of reform, and I will return to the elements of the historiographical debates that are particularly useful for understanding Cistercian Observant culture.

There were three distinct axes of the Observant reform movement in the Cistercian order. The first one was papacy-driven reform projects, especially those instigated by John XXII (d. 1334) and *Fulgens sicut stella* (1335) issued by Benedict XII. Secondly, there were Cistercian, internally driven reform projects, especially those led by Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux (r. 1476-1501). Thirdly, there were regional and local centers of reform, often associated with particular figures and congregations. It is also important to stress that female Cistercian communities were far more involved and affected by Observant reforms, than male houses, and their patterns of reform had much in common with those experienced by both Benedictine and Mendicant nunneries.

The impact of Benedict XII's reforms of several religious orders has been recognized not only 'as one of the landmarks of his pontificate'<sup>19</sup>, but also provided a legal and institutional framework for reforms across

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18 Mirko Breitenstein, *Die Benediktiner: Geschichte, Lebensformen, Spiritualität* (München: C.H.Beck, 2019), 100-105; Bert Roest, 'Observant Reform in Religious Orders', in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Volume 4: *Christianity in Western Europe, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 446-457: at 453.

19 Irene Bueno, 'Introduction: Benedict XII, the Guardian of Orthodoxy', in: *Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342): the Guardian of Orthodoxy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 13-26: at 16.

all main religious orders, with lasting impact.<sup>20</sup> Pope Benedict XII was an “insider”, a former Cistercian monk and abbot of Fontfroide Abbey, with clear plans for what needed to be reformed within the order, with which he strongly identified himself and for which he used his papal position to implement reforms, whilst consulting key Cistercian abbots – from Cîteaux, La Ferté, Clairvaux and Morimond.<sup>21</sup> Yet, at the same time papally driven reforms were always a danger for the real and perceived autonomy of the order.<sup>22</sup> The content of the bull is clearly anchored in the Observant aims, its three elements – financial security and responsibility of the abbots, to use modern terminology, anti-corruption regulations, the reinforcement of common observance (shared accommodation, no private incomes, dietary restrictions), liturgy as well as making university education much more central to the monastic practice. It not only gave a principal role to St Bernard College in Paris, but described the function, structure and organization of colleges in Oxford, Toulouse and Montpellier as well as new foundations in Bologna and Salamanca. The College in Metz was at this point the most eastward-located Cistercian school. The abbots were obliged to send a proportion of monks from their communities to these study houses for academic education and provide funding for it. *Fulgens sicut stella* developed as an important reference point for the General Chapter and the role of higher education became embedded in the Cistercian culture.<sup>23</sup>

The role of Benedict XII’s bull as a reform project in the fourteenth century can be contrasted with another reform attempt, just a few years before, instigated by his predecessor John XXII in 1317-18 in relation to Cistercians and other orders that would undermine their exempt status and would force them to give major financial contributions to the Church.

The plans were set up with the rhetoric of the great need for reform because the exempt status of these orders was causing various corruptions.<sup>24</sup>

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20 James Mixson, ‘Introduction’, in: *A Companion to the Observant Reform in the Later Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James Mixson and Bert Roest (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 1-20 (at 4).

21 Franz Felten, ‘Die Ordensreformen Benedikts XII. unter institutionsgeschichtlichem Aspekt’, in: *Institutionen und Geschichte. Theoretische Aspekte und mittelalterliche Befunde*, ed. Gert Melville, Norm und Struktur, 1 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), 369-435: at 382.

22 Felten, ‘Die Ordensreformen Benedikts XII.’, 369-380.

23 R. Schimmelpfennig, ‘Zisterzienserideal und Kirchenreform – Benedikt XII. (1334-1342) als Reformpapst’, *Zisterzienser-Studien* 3 (1976), 11-43: at 35.

24 William Chester Jordan, *Unceasing Strife, Unending Fear: Jacques de Thérines and the Freedom of the Church in the Age of the Last Capetians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 75.

The Cistercians realized the danger it posed to their autonomy, and Abbot Jacques de Thérines of Charlieu presented a dossier of key Cistercian documents and made an eloquent case against the papal plan, arguing that the Cistercian order did not need any reform. He stressed that the order was exempt and under direct papal authority, so it could not have any shortcomings. Abbot Jacques stressed enormous tax burdens, especially in France, wars ravaging large parts of Europe, damage and destruction to numerous monasteries, in Gascony, Flanders, Scotland and Wales, as well as the heavy duty of charity during the Great Famine that began in 1315. The burden of poverty forced many Cistercian communities to disperse, so any further contribution toward the crusades, which the pope wanted, was declared to be impossible. In order to appeal to Pope John XXII's devotion to Virgin Mary, Abbot Jacques reminded him that she was the patroness of the Cistercian order, and owned all the land belonging to the monasteries. The rhetorical skills and arguments presented by the abbot of Charlieu convinced the pope, who abandoned his plans toward Cistercians, focusing on other orders instead, especially the Franciscans.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst external reforms had always had an element of risk, internally driven reforms were also subject to conflict and strife – a typical aspect of Observant reforms in the context of many non-Cistercian institutions too. The most important of the reforms that featured all key elements of Observant ideas, were those introduced and carried by Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux and promulgated by him and assembled Cistercian abbots in the *Articuli Parisienses* in February 1493. He identified key dangers and failures which required urgent remedy and thus established ground for the reform. Abbot Jean singled out the ineffective institutional structure of the order and the curse of commendatory abbots who did not care about proper monastic observance nor the cohesion of the order. These were typical Observant narratives regardless of how much these problems were related to the French and Italian Cistercian context and far less an issue for the Cistercian communities in other parts of Europe. The *Articuli Parisienses* were an element of a much wider reform program that Abbot Jean de Cirey carried out.

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25 Patrick Nold, 'Pope John XXII's Annotations on the Franciscan Rule: Content and Contexts', *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007), 298-299; Jordan, *Unceasing Strife*, 75-76, 79-81, 83.

Coraline Rey has established four aspects of what can be described as creating a “resources of tradition” project at Cîteaux.<sup>26</sup> First of all, he commissioned systematic writing of dorso-notes on the back of the charters in the abbey’s archive. The documents were classified according to the units of Cîteaux’s economy, for example, barns and seigneuries. This was the first step in creating 15 cartularies, which the abbot commissioned from the material in Cîteaux Abbey archive. The second element was the cataloguing of the manuscripts in Cîteaux library between 1480 and 1488 and the systematic binding of the manuscripts, in the archives and in the library. The abbot also further expanded the library collections by purchases and new copies made at Cîteaux.<sup>27</sup> Whilst he was not the first abbot in the Cistercian order to deliberately expand library holdings, it was done in the context of a clear understanding that printing offered unrivalled opportunities for producing uniform liturgical books. Abbot Jean even set up a printing workshop at Dijon.<sup>28</sup> The first volume printed there on 4 July 1491 was *Privilegia Ordinis Cisterciensis*. The volume was intended as a codification of all Cistercian privileges with commentaries for distribution across the order. The preface to the volume written by Abbot Jean states the aim of this project – the collection of these privileges to be used to defend the rights of the order at the times of great difficulties that have befallen it.<sup>29</sup> Just as correct and uniform liturgical books were very important for Observant reforms, the volume of Cistercian privileges was a very important resource for institutional identity and defense against adverse claims. There was a further project of the abbot of Cîteaux that was aimed at the preservation and organization of information, and above all, creating ‘protection resources’ – namely a list of Cistercian saints, written between 1482 and 1485. It is the first attempt at creating a comprehensive,

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26 [https://www.academia.edu/9669295/Jean\\_de\\_Cirey\\_abbot\\_of\\_C%C3%A9teaux\\_1476-1501\\_and\\_the\\_reorganization\\_of\\_archives\\_and\\_manuscripts\\_archival\\_filing\\_cataloguing\\_binding\\_and\\_printing\\_Maastricht\\_6\\_feb.\\_2014\\_](https://www.academia.edu/9669295/Jean_de_Cirey_abbot_of_C%C3%A9teaux_1476-1501_and_the_reorganization_of_archives_and_manuscripts_archival_filing_cataloguing_binding_and_printing_Maastricht_6_feb._2014_)

27 Yolanta Zaluska, *L’enluminure et le scriptorium de Cîteaux au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Commentarii Cistercienses: Studia et Documenta*, 4 (Cîteaux: Brecht, 1989); Yolanta Zaluska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, *Corpus des manuscrits enluminés des collections publiques des départements* (Paris: CRNS, 1991).

28 David N. Bell, “The Library of Cîteaux in the fifteenth century: *primus inter pares* or *unus inter multos?*”, *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 50 (1999), 103-134.

29 Description of this text in the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*: <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00976000?style=expanded> and another listing of holdings in public and university libraries <https://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/docs/M35439.htm>.

non-local list of saints in the Cistercian context. It was at first a manuscript copy attached to another of Abbot Jean's texts, a highly polemical *Dialogus de prospero et adverso statu Ordinis Cisterciensis*,<sup>30</sup> and then printed in the volume of Cistercian privileges. A short preface proclaims that although the list is incomplete, it contains the names of saints from the ranks of the Cistercian order, who were proven to have led holy lives and performed miracles. The list contains 75 *sancti* and *beati* who Abbot Jean knew to be venerated in various Cistercian abbeys. He used his visits to various communities to assemble the information, and this is strongly reflected in the geographical focus of this collection – there is a visible predominance of evidence from French monasteries with far fewer *sancti* and *beati* from communities further away. The whole list projects a strong belief that the Cistercian order had accumulated spiritual treasure during the more than three hundred years of its existence, and that this 'capital' should not be neglected.<sup>31</sup>

The lists of saints belonging to particular religious orders were a popular contemporary genre. Franciscan and Dominican Observants promoted their third orders with catalogues of saints, although most of them had tenuous connections to their organizations. Nine catalogues of Franciscan saints of the tertiary order were produced between 1385 and 1547 (the last one contained in a papal bull of Paul III), the majority in Latin and three in Italian.<sup>32</sup> The form and structure of these lists resemble the Cistercian catalogue. They are very simple listings of *saints* and *beati* with some contextualization of their hagiography and assertions of numerous miracles.<sup>33</sup> However, one of the vernacular Franciscan catalogues, *Trattato del Terz'Ordine* created between 1521-29, has a more distinctly chronological structure placing various saints within specific time references.<sup>34</sup> Such sequential lists that create a more linear narrative can be found among other religious orders too. For the Carmelites, the process of development of their catalogues of saints began in the mid-fourteenth century and contin-

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30 Bibliothèque multimédia intercommunale d'Épinal, MS 88 Epinal, fols. 99-101.

31 Jean de Cirey, 'Catalogue des Saints et des Bienheureux de L'Ordre de Citeaux', in: *D'Après les Manuscrits de L'Abbaye de Citeaux*, ed. Ph. Guignard (Dijon, 1878), 650.

32 Chiara Mercuri, *Santità e Propaganda il Terz'Ordine Francescano Nello'Agiografia Osservante* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1999), 124-127.

33 Ibidem, 133-160 (an appendix with the editions of the texts).

34 Ibidem, 144-158.

ued in the fifteenth when fuller lists were produced.<sup>35</sup> Andrew Jotischky argues that this catalogue of Carmelite saints was ‘a microcosm of the order’s history, but also reveals the identity which Carmelites wish to portray’.<sup>36</sup> Following a linear structure, it begins with the mythical founding father Elijah, Elisha, prophets Jonah and Obediah, and moves to historical figures. In this way, the list represented, according to Jotischky, a ‘distillation of historical narrative’ of the order by listing figures that represented the spirituality of the Carmelite order and the individuals who were central in shaping its normative texts and structures.<sup>37</sup>

The reform program of Abbot Jean was intended to strengthen the structures of the order and its financial stability, and remove the practice of commendatory abbots, and to do so he navigated skillfully between the demands of French King Charles VIII and the papacy. The reforms promulgated in the *Articuli Parisienses* were very much about upholding observance – liturgy, communal life, regulating private property and monastic finance, the role and responsibility of abbots as well as claustration of Cistercian nuns.<sup>38</sup> All these were means to “cure” long-standing and much-debated problems that attracted both internal and external concerns. The huge project of Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux including the *Articuli Parisienses* was also in part embroiled in a long-standing conflict between Cîteaux and Clairvaux.<sup>39</sup> In that sense, local and regional reform projects were never conflict- and controversy-free either, but their presence was an important dimension of Observant culture within the Cistercian order.

In terms of regional focus and Observant ideas transcending boundaries of religious orders, such a network was the Congregation of Sibculo originating from Kamp Abbey. Alongside Altenberg Abbey, Kamp Abbey was the most important and rich Cistercian monastery in the Rhineland,

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35 Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Past in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 191, and see footnote 2 on the same page for the MSS and information on editions.

36 *Ibidem*, 191.

37 *Ibidem*, 191.

38 *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis, 1116–1786, VI: 1491–1542*, ed. Josephus Maria Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1938), 87–97.

39 Immo Ebert, *Die Zisterzienser. Geschichte eines europäischen Ordens* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2007), 327.



with a large number of daughter houses in its care, including several female communities. Kamp had a particularly close connection to the *Devotio moderna* during the abbacy of William II of Cologne, who took office in 1382.<sup>40</sup> The abbot and the community of Kamp was the recipient of letters from Geert Grote (1340-1384), the founder of the *Devotio moderna* movement, advising and urging reforms in Kamp and its filiations, especially in its nunneries. Their focus was the eradication of private property in the monastic communities, and the importance of the spiritual guidance of the abbot, whose role was inward and not outward facing, enforcement of communal life and seclusion from the outside world. For Geert Grote, upholding monastic customs of Cistercian life and inspiration from Carthusian eremitical traditions was the best path for ‘the salvation of the soul in God’s glory’.<sup>41</sup> The implementation of this reform program was at first the adoption of the Cistercian Observance by the house of Canons Regular at Sibculo in 1406, which was joined by a group of Brethren of the Common Life, and together with Kamp’s filiation houses – Mariënhaven in Warmond, Mariëenberg in Hesselstein and Galilea in Sibculo – created the Congregation of Sibculo in 1418. Whilst remaining institutionally Cistercian, and following Cistercian liturgy, it adopted Carthusian elements, especially strict *inclusio* and spirituality influences by the *Devotio moderna*.<sup>42</sup> These development show how the ideas of change and renewal were very much linked to the activities of particular abbots, but unlike many earlier developments relied far less on the filiation systems, and far more on regional connections and inspiration crossing institutional boundaries.

The role of specific abbots or even individual monks in propagating and implementing reform and cultivating Observant culture in the Cistercian Order can be exemplified by two rather divergent figures from two different generations and geographical zones – Jakob of Paradies (1381-1465) and Abbot Marmeduke Huby of Fountains (ca. 1439–1526). Jakob is an

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40 Rudolf Th.M. van Dijk, ‘Tussen kartuizers en cisterciënzers: de brieven van Geert Grote aan de abdij van Kamp’, in: *Fish Out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*, ed. Stephen J. Molvaere and Tom Gaens (Louvain: Peeters, 2013), 127-163.

41 Ibidem, 162.

42 Tom Gaens, ‘*Fons hortorum irriguus, ceteras irrigans religiones*: Carthusian Influences on Monastic Reform in Germany and the Low Countries in the Fifteenth Century’, in: *Fish Out of Water?*, 71-72.

excellent example of the dynamics of reform movements and inspirations, and the conciliary context of intense debates. The role of higher education in his monastic formation and path from the Cistercians to the Carthusians is also significant. Whereas the reforming Abbot Marmeduke Huby, a contemporary of Abbot Jean de Cirey, was a very successful monastic leader of his own communities and implementor of reforms within Cistercian communities in England and Wales.

Jakob of Paradies, a doctor of theology, first studying and then teaching at Kraków University (1420-1441), monk at Paradis (Paradyż) from 1402 and later Mogiła Abbey (from 1420), was deeply concerned about the importance of *vita contemplativa* in the moral reform of the Church.<sup>43</sup> Like many reformers of his generation, including those within the broad Benedictine tradition, Jakob was gravely concerned about the poor moral and education level of the clergy and the corrupting influence of wealth among secular clergymen and in religious orders. His method and spirit of reform were considerably inspired by the *Devotio moderna* and consisted of two interlinked approaches – reform of the institution of the Church through education and law, rejection of wealth, and reform of its members through asceticism and strict observance. Jakob not only preached, wrote – there are 150 surviving texts attributed to him – and taught, but was also active as a visitor of Cistercian communities, and took part in the local reforming synod in Łęczycza postulating far-reaching monastic reforms and preaching at the council of Basel. In 1442, he moved to Cistercian Sulejów Abbey and then changed his affiliation to the Carthusians. It was not an unusual decision for someone so deeply involved in monastic reform and inspired by the *Devotio moderna*.<sup>44</sup> Taking most of his book collection from Mogiła, Jakob entered the Carthusian charterhouse in Erfurt in 1442, and the remaining years were devoted to intense scholarly work, writing, and living according to strict monastic observance. His deanship and rectorship at Erfurt University are much disputed and the historiographical consensus is that the Iacobus de Paradiso mentioned in the sources actually referred

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43 Khrystyna Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies (1381-1465) und seine Schriften zur monastischen Reform* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2017), 17-27.

44 Like many details of his life, participation in the reform councils is far from certain. For the latest assessment of the historiography and the sources on this matter in the context of the changes in the order, see: Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies*, 28-38.

to two different scholars – one living in the Erfurt charterhouse and the other pursuing a university career also in Erfurt.<sup>45</sup> Jakob's contribution to the debates on monastic reform, wider Church reform and the conciliar movement has been singled out as particularly significant. Jakob expressed a sense of urgency with regard to the reform of the institutional Church, and his texts on monastic reform not only concerned legal and institutional parameters but also touched on spiritual dimensions. Already during Jakob's lifetime, his texts were much copied and distributed (especially those produced in Erfurt), and their presence has been attested in Cistercian, Carthusian, and Melk-affiliated Benedictine houses.<sup>46</sup>

Abbot Marmeduke Huby's path was very different, but representative for the late fifteenth-century ideas of reform in the Cistercian world and the role of abbatial leadership its implementation. Before he became abbot of Fountains in 1495, he held the office of bursar in his community (documented from 1482 onward) and acted as proctor of Abbot John Darnton of Fountains, who was one of the Cistercian commissioners, performing regional visitations in England by the appointment of the abbot of Cîteaux, and collecting taxation for the General Chapter. Appointed in 1495 to the abbacy of Fountains, he epitomized the "good abbot" – taking care of the community, material prosperity and security of the abbey and propagating the cult of local saints. However, his efforts were not only local but extended to the whole Cistercian province of England and Wales and constituted a clear reform program. He continued the appointment as the commissioner of the abbot of Cîteaux, co-presided over provincial chapters, conducted visitations and intervened in monasteries in which serious problems were identified, for example in the case of a disputed election in Furness Abbey in Cumbria. The role of higher education was another element of the reform strategy represented by him. Abbot Marmaduke was behind the foundation of St Bernard's College in Oxford and campaigned for its library in 1495. Yet another element of this reform that it had in common with its predecessors from the early fifteenth century, was the importance of liturgy and correct observance. The building of Huby's

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45 Jarosław Stoś, *Jakub z Paradyża* (Kraków: WAM, 2004), 10-29, 35-57; for the list of his works see: 'Iacobus de Paradiso', *Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters*, <http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/autor/3125> [accessed on 21.07.2022].

46 Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies*, 39-45.

tower for the monastic church in Fountains is particularly significant, as its decoration with the text on external inscriptions was taken from Cistercian liturgies – from offices that were sung on Sunday. As Michael Carter has established, the tower inscriptions also reflect Huby's personal devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, which gained much popularity across Europe in the later Middle Ages; the Cistercians played an important role in the development of this cult.<sup>47</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

Whilst this contribution does not provide a complete overview of what Observant reform consisted of in the Cistercian order, it sketches key characteristics of Observant ideas at different levels and contexts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Observant culture, reform programs and their implementations were heavily vested in contacts with other religious orders, especially Carthusians and movements such as the *Devotio moderna*. Cistercian implementation and conflicts over reforms in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries expose how different agents – the order and its components, papal curial, and secular powers were all involved, with not necessarily the same understanding and aims. The investment in the key resources of reform – education, preaching, control of religious observance through visitations and inspections, the appropriation of the past through the production of texts and the promotion of saints and their cults – was a striking element of the network of Observant culture within the Cistercian order and its connections to other parts of the Church. Finally, whereas the historiography on Observant reform and Cistercians remains rather thin, it shows an interesting tension between normative and specific evidence. This exposes a long-standing issue of the interpretations of the later medieval Cistercian order, namely, how can the history of the order as a whole relate to the regional studies and individual case studies.

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Carter, 'The Tower of Abbot Marmaduke Huby of Fountains Abbey: Hubris or Piety?', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 82 (2010), 269-286; Christopher Harper-Bill, 'Huby, Marmaduke', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53115>.



## About the Authors

**Pablo Acosta-García** (pablo.garcia.acosta@gmail.com) is María Zambrano Postdoctoral Fellow at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). His current project studies the materiality, composition, and censorship of the visionary book of sermons by the Franciscan abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534). He was formerly Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow (2019-2021) at the Institute of Medieval History of the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf (Germany), with the project 'Late Medieval Visionary Women's Impact in Early Modern Castilian Spiritual Tradition'. His research interests include, but are not limited to, mysticism, devotional and convent literature, female preaching in the Middle Ages, the European circulation and translation of religious writing authored by women, and manuscript studies.

**Cécile Caby** (cecile.caby@sorbonne-universite.fr) is Professor in Medieval History at Sorbonne Université, Paris. Her main research fields are in social, monastic and cultural history of late medieval Italy. More recently, she studies the penetration of humanistic practices in religious orders in Quattrocento Italy, with a special focus on oratory and the transition from the *sermo modernus* to humanistic oratory. Her publications include the monographs *Autoportrait d'un moine en humaniste. Girolamo Aliotti (1412-1480)* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018); *Un éloge de Camaldoli pour Pierre le Goutteux. La Heremi descriptio de Ludovicus Camaldulensis monachus* (Florence: FUP, 2021).

**Roberto Cobiانchi** (rcobianchi@unime.it) is Associate Professor at the Università degli Studi di Messina, Italy. He specialises in religious art and iconography in late medieval and early modern Italy. His publications include the monograph *Lo temperato uso dele cose. La committenza dell'Osservanza francescana nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Spoleto: CISAM,

2013), and articles such as “Cithara Angelica: experiencing God through music in Franciscan imagery (...)” (2020), ‘Il lungo corso del «Fiume del terrestre Paradiso». Francescanesimo, immagini e iconografie nell’età della Controriforma’ (2017), ‘Printing a New Saint: Woodcut Production and Canonization of Saints in Late Medieval Italy’ (2015).

**Pietro Delcorno** (pietro.delcorno3@unibo.it) is Senior Assistant Professor at the Università di Bologna, and Visiting Researcher at Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen. He is leading the project ‘Lenten Sermon Bestsellers: Shaping Society through Religious Communication in Late Medieval Europe (1470-1520)’, founded by a Veni Grant of the Dutch Research Council (NWO). His main research interests include medieval and early modern preaching, religious theatre, and late medieval social history. Among his academic publications in the field, are the two monographs: *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone: Metamorfosi di una parabola fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Il Mulino, 2014); *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son: The Pastoral Uses of a Biblical Narrative (1200-1550)* (Brill, 2018).

**Koen Goudriaan** (goudriaan50@gmail.com) is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His main field of interest is the religious history of the Low Countries during the Later Middle Ages. In particular, he focuses on the *Devotio moderna*, paying attention to both institutional and spiritual aspects and to the wider horizon of rival religious movements such as Observant franciscanism. He has published many essays and articles on late medieval religious life in the Low Countries, and is co-editor of the volume *Piety in Practice and Print: Essays on the Late Medieval Religious Landscape* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016). Over the last decade he compiled a *Digital Census: Monasteries in the Netherlands until 1800* (<https://geoplaza.vu.nl/projects/kloosterlijst/en/>).

**Kristin Hoefener** (khoefener@fcsh.unl.pt) holds a PhD in musicology (Liturgical offices in honor of St. Ursula) from Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (Germany) and a double master in musicology (Universiteit van Amsterdam) and medieval history (École Pratique des Hautes Études of Paris). Currently, she works as Marie Skłodowska Curie Research Fellow at Universidade Nova in Lisbon (Portugal) on a project about late medieval Dominican chant repertoire from Aveiro. Parallely, she is the artistic

director of the vocal ensemble KANTIKA that specializes in medieval music. Her past research focused on medieval sacred chant and its strong anchoring in the context (historical, hagiographic and liturgical), as well as its participation in an innovation process (liturgical reforms, innovation in musical notation, composition of new chants, compilation of cycles with new and old elements).

**Emilia Jamroziak** (E.M.Jamroziak@leeds.ac.uk) is Professor of Medieval Religious History at the University of Leeds. She has published three monographs on various aspects of monastic social and cultural history in Northwest and East Central Europe. Her forthcoming book, under contract with Amsterdam University Press, explores Cistercian engagement with the cult of saints between 1300 and the early sixteenth century. Jamroziak was a 2015-16 Humboldt Fellow at TU Dresden and a 2019-20 Marie Curie- and Horizon 2020-funded Fellow at the Universität Erfurt. She has been the recipient of four Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) grants, and her current work focuses on the constructions of the historiography of Latin monasticism since the 19th century.

**Ana Marinković** (amarinko@ffzg.hr) is Assistant Professor at the Art History Department of the Sveučilište u Zagrebu/University of Zagreb (FFZg), holding a PhD in medieval studies from the Central European University in Budapest (2013). She is a founding member of the Croatian Hagiography Society Hagiotheca. Her current research focuses on the local contexts of church reforms and Observant cults, and the spatial responses to changes in political governing and ecclesiastical discipline in the medieval and early modern cities of the Eastern Adriatic.

**Haude Morvan** (haude.morvan@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr) is Associate Professor (maître de conférences) in the History of Medieval Art at the Université Bordeaux-Montaigne since 2016, and a former member of the École Française in Rome. Her research interests center on tomb monuments from the late Middle Ages, the mendicant orders, the changes in church interiors between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, and antiquarianism. She recently published *'Sous les pas des frères'. Les sépultures de papes et de cardinaux chez les Mendiants au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2021).



**Hugo Perina** (perina.hugo@gmail.com) is associated with the Centre de Recherches Historiques, Paris. His research focuses on late medieval and Renaissance religious musical culture, with a specialization in the development of the organ. His publications include the upcoming monograph *L'orgue et le souffle dans l'Église italienne de la Renaissance (1400-1550)*, and essays such as 'L'histoire religieuse aux frontières de l'histoire culturelle : orgue, patrimoine et historiographie' (2019), 'Les effets du son de l'orgue sur la société italienne de la Renaissance' (2020), 'Les contrats d'apprentissage et leurs alternatives dans la formation des organistes et facteurs d'orgues italiens (1400-1550)' (2022).

**Bert Roest** (bert.roest@ru.nl) is a Lecturer at Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and holds a status only position as Associate Professor at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, Canada. His research focuses on the cultural and intellectual history of religious orders between the thirteenth and the seventeenth century. His publications comprise various monographs, such as *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares Between Foundation and Reform* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), and *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission c. 1220-1650: Cum scientia sit donum Dei, armatura ad defendendam sanctam Fidem catholicam...* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), as well as many articles and essays on mendicant preaching, Observant religious and literary culture, and demonology. Together with Maarten van der Heijden, he maintains the Franciscan Authors Website (<https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/>).

**Silvia Serventi** (serventisilvia@gmail.com) is an independent scholar who deals with religious Italian literature of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. She edited several fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources, including the *Avventuale fiorentino* by Giordano of Pisa, the letters of spiritual direction by the Augustinian Girolamo of Siena, the collection of *laudi* by the Jesuate Bianco of Siena, the *Laudi, trattati e lettere* written by the Poor Clare Caterina Vigri, and the Latin and vernacular versions of Camilla Battista of Varano's *Trattato della purità del cuore*. She collaborates with the Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo on the edition of the letters of Caterina of Siena.

**Patricia Stoop** ([patricia.stoop@uantwerpen.be](mailto:patricia.stoop@uantwerpen.be)) is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ruusbroec Institute at Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium. Her strongly interdisciplinary research focuses on women's participation in the intellectual, religious, cultural and literary field of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. Central themes in her work are (collective) authorship, literacy, authority and autonomy of women. In addition, she focuses on subjects such as the construction of book collections and (literary and intellectual) networks, memoria (both in the sense of memory techniques and the remembrance of persons), commercial book production, and sermon studies.

**Valentina Živković** ([valentina.zivkovic@bi.sanu.ac.rs](mailto:valentina.zivkovic@bi.sanu.ac.rs)) is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA (PhD Univerzitet u Beogradu/University of Belgrade, 2007). Her research focuses on late medieval and early modern art and devotion in the Southeastern Adriatic city of Kotor, with a focus on cultural and religious ties between the two Adriatic coasts, cults of saints, Observant reform of the Dominican order, female monasticism, testamentary legacies for the salvation of the soul, the role of prayers and miracle-working images.



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The impetus of religious reform between ca. 1380-1520, which expressed itself in a variety of Observant initiatives in many religious orders all over Europe, and also brought forth the *Devotio moderna* movement in the Low Countries, had considerable repercussions for the production of a wide range of religious texts, and the embrace of other forms of cultural production (scribal activities, liturgical innovations, art, music, religious architecture). At the same time, the very impetus of reform within late medieval religious orders and the wish to return to a more modest religious lifestyle in accordance with monastic and mendicant rules, and ultimately with the commands of Christ in the Gospel, made it difficult to wholeheartedly embrace the material consequences of learning and literary or artistic prowess, as the very nature of such pursuits ran against basic demands of evangelical poverty and humility. This volume explores how this tension was negotiated in various Observant and *Devotio moderna* contexts, and how communities connected with these movements instrumentalized various types of writing, learning, and other forms of cultural expression to further the cause of religious reform, to defend it against order-internal and external criticism, to shape recognizable reform identities for themselves, and to transform religious life in society as a whole.

**Pietro Delcorno** is Senior Assistant Professor at the University of Bologna, Italy, and Visiting Researcher at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. His main research interests include medieval and early modern preaching, religious plays, and late medieval social history.

**Bert Roest** is a Lecturer at Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and holds a status only position as Associate Professor at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, Canada. His research focuses on the cultural and intellectual history of religious orders between the thirteenth and the seventeenth century.

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