

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

PAPERS FROM
THE BIRGITTA
CONFERENCE
AT DARTINGTON
2015



KUNGL. VITTERHETS HISTORIE
OCH ANTIKVITETS AKADEMIEN

KONFERENSER 93



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Editors

*Elin Andersson, Claes Gejrot, E. A. Jones
& Mia Åkestam*



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ABSTRACT

The volume comprises a broad review of recent scholarship on Saint Birgitta and the Birgittine Order. The twenty-three papers were originally presented at an international conference at Dartington Hall, Devon, in July 2015. Eleven of the essays focus on Syon Abbey, the English Birgittine house, whose sexcentenary was celebrated in this year. The conference theme of 'continuity and change' is reflected in the volume's wide chronological span, which ranges from the earliest foundations of the Birgittine Order through to the twentieth century. The authors come from a range of institutional and disciplinary contexts, including Archaeology, Art History, Literature, Musicology and Philology.

Keywords

Saint Birgitta, the Birgittine Order, medieval history, medieval literature, medieval manuscripts, medieval art, monasticism, theology, nuns, liturgy, church art

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now at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Heavitree, Exeter. Photo: Graham Fereday

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Preface

IN JULY 2015 some sixty Birgittine scholars gathered at Dartington Hall, Devon, in South-West England, for the third Birgitta conference. The occasion was also a celebration of the six hundredth anniversary of England's only house of the Birgittine Order. Syon Abbey was founded by Henry V in 1415 at a site in Twickenham, South-West London, but its long and unbroken history took in suppression and exile, years of wandering in the Low Countries and France, and a long sojourn in Portugal, before the community returned to England in the nineteenth century and settled in Devon, most recently at Marley House, near South Brent, half a dozen miles from the conference venue at Dartington.

Reflection on Syon's unique experience lay behind our choice of theme for the conference: continuity and change.¹ Somehow the Syon community maintained its identity over six hundred years, taking in four different countries, and at least twenty changes of site. They sometimes enjoyed their own purpose-built monastery, at others they made do with rented secular property. Birgitta's vision for her order had to be reinterpreted as numbers fluctuated, and in particular after the brothers died out at the end of the seventeenth century, when the community was in Lisbon. The rule and constitutions have been translated and re-translated, and adapted to new circumstances and new contexts. The office has been sung in Latin, abandoned for the Roman breviary, restored in Latin, and translated into English.² The community has seen kingdoms rise and

¹ The terms purposely echo those of John Paul II's Post-Synodal Exhortation on renewal in the religious life, *Vita Consecrata* (1996), c. 2, 'Continuity in the work of the Spirit: faithfulness in the course of change', see http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html.

² The English translation of the office used at Syon since the 1960s is now available: *Daily Office of Our Lady: The Syon Breviary* (Plymouth, 2015), see <http://syonbreviary.co.uk/>.

fall; lived through war, fire and earthquake, and responded to the councils of Constance, Trent and Vatican II.

At the same time, the wider Birgittine Order, over its more than six centuries of existence, has seen many changes: periods of growth and decline, expansion and retrenchment, patronage and persecution; individual houses have been suppressed and restored, declined, revived, relocated, and finally closed; the Birgittine vine has put out new branches, some of which have taken, and some not.³ What, if any, are the constants? Is there something intangibly, indefinitely Birgittine? Is Birgittine identity about adherence to an essence or ideal, or something that is worked out in practice? How to understand the 'spirit of the founder', and how to live out that spirit in contexts that the founder herself can hardly have anticipated?⁴ Is the idea of *charism* useful, or an obstacle to historical analysis? And if not, or not only, by some unvarying essence, how else is continuity maintained? What are the roles played by shared traditions, collective memory, textual communities, or the cultivation of a sense of history? These are the questions that lie behind many of the essays that are contained in this volume.

The essays are arranged, rather loosely, in broad chronological bands. The first group is concerned with the establishment and early years of the Birgittine Order. In 'Similar but different? The Two Convents of the Birgittine Abbey', Tore Nyberg investigates and compares the contents of two early, essential Birgittine texts. What does the *Regula Salvatoris* say about the brothers and sisters and the division between the two convents, and how is this reflected in the papal bull of 1370 which permitted the establishment of 'two monasteries'? In his contribution, 'Messenger Manuscripts and Mechanisms of Change', Roger Andersson discusses various ways in which the Vadstena brothers received, copied and transmitted ideas and topics, internally as well as externally. Mia Åkestam places the emphasis on space and materiality when she shows how the young Princess Philippa of England emerged as the Queen of Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Important factors in this process were the Birgittine Order, Vadstena Abbey and the founding of Syon Abbey. Hilkka-Liisa Vuori's contribution, a selective summary of her 2011 thesis in musicology, deals with the development of the Great Matins Responsories in the *Cantus Sororum*, with special focus on the role of Birgitta's confessor Petrus of Skänninge.

³ See <http://birgittaskloster.se/>.

⁴ The 'spirit of the founder' was a central term in *Perfectae caritatis*, Vatican II's directive on 'The Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life' (1965).

The next three studies look at the beginnings of Syon Abbey. Kevin Alban discusses some aspects of Carmelite involvement in the early years of Syon. His essay also touches upon questions of action versus contemplation, an issue often debated by Birgittines and Carmelites alike. Elin Andersson writes about Syon's first confessor general Thomas Fishbourne and his visit to the Roman Curia in the early 1420s. Her essay includes an edition and translation of the *informatio brevis* on the Birgittine Order that Fishbourne presented to the Pope on this occasion. At the centre of Claes Gejrot's essay we find the Swedish sisters who emigrated to Syon in 1415. A few Syon sources remain, such as the important *Martiloge* obits, but there are also Swedish sources that can give us information. The contribution includes an edition and translation of a central text.

There follows a group of essays that focus on the heyday of the Birgittine Order in the fifteenth century. In her analysis of Syon's medieval benefactors, Virginia Bainbridge traces the Abbey's appeal among regional and mercantile elites through the fifteenth century's succession of dynastic changes. Erik Clae-son focuses on the Birgittine monastic rule, examining how the sisters managed to follow its sometimes idealistic demands. A comparison between the Rule of Saint Saviour and a selection of sermon material from Vadstena gives interesting results. David Carrillo-Rangel explores the ways in which devotional practices associated with Birgitta were transmitted through varieties of imitation, from textual reception to the 'modelling' of certain behaviours by women, including Margery Kempe and Marina de Escobar, to mnemonic practice in a Birgittine monastic context. Markus Lindberg has chosen to take a closer look at a couple of sources that tell us something about food in Vadstena Abbey. By setting a legislative text against another contemporary source, he is able to compare rule with reality. In his contribution, Thomas W. Lassen throws light on the relations between monastery and town in the Middle Ages, as they appear in the Maribo Statutes from 1488, one of few surviving documents that regulate trade, obligations and the lives of the citizens in a small town in Denmark.

The conference provided evidence of a strong concentration of current research on the sixteenth century. Sara Risberg's contribution highlights Vadstena brother Petrus Ingemari's many travels and his attempts to obtain the canonisation of Birgitta's daughter Katarina, as well as detailing the contacts between Vadstena and Syon in this regard. Tekla Bude shows how Katarina was celebrated by the English Birgittines. In one of several essays in the volume to focus on liturgy, she takes a closer look at processionals from the women's choir of Syon Abbey. Eva Lindqvist Sandgren writes about Vadstena Abbey towards the end of the century, when the community was forced to sell its treasures in

order to survive. By looking at what was sold and what was kept to the end she shows what was essential for the monastery's existence in a formal sense.

In a pair of essays on early printed books, Brandon Alakas shows how, in his *Directory of Conscience*, the sixteenth-century Syon brother William Bonde engages with, and quietly counters, evangelical ideas around scrupulosity of conscience, whilst Ingela Hedström explains how the development of printing affected Vadstena in different ways, and to what extent Birgittine printed editions were found on the Swedish book market in the sixteenth century. Finally, Veronica O'Mara provides an analysis of the scribal work of Mary Nevel, a sixteenth-century nun of Syon whose hand is found in a number of liturgical manuscripts dating from the community's last years in England before the Dissolution and their exile in the Low Countries.

Mary Nevel, the subject of O'Mara's essay, straddles the pre- and post-Reformation history of Syon Abbey. The volume's remaining essays all focus on the relatively neglected history of the Birgittine Order in more recent centuries. Elizabeth Perry's contribution takes a closer look at art in the church at Syon Abbey in Lisbon and shows that the Syon community there represented inter-related English and Portuguese as well as Birgittine identities and audiences. Karin Strinnholm Lagergren writes about melodical reform in the Birgittine community of Maria Refugie (Uden) around 1800. In her essay, she discusses how Gregorian chant could be adapted as tastes changed after the Middle Ages.

The final three essays in the volume all focus on Syon Abbey in the last century or so of its existence. The recent rediscovery of the *Syon Virgin* is the starting point for Erik Bizjet. Drawing on the evidence of unpublished inventories and letters, he brings to light references to the interior of the convent in Lisbon, further extant objects, and their role in the re-establishment of Syon in England from the late nineteenth century onwards. Carmen M. Mangion looks at the growth of the Syon community in the first half of the twentieth century, and the kinds of women attracted to Birgittine life, through an analysis of the abbess' correspondence with postulants and their families and sponsors. In conclusion, E. A. Jones looks back to Syon's celebration of its *five* hundredth anniversary, which took place in 1920, when the Birgittines were thriving at their home in Chudleigh, Devon, and the English Roman Catholic community was full of optimism for the future.

A number of the papers that were presented at the conference have not found their way into this volume, but we record their details here as further evidence of the range of current work in Birgittine and related studies. John Adams gave

a presentation on ‘The Syon Abbey Herbal and Healthcare at Syon’;⁵ Robert Andrews and Olle Ferm spoke on ‘Swedish Students in Oxford and Cambridge: A Birgittine Connection?’. Michael Tait delivered a paper entitled ‘Anything You Can Do: The Four Deacons in the Birgittine Economy’.⁶ Michelle Urberg discussed ‘Constructing a Birgittine Identity at Vadstena Abbey through the Procession Repertory’, and Ingela Wahlberg ‘Some Aspects on Embroidery Techniques and Ornamentation in Birgittine Embroidery from Sweden and Finland’. Continuing the conference’s book history theme, Jennifer Brown spoke on ‘A Siennese in Syon: Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget in Manuscripts’, Cathy Grisé on ‘Fruits and Vines in *The Orchard of Syon*: Continuity and Change’, and Stephanie Morley also focussed on Syon in her paper entitled ‘Dyuvers Holy Instrucyons and Diverse Holy Readers: Writing a Reading Community after 1539’.

We were pleased to have with us at the conference Bridget Morris and Dennis Searby, who launched Volume 4 of their *Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*.⁷ This final volume of a monumental undertaking was published to coincide with the Syon anniversary. We celebrated a number of other sexcentenary publications, whose authors were also part of the gathering at Dartington: the *Syon Herbal* by John Adams and Stuart Forbes, Claes Gejrot’s edition of the *Martiloge*, E. A. Jones’s six hundred-year history of Syon for the general reader, and Sister Anne Smyth’s edition of the Syon Breviary.⁸

The conference thus testified to the healthy state of Birgittine studies in Sweden, the UK, elsewhere in Europe, and in North America. The wide range of delegates also demonstrated the continuing appeal of Birgitta and her order beyond the confines of the academy. We were also honoured to be joined for the duration of the conference by Sister Anne Smyth O.Ss.S, abbess of Syon 1976–2011, and Sisters Birgitta and Monika O.Ss.S, from Vadstena.

In addition to the presentation of academic papers, conference delegates made a visit to the grounds of Marley House near South Brent, home of Syon Abbey

⁵ John Adams has made the material from this paper available online via the Syon Abbey Society website, see <https://syonabbseysociety.wordpress.com/>.

⁶ This paper is now published in Michael Tait, *Bright the Vision: Essays on the Eschaton and other Glories* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

⁷ *The Revelations of St. Birgitta, Volume 4: The Heavenly Emperor’s Book to Kings, The Rule, and Minor Works* (Oxford, 2015).

⁸ *The Syon Abbey Herbal: The Last Monastic Herbal in England c. AD 1517* (Purley, 2015); *The Martiloge of Syon Abbey. The Texts Relevant to the History of the English Birgittines* (Stockholm, 2015); *England’s Last Medieval Monastery: Syon Abbey 1415–2015* (Leominster, 2015); *Daily Office of Our Lady* (see note 2 above).

between 1925 and 2011, which is now divided into a number of secular dwellings. We were shown around by some of the current residents, together with Sister Anne, the former abbess. On 23 July, we attended mass for the Feast of Saint Bridget at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Heavitree (Exeter). The church is now home to the portion of pillar from the medieval Syon Abbey on which part of the martyr Saint Richard Reynolds's body is said to have been displayed after his execution in 1535. (Reynolds was a native of Pinhoe, near this part of Exeter.) Salvaged by the community at their suppression, the fragment remained with them throughout their exile, and until the closure of the Abbey in 2011.⁹ As a powerful symbol of continuity through all the community's many changes, it features on the cover of this volume.

From Heavitree we went on to the University of Exeter's Heritage Collections for a chance to examine manuscripts, books, documents and photographs from the Syon archive, currently in the keeping of the University. The day concluded with a concert of Birgittine chant by *Vox silentii* in Dartington's Great Hall.

The conference doubled as the third in a series of workshops, organised by E. A. Jones and Vincent Gillespie, based around Syon's sexcentenary.¹⁰ The workshops were funded by the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council, whose support is gratefully acknowledged here, as is the support of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. We thank our contributors for the diligence and promptness with which they delivered their essays to us, and Ezra Alexander, Stockholm University, for checking the English. Finally, we are grateful to the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters for accepting this volume into their conference series.

Stockholm, March 2017

Elin Andersson

Claes Gejrot

E. A. Jones

Mia Åkestam

⁹ See references in the essays by Perry, Bijzet, and Jones in this volume.

¹⁰ 'Syon at 600: The English monastic experience, 15th – 21st centuries.' For details, see <http://syonat600.exeter.ac.uk/>.

TORE NYBERG

Similar but Different?

The Two Convents of the Birgittine Abbey

WHEN POPE URBAN V (1362–1370) first heard of the Order of the Holy Saviour, and the noble Lady Birgitta from Sweden as the author of a new monastic rule, the project must have looked entirely clear to him. Brought up in monastic establishments, and several times abbot in Benedictine houses, he must have seen in this grandiose plan new prospects for the Church in Sweden, if it was carried out in reality. Was this not a sign of bold reform regarding male as well as female monasticism and spiritual growth in this northern periphery of Christian Europe? At the same time, he must have realized that a significant amount of new legislation would be necessary in order to adapt such a huge concentration of new spiritual awakening to a 'modern' world and its ideas of religious reform. To approve an order for both nuns and monks meant to approve the foundation of two monasteries, one for men and one for women, at a small distance from each other, as the law of the Church had always maintained. In the mental categories of his time, it must have seemed self-evident to approve such a noble concern. Pope Urban V could not easily resist Lady Birgitta's legitimate application for an approval of her monastic project. Thus, on 5 August 1370, the plan to found two monasteries in Vadstena in Sweden – one for men and one for women – was approved of, in order to allow both sexes to live their monastic life according to the constitutions recently composed by their inspired and generous founder.¹ The two monasteries were supposed to find their place under the wide umbrella of the Rule of Saint Augustine, and subsist economically under the common administration of the abbess. Having fulfilled what was expected from him, Pope Urban V set forth for Avignon to give his soul to God in familiar surroundings.

¹ *Reg. Salv.*, the Θ text, pp. 222–227.

However, problems arose once this rather simple and lucid idea of two adjacent monasteries were examined against the primary text of the Birgittine Revelations' that addressed the matter, the *Regula Sancti Salvatoris*, 'The Rule of the Holy Saviour'. No one could claim to be unaware of the number of contradictions and variations that existed between Christ's commission to Lady Birgitta – given in a state of spiritual exaltation to establish a religious order for both men and women – and the papal summary of the same idea. Both rely upon the ultimate authority of Christ, yet along two different channels: one is the mystical speech of God to a religious woman, the other the opinion of one claiming to be the representative of Christ on earth and the leading authority over the Church in accordance with the apostle Saint Peter and his successors.

Our task must be to test the evidence concerning the different ways the two texts try to express the originality and special vocation of the new religious Order of the Holy Saviour. We especially hope to clarify some problems concerning the two planned monasteries at Vadstena and their relation to each other and the outer world.

It all starts with an early, now lost, version of the *Regula Salvatoris* that is postulated by scholars of Birgitta's Revelations,² who refer to Lady Birgitta's vision from its earliest known stage, about 1345. We ascribe the early editorial work, and perhaps part of the authorship of *Regula Salvatoris*, to Petrus Olavi, a Cistercian monk and subprior at Alvastra Abbey, as well as Birgitta's advisor in monastic matters since the 1340s.³ In his unsophisticated Latin, he had not spoken of a foundation for *moniales* or nuns, as the pope's summary did, but for sisters, *sorores*. Moreover, he did not mention any *monachi* or monks in the planned monastery, just *fratres*, brothers, as resident in a monastery of their own, but in the twin way that mendicants sometimes organized themselves.

The Revelations' version of the Rule (II) contains issues that do not figure in the papal summary, for example: (1) Birgitta and the editors agreed upon the important role that the bishop of the diocese should play as a 'father and supervisor of the sisters as well as of the brothers', *tam sororum quam fratrum pater et visitator*.⁴ This statute is lacking in the papal summary of 1370 according to which the two monasteries were exempt from episcopal supervision. (2) Birgitta and the editors set the age of 18 as a condition for admittance as a

² *Reg. Salv.*, the Ω text, pp. 21–23, 72–78.

³ Cf. Rychterová 2004, pp. 9–43.

⁴ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 131, § 256.

soror into the women's community and the age of 25 for *clerici seu fratres*.⁵ In the papal summary, age 18 is the rule for male and female applicants alike. (3) The previous arrangement of windows for conversation between members of the two convents vanished, whereby the idea of an internal parlor as the proper place where *fratres et sorores (debent) loqui ad invicem de necessariis*, that is, where 'brothers and sisters ought to talk to each other on necessary matters' could have been dismissed.⁶

In these quotes, we encounter the expression *fratres et sorores* meaning 'the entirety of a group of religious of both sexes', which deviates from the normal way of addressing contemplative religious persons. Only the chapter headings disclose early editorial work on the rule by someone who may have tried to improve the style by calling every sister a *monialis* and the brothers in various ways, such as *fratres, sacerdotes, presbyteri, clericci, dyaconi* or even *laici*.

We conclude from the use of the expression *fratres et sorores* that every member of a Birgittine abbey was meant to be treated as an equal, and that the order had no type of physical members other than those who applied for entrance and were ceremonially received into the cloistered world of spiritual reality. Since the rule maintained each member's right to vote at the election of superiors and admittance of aspirants, the female monastery came to form a community body, a *conventus* in its own right; the male monastery equally had a community body in its own right. How then should we define the difference between the two bodies that have so many details in common?

By the outbreak of the papal schism in 1378, there was urgent need for Lady Birgitta's prophetic voice in support of the true Pope against the revival of Avignon's claims. Prior Petrus's text⁷ once again served as starting point for a revision of the rule, this time carried out by Cardinal Elziarius of Sabrina. Pope Urban VI (1378–1389) approved the Prior's original text (Π) with a few, yet very significant, variations. From that point forward, the 1378 text was the only lawful and valid constitution of the order.⁸ The formal set up is the same as that of the Π text, just as the sequence of chapters and many other details. On the other hand, Christ no more presents himself to his listeners as 'I' or refers to the Church as 'my house'. One important sentence was excluded: Christ's word to Birgitta: 'I want to establish [this rule] primarily and mainly for women' (*per mulieres*

⁵ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 128, § 231.

⁶ *Rev. Extr.*, 28:3.

⁷ *Reg. Salv.*, the Π text, pp. 99–139.

⁸ *Reg. Salv.*, the Σ text, pp. 146–172.

primum et principaliter statuere volo), the opening formula of the original rule.⁹ The omission of the *primum et principaliter* clause in the revised 1378 version of the rule provides strong support for the assumption that observing equality for men and women alike – *fratres et sorores* without precedence to anyone – was a guiding principle during the renewed revision of the original rule. It gave way to another theme for an opening address, namely the three monastic virtues *vera humilitas et pura castitas atque voluntaria paupertas*, ‘true humility and pure chastity as well as voluntary poverty’ that form the entrance words of the revised rule.¹⁰ These link it more convincingly to monastic tradition.

A division of the rule into three sections has been proposed.¹¹ As the first section,¹² the description of the sisters’ lives, living areas and community exercises is logical and easy to follow. A second section¹³ deals with the *fratres* and their position to each other and the sisters. The opening formula demonstrates inequality: *Sorores erunt sexaginta et non plures. Que clericos habebunt, qui cottidie ... decantabunt*: ‘The number of sisters must not exceed sixty. They shall have clergymen to sing daily ...’.¹⁴ The idea that *sorores habebunt clericos* – ‘the sisters shall have clergymen’ – is a challenge to interpret: is it an expression of female superiority? The third section of the rule¹⁵ would then treat *fratres et sorores* when involved together in special aspects of their collaboration, such as the intricate liturgical rules for mass and daily office and for confession.

However, these items of the *fratres* rule are not found in such an orderly manner in the second and third main sections of the rule. There is no independent text describing the construction and building of a *monasterium fratrum* with its facilities and possibilities or the establishment of a male convent life and its means of seclusion from the outside world. We learn rather that *fratres*, with some exceptions, will receive the same blessings at their entrance into monastic life as *sorores* in the corresponding situation. However, the sacred rite of the virginal blessing of a *soror*, in the way it closes the first section of the rule, is not repeated for a *frater* in the male form; it only says that their entrance ceremony should take place *eodem modo et eisdem locis ... quibus sorores*.¹⁶ There are new

⁹ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 105, § 44.

¹⁰ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 146, § 50.

¹¹ Nyberg 1973a.

¹² *Reg. Salv.*, pp. 146–158.

¹³ *Reg. Salv.*, pp. 159–166.

¹⁴ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 159, § 150.

¹⁵ *Reg. Salv.*, pp. 167–172.

¹⁶ *Reg. Salv.*, pp. 119–120, § 162.

concepts for buildings and customs, above all the term *curia fratrum*, which is supposed to match the *monasterium sororum*, a construction to stress the difference between *fratres* and *sorores* rather than their similarity, suggesting even a different level of dignity.

One might also consider the semantic transformation of the word *frater* in monastic language over the previous medieval centuries, from its original meaning 'brother' into 'lay brother', a monk who could not read nor sing – an illiterate. Such change of *frater* into 'lay brother' allows for the introduction of other smaller groups among the *fratres* like *sacerdos*, *dyaconus* and *clericus*. By their use, one might easily fail to grasp the original weight of the notion *fratres et sorores* in the sense of an entirety of a religious group. One *Extravagantes revelation*¹⁷ uses the formula *verba sororum et fratrum* for the bringing out of letters and their answers within each of the two convents. For example, we find the formula *cum omni congregazione sororum et fratrum* in the comprehensive meaning of the whole community.¹⁸

The leading Birgittine fathers of the first generation at Vadstena must have realized rather quickly that much work was still necessary to produce a better version of the rule for men concerning their convent and buildings and daily observance. Already the earliest version of the rule offers a guiding principle for the procedure of extensions and additions. It says that *aliqui devoti fratres* – 'some devoted brothers' – of Benedict's or Bernard's Rules should assist the new monastery in supplying matters and rites not yet treated, such as the employment of officials for the administration of the land, monastic silence, burial rites, etc.¹⁹ Such procedures opened the door for the introduction of Cistercian elements, and thereby contributed to a change of attitude towards aspects of the monastic heritage, in so far as they needed clarification.²⁰ Prior Petrus saw the need to continue his commentary work and decided to organize his (further) comments after the chapters of the rule itself, calling them simply *Additiones*, the term used by Cardinal Elziarius in the Σ text: *qui istis constitutionibus addendo inscribant*.²¹ There is from Vadstena Abbey an official copy of these *Additiones* bound together with a cursive older version of the same text in codex

¹⁷ *Rev. Extr.*, 33:4.

¹⁸ *Reg. Salv.*, the Π and Σ texts, pp. 120, § 168; 161, § 168.

¹⁹ *Reg. Salv.*, the Π text, p. 131, § 260.

²⁰ Nyberg 1973b.

²¹ *Reg. Salv.*, p. 171, §§ 260–261, cf. the original version, the Π text: 'qui huic regule inscribant', *ibid.*, p. 131, § 260.

A 22 from the fifteenth century, today in the National Library in Stockholm.²² By commenting on the destiny of each singular chapter that had found its way to the approbation by the bishop of Linköping in 1420, one gets an impression of the process of transforming the *Additiones prioris Petri* into the Birgittine *Constitutiones* that each member of the monastery promised to observe.

Although *fratres et sorores* were using the same church for their services, and both housings were joined with the one common church, the description of the hierarchical structure of the male convent and the character of the brothers' relation to the abbess differed from those of the sisters. In many monasteries of the order, for example, it seems that the men received their food from the sisters' kitchen. Thirteen of the twenty-five men had a rule described separately for them, saying that they *tantummodo divino officio, studio quoque et orationi vacare debent nullisque altis se implicare negotiis vel officiis*, 'they shall only devote themselves to the divine office, studies and prayer and not interfere with any other work or task', followed by their obligation to preach the gospel in the mother tongue every Sunday and Holy day of the year.²³ Besides the programmatic connection of the four deacons with four fathers of the Church, there was no specification of the duties that belonged to the remaining twelve men, eight of whom were *laici*, lay brothers.

From the middle of the fifteenth century in West and Central Europe new Birgittine abbeys took root and went their own way in order to adjust to the monastic habits of the universal Western Church. Exceptions to the Rule, supported by the archbishops of Cologne, were proposed and approved by Pope Pius II (1458–1464) in 1461,²⁴ making it possible for the abbey of Marienbaum in the Duchy of Cleves to open a novitiate inside the enclosure instead of testing candidates while they were still living outside, as previewed by Birgitta. Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) allowed all Birgittines in the Archdiocese of Cologne to receive female applicants from the age of 13 and male applicants from the age of 20 – instead of the 18 for female and 25 for male delimitations stated in the Rule.²⁵ The abbeys situated in the Archdiocese of Cologne remained Birgittine with these dispensations from the original rule until the end of the German Reich in 1803.

²² The early cursive text is also in Augsburg UL, Ms 4° cod. 4, see Nyberg 1972–1974, II, No. 223, pp. 42–146.

²³ *Reg. Salv.*, pp. 121, § 173; 161, § 173.

²⁴ Nyberg 1972–1974, I, No. 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, No. 52.

The evidence makes clear that mechanical equality cannot have been the parameter of values that the rule intended to protect and develop. We need a key to discover what these groupings on different levels are and how they constitute themselves.

There is no doubt that in her new monastery Birgitta gave preference to the exemplary unit of liturgical and contemplative prayer: the convent of her sixty sisters. This community outnumbers all the other larger and smaller groupings in a Birgittine abbey. It will always be the most numerous single unit among and within her community of eighty-five consecrated members. At the most, four lay sisters called *focariae* could join for the purpose of doing heavy work in the kitchen, without sharing the divine office or any other occupation with the no more than sixty sisters. No other grouping enjoyed the liturgical privilege of praying a special Marian weekly office or any other special status of liturgy. The series of *revelationes extravagantes* on the architecture of the abbey church²⁶ stressed the central east–west axis, on which were to stand the two high altars on two different levels. One high up in the east under the ceiling was for celebrating the Mother of God, and the one nearer to the congregation of the faithful on the church floor in the west was for Christ. The mark of preference given to the sixty sisters was indicated by the high position of their gallery, which covered the eastern half of the church, the abbess's status as mother of both sisters and brothers and the *monasterium* of the *sorores* against the *curia* of the *fratres*.

But still, why should there be a dividing line between the sixty (sisters) and the twenty-five (brothers) if the model for the idea is to separate 'the Thirteen' (the disciples) from the 'other, the seventy-two'? The New Testament text deals with the missionary wanderings of the seventy-two 'other' disciples who – two by two – are sent out to announce salvation to mankind by visiting all the villages, proclaiming in every house the wonderful message of the true Messiah, Jesus from Nazareth, to the inhabitants. The group of disciples for comparison is that of the disciples of Jesus, those who had followed him during the three years of wanderings. This included Matthias instead of Judas Iscariot, with the apostle Paul. Evidently, this statement of the Birgittine Rule has no historical content, not even according to medieval standards. There must be another quality able to keep these persons together as a group that makes sense for a reference to Scripture. In the eyes of contemporaries, walking with the Master for three years must have furnished the Twelve with a unique quality as true witnesses to

26 *Rev. Extr.*, 24–40.

Salvation – for Paul this was accomplished by reference to his strong personal conversion. This meant that any other preacher of the message was afforded a place among the ‘other’ disciples. The crucial term to characterize the group of thirteen disciples must be some form of intimacy or confidentiality with God incarnate, fostered during the three years of wandering with the Master and separating for all times ‘the Twelve’ from any other messenger of salvation. The place of Paul was special, since it included his dramatic conversion and the divine inspiration of his writings and preaching amongst the witnesses of excellency, the apostles, as already expressed in words in the *extravagantes*. The first altar to the right of the High Altar (dedicated to Saint Peter) is to be dedicated to Saint Paul, ‘*qui licet ipse non vidit me conversantem in carne, vidi tamen visione spirituali, et ipse perfectius inflammatus zelo animarum fuit et caritate amplius laborabat, unde et nomen et vitam et dignitatem sortitus est apostolorum*’: ‘who, although he did not meet me physically as long as I lived on earth, yet he saw me in a spiritual vision; and he was totally inflamed by the zeal for souls and earned so much by love, that he received name, course of life and dignity of the apostles’.²⁷

In light of the preeminence of ‘the Thirteen’ – that is, the ‘apostle priests’ in the set-up of a Birgittine abbey – it is near at hand to assume that Birgitta and her assistant clergymen were searching for ways to express a balance between ‘the Sixty’ and ‘the Thirteen’ as two pillars of unique quality, although of a different kind, which carried the weight of the whole monastery.²⁸ It would be logical to confer that each of the two pillars were one group of persons carrying their special task. The first group was evidently those devoted to contemplative life, ‘the Sixty’. However, if ‘the Thirteen’ constituted the second pillar, under which heading of similar importance and weight could they be included, considering the diversity of their vocations? Furthermore, what about the remaining twelve religious men – four deacons and eight lay brothers?

There are several accessible key notes for a choice. The priests or clergymen, *clericci*, are as mentioned before to pray the divine office; however, there are no special liturgical features to mark their performance of the diocesan daily office comparable to the Marian office of ‘the Sixty’, that is to say, there are no extraordinary duties to favor liturgical solemnity. Teaching the sisters and offering them, along with pilgrims and visitors, pastoral care, may be part of the tradition of monks adopting pastoral care for religious women. However, this

27 *Rev. Extr.*, 34:3.

28 Nyberg 1993, pp. 192–208.

would probably not suffice to counterweigh the contemplative character of 'the Sixty'. Theological study belongs to all religious life and is not particular to the Birgittine brothers.

Among the topics available from the wordings of the rule, only one appears to be outstanding enough to display that extra quality indicative of a second pillar for the order and its spirituality: the obligation of 'the Thirteen' to preach in the vernacular every Sunday and Holy day of the year. Preaching, as the primary content of a male religious world, would include a combination of monastic traditions calling for the preachers' attention, and the attachment to preaching was at a much higher degree than in the ordinary monastic life of the fourteenth century. It was a blend of well-known characteristics regarding monastic life, favoring a dominant principle that had been otherwise subordinate in monastic tradition. Lady Birgitta also received, among other divine charges, a revelation on the characteristic traits of good preaching.²⁹ One would here face a new type of monk in monastic surroundings, one who would give all his religious devotion to imparting the message of salvation.

Above all, postulating preaching as the key notion in the Birgittine spirituality of the brothers would enjoy the backing of Scripture and its very basic passage in Luke 10 with the special vocation of 'the Thirteen'. The Birgittine Rule may impart the preaching of 'the Thirteen' as a commitment capable of raising the spirituality of the brothers to the level of the contemplative life of 'the Sixty' with its elements contained in the rule and by other means.

Of the three groups among the male religious members – the thirteen priests, the four deacons and the eight servants – Pope Urban V had eliminated the second group, declaring that the *clericī* were to be at most seventeen in number in contrast to eight lay brothers, certainly considering the latter servants and illiterate. There is, however, a tension in balance inside the male convent between 'the Thirteen' and the remaining twelve religious men. This balance finds its expression in the strict and independent definition of the preaching of 'the Thirteen' against the undefined openness in describing the task of the four 'deacons' and the eight 'lay brothers'. It is the unconventional combination of the traditional elements of monastic characteristics and the focus on preaching – and not traditional monastic virtues – that imparts to this convent its special weight and capacity, finally making it into the second pillar of the whole Birgittine monastic construction. The equal dignity of the two pillars comes from restructuring the traditional elements of the monastic tradition and forming

29 *Rev. Extr.*, 23.

new combinations under the priority of preaching. The male convent's other twelve members should support the common task of 'the Thirteen' just as 'the Sixty' should in their way.

The hypothesis of the dominating role of preaching in the male Birgittine monastic life, as described above, could explain some of the oddities in the rule's description of the brothers' convent, above all the insistence upon a *curia fratrum* against the *monasterium sororum*, a terminology that is doubtlessly partial in favor of the sisters. The Birgittine concept may be an expression of a reevaluation of elements that together make up the daily life of not only the Birgittine brothers, but also of 'the Thirteen' as the main representatives of the new spirituality and the new type of preacher in a monastic setting, as well as the entire monastic congregation of, at most, eighty-five members.

That the divine office of the brothers' convent was to be performed according to the Roman rite without special regard to Birgittine issues could then be interpreted as an expression of the brothers' reduced focus upon liturgy and special ascetic exercises, such as fasting or a far reaching mariological spirituality. We might consider the expression *curia fratrum* as evidence that it was important to Birgitta and her circle that the *fratres* according to the Rule lived in a monastery without an intermediate subordination under the abbess. While the sisters *constitute the monasterium* and make up the sisters' convent, the brothers *are part of that monasterium* and make up, headed by the general confessor, a convent of three groups of brothers.

Thus, on the one side, the rule suggests Jesus walking around the Holy Land with twelve followers, or leaders of the twelve tribes of the chosen people, bound to absolute loyalty, faith and obedience to a new Messianic kingdom. Jerusalem, I suggest, is where to find the basis for Birgitta's devotion to the twelve apostles, excepting Judas Iscariot, but including Matthias.³⁰ On the other hand, we have the sinner Paul, blinded on his way to Damascus, the dramatic convert to a new type of Christian faith of which New Testament exegesis has told us so much during the last two centuries: Pauline Christianity, the introvert but also missionary individual meeting Jesus, whom Paul never met in this life. Serving God in the group of twelve and serving God without a group as just one single sinner makes for 12 + 1 – 'the Thirteen'.

³⁰ Tait 2016.

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ROGER ANDERSSON

Messenger Manuscripts and Mechanisms of Change

THE BIRGITTINE MOTHER HOUSE in Vadstena has sometimes been described as a cultural institution of the medieval period, and rightly so, because Vadstena Abbey certainly played roles other than those connected to its being the house of a religious order, with everything that implies. *Diarium Vadstenense*, the detailed memorial book of the brothers at Vadstena, contains many accounts of visiting kings and queens.¹ The same source also shows that the political issues of the day were of interest for the convent members. Thus exposed to the world outside the cloister walls, the male convent served as a channel for influence of various kinds from abroad. To a lesser degree, the lines of influence also worked in the opposite direction. A cultural *translatio* from abroad should not be understood in the sense that everything that originated in other countries was slavishly copied; indeed, it should also be understood in the sense that the brothers, as well as many others, were actually affected by this influence: it came to mean something to them and brought with it a change of manner regarding many things, including the Church and even life.

Many priest brothers had studied abroad before entering the monastery, and even after embracing the religious life several of them were sent on missions to other countries. The large synods of Constance and Basle in the first half of the fifteenth century saw delegates coming from a huge number of ecclesiastical institutions and monasteries in many countries. The delegates took part in the proceedings and sometimes brought books with them back home. Many others were sent out on missions for the order itself, which means that they visited other Birgittine houses throughout Europe, something that gave them excellent opportunities to pick up new ideas and trends, and to learn what was happening out there.

¹ See for example Gejrot 2000. *The Diarium Vadstenense* (DV) is edited in Gejrot 1996.

The last few decades have seen a number of studies addressing the issue of cultural import to medieval Vadstena. Some scholars have approached the topic from the point of view of translation.² Others have focused more on literary techniques such as methods for textual composition,³ and still others discuss the travelling of ideas.⁴ The priest brother Thorirus Andreae serves as an example. In 1414 he was sent out to the Council in Konstanz and reported back to his confessor general regarding the contentions and conflicts resulting from the allegedly heretical movements led by well-known thinkers such as Jan Hus, John Wyclif and Jerome of Prague that are so important for the development of thought within Western Christianity. On his way back to Sweden he stopped at two Birgittine houses, one in Germany and the other in Denmark, where he could easily discuss what he had heard and seen with his fellow brothers.⁵ As Monica Hedlund has demonstrated, when Katillus Thorberni returned to Vadstena from Syon Abbey after its foundation, he brought with him books, for example works of the mystic Richard Rolle, and a most interesting theological debate between advocates of Catholicism on the one side and the teachings of the Lollards on the other.⁶

Saying that Vadstena Abbey was not an isolated outpost in the far north, but rather that it formed part of the same theological, philosophical and intellectual milieu as the rest of Europe, would perhaps be a way of stating the obvious. However, when we take a look at the last leaf (306r) of the Uppsala University Library, MS C 220, this all becomes remarkably evident and clear. C 220 is a miscellanea volume that was in the possession of a university student (probably Swedish) in Bohemia in the 1430s.⁷ In this short addition, written after the book had been brought to Sweden, an unknown scribe speaks about the reform movements in Sweden and Vadstena.⁸ We learn, for example, that the Pope was wrong to give properties (*bona*) to churches and monasteries, that there should be no more than two altars in the abbey church in Vadstena, that in other convents there should be only one, that below the altars demons are barking

² The classic studies are Wollin 1981 and 1983, but the same author has also pursued the theme in a number of more recent studies; see for example Wollin 2007 with further references. See also Carlquist 2007, esp. pp. 95–147.

³ For example Andersson 1998, 2001 and 2015; Hedlund 2006, 2007a, 2008 and 2011.

⁴ Hedlund 1991, 1996 and 2006; see also several essays collected in Härdelin 1998 and (parts of) Härdelin 2005.

⁵ Andersson 2001, pp. 199–200.

⁶ Hedlund 1996.

⁷ For a description of this manuscript, see MHUU 3 (1990), pp. 72–83.

⁸ The text has been edited and studied by Toni Schmid (1937).

like dogs (*sub altariis latrant demones sicut canes*) and that the number of parish churches in Sweden should be drastically reduced, because the distance between them should ideally be two miles (*miliaria*). I quote this text only to give an illustration of the fact that Vadstena Abbey was a place where debate took place, and where influences in theological and other matters were channelled. Such an exchange of ideas does not just happen; it needs vehicles and mechanisms. The overall aim of this contribution is to discuss and exemplify a few of these mechanisms.

We have already touched upon one of them, which has to do with the written word, that is, with books. The book I just quoted from (C 220) was brought to Vadstena by a former university student, and besides the quoted addition, this manuscript contains copies of texts that were debated throughout Europe, because central issues of the Catholic faith were at stake. We meet Jean Gerson, Matthew of Crakowia and Jan Miliç, but also the most contentious of them all, Jan Hus (his tract *De sanguine Christi*), including a number of documents related to the Hussite controversies in Prague.

Below I will try to investigate further into the role the manuscripts themselves played to enable the change to take place. And that is why I call them *messenger manuscripts*. I will place particular focus on what happens to sermon manuscripts and the texts contained therein after they have been incorporated in the abbey library. How were they used by the priest brothers for their own education or for the benefit of those listening to their sermons? The examples are mostly taken from my own previous research.

KONRAD VON SACHSEN

In my 2001 study of sermons for the eighth Sunday after Trinity I came across Konrad von Sachsen (or Conradus Holtnicker de Sachsonia), who was a well-known Franciscan theologian in the thirteenth century (he died in 1279).⁹ His importance for the diffusion of ascetical mysticism and Marian devotion cannot be overestimated. In particular is he known for his *Speculum beatae Mariae virginis*, which is preserved in hundreds of manuscripts throughout Europe. However, he also wrote sermons, and Vadstena Abbey held several copies of these, as well as of the *Speculum*. Konrad's sermon legacy was used as an important source for several Vadstena priest brothers, but the sermons were not copied

⁹ Andersson 2001, pp. 88–90. It should be noted that the examples I give here and in the following sections about Franciscus de Abbatibus and the Björkvik homiliary are taken only from my analyses of sermons for the eighth Sunday after Trinity; for details and for other sources besides those mentioned here, see Andersson 1998 and 2001.

slavishly, word for word. Instead, they were adapted in different ways to suit the particular needs of the Swedish preachers. Let me give one example.

The manuscript Uppsala University Library MS C 352, contains such an adaptation.¹⁰ It was written in Vadstena already in the latter part of the fourteenth century, and it testifies to the mode of sermon composition prevalent in these early days in the history of the monastery. Foreign sermon collections were used as source books from which the brothers could gather *materia praedicabilis*. The original authors are normally not regarded as authorities. In fact, their names are only rarely even mentioned. This is also the case with the version of Konrad's sermons in C 352. The medieval preacher left it to modern scholarship to identify the sources he had used. The text is also expanded by means of a great number of quotations from the Revelations of Saint Birgitta. Now, what happened with this manuscript once it had been assigned its proper location in the library – in this case the first book on the first shelf in bookcase E, which contained mainly homiletical writings – was that it was almost immediately picked up by the priest brothers as a reference tool. One of them composed his sermons, now in Uppsala University Library and referenced as MS C 305 (in the preacher's own hand-writing),¹¹ shortly after the writing down of the alleged exemplar (C 352). According to Monica Hedlund,¹² the scribal hand occurs in other Vadstena manuscripts, but remains as yet unidentified. Hedlund argues that it was written at the very beginning of the fifteenth century.

Another preacher using the sermons of Konrad von Sachsen lived much later, and his sermons have come into the possession of Uppsala University Library, referenced as MS C 363. The hand-writing of that manuscript is very similar to that of the Confessor General Clemens Petri,¹³ and if that holds true the sermons were not written until the end of the fifteenth century. What Clemens does (if it was him) is change the structure a bit. However, we can be fairly sure that he used C 352 as his main source. All quotes from Saint Birgitta in this particular sermon in C 352 also find their way into Clemens's own copy, and in exactly the same order. The tradition from Konrad is illustrated in the table overleaf:

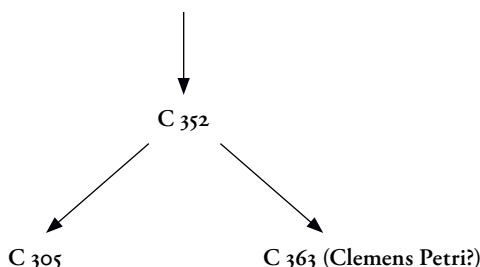
¹⁰ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 356–362.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 30–33.

¹² Hedlund 1996, p. 85.

¹³ Clemens Petri was confessor general between 1488 and 1499. For condensed biographical information about most of the Vadstena priests mentioned in this article, see the on-line resource *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin* (MNLL).

Konrad Holtnicker von Sachsen



FRANCISCUS DE ABBATIBUS

Another Franciscan writing in a similar vein to Konrad von Sachsen is Franciscus de Abbatibus, who died before 1350. His sermons belong to a group of foreign sources that were used extensively by the Vadstena preachers.¹⁴ One of these, belonging to the early generation, was the learned Johannes Suenonis senior.¹⁵ He studied first in Prague, then in Bologna, and then eventually came back to Prague. The university in Prague had developed into a kind of centre for new currents in theology, and the term *devotio Bohemica* has been coined to capture at least one of its important characteristics, namely the focus on personal belief and sincere devotion. This was partly in opposition to the hegemony of the priests and the papacy. When Johannes Suenonis studied in Prague, he made a copy of a collection of Sunday sermons composed by Franciscus de Abbatibus. When he entered Vadstena Abbey in 1387 he brought this book, which is now Uppsala University Library MS C 14,¹⁶ with him, and it was soon given its proper location in the reference library of the brothers, and assigned the shelf mark E III 12, that is the twelfth volume on the third bookshelf in bookcase E.

One of those who eventually found it there was the renowned preacher Johannes Giurderi, often called simply Johannes Præst ('Johannes the Priest'). He had a remarkable reputation as a preacher, and was in some quarters known as 'the second Chrysostomos', since he had a 'golden mouth' and knew practically the entire Bible by heart.¹⁷ Johannes Præst used his colleague Johannes

¹⁴ Andersson 2001, pp. 98–102.

¹⁵ Härdelin 1998, pp. 95–120.

¹⁶ MHUU 1 (1988), pp. 148–151.

¹⁷ Andersson 2001, pp. 26–27 with reference to the sources.

Suenonis's copy as one of several sources when he himself put together his immense sermon collection. This collection has not been preserved in Johannes Præst's own hand, but a nearly contemporary copy is still extant, now in Uppsala University Library (MS C 270).¹⁸

But that is not all. Besides Konrad von Sachsen, the preacher and scribe who wrote C 305 made use of the anonymous copy of Johannes Præst's elaboration of Johannes Suenonis's elaboration of Franciscus de Abbatibus's sermon collection. But, not any more than Johannes Præst copied Johannes Suenonis word by word, did the scribe of C 305 copy his exemplar *verbatim*. Instead, he added substantially, and the most important part of these additions consists of quotations, some of them very long, from the Revelations of Saint Birgitta.

Nevertheless, Johannes Suenonis and his followers were not the only ones to use the sermons of Franciscus de Abbatibus. For example, another popular preacher made good use of this source in one of his sermons intended for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. Styrkarus Thyrgilli was formerly a parish priest in Kuddby, not very far from Linköping, and one of the first priests at Vadstena Abbey, where he died in 1416. He was a talented and independent-minded composer of Latin sermons. His sermons are preserved in a paper codex, partially dated to 1379, which is now Uppsala University Library MS C 391.¹⁹ There are good reasons to assume that the exemplar he followed was in fact Johannes Suenonis's own copy in C 14.

As if this was not enough, Styrkarus's manuscript C 391 was thoroughly studied by the well-known and important preacher and sermon composer Johannes Borquardi.²⁰ In a sermon on *Attendite a falsis prophetis* (Matthew 7:15), taken from one of his large manuscript sermon books, Uppsala University Library MS C 330, he uses Styrkarus' manuscript C 391 as one of his principal sources.²¹

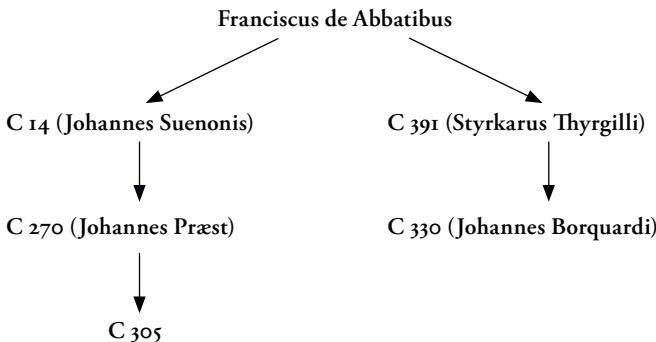
This last chain of textual use, reuse and transmission is summarised in a table overleaf:

¹⁸ MHUU 3 (1990), pp. 232–239.

¹⁹ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 592–600.

²⁰ Johannes Borquardi entered Vadstena in 1428 and died on a mission to Finland in 1447.

²¹ For positive evidence that Johannes Borquardi used C 391, see Andersson 2001, p. 101.



DIFFUSION TO PARISH CHURCHES

Vadstena Abbey was certainly not only a receiver of influence from abroad. In its turn, the monastery made a considerable imprint on the world outside the monastic walls, including the field of preaching. Monica Hedlund has drawn attention to a form for receipts concerning the lending of sermon collections to parish priests found in one Vadstena manuscript.²² Another remarkable example is provided by the so-called Björkvik homiliary, now in Uppsala University Library (MS C 332).²³ On the first leaf of this sermon collection, written in the second half of the fifteenth century and containing a complete set of Sunday model sermons from 1 Advent to the 25th Sunday after Trinity, a short note reads:

This book was lent to the reverend Daniel Hemmingi, vicar in Björkvik in the diocese of Strängnäs, by the brothers of Vadstena monastery.²⁴

It is further stated that after the vicar's death the book should be returned to the abbey. An investigation into the sources of these sermons could therefore give us an idea about the kinds of spirituality and theology that were diffused from the abbey to the secular clergy. The method I used for my preliminary study on one of the sermons, published in 1998,²⁵ was a combination of traditional textual criticism and my own reading of continental collections of model sermons. The

²² Hedlund 1995, esp. pp. 242–246.

²³ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 253–259.

²⁴ 'Iste liber concessus est domino Danieli Hemmingi, curato in Birkewik dyocesis Strengensis, a fratribus monasterii Watzstenensis.' C 332, fol. iv; here quoted from Andersson 1998, p. 186.

²⁵ Ibid.; see also Andersson 2001, pp. 108–110.

information about the sources found in the manuscript catalogue (MHUU) was an indispensable point of departure.

It proved possible to establish a long line of influence, covering a time span of more than two hundred years and a geographical area including several European countries. The sermons that eventually ended up in the parish of Björkvik constitute the end point of a considerable textual development. Its immediate source is a series of sermons written by a Vadstena priest known only by his first name, Henechinus, who entered the abbey in 1440 and died there in 1453.²⁶ In his turn Henechinus has used several different sources. The sermon in question begins with a short exposition of the Gospel text taken mainly from the Bible gloss by Nicolaus de Lyra (from the beginning of the fourteenth century). It thereafter follows a prothème, or an *exordium*, which is ultimately taken from a sermon by the Franciscan friar Nicolaus de Aquaevilla, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century and was possibly of French origin. He is here mediated by an older colleague of Henechinus, the famous Acho Iohannis who was later to become bishop in Västerås. The main part of the sermon is an amalgamation of influences from the well-known Jacobus de Voragine and the highly productive fourteenth-century Augustinian hermit Jordanus de Quedlinburg.²⁷ Henechinus did not, however, quote directly from any of these sources, but in this case recurred to an older colleague, Finvidus Simonis, who belonged to the first generation of preachers and died in 1424.

From this section and from what was said earlier about Konrad von Sachsen and Franciscus de Abbatibus, it seems quite clear that the Vadstena sermon in its peak years, the middle of the fifteenth century, was heavily dependent on not only the collections of model sermons of continental origin but also on the “in-house” homiletical production of older Vadstena priest brothers.

MATHIAS LINCOPENSIS

Surprisingly little is hitherto known about to what degree Mathias Lincopensis's pastoral and homiletical writings influenced the preaching of the priest brothers at Vadstena, once the order was established and the religious life in Vadstena had begun.

It would perhaps be superfluous to remind the reader that Mathias was one of the most important theologians and prolific writers in medieval Sweden and

²⁶ DV 637.

²⁷ On Jacobus, see for example Bertini Guidetti 1998, pp. 31–40; on Jordanus, see the reference in Andersson 2001, p. 87, note 187.

that he had an international reputation.²⁸ This is not contradicted by the scarcity of source material concerning his biography, and some claim that he made translations or adaptations of exegetical works into Old Swedish. We do not know when he was born, but there are fairly good reasons to believe that he died in 1350 in Stockholm.

Mathias was important for the spiritual development of Birgitta and for the success of her Revelations. He wrote the impressive foreword to Book 1, with the *incipit* known as *Stupor et mirabilia*. In the Revelations he is repeatedly mentioned, albeit only rarely by name, as the one who could tell a good spirit from an evil one, i.e. one mastering the art of *discretio spirituum*. He was the theological expert needed to legitimise the prophetic claims of Birgitta and the divine origin of her visions.

Mathias wrote a handbook for preachers, laying out the entire history of mankind and salvation, and the most important elements of Christian faith. In an appendix to this work, the *Homo conditus*, Mathias added a series of sermon sketches, or beginnings of a set of sermons covering the whole of the ecclesiastical year, both for Sundays and for saints' feast days. These short texts were explicitly meant to be used as preaching aids in order to give the preacher a hint regarding which subjects could be of particular interest for the different celebrations throughout the year. Indeed, it would be quite surprising if such a practical tool was not used by the brothers.

In the theology of Master Mathias, as represented in, for example, works such as the *Homo conditus*, we see a clear influence from a rather austere Franciscan spirituality, and an almost programmatic disdain for the hair-splitting refinery of the schools, all this in favour of a theology aimed at personal contrition, repentance and imitation of Christ's life. If the preachers actually used Mathias's work, this would also mean that such particular spiritual approaches were transmitted not only to the monastery itself, but also through the brothers' sermons to everybody who visited the church, from peasants to high ranking nobility.

I recently published a minor pilot investigation, and I will here summarise the most important findings.²⁹ First of all, it is perfectly clear that the abbey library held a copy of *Homo conditus*. Apart from a few extracts and minor pieces, this work has come down to us in two copies: Uppsala University Library MSS C 217 and C 387.³⁰ Only in the latter case do we know that the book in

²⁸ Piltz 1985–1987.

²⁹ Andersson 2015.

³⁰ MHUU 3 (1990), p. 52, and 4 (1991), pp. 562–564.

question belonged to the abbey library. This may have also been the case for the first copy, C 217, but there is no positive evidence for this, apart from its having been written in the diocese of Linköping. C 387 was incorporated into the library in 1404 by its scribe and previous owner, Johannes Johannis. Moreover, the possibility that there are lost manuscripts of *Homo conditus* cannot be ruled out. Thus, it was certainly possible for the Vadstena preachers to quote from Mathias's work. But did they do so?

Yes, they did, and this even to a considerable degree. Throughout the fifteenth century, several of the most renowned priests quoted from *Homo conditus* at the beginning of their sermons and then went on with material collected from other model collections or pieces they developed and composed themselves. The reason why this had not been noticed before is without doubt that the sources are never spelled out in the manuscripts, something that makes it almost impossible to spot them. In the sermons studied I found at least eleven quotations from *Homo conditus*. These are as follows:

Preacher	Occasion in sermon	<i>Homo conditus</i> (HC)	Occasion in HC
<i>Johannes Borquardi</i>			
C 392, fol. 12v	Dom. Quadragesime	Piltz 1984, p. 173	Dom. Quadragesime
C 331, fol. 45r	De angelis	Piltz 1984, p. 201	De angelis
<i>Ericus Simonis</i>			
C 10, fol. 13v	Tercia die pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 178	Die pasche
C 48, fol. 278r-v	St Sigfridus	Piltz 1984, p. 194	St Sigfridus
<i>Jacobus Laurencii</i>			
C 396, fol. 174r	St Laurencius	Piltz 1984, p. 198	St Laurencius
<i>Clemens Petri</i>			
C 321, fol. 341v	Feria 3 ^a pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 178	Easter Day
C 321, fol. 182r	Dom. 2 post pascha	Piltz 1984, p. 180	Dom. 2 post pascha
C 321, fol. 188r	2 ^a die pentecostes	Piltz 1984, p. 183	2a die pentecostes
C 321, fol. 266r	Die 4 ^a pentecostes	Piltz 1984, p. 183	2a die pentecostes
C 308, fol. 247r	St Laurencius	Piltz 1984, p. 199	St Laurencius
<i>Anonymous</i>			
C 312, fol. 111r	Dom. 5 post pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 181	Dom. 5 post pasche

Let me present one of these in more detail. From the discussion above, we are already familiar with Johannes Borquardi. The passage in question is taken from the beginning of a sermon intended for the First Sunday in Lent, the *Dominica Quadragesime*. The manuscript is Uppsala University Library, MS C 392.³¹ In the quoted passage, Mathias tells us that there is a time for healing and a time for sickness. All our time is given to us as a preparation for the eternal bliss, but Mathias, and with him Johannes Borquardi, continues by saying that not even during Lent does man abstain from sin. Johannes Borquardi quotes this almost *verbatim* from *Homo conditus*. After the parallel ends, he returns to the setting of the preaching event, and connects Mathias's words to the Gospel text of the day: Jesus Christ took on penance even though he did not have to, being without sin (*quia peccatum nullum fecit nec inuentus est dolus in ore eius*). By fasting forty days in the desert, as is said in today's Gospel (*vt dicit evangelium hodiernum*), he gave us an example how to do penance (*vt nobis exemplum penitenciam agendi monstraret*). It all becomes very clear if we put the texts side by side, see p. 35.³²

This is also exactly the way the other preachers using *Homo conditus* proceed. Precisely as was intended by Mathias, they use the sermon sketches for their prothymes. They quote what they find appropriate or fitting to introduce the main topic of the sermon, and then they turn to another model source text or express themselves in a more personal way.

CONCLUSION

Vadstena Abbey imported manuscripts, and book import was one of the main channels for new ideas to make their way into the religious life at Vadstena. Other channels were, for example, journeys abroad or visits from abroad – or at least from the world outside the abbey walls.³³ These manuscript books ('messenger manuscripts') were either bought, copied or used as sources of inspiration for the writings of the brothers, that is, for the texts they produced themselves.

When it comes to the 'mechanisms of change' I would like to view this from a very concrete angle. In order to do so we need to address some questions related to the very conditions for what is usually called the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages. There are a couple of points that I would like to mention concerning conditions that favour a certain susceptibility for – or openness to – new perspectives. When I speak about this susceptibility it is easy to draw parallels to modern times, when ideas travel faster than light due to immense

³¹ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 601–612.

³² Quoted from Andersson 2015, p. 179.

³³ On Vadstena's book acquisitions, see Walta 2014, pp. 56–110.

Johannes Borquardi. C 392, fol. 12v	<i>Homo conditus</i> , Piltz (ed.) 1984, p. 173
<p>Dominica Inuocauit vel dominica prima quadragesime sermo primus. <i>Ductus est Ihesus in desertum a spiritu vt temptaretur a dyabolo</i> Mt iijj [Matth. 4:1]. Karissimi, Sapiens dicit: <i>tempus est infirmitatis et tempus est medele</i> [cfr Ier. 8:15, Eccl. 18:21]. Sed heu, multi sunt qui totum annum sibi faciunt tempus infirmitatis, non attendentes, quod omne tempus dedit nobis Deus ad procurandum et laborandum nostram perpetuam salutem. Sed nos illud conuertimus nobis in infirmitatem et mortem. Ita quod vix adhuc isto sacro quadragesimali tempore volumus a peccato abstinere et preterita peccata emendare, non aduertentes quod istud tempus specialiter nobis pro salute nostra datum est, sicut dicit apostolus ij ad Cor vj (2 Cor. 6:2): <i>Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis.</i> Vere dies salutis, quos Dominus noster Ihesus Christus, saluator et redemptor noster, suo ieiunio et abstinenzia consecrauit et nobis imitandos et seruandos suo exemplo exhibuit et commendauit, si salutis eius participes fieri velimus. Vere dies salutis sunt isti quadragesime dies, in quibus medicamentum eterne salutis quod est penitencia suscipi debet. Penitencia siquidem est salubre medicamentum, quod omnia peccatorum vulnera sanat. Hanc Dominus noster Ihesus Christus sibi assumpsit, licet ea non indiguit, quia peccatum nullum fecit nec inuentus est dolus in ore eius. Assumpsit autem eam, quando isto sacro tempore quadraginta diebus in deserto ieiunauit, vt dicit ewangelium hodiernum, vt nobis exemplum penitenciam agendi monstraret ...</p>	<p>Dominica Quadragesime.</p> <p>Sapiens dicit esse <i>tempus infirmitatis et tempus medele</i>. Heu, quod multi totum annum faciunt sibi esse tempus infirmitatis. Omne siquidem tempus dedit nobis Dominus ad procurandum nostram perpetuam salutem. Nos illud conuertimus nobis in infirmitatem et mortem, et vix adhuc isto sacro Quadragesimali tempore volumus a peccatis abstinere et preterita emendare non aduertentes quod hoc tempus specialiter nobis pro salute nostra datum est, sicut dicit apostolus secunda ad Corinthios sexto dicens:</p> <p><i>Ecce nunc, inquit, dies salutis.</i> Vere dies salutis, quos Saluator ipse suo ieiunio consecrauit et nobis imitandos et seruandos exhibuit, si salutis eius participes fieri velimus.</p> <p>Vere dies salutis, in quibus medicamentum eterne salutis, quod est penitencia, suscipi debet et exhiberi. Penitencia siquidem est salubre medicamentum, quod omnia vulnera sanat. Require quarto capitulo, littera y.</p>

technological development. Today we are constantly exposed to outer stimuli, the medieval Birgittine friars found themselves in a similar situation.

First of all, it seems that literature of the kind I have been discussing seems to travel along somewhat different lines compared to those that literary historians normally address. There is one feature in particular where this becomes clearly visible; not in one single instance do the scribes or the preachers let us know the source of a passage they have quoted. When they quote Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux or Peter the Lombard, they are normally very careful about such

things. However, when it comes to this kind of literature, i.e. quoting from collections of model sermons or preaching aids, the task of identifying the sources is always given to the modern scholar. These writers simply did not enjoy the same authorial prestige, peculiar as this may seem, since their works were so popular all over Europe. If we rephrase this we could say that this literature, or this particular aspect of this literature, was *user-oriented* rather than *work-oriented*. It really did not matter who had written or said something, as long as the quoted text contained what the preacher or sermon composer needed for his own purposes.

A second precondition, related to the first, has more to do with the *compilatory technique* of textual composition. We have been speaking mostly about sermons, a genre with both oral and written dimensions. I think that the orality in itself favours a certain textual fluidity. The technique consists of putting together material from many different sources and changing whatever is needed. This is a technique that makes it possible to collect a large amount of information from many different sources in a very limited space, and then wrap it up in an attractive package that sometimes even makes it look like the preacher's own invention, i.e. something original. This is no doubt something that favours a rapid diffusion of the contents in the texts. A living and dynamic text, not too tied to a specific author or to a specific long-gone time in the past, is an important element of a text being *used*, and by this I mean that it becomes, or could become, a vehicle for a likewise living and dynamic discussion or exchange of ideas. Such a text has, in turn, the capacity and potentiality of being used in the same way afterwards – by others – that is, copied, re-arranged and re-read in new contexts. A remarkable example of how this procedure can work in practice has been studied by Monica Hedlund. The already mentioned Johannes Borquardi sometimes adds short notices about the sources he had used when composing his own sermons, mainly other manuscripts in the brothers' reference library. Johannes sometimes gives the names of the author or uses the shelf mark system, and sometimes he provides a physical description of the book: 'the white thick book', 'Johannes Bernardi's oblong book', 'a small white or yellow book', etc.³⁴

A third precondition is that there are infrastructural means for the storing and retrieving of all this information, and this infrastructure is the abbey library. We have already seen this, and several scholars have investigated it, but there was a remarkably functional system for the storing of the books in the library. In its

34 See further Hedlund 2008.

final form, every book was assigned a three-digit shelf mark.³⁵ The first indicated the book case, the second the shelf, and the third the position of the book in this shelf. For the book cases letters were used, and the books were sorted according to their contents, at least roughly. Sections D and E mainly contained homiletic literature, so one can easily understand that many priest brothers went there to find material for their own sermons. It must also be possible to locate the information within the book once you have found it. Many codices display a broad variety of indexes, both alphabetical and indexes of contents or key concepts.³⁶ Already in medieval monastery libraries, as exemplified here by Vadstena, we see many of the elements of modern systems for information retrieval that would be developed in the following centuries.

An important conclusion is that the exchange of ideas does not just happen. It needs vehicles and channels. The precondition for this was the ability to read and write, combined with a sound curiosity and a wish to let other people know what you feel and think.

³⁵ Hedlund 2007b; Walta 2014, pp. 39–44.

³⁶ For examples from Vadstena manuscripts, see Andersson 2011, pp. 35–36.

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FIG. 1: Queen Philippa, stained-glass window by Reinhold Callmander, 1895. Vadstena Abbey church. Photo: Mariusz Paździora/creativecommons.org/licenses.

MIA ÅKESTAM

Creating Space

Queen Philippa and Art in Vadstena Abbey

PRINCESS PHILIPPA OF ENGLAND sailed into the harbour of Helsingborg in September 1406 with ten ships and four balingers. She was 12 years old, and arrived as queen of her new realms: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Philippa had already married the King Erik of Pomerania *par procuration* in Westminster Abbey in December 1405, with the Swedish knight Ture Bengtsson (Bielke) as the king's deputy at the ceremony. Now the marriage was to be repeated in Lund, this time with the king present. Philippa showed up with a retinue of 204 named persons, all wearing uniform dress in green and scarlet, accordingly furred and lined, with embroidered white crowns and the motto 'sovereyne' on one shoulder. Each badge was embroidered in accordance with the carriers' social position.¹ The English escort exceeded 500 persons with servants and sailors included. Her *trousseaux* – the dowry – was extensive, and carefully recorded by the Royal Household. It is evident that the queen's arrival was intended to be impressive.

As an English princess, Philippa was also a representative of the Royal House of Lancaster, which naturally involved rank and power. She was the youngest daughter of King Henry IV and Mary de Bohun, born shortly before or on 4 July 1394 (her mother died that day, after giving birth to Philippa). One of her brothers was the famous king Henry V, victor at the battle of Agincourt 1415. Two other brothers served at times as English regents.

Philippa was probably introduced to the Birgittines at an early stage. Lord Henry Fitzhugh had already visited Vadstena upon arrival in Denmark and Sweden in 1406, and was a central figure in the founding of Syon Abbey. Her first recorded official visit to Vadstena occurred in January 1415.

¹ Baildon 1916, pp. 170–171. All in the retinue had been provided with scarlet and green cloth for their liveries. The more distinguished persons also received pured miniver (squirrel skin).

Recently, the historian Louise Berglund launched the idea that the term ‘queenship’ applies to Queen Philippa; and that she convincingly highlighted her strengths as a politician and as the queen of Sweden, Denmark and Norway.² Thus, Berglund’s study of medieval queenship connects to a vivid and international field, where John Carmi Parsons, Pauline Stafford and Theresa Earenfight can be mentioned among those who have made important contributions.³ With Berglund’s argument for Philippa’s queenship as a starting point, this paper will focus on material culture, art and architecture. My aim is – with Philippa and the Birgittine monastery in Vadstena as an example – to highlight some material aspects of being a queen; various forms of manifestations as they appear in the limited written source material and preserved artefacts.⁴

Queen Philippa had a significant visual impact on Vadstena Abbey church, but does that mean that she was interested in art? I will argue that her attitude towards art and architecture was more instrumental, and related to her eminent role as queen of Sweden, Norway and Denmark – that is, to her queenship.⁵ One can say that the subject calls for a performative approach, even though I prefer the word ‘presence’. ‘Presence’, as I understand it in the following, is more directly related to person and body, while ‘performance’ suggests ceremony and ritual. Both terms concern identity. How did Philippa show her presence? I will argue that it was all about creating her space.

The first part of the paper concentrates on Philippa’s *trousseaux*, the second part focuses on her relations to the Birgittines and Vadstena Abbey church, and the third on the foundation of the Saint Anna choir. In other words, the first part deals with material culture and the use thereof, while the second part highlights art and architecture. The contribution will end in a discussion and some tentative conclusions regarding Queen Philippa’s ways of creating space.

There has been a renewed scholarly interest in the concept of ‘space’ in recent years, with its point of departure in sociology, the *Annales* school and Henri Lefebvre.⁶ The historiography and today’s positions are well summarised by Meredith Cohen and Fanny Madeline in the anthology *Space in the Medieval*

2 Berglund 2015, pp. 69–89. See also Berglund 2009. I wish to thank Louise Berglund for generously having shared these articles, even at proof stage.

3 Parsons 1994; Stafford 1997; Earenfight 2013.

4 Main sources are Philippa’s *trousseaux* in The Royal Household (Baildon 1916), the *Diarium Vadstenense*, letters in SDHK, DS, DD, DN and Örnhielm’s *Diplomatarium*, in Carlsson 1956.

5 Stafford 1997; Berglund 2015.

6 Lefebvre 1990 (1974) is central to the new development where space was regarded as medium and material that interacts with society. The *Annales* school and the writings of March Bloch

*West.*⁷ The problem of space has been applied to places, architecture, cartography, networks, and territories, on both concrete and abstract levels. The intellectual concept of space, as in ‘the Heavenly Jerusalem’ is also recognised. However, although both material and immaterial aspects are at hand, they have not been connected to any significant extent, and especially not when it comes to individual space. Here, I want to highlight the importance of a personal space in medieval society, from a point of view that acknowledges that materiality and agency mattered.⁸ How did Philippa create her own space? What means were needed?

Written sources are sparse and scattered. Personal belongings and material things mentioned in donations are rarely preserved. Architecture is ruined. Works of art are debated. Nevertheless, Philippa’s legacy is entirely positive, even in contemporary medieval sources,⁹ and opinions of her have not changed over time. Researchers have addressed her in different contexts, particularly in connection with Erik of Pomerania or Vadstena Abbey. Philippa’s ability to take political action, and her possession of land are documented.¹⁰ The historian Mary Everett Green included Philippa in her survey on English princesses in 1857. Later, the Swedish historian Gottfrid Carlsson wrote a short critical biography on her in 1964. New, critical biographical articles have been published in Norway and Denmark, and Marie Louise Flemborg published an extensive popular biography in 2014.¹¹ A heroic and romantic image of Philippa can be traced back to novels and plays during the 1800s,¹² as well as a stained-glass window made by the Swedish artist and pioneer of decorative art, Reinhold Callmander, in the movement to restore Vadstena Abbey church (fig. 1 on p. 40).

A QUEEN EMERGES – PHILIPPA’S TROUSSEAU

When the English fleet disembarked in Helsingborg, Philippa brought an extensive royal *trousseau*, as described in the Wardrobe Account, several other documents from the English Royal Household and in Norwegian and Danish

and Fernand Braudel connected ‘space’ with society. Le Goff & Schmitt 1996, pp. 9–25 acknowledged this approach as they discussed ‘time and space’ and urban space.

⁷ Cohen & Madeline 2014, pp. 2–13.

⁸ Bynum 2011, pp. 25–28, see p. 37, for Christian materiality.

⁹ Jansson 1994, pp. 31, 41–42. (The Engelbrekt Chronicles, written at the end of 1430s.)

¹⁰ See for example Carlsson 1964–1966; Olesen, in Arntsen (ed.) 2005; Berglund 2009 and 2015.

¹¹ Green 1857 (III), pp. 344–394; Baildon 1916, pp. 163–188; Höjer 1905; Carlsson 1964–1966; Arntsen, (ed.) 2005; Olesen 2000–2001; Flemborg 2014.

¹² Stålberg 1849; Andersen 1851, pp. 36–50; Lagus 1875; Lundegård 1904; Ramsay 1910.

charters.¹³ It included a number of outfits, a big collection of gold- and silver-wear, a painted and gilded carriage and eight saddles with gilded harness. She even brought three beds and her own 'cloth of estate' (*pannus destat*) – a canopy to use when she was sitting at table, or presiding at meetings.¹⁴ All the balingers and ships were obviously needed.

Certain items are carefully described, among them the beds. The bridal bed was the most exquisite. It consisted of 'a coverlet' (*copertorium*) and a tester with an entire 'celure' lined with blue buckram. It was bound with thread ribbon and garnished with silk fringe and three curtains of red tartarin (an eastern silk fabric imported from Tartary), bound with silk ribbons and garnished with copper rings. The hanging for the head of the bridal bed is described as a cloth of gold from Cyprus (a fabric woven partly or wholly of gold threads), embroidered with 'gold falcons and swans and furred with pured miniver *pro capite lecti*'.¹⁵ The other three hangings were of gold cloth from Cyprus, with a red and black background, adorned with embroidered thistle-flowers (*cum floribus carduum*). Several sets of pillows were 'lined with white fustian and buckram, bound with ribbons and having silk buttons'.¹⁶ Duvets and sheets were of course included. All was carried and stored in a special sack of cloth. Two additional coverlets are mentioned, one in blue long-cloth and furred, the other in red, as well as an extra set of three curtains. Two extra mantles for winter, one furred with pured miniver, the other with 'backs of greys' were also provided for the queen's bed.¹⁷

A second bed was made of blue and white silk, with six cushions covered in blue satin. The third bed, not mentioned in the main account, was made of white satin, consisting of an entire 'ciel' and three curtains of white tartarin all embroidered with the royal arms and six cushions. Six white 'tapites'¹⁸ were embroidered with crowned M's. There were also three Arras tapestries (wall-hangings) worked with gold and embroidered texts. One says *En tapisserie demonstrar*, the second *Che listore es de grat renon* and a third begins *Vees chevauchier cel vassal*.¹⁹

¹³ Baildon 1916, pp. 163–188; DD 26 October 1406 (<http://diplomatarium.dk/dokument/>), 14061026001; DN XIX 840, nr. 667.

¹⁴ DD 26 October 1406, paragr. 65.

¹⁵ Baildon 1916, p. 166.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Painted, embroidered or woven decorative fabrics used variously as carpets, wall hangings and for beds.

¹⁹ Baildon 1916, p. 167. The term 'Arras' not necessarily indicates that they were from Arras in France; it could also mean that the tapestries were decorated with a certain type of motif. The legend is not identified.



FIG. 2: Christine de Pizan presenting her book to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria. Attr. Master of the *Cité des Dames*, c. 1410–1414, Harley 4431, f. 3. © British Library.

The beds are not so much pieces of furniture as portable bedrooms, including wall-hangings and pillows for benches and chairs. Thus, the personal space created by the bed, canopy and curtains was extended to the place where the queen resided at any given moment.

In this context, it is worth noting that Philippa also brought her own chapel – with everything she and her confessors needed of liturgical textiles and silver. The chapel also included an altar front, a ‘contre front’, a super altar and a *prie dieu* (‘pewe’).²⁰ In comparison with the beds and other textiles and silver, the chapel with equipment is scarcely mentioned, and neither the frontale nor the contre-front are described. This chapel extended Philippa’s personal space outside her bedroom.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

An illumination from a Christine de Pizan manuscript provides an idea of a royal interior (fig. 2). The example is not far-fetched – the image was painted in the beginning of the 1400s, and Christine was well known in royal circles. Philippa's father, Henry IV, was a great admirer of hers. This interior, where Christine de Pizan presents her book to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, is instructive. The wall hangings, the bed with its red canopy and the hangings worked with gold and silk fringes – in addition to the royal arms and symbols – correspond to the descriptions of Philippa's *trousseaux*. The queen and ladies in waiting wear dresses and hairstyles showing the social position at court, while Christine's dress is simple and humble. Moreover, not only does the illumination show identifiable items, it also displays the setting of a queen's space. With its style and colour it furthermore shows the aesthetic preferences in northern Europe in the early fifteenth century that, with no doubt, Queen Philippa and King Erik were familiar with and adopted.

The English royal iconography guaranteed that the message would be understood. Among the hundreds of items of gold and silver for rooms and tables, several are mentioned as adorned with motifs and arms. Here I will only mention an alms dish in the form of a boat, worked with seven standing leopards. The king of England's arms are mentioned twice, on the hangings of a bed and on a cup of gold. Blue flowers on a dress were probably forget-me-nots; Henry IV had used them as his badge. White flowers and white roses were used on gowns. Thistle flowers on the bridal bed were a Celtic symbol for both nobility of character and birth, as well as for defending the heart against external harm and attacks. Moreover, it was the national emblem of Scotland.²¹ The falcons and the white swans of the House of Lancaster were more definitely heraldic, as were the eagles on a gown and a hanap, and the seven leopards and squirrels of gold on a pair of sleeves and a mantle.

UNDER THE CLOTH OF STATE — DRESSES, JEWELLERY AND REGALIA

Philippa's *trousseaux* furthermore included an amount of personal clothing and necessities. The first item mentioned is the wedding dress. It comprised a tunic and mantle with a long train made of white satin, worked with white velvet embroideries (velvet brocade), it was furred with pured miniver and lined with

²¹ *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 990, see also Scotland's heraldry, in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Wikipedia and other sources. The Stuart's motto *Nemo me impune lacessit* ('None touches me unharmed') is later.

ermine.²² Queen Philippa was married in white, which might indicate that the coronation ceremony took place in close connection to the wedding, as white was frequently used for these contexts.²³

In addition to the wedding dress, five gowns are described in detail. The first was of woven gold from Cyprus, embroidered with white flowers on a green background, furred with miniver. The second was of red velvet, embroidered with white pearls, gold and silk, in the manner of a ribbon about the sleeves and collar. A third was of red cloth woven with gold from Cyprus, worked with white roses. Number four was a long gown of cloth with gold from Cyprus, with blue flowers embroidered on a white ground. Number five was a petticoat, an open gown and a cloak with a train made of blue velvet. A sixth gown was made of green cloth lined with green tartan, perhaps a travelling dress. All gowns were trimmed with pured miniver and lined with ermine.

Alongside this she brought a large number of tunics, gowns, dresses, jackets, coats, fur hats, fur coats, shoes, three pairs of boots, four pairs of white leather shoes and a blue raincoat.

Descriptions of jewellery and regalia are rare, and come from scattered sources. From wills can be mentioned one necklace of gold with pearls, from bishop Eskil of Ribe in Denmark, and a ring with sapphires from archbishop Jacob of Lund.²⁴

Philippa obviously owned a necklace (*monile*), made as a picture of a white dog,²⁵ which was probably designed as a gold chain with accompanying jewellery in gold and white enamel. A belt of gold (*balteus aureus, videlicet kapobonadhin*) is also mentioned. This belt had a value almost as high as the queen's crown.²⁶

Regarding Philippa's crown we have unique and extensive information, which, typically, comes from an evaluation of the royal crowns.²⁷ It is worth noting that the queen's crown was worth twice as much as the king's. Two goldsmiths, one from Stockholm and one from Vadstena, describe the crowns carefully, especially the queen's. It was decorated with wreaths of leafs and roses in gold and with ten spires. The wreaths were decorated with pearls, red rubies,

²² DD 26 October 1406, paragr. 1–8; Baildon 1916, pp. 164–165.

²³ The first white wedding dress recorded, to my knowledge. White was rare colour for weddings until Queen Victoria made it modern in 1840.

²⁴ Flemberg 2014, p. 324.

²⁵ DV 641:2, SDHK 26418, see also Carlsson 1956, p. 98.

²⁶ Carlsson 1956, p. 98f, and add. in Örnhielm dipl., RA, Vol. X; Flemberg 2014, pp. 320–322.

²⁷ Örnhielm dipl., RA, Vol. X, p. 477, the full text is published in Carlsson 1956. The last known record of the crowns is from Lübeck 1462, when they were pawned. See also DV, 8 January 1454.



FIG. 3: The Palatine crown, c. 1370–1380, English. For Queen Philippa's sister Blanche's wedding in 1402. Munich Residenz Museum, Treasury. © Bayerische Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen.

and green emeralds of various sizes, including blue sapphires and diamonds. At the top of each spire were three big pearls and one big diamond. At the base were pearls and red rubies. The oldest surviving royal crown known to have been in England belonged to Philippa's sister Blanche, married to Ludwig of Pfaltz (fig. 3). This crown provides a good depiction of what Philippa's crown looked like. A comparison with the description from Vadstena shows that the sisters' crowns were similar, albeit Philippa's was somewhat simpler.

The queen's space was extended through her personal canopy, the 'cloth of estate' (*pannus destat*), made of cloth of gold from Cyprus, lined with buckram and with a silk fringe.²⁸ A canopy protected her at meals and at meetings, and

²⁸ Baildon 1916, p. 167. Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia: The cloth of estate was a more magnificent gold tissue, used to canopy over thrones.

showed all present who was queen from a long distance. Thus, the limits not to be exceeded were visible. In my opinion, the gowns and jewellery should not be regarded as private vanity with female overtones, but rather as an equivalent to the performances of kings and bishops.

As Louise Berglund discusses, a common interpretation presupposes that the power of medieval queens was informal and private, conducted by their spouses.²⁹ This hardly applies to Philippa. She was young, but as she approached her 20s, she came forward as a queen. She seems to have been skilled at and interested in politics, judging from the 67 entries found in the Swedish charters alone. She had a functioning secretariat and her own seal. Tomas Simonsson, dean of Strängnäs (appointed bishop in 1429) was her chancellor. Her estates had been shattered, but that changed in June 1420, when her properties were expanded and concentrated to central parts of Sweden. She acted as ruler, independent of the king, and had the ability to manage the affairs of the Kalmar Union, even as a defender in war.³⁰ This goes beyond the informal power that often is assumed, and it is therefore accurate to refer to her in terms of queenship.

PHILIPPA AND THE BIRGITTINES IN VADSTENA

Philippa was probably introduced to the Birgittines at an early stage. Lord Henry Fitzhugh followed her to her new countries, and visited Vadstena already at his arrival in Denmark and Sweden in 1406. As discussed by Virginia Bainbridge in this volume (on p. 129), he was a central figure in the founding of Syon Abbey. Furthermore, Philippa's lady in waiting the first two years was Katarina Knutsson (d. 1407), granddaughter of Saint Birgitta.

Philippa made her first official visit to Vadstena Abbey in January 1415, when the abbey received the queen with full official ceremonies, as recorded in *Diarium Vadstenense*.³¹ On day one she was received in the abbey church. The second day she was received in the brothers' parlour, with all the brothers present. On this occasion all the convent's relics and reliquaries were displayed for her, as she showed her devotion.³² This was a rare privilege, as they were not even shown to the king. On the third day, the following Sunday, Philippa returned to both convents, this time asking to become a *soror ab extra*. On the same occasion a

²⁹ See Berglund 2015, p. 79.

³⁰ Carlsson 1964–1966; Berglund 2009 and 2015.

³¹ DV 238, Gejrot 1996, see note p. 144. DV 147 for the wedding, see Höjer 1905, p. 307. According to DV this was her second visit.

³² DV 238, 238:2. See also Ström 2004, pp. 94, 98, 101. Ström shows that the reception of kings and queens was elaborated for many years. It had only begun forming when Erik of Pomerania visited Vadstena for the first time as king, in May 1413.

new girl, Kristina, was introduced into the convent at the queen's request and in her presence.³³

Philippa had at that time reached the age, and possessed the authority, to act independently and make an official visit in her own right. This visit to Vadstena was certainly related to the founding of Syon Abbey later in the same year, and was followed by the letter from King Henry V to Vadstena in March (see *Gejrot*, on p. 110 in this volume).³⁴

The importance of relics must be considered, as representatives of materiality and presence; next to the Real Presence of the Eucharist, the presence of the saints was essential, and this was mediated through relics – important matters and valuable things. The relics in the Birgittine abbey were at the centre of Philippa's first visit, and during the years she donated relics and costly reliquaries to Vadstena on several occasions. Two occasions are particularly illustrative: when Philippa sent relics of Birgitta to the Pope in 1419 in order to strengthen the Birgittine's position, as well as when she personally went to Vadstena with the donation of a valuable relic of the patron saint of Denmark, King Knud (Canute) the Holy.

Philippa's importance for the Birgittines increased from 1419, as indicated by the relic she sent to the Pope, and many letters. The bull of separation 1422 (as discussed by Elin Andersson on p. 96 in this volume) made Philippa act with force and out of true concern, and she sent a number of letters to Pope Martin V and to her two brothers in England. The *Diarium Vadstenense* explicitly says that the queen acted wiser and with more power than the king regarding the approval of the monastic rule 'with gifts and expenses'.³⁵

CREATING SPACE WITH ARCHITECTURE — THE SAINT ANNA FOUNDATION

Philippa was present in Vadstena mostly in winter and spring, when she normally stayed for a couple of months. At least eight occasions are recorded, and she stayed close to the sisters and brothers; the royal residence since long bordered on the abbey walls.³⁶

The queen also made numerous donations in Vadstena. Relics and reliquaries

³³ DV 239.

³⁴ DV 254, 21/5; SDHK 18536, SDHK 18538.

³⁵ DV 333. See *Cnattingius* 1963 for the drama concerning the Birgittine Order, and the bull of 1422.

³⁶ The old dwelling house was burnt down in a fire 1423, a new was built shortly after, further from the abbey walls, see DV 351.

are already mentioned, while another example is an agreement reached with the Birgittine Order for a daily mass 'for all eternity', for herself, her husband, and her parents (King Henry IV and Mary de Bohun) in March 1421.³⁷

The grandest donation, however, was the foundation of the choir dedicated to Saint Anna at the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, 25 March 1425.³⁸ This was probably meant to be a memorial and the burial place for the queen and the king from the very beginning. This foundation is alternately called a choir, a chapel or an altar in the many entries. The meaning of the different terms has been discussed on an abstract level, but they simply seem to mirror reality. A choir was built, one or more altars were installed within that space, and for sure it could be called a chapel if it was a building within the building.

Saint Anna's altar was inaugurated on 27 December 1426 by the Archbishop of Uppsala, Johannes Haquini, at the queen's request.³⁹ A few months later, the *Diarium Vadstenense* records that it was used for the installation of the bishop of Stavanger (in Norway), by three Swedish bishops.⁴⁰ As the chapel could host an event of this dignity it ought to have been of some size.

According to the church plan, there was plenty of room for a substantial structure in the northwest part of the nave (fig. 4 on p. 53). The galleries on both sides of the church were probably built somewhat later, and allowed the brothers to move in the room one level above the congregation; they also provided the opportunity for rows of smaller chapels at ground level. A closer look at the plan shows that the southern gallery stops at the third bay, which leaves plenty of space for the queen's choir, if it was a major architectural structure of stone or wood, as I think it was. Number 1 in the plan is the queen's tomb, more or less shown in its original medieval location.

A short annotation in *Diarium Vadstenense* provides information on Philippa's participation:

In the year of our Lord 1430. During the night before twelfth night our beloved queen, mistress Philippa, died, the queen of Sweden, Denmark and Norway. She was buried here in Vadstena in the choir of Saint Anna, which she herself had founded and had built. She was the very faithful patroness of this monastery and of the whole order.⁴¹

³⁷ DV 322; Gejrot 1996, p. 170.

³⁸ SDHK 20459.

³⁹ DV 274; Vadstena writes 1427, counting the new year from Christmas Day.

⁴⁰ DV 379.

⁴¹ DV 406.

From this text, it seems clear that Philippa not only founded an altar for Saint Anna, but that she also built it. The same information is given in her charter for the founding in 1425. The two sources give the impression that she had already built the choir and the altar when it came to financial matters and funds for masses, priests and church.⁴² Matter was important, as Caroline Bynum has shown,⁴³ and an interpretation on an abstract level is not necessarily valid for these two written sources – a diary and a charter.

Furthermore, Philippa was buried in her choir on 6 January 1430, according to her earlier plans.⁴⁴ There are no indications of a raised and sculpted tomb in the written sources. Still, according to a source from the seventeenth century, the queen's tomb was raised, and there is reason to believe that it also had an effigy. It is unknown if that was the case during the early 1400s.⁴⁵

A conclusion from the quote from *Diarium Vadstenense* is that the queen was personally engaged in the construction of a new, extensive choir/chapel with screens made of wood or of stone, and with proper space for tombs, altars and people – a standard within church buildings in the fifteenth century. There are no original choirs and chapels of this kind preserved on Swedish ground, but a good comparison is the choirs of the cathedral in Exeter (fig. 5 on p. 54) with architectural arrangements built within an existing building.

TAKING UP SPACE – ARTEFACTS IN THE CHOIR

Rare information on imagery appears in connection with the donation of the royal crowns. When these, and other objects from Philippa's will, were to be valued some twenty years later, the earlier condition for the deposit was made clear: Two images (*ymagines*) depicting the Coronation of the Holy Virgin should be executed for the queen, Lady Philippa, in Saint Anna's choir. Further, it was

⁴² SDHK 20459, 25 March 1425, a letter issued in Vadstena, sealed by the queen's seal, the archbishop's seal and by eight other named noblemen.

⁴³ Bynum 2011, pp. 268–269.

⁴⁴ Philippa had come to Vadstena to celebrate Christmas, and died there on 5 January. She was buried in haste only the day after. Some scholars argue that Philippa suddenly fell ill in Vadstena, but the sources are silent. A plausible theory is that the tomb was already prepared. The speed with which the funeral was conducted suggests that her death was expected. King Erik arrived more than a week later, and the abbey church was inaugurated on 6 February 1430.

⁴⁵ Lindblom, 1965, p. 51. King Erik financed Queen Margareta's sarcophagus in Roskilde in 1423; art historian Andreas Lindblom argues that Philippa's tomb had a similar design in the 1430s.

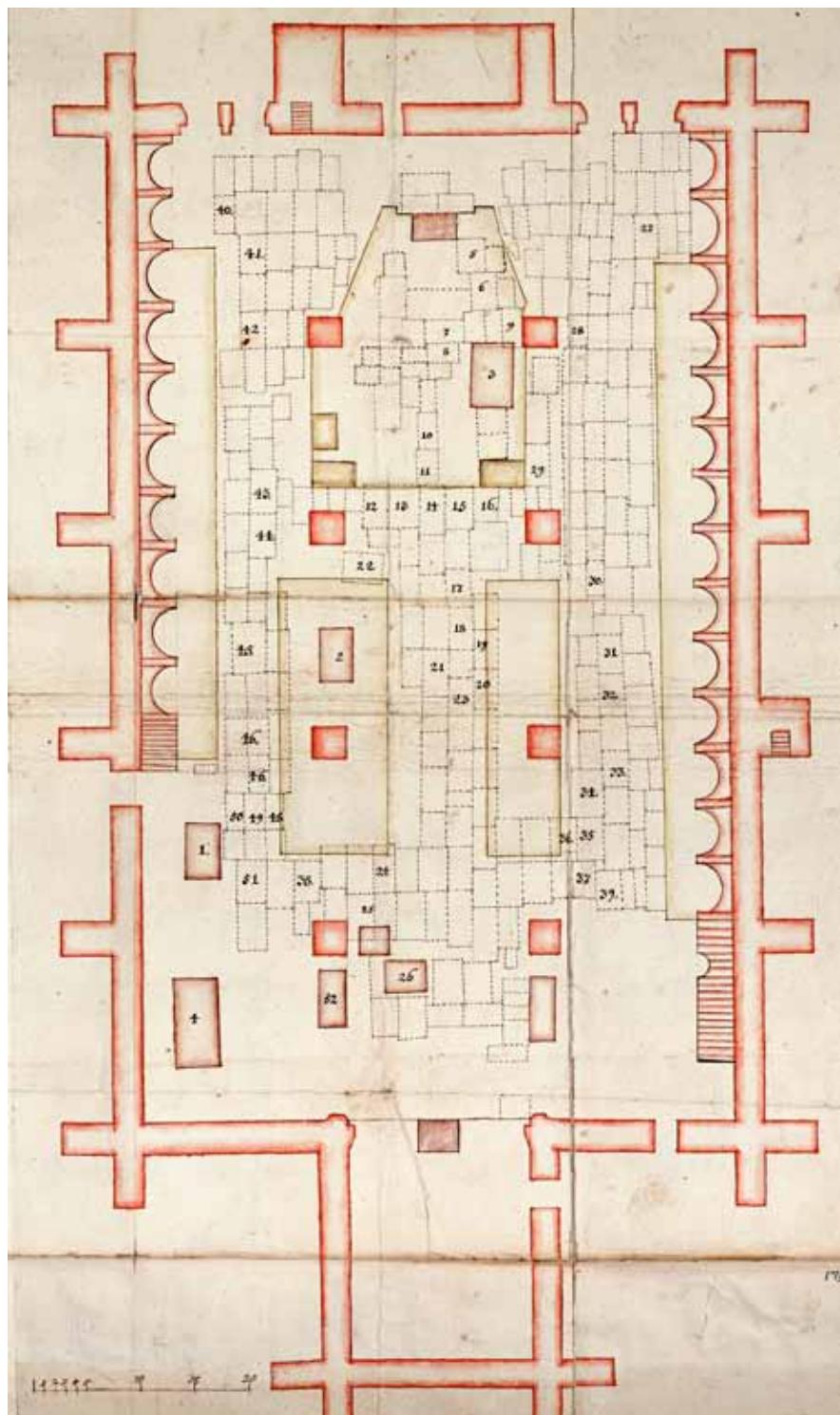




FIG. 5: Exeter Cathedral, Chapel of Saint Gabriel, limestone structure, c. 1270–1350.
Photo: The author.



FIG. 6: Coronation of the Virgin Mary, wooden sculpture in reredo, Northern Germany, c. 1450. Överselö parish church, Södermanland, Sweden. Photo: The author.

stated that a new king could borrow the crowns for his own coronation. In case of a serious emergency, the abbey was allowed to sell them.⁴⁶ In this context, *ymago* does not refer to paintings; the crowns were hardly meant to be sold for the commissioning of a painting, as some scholars have suggested.⁴⁷ In my opinion, the purpose was that the crowns should adorn an additional image intended for the queen's choir, and this must be interpreted as an altarpiece, a triptych with sculptures of Christ and the Virgin Mary enthroned in heaven. This reinforces that the choir was rather large. The Vadstena image has disappeared, if it was ever executed, but the motif was popular and commonplace at the time (fig. 6). A later source mentions an image of the Virgin in the Anna choir having a golden wreath (or coronet).⁴⁸

MATERIALITY — SAINT ANNA-GROUPS STILL IN EXISTENCE

The prebends, altars, rituals and praying demanded images, textiles and reliquaries. We do not know how the altars were adorned, or what the choir looked like, but material things were necessary. Sculptures demanded space, and had important devotional purposes. They could also be regarded as active agents, which became clear in the iconoclastic debate at the time.⁴⁹

Three sculpture groups, showing Saint Anna with the Virgin and the Child, are preserved (fig. 7, 8 & 9).⁵⁰ The first sculpture group is regarded as the masterpiece, probably commissioned from Lübeck (fig. 7). According to art historians Andreas Lindblom and Mereth Lindgren, it was probably donated by the queen for her choir, while Aron Andersson is more doubtful.⁵¹ The argument is that Philippa had the means, more than anyone else, to commission a work of this quality. This sculpture was once gilded and polychromed. The eyes are bluish-green, the carnations light, and there are traces of gold, white, red and green. The composition made high demands on the artist; Saint Anna holds her daughter – who has the proportions of an adult – in her lap, and the Virgin Mary in turn balances the Child on her left forearm. The beauty of the balanced

⁴⁶ DV 641:2, at King Karl's encounter in the brothers' refectory in February 1454. SDHK 26418, see also Carlsson 1956, p. 98.

⁴⁷ Cf. Berglund 2009, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Bynum 2011, pp. 25–28 and 38–41. For medieval approaches to images and idolatry, see also Camille 1989 and Stanbury 2008.

⁵⁰ Flemborg 2014, p. 257: the statement 'today there are two sculptures of Saint Anna in Vadstena' is incorrect.

⁵¹ Lindblom, 1965, p. 118, 1426; Attr. to Johannes Junge, in Andersson 1983, p. 32, 1410–1420; Lindgren 1990, c. 1425.



FIG. 7: Saint Anna, the Virgin and the Child, sculpture, 1410–1420, alt. 1425, Lübeck.
Photo: Lennart Karlsson, SHM.



FIG. 8, left: Saint Anna, the Virgin and the Child, domestic work, c. 1418 alt. 1420–1430.
Photo: Lennart Karlsson, SHM.

FIG. 9, right: Saint Anna, the Virgin and the Child, domestic work, 1446–1466 alt. 1470s.
Photo: Lennart Karlsson, SHM.

composition and the human and tender contact between the three would have been a good *imago* for devotion. Someone in the abbey appreciated this image so much that its composition was used as model for a ring of gold.

In the second sculpture, Saint Anna is depicted as a mature woman. She sits heavily, and from a distance this whole image is rather square. Although the former sculpture is more advanced in handicraft, this one is soft and tender and quite interesting – a close-up shows Anna with a gentle face, her right hand carefully holds the Virgin who is depicted as a young, slender girl. It is also worth noting that the Virgin holds a scroll over the Child's lap as a reminder of the Child as the Word. The base adds meaning to this motif and includes 'the man

in the moon' and musician angels. Lindgren argues that this second sculpture is the one mentioned in the 1418 letter (fig. 8).⁵²

A third Saint Anna-group, made in the second half of the fifteenth century and perhaps connected to the later prebend mentioned above, gives evidence that the cult prevailed long after Queen Philippa (fig. 9).⁵³ This domestic work shows Anna as a slender, rather active woman, standing with her daughter, the crowned Virgin, close by her side, and with the Child on her arm.

None of the three Saint Anna-groups can with certainty be connected to a prebend, and no reliable dating is at hand. They are, however, valuable arguments for the position of the Saint Anna cult and the queen's choir in the abbey church.

A CONTINUING CULT

The theoretical background for a Saint Anna foundation is in the Birgittine theology. Saint Birgitta's interest in Saint Anna is evident from the Revelation; Saint Anna was the Virgin Mary's mother and also 'the mother of all devout wives'. Birgitta strongly recommends that a feast for Saint Anna should be established.⁵⁴ The cult of Saint Anna was established in Vadstena from an early date, and resulted in liturgy and material things. The first reading on Wednesdays in *Sermo Angelicus* 10, Matins, is dedicated to Saint Anna and the good marriage. This can also be said of the sisters' chant, the responsorium to the readings in the *Cantus Sororum*.

Already in 1418, the bishop of Linköping had proclaimed indulgences and pledged 40 days for those who prayed before the image of Saint Anna in Vadstena: '... *vt ymago in memoriam sancte Anne, matris Marie virginis, facta et formata, que in monasterio Watzstenensi existit constituta*'.⁵⁵ The wording shows that a sculpture of Saint Anna with the Virgin Mary and the Child already existed in the church.

Thus, the cult of Saint Anna was not new in Vadstena. By her donation, the queen strengthened Vadstena as a centre for this cult, and ensured its continuity. In addition to Philippa's foundation, five prebends for Saint Anna are recorded: two in 1428, two in 1432, and one 1447–1464.⁵⁶

⁵² Lindgren 1990, p. 58, 1418; Lindblom 1965, p. 125, c. 1428; Andersson 1983, p. 34, 1420–1430.

⁵³ Lindblom 1965, p. 131, 1446–1466; Andersson 1983, p. 64, c. 1470; Lindgren 1990, c. 1470.

⁵⁴ Rev. 1:9, IV:55, V:13, VI:49, Rev. Extr. 10 and Rev. VI:104.

⁵⁵ SDHK 19064.

⁵⁶ SDHK 20954, 20980, 21707, 21802; RA (D 13), Lady Ingeborg Ivarsdotter, widow of Ivar Pedersson (Tott), see Lindblom 1965, pp. 61, 64, 65 and 70; Andersson 1983, p. 64; Lindgren 1990, pp. 58–60.

Motifs from Saint Anna's legend were also applied to Birgittine textiles in Vadstena and Nådendal (Naantali) in Finland. Vadstena as a centre for the cult of Saint Anna prevailed long after Queen Philippa, and even into the sixteenth century. As late as 1520 a magnificent altarpiece, which included the legend of Anna and Joachim, was ordered from Antwerp. The Saints Anna and Joachim were a consolation to those who never had children, like the queen and king. Presumably, Saint Birgitta's idea of Saint Anna as 'the mother of all devout wives' appealed to Philippa.

Philippa was a pious queen, with a religious focus on Vadstena and the Birgittine Order. This focus on a single monastic order distinguishes her from most contemporary royalty; the standard was to spread the interests more equally among different orders and churches. Some reasons for her singular devotion can be mentioned: Her first lady in waiting was a close relative to Birgitta; the management at Vadstena was female and aristocratic, yet with humble ideals; the cult of the Virgin Mary, Saint Anna, and Saint Birgitta (who was a lady and a mother, as well as a founder and a saint) for a young queen whose task was to give birth to the king's heirs. Philippa's concern for the Birgittines can also be seen in the light of politics. When she married Erik, Vadstena had a close relation to the Kalmar Union rulers and promoters. Her family, including her brother King Henry V, supported the Birgittines already in 1406 and founded Syon Abbey nine years later. Saint Birgitta had been concerned about the Hundred years' war between France and England. In her Revelations, she had supported England's cause and the king of England, albeit she moderated her position later. Thus, Philippa had little opportunity to support any other monastic order. Vadstena and the Birgittines were central to her from an early date, as mentors and as friends, in her religious dedication and as a politician.

During her life as queen she was often present in Vadstena in person, and with her own choir and the Saint Anna foundation she created a space for her continued presence.

CREATING HER SPACE

A young queen should fulfil her representative functions, and give grace to herself, her family, the Lancastrian house, and her new kingdoms. And Philippa did. She surrounded herself with beautiful things: silver, gold, jewellery, textiles, wall hangings, carriages and horses. She had her crown, her golden belt, and her chain with a lock in the form of a white dog. This was not vanity; these were

signs of a powerful queenship. She worked fundamentally as regent. Queen Philippa and King Erik even issued their own separate letters on the same matter. She was an important queen, and skilled in both warfare and economics.

Was Queen Philippa influential regarding art? There are few indications that she took a special interest in art and architecture, even though she explicitly founded and built the Saint Anna choir, and that choir unquestionably housed several images.

Her interest was rather directed towards devotional material culture, judging from written sources. The relics to be displayed were already in the centre when she visited the abbey in 1415, and donations of relics and reliquaries were henceforth important.

The spaces discussed above were narrow and close to the body; they were personal but not private. They extended the royal body in a material way, with material means, within any building where the queen occasionally resided.

In Philippa's *trousseaux*, the three beds, the cloth of estate, the chapel and, to some extent, the carriage and harness are examples of spatial constructions that created a personal space for the queen. Her body was, as it were, not left alone and naked in her new countries. If someone approached the queen, she or he would stop outside this personal sphere and could not get closer without permission. The constructions created rooms within rooms, so that no one should forget whom and what the Queen Philippa was, not even King Erik, as he entered her chambers or the bridal bed. The iconography of the House of Lancaster reinforced this meaning.

Her space was extended through her personal canopy, the 'cloth of estate'. Her stunning, official outfits were carefully described in England, and with no doubt she appeared with very valuable jewellery. The queen's gowns, girdle and chain, and ring and seal demonstrated her prestige and were essential insignia, as she was to act with power. The material aspects of being a queen helped to protect and extend the private body and sphere to a personal space where Philippa acted. The creation of her own spaces, using beds and wall-hangings, her chapel, her cloth of estate and finally a funerary choir built within Vadstena Abbey church was fitting for a queen and ruler.

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- DV = *Diarium Vadstenense*, see Gejrot 1988 and 1996.
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HILKKA-LIISA VUORI

The Great Matins Responsories in the Birgittine Sisters' Liturgy of Hours

'An Ode to Petrus of Skänninge'

Cantus Sororum – the sisters' chant – is the liturgy of the hours in the medieval Birgittine monastery. I want to bring forward the continuity and change that happened already in the beginning when the *Cantus Sororum* was formed, in the second half of the fourteenth century. I will demonstrate this development through the examples of three great matins responsories.¹

There are altogether 21 great responsories for the sisters' early morning hour, matins. Every morning Birgittine sisters sung three great responsories, and before each one of them they listened to the lesson about the theme of the great responsory, which was also the theme of the day. 21 lessons, together with the great responsories, are called *Sermo Angelicus* – the angel's sermon. The great responsories and the 21 lessons of matins formed the thematic core of the Birgittine sisters' liturgy in medieval times. When looking at the great responsories, we are examining the very central form of the liturgy.

The musical creator of the *Cantus Sororum* chants was Saint Birgitta's confessor Petrus Olavi of Skänninge (1298–1378). Petrus of Skänninge organized all the chants in the liturgy, and also set music to many of them. He organized the lit-

¹ The present article is a selective summary of the results shown in my 2011 thesis.

The great responsories (GR) are complicated compositions, written with regard to the medieval way of composing with musical formulas. A great responsory consists of two parts, which are called *responsum* (response) and *versus* (verse). Everybody chants the *responsum*, after that one person sings the *versus*, after which the end part of the *responsum* is sung again. The end part is called *corpus* or *repetendum* (to be repeated). After the last, that is the third great responsory of matins, a shortened doxology, *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*, was chanted, after which everybody repeated the *corpus* again. See Geete 1895, p. V; Hiley 1993, p. 70. The doxology ties the great responsories to the historical antiphon and psalm singing, where the doxology *Gloria Patri* was sung at the end of the recitation. Taitto 1992, p. 388.

urgy from older known Gregorian tradition, adding into some chants respectful lines for Mary. Some chants in the liturgy are assumed to have been composed by him, with respect to the older tradition.

The great responsories can be divided into three groups: old tradition, varied old tradition and new compositions.² However, the division of chants into new compositions and variations is not simple or even necessary, since the variation can bring forward something new, while new compositions can be created with old formulas.

It is written in the foreword of the *Sermo Angelicus* that Saint Birgitta received them from an angel. Saint Birgitta's way of working is described to have been very disciplined.³ She showed the texts to Petrus of Skänninge, who translated them into Latin. It is also possible that she dictated the texts to him, and he wrote them down. The *Cantus Sororum* was written in Rome between 1354 and 1366.⁴

In Birgitta's visions, Petrus is given authority over the chants and liturgy, and in this way he is allowed to change and adjust her texts according to the melodies.

The chants came to his ears and his mouth from the Virgin like a blowing wind inflating his heart with God's flaming love. His tongue telling matters, which he had not known before, words to be composed and responsories, antiphonies and hymns to be organized.⁵

Together Saint Birgitta and Petrus of Skänninge formed a working team, which created the sisters' liturgy.⁶ When looking at the music and texts together, they reflect like a mirror the composition and the story of a great creative companionship.

² Lundén divides the *Cantus Sororum* chants into three layers: the material from Saint Birgitta and Petrus of Skänninge, the material they have received from other sources, and the material added by later generations, e.g. masses for Saint Birgitta and Saint Katarina. Lundén 1976, pp. xxxviii; xxxix; xl.

³ *Sermo Angelicus* (henceforth SA), Prologue 4, 7.

⁴ In the *Revelationes Extravagantes* 113:3 Saint Birgitta mentions the showing of the 'hours' to Bishop Hemming. This is a reference to the hours of *Cantus Sororum*: 'Sed dic sibi, quod ostendat ea dilecto amico meo vero, episcopo Hemmingo; quod ipse velit, potest addere vel planare'; Servatius 1990b, p. 217. Lundén and Nordahl share the opinion that this would be the completed *Cantus Sororum*. The Virgin Mary urges Saint Birgitta to take the completed manuscript to Alvastra monastery, so that sisters could learn the chants while waiting for the Vadstena convent to be ready for them. Lundén 1976, p. cxiii; Nordahl 2003a, pp. 90–91.

⁵ 'Virgo Maria loquebatur sposte Christi: 3 [...] aures sue et os aere replebantur et cor tamquam vesica ex ardenti ad Deum caritate extumescebat. Unde optinuit ipse illa scire verba, que prius ignoravit quomodo scilicet responsoria, antiphonas et ympnos componere et cantum debuit ordinare'; Rev. Extr., 114:1, 3–4.

⁶ Helge Nordahl calls them 'författarduo', a writer's duo. Nordahl 2003b, p. 57.

OLDER TRADITION IN THE GREAT RESPONSORIES
OF THE *Cantus Sororum*

In my musicological dissertation (2011) I came to the conclusion that in the contemporary and earlier liturgical sources there are models for fourteen of the twenty-one great responsories of the *Cantus Sororum*.⁷ Eleven of these chants are written in many notated European manuscripts.⁸ In the *Cantus Sororum*, these eleven chants have only minor changes made by Petrus of Skänninge.⁹ Added to these are three of Friday's great responsories, which have contemporary variations written in Swedish and Finnish manuscript sources.¹⁰ We can form an idea of the musical thoughts in the mind of Petrus of Skänninge when we compare the themes of these fourteen chants with the chants sung by brothers in Vadstena, according to the *ordinarium* of the diocese of Linköping.¹¹

From the older tradition Petrus of Skänninge has chosen the chants to build up the body, the *corpus*, of the *Cantus Sororum* liturgy. All the chants of Thursday and Saturday, the birth of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, are from the older tradition. By contrast, all the Tuesday chants are more or less new, with the theme of matriarchs, patriarchs and prophets. What else did he want to emphasize? He composed two chants for Sunday's theme: Mary in God's thoughts, one song for the theme of angels and one song for Saint Anna. He greatly renewed all Friday's great responsories with the theme of the passion of Christ and compassion of Mary.

Vadstena monastery was situated in the diocese of Linköping. Thus the brothers in the Birgittine convent sung the chants according to Linköping's *breviarium*. When comparing the *Cantus Sororum* and its great responsories with similar ones, or variations, from the diocese of Linköping – which are based on an older tradition – we can see how rooted Petrus of Skänninge was in old tradition, although he did make some changes in the older chants. In the *responsum*-parts the differences are quite small, for example, in the twelfth great responsory of

⁷ Vuori 2011, p. 46.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 14–21.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 68–69.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 92–99.

¹¹ According to Sven Helander, the *Ordinarium Lincopense* was written 1391–1393, Helander 1957, pp. 40 and 46. Birgittine brothers were chanting their office (*De Die*) according to the order of diocese, where the monastery was situated, while sisters were chanting the Marian office *Cantus Sororum* (*De Domina*), Rev. Extr. 18:4, in Lundén 1976, p. xxxv. In Vadstena, the brothers were chanting according to the order of Linköping, and in Naantali, Finland, they were chanting the office according to the order of Turku diocese.

the *Cantus Sororum* we find the words *maris renitens*, whereas in Linköping's *breviarium*, as well as in other sources, we have *maris hodie*. In the verses even bigger changes can be seen, with the idea of giving more respect to Mary. For example, in verse four of the great responsory in the *Cantus Sororum* it is written: *Cherubim atque seraphim, omnisque celicus ordo, pro tua Gloria o Virgo laudes proclaimant Domino dicentes*,¹² while in Linköping's *breviarium* and the other sources the same verse is *Cherubim quoque et seraphim Sanctus proclaimant et omnis celicus ordo dicens*.¹³

GR*	<i>Breviarium Lincopense</i>	<i>Cantus Sororum</i> .
1	Omnium sanctorum	Sunday: Holy Trinity, Creation
4	Omnium sanctorum	Monday: Angels and Mary
4	Omnium sanctorum	Saint Michael
6	Annuntiatio Marie	Monday: Angels and Mary
11	Assumptio de BMV	Wednesday: Birth of Mary
12	Nativitatis Marie	Wednesday: Birth of Mary
13	Nativitatis Domini	Thursday: Birth of Christ
13	Circumcisione Domini	Thursday: Birth of Christ
14	Purificatione de BMV	Thursday: Birth of Christ
15	In festis BMV	Thursday: Birth of Christ
15	Omnium sanctorum	Thursday: Birth of Christ
16	Sabbatum de comp. BMV	Friday: Passion of Christ and compassion of Mary
17	Sabbatum de comp. BMV	Friday: Passion of Christ and compassion of Mary
18	Sabbatum de comp. BMV	Friday: Passion of Christ and compassion of Mary
19	Assumptio de BMV	Saturday: Resurrection of Christ and assumption of Mary
20	Assumptio de BMV	Saturday: Resurrection of Christ and assumption of Mary
21	Assumptio de BMV	Saturday: Resurrection of Christ and assumption of Mary

* The great responsories (GR) are: 1. *Summe Trinitati*, 4. *Te Sanctum*, 6. *Christi Virgo*, 11. *Stirps Jesse*, 12. *Solem iustitie*, 13. *Sancta et immaculata*, 14. *Videte miraculum*, 15. *Felix namque es*, 16. *Sicut spinarum*, 17. *Perhenniter*, 18. *Palluerunt*, 19. *Beata es*, 20. *Que est ista*, 21. *Super salutem*.
Vuori 2011, p. 75. BMV = Beatae Mariae Virginis.

TABLE I: The daily themes of twenty-one *Cantus Sororum* great responsories and the feasts of the comparative great responsories in Linköping's breviary.

12 'Cherubim and seraphim and all of the heavenly host proclaim in thy honour, O Virgin, the praise of the Lord, saying ...'

13 Vuori 2011, pp. 77 and 256. The same differences are also found when comparing the *Cantus Sororum* material with the tenth century Hartker antiphonary (Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 390–391), the thirteenth-century Worcester antiphonary (MS F 160), and as a text source in the Hesbert antiphonary, see *ibid.*, pp. 254–255.

A CASE STUDY I:
MONDAY'S SECOND GREAT RESPONSORY
Benedicta terra

Seven out of 21 great responsories were, presumably, partly or totally composed¹⁴ by Petrus of Skänninge. In his work can be seen a balanced reach for continuity and also for change: two thirds of the great responsories are based on the old Gregorian tradition with slight additions. One third consists more or less of his own compositions, that is, the great responsories 2, 3, 5, 7–10.¹⁵

The seven great responsories below are not included in older or comparative sources. Two of them are Sunday's great responsories and one of them is Monday's great responsory. Furthermore, we have all three of Tuesday's great responsories and one of Wednesday's great responsories. If these are more or less composed by Petrus, he has chosen material that is not common in the older tradition. He composed songs for a need, and I would argue that these songs would please the feminine atmosphere in a Marian theology, especially the chants regarding the matriarchs Anna and Eve, Mary in the thoughts of God in eternity, and Mary and the angels.

The great responsories not included in older or contemporary sources are (R= responsum, V = versus):

2. R. *O Maria, dignissimum vehiculum* V. *Infer igitur cordibus nostris*, III mode.
3. R. *Maria summe Trinitatis* V. *Respic propicia*, II mode (versus authentic).
5. R. *Benedicta terra* V. *Vere hec terra est Virgo Mater*, II mode.
7. R. *Eva mater hosti consenciens* V. *Laus Deo sit gloria*, I mode.
8. R. *Intelligens Abraham successionem suam* V. *Exultet igitur*, VIII mode.
9. R. *O ineffabiliter divitum* V. *Hic ad patriam*, VIII mode.
10. R. *Beata Mater Anna* V. *Exulta reverenda*, VI mode.

In the musical analysis I have used Hans Holman's categories for the *responsum*-parts. He divides them into four different categories.¹⁶

1. Responses with melodies similar to each other.
2. Responses with standard phrases or standard formulas (not necessarily in similar order with each other) (GR 5).

¹⁴ The word 'compose' in its musical meaning was a much wider concept in the Middle Ages than it is today. It meant also arranging, copying and organizing the music, not only creating something new. In compositions well known musical and modal formulas were often used. See Servatius 1990b, pp. 225–226.

¹⁵ Vuori 2011, p. 77.

¹⁶ Holman's dissertation is written on the great responsories of the Worcester antiphonary; his descriptions of letters indicate musical formulas. Holman 1961, pp. 82–83, 277.

3. Responses with a combination of standard formulas or phrases and free composition (GR 2, 3, 7–9).
4. Responses considered free compositions (GR 10).

Out of the seven *Cantus Sororum* great responsories five belong to group 3, that is, combinations of standard formulas and free formulas. The great responsory 10 belongs to group 4 being a free composition, and the great responsory 5 belongs to group 2 with standard formulas.

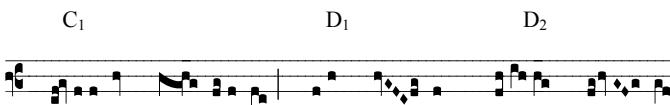
The fifth great responsory, Monday's second one, *Benedicta terra*, is an example of Petrus of Skänninge creating something new with gratitude to the older tradition. The chant has a melodic model in older tradition, a great responsory *Erue a framea*.¹⁷

A 84 f. 9^{R-V}, *Benedicta terra*, the intonation of the responsum, 5th GR.



RX Benedicta ter- ra cuius flo- res non mar- ces- cunt

WA, p. 108, *Erue a framea*, the intonation of the responsum.



RX Erue a fra- me- a Deus a- ni- ma me- am

TABLE 2: The great responsory *Benedicta terra* and a comparison with the great responsory *Erue a framea*. The intonations.

The intonation and the most of the *responsum* melody of *Benedicta terra* are perfectly similar with the older chant (see table 2). However, in *Benedicta terra* there is an extra phrase at the end of the respond *Tribuens omni carni nutrimentum* (table 3, overleaf). This musical phrase does not exist at all in the comparative chant. It is an addition made by Petrus of Skänninge.

¹⁷ Easter great responsory *Erue a framea*, *Deus, animam meam* (Worcester antiphony, p. 108; Hesbert 1970, p. 171). Holman 1961, p. 98 ('Deliver my soul', Ps. 22:21). Using Holman's analysis the melodic structure of *Erue a framea*-response is C₁ D₁ D₂ D₁ and for *Benedicta terra*, the *responsum*-part, it is C₁' D₁ D₂ D₁' D₁'. This type of plagal d-mode fifth melody type, according to Holman, always appears with two parts. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

A 84 f. 9^{R-V}, *Benedicta terra*, the end of the responsum, 5th GR.

D₆'

D₁



TABLE 3: The great responsory *Benedicta terra*. The end of the responsum.

What makes this chant so special and interesting, when it does not contain so much new melody written by Petrus of Skänninge? It is a constructive part in the sisters' liturgy. The great responsory is closely linked with two other second mode great responsories of the *Cantus Sororum*. These responsories are the eleventh responsory, *Stirps Jesse*¹⁸ and the thirteenth responsory, *Sancta et immaculata*.¹⁹ Both these great responsories are very well known chants from the older liturgical traditions. They could be called classics of Gregorian chant.

In musical analysis the focus is always on the *responsum*-parts of the great responsories. This is because the verses of great responsories are usually composed according to a certain pattern. In this case the verses for all these three great responsories have a similar structure and melody. These three great responsories are related according to the first melody family of second mode, but not in a strict sense.²⁰ According to Hans Holman, all II-mode *responsum*-melodies are variations on one basic melody.²¹ The eleventh *responsum* varies the most of these three. The fifth and thirteenth *responsum* are, in their first three phrases, very similar.²²

¹⁸ Holman describes the *Stirps Jesse*-response to be outside the plagal d-mode melody group, because it consists of one standard frase and a variation ...d ...d D₉ ...d ...d. Holman 1961, p. 108. There are 122 second mode great responsories in the Worcester antiphonary. Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁹ According to Holman, the thirteenth responsory belongs to the first plagal d-mode group. c₄ D₁ D₆ C₂ A₂' D₇'. Ibid., pp. 88–89.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

²¹ Ibid., p. 85; Helsen 2008, p. 121.

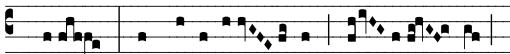
²² The formulas for three great responsories, when using the categories by Holman are: 5 GR: C₁ D₁ D₆ C₂ A₂' D₉'; 13 GR: c₄ D₁ D₆ C₂' D₇' A₅; 11. GR: ...d ...d D₉ ...d ...d.

A 84 f. 9^{R-V}, the intonation of the responsum, 5th GR.



℟ Benedicta ter- ra cuius flo- res non mar- ces- cunt,

A 84 f. 28^{R-V}, the intonation of the responsum, 13th GR.



℟ Sancta et immacula- ta vir- gini- tas,

A 84 f. 22^V–23^R, the intonation of the responsum, 11th GR,



℟ Stirps Ies- se vir- gam

TABLE 4: Comparison of the intonations of the great responsories *Benedicta terra*, *Sancta et immaculata* and *Stirps Jesse*.

The most typical interval in these three chants, the musical step, is the second interval. There is also considerable repetition of the same tone height. It means that the melodies move very little or in very small steps. This gives a meditative atmosphere to the chant. In the fifth responsory there is not even one leap of fifth, and in the other two responses there are only a few.

The melodies are similar to each other. How about the texts? In these three plagal d-mode *responsum*-texts God, the Virgin and her Son are praised. All of the responses praise Mary, the mother of God, the giver of life. They have a beautifully poetic way of describing Mary. The texts of the fifth and eleventh great responsories especially complement each other. In the eleventh responsory Mary is a branch and Jesus is a flower. In the fifth responsory Mary is the earth, the flowers are her actions and her Son is the fruit of this earth. The thirteenth great responsory has a classical *Ave Maria* with Jesus as a fruit of her womb. When writing the chant text *Benedicta terra*, Petrus of Skänninge has deepened, broadened and continued the classical story of *Stirps Jesse*, the branch of Isai.²³

²³ For further studies about the theme of *Stirps Jesse*, see Blunt 1998 pp. 180–181. Mews and Powell have approached the theme by reflecting on the book *Speculum Virginum*, which Saint Birgitta is known to have been aware of; Mews 2001, p. 22; Powell 2001, pp. 95 and 98. The theme of

Fifth responsory

R. Blessed is the earth whose flowers do not fade, whose fruit is the life of all living things, spreading nourishment to all flesh. V. Truly this earth is the Mother Virgin, the flowers its actions, her Son its fruit. Distributing ...²⁴

Eleventh responsory

R. The root of Jesse hath brought forth a branch, and that branch a flower. And over this flower doth rest a gentle spirit. V. The Virgin, Mother of God, is the branch, and the flower her Son. And over this ...²⁵

Thirteenth responsory

R. O holy and immaculate virginity, I know not by what praises I may extol thee: for thou hast born in thy womb, whom the heavens could not contain. V. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.²⁶

Before every great responsory the sisters would listen to one of them reciting a lesson with the theme of the day. In the great responsory the text would reflect the theme of the lesson just heard. The relationship between the great responsories is also seen in the lessons. In the fifth lesson Mary is praised as an earth bearing fruit.²⁷ In the eleventh lesson Christ, the seed in the mother's womb, is praised for his greatness.²⁸ The thirteenth and fifth lessons praise Mary's virtues.²⁹ In the lessons can be seen relationships with each other as well as in the great responsories. Petrus of Skänninge has not only created a great responsory for the sisters' liturgy, he has created it in a deep relationship and in harmony with the great responsories.

Stirps Jesse can be also followed in the music and texts of Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth-century religious, poet and composer. Fassler 1998, pp. 156–159.

²⁴ R. 'Benedicta terra, cuius flores non marcescunt, cuius fructus vita est omnium vivencium, tribuens omni carni nutrimentum.' V. 'Vere hec terra est Virgo Mater, flores eius opera, fructus Filius suus. Tribuens ...' SA, GR 5.

²⁵ R. 'Stirps Jesse virgam produxit virgaque florem. Et super hunc florem requiescit spiritus almus.' V. 'Virgo Dei genitrix virga est, flos filius eius. Et super ...' SA, GR 11.

²⁶ R. 'Sancta et immaculata virginitas, quibus te laudibus efferam nescio, quia quem celi capere non poterant, tuo gremio contulisti.' V. 'Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui. Quia quem ...' SA, GR 13.

²⁷ 'Preterea toti terre in eo similis extitisti, quod, sicuti omnia in hoc maiori mundo terrenum corpus habencia ex terre fructibus debebant enutriri, ita omnia illa non solum nutrimentum ymmo et ipsam vitam ex tuo fructu debebant optinere.' SA, fifth lesson.

²⁸ 'Hec itaque virga tam gracilis erat, quod in matris alio faciliter versabatur, medulla vero ipsius in longitudine et latitudine tam immensa et grandis erat, quod nulla mens ipsius magnitudinem excogitare sufficiebat.' SA, eleventh lesson.

²⁹ SA, fifth and thirteenth lessons.

A CASE STUDY 2:

FRIDAY'S FIRST GREAT RESPONSORY *Sicut spinarum*

The second case study includes contemporary sources of the *Cantus Sororum* from the dioceses of Linköping and Turku, the three great responsories from the *officium, compassio Mariae virginis*. The feast day is found in four of my comparative sources: the Karjalohja and Tammela antiphonaries from Finland and two processionals from the C-collection in Uppsala University Library. They are all dated to the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries.³⁰



FIG. 1: *Sicut spina rose florem*, from Antiphonarium Tammelense (TA), MS ÅAB D 71/161, fols 90rv. By permission: Åbo Akademis bibliotek, Handskriftsamlingarna, Antifonarium Tammelense.



FIG. 2: *Sicut spinarum vicinitas florentis*, from *Cantus Sororum*, Helsinki, National Library of Finland, F.m. IV 132, fol. 10v. By permission: National Library of Finland.

Friday's first great responsory *Sicut spinarum* is an example of Petrus of Skänninge's creative work in addition to the seven great responsories not found in the older repertoire. The upper example (fig. 1) is a rhymed chant from the Tammela antiphonary, *Sicut spina*, and below (fig. 2) is the *Cantus Sororum* version. The

³⁰ MS Gum I:3; MS ÅAB, D 71/161; UUB MS C 21 and C 23.

Tammela antiphonary was assumingly sung and used by the Birgittine brothers in Naantali. The brothers in Naantali were supposed to sing the chants of the diocese of Turku. This manuscript was also probably written in the Naantali scriptorium.

The Tammela antiphonary version is a rhymed one and the *Cantus Sororum* is not, but they are definitely variations of the same chant.³¹ The musical analysis shows that the versions do not differ from each other very much in intonation, that is, in the beginning of the chant. The notes show small differences, mainly in notation. Two rhymed office sources are from Finland (Gum I:3; TA), while the other two rhymed office sources are from Sweden (C 21, C 23) and a *Cantus Sororum* source (A 84).

The greatest differences are found at the end of the *responsum* parts. When the *Cantus Sororum* version ends, the rhymed ones continue. The rhymed versions are considerably longer than the *Cantus Sororum* version. In table 5 is an example from the Finnish source, the Birgittine fragment *breviarium* 127 and a rhymed office from the antiphonary MS Gum I:3.

This type of difference is found in all three *Cantus Sororum* chants, for example, Friday's great responsories compared to the brothers rhymed great responsories for the day of *Compassio Marie Virginis*. The sisters were singing these three great responsories every Friday, while the brothers were perhaps only singing the variations on the day of *Compassio Marie Virginis*, the second Saturday after Easter.³²

This leaves unanswered the question of which of the sisters' or brothers'

³¹ *Sisters*: R. 'Sicut spinarum vicinitas/ florentis rose odorem non minuit,/ ita tribulacionum inmensitas in te,/ Christi Mater, minorare/ non valuit virtutem constancie,/ omnium enim virtutum/ fragrancia redolebas.' V. 'Assiste, spes nostra,/ in auxilium parata nobis/ tuis supplicibus,/ ne nos extollat prosperitas,/ nec deprimat adversitas./ Omnia enim...' (Cantus Sororum)

Brothers: R. 'Sicut spina rose florem/ non immutat vel odorem/ cum crescat vicinius,/ ita, Virgo, tuam mentem,/ cunctis donis redolentem,/ furor fugit obvius./ Immo videns flagellari/ et in cruce conclavari/ tuum primogenitum,/ patienter sufferebas/, et constanter requirebas,/ dextre Dei digitum. Alleluia.' V. 'Confer opem tua crece,/ ne mundi prosperitas/ nos excecerit sua fece,/ vel premet adversitas.' MS Gum I:3; MS ÅAB, D 71/161; UUB MS C 21 and C 23. *Breviarium Lincopense* (BL) 1953, p. 358. Translation of the *Cantus Sororum* version: 'As the proximity of thorns does not degrade the fragrance of a blossoming rose, so did thy immense tribulations not degrade the virtue of thy inner strength, O Mother of Christ, for thou didst possess the fragrance of all virtues. Help us, our hope, and be ready to assist us, thy humble supplicants, so that success doth not make us proud and adversity doth not depress us.' Translation by Jaakko Mäntylä and Diana Tullberg.

³² The time of *Compassio de Marie Virginis* was 'sabbato post dominicam in albis', that is, Saturday before the second Sunday after Easter. Malin 1925, p. 239.

The intonation of the responsum, 16th GR.
Gum I:3 f. 134^V–135^R.

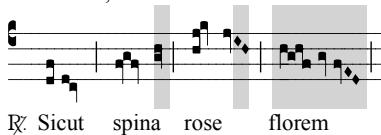
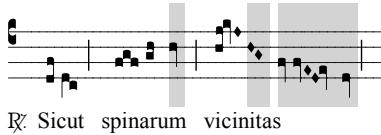
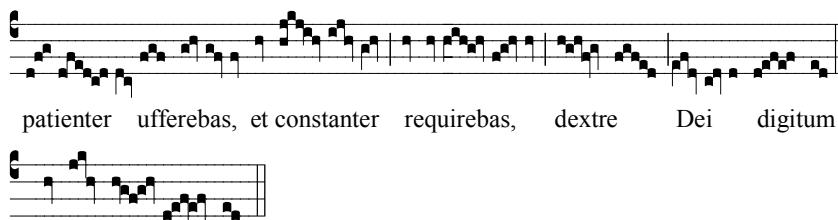
TA f. 90^{R-V}.C21 f. 78^V, 79^{R-V}.C23 f. 72^V–73^R.A 84 f. 35^{R-V}.

TABLE 5: Comparison of the great responsoy *Sicut spinarum* with the rhymed versions.

F.m. III Brev 127 f. 2^{R-V}, the end of the responsum, 16th GR



redolebas

TA f. 90^{V-R}, the end of the responsum.

Alle - lilia

TABLE 6: Comparison of the great responsoy *Sicut spinarum* with the rhymed version. The end of the responsum.

versions of Friday's great responsories were the earliest. From a musical point of view the *Cantus Sororum* versions are younger, since they are altogether less melismatic and shorter than the comparative ones sung by the brothers. They are also in a modal order, which is not typical with regard to the *Cantus Sororum* great responsories, but a typical feature of rhymed offices. Rhymed songs and rhymed offices were a modern way of singing during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Petrus of Skänninge did not want to compose in a modern way, so this suggests that he would have written variations of the rhymed ones.³³

On the other hand, the comparative rhymed chants have so far only been found in northern sources, dated later than the *Cantus Sororum*, but with roots deep in an older tradition.³⁴ It could be that somebody wrote rhymed versions from the compositions by Petrus of Skänninge. That would show a great respect for him, for Saint Birgitta and the *Cantus Sororum* as well as making Petrus of Skänninge the composer of Friday's great responsories. From my scholarly view, this question of which versions were the first remains open to further evidence, but it is a strong possibility that Friday's chants are compositions of Petrus of Skänninge, and thus the models for the great rhymed responsories of the feast *Compasso Marie Virginis*.

A CASE STUDY 3:
WEDNESDAY'S FIRST GREAT RESPONSORY
Beata mater Anna

The last example of the *Cantus Sororum* great responsories is Wednesday's first great responsory *Beata mater Anna*. It is assumingly composed by Petrus with a great respect for the older Gregorian material. Saint Anna is a matron saint of Birgittine convents. The love for the saint is expressed in this song, which was also sung in the feasts *Omnium sanctorum* and *Sanctae Anna*.³⁵

³³ The flourishing time of rhymed offices was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The term 'rhymed office' was not invented until the nineteenth century. Taitto 1992, p. 225. See also Servatius 1990a, p. 15 and Hiley 2009, pp. 154.

³⁴ MS Gum I:3; MS ÅAB, D 71/161; MS C 21 and C23. According to Sven Helander, the *Ordinarium Lincopense* was written 1391–1393. Helander 1957, pp. 40 and 46, but the roots of liturgy are much older. For example, the feast of Visitatio Beate Marie Virginis was written already in 1263 for the Franciscans, but it is mentioned as a new feast in Linköping 1406 and mentioned in Vadstena already in 1388. Ibid., p. 42. According to Helander the feast of *Compasso de Beate Marie Virginis* was officially founded in Köln 1413, ibid., p. 44, but again the roots of the feast are older. The *Cantus Sororum* was, as we have seen, written between 1354 and 1366. Lundén 1976, p. cxiii; Nordahl 2003, pp. 90–91.

³⁵ In UUB MS C 482, there are chants from offices *Omnes sancti, S. Anna ja S. Birgitta*, See MHUU, 1992, p. 207.

R. Blessed mother Anna, ark of the eternal king, in you he has preserved the treasure that is dearest to him, his legacy to his only begotten son, who became the richness of the poor and the liberation of the poor prisoners. V. Rejoice, O revered mother, about your yet more revered daughter: As a virgin she bore Him who created everything. And the liberation ...³⁶

According to Hans Holman's categories, the *responsum*-part of the chant consists of seven phrases, which are all of free formation.³⁷ They sound like typically f-mode formulas, but are still unique. As a comparison, Holman writes that out of the 51 VI-mode great responsories he has studied only six can be said to have a clear structure.³⁸ Also, in this case, a verse is a variation of a 6th melody formula and is also free by structure.³⁹

In the *Cantus Sororum* there are two other VI-mode great responsories: one with the theme of compassion, the eighteenth great responsory *Palluerunt*, and one with the theme of the assumption of Mary, the nineteenth great responsory *Beata es Virgo*. These three VI-mode chants are not related to each other. It is typical for this mode that there are few standard phrases, but free variations.⁴⁰ This is also seen in three *Cantus Sororum* VI-mode great responsories. All are different from each other.

The great responsory *Beata mater Anna* has an air of mature happiness in the melody. There can be seen similarities with the *Cantus Sororum* Tuesday's antiphon, *Magnificetur Rex*, which is also assumingly composed by Petrus of Skänninge. Both chants are in VI-mode.⁴¹

With the three great responsories presented in this paper – Monday's *Benedicta terra*, Friday's *Sicut spinarum* and Wednesday's *Beata mater Anna* – we have been able to see the work of Petrus of Skänninge from different angles. He had a great knowledge of tradition. He did acquire from the older tradition many beautiful 'corner chants', corner stones of Marian liturgy. With Monday's great responsory

³⁶ 'R. Beata mater Anna arca Regis eterni, qui in te thesaurum sibi gratissimum recondidit, quo suum Unigenitum hereditavit, inopes locupletavit. Et miseros captivos liberavit. V. Exulta reverenda Mater de reverendissima filia tua que eum Virgo genuit qui omnia creavit. Et miseros ...'; Translation Jaakko Mäntyjärvi and Diana Tullberg, 2003.

³⁷ ... D... E... E... E... E... F... F; see Holman's formulas. Holman 1961, pp. 428–451.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

³⁹ 6th melody group, see *ibid.*, p. 257.

⁴⁰ In the Worcester antiphonary, there are 55 V-mode and 51 VI-mode great responsories, *ibid.*, pp. 216 and 229. In the *Cantus Sororum* there are no V-mode great responsories, see Vuori 2011, p. 212.

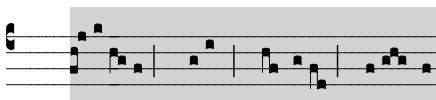
⁴¹ *Cantus Sororum*: Tuesday's antiphon *Magnificetur Rex*, in for example F.m. IV Ant. 132 f. 1rv; see Servatius 1990a, p. 110.

A 84 f. 22^{R-V}, the intonation of the verse, 10th GR.



¶ Exulta re- ve-renda ma-ter, de reverendissima fi-lia t-ua

F.m. IV Ant 132 f. 1^{R-V}. A part of a CS antiphon Magnificetur Rex.



... incessanter eius be-ningna cari-tas...

TABLE 7: Comparison of the great responsory *Beata mater Anna* with the antiphon *Magnificetur Rex*.

we see an example how he wanted to leave his own mark in this tradition by composing a new text and using old melodies with the theme of blessed earth and blessed nurturing mother. With Friday's great responsory we can see a variation or a composition by Petrus of Skänninge. Either way, the Friday's chant is also a masterpiece. Finally, in Wednesday's great responsory there is a joy in the music and the text – a core of Birgittine feminine appreciation, the theme of motherhood. It is interesting that Petrus of Skänninge not only brings forward the motherhood of Virgin Mary in the chants, but also that of mother Eva and Anna, the grandmother of the infant Jesus. In these choices we can return to the idea of the writer's duo consisting of Saint Birgitta and Petrus of Skänninge. He was not making these choices on his own.

The three great responsories presented here only constitute 1/7 of all the *Cantus Sororum* great responsories. The musical world of Petrus of Skänninge is much larger, as is the entire modal atmosphere to be opened up with the great responsories of matins.

With respect to Syon Abbey, here follows an instruction from the *Myroure of oure Ladye*, regarding how sisters were supposed to recite the lessons and chant the great responsories.

First the understanding needs to be awakened with the knowledge of good and evil. This understanding can be reached through the reading and listening of lessons. Secondly there needs to be freedom of will to love the good and hate the evil. So the will answers the knowing – The responsum answers to the lesson. Thirdly, one

must act so that she understands what is bad, and at the same time understand what is good, and act doing it. This comes as a singing of the versus. The understanding of the lesson, and the will to sing the responsum come as acts of good deeds when singing the versus. And after the singing of the versus, part of the responsum is sung again. For as a good will causes good deeds, so the good deeds help stabilise and strengthen the good will.⁴²

42 ‘The fyrste ys that the vnderstandinge be lyghtened with knowlege of trouth to knowe what ys good & what ys yuel. And for thys knowlege ys had by redyng & heringe of holsome doctryne! therfore yt ys vnderstoned by the lessons. The seconde ys. good vse of the frewyl that the wylle assente to loue that. that ys knownen good. And to hate that. that ys knownen yuell. And for the wylle answereth thus to the knowyng. therfore yt ys to vnderstonde by the responce. That ys as moche to say. as answer. for yt answereth in sentence to the lesson as ys before sayde. The thyrde ys werke so that that thyng that the vnderstondyng knoweth yuel. and the wyle hateth! be fled in dede and eschewede. And that thyng that the vnderstondyng knoweth good. and the wyll reuled by grace loueth! be done in dede. And this is vnderstoned. by the verse that is as moche to saye as a tornyng. for the knowlege and wyle. oughte thus to be turned in to dede. And after the verse a parte of the responce is songe ageyne. For as a good wylle causeth good dedes. soo good dedes helpe to stable. and to strength the good wylle.’ Blunt 1998, pp. 114–115, modern English translation by the author.

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KEVIN ALBAN

Some Aspects of Carmelite Involvement in the Early Years of the Abbey of Syon

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF THE CARMELITES and Syon is one that has been told as a series of footnotes to a main narrative which has concentrated on other orders, such as the Benedictines and the Carthusians, and their influence on Henry V's foundation, whose sexcentenary is being celebrated.¹ There are, however, some interesting aspects to Carmelite involvement in the Birgittine house which revolve around two topics and two friars: first, the concept of obedience: to whom is it owed by whom, and in what circumstances. Secondly, the question of whether contemplatives were bound to perform manual work or not provided further occasion for debate. The two Carmelites involved were Stephen Patrington (d. 1417) and Thomas Netter of Walden (d. 1430), successively priors provincial of the English province.

Before embarking on these topics, however, one important area must be mentioned at the outset, if only to refer to a work which is still in progress. The question of vernacular writings and Syon is a very significant one in many areas of English medieval literary and historical studies, and a large body of research exists on it. One of the lesser-known features of this subject is the relationship between the Carmelites and vernacular theology, and the place of Syon in this connection. Johan Bergström-Allen is currently writing up his research into the vernacular literature of the medieval English Carmelites.² Among the communities responsible for copying Carmelite writings were the Birgittines. They possessed several copies of the translation of the *Scale of Perfection* by Walter Hilton (1340–1396) made by Thomas Fishlake (fl. 1370–1400) one at Syon Abbey

¹ Cf Tait 2013, which is his Oxford D.Phil thesis from 1975; Andersson 2011; Aungier 1840.

² I am very grateful to my colleague Johan Bergström-Allen for letting me see a draft of his PhD thesis, 'The Tip of the Rhinocerus' Nose: The Vernacular Literature of the Carmelite Order in Medieval England', and the information here is taken from this work.

in Middlesex, and two at their Swedish motherhouse at Vadstena; one of which (now Uppsala University Library MS C 159) was copied at Syon by a Birgittine deacon, Clement Maydstone (d. 1456).³ It will be interesting to see how Bergström-Allen assesses the importance of the Syon connection in the context of Carmelite involvement in the production of vernacular theology.

BISHOP STEPHEN PATRINGTON

The first Carmelite connected with Syon was Stephen Patrington (d. 1417), who had joined the Carmelite Order in York, suggesting that he was a native of those parts, and was ordained priest in 1370.⁴ He is listed as prior of the Oxford house in 1373, proceeding to the baccalaureate in theology in 1382 and to the doctorate in 1390. In 1382, he, along with other mendicant members of the University of Oxford, had complained to John of Gaunt (1340–1399), Duke of Lancaster and a highly significant power broker in late medieval England, about the latter's support for Wyclif.⁵

The connection between the Carmelites and John of Gaunt was a strong one. Even before the Duke's renunciation of Wyclif and embracing of orthodoxy in 1382, one of his confessors had been the Carmelite William Badby (d. 1380).⁶ He was succeeded by Walter Diss (d. 1404),⁷ around the time of Patrington's letter, and by John Kynyngham, prior provincial of the English Carmelites from 1392.⁸ Patrington had been a salaried member of John of Gaunt's household from 1397 and on Kynyngham's death in 1399, he succeeded him as superior of the Carmelites in England, while retaining his place in the Lancastrian household. He may not have been confessor to John of Gaunt's son, Henry IV (1367–1413), but he preached before him on Christmas Day 1401, when it is said the king was impressed by him. In 1413 Patrington became part of Henry V's household, relinquishing his office of prior provincial, to become royal chaplain and confessor to the young king.

This preference for Carmelite confessors by the House of Lancaster meant that from 1399 the order was well placed to exercise influence over the successive

³ I wish to express my gratitude to my confrère Richard Copsey for letting me see an advanced draft of his forthcoming *Biographical Register of Carmelites in England and Wales, 1240–1540* from where I have drawn the little information about Fishlake that we possess.

⁴ See Jeremy Catto, 'Stephen Patrington', ODNB, and Copsey (forthcoming).

⁵ Goodman (1992).

⁶ Richard Copsey, 'William Badby', ODNB. Badby appears as confessor from 1370. He was a notable and popular preacher of his day.

⁷ Michael Wilks, 'Walter Diss', ODNB.

⁸ Anne Hudson, 'John Kenningham', ODNB.

monarchs for the following seventy years or so. It also meant that Carmelites were likely to be the recipients of patronage in the form of royal chaplaincies and bishoprics. It is no surprise that Patrington was appointed to the see of St David's in 1415 and consecrated bishop in June that year. The same month, the richer see of Chichester became vacant and Patrington appointed two proctors to further his claim to that diocese. In June 1416 he was already assigned the income from Chichester, although his actual appointment was delayed by the death of Pope Gregory XII in 1415 and the election of Martin V some two years later. As confessor to the king's grandfather, preacher to his father and chaplain to Henry V himself Patrington was clearly part of the 'great and the good' of early fifteenth century England. When he was asked to convene a commission of theologians to work out the teething problems of Henry's royal foundation of Syon in 1416, it can hardly have been a surprise to anyone.⁹ The commission consisted of five other clerics, including the abbot of St Alban's, William Heyworth, and the man who would become confessor general, Thomas Fishbourne.¹⁰

However, also as a Carmelite, Patrington was particularly well placed to assist the new foundation at Syon with some of the problems that emerged in the first months of its existence.¹¹ One of the important issues that the commission had to deal with was the relationship between the community of nuns led by an abbess and the confessor general and the small group of brothers that were present on site. Who was the superior of whom? Matilda Newton, the first abbess, appointed by Henry V and not elected, claimed on the basis of the Birgittine Rule that William of Alnwick, the confessor general, also appointed, should obey her.¹² This problem of obedience, which would seem to be rather specific to Syon, was tied to a much wider consideration of the importance of that trickiest of vows.

Secondly, the nuns raised the issue of whether their obligation to perform manual labour impacted on their contemplative life and vocation in a detrimental way. These were not new problems, nor were they peculiar to England. Similar concerns had been raised in the mother house of Vadstena, and continued to be raised over the years even as house after house grappled with the somewhat anomalous nature of Birgitta's *Rule of the Saviour*. In the case of Syon, however, there were perhaps additional factors at work: as noted neither the abbess nor

⁹ See Deanesly 1915 and Knowles 1948–1959, vol. II, pp. 175–181; vol. III, pp. 212–221.

¹⁰ R. N. Swanson, 'William Heyworth', ODNB.

¹¹ See Tait 2013, pp. 134–135.

¹² The abbess was defined as 'caput et domina' of the monastery. This was a constant source of debate in the whole order, not only in Syon. *Ibid.*, pp. 210–211.

the confessor had been elected in a canonical fashion. Nor indeed were either Matilda or William professed members of the order. Those nuns who came over from Sweden to England may well have found this situation irregular, albeit temporary.¹³

It is a stroke of fortune that Patrington's only extant work is a collection of theological opinions and debates compiled by him as a student in Oxford preparing for his doctoral exercises.¹⁴ The *Repertorium* is a rare example of a late fourteenth century theological notebook, but it does not unfortunately represent Patrington's personal views. Novelty and originality were not the highly prized virtues of academic life as they are now. Rather the exposition and propagation of well-grounded truths and well-worn pathways were the ideal to be aimed for. And Patrington reached his goal. Tantalisingly, one of the questions that he listed was precisely 'whether a superior was bound to obey an inferior'.¹⁵ The reply is only some twenty words long and asserts that in no way could a superior be subject to someone lower down the hierarchy. It is perhaps unsurprising that the commission decided against the abbess and in favour of her obedience to the confessor general.¹⁶

In the period from 1416 to 1420, however, the issue was not regarded as settled, and this may reflect the atypical nature of governance that the Syon community initially enjoyed. It is interesting to note that Matilda Newton was effectively removed as abbess of Syon and returned to her original monastery of Barking, not as a choir nun but as a recluse.¹⁷ So too early in 1418 William of Alnwick moved to St Margaret's monastery of Westminster where he became a recluse.¹⁸ It was only in 1420, when Pope Martin V acceded to Thomas Fishbourne's request that Syon be permitted to enjoy the usual privileges in the *Rule of the Saviour*, that the system of authority reverted to the normal arrangement of the primacy of the abbess.

¹³ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁴ There are three surviving copies of the original notebook. The one consulted here is St John's College, Cambridge, MS D28. For a description of Patrington's work, see Kennedy 1986, where there is a very useful transcription of the index to the notebook.

¹⁵ St John's College, Cambridge, MS D28, 44v, col. a. The St John's MS has the folio numbers of the original notebook in the margins and they correspond to the references in the index. So in the original this article on obedience is at fol. 57a 6.

¹⁶ See Deanesly 1915, p. 113. Both Matilda Newton and William of Alnwick left Syon between 1417 and 1420.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 115–116. Tait 2013 pp. 133–134 disagrees with this interpretation, suggesting that Matilda had been dragged into an internal dispute, not of her making in Syon.

¹⁸ See Deanesly 1915, pp. 116–124.

The second issue, manual labour versus the contemplative life, was an old chestnut in the spirituality of the religious life, and here too Patrington's Carmelite background may have been helpful in the commission's work.

The original hermits on Mount Carmel had migrated to Cyprus, Italy, France and England from the middle of the thirteenth century and established themselves in locations which recalled the somewhat isolated conditions they had left in Palestine. In England, for example, they settled in Alnwick in Northumberland and Aylesford in Kent, both of which were fairly remote locations. It soon became clear, however, that a certain adaptation or accommodation of their eremitical lifestyle would be necessary if these early Carmelite were to have sufficient recruits and adequate economic resources to continue their religious life. At a very early General Chapter in 1245, the hermits petitioned Pope Innocent IV to be allowed to make foundations in urban settings. This request was granted in the bull *Quae honorem conditoris* in 1247 and is often cited as the moment when the hermits became mendicants.¹⁹ This is perhaps an over-simplification, for while the order certainly did make many foundations in towns and cities, its members were still known as 'hermit brothers' and from then on there was a continual debate among Carmelites about the relative weight the contemplative and the active should have in their way of life. This came to a head in a letter from the Carmelite Prior General, Nicholas the Frenchman in 1271, the *Igneus Sagitta*.²⁰ In this, Nicholas criticises his fellow friars for not being sufficiently qualified to undertake pastoral work in the cities and of having abandoned the eremitical life of Carmel.²¹ So the debate was very much a live one in Carmelite circles, as will be seen in the case of the second prior provincial to be involved with Syon.

The tendency to view action and contemplation in competition is well reflected in the issue raised by the Syon nuns of whether they were to be dispensed from manual labour because it took time away from their contemplative vocation. The members of the commission concluded that '... as already mentioned, the sisters should not relinquish the domestic offices of brewing, that is the bakery and the kitchen, without permission, dispensation or special leave of the Pope'.²²

¹⁹ See Smet 1997 for a more nuanced interpretation of the modifications approved by Innocent IV.

²⁰ For the critical edition, see Staring 1962.

²¹ See Copsey 1999 and Alban 2008.

²² *Articuli extracti de Regula sancti Salvatoris beate Birgitte revelata*, Uppsala University Library MS C 6, fols. 78v–80r: 'Ut prius memorare sorores a se dimitterent domos officiosas braxaturam videlicet et pistrinam et coquina, sine requisitione, dispensacione et speciali licencia papae.' Quoted in Höjer 1905, p. 77.

THOMAS NETTER OF WALDEN

The relationship between Patrington's 'Carmeliteness' and the issues surrounding the Syon foundation might be described as a connection with a dotted line rather than a solid one. In the case of Thomas Netter there is surer ground in as much as a connection between the Carmelite provincial and Syon is evidenced by correspondence between Netter and Thomas Fishbourne, and Netter's *Doctrinale* contains a substantial section on both obedience and the question of manual labour.

Thomas Netter of Walden, was a Carmelite friar, royal confessor, diplomat, religious superior and theologian.²³ His only extant theological work, the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae contra Wiclevistas et Hussitas*, was written mostly in the 1420s, with the declared purpose of combating the errors of Wyclif and his followers.²⁴ From his death in 1430 until the middle of the eighteenth century Netter was a much quoted and copied author whose clear exposition of Catholic teaching on subjects such as the Church, the religious life and the sacraments proved useful to many Counter Reformation polemicists and apologists.

Netter was educated at Oxford, taking his doctorate in 1409, and in 1410 he attended the trial of John Badby in St Paul's, London.²⁵ He is not listed as an official member of the court and may have been there as an observer. Again, on 25 September 1413, he was present as an official assessor in the chapter house of St Paul's cathedral during the trial of Sir John Oldcastle, when Sir John was asked to reply to the accusations against him.²⁶ In the 1420s Netter took part in the trials of two other prominent Lollards: in 1423 he is mentioned in the account of the trial of William Taylor, who had been skirmishing with the authorities since 1406 and was burnt as a heretic in 1423.²⁷ Netter's name also appears in the list of *virи venerabiles et religiosi* who assisted Bishop William Alnwick at the trial of William White in Norwich in 1428.²⁸ By that time, Netter was prior

²³ Anne Hudson, 'Thomas Netter', ODNB. See also Bergström-Allen and Copsey 2009 and Alban 2010.

²⁴ The edition of the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae contra Wiclevistas et Hussitas* used here is that of Blanciotti, published in three volumes in Venice between 1757 and 1759. It is the most recent and reliable edition. The usual way of citing the *Doctrinale* using this edition is by volume and column, thus: 2:120 = volume 2, column 120. However, to facilitate readers who may be using one of the other printed editions of Netter's work, the reference system adopted here is by book, section and chapter.

²⁵ Wylie 1892–1896, vol. 3, p. 439. McNiven 1987 makes no mention of Netter.

²⁶ Shirley 1858, p. 443; Wilkins 1737, vol. 3, p. 355; Scott Holmes 1914, p. 161.

²⁷ John A. F. Thomson, 'William Taylor', ODNB.

²⁸ Shirley 1858, p. 417.

provincial of the Carmelites in England, having taken Patrington's place when he resigned in 1413 to assume greater responsibilities in the royal household. Netter too was a confessor to Henry V and Henry VI, and his anti-Lollard writings and participation in various trials are part of the 'orthodox activity' that both these monarchs engaged in as a way of proving England's credentials as a true daughter of the Church.²⁹

Netter's connection with Syon takes the form of a short letter to Thomas Fishbourne and since it is brief, is worth quoting in full:

Letter to Thomas Fishbourne, confessor to the handmaids of Christ in the Convent of Saint Syon of the Order of Saint Birgitta, about a disobedient Praemonstratensian monk, see below:

It seems to him that obedience to any mortal man derogates from the state of a recluse. For the defence of the presumed liberty of this altogether perfect life he tries to make out his case that he should not obey the one to whom he once vowed obedience. Without any need of going beyond the Scriptures, I feel compelled to proclaim my amazement, O word intolerable, O word which deserves chastisement. A religious, by virtue of his state, is not bound to obey any mortal man! Who has suggested this opinion, who could affirm this view? What shall I call him or whose Rule has he professed unless his own? He goes beyond the stars and wishes to put the throne of his perfection above the rest. He is not content to be like the Most High unless he is better. We want to know if Jesus, the Son of God, both servant and perfect man, took care to obey mortals or not? Did he not obey the poor? Was he not subject to a workman and a woman? For what does Luke relate if not the fact that he went down with them and was under their authority? And Basil says this: from childhood he was obedient to his parents and took upon himself any kind of corporal work humbly and reverently. Paul says: be subject to any human creature.³⁰

29 Beckett 1993, esp. p. 137.

30 Alban 1992, p. 371. The Netter Letters edited from Bodley MS 73 by Zimmerman (1907); Ep. XXXV: "...viro domino Thome Fyschbourne, confessori ancillarum Christi in monasterio sancte Syon, ordinis sancte Brigitte, super inobediente Premonstratensi monacho: vide infra: "Videtur sibi reclusi derogare statui, quod debeat cuiquam obedire mortali. Et pro illius omnino perfecte vive presumpta libertate partes facere temptat, ne illi obediat, cui se semel vovit. Non ultra scripturas sed admiracione clamare compellor: O verbum non ferendum, O verbum multo verbere dignum. Religiosus vir ex vi status sui nulli tenetur obedire mortali. Quis hanc dictavit, aut dictatam posset affirmare sentenciam? Quem eum dicam aut cuius regule professorem, nisi eius qui cuncta concendit astra, volens super ea sue perfectionis ponere solium, nec in hoc contentus, ut similis sit Altissimo, nisi transcendat Altissimum. Volumus scire, annon Jesus Dei Filius, et puer existens et homo perfectus, curavit obedire mortalibus? Nonne pauperibus obedivit? Nonne fabro femineque subiectus est? Quid enim Lucas refert, nisi quia descendit et erat subditus illis? Super quo Basilius noster inquit: 'Ab ipsa etate primeva parentibus obediens quemlibet labore [fol. 101v] corporeum humiliter et reverenter sustinuit.' Paulus inquit: 'Subiecti estote omni humane creature propter Deum, etc.'"

Again the question is that of obedience and the exemption this recluse is claiming from that owed to a lawful superior. Netter's reply is typically indignant and shocked, appealing to the example offered by Christ himself. He reminds Fishbourne that Jesus lived in obedience to his parents (Luke 2:51), that he was prepared to undertake manual labour (another example of the debate between active and contemplative lifestyles) and that he was subject to human beings, 'on account of God', to continue the quotation from 1 Peter 2:13 to its conclusion. The 1416 commission's decisions were not treated as definitive in succeeding years and Netter's letter to Fishbourne bears witness in some small measure to the relevance of the continuing debate.

It is interesting to find a Premonstratensian connection between Carmelites and Birgittines. Originally founded in the diocese of Laon by Norbert of Xanten (1080–1134), the canons of Prémontré drew their inspiration from the Rule of Saint Benedict as understood in the Cistercian tradition and that of Saint Augustine, with its more active, apostolic emphasis.³¹ As with the Carmelites and the Birgittines, the Premonstratensians had to make some adjustments to their initial intent which required papal intervention. There was clearly some tension inherent in the order between Norbert's plan to be an apostolic institute and the lived experience of being closer in fact to a monastic way of life. To this extent, the Carmelites, Premonstratensians and Birgittines had a lot in common. The visitation records of the English province of the order are extant for a later period than Netter's letter to Fishbourne, but they do not reveal widespread disobedience or unauthorised wandering off from the monastery.³²

In the *Doctrinale* Netter deals with both the general topic of obedience and the question of whether religious should be exempt from manual labour. This discussion occurs in books III and IV of his work, whose composition the consensus of scholarly opinion would place not in the 1420s but in Netter's days in Oxford as a student, perhaps in the early 1400s (Netter was a doctor by 1409). In his discussion of obedience, Netter seems to be influenced by a key Carmelite spiritual text, the *Institute of the First Monks*. This was a compilation of material prepared by the Catalonian provincial, Felip Ribot, around the mid to late fourteenth century.³³ The text circulated widely in the order and had a tremendous impact on the way Carmelites viewed themselves. Netter owned a copy which he had made for him by Prior General John Grossi.³⁴ In this work

³¹ See Colvin 1951.

³² See Gasquet 1904–1906 and Gribbin 2001.

³³ Paul Chandler, 'Ribot (Philippe), carme, † 1391', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 13:537–539.

³⁴ Alban 1992, notes 27 and 28.

the author asserts that the Rechabites were the first monks and allowed to stay in the Holy Land even during the Babylonian exile, on account of their great obedience to their leader. This reference occurs at a crucial point in the *Institute* when the Carmelite hermits founded by Elijah and Elisha are also under threat of deportation. Here too the survival of the hermits against all the odds is said to be on account of their righteous life style: 'because of the merit of their obedience they were left in the Holy Land'.³⁵

For Netter, the vow of obedience is based on a common duty of all Christians to obey God's commandments. He stresses again that this is not a question of desire, but a real bond between the religious and God which he calls 'an outstanding sacrament', using that term in the original sense of an oath or tie.³⁶ This is a view of obedience which emphasises the union between the religious and God, rather than the strictly juridical arrangement. As Netter puts it, 'One thing I do know, that a man sows and he reaps, and he who has humbled himself for the sake of holy obedience to be like one of the little ones of Jesus Christ, he will be greater in the kingdom of heaven'.³⁷

Netter's treatment of the foundations in history for vows of obedience begins with that of Elisha to Elijah in 2 Kings 2, drawing again on Carmelite spirituality as it looked to these two Old Testament prophets for its inspiration. Netter notes that a vow of obedience can only be taken with the permission of a 'prelate' (that is, a lawful superior) and that the bond exists even when the superior is himself sinful. Obedience is found in a sublime form in that of Christ who was obedient to the point of death itself. This is again a view of the vow which would stress first its ecclesial nature (in obtaining the permission of a superior) and secondly its Christological foundation, based on the attitudes and actions of Christ in his supreme exercise of self-sacrifice out of love: '... the second man coming for the redemption of humanity shows what it meant to do his father's will and not his own'.³⁸

³⁵ See *Institute*, 4, 8: '... ipsi tamen non fuerunt in Babilonem ducti, sed propter meritum obediencie fuerunt in terra sancta relicti'. Ribot's work exists in a number of manuscripts and was printed in *Speculum Carmelitanum*, edited by Battista Cathaneis and published in Venice in 1507. The *Speculum* was reprinted and reedited by Daniel of the Virgin Mary in Antwerp in 1680. For an English translation, see Copsey 2005.

³⁶ For example Arnobius, *Disputationes adversus nationes*, 4, 20 uses *sacramentum* to mean a wedding vow.

³⁷ *Doctrinale* 3.2.23: 'Haec unum scio quod quae seminat homo, hanc et metet et qui humiliaverit per sacram obedientiam ut sit sicut parvulus Iesu Christi, hic maior est in regno caelorum.'

³⁸ *Doctrinale* 3.2.26: '[...] secundus [homo] vero ad redemptionem hominum veniens dum non se voluntatem suam sed patris facere ostendit [...].'

Regarding the second issue at stake, that of manual work and its impact on the contemplative life, the second article of book four of the *Doctrinale* opens with a consideration of manual work and whether religious must live by it. It has always been the custom from the time of the Egyptian monks to the Benedictines, and including the Carmelites and other religious, for them to engage in some sort of manual work.³⁹ The earliest witness to this, according to Netter, is Saint Jerome when he describes the lifestyle of the eastern monks.⁴⁰ The same testimony is given by Benedict in his Rule: Idleness is the enemy of the soul ... and therefore the brothers must always be engaged in some manual work.⁴¹ Similarly, the Carmelite Rule of Saint Albert exhorts: 'You must give yourself to work of some kind, so that the devil may always find you busy, [...].'⁴²

However, having established in some detail and at some length the virtue and necessity of manual work in the religious life, Netter is able to outline the cases that are exempt. It has always been the practice to exonerate some groups of religious: scribes and scholars producing books. Moreover, drawing on a rural image, there are shepherds and ploughmen as well as those who look after them. This image is applied to the church: there are priests and religious and those who are charged with their administration.⁴³ Netter concludes his treatment of exemptions by listing and justifying other categories of religious and clerics who are not required to perform manual work: the sick, those of noble birth, ministers of the altar, preachers, scribes, teachers and their assistants, and those who are called to contemplation.⁴⁴

It is clear then that in the decision of the 1416 commission there was a distinction made between male priests and religious who could be exempt, and female religious who could not.

³⁹ *Doctrinale* 4.2.21: 'Labores manuum quia manducabis, beatus es et bene tibi erit.'

⁴⁰ Netter quotes from Jerome's *Epistola ad Rusticum*.

⁴¹ Saint Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 48 (ed. Venarde 2011): 'Otiositas inimica est animae, et ideo certis temporibus occupari debent fratres in labore manuum, certis iterum horis in lectione divina.'

⁴² *The Rule of St. Albert* (eds Clarke & Edwards 1973), chapter 16.

⁴³ *Doctrinale* 4.2.25: 'Cum in Ecclesia duo genera servorum sint; aratores quidam alii vero pascentes, utrique virtus administratione debetur.'

⁴⁴ *Doctrinale* 4.2.29 and 30. Membership of religious communities did not mean social differences were eliminated, and those of high rank generally continued to enjoy the privileges of noble birth.

CONCLUSIONS

Given their close connections with both anti-Lollard activity and the royal household, it is entirely predictable that Stephen Patrington and Thomas Netter were connected with the foundation and early years of Syon. They were both close to Henry V and his court, and Syon was close to him as an expression of orthodoxy and devotion. Yet apart from their status as royal chaplains and confessors, Patrington and Netter brought with them an experience and a collective wisdom of the Carmelite order in both matters of obedience and exemption from manual work. They also brought with them a particular and personal background seen in Patrington's *Repertorium*, albeit in a rather second-hand fashion, and most clearly in Netter's *Doctrinale*.

Patrington's activities on the 1416 commission, reflected in its decisions, can be fleshed out then by looking at the general Carmelite background and in noting his very short reference to problems of obedience in his theological notebook. His is a very specific and significant connection that can be set against a general Carmelite background. By contrast, Netter's correspondence with Thomas Fishbourne, which touches on the problem of another religious order (the Premonstratensians), is perhaps only obliquely connected with Syon as such. Yet the topics of obedience and manual work were dealt with extensively by Netter in the *Doctrinale*, thus providing a fascinating intellectual framework to the very practical problem of an errant recluse.

Finally, perhaps it is worth noting that the Carmelite hermits from Palestine relocated to England in the mid-thirteenth century and adapted to a new country and a new society. The experience and consciousness of this move perhaps provided a fruitful common ground for a Carmelite provincial dealing with the need for modifications to the *Rule of Saint Saviour* and to his successor in sharing the story of a disobedient monk with the confessor general of Syon.

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ELIN ANDERSSON

Thomas Fishbourne at the Curia

An *Informatio Brevis* on the Birgittine Order

THE FIRST DECADE after the foundation of Syon Abbey coincided with a critical time for the Birgittine Order, the turbulent 1420s, when Pope Martin V temporarily prohibited the Birgittine practice of nuns and priest brothers living and working in close cohabitation.¹ During these early years in Syon's history, the first confessor general, Thomas Fishbourne, emerges as a figure of great importance to the English monastery, appearing in contemporary documents as an engaged and wise leader and as a man with important friends. In the present article, I will edit and translate a brief document shedding some light on his contacts with the papal curia for the sake of the Birgittine Order as a whole, in a time of turbulence and uncertainty.

FISHBOURNE AT THE CURIA

In 1408, Fishbourne was ordained by Richard Clifford, bishop of London.² In the years before he was made confessor general of Syon in 1420,³ we find him mentioned as a recluse at St Alban's monastery. It is from the St Alban's chronicle that we have the information that Fishbourne had first travelled to Rome to receive a dispensation in order to become a priest.⁴ It has been argued that one reason for this might have been that Fishbourne was married,⁵ but unfortunately no records survive to confirm this theory. In 1418, Fishbourne again

¹ See for example Cnatttingius 1963, pp. 115–127. The bull is printed in Bååth (ed.) (1936–1957), *Acta Cameralia* II, 1538a.

² Tait 2013, p. 439, with reference to Clifford's register, pp. 436–445 on Fishbourne's religious career.

³ 1421 according to Knowles 1955, p. 180, note 6, 1420 according to Johnston 2006, p. 9, and Tait 2013, p. 138.

⁴ Knowles 1955, p. 367, p. 180.

⁵ Tait 2013, p. 437. See also Virginia Bainbridge, p. 131 in this volume.

travelled to Rome, this time to receive the bull of approval for Syon Abbey,⁶ and in 1423 he once again visited the papal court to obtain a revocation of the Bull of Separation, issued in 1422. Indeed, the Syon *Martiloge* states that Fishbourne ‘applied himself tirelessly to the task of strengthening the order and the monastery in spiritual and worldly matters, both in the Roman curia and in other places’.⁷

During his visit to the papal curia in August 1423, Fishbourne presented to Pope Martin V an *informatio brevis* on the Birgittine Order, which is the focus of the present article. In this brief document (henceforth referred to as Vol. 247)⁸ – preserved at the Archivio di Stato in Florence in a volume mainly dealing with matters regarding the Birgittine monastery of Paradiso – some distinctive features of the Birgittine community are highlighted, in order to show how the Bull of Separation would lead to the end of the order as intended by Saint Birgitta. The *informatio* thus gives us a glimpse of Fishbourne’s view of the order at an early stage in Syon’s history, as well as a hint of how diplomatic procedure at the Curia could be carried out.

BIRGITTINE DIPLOMATS IN ROME

The news about the Bull of Separation, issued in February 1422, reached Vadstena in June the same year.⁹ In the words of Hans Cnattingius, the ‘double monastic principle was part of the original rule of the order, which all orthodox Bridgettines believed to be of directly divine origin’.¹⁰ Persuading the Pope to withdraw the bull was therefore a matter of utmost importance for the survival of the order. The Memorial Book of Vadstena explicitly mentions that the king and queen of Sweden, Erik and Philippa, took immediate action,¹¹ and by the

⁶ Knowles 1955, p. 180.

⁷ Gejrot 2015, pp. 28–29; I quote Gejrot’s translation.

⁸ For a description of the manuscript – *Carte del monastero del Paradiso* vol. 247 – see Cnattingius 1963, pp. 69–72. The scribe of the main part of the volume was identified by Cnattingius as Antonius Dini de Palaria of Paradiso monastery. Cnattingius explored large amounts of medieval source material preserved in Italian archives, and before him scholars such as K. H. Karlsson, Ernst Nygren, Torvald Höjer and L. M. Bååth had studied and surveyed medieval sources related to Sweden in Italian archives and libraries, see Nygren 1928, p. 151. While researching matters related to the Birgittine Order in the 1420s, Cnattingius used Karlsson’s excerpts and copies of medieval sources in the curia, and I, in turn, have had great use of Cnattingius’ research archive, kept at the National Archives of Sweden (RA), while preparing the edition in the present article.

⁹ DV 333.

¹⁰ Cnattingius 1963, p. 128.

¹¹ DV 333. See also Cnattingius 1963, pp. 128–131, on the first reactions to the bull, with references

end of 1422, Nicolaus Ragvaldi,¹² dean of Strängnäs, set off on a journey to the curia equipped with letters from the Swedish royal couple.¹³ In February 1423, Queen Philippa sent letters to her relatives in England¹⁴, and in August an English diplomatic delegation, led by Thomas Fishbourne, arrived in Rome. As mentioned above, Fishbourne had once been ordained by Bishop Clifford of London, who on one occasion referred to the confessor general as 'my welbelovyd cousin';¹⁵ the bishop, in turn, had been supporting the election of Martin V as Pope, so there was probably good reason to believe that Fishbourne would be well received at the curia.¹⁶

Quite a few details about the English Birgittines' visit in Rome are known thanks to a 'brief but vivid account'¹⁷ preserved in the same manuscript as the *informatio brevis*. This summary tells us that Thomas, confessor general of Syon monastery in England, arrived in Rome on 11 August 1423, together with a professed priest named Simon,¹⁸ the lay brother Thomas, who was also a secular priest, the chaplain Gervillus, two lay servants and seven horses.¹⁹ After a few days in Rome, on 17 August, Fishbourne met the Pope, and then once again in the evening the following day: *Et die mercurii xviii Augusti hora vespertina iterum fuit cum papa et habuit sufficientem audientiam et bonam responcionem* – 'On

to letters sent by King Erik and Queen Philippa to the Pope; MS A 20, fol. 116v–117v; 155rv, SDHK 19957; 19954. See further Höjer 1905, p. 184, note 3.

12 On Nicolaus Ragvaldi (d. 1448), see SBL 26, p. 617; Losman 1970, pp. 92–93. Note that this is not the same person as the confessor general Nicolaus Ragvaldi of Vadstena (d. 1514).

13 Cnatttingius 1963, p. 130.

14 MS A 20, fols. 118rv, 160rv, SDHK 20018, 20019; Cnatttingius 1963, p. 129, Höjer 1905, p. 184, note 4. According to DV (§ 333), Queen Philippa was more engaged in the matter than King Erik ('... in hoc negocio longe prestancius exhibuit se regina in donariis et sumptibus quam rex').

15 Knowles 1955, p. 180; Tait 2013, p. 439 note 1, remarks that 'cousin' might have been merely an affectionate term, not necessarily indicating a blood relation.

16 Knowles 1955, p. 180.

17 Cnatttingius 1963, p. 131, with reference to Vol. 247, fol. 223.

18 Simon Winter, in Gejrot 2015, p. 77.

19 'Frater Tomas generalis confessor monasterii de Syon de Anglia ordinis sancti Salvatoris sancte Brigitte divinitus revelati, cum fratre Simone sacerdote professo, fratre Toma laico professo et presbytero, Gervillo capellano, duobus familiaribus secularibus et septem equis, urbem Romanam applicuit die mercurii xi mensis Augusti 1423 [...].' See further Cnatttingius 1963, p. 131. We may note that a secular priest has apparently entered Syon as a lay brother at this point; a similar matter is discussed by Syon and Vadstena in the 1427 *Responsiones*, a lengthy document consisting of about 170 questions from Syon and answers from Vadstena on the Rule and on life in the Birgittine Order. In the *Responsiones*, the Syon community asks whether it is allowed to 'receive a priest (*sacerdos*) or a deacon as a lay brother', but Vadstena strongly advises against it since 'it has led to many problems', without however further exploring the subject; Andersson 2011, pp. 138–139 (*Resp.* II.68).

August 18, in the evening, he [Fishbourne] met with the pope again and was sufficiently heard and received a satisfying answer.' On this occasion, the *informatio brevis* was presented to the Pope; Fishbourne also gave him *duos bacinos argenteos deauratos valoris ducatis 120*, 'two silver gilt bowls valued at 120 ducats',²⁰ as well as other precious gifts intended for important persons at the curia. By doing so, Fishbourne apparently followed the expected diplomatic protocol.²¹

THE CONTENTS OF THE *informatio brevis*

The *informatio brevis* had likely been drafted during the first days in Rome.²² As pointed out by Cnattingius, the text raises two main points: first, the (disastrous) consequences of the Bull of Separation, and second, the fact that the Bull in itself was based on invalid information.²³ In the first lines, the *informatio* stresses that the 'enemies of the order' had provided the Pope with false information. The same argument is seen again in a letter to Vadstena, sent in January 1424 from the above-mentioned dean of Strängnäs, Nicolaus Ragvaldi. He mentions that the ban on double monasteries was a result of the Pope having been falsely informed (*sinistre informatus*) from the beginning.²⁴

Another important point in the *informatio* is that the rule had been dictated to Birgitta by the Saviour himself and that she by no means should be called a *simulatrix femina*. 'For if her sayings and writings had been regarded as false and dubious, she herself would never have been approved by the Church as a saint, chosen by God.' As is well known, the question of authenticity was raised on many occasions and debated at length in papal committees in the early history of the Birgittine Order.²⁵

²⁰ Vol. 247, f. 223r. I quote the translation by Cnattingius 1963, p. 133.

²¹ Harvey 1993, p. 87: 'There were of course standard charges for almost all the graces and favours in Rome and for royal services, like letters of exchange. But in both Rome and England the wheels were oiled by tips and presents, adding greatly to costs. In Rome gifts in kind were essential courtesies.' Harvey remarks that Fishbourne also made gifts to Hermann Dwerg, 'the most influential German in the curia'.

²² Perhaps in collaboration with Antonius Dini de Palaria, the main scribe of the manuscript, see above, note 9. From the account in Vol. 247, f. 223r, we know that Fishbourne met Nicolaus Ragvaldi on 20 August.

²³ Cnattingius 1963, p. 138. 'Thomas Fishbourne was ... calling the Pope's attention, firstly to the devastating consequences that would follow the bull of separation, secondly to the fact that this bull was based on inaccurate information [...]. If anyone wanted to bring about a change in a Papal decision, it was the usual procedure to try to show that the Pope's decision was based on inaccurate information.' A summary of the contents in the *informatio brevis* may also be found in Cnattingius 1963, pp. 136–138.

²⁴ RA MS A 20, fol. 249rv; SDHK 20198; Cnattingius 1963, p. 121, note 2.

²⁵ See for example Höjer 1905, pp. 65–66; Fredriksson Adman 2003; Andersson 2011, p. 97.

Furthermore, the *informatio* stresses that the rule had been confirmed by various popes, and that the monasteries were financed by kings, princes and other important persons. To eradicate all these foundations would lead to *non parvum scandalum et gravamen*. Syon, of course, was a royal foundation, and we find a similar argument repeated in a petition to the Pope, 'drawn up in the name of King Henry VI and Queen Katherine and the nobility and priesthood of England',²⁶ also dated 18 August 1423.

Paragraph three highlights the fact that the number of persons in any monastery of the order ought to be 85, the same as the number of the 13 apostles and 72 disciples, and that the priests 'should only devote themselves to the divine office and not interfere with any other affairs or duties'. By contrast, when the English community contacted Vadstena in 1421 about some dubious matters in the rule, Vadstena replied that the confessor general, regardless of what the rule says about the priests devoting themselves solely to divine office and prayer, may still 'assist the abbess in secular matters and give advice regarding the affairs of the monastery'.²⁷ With an interesting image of the confessor being 'caught between the embraces of the sisters Rachel and Leah' – that is, the female and the male convents – the Swedish monastery points out that 'giving counsel and encouragement in matters of business is one thing, but to interfere with it is something else'.

Further points in the *informatio* stress that since no other priests or monks were permitted to enter the monastery, the sisters would not have anyone present to give them the sacraments or hear their confessions if the brothers disappeared altogether from the community. However, the matter demanding most space in this short text is the confessions. Notably, the *informatio* stresses the importance of having priests to hear the nuns' confessions since 'the sisters do not possess sufficient insight to choose the right confessors for themselves'. Therefore, the duty of the confessor general is to choose the most mature and suitable brothers for this task. Without the male community close by, the weak-minded sisters would change confessors as it pleased them for the moment. 'We know for a fact that such things have happened in other monasteries', the *informatio* concludes.

²⁶ '... ex parte devotorum filiorum vestrorum Henrici regis Francie et Anglie, Katerine regine ac dominorum et cleri dicti regni Anglie'; Vol. 247, f. 68r, as well as Vol. 4, f. 672, Paradiso Archive; see Cnatttingius 1963, p. 72; Ibid; Cnatttingius 1963, p. 135: 'The appeal had undoubtedly been drawn up in Rome and presented by Thomas Fishbourne at his audience with the Pope on the day in question.'

²⁷ Andersson 2013, p. 167.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Even in a very brief text such as the *informatio brevis*, some glimpses of Thomas Fishbourne's activity in the early 1420s can be discerned. The English confessor general had important contacts to back him, such as the bishop of London; he knew how to approach powerful persons and present them with the right gifts, and he understood the importance of clearly summarising the most important matters in order to get his point across, balancing between the straightforward and the careful.

Eventually, Fishbourne and the other representatives of the order succeeded in obtaining a revocation of the Bull of Separation, applying to Syon in November 1423, and to the Nordic and Baltic countries in December the same year.²⁸ During this visit in Italy, Fishbourne also undertook the task to revise the great Bull of Privilege, the *Mare Magnum*. Preserved documents show how Fishbourne scrutinised the bull paragraph by paragraph and deleted such parts he deemed contradictory to the rule, resulting in Syon's own Bull of Privilege, the *Mare Anglicanum*, in February 1425.²⁹ In the years to follow, Fishbourne and the English community maintained their wish to grasp the deeper meaning and purpose of the Birgittine Rule – basing their decisions and defining their existence in accordance with what they considered to be the wish and intention of the foundress, Saint Birgitta.

I am thankful to the Fondazione Famiglia Rausing, which through a generous grant enabled me to study manuscripts at the Archivio di Stato, Florence, in February 2015.

²⁸ See Cnattingius 1963, pp. 148–150, on the politics behind the revocation of the bull, and Höjer 1905, pp. 184–186.

²⁹ Cnattingius 1963, pp. 150–155.

APPENDIX:

EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF THE *informatio brevis*Latin text³⁰

(67r) Die mercurii³¹ xviii Augusti 1423 per confessorem monasterii de Anglia data fuit pape infrascripta informatio.³²

(148r) Quedam informatio brevis in facto³³ fratrum sancte Brigide.

Beatissime pater! Ad obviandum adversariis ordinis sancti Salvatoris beate Brigide celitus revelati vestram sanctitatem de et super eodem sinistre contra Deum et iustitiam informantibus, prenotantur cum omni devotione breves et simplices conclusiones inferius annotate.

(1) Primo quidem dignetur vestra sanctitas oculis pie considerationis aspicere, quod dominus noster Iesus Christus ore suo proprio et benedicto dictavit eiusdem ordinis regulam et statuta et per papam preceperat confirmari. De qua re, si dubitare licet de sanctitate et veritate beate Brigide ab ecclesia canonizate, que hoc scribit et secundum eorundem tenorem de licentia Urbani quinti, universalis ecclesie summi pontificis, unum eiusdem ordinis monasterium fundavit, quasi unius simulatricis femine et mendacis ambigere conveniret. Nam si potuissent dicta et scripta ipsius falsa et dubia reperiri, ipsa nequaquam pro sancta et Dei electa debuerat ab ecclesia approbari.

³⁰ The *informatio* is found in Vol. 247, neatly copied, on fols 148rv, which are misplaced in the manuscript and inserted after fol. 149, which, in turn, is placed after fol. 90v. On fols 67rv there is a draft of the *informatio*, closely corresponding to the final version, but with a few exceptions where the draft gives a more extensive text. There is a headline in the draft on fol. 67r, mentioning the date the *informatio* was presented to the Pope; apart from this rubric, only a few significant variants in the draft have been included in the edition.

The edited text follows the orthography of the manuscript, with the following exceptions: the letters *i* and *j* are rendered *i*; the letter *v* is given for the consonantal sound and *u* for the vocalic sound. Numbers are printed exactly as they occur in the manuscript, and a modern punctuation has been applied. The following abbreviations are used in the text notes: *cod.* = Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte del monastero del Paradiso, Vol. 247; *corr.* = correctionem; *del.* delevit; *exp.* = expunxit; *fol.* = folium –i etc.; *fort.* = fortasse; *litt.* = littera –ae etc.; *marg.* = margine.; *scr.* = scripsit; *vid.* = videtur. Square brackets indicate deleted text, angle brackets supplied text. The paragraphs (numbers within parentheses) have been added by the editor.

³¹ mercurii *post corr. cod.*

³² die ... informatio 67r. *In marg. fol. 67r scriptum est:* Est etiam in folio 148 similis informatio, *similiter in marg. fol. 148r:* Est etiam in folio 67 similis informatio

³³ *Post facto litt. sr. ut. vid., del. cod.*

(2) Item dignetur sanctitas vestra attendere, quod regula et constitutiones predicte per predecessores vestros Romanos pontifices ac per eandem sanctitatem vestram approbate et confirmate existunt, et reges, principes, prelati et alii Christi fideles in diversis mundi partibus ex singulari devotione beate Brigide et sub spe confirmationis huiusmodi etiam de speciali licentia sancte sedis apostolice solempnia monasteria et sumptuose constructa iuxta regulam et constitutiones predictas magnis expensis et laboribus erexerint,³⁴ que, si divisio et separatio fratrum a sororibus (quod absit!) procedat, sine dubio finaliter destruentur, tam in ipsorum fundatorum quam aliorum Christi fidelium necnon totius ecclesie non parvum scandalum et gravamen.

(3) Item vergit divisio et separatio huiusmodi ad totalem enervationem regule et constitutionum predictarum, nam tantus debet esse numerus personarum in quolibet monasterio eiusdem ordinis, quantus erat numerus xiii^{cim} apostolorum et lxxii^{orum} discipulorum,³⁵ ut patet in regula, capitulo x.

Item sacerdotes tantummodo divino officio studio quoque et orationi vacare debent, nullisque aliis se implicare negotiis vel officiis, ut patet in regula capitulo xiii.³⁶

Item³⁷ confessori generali administrus ter in anno omnium sororum et fratrum conscientie patefici debent per confessionem; capitulo xiii supradicto.

Item monialis habens proprium debet absolviri a generali confessore; capitulo xv.

Item confessori generali cum fratribus licet ingredi clausuram sororum tantummodo ad ministrandum sacramenta infirmis, et ad deferendum corpora earum mortua ad sepulcrum; capitulo xv et xxii.

Que omnes constitutiones et quamplures similes per divisionem predictam omnino frustrarentur et tota regula evanesceret, cum tam fratres quam sorores secundum regulam et constitutiones huiusmodi degere debeat perpetua sub clausura.

(4) Item si moniales privarentur clericis suis et sacerdotibus iam professis, cum nulli alii seculares vel religiosi cuiuscumque necessitatis occasione in earum monasterium debeat ingredi, capitulo vi^o, nec cum ipsis loqui nisi in dominicis et magnis festivitatibus sanctorum / (148v) et sic quod ipse moniales habeant

³⁴ erexerintt *ante corr. cod.*

³⁵ apostolorum *ante corr. cod.*

³⁶ supradicte *post xiii^o scr. et postea del. cod.*

³⁷ post item *verba* monialis habens proprium *scr. sed postea del. cod.*

secum sorores alias, que omnia verba audiant sicut et ipse, capitulo vii^o et xxii^o, satis patet, quod nullos possent habere alios, qui ministrarent sacramenta infirmis vel audirent earum confessiones, seu eis in aliis spiritualibus necessitatibus deservirent.

(5) Item persuasio adversarii, quod propter separationem huiusmodi multi edificant monasteria pro sororibus vel fratribus separatim – qui non sufficiunt pro utrisque – et sic ordo susciperet incrementa, non valet, quia reges et alii Christi fideles videntes (saltem³⁸ estimative) se per sedem apostolicam et ordinem predictam illusos manus retrahent adiutrices, non solum ab edificatione monasteriorum istius ordinis, sed etiam alterius cuiuscumque, et precipue cessaret causa devotioni ad istam religionem, tum quia deroga~~re~~tur³⁹ revelationibus divinis, tum quia tolleretur continuatio divini cultus, qui fit⁴⁰ in monasteriis ipsius ordinis per sorores et fratres successive quasi sine intermissione, tum etiam quia cessaret continuatio verbi Dei, quod ibi continue et publice predicatur. Sed et si moniales pro continuatione huiusmodi divini cultus tenere deberent presbyteros seculares, maiores requererentur sumptus pro eorum victu et amictu quam fratrum degentium in habitu deiecto et ciborum observantia regulari.

(6) Item ad aliam persuasionem, scilicet quod conscientie multorum⁴¹ stante⁴² propinquitate virorum forte poterunt maculari et scandala suboriri, respondendum, quod ex quo mulieres non possunt includi et vivere sub habitu regulari sine auxilio sacerdotum, satis constat, quod non possunt habere clericos et sacerdotes alios in tanta quiete cordis et securitate conscientie et cum exclusione cuiuscumque occasionis conscientiam maculantis, sicuti eiusdem ordinis sacerdotes.⁴³ Et ratio est, quia iam generalis confessor pro tempore existens illos de suis fratribus ad confessiones earum audiendas eligit et assignat, quos videt matuiores estate et moribus, et ad hoc officium in conscientia sua, sicut omnium conscientias noscit, indicat magis ydoneos et discretos, ubi si ipsem sorores sibi de extraneis eligerent confessores, tales haud dubium niterentur habere, quales – si mutabunde et instabiles essent – cordi⁴⁴ earum fragilis affectio sibi

³⁸ post saltem litt. exti scr. sed postea del. cod.

³⁹ derogatur ut vid.

⁴⁰ post corr. cod.

⁴¹ multarum fort. exspectes

⁴² ex tanta 67v.

⁴³ ante verbum sacerdotes litt. or exp. cod.

⁴⁴ cordi ut vid., fort. corde legendum.

indicaret pro tempore placituros, et dum iuxta earum fragiles⁴⁵ conceptus mentis affectio mutaretur,⁴⁶ suos [in] confessores protinus commutarent, sicque dum sue instabilitati firmitatis repagulum non obstaret, per inutiles affectiones nunc istius nunc alterius solatia⁴⁷ meditantes seipsis semper fierent instabiliores, et conscientie maculas, quibus iam carent, traherent nimis graves. Et hec⁴⁸ quidem in aliis monasteriis monialium novimus comprobata. Et quis sibi sum[m]-eret⁴⁹ scandalum de vicinitate habitationum sororum et fratrum, cum fratres sint omnino ab earum monasterio separati, et nec semel locuntur cum eis sine superiorum suorum licentia speciali et adhuc sociati ex utraque parte, et ad tales crates ferreas ubi audiri possint sed non videri, capitulo xxii, etc.

(7) Item minoris scandali vel suspicionis occasio haberi potest penes sorores et fratres, in huiusmodi clausura separata absque locali distantia commorantes, quam si sine inclusione in locis longe distantibus habitarent, nam ubi nunc stant in continua et separata clausura non valentes adinvicem convenire, tunc liberum exitum habentes etiam si per multa miliaria distarent illarum et illorum habitationes abinvicem, alter tamen ad alteras et econverso adire valeret.

Translation

On Wednesday 18 August 1423, the following text was given to the Pope by the confessor of the English monastery.

A brief text regarding the brothers of Saint Birgitta.

Most Holy Father! In order to prevent the enemies of the Order of Saint Saviour, heavenly revealed to Saint Birgitta, from wickedly misleading your Holiness – contrary to divine justice – in this specific matter, the following short and simple comments have been written down with the utmost devotion.

(i) First, your Holiness should observe with the eye of pious reflection that our lord Jesus Christ dictated the Rule and statutes of the said order with his own blessed mouth, and ordered them to be confirmed by the Pope. Therefore, if

45 *fragiles 67v ut vid.*, *fragilis 148v.*

46 *mutaretur 67v*, *muraretur 148v, ut vid.*

47 *soltatia ante corr. cod.*

48 *hec 67v, hoc 148v.*

49 *summeret cod. fol. 148v, sumeret 68v.*

there were any doubts about the holiness and truthfulness of Saint Birgitta – who has been canonized by the Church, wrote all this and, according to the contents of the Rule, founded a monastery of this order by approval of Urban V, Pope of the universal Church – then it would be appropriate to argue about it, as if it came from any false and lying woman. For if her sayings and writings had been regarded as false and dubious, she herself would never have been approved by the Church as a saint, chosen by God.

(2) Furthermore, your Holiness should be aware that the Rule and the above-mentioned constitutions have been approved and confirmed by the popes in Rome, your predecessors, as well as by your Holiness yourself. Out of singular admiration for Saint Birgitta and hoping for a confirmation of her Rule by special license from the Apostolic See, kings, princes, prelates and other faithful Christians in various countries have built regular monasteries according to the Rule and the abovementioned constitutions, with great expenses and efforts. If the plan to separate the brothers and sisters proceeds (may it not come to that!), these monasteries will no doubt be thoroughly destroyed, and it would lead to great offense and many inconveniences for these founders, as well as for other faithful Christians and the Church as a whole.

(3) The division and separation of the monastery leads to a complete weakening of the Rule and the abovementioned constitutions, since the number of persons in any monastery of the order ought to be the same as the number of the 13 apostles and 72 disciples, as is stated in the Rule, chapter 10.

The priests should only devote themselves to the divine office and not interfere with any other affairs or duties, as is stated in the Rule, chapter 13.

All sisters and brothers should reveal their consciences to the confessor general at least three times a year; see the above mentioned chapter 13.

A nun guilty of owning property should be absolved by the confessor general; see chapter 15.

The confessor general and the brothers are only allowed to enter the *clausura* of the sisters in order to administer sacraments to the sick, and to carry their dead bodies to the grave; see chapter 15 and 22.

By the abovementioned division, all these and similar constitutions would become completely useless, and the Rule as a whole would become invalid, since the brothers as well as the sisters must live under a perpetual *clausura*, according to the Rule and its constitutions.

(4) If the nuns were to be deprived of their clerics and professed priests – since no other secular or religious persons may enter their monastery for any reason, as is stated in chapter 6, and since the nuns must not speak to them unless on Sundays and on great feast days, and then only with other sisters nearby to hear all words just as well as they themselves hear them – see chapter 7 and 22 – then it is clear that they could not have any other priests to administer sacraments to the sick, hear their confessions or attend to other spiritual necessities.

(5) As to the argument of our enemies that, as a result of the separation, many persons would build separate monasteries for sisters or brothers – who are not many enough to serve both convents – and thus the order would grow, this is not valid, as kings and other faithful Christians, seeing (at least we believe so) that they had been ridiculed by the Apostolic See and the said order, would withdraw their helping hands, not only from building monasteries of this order, but also of any other order. Above all, there would be no reason to show their piety to *this* order, since it would then have lost its divine revelations and the continuance of divine office – which constantly takes place in this order by brothers and sisters successively – would have ceased, as would the practicing of the word of God, which is constantly and publicly preached there. And if the nuns, for the sake of continuance of divine office, were forced to have secular priests, this would lead to greater costs as regards their food and clothes than is the case with the brothers, who use simple clothes and food according to regular observance.

(6) As to another argument, namely that the consciences of many persons might be stained by the close habitation to the men and that temptations would occur, we answer that since the women cannot be included and live in religious habit without the help of the priests, it is clear that they cannot have other clerics and priests to provide peace of mind, a safe conscience and the exclusion of anything that might stain their morals, in the same way as the priests of the order. The reason for this is that the current confessor chooses and assigns those brothers that he considers to be more mature in age and manners, appointing those that are more discreet and suitable to this task. If the sisters themselves were to choose persons outside the monastery as confessors, they would no doubt – if they were fickle and irrational – want to have such persons as pleased them for the moment, and then, when their feelings – weak-minded as they are – changed, they would alter confessors again. Since there would be no firm bar to obstruct their instability, they would seek comfort from different persons, and become even more unstable, and they would inflict serious stains of conscience

upon themselves, which is something that they now lack altogether. After all, we know for a fact that such things have happened in other nunneries. And who would be tempted to commit a sin because of the close habitation of the sisters and brothers, seeing that the brothers are completely separated from the nuns' monastery, and must never speak with them without special license from their superior, and hitherto with company on both sides, at such iron gratings where they can only be heard, but not seen, as stated in chapter 22, etc.?

(7) There would be less risk of sin or suspicion if the sisters and brothers were separated from each other's *clausuras* and lived within a short distance from each other, than if they lived far away outside the monastery. For now the brothers and sisters live in perpetual and separate *clausuras* and cannot meet each other, whereas in the other case they would be free to exit the monastery even though they lived many miles from each other; one man would be able to visit certain women and vice versa.

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CLAES GEJROT

The Swedish Sisters of Syon Abbey

THIS PAPER DEALS WITH one aspect of the early Swedish influence on Syon Abbey. My intention is to look more closely at the group of Swedish women who were chosen to travel from Vadstena to Syon and take part in the process of establishing the new monastery. Medieval Swedish sources that reveal details about their lives will be brought into the light and examined. In addition, a letter sent from Vadstena to Syon will be presented, edited and translated.¹ We will, however, begin with the first Birgittines to travel to England.

BEFORE 1415

In the years between the royal wedding in 1406² and the founding of Syon in 1415, Vadstena was invited to send representatives for the planning of an English foundation, and several men came from Sweden to England during this time. We have some information about their journeys to and from England, and we know a few things about what they did there, but we lack a detailed account of their activities.³ As for the regulations within the Birgittine Order, the brothers had the possibility to travel – albeit only in serious and necessary cases (*in graui et ineuitabili casu necessitatis*), as the rule says,⁴ and some of them spent a

¹ The Latin texts are quoted directly from the manuscript sources, or, if printed from SD, Andersson 2004 and *Diarium Vadstenense*. All translations are my own.

² The Danish, Swedish and Norwegian king, Erik of Pomerania, was married to Henry IV's daughter Philippa in Lund in 1406. In connection with the wedding initial contacts were taken for an English Birgittine monastery (*Diarium Vadstenense* 147).

³ Among these were *Katillus Torberni* (Kettil Torbjörnsson) and *Johannes Petri* (Johan Petersson); see further below and cf. Andersson 2004, pp. 4–5, and Graff 2001, pp. 323ff.

⁴ *Regula Salvatoris*, chapter 11 (ed. Eklund 1975, p. 160), in the Σ version, which is the text of the official 1378 papal bull. It is not included in the Π version (the first version of the rule, which is the basis for the translation in Searby & Morris 2015). On the versions of the rule, see Eklund 1975, pp. 21–28, and Searby & Morris 2015, pp. 109–110.

considerable amount of time on the road. The sending out of nuns, on the other hand, was a different matter. The Birgittine women were only allowed to travel if they were to assist a new monastery being established.⁵

For Syon, these early brothers were not enough. When the decision was taken to establish a Birgittine monastery in England, a natural development was that the cooperation with Vadstena should deepen. At Henry V's request, a new and larger group was sent from Sweden.

THE EVENTS OF 1415

Probably in March or April 1415, Henry V issued a letter to Vadstena with his formal request: 'From the bottom of our heart we now ask you – and we pray for this with great perseverance – to send over one brother and six of the older sisters from your monastery'.⁶

Vadstena's answer was dated 16 May. Directed to the English king, it has the form of a letter of recommendation for the persons sent out:⁷

Fulfilling your demand and at the special request of our noble king and queen of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, we now send to your Royal Majesty four consecrated sisters, sufficiently learned in the duties of our rule, together with one priest-brother and two girls, qualified for the choir and song.

As can be seen here, the king's request was met, but with a slight alteration. He had asked for one brother and six of the more experienced sisters, but Vadstena's letter mentions instead four consecrated nuns, one priest and in addition, two girls.⁸ This letter also refers to the two brothers that had already been sent to England from Vadstena after a request from the present king's father, Henry IV.⁹

5 For a survey of the journeys of the Vadstena brothers and sisters, see Gejrot 2000, pp. 71–81.

6 '[...] vos ex corde petimus et magna precum instancia deprecamur, quatenus fratrem unicum et sex sorores de proueccioribus monasterij vestrij [...] transmittere velitis', Undated copy in MS A 20, RA, fols 76v–77r; SDHK 18538, ed. Andersson 2004, letter n. 3.

7 MS A 20, RA, fol. 102v; SDHK 18536, ed. SD 2082: '[...] postulacionique vestre satisfacientes ad illustrissimorum principum nostrorum Swecie, Dacie et Norvegia regis et regine instantiam preceptiuam quatuor sorores consecratas in regulariis obseruanciis competenter doctas cum vno fratre sacerdote et duabus pueris pro choro et cantu valentibus vestre pronunc dirigimus regie maiestati'. – On this exchange of letters, see Nyberg 1965, pp. 74–75, and Höjer 1905, pp. 252–253.

8 Sending out girls, not yet consecrated as nuns, is not unique in the history of Vadstena. A parallel is found three years earlier (September 1412, cf. *Diarium Vadstenense* 216). In this case, we are told that two sisters and two girls were transferred to Mariental, the Birgittine house in Estonia. These girls are described as 'votive sisters' ('puelle ... erant votive ad ordinem').

9 MS A 20, RA, fol. 102v; SDHK 18536, ed. SD 2082: '[...] vna cum duobus fratribus nostris ad serenissimi regis instantiam domini Henrici, felicis recordacionis vestri precarissimi genitoris alias illuc missis.'

To complicate matters, further letters were written on the same day (16 May 1415), one of them to one of the key players in England, Sir Henry Fitzhugh, the man behind much of the planning. In this letter, Vadstena announces that 'five consecrated persons' will be sent to England, obviously leaving out the two girls. In the most polite manner, the letter also urges Fitzhugh to protect and defend the Swedish group so they would not end up regretting this mission.¹⁰ The same information is found in the letter sent to the Vadstena brothers already placed in England.¹¹

As it turns out, the real number was higher than what Vadstena had stated in these letters. In fact, the final and accurate number of persons sent to England on this occasion is to be found in the memorial book of Vadstena (*Diarium Vadstenense*) and in Syon sources. In reality, the group travelling to England from Vadstena included four nuns, three girls and two men. The difference between Vadstena's answer to King Henry and the final group is slight but evident – one girl and one priest were added. We must assume that the third *puella* was added in the last week, after the letter was written, finished and sealed.

It seems most likely that the travellers brought the various letters with them to England. The group left Vadstena soon after Whitsunday 1415,¹² and the memorial book gives us most of the names of those leaving. Let us look at this source:¹³

[...] at the request of the king of England and also the king and queen of Sweden, four professed sisters left the monastery: Kristina Finvidsdotter, Ragnhild Tidekesdotter, Anna and Kristina Esbjörnsdotter, and in addition to them three girls who had not yet professed. Brother Johannes of Kalmar and *dominus* Magnus Hemmingi also left together with them in order to work for the expansion of our Order which was to

¹⁰ MS A 20, RA, fol. 103r; SDHK 18540, ed. Andersson 2004, letter n. 5: '[...] quinque personas versus prefatum regnum Angie dirigere consecratas. [...] supplicamus, quatenus easdem personas nostras illuc venientes [...] intra sincere dilectionis amplexus vna cum predictis fratribus dignemini suscipere misericorditer confouendas et ab emulorum suorum jnsidiis taliter liberandas, vt ipse in vobis tam pium patronum et egregium defensorem se gaudeant inuenisse, quod necesse non habeant de sua negacione penitere [...]']

¹¹ MS A 20, RA, fol. 102rv; SDHK 18539, ed. Andersson 2004, letter n. 4: 'personas quinque consecratas nunc illuc duximus transmittendas'.

¹² The entry in the *Diarium* is dated *ii die pentecostes*, which could be interpreted as either 20 or 21 May 1415.

¹³ *Diarium Vadstenense* 254: '[...] ad instanciam regis Angie, regis et regine Swecie exierunt iiii sorores consecrate, scilicet Cristina Finvidzottir, Ragnildis Tidekadottir, Anna et Cristina Esbjornadottir, cum iii puellis non consecratis. Cum quibus eciam frater Iohannes Kalmarnensis et dominus Magnus Hemingi pariter exierunt pro dilatacione ordinis nostri in Anglia instituendi. Et fuerunt hee persone educte cum magna sollempnitate per archiepiscopum Lundensem et tres episcopos Suecie et unum Norvegie ac milites et sollempnes nuncios in copia.'

be established in England. And these people were taken out of the monastery with great solemnity by the archbishop of Lund, three bishops from Sweden and one from Norway. A large number of knights and solemn envoys were also present.

One of the four professed nuns lacked a patronymic in the *Diarium* (Anna), and in the case of the three girls who were not yet nuns, the Vadstena material provides no information regarding their names, which are known to us through English sources. A complete list looks like this:

Professed Vadstena sisters:

Kristina Finvidsdotter
Ragnhild Tidekesdotter
Anna Karlsdotter
Kristina Esbjörnsdotter

Girls:

Margareta Finvidsdotter
Marina Toresdotter
Margareta Johansdotter

The Vadstena brother Johannes Johannis of Kalmar
The priest Magnus Hemmingi

Brother Johannes Johannis would return in 1416, but the women were never to come back to Sweden.¹⁴ Who were these women? What do we know about their background?

Sister *Kristina Finvidsdotter* entered Vadstena Abbey on 26 August 1386,¹⁵ and she ought to have been the oldest woman in the group. Nothing is known of her family background. Her patronymic (Finvidsdotter) is not very common, and it might connect her with one of the girls, Margareta Finvidsdotter, but the age gap would of course be significant. Sister *Ragnhild Tidekesdotter* entered Vadstena Abbey on 4 August 1392.¹⁶ There is a problem with her patronymic as the memorial book on this occasion records her name as 'Ragnhild Hennekessdotter'. However, the identification seems certain and the patronymic was probably mistaken in the 1392 annotation.¹⁷ Nothing is known of the origin

¹⁴ Magnus Hemmingi (Hemmingsson) seems to have remained in England. His letter of denization was registered already on 10 February 1414 (Patent Rolls, C 66/393, No. 21, National Archives, London). In this source, he is described as a 'chaplain in Sweden' ('... sciatis quod de gratia mea speciali concessimus Magno Hemminghi capellano in regno Swecie oriundo, quod sit indigena in regno nostro Anglie ...'). There are no further traces of him in Swedish sources.

¹⁵ *Diarium Vadstenense* 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁷ On the identity of Ragnhild and the double patronymics, see Nyberg 1963, pp. 30 and 36.

or family of Sister *Anna*. Her patronymic is written out as *Karlsdotter* on other occasions. She entered Vadstena Abbey on 11 November 1400 as one of six young girls consecrated as nuns that day by the bishop of Linköping in the presence of Queen Margareta, King Erik, the archbishop of Uppsala and many others.¹⁸ Sister *Anna* is also known to us through the book she owned, a small prayer-book in Latin and Swedish, decorated in England. She is furthermore mentioned as a book donor.¹⁹ *Kristina Esbjörnsdotter* entered Vadstena on 5 December 1400.²⁰ She had been brought up by Saint Birgitta's daughter *Cecilia Ulfsdotter*, who died eighteen months before *Kristina*'s profession.²¹

The names of the three girls – *Margareta Finvidsdotter*, *Marina Toresdotter*, *Margareta Johansdotter* – can be found in the *Martiloge*,²² but nothing is known about their background.

What can be said about King Henry's request for six older (experienced) nuns? Judging from the profession years of the four consecrated nuns, it must be concluded that the wishes of the English king had been partly fulfilled. Even if the number did not correspond exactly to the royal request, the professed sisters were indeed experienced. The oldest one (*Kristina Finvidsdotter*) was at least 50 years old in 1415, if she took vows in her early twenties. She spent almost thirty years at Vadstena. Sister *Ragnhild Tidekesdotter* had served there for twenty-three years. She was probably around 45 at the time of emigration. The remaining two nuns had spent about fifteen years at Vadstena.

It is interesting to note that Vadstena's letter to the English king specifies that the nuns were sufficiently educated (*competenter doctas*), and, as is clear from the quotation from the letter, even the 'girls' were not without training. In fact, they had probably received a basic education (in all likelihood in connection with the abbey), mainly in the *Cantus Sororum*, the weekly office. As is seen above, the letter claims that they were proficient in the choir and song (*pro choro et cantu valentibus*).

¹⁸ *Diarium Vadstenense* 110:1. The reason for this large gathering can be found in the meeting of the council of the realm that took place at this time in Vadstena.

¹⁹ On Anna Karlsdotter's prayerbook (MS A 82 a in the National Library of Sweden), see Gejrot 1994. On Sister *Anna* as a book donor to Syon, see Gillespie 2001, p. 588.

²⁰ *Diarium Vadstenense* 110:6.

²¹ *Kristina* had an older sister (Ragnhild Esbjörnsdotter). *Cecilia Ulfsdotter* seems to have taken care of Ragnhild as well. On *Cecilia Ulfsdotter*, see *Äldre svenska frälsesläkter*, vol. I, pp. 93–94. Ragnhild Esbjörnsdotter died in Vadstena in 1436 (*Diarium Vadstenense* 452).

²² Gejrot 2015, pp. 15–16.

We know a few facts about the journey to England, which seems to have been quite difficult.²³ After the grand exodus from Vadstena in May 1415 the group headed towards the coast (it is unclear which Swedish or Danish port they used). They were escorted by Swedish bishops and the archbishop of Lund, and they had to wait some time for a suitable ship. The sea passage was dramatic as they experienced bad weather and storms. One of the Swedish bishops (we do not know which one) escorted them across the North Sea together with King Henry's envoy (Nicholas Peche).²⁴ The group finally reached England on 26 August 1415. The journey had so far lasted about three months after the departure from Vadstena. They disembarked at Bishop's Lynn (King's Lynn) near Norwich, where the town is recorded as having given the nuns a gift consisting of 'a pipe of wine'²⁵ before their departure to the place first determined for the monastery, Twickenham. Henry V accounted for the costs of the journey, and the king's generosity towards the newcomers is reported to have continued as they each received a silver-gilt ewer.

BETWEEN 1415 AND 1420

In their new country and environment, the Swedish women must have been singled out as a special group, at least during the first years after their arrival. For practical reasons, it seems natural to assume that they learnt English quickly, but there may have been difficulties other than the language question that had to be addressed. During these formative years, the Swedish sisters were apparently involved in the question of Syon's leadership. This must come as no surprise given the fact that they were sent over to assist in the establishment of the new monastery in their capacity as experienced nuns. The English scholar Margaret Deanesly briefly discussed the situation of the Swedish women, but we find no certain conclusions.²⁶

There is an interesting letter sent from Vadstena to Syon in 1418, giving us a hint of these problems. Here, the Swedish Birgittines (the Vadstena brothers and the Confessor General Erik Johansson) are reacting to complaints from England.²⁷

²³ The following paragraph is based on Fletcher 1933, p. 22.

²⁴ He is mentioned already in King Henry's letter (Andersson 2004, note 3).

²⁵ The wine measure 'pipe' (or 'butte') was half a 'tun' (252 gallons). The wine gift was then 126 gallons (or 476 litres).

²⁶ Deanesly 1915, pp. 125ff.

²⁷ MS A 20, fols 110v–111r (SDHK 19141), ed. SD 2521: '[...] humiliiter conqueruntur de aliquibus sororum nostrarum, quod propriis voluntatibus sinuntur aliquomodo adherere, non credentes se habere superiorem vsque ad inclusionem.'

[the Syon brothers] humbly complain about some of our [Swedish] sisters, because to some degree they are allowed to decide for themselves, and they do not think that they have any superior [at Syon] until the inclusion.

The text shows the complicated situation and the apparently very difficult position the Swedish sisters now found themselves in. The embryonic Syon community did not yet, at least formally, include any consecrated English brothers. The English priests awaiting Birgittine consecration, as Vadstena points out in this reply, can consequently not yet have any authority over the Swedish women, who still must regard the Vadstena abbess and confessor as their formal leaders, at least until Syon has been officially consecrated, something that did not occur until 21 April 1420.²⁸ The letter from Vadstena continues:²⁹

Therefore, in the spirit of simplicity, we answer the dear brothers in your monastery that we know that these sisters have already once professed in our order and that they have promised to obey only their own prelates, according to the Rule of Saint Saviour.

The passage shows that the sisters were instructed from Sweden to regard the abbess and confessor general in Vadstena as their only lawful leaders. The complexity of the day-to-day situation can be understood between the lines. We do not know exactly what lies behind this, of course, but one can easily imagine where at least part of the problem lies: At about the time of this letter, the temporary leadership of Syon was changed (see further below), and it is possible that the letter should be seen in that context. The people gathered at the preliminary location were trying to set up a functioning monastery adapted to the circumstances in England, but they now had to listen to what these four Swedish women had to say, in a way that they had perhaps not expected. It was no secret that Saint Birgitta had intended a strong female leadership for the Birgittine Order, but all the details were not clear. Additions were necessary. The nuns from Sweden may have brought with them several controversial questions still relevant in Vadstena, for instance, the discussion on which practical tasks the professed nuns were to take part in.³⁰ From the general inclusion and onwards, it must be supposed that the Swedish nuns accepted English leadership. It is possible that they went through a second consecration ceremony in 1420.

²⁸ Gejrot 2015, pp. 38–39.

²⁹ MS A 20, fols 110v–111r (SDHK 19141), ed. SD 2521: ‘Idcirco karissimis fraternitatibus vestris in simplicitatis spiritu respondemus, quod ipsas nouimus semel fuisse professas ordinem nostrum et obedere voulisse tantum prelatis suis secundum regulam sancti Saluatoris.’

³⁰ Cf. *Diarium Vadstenense* 315, with commentary and further references.

Other Vadstena letters in the copy book material from this time mention the Swedish sisters and include recommendations concerning them.³¹ Another example, taken from the first part of a letter from 1418, written by the Vadstena confessor and brothers, and probably directed to the *pro tempore* male leader of Syon, shows us that the sisters wrote home:³²

Dear brother! Although we do not know you personally, your exemplary honesty is sufficiently clear to us by the way you have treated our sisters and our brother, who are now staying with you as guests. They have recently sent a letter to us, and from this we have learned that you are doing your best in always preserving your pastoral care towards them and showing them fatherly affection. Therefore, we thank you heartily and sincerely, and not without reason. In a humble spirit we ask the following of you, our dear pious brother. Just as you treated them with tender care from the beginning and continued in this agreeable way, unfailingly stay the same to them all the way until the end! Do not remove them from your loving heart which they have grown so used to, and do not refrain from giving them your special protection when they need it! Then, our dear brother, we will pray for you especially and eternally. Furthermore, our sisters mentioned to us [...].

Another undated text should probably also be placed in this period before the general inclusion. Here, the Vadstena brothers ask their Syon colleagues to treat the Vadstena sisters (*consorores nostras*) affectionately.³³

³¹ MS A 20, fols 112rv; SDHK 19139–19140, ed. SD 2519–2520: ‘[...] supplicamus quatenus vestre dominacionis sublimitas dignetur [...] consorores nostras cum confratre habere inter regii fauoris amplexus humiliter commendatas’ (SD 2519, to King Henry V); ‘[...] in personis nostrarum sororum et confratris [...]’ (SD 2520, thanking Sir Henry Fitzhugh).

³² MS A 20, fols 111rv; SDHK 19142, ed. SD 2522: ‘[...] Karissime! Quamuis fraternitatis vestre personalem noticiam non habemus, satis tamen experti sumus probitatis et sinceritatis eius insignia in personis nostrarum sororum et confratris apud vos nunc peregrinancium, quas, vt ex earum epistolis nobis nouiter directis cognouimus, vere paternis confouetis affectibus atque sub debita semper conamini conseruare solicitudine pastorali, pro quo sinceritati vestre non immerito deuotas graciarum referimus acciones, in humilitatis spiritu supplicantes quatenus vestra deuocio, quemadmodum cepit in ipsis misericorditer [mistaken reading in SD 2522: miserabiliter] operari ac gratis continuauit mediis, ita erga eas vsque in finem indeficiens perseueret, non remouendo illas a consuete vestre dilectionis pectore, neque denegando ipsis in suis necessitatibus vestre proteccionis pallium singulare, habituri proinde, karissime, nos vestros speciales et perpetuus oratores. Insuper insinuabant nobis prefate sorores nostre, quod [...].’

³³ MS A 20, fol. 132v; SDHK 19029, ed. Andersson 2004, letter n. 6: ‘[...] dilectas consorores nostras, quas cum fratre Katillo apud vos habetis depositas, vestris sinceritatibus tanto humilius recommendamus diligendas, quanto vehemensius viscera nostra super tam remoto earum peregrinacionis exilio quotidie commouentur. Maximas eciam vobis graciarum acciones refundimus pro caritatis insignis et vestre reuerencie honestate eis multipliciter iam exhibitis.’

[...] we recommend to you our beloved fellow sisters, whom you keep placed together with brother Katillus, so they can be sincerely loved by you. This we do with so much more humility since our hearts are daily and vehemently moved by their remote exile and peregrination. We would also like to thank you indeed for the signs of charity and honest reverence that you have already shown them in many ways.

It is indeed interesting to see that the Swedish nuns are described as being 'placed', or 'deposited' (*depositas*) with brother Kettil. He stayed in England during the first building period and did not return to Vadstena until 1421.³⁴ He can perhaps be regarded as the nuns' escort, which was needed until the official introduction ceremonies at Syon in 1420. The first female leader appointed to the community was Matilda Newton, previously a Benedictine nun at Barking. Her time at Syon was marked by controversies, and she was in fact forced to step aside in 1417/1418.³⁵ As this was before the general inclusion, she was not included in the Martiloge list of Syon abbesses (in fact, she is not mentioned at all).³⁶

Looking at these formative years – when construction work was going on, when detailed regulations were written and people recruited – it is perhaps rewarding to compare this with the situation in Vadstena in the 1370s. During these years the same type of planning, building and preliminary monastic activities were taking place in the Swedish monastery. The leadership was also informal, before the official opening of the abbey, but a significant difference is that Katarina Ulfsdotter was the undisputed leader in Vadstena until her death in 1381. The authority of Katarina was naturally great as she was the daughter of the founder herself. Matilda Newton and her supporters at Syon had to deal with a more difficult situation, and, without going into further detail, it might be sufficient here to conclude that any interference by the experienced Swedish Birgittines must have been a significant factor. It can be added that no Swedish nun was elected to the office of abbess or prioress at Syon, perhaps an indication that their influence gradually vanished after 1420.

We must assume that the Swedish sisters, at least during this first period, were in continuous contact with Vadstena by exchange of letters. One of the letters quoted above (SD 2252) indicates a correspondence of this kind. Another concrete, but indirect, proof of this can be found in a letter sent from Vadstena to the brothers who represented the monastery at the Council of Constance. The

³⁴ On Katillus Torberni, see Hedlund 1996.

³⁵ On Matilda Newton and the controversies around her, see Krug 2002, pp. 163ff. On the Syon leadership, see Nyberg 1965, pp. 75–77.

³⁶ Cf. Gejrot 2015, pp. 23ff.

text of the letter, preserved through a copy book, lacks a date, but the reference to a brother not yet returned indicates that it was sent before 4 October 1416. In this letter, the brothers in Sweden report news from Vadstena, and among other things the situation in England comes up, more precisely the fates of the brothers who were sent there:³⁷

On St. Olof's feast brother Johannes Johannis returned, whom we sent to England last year together with the sisters. And, although his place had been taken by another man, we let him enter the monastery, as we did not know how we should deal with him. At the same time, brother Johannes Petri went back from England, *as our sisters have written to us*, but we have so far not heard any news of him or anything about where he went.

AFTER 1420: STAYING AT SYON – AND DYING THERE

The names of the Swedish Syon members are found in the preserved register of the Bishop of London, in a copy of a document concerning the election of Confessor General Robert Bell in September 1428.³⁸ At this time, the Swedish sisters were all alive and their names were recorded in the following way (with the normalised form within brackets):

Cristina Swethe (Kristina Finvidsdotter)
 Ragnelle Titheca (Ragnhild Tidekesdotter)
 Anna Karilis (Anna Karlsdotter)
 Cristina Isbiorna (Kristina Esbjörnsdotter)
 Margareta filia Johannis (Margareta Johansdotter)
 Marina de Sweth (Marina Toresdotter)
 Margareta de Sweth (Margareta Finvidsdotter)

The scribe uses the descriptive expression '(de) Sweth(e)', a clear sign of the Swedish identities still being active. It also indicates possible problems with some of their patronymics, for instance, 'Finvidsdotter' might have been a hard name to master.

³⁷ MS C 6, UUB, fol. 50v., 46v–47r; SDHK 18809, ed. SD 2284. 'Item in festo Olai reuersus est frater Johannes Johannis, quem ad Angliam cum sororibus priori anno transmisimus et licet locus eius erat per alium occupatus, ipsum tamen intromisimus, ignorantes adhuc quid erga eum facere debeamus. Similiter eciam recesserat de Anglia frater Johannes Petri, vt scripserunt nobis sorores nostre, sed nihil adhuc de eo audiuiimus quo deuenit.' Brother Johannes Johannis returned on 28 July and Brother Johannes Petri on 4 October 1416 (*Diarium Vadstenense* 269 and 270).

³⁸ Bishop William Gray's Register, Guildhall Library, London, MS 9531/5, fols lxix r–lxx r. The text is briefly mentioned by Aungier 1840, p. 60, and by Tait 2013, pp. 422f, who notes that the Swedish sisters voted first.

The preserved Syon obit lists are based on calendar days, and the dates are therefore always indicated, while the relevant years are only sometimes mentioned. As for the Swedish sisters, we know the exact death years only in two cases (Kristina Esbjörnsdotter and Margareta Johansdotter). It is, however, possible to say something more about this. In the edition of relevant parts of the Martiloge, I also included the erased obits from the calendar at the beginning of the manuscript. At a later stage, these obits were transferred to the main obituary in the manuscript. The calendar obits are formulated in a way similar to the Syon obits found in a Cambridge (Magdalene College) manuscript. A comparison with the main Martiloge obituary shows that all obits in the Cambridge list concern deaths in or before 1451.³⁹

The oldest Swedish sisters seem to have died before or in 1451. This is perhaps what is to be expected: we can place Kristina Finvidsdotter's birth in the 1360s and those of the remaining three of the original Vadstena nuns in the 1380s. Obits of all seven Swedish sisters are found in the Syon Martiloge, both in the erased earlier entries and in the later list. Kristina Finvidsdotter died at Syon Abbey on 3 May, not later than 1451.⁴⁰ Ragnhild Tidekesdotter died there before or in 1451, either on 2 May or on 4 May: the English obituaries place her death on different days.⁴¹ Perhaps 4 May is the correct alternative, since the older (later erased) version of the obit in the Martiloge agrees with the Cambridge list on this date. A mistake could have been made when the information was transferred into the new Martiloge obit list. Anna Karlsdotter died at Syon on 28 March, as it seems, and no later than 1451. Her obit in the Martiloge shows that she might have been known by the Syon Birgittines simply as 'Anna Charles'.⁴² Kristina Esbjörnsdotter died at Syon on 2 September 1441.⁴³

Of the three women who came to England as girls and took vows at Syon, Margareta Finvidsdotter died there on 1 January before or in 1451,⁴⁴ Marina Toresdotter died at Syon on 14 April, probably after 1451,⁴⁵ and Margareta Johansdotter died on 8 November 1465, fifty years after her emigration to England.⁴⁶

³⁹ Gejrot 2015, pp. 43–49. On the Syon obituaries (The Martiloge, British Library, MS Add. 22, 285, fols 5r–10v, 21v–69r and in Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS F.4.23, fols 73–12v), see Gejrot 2015, pp. 11–13. For the editions of the obituaries, see *ibid.*, pp. 42–49 and 74–135.

⁴⁰ Sister Kristina's death is recorded in *the Martiloge* on fols 7r and 37r, in the Cambridge list on fol. 9r.

⁴¹ *The Martiloge*, fols 7r and 37r, the Cambridge list, fol. 9r.

⁴² *The Martiloge*, fols 6r and 32r, the Cambridge list, fol. 8r.

⁴³ *The Martiloge*, fols 9r and 53r, the Cambridge list, fol. 11r.

⁴⁴ *The Martiloge*, fols 5r and 21v, the Cambridge list, fol. 7r.

⁴⁵ *The Martiloge*, fols 6v and 34v.

⁴⁶ *The Martiloge*, fols 10r and 62v.

	<i>Cambridge obits (before or in 1451)</i>	<i>Martiloge calendar obits (erased)</i>	<i>Martiloge obits</i>
Kristina Finvidsdotter 3 May	Obitus <i>Christine filie Finvidi sororis professe</i>	Obitus <i>Christine filie Finuidi</i>	<i>Christina Fynwyde soror 1</i>
Ragnhild Tidekesdotter 4 May (or 2 May)	Obitus <i>Rengnildis filie Tithikini sororis professe</i>	Obitus <i>Reagnildis filie Tithikyni</i>	<i>Reangnildis Tytykyn soror</i>
Anna Karlsdotter 28 March	Obitus <i>Anne filie Caroli sororis professe</i>	Obiit soror Anna filia Karoli, vna de quatuor de Suecia	Anna Charles soror 3
Kristina Esbjörnsdotter 2 September 1441	Obitus <i>Christine Esberni sororis professe</i>	Obitus <i>Christine filie Esberni</i>	<i>Christina Esberne soror 1441</i>
Margareta Finvidsdotter 1 January	Obitus <i>Ma<r>garete filie Fynlaydi sororis professe</i>	Obitus <i>Margarete filie Fynwydi sororis</i>	<i>Eodem die obiit Margareta Fynwyd soror</i>
Marina Toresdotter 14 April		Obitus <i>Marine Throgdesdoghter</i>	Marina Throwes-dowzter soror
Margareta Johansdotter 8 November 1465		Obitus <i>Margarete filie Johannis (Johannes-doghter) anno 1465</i>	Margareta Johnedoghter soror, 1465

The Syon obits of the Swedish sisters.

As we have now seen, all seven Swedish sisters died in the English monastery and were included in the Syon obituaries. Nevertheless, it has sometimes been suggested that they returned home. The arguments for this have not been based on an entry in the memorial book of Vadstena (they are not mentioned in this source after 1415), but on a passage in an undated letter from Vadstena. The letter speaks of the nuns being sent from their exile to their homeland – *de exilio ad patriam* – and it has been tempting to interpret this as an indication that they were in fact sent back to Sweden.⁴⁷

However, if we analyse the expression in its proper context (it is actually used twice in the letter) it will soon appear that the meaning is something else, and more in line with the ecclesiastical Latin used by the Birgittine brothers. The word *patria* has, of course, its basic meaning of ‘homeland’, but it is the *heavenly* homeland that is intended. This distinction has been noted by the editor of the Swedish Glossary of Medieval Latin,⁴⁸ an excellent tool when dealing with Latin Birgittine source material. Here we find a collection of examples, mostly

47 MS A 21, RA, fol. 8or; SDHK 19024, ed. below. Cf. Tait 2013, pp. 153f.

48 See GMLS: s.v. ‘*patria*’.

from the Vadstena sphere, showing that the expression was in common use by the Birgittines. A clarifying example from another Vadstena letter, from 1401, displays the meaning of *patria* in this monastic context:⁴⁹ [...] *cum Domino placuerit de huius seculi incolatu ad patriam vos vocare et obitus vester vel alterius vestrum apud nos fuerit nunciatus*; [...] when it pleases God to call you from this earthly dwelling to your heavenly home, and when the news of your or some other person's death reaches us [...].

Let us now return to the letter that has been misunderstood. It is undated, but, as we will soon see, it was probably written in the first part of the 1450s. It has not been printed before, and therefore the whole letter will be edited and translated below (see p. 123). The letter is an example of a correspondence that seems to have been active between the confessor generals of Vadstena and Syon at this time. In this case, the Swedish confessor writes to his English colleague about various issues, and an analysis of the contents will help us to suggest a time for the writing of the letter.

The first part of the text concerns Vadstena's advice to Syon concerning the correct choice of material for the roof of the church at Syon. They should use lead instead of copper, the Vadstena confessor writes, as lead was easier to find in England. The roof problems were relevant to the Vadstena brothers in the early 1450s, as they had decided to rebuild the roof of the abbey church. According to the *Diarium*, this work was apparently finished in 1455.⁵⁰ A second part of the letter shows Vadstena's wish to receive copies from Syon of English texts defending Birgitta's Revelations. This request places the letter in the aftermath of the examinations of the Revelations made at the Council of Basle.⁵¹

49 MS A 20, RA, fol. 8or; SDHK 15689.

50 *Diarium Vadstenense* 666: 'Item, hoc anno tectum ecclesie, quod fuit prius unicum et non in debita altitudine proporcionatum secundum latitudinem ecclesie, de novo est reparatum, tum quia cuprum fuit ruptum et non bene appositum, tum quia plures trabes et asseres corrupte sunt. Quod autem tectum in tantam altitudinem (et campanile similiter deductum est) contra voluntatem fratrum et sororum factum est, quia carpentarius utebatur consilio regis et nobilium et aliorum sapientum et non conventus.' – 'This year [1455], the roof of the church was completely repaired. Previously, it had been uniform and not adjusted to the correct height corresponding to the width of the church. Not only was the copper broken and badly attached, but a number of beams and planks were rotting. But the roof was erected as to such a high altitude (and the bell tower was raised likewise) against the brothers' and sisters' wishes, since the carpenter followed the advice of the king and the lords and other wise men, and not the monastery.'

51 On the defense of the Revelations at the Council, see Fredriksson Adman 2003, pp. 17ff.

The third matter discussed in the letter is the one most important to us. The Vadstena confessor general thanks Syon for taking care of the Swedish sisters, and especially asks about the remaining women. The letter seems to be written in the period when the four 'original' sisters that had professed in Vadstena had died. However, at least two of the 'girls' mentioned in 1415 were still living at Syon. This can be taken as another indication that the letter should be dated in the early 1450s.

A fourth and last issue concerns some unspecified 'problems' (*diuersis tribulacionibus*) that had now been solved. This might refer to the apparently difficult situation at Syon in the 1440s, when the abbess was examined by the archbishop of Canterbury but eventually exempted from the archbishop's jurisdiction by the king. In 1448, a royal charter secured the abbey privileges.⁵²

*

There are some further traces in the archives of contacts between Vadstena and Syon,⁵³ but the letter edited below seems to be the last glimpse we get of the Swedish sisters. As we have seen above, the move to England must have led to great changes in their use of languages and in their daily routines. Even if several decades had passed since the emigration, the Vadstena confessor general (perhaps Magnus Unnonis) shows in his letter that the Swedish women at Syon were not forgotten in their old home, as he urges Syon to treat them lovingly and 'not as visitors or servants, but as indigenous and proper sisters'.

⁵² Höjer 1905, pp. 258–259, BHO Middlesex (www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol1/pp182-191); Tait 2013, p. 154.

⁵³ For a survey of the preserved correspondence between the two monasteries, see Andersson 2011, pp. 19ff.

APPENDIX:

EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF SDHK 19024
(MS A 21, RA, FOL. 8or)Latin text⁵⁴

Littera destinata⁵⁵ ad monasterium de Syon in Anglia pro sororibus emissis.⁵⁶

Sancte religionis affectum et sinceritatem cum virtutum omnium incremento,
Domine reuerende et frater mi karissime!

Muris ecclesie vestre crescentibus multum sollicita, vt scribitis, de qua materia metalli videlicet an plumbo aut cupro ecclesia vestra sit operienda. De quo nusquam reperi in scriptis seu reuelacionibus aliquibus saltem michi notis determinatum, vtrum huiusmodi ecclesie tectum fiat de cupro vel plumbo aut tegulis latericiis. Sed quia, vt⁵⁷ didici, plumbum et non cuprum reperitur et fabricatur in Anglia, huiusmodi tectum de plumbo consulo fabricari. Si vero de altitudine tecti scientifici et maturi deliberent artifices, vt latitudini ecclesie correspondeat sufficiens et competens altitudo, similitudinem tecti nostre ecclesie minime respicientes, quia eius altitudo latitudinem non respondit et ideo in altitudine deficit. Quare deperditis laboribus et expensis in eius ereccione factis oportet monasterium nostrum tectum aliud denuo facere⁵⁸ fabricari. Propterea de huiusmodi tecto mature et debito modo deliberate!

Item, quidam venerabilis doctor et magister in Anglia fecit quoddam solempne opus sieu subtilem tractatum, qui incipit 'Declaracio sermonum tuorum'. Quem quidem tractatum per subcriptionem nominis eiusdem doctoris manu propria factam aut aliquorum, si fieri potest,⁵⁹ publicorum notariorum attestacionibus⁶⁰ autenticatum⁶¹ pro defensione matris nostre sancte in scriptis, vt perpetuam memoriam habeat in loco isto, michi velitis procurare et quamtocius poteritis destinare. Et si quis alij doctores, de quibus nobis nondum constat,

⁵⁴ The orthography of the MS is followed, but the use of capital letters and punctuation has been normalised. Abbreviations used in the text notes: *cod.* = codex A 21, *corr.* = correctionem, *vid.* = videtur, *del.* = delebit, *lin.* = lineam, *marg.* = margine.

⁵⁵ destinata] destinatus *ante corr. ut vid.*

⁵⁶ pro sororibus emissis *ut vid. post corr.*

⁵⁷ vt *supra lin.*

⁵⁸ post facere *verbum et scr. sed postea del. cod.*

⁵⁹ si fieri potest *in marg. cod.*

⁶⁰ post attestacionibus *verbum factam scr. sed postea del. cod.*

⁶¹ autenticatum] autentizatum *ante corr.*

in Anglia scripserant⁶² aliqua pro declaracione et defensione dictarum Reuelacionum, michi eodemmodo sub manu publica et proprie manus subscripcione transmittere studeatis.

Jnsuper referimus vobis graciaram acciones pro dileccione et beneficiis sororibus nostris impensis, quas de exilio ad patriam transmisistis. Item pueras remanentes, quas dicte sorores nostre secum adduxerant habeatis sincere recommendatas precipientes domine abbatisse et⁶³ sororibus vestris, quatenus ipsas in dileccione materna habeant non tamquam aduenas vel ancillas sed sicut indigenas et sorores proprias, donec Domino Deo de exilio ad patriam eas placuerit reuocare.

Item didicimus vos in diuersis tribulacionibus consitutos et de eisdem mirabiliter eruptos et liberatos. Pro quibus Omnipotenti omnium in se confidencium protectori beateque Marie virginis et sancte matri nostre Birgitte intimis precordiis graciaram acciones referimus multiformes.

Translation

Letter directed to the monastery of Syon in England, for the sisters that were sent out.

With a deep and sincere greeting in our holy religion with the hope of increasing virtues in everyone, Sir, my revered and dearest brother!

The walls of your church are rising, as you write, and you should carefully consider with what material your church should be covered, with lead or copper. I have never seen this matter decided in any writing or in any Revelation known to me, that is, whether such a church roof is to be made of copper or lead or bricks and tiles. But since I have heard that lead – and not copper – is found and produced in England, I advise you to build a roof of lead. Wise and mature builders considering the height of the roof and ensuring that a proper and sufficient height of the roof corresponds to the width of the church, should not try to imitate the roof of our church, since its height does not correspond to its width, and thus, the height is incorrect. Despite all the work and money spent on the building of the roof, our monastery now has to build a completely new one. Therefore, you must think very carefully about this roof!

62 scripserant] conscripserant *ante corr.*

63 et *supra lin.*

Furthermore, a venerable doctor and *magister* in England has written an important and fine work or treaty, with the incipit 'Declaratio sermonum tuorum'. I would like you to obtain for me this treaty written for the defense of our holy mother so that we will have a lasting memory of it in this location, and I want you to send it here as soon as possible, signed by the hand of the same doctor or, if possible, with a certificate by public notaries. And, if there are further doctors in England, hitherto unknown to us, who have explained or defended these Revelations in writing, please try to send me this material in the same way, certified by a public scribe and signed.

In addition to this, we thank you for the affection and services you have given to our sisters, whom you have sent to their heavenly home from their exile. Furthermore, we recommend to you the remaining girls, whom our sisters brought with them, and we want your Lady Abbess and your sisters to treat them with motherly love and not as visitors or servants, but as indigenous and proper sisters, until the God our Lord wishes to call them from their exile to their heavenly home.

Furthermore, we have learnt that you have been going through various troubles and were miraculously saved and freed from them. For this, we are in many ways deeply and truly grateful to the Almighty, the protector of everyone believing in him, and to the holy Virgin Mary and our mother, Saint Birgitta.

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VIRGINIA BAINBRIDGE

Syon Abbey and Nation Building

Patronage by Political Elites and their
Regional Affinities in England
and Wales *c.* 1415–1558

HENRY V AND THE LANCASTRIAN DYNASTY

WHEN KING HENRY V founded Syon Abbey in 1415, he exchanged his patronage for the prayers of the religious community for himself and his dynasty. Syon Abbey also received patronage from powerful families in the Lancastrian affinity, supporters of the new regime of Henry V, and his father Henry IV before him. These families came south in the retinue of the new dynasty. Their members filled important military and administrative offices, while retaining links with the heartlands of Lancastrian support in northern England. They wished to be associated with the monarch as donors to his prestigious foundation, and they also provided vocations to the new community.¹

The calendar of Syon Abbey's *Martiloge*, now held in the British Library, records the dates of death of 21 patrons of the community alongside those of the sisters and brothers.² There follows a list entitled 'Syon's Special Benefactors and Friends', which names a further 89 patrons.³ In total the British Library *Martiloge* commemorates 110 major donors, some with spouses or family members, from the years of planning before the foundation of the monastery in 1415 to the early decades of the community's long exile in Portugal, which began in 1594.⁴

The pattern of patronage and vocation revealed in the *Martiloge* may be used as a case study to trace the development of the early modern English state over these centuries. A high proportion of Syon's benefactors served in the royal

¹ This article is a companion to articles already published: Bainbridge 1997, pp. 55–76; Bainbridge 2010, pp. 37–49.

² London, British Library, Add. MS 22285; Gejrot 2015, pp. 74–134.

³ Gejrot 2015, pp. 134–145.

⁴ Exeter University Library (EUL), MS 95/10–13. Canon John Rory Fletcher's manuscripts contain brief, carefully researched but unreferenced biographies of the sisters, brothers and benefactors, which have provided valuable information for this article.

household and administration. Most were drawn from the ranks of the upper gentry of various counties and from the mercantile elite of London and other major cities. The confluence of interests of the county gentry in royal service and overseas trade was to become a cornerstone of early modern English society.

Of the 110 benefactors commemorated in the *Martiloge*, 58 were laymen (52 per cent), 19 were laywomen (17 per cent), and 32 were secular clergy (29 per cent). The significant proportion of women may be explained by their greater financial autonomy and disposable wealth at a higher social level.⁵ The secular clergy included two cardinals, three bishops, diocesan administrators, academics, and friends and family members of the religious community.

The names of Syon's 'Special Benefactors and Friends' are listed in roughly chronological order. The first name on the list is Henry Fitzhugh, who in 1406 gave his manor of Cherry Hinton just outside Cambridge, to support the foundation of a Birgittine house in England.⁶ Fitzhugh was one of Henry IV's household knights and a trusted counsellor.⁷ Under Henry V he was made a knight of the Order of the Garter, constable of England and subsequently lord chamberlain of the king's household.⁸ He had a personal devotion to Saint Birgitta even before he escorted Henry IV's daughter Philippa to Sweden to marry King Erik of Pomerania in 1406, and made his own pilgrimage to Vadstena.⁹ Fitzhugh shared his devotion to Saint Birgitta with his kinsman Henry, Lord Scrope of Masham (executed 1415),¹⁰ who also accompanied Philippa to Sweden, and to whom Fitzhugh willed his copy of Birgitta's *Revelations*.¹¹ Henry 'Hotspur' Percy (d. 1403), was another northern devotee of Saint Birgitta, who had taken a vow of pilgrimage to visit her shrine at Vadstena.¹² Neither Percy nor Scrope were recorded as benefactors of Syon, as they rose in rebellion against the Lancastrian monarchy before 1415.¹³

Northern supporters were behind the plan to found a Birgittine monastery at York, where Henry IV had licensed the redundant hospital of Saint Nicholas for this purpose.¹⁴ Walter Skirlaw (d. 1406), bishop of Durham, was one of

⁵ Bainbridge 1997, pp. 55–76; Harris 1993, pp. 89–113.

⁶ Gejrot 2015, pp. 57, 135.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 29, 57, 61, 135; ODNB 2004, Fitzhugh, Henry, 3rd baron Fitzhugh (1363?–1425); Hughes 1988, pp. 75, 86–92; Tait 2013, pp. 119–22.

⁸ ODNB 2004, *ibid.*

⁹ Johnston 1964, p. 5.

¹⁰ ODNB 2004, Scrope, Henry, 3rd Baron Scrope of Masham (c. 1376–1415).

¹¹ Aungier 1840, p. 25; Gejrot 1988, pp. 147:2, 161; Johnston 1996, p. 48.

¹² Cokayne, 1910–1959, Vol. IX, pp. 713–714; Tait 2013, pp. 117–118.

¹³ Goodman 1992, pp. 286–290.

¹⁴ Hughes 1988, p. 75.

those involved in planning the new Birgittine foundation.¹⁵ Thomas Langley, his successor as bishop of Durham, was one of Syon's early special benefactors.¹⁶ Langley rose in the service of the House of Lancaster. He began his career in the household of John of Gaunt and eventually became cardinal and Lord Chancellor to Henry VI. Langley was a trustee of alien priory land which Henry V settled on Syon, and was instrumental in the community's acquisition of Lancaster Priory and its estates.¹⁷

The most important benefactor was, of course King Henry V, founder of Syon Abbey.¹⁸ Following Henry's early death in 1422, Syon was well-supported by his immediate family. Henry's widow, Catherine of Valois, gave diplomatic support to Syon's mission which persuaded Pope Martin V to revoke his 1422 bull banning Birgittine double monasteries.¹⁹ Henry's sister-in-law, Margaret Holland (d. 1439), widow of his brother Thomas, Duke of Clarence (d. 1421), who herself retired to live at the monastery of St Saviour, London, gave Syon 200 pounds, the largest recorded gift from a special benefactor.²⁰ In 1426, Henry's brother, John, Duke of Bedford (d. 1435), laid the foundation stone of the first abbey church, presented the sisters with valuable manuscripts, two copies of the office of Our Lady and a legendary, and gave each sister a profession ring.²¹ All three were recorded as special benefactors and friends of Syon. In 1431, Henry V's brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (d. 1447), was present at the translation of the Birgittines from their old site to their new monastery at Isleworth, and his anniversary was kept by the community.²² Henry V's paternal uncle, Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, presided over the ceremonies of 1426,²³ with John Kempe, bishop of London.²⁴ Beaufort's political clients were among Syon's early patrons.

After Syon's establishment near London the balance of patronage shifted from the north to London and the home counties, although vocations continued to come from the north into the seventeenth century. Thomas Fishbourne (d. 1428), Syon's first elected confessor general, was one of the men who came

¹⁵ ODNB 2004, Skirlaw, Walter (*c.* 1330–1406), diplomat and bishop of Durham; Tait 2013, pp. 438–439.

¹⁶ Storey 1961; Gejrot 2015, p. 135.

¹⁷ Storey 1961, p. 45; Aungier 1840, pp. 32–35.

¹⁸ Gejrot 2015, pp. 47, 55–59, 113.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 55, 61, 137; Cnartingius 1963, pp. 134–135, 148–149.

²⁰ Gejrot 2015, p. 135; Cokayne 1910–1959, Vol. III, pp. 258–260.

²¹ Gejrot 2015, pp. 39, 57, 135.

²² Ibid., pp. 39, 58n, 83.

²³ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁴ Ibid.

south to serve the Lancastrian kings. His career began in the household of Bishop Walter Skirlaw, and he was appointed steward of St Alban's Abbey, before taking up a late vocation at Syon.²⁵ Sisters Isabel and Joan Fishbourne of Syon were probably his wife and daughter.²⁶ Sisters Agnes (d. 1479), and Catherine Fogge (d. 1488), came from a Lancashire family which served John of Gaunt and the Lancastrian kings.²⁷ The families of Sister Christina Rede (d. 1473),²⁸ and of Sisters Alice and Margaret Elrington (both d. after 1539), came from Northumberland in royal service and settled in London and the adjacent county of Middlesex.²⁹

Following Henry V's death, members of Henry VI's minority council were among Syon's special benefactors, notably Henry Chichele (d. 1443), Archbishop of Canterbury, who presided over the first professions and solemn enclosure in 1420.³⁰ In 1431 he co-celebrated mass with the bishops of Rochester and Bath on the translation of the community to their new site and hosted a dinner for many lords, spiritual and temporal, at his nearby mansion at Mortlake. He also gave Syon a donation of 20 pounds.³¹ Other councillors to Henry VI who were patrons of Syon were Humphrey, Earl of Stafford (d. 1460), who played a leading role in the war in France, and was captain of Calais from 1422,³² and James Butler (d. 1452), 4th Earl of Ormond and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.³³ John Somerset (d. 1454), Henry VI's personal physician in the later years of his reign and Chancellor of the Exchequer 1441–1446, was also a special benefactor of Syon.³⁴ An illegitimate member of the Beaufort family, he served the royal household for over twenty-five years. A leading intellectual, he assisted Henry VI with his foundations of Eton College and King's College, Cambridge.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 47; Knowles 1955, p. 180; Cnatttingius 1963, pp. 131–132; Tait 2013, pp. 436–445.

²⁶ Gejrot 2015, pp. 43, 79, 105.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 47; EUL, MS 95/12, pp. 52–53.

²⁸ Gejrot 2015, p. 47; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 50, Christina was a relative of Sir Robert Rede (d. 1519), Chief Justice of Common Pleas, one of Syon's special benefactors, and of Sir Bartholomew Rede (d. 1505), a London goldsmith and mayor (1502), who was buried at London Charterhouse.

²⁹ Gejrot 2015, pp. 115, 117; Freeman 2002, pp. 50, 58, 78, 97, 112, 137, 139; Mattingly 1994; Norrington 1983, the Elderton or Elrington family were relatives of Alice, second wife of Thomas More.

³⁰ Gejrot 2015, pp. 39, 45, 55, 59, 93.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 45, 59, 135.

³² Ibid., p. 137; Cokayne 1910–1959, Vol. II, pp. 388–389.

³³ Gejrot 2015, p. 137; EUL, MS 95/10, pp. 115–116; ODNB 2004, Butler, James, 4th Earl of Ormond (1390–1452).

³⁴ Gejrot 2015, pp. 39, 139; ODNB 2004, Somerset, John, physician to Henry VI; Hicks 1991, pp. 256–257; Sutton & Visser-Fuchs 1996, pp. 242–246.

EDWARD IV AND THE YORKIST DYNASTY

The War of the Roses led to changes of ruling dynasty, which were reflected in the patronage of Syon Abbey. The *Martiloge* proclaimed Edward IV the second founder of Syon Abbey.³⁵ The list of 'Special Benefactors and Friends' names new benefactors drawn from among the supporters of the Yorkist dynasty. They came from other geographical regions, from the City of London, East Anglia, Bristol and the West Country, reflecting Edward IV's links with international trade, and from a rising courtier elite settled in the home counties. Sisters and brothers were recruited from families with ties to the new political regime, keen to associate themselves with political power.³⁶

There was an inevitable decline in major donations to Syon under Henry VI, once the initial wave of enthusiasm had passed. Thirty of the special benefactors were dead by the mid-fifteenth century, and it fell to Edward IV to head a new fund-raising drive. He was quick to seize the propaganda opportunity of becoming patron to this prestigious Lancastrian foundation. The *Martiloge* records his restoration of properties granted away by Henry VI to his own foundations, and a gift of over 500 Marks towards building the church on the monastery's second site.³⁷ New funding was necessary to sustain the extensive building programme on the new site, which continued from the 1460s to the Dissolution.³⁸ The church was not finished until 1488, despite huge financial resources.³⁹ Syon Abbey was built on the grand scale prescribed by Saint Birgitta for all her houses. It was a religious palace, and had it survived the architecture of its finest buildings would have rivalled Henry VI's foundations of Eton College and King's College, Cambridge.⁴⁰

It seems that Edward and his wife Elizabeth were sincere and generous admirers of Syon's spiritual authority. They called their youngest daughter Bridget,⁴¹ and Edward's elder sister Anne (d. 1476), Duchess of Exeter, was a special benefactor.⁴² Anne was the patron of two leading London churchmen associated with Syon, Thomas Jane (d. 1500), canon of St Paul's Cathedral, and

³⁵ Gejrot 2015, pp. 59, 61, 67.

³⁶ Bainbridge 2010a, pp. 37–49.

³⁷ Gejrot 2015, p. 61.

³⁸ Dunning 1981, pp. 16–26.

³⁹ London, The National Archives, PRO, SC6 ADDENDA/3485/3, accounts for final alterations to the New Church, Syon Abbey, 4/5 Hen. VII [1488/9].

⁴⁰ Foyle 2004, pp. 550–555.

⁴¹ Armstrong 1983, p. 136.

⁴² Gejrot 2015, pp. 49, 139.

later bishop of Norwich, a generous donor,⁴³ and Dr John Pynchbeck, who spent time as a Syon brother and was an executor of Anne's will.⁴⁴ A gift is recorded in the list of special benefactors to commemorate the anniversary of their father, Richard, Duke of York (d. 1460).⁴⁵ Edward IV's gift for his father's obit, the patronage of his mother Cicely, Duchess of York,⁴⁶ and of his sister Anne were not matched by the same number of gifts from the aristocracy as in the first half of the century.

Syon's special benefactors and friends now came mainly from London's ruling oligarchy and gentry involved in overseas trade and royal administration, reflecting the political tone of Edward IV's reign. Edward's personal attention to his financial situation and his interests in overseas trade were greater than those of his predecessors, and also the degree to which his regime was underpinned by support from the City of London and loans from its financiers.⁴⁷

Over the course of the fifteenth century common interests developed between courtiers and leading merchants who supplied the royal household. Then as now, financial careers in the City of London provided the wealth to operate at a certain social level and opportunities for cultural experience and cosmopolitan taste. Court fashions were fed by the mercantile elite, the aldermen and senior members of the twelve great livery companies of London, who supplied luxury goods and novelties, and capital to kings in need of a loan. Those who made their fortune in trade invested in landed estates. Like Chaucer's Franklin, wealth bought them access to the social world of the gentry and aristocracy, and even intermarriage.⁴⁸ Syon's London benefactors included Geoffrey Boleyn (d. 1463),⁴⁹ a member of the Mercers' Company whose own marriage to Anne, daughter and coheir of Lord Hoo and Hastings paved the way for his granddaughter Anne to marry Henry VIII. Another was Sir John Crosby (d. 1476), a member of the Grocers' Company, a merchant of the Calais Staple and lord of the manor of Hanworth, Middlesex, who was related by his

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 107, 145; EUL, MS 95/11, pp. 40–41; Emden, BRUO, Vol. II, pp. 1013–1014; Buxton & Williams 1979, pp. 24, 25; ODNB 2004, Jane, Thomas (c. 1438–1500), bishop of Norwich; Gillespie 2001, p. 588.

⁴⁴ EUL, MS 95/12, p. 23; Emden, BRUC, p. 466; *Calendar of Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland 1455–1464*, pp. 638–639; Gillespie 2001, pp. 584–585.

⁴⁵ Gejrot 2015, pp. 67, 137.

⁴⁶ Armstrong 1983, pp. 150–151.

⁴⁷ Ross 1975, pp. 351–370.

⁴⁸ Thrupp 1948, pp. 234–287.

⁴⁹ Gejrot 2015, p. 139; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 272; 1913, Vol. II, pp. 10, 164; Thrupp 1948, p. 325; Wedgwood & Holt 1936, pp. 90–91.

second marriage to John, Lord Howard,⁵⁰ and entrusted with trade missions by Edward IV.⁵¹

Twenty per cent of Syon's 'Special Benefactors and Friends' were from London's mercantile elite: thirteen held the office of alderman, nine were Members of Parliament, seven were mayor of London, six were members of the Grocers' Company, five were knighted by Edward IV,⁵² and two were widows of leading citizens. In the first half of the fifteenth century Syon Abbey's special benefactors included Stephen Brown (d. c. 1466), a grocer wealthy enough to lend 400 pounds to Henry V;⁵³ Richard Buckland (d. 1436), a member of the Fishmongers' Company and Treasurer of Calais 1421–1436, whose immense wealth subsidised the regency of John, Duke of Bedford;⁵⁴ and John Walden (d. 1464), also a grocer and a merchant of the Calais Staple, who made regular loans to Henry VI.⁵⁵ Two women from the ranks of the aldermen, Joan Buckland (d. 1462), an heiress of great wealth and widow of Richard Buckland,⁵⁶ and Edith Cambridge, widow of the grocer William Cambridge (d. 1432), described as a citizen of London in her own right,⁵⁷ had the independent means to make the substantial gifts required to be named in 'Special Benefactors and Friends'. By the later years of Henry VI's reign, the majority of merchants, preferring a strong government as a precondition for trade, had transferred their allegiance to the Yorkist party. Those who felt compromised by their association with the old regime, like John Walden, took out pardons.

In 1465 at Elizabeth Woodville's coronation, Edward IV knighted the mayor of London, Ralph Josselin (d. 1478),⁵⁸ and four of the aldermen in recognition of the City's support.⁵⁹ He bestowed the honour of further knighthoods on the City in 1471 for loyalty during Henry VI's readeption. Significantly three

⁵⁰ Ross 1975, p. 355.

⁵¹ Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 256; 1913, Vol. II, p. 13; Thrupp 1948, pp. 335–336; Wedgwood & Holt 1936, p. 241; ODNB 2004. Crosby, Sir John (d. 1476), merchant and diplomat; *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*, Vol. III, pp. 165, 167.

⁵² Ross 1975, pp. 354–355.

⁵³ Gejrot 2015, p. 139; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 10; 1913, Vol. II, p. 7; Wedgwood & Holt 1936, p. 123.

⁵⁴ Gejrot 2015, p. 137; Stratford 1994, pp. 113–128.

⁵⁵ Gejrot 2015, p. 139; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 82; 1913, Vol. II, p. 10; Thrupp 1948, pp. 371–372; Wedgwood & Holt 1936, p. 914.

⁵⁶ Gejrot 2015, p. 137; Stratford 1994, pp. 113–128.

⁵⁷ Gejrot 2015, p. 137; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, pp. 23, 167; 1913, Vol. II, p. 5; Thrupp 1948, p. 327.

⁵⁸ Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 256; 1913, Vol. II, pp. 11, 164–5; Thrupp 1948, p. 351; Wedgwood & Holt 1936, pp. 505–506.

⁵⁹ Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, p. 256.

of those knighted in 1465, the mayor, the aldermen Hugh Wyche (d. 1468),⁶⁰ and John Leynham, alias Plomer (d. 1482),⁶¹ and two of those knighted in 1471, William Hampton (d. 1483),⁶² and John Crosby, were included among the benefactors and friends. The knighthoods illustrate the continuing patronage of Syon by London's elite and also the confluence of royal and mercantile interests in economics and in cultural and spiritual taste.

Syon Abbey received gifts and vocations from gentry families clustered around other major cities. These included York, in Syon's early days, where the family of Sister Anna Bowes (d. by 1451),⁶³ were powerful clients of Bishop Walter Skirlaw, and engaged in the lucrative wool trade with Calais.⁶⁴ A group of Syon's supporters living in and around Norwich were linked through book ownership.⁶⁵ Father John Steyk (d. 1513), was rector of St Lawrence, Norwich, before he became a brother at Syon.⁶⁶ Norfolk gentry families provided vocations, including four from the Soklynge family of Woodton, all professed by 1428, Syon's third prioress, Juliana Soklynge (d. by 1428),⁶⁷ and Sisters Johanna (d. by 1451), Margaret (d. 1464), and Katherine Soklynge (d. 1469);⁶⁸ Sisters Alice Denham (d. by 1451),⁶⁹ and Mary Denham (d. after 1539);⁷⁰ and Sister Agnes Everingham, whose family originated in Yorkshire but had settled in Norfolk by the fifteenth century and intermarried with the Denham family.⁷¹ Syon's seventh prioress Alice de la Pole (d. 1501),⁷² and Sisters Anne Drury (d. 1512),⁷³ Mary Drury (d. 1534),⁷⁴ and Bridget Sulyard all came from Suffolk families.⁷⁵

⁶⁰ Gejrot 2015, p. 139; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, pp. 109, 256; 1913, Vol. II, p. 11; Thrupp 1948, pp. 375–376; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, pp. 945–946; Freeman 2002, p. 77.

⁶¹ Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, pp. 57, 256; 1913, Vol. II, p. 13; Thrupp 1948, p. 361; Macnamara 1895, pp. 109, 113, 144, 150, 155–156.

⁶² Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Beaven 1908–1913, Vol. I, pp. 175, 256; 1913, Vol. II, p. 12; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, p. 417; Erler 1996, pp. 209–222.

⁶³ Gejrot 2015, pp. 49, 125; Erler 2002, pp. 95–96.

⁶⁴ Roskell et al. 1992, Vol. II, pp. 318–319, Bowes, William (d. 1439); Wedgewood & Holt 1936, p. 97; *Harleian Society*, XVI, Yorkshire, pp. 31–32.

⁶⁵ Erler 2002, pp. 68–84; Tanner 1984, pp. 112, 233.

⁶⁶ Gejrot 2015, p. 91; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 67; Emden, BRUC, pp. 552–553; Erler 2002, pp. 80–82; Gillespie 2001, pp. 587–588; Knowles 1955, Vol. II, p. 347; Tait 2013, pp. 543–545.

⁶⁷ Gejrot 2015, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 47, 93, 105, 131; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 38.

⁶⁹ Gejrot 2015, pp. 43, 81; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Aungier 1840, pp. 89–90, 98–99.

⁷¹ Gejrot 2015, pp. 45, 97; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 44.

⁷² Gejrot 2015, pp. 95, 155; Armstrong 1983, pp. 135–156; Bell 1995, pp. 199, 209–210.

⁷³ Gejrot 2015, pp. 99, 155.

⁷⁴ Gejrot 2015, pp. 129, 157; EUL, MS 95/12, pp. 76–77.

⁷⁵ Gejrot 2015, p. 119; Richmond 1987, pp. 199–228.

Anne, Duchess of Exeter (d. 1476), sister of Edward IV, was associated with a group Devon benefactors. Dartington Hall and its palatial complex of late medieval buildings, the venue for the conference celebrating the 600th anniversary of Syon Abbey's foundation, was the centre of a great estate held by a series of royal patrons in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Richard II granted Dartington to his half-brother John Holland (d. 1400), Duke of Exeter, from whom it descended to his grandson, Anne's first husband, Henry Holland (d. 1475), 4th Duke of Exeter. From 1487 it was held by Lady Margaret Beaufort (d. 1509), mother of Henry VII. Henry VIII granted it to his cousin Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Devon, executed in 1538 for his proximity to the Crown.⁷⁶ It passed to his son Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon who died under suspicious circumstance in exile in 1556.⁷⁷ He was commemorated in the Syon *Martiloge*, together with his four executors who included Sir James Bassett, lord of Umberleigh, Devon.⁷⁸ From 1559 to 1925 Dartington was the property of the Champernowne family, of whom Sir Hugh Champernowne was a special benefactor.⁷⁹ Exeter and its hinterland provided many vocations from landed families and those engaged in coastal trade.⁸⁰ They included Syon's second prioress Joan Cobley (d. by 1428),⁸¹ priests Thomas Dygon (d. 1465),⁸² and Nicholas Edward (d. 1490),⁸³ who had to leave when he contracted leprosy, and Sisters Margaret (d. 1516), Anne (d. after 1539), and Elizabeth Edward (d. after 1539).⁸⁴ The Edwards family and their cousin, the fifth abbess Elizabeth Gybbes (d. 1518),⁸⁵ came from Exeter, and Syon's martyr, Saint Richard Reynolds (d. 1535), came from Pinhoe, now a suburb of Exeter.⁸⁶

Major benefactors of Syon had estates along the Thames Valley on the trade routes from London to Bristol. Richard Quartermaine (c. 1395–1478), of Ryecote, Oxfordshire, was central to a group of patrons. He married Sibyl, daughter of

76 ODNB 2004, Courtenay, Henry, Marquess of Exeter (1498/9–1538); Cokayne 1910–1959, Vol. IV, pp. 330–331.

77 Gejrot 2015, p. 117; ODNB 2004, Courtenay, Edward, 1st Earl of Devon (1526–56); Cokayne 1910–1959, Vol. IV, pp. 331–332.

78 Gejrot 2015, p. 117; ODNB 2004, Bassett, James (c. 1526–1558), courtier.

79 Gejrot 2015, p. 139; EUL, MS 95/12, pp. 199–201.

80 Kowaleski 1995.

81 Gejrot 2015, p. 105; Johnston 1996, p. 64.

82 Gejrot 2015, p. 103; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 23; Gillespie 2001, p. 575.

83 Gejrot 2015, p. 113; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 29; *Calendar of Papal Registers 1484–1492*, p. 42; Gillespie 2001, p. 576.

84 Gejrot 2015, pp. 93, 107, 121, 155; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 29.

85 Gejrot 2015, pp. 23, 113; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 29; Bell 1995, p. 186.

86 Gejrot 2015, pp. 95, 97; Hamilton 1905; ODNB 2004, Reynolds, Richard (d. 1535), martyr.

Nicholas Englefield, steward of Richard II's household.⁸⁷ In 1422, Quartermaine became controller of tunnage and poundage and he shared shipping interests with Richard Buckland and William Hampton. All three were members of the London Fishmongers' Company and special benefactors of Syon. Quartermaine, an M. P. for Oxfordshire, served the households of Richard, Duke of York, and his Duchess Cicely in the 1450s, which led naturally to the service of Edward IV. In many of his later activities Quartermaine acted with his nephew and heir Richard Fowler, son of Sibyl's sister Cicely and her husband William Fowler, three more special benefactors.⁸⁸ In 1474, Quartermaine and Fowler were appointed councillors to Edward IV for life. Richard Fowler, a lawyer and financial official to Henry VI, became solicitor to the crown in 1461, and was successively Chancellor of the Exchequer, under-treasurer of England, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.⁸⁹ Fowler married Quartermaine's great-niece Joan, daughter of John Danvers and his second wife Joan. Danvers too was an M. P., whose main energies went into building up a large Oxfordshire estate.⁹⁰ Joan Fowler's half-sister Agnes Danvers, Lady Say (d. 1478), was commemorated as a special benefactor under the name of her fourth husband Sir John Say, speaker of the House of Commons.⁹¹ In common with many of Syon's Special Benefactors and Friends, the Danvers family were interested in Renaissance learning. They worked towards the foundation of All Souls College and Magdalene College, Oxford, on behalf of the respective founders, Archbishop Henry Chichele and Bishop William Wayneflete, who used the family's local connections and business acumen to manage necessary legal and financial arrangements.⁹² Vocations to Syon in the decades around 1500 included Sister Elizabeth Da[n]vers (d. 1511).⁹³ Her relative Sister Anne Daunsye, or Dauntsey

⁸⁷ Driver 1986, pp. 87–103; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, pp. 703–705; Macnamara 1895, pp. 116–119, 140, pedigree facing p. 171, pp. 204–209; Stratford 1994, p. 121.

⁸⁸ Gejrot 2015, p. 141.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 141, 143; Driver 1986, pp. 87–103; *Harleian Society*, V, Oxfordshire, p. 187; *Harleian Society*, XIX, Bedfordshire, pp. 29–30; Roskell et al. 1992, pp. 350–351; Macnamara 1895, pp. 155–158, 170–175, pedigree facing p. 171, pp. 208–209.

⁹⁰ Gejrot 2015, pp. 139n, 141; *Harleian Society*, V, Oxfordshire, p. 187; Roskell et al. 1992, Vol. I, pp. 747–748; Macnamara 1895, pp. 95–113, 155–158, 173–183, 204–206, 210–212, 218–224, pedigrees facing pp. 103, 155 and 171.

⁹¹ Gejrot 2015, p. 139; ODNB 2004, Say, Sir John, speaker of the House of Commons (d. 1478); *Harleian Society*, V, Oxfordshire, p. 187; *Harleian Society*, XIII, Essex, pp. 119–122; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, pp. 74–76; Macnamara 1895, pp. 95, 143–154, pedigree facing p. 103.

⁹² Bainbridge 2010b, pp. 82–103.

⁹³ Gejrot 2015, pp. 133, 155, her surname is written Davers in the *Martiloge*, but a faint superscript stroke suggests it should be read Da[n]vers; Macnamara 1895, pp. 182–183.

(d. 1567),⁹⁴ laybrother John Mayo (d. 1494),⁹⁵ and his relative Sister Thomasina Grove (d. 1566),⁹⁶ who all came from north Wiltshire gentry families. Sister Agnes Regent (d. 1524),⁹⁷ deacon Thomas Pollard (d. 1544),⁹⁸ and benefactor Master John Pollard (fl. 1446),⁹⁹ were all from Bristol.

In the last decades of the fifteenth century, benefactors of Syon successfully served more than one political dynasty, showing the continuities which had developed in government and administration. Sir John Wood, M. P. (d. 1484), an associate of Richard Fowler, was a Treasury official throughout his career: from 1452–1455 he served as under-treasurer to Henry VI, from 1482–1483 to Richard III, and as treasurer from 1483 to his death in 1484.¹⁰⁰ Thomas Molyneux, M. P. (d. 1490) was attorney-general to Edward IV, and a privy councillor to Henry VII.¹⁰¹

HENRY VII AND THE TUDOR DYNASTY

With the advent of the Tudor dynasty, the pattern of patronage changed again. Lady Margaret Beaufort (d. 1509),¹⁰² the mother of the Welsh King, Henry VII, married as her third husband Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby, in 1482. The powerful Stanley family played a vital role in Henry VII's accession to the throne in 1485. Thereafter patronage and vocations flowed to Syon from the Tudor and Stanley estates spread across north west England, north east Wales and the Welsh borders.

Brother Richard Whitford (d. 1544), is the most famous of Syon's Welsh recruits. He came from the parish of Whitford in Flintshire.¹⁰³ Sisters Alice (d. 1495), and Joanna Buckley (d. 1532), came from the neighbouring parish of Buckley.¹⁰⁴ Syon already had connections with Cheshire families under Edward IV, notably the special benefactor Sir Hugh Wyche, the mercer and mayor of London knighted by Edward IV, and his niece Sister Helen Wyche (d. by

94 Gejrot 2015, p. 97; Macnamara 1895, pp. 229–234, pedigree facing p. 295.

95 Gejrot 2015, p. 115; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 35; Gillespie 2001, p. 583; *Harleian Society*, CV, Wiltshire, pp. 128–129; Mayo 1908; *Victoria County History, Wiltshire*, Vol. III, p. 88.

96 Gejrot 2015, p. 123; Bell 1995, p. 197.

97 Gejrot 2015, p. 81; Erler 2002, pp. 126, 133, 141.

98 Gejrot 2015, p. 79; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 151; Gillespie 2001, p. 584; Tait 2013, pp. 554n, 558.

99 Gejrot 2015, p. 143; Kirby 1888, p. 64.

100 Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, pp. 965–966.

101 Gejrot 2015, p. 141; Wedgewood & Holt 1936, p. 599.

102 Jones & Underwood 1992; Powell 2005, pp. 211–224.

103 Gejrot 2015, p. 117; ODNB 2004, Whitford, Richard (d. 1543?), Birgittine monk and author.

104 Gejrot 2015, pp. 119, 125; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 58; *Harleian Society*, XVIII, Cheshire, pp. 54–57; Meyrick 1846, Vol. I, p. 112; Vol. II, pp. 90–93, 134–36, 145, 211.

1451).¹⁰⁵ The Sutton family, of Sutton in the parish of Prestbury, Cheshire, served Syon Abbey for several generations. William Sutton (d. 1428/9), was a valet to the Crown before he became a lay brother;¹⁰⁶ Anthony Sutton (fl. 1539–1543), became a priest;¹⁰⁷ and Sir Richard Sutton (d. 1524), co-founder of Brasenose College, Oxford, and a privy councillor to Henry VII, was a steward of Syon.¹⁰⁸ Tudor vocations from Cheshire included Sister Elizabeth Stokton (d. 1500),¹⁰⁹ the priest Brother Robert Brereton (d. 31 January 1522),¹¹⁰ whose family was intermarried with minor branches of the Stanley family, Sister Katherine Brereton (d. after 1540),¹¹¹ her cousin Sister Parnell Davenport (d. after 1540),¹¹² and Elizabeth Knutsford (d. 1558).¹¹³ The Stanley family and their retainers provided vocations for Syon into the Recusant era.¹¹⁴

The Tudor dynasty continued royal patronage of Syon. Henry VII endowed an anniversary there for himself, his wife Elizabeth and family.¹¹⁵ In 1521 the step-grandson of his mother Margaret Beaufort, Thomas Stanley, 2nd Earl of Derby was buried there.¹¹⁶ Despite deep fissures in the fifteenth-century political establishment, there was continuity in royal patronage because ultimately the kings were all members of one extended family. Syon's history also provides examples of the matrilineal transmission of religious patronage from one generation to the next. Margaret Beaufort's grandmother Margaret, Duchess of Clarence was one of Syon Abbey's first special benefactors. Margaret Beaufort passed on her status as patron of Syon to three Tudor queens, her daughter-in-law Elizabeth of York, Catherine of Aragon, and Mary I, the last English monarch whose obit is recorded in Syon's *Martiloge*.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁵ Gejrot 2015, pp. 45, 91; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ Gejrot 2015, pp. 43, 81; EUL, MS 95/12, pp. 31–32.

¹⁰⁷ Gejrot 2015, p. 109; EUL, MS 95/12, pp. 109, 149–50.

¹⁰⁸ ODNB 2004, Sutton, Sir Richard (d. 1524), co-founder of Brasenose College, Oxford; Aungier 1840, pp. 81, 531–533; Thornton 2000, pp. 35–36.

¹⁰⁹ Gejrot 2015, p. 89; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 70.

¹¹⁰ Gejrot 2015, p. 79; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 82; *Harleian Society*, XVIII, Cheshire, pp. 41–46; Gillespie 2001, p. 570; Tait 2013, p. 552.

¹¹¹ Gejrot 2015, p. 93; EUL, MS 95/12, p. 82; *Harleian Society*, XVIII, Cheshire, pp. 41–46.

¹¹² Gejrot 2015, p. 115; *Harleian Society*, XVIII, Cheshire, p. 72.

¹¹³ Gejrot 2015, p. 125; EUL, MS 95/10, p. 143.

¹¹⁴ Bainbridge 2010a, p. 48.

¹¹⁵ Aungier 1840, p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Gejrot 2015, p. 99.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 43, 127.

CONCLUSION

The list of abbesses in the *Martiloge* shows how Syon Abbey's geographical influence widened over the course of its first two centuries, until it was a truly national institution. Matilda Newton¹¹⁸ and Joan North (d. 1433),¹¹⁹ both transferred from established communities of religious women, Barking Abbey and Markyate respectively. Matilda and Elizabeth Muston came from a Yorkshire family which settled in Middlesex,¹²⁰ Margaret Ashby came from Leicestershire,¹²¹ Elizabeth Gybbes from Devon, Constance Browne from London,¹²² Agnes Jordan from Wiltshire,¹²³ Catherine Palmer from Sussex,¹²⁴ Elizabeth Hart from Oxfordshire,¹²⁵ and Barbara and Anne Wiseman from Essex.¹²⁶

The patronage of Syon Abbey may be used as a case study to illustrate how regional elites were drawn into national politics by successive royal dynasties in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This came about partly by design, for example through the nation-building policies of Henry V, and partly through political accident as new regimes drew on their own regional affinities and brought new interest groups closer to the heart of the emerging early modern state.

¹¹⁸ Deansley 1915, pp. 110–118.

¹¹⁹ Gejrot 2015, p. 23; Johnston 1996, p. 47.

¹²⁰ Gejrot 2015, p. 23; Johnston 1996, p. 53.

¹²¹ Gejrot 2015, p. 23; Johnston 1996, p. 64.

¹²² Gejrot 2015, p. 25; Davidson 1970, p. 70; Bell 1995, 199; Tait 2013, pp. 160, 418–420.

¹²³ Gejrot 2015, p. 25; Erler 2002, p. 121; *Victoria County History, Buckinghamshire*, III, p. 260; *Victoria County History, Wiltshire*, III, pp. 239, 242.

¹²⁴ Gejrot 2015, p. 25; Erler 2002, p. 121; Hamilton 1905, pp. 102–104; Johnston 1964, p. 10.

¹²⁵ Gejrot 2015, p. 25; Davidson 1970, pp. 117–118, 264–265, 293–295, 384; Morris 1875, Vol. II, pp. 28–34; *Victoria County History, Oxfordshire*, XII, pp. 133, 152.

¹²⁶ Gejrot 2015, p. 25; Morris 1872–1877, Vol. I, pp. 7, 256; 1875, Vol. II, pp. 57–58, 268.

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ERIK CLAESON

Imitatio Christi

Spiritual Marriage, Female Role Models and the Passion of Christ in Fifteenth-Century Vadstena Abbey

INTRODUCTION

IN THE BEGINNING OF *Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris* (henceforth *RSS*) Christ is telling Saint Birgitta that the order she was going to establish would be different from and a good example for all other monastic orders. He describes this in a parable of a vineyard, where the Birgittine Order is the new vineyard, in contrast to the old monastic orders, i.e. the old vineyards. The old vineyards had ceased to bring forth fruit, but God, who is the gardener of the new vineyard, would guard it with divine love and make sure it produces good, sweet wine. Through this new vineyard, many other vineyards will grow and produce fruit again.¹ Vadstena Abbey is described as an institution of good morals and is portrayed as a good example for the old monastic orders.

This is how Vadstena Abbey was supposed to be; an ideal picture is presented. Anyone studying the regulations in *RSS* and other legal documents will find that nothing is said regarding whether the regulations were followed or not. As in any community, Vadstena Abbey was not free from problems, but what regulations were broken and how did the abbey correct those sisters breaking the regulations? Is there any possibility to come closer to the problems and the everyday life of the abbey? I think there is.

In a genre of sermons called *exhortacio/collacio*,² preached by the confessor general in the abbey and based on the confessions of the sisters, we can come

¹ Reg. Salv., pp. 102–104.

² Confessor General Nicolaus Ragvaldi uses these terms synonymously, for example in a sermon for Advent where he writes: 'Exhortacio or collacio to the sisters in Advent' (Berggren 2009, p. 128: 'Exhortacio sev collacio ad sorores in adventu'). The term *collacio* is to be found already in the works of Saint Johannes Cassianus, referring to thehortatory, guiding and blaming speeches held by the abbot or abbess to their followers (Härdelin 1993, p. 82). In *Liber Usuum* the term *exhortacio* is used (Risberg 2003, p. 143). I will use the term *exhortacio* when referring to those sermons.

close to the problems of the abbey. In the *exhortaciones*³ of Confessor General Nicolaus Ragvaldi, he gives examples of problems among the sisters. For example, he says, in a sermon for Lent, that some sisters are sinful because of their impatience as they take revenge on other sisters, not only with words but also with quick signs.⁴ They do that in places where they are not allowed to talk, such as in the dormitory, the refectory and the church, and also in the choir and during the hours.⁵ In another sermon, for Pentecost, he mentions a certain problem of pride. Some consider themselves superior to other sisters because of their parent's wealth in the world.⁶

The *exhortaciones* are not only interesting in their portrayal of concrete problems in the abbey, but also in their presentation of ways to solve them. One way to do that is to remind the sisters of the promises made in the rite of consecration.

The rite of consecration is described in the tenth and eleventh chapter of the rule. Chapter 10 regulates how a new sister is to be tested and prepared for the life in the abbey. A new sister has to wait a year before the abbey can decide whether she will be allowed to enter or not. It is a year of preparation, as she has to think about her reasons for entering and the consequences of doing it. Furthermore, the tenth chapter describes the first moments of the rite performed by the bishop of the diocese, which continues in the eleventh chapter dealing with the detailed liturgy surrounding the consecration of a new sister.⁷ Confessor General Nicolaus quotes from the rite of consecration in an *exhortacio* for the Advent period, as he only quotes from it once it can be seen as a contradiction to stressing the importance of the promises made in the rite of consecration to solve the problems in the abbey.⁸ Still, in another sermon for Lent, Nicolaus teaches the sisters that the taking of vows is of more value than pilgrimage, if it is done for the right purpose. The right purpose, he says, is to observe the promises made when entering the abbey.⁹ My conclusion is that a strong emphasis is laid in the later passage mentioned on the importance of the

³ Published in the edition *Homiletica Vadstenensis. Ad Religiosos et Sacerdotes* by Maria Berggren 2009, in the series *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*.

⁴ Cf. *Lucidarium*, chapter 48, the Customary of the sisters, discusses the problem of signs made in places supposed to be quiet. It is stated that it is prohibited to gossip about others, but also to make cursing signs, see Klemming 1884, p. 104.

⁵ Berggren 2009, p. 196.

⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

⁷ Reg. Salv., pp. 111–118.

⁸ Berggren 2009, pp. 130–131.

⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

rite of consecration in overcoming the problems among the sisters. In addition, it is my opinion that the rite of consecration, with its prayers and ceremonies, in a certain way expresses the demands of living in the abbey.

I have chosen to do a comparative study between the *exhortaciones* of Confessor General Nicolaus¹⁰ and the rite of consecration as described in the tenth and eleventh chapter of *RSS*. My aim is to display the existing continuity between the sisters' rite of consecration and the *exhortaciones*. I argue that the link between the two is not primarily 'intertextual', a demonstrable fact as Nicolaus only makes one quotation from the rite of consecration. However, a link is visible in light of the shared spirituality¹¹ that expresses itself primarily in the commonalities of topics and usages of terminology. I will focus on textual sections in both materials, which express how to practice the Christian life in the abbey of Vadstena. For textual analysis I will study the theological meaning of central words used in both categories of the material. The practical exhortations were not only delivered to the sisters in words, i.e. in prayers, but also through other media such as ceremonies and pictures, which will also be taken into account. By these analyses I claim that it is possible to grasp the spirituality expressed by Confessor General Nicolaus and in the rite of consecration.

PREACHING IN GENERAL AND PREACHING TO NUNS IN THE ABBEY OF VADSTENA

The thirteen priest-brothers in the abbey of Vadstena were sometimes called preaching-brothers, indicating the importance of preaching in the abbey. According to *RSS* chapter 15, the priest-brothers '... shall expound the Gospel of the day at Mass every Sunday, in the vernacular, for all who are listening. Also, they shall preach publicly in festivals, which have vigils with fasting on bread and water, and on all other feasts having a vigil as well.'¹² In this regulation it is stated that the sermons were to be preached in the vernacular, which was the common custom in the Middle Ages.¹³ Furthermore, two types of sermons are

¹⁰ I am analysing six of the eleven sermons published by Berggren, numbers 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.9 and 4.11. The analysis is limited to the sermons discussed in my essay for the master degree.

¹¹ I use the definition formulated by Alf Härdelin. He defines spirituality as the teaching formulated and delivered by the Church on how to practice a Christian life, instead of reducing it to studies of feelings and subjective experiences of individual Christians, see Härdelin 2005, pp. 28–30.

¹² Reg. Salv., p. 121: '... omni die dominico euangelium illius diei in ipsa missa omnibus auditentibus in materna lingua exponere tenentur cunctisque solemnitatibus, quarum vigilias seu profesta ieunant in pane et aqua, atque aliis quibuscumque festis vigiliam habentibus publice predicare'.

¹³ Berggren 2009, pp. XVII–XX; Borgehammar 2010, pp. 15–16.

mentioned. The first one concerns an explanation of the Gospel pericope of the day, often verse-by-verse, primarily focusing on the historical sense of the text. The second one mentioned is the public preaching, also called the *thematic* sermon. It proceeded from one sentence or phrase in the Bible, and based on this the content of the sermon was divided. The primary focus was to expound different senses of the phrase and explain it in detail.¹⁴ Regarding the content of the sermons, it is regulated in *Revelaciones Extravagantes* chapter 23 that sermons are to consist of texts from the Bible, the words of Saint Birgitta, Mary and the saints, i.e. the Revelations, the Lives of the Fathers and hagiographies, the creed and remedies against temptations and vices.¹⁵ The *exhortaciones* of Nicolaus Ragvaldi contain references to the Bible, the Fathers (primarily Augustine and Gregory the Great), medieval authors such as Bernhard of Clairvaux and legislative texts of the Birgittine Order.¹⁶

The *exhortaciones* belong to the category of *thematic* sermons. Regulations about the *exhortaciones* are given in *RSS* and the Customary of the brothers, *Liber Usuum*. According to *RSS*, the confessor general was obliged to hear confessions at least three times a year from each sister.¹⁷ The twenty-second chapter of *Liber Usuum* regulates the duties of the confessor general, stating that: 'After he had heard all confessions in accordance with the rule, he was supposed to give particular exhortations to the sisters in the locutory, three to four times a year, in order to reform such transgressions of the rule as have then emerged'.¹⁸ Sermons to nuns were preached as early as 1444 and 1445 by the Confessor Generals Magnus Unnonis and Iohannes Borquardi, even though *Liber Usuum* was not given official status as an additional regulation until 1487. A reasonable argument given by Berggren is that those early practises of the *exhortaciones* gave rise to the regulation in *Liber Usuum*.¹⁹

As aforementioned, it was among the duties of the confessor general to preach the *exhortaciones* for the sisters. The confessor general in focus for this article is Nicolaus Ragvaldi. He was probably born around 1445²⁰ in the Swedish region

¹⁴ Andersson & Borgéhammar 1997, pp. 230–231.

¹⁵ Rev. Extr., p. 133.

¹⁶ Berggren 2009, pp. XXVIII–XXX.

¹⁷ Reg. Salv., p. 121: 'Confessori eciam generali ad minus ter in anno omnium sororum ...'.

¹⁸ Risberg 2003, p. 143: '... sororibus in loquitorio eis ad hoc specialiter congregatis ter vel quater in anno, scilicet postquam audierat iuxta regulam omnium confessiones, speciales faciat exhortaciones pro reformacione excessum regularium tunc eminentum'.

¹⁹ Berggren 2009, pp. XIV and LXXIX.

²⁰ The year of birth is based on a note in one of his sermon collections (C 348) stating that he reached the age of 52 around the time of Pentecost in 1497 ('Anno dominij 1497 in festo pentecostes vel circa complevi lij annos'), in MHUU 4, p. 324.

of Östergötland²¹ and was made a priest-brother in the abbey of Vadstena in 1476.²² The memorial book of Vadstena Abbey states that he held the position of confessor general three times, twice in the abbey of Vadstena and one time in the abbey of Mariental, Reval. The first time he was elected was 12 May 1501. The memorial book describes him as a venerable man, much devoted and with a good reputation, who was elected unanimously and serenely by the brothers.²³ Between his periods as confessor general in the abbey of Vadstena, in 1506, he made a journey together with brother Karolus Benedicti. The reason was to do a visitation and to reform the abbeys in Reval and Danzig, as both of them had written to the abbey in Vadstena complaining about the lack of sisters and brothers. In addition, the abbey in Danzig had been defamed.²⁴ The same year, in 1506, Vadstena received a letter of resignation from Nicolaus, sent from Mariental. In Mariental he was elected confessor general, a position he held for two years before his return to Vadstena on 24 June 1508.²⁵ On 22 February 1511 he was elected confessor general a second time, a position he held for a year, until 1512.²⁶ This time he is described as an honourable man, and a reason for his re-election was that he held this post in a beneficial way the first time.²⁷ He died 1 July 1514.²⁸

A COMPARATIVE STUDY:
Exhortaciones AND THE RITE OF CONSECRATION

In the following I will discuss three central topics in the rite of consecration discovered in the *exhortaciones* of Confessor General Nicolaus, namely female role models, the spiritual marriage and the Passion of Christ.

Female role models

The Virgin Mary was a central figure for Saint Birgitta, which can be seen in the Revelations, but also in the history of Vadstena Abbey. This can be exemplified in a number of ways. First, it can be seen in the structure of the order. In the

²¹ Andersson 2001, p. 213. According to Andersson his place of birth is uncertain, but since Nicolaus' cousin Anna Nilsdotter, consecrated as sister in the abbey 25 October 1495, was from Östergötland (Gejrot 1996, 923), it is possible that Nicolaus was born in the same region.

²² Gejrot 1996, 828.

²³ Ibid., 953: '... xii die mensis Mai in bona concordia et tranquillitate electus est in confessorem generalem venerabilis vir ffrater Nicolaus Rawaldi magne devacionis et circumspeccionis'.

²⁴ Ibid., 974.

²⁵ Ibid., 980 and 1010.

²⁶ Ibid., 1010 and 1018.

²⁷ Ibid., 1010: '...electus est in confessorem generalem honorabilis vir frater Nicolaus Rawaldi ... hic huiusmodi officium confessoris proficie gerebat fere annis sex'.

²⁸ Ibid., 1027.

first chapter of *RSS* Christ says: 'I will institute this order in honour of my most beloved mother.'²⁹ Additionally, in the fourteenth chapter it is stated that as the Virgin Mary was the head and queen of the apostles and disciples after Christ's ascending to heaven, the abbess is the head and queen of the abbey, since the abbess is the Virgin Mary's substitute on earth.³⁰ Therefore, the abbess has the highest position in the monastery.

A second example can be seen in the structure and content of the divine office. It was not possible for the brothers and sisters to celebrate the divine office together, since the Second Lateran Council of 1139 forbade it.³¹ For this reason, a Marian office, *Cantus Sororum*, was composed for the sisters.³² *Cantus Sororum* is structured around *Sermo Angelicus*, which contains readings for the divine office focusing on the Virgin Mary's life before the creation and on earth, ending with her assumption into heaven.³³ Additionally, Ingmar Milveden argues that since the brothers celebrated their office first, followed by the sisters, the Marian office was the crescendo. Because it was normally the other way around, this expresses the Birgittine spirituality as mariocentric.³⁴

These are just some examples of the important place held by the Virgin Mary in Vadstena Abbey. Below I will focus on the Virgin Mary's significance and function in the rite of consecration and in Confessor General Nicolaus Ragvaldi's sermons, but the importance of other female saints will also be stressed.

In the beginning of the rite of consecration, after answering questions from the bishop outside the church, the new sister was led into the church following a red ensign. On the one side of the ensign a picture of the suffering Christ was shown, which I will discuss later. On the other side was a picture of the Virgin Mary, and *RSS* states: 'When seeing the sign of her new groom suffering on the cross, the new bride should learn patience and poverty and when seeing the Virgin Mary she should learn chastity and humility.'³⁵ I will discuss the Virgin Mary's characteristics, beginning with the humility.

²⁹ Reg. Salv., p. 105: 'Hanc igitur religionem ad honorem amantissime Matris mee ... statuere volo.'

³⁰ Ibid., p. 120. This regulation was debated and put to question by the brothers many times in the history of the abbey, see for example Gejrot 1990.

³¹ Piltz 1996, pp. 255f.

³² Cf. Reg. Salv., p. 107.

³³ Serm. Ang., pp. 75–137. According to Anders Piltz, *Sermo Angelicus* was translated by magister Petrus Olavi of Skänninge in 1354, Piltz 1996, p. 256.

³⁴ Milveden 1972/73, pp. 46f.

³⁵ Reg. Salv., pp. 112–113: '... aspiciens noua sponsa signum noui sponsi in cruce passi discat pacientiam et paupertatem et aspiciens Virginem Matrem discat castitatem et humilitatem'.

A useful interpretation of the word humility in this context is to understand it as the offering of the Virgin Mary's own will to do the will of her son.³⁶ A similar understanding of the word is found in one *exhortacio* for Advent. In this sermon, Nicolaus quotes chapter 20 of the first book of Saint Birgitta's Revelations, which contains a conversation between the Virgin Mary and her son. She is being told that her ability to follow him, suffer with him and do his will was made possible because of her humility, the offering of her own will.³⁷ The humility is connected to the suffering, but not to suffering in general, but suffering with Christ. In another *exhortacio* for Advent, the Virgin Mary is called a white martyr, because she was standing near the cross and felt the pain of seeing her son die, an act not possible without humility.³⁸ Nicolaus counts the white martyrdom as higher than the classical martyrdom, because the suffering lasts longer.³⁹

In order to understand the concept of white martyrdom we need to understand that the earliest saints, according to, for example, Saint Augustine, were martyrs. As the persecutions of the Christians ceased, other categories of holy men and women were added to the group of saints, such as confessors and virgins; these were called white martyrs. Still, the martyrs were often regarded as having the highest rank among the saints.⁴⁰ Since martyrs still had a high position in the Church's teaching, Nicolaus expresses how the sisters, like the Virgin Mary, can become martyrs even though they were not persecuted for their faith. In fact, Saint Birgitta and her daughter Saint Katarina are also mentioned among the white martyrs.⁴¹ By making the most important women in the history of the abbey a kind of martyr, the sisters had the ultimate role models in their quest to follow and suffer with Christ. The fact that Nicolaus needs to stress the high position of the white martyrdom can perhaps be explained by some sisters questioning the importance of this. However, by stressing the longer suffering for white martyrs, Nicolaus is trying to strengthen the concept of white martyrdom. Following the martyrs, in this context especially the Virgin Mary, is to ultimately follow Christ, and not his life in general but his suffering, *imitatio Christi*.

The other characteristic the sisters were about to learn from the Virgin Mary, according to the rite of consecration, was chastity. In the *exhortaciones*, Confes-

³⁶ Härdelin 1998, p. 343.

³⁷ Berggren 2009, p. 137. Cf. Rev. I:20, p. 294.

³⁸ Berggren 2009, p. 93.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴⁰ Raasted 1961, pp. 321f; Nilsson 2005, pp. 2f.

⁴¹ Berggren 2009, pp. 71–72.

sor General Nicolaus never mentions chastity when talking about the Virgin Mary. Instead, he gives examples of other female saints exemplifying chastity: Agnes, Barbara and Dionysia.⁴² Let us look a little closer at the martyr Agnes. According to Härdelin, many of the thoughts and formulas in the rite of consecration are collected from the *vita* of Agnes, for example the prayer over the ring and the strong emphasis on the mystical marriage between the bride and the groom Jesus Christ.⁴³ Nicolaus mentions Agnes in two different sermons when talking about the value of chastity.⁴⁴ What Härdelin expresses on Agnes' role in the rite of consecration and what Nicolaus states in the *exhortaciones* is that she would have rather died than lose her virginity and chastity. In the next section I will exemplify with an excerpt from one *exhortacio* that becoming a bride of Christ is to share the suffering of Christ.

The spiritual marriage

There is another important link existing between the two materials, namely the secular marriage, which plays an important role in explaining the spiritual marriage. First, let us look for possible allusions to the secular marriage in the rite of consecration.

During the ceremony in the church, the bishop blesses the ring and puts it on the candidate's finger.⁴⁵ Additionally, when clothing the bride with her new clothes, the most important vestment, according to Härdelin, is the veil.⁴⁶ Next to the outward signs of ring and veil, the prayer after the dressing of the candidate also indicates a link to the secular marriage, and I quote from the eleventh chapter: 'When the bishop comes to that part of the Mass, in which the priest usually turns to the bride and groom to bless them, he turns to the candidate and places a crown on her head, over the veil.'⁴⁷ Those are the most obvious links to the secular marriage.

Confessor General Nicolaus' allusion to the secular marriage is found in one *exhortacio* for Advent with the *thema* 'See the groom is coming, go out and meet him.'⁴⁸ This *thema* has special connotations for the sisters, since they are united

⁴² Ibid., p. 78.

⁴³ Härdelin 1998, p. 339.

⁴⁴ Berggren 2009, pp. 78 and 90.

⁴⁵ Reg. Salv., p. 113.

⁴⁶ Härdelin 1998, p. 338.

⁴⁷ Reg. Salv., p. 116: 'Qui cum venerit ad partem illam misse, in qua sacerdos in sponsali missa solet se conuertere et benedicere sponsum et sponsam, conuertet et ipse se episcopus et vno clericu vocante famulam Dei ad altare imponat ei coronam super velum ...'

⁴⁸ Berggren 2009, p. 128: 'Ecce sponsus venit; exite obviam ei.'

with Christ in a spiritual marriage. To describe the union, Nicolaus makes use of allusions from the secular marriage.

What must the sisters do to make this union take place in their souls? Nicolaus explains that they have to be like a chaste bride who waits for her groom before the marriage. First, she should go into the bedroom, secondly, look at herself in the mirror, thirdly, wash away the stains and fourthly, dress in beautiful clothes. Nicolaus interprets this as follows: First, the sisters' bedroom is the soul and it is in there that they should identify their own sin. Secondly, the mirror that the sisters should reflect themselves in is the Bible and the rule. Thirdly, when the sisters have seen their sin in the light of the Bible and the rule, they should wash them away. To wash away the sins is to make confession in the sacrament of penance. Fourthly, the bride is clothed in beautiful clothing. The sisters' clothing should be virtues with which they dress their souls. Two virtues are especially important for a bride of Christ: purity and love. The bride and groom are supposed to wear the same colour, so as to mark their unity and love; the colours of Christ's clothes are white and red.⁴⁹ White symbolises purity while red represents the blood of Christ, since the vestment of love is made of Christ's blood on the cross.⁵⁰

Some comments are necessary here. Though the obvious signs, the ring and veil, are absent in the *exhortacio*, a clear link exists to the secular marriage. In addition to the rite of consecration, Nicolaus formulates a practical theology about how to preserve the mystical marriage. Being a bride of Christ means resembling the groom both in purity and in suffering, characteristics the sisters reach by self-knowledge, the mirroring in the Bible and the rule ending up with the sacrament of penance. Only through purity can they resemble Christ and share His suffering.

The Passion of Christ

In this passage, I will discuss different aspects of how to understand the suffering of Christ, how to internalise it and what the consequences will be if this is done. Let us begin with the rite of consecration. As mentioned before, by watching Christ on the red ensign the new sister will learn patience and poverty. When analysing the etymological background of the word *paciencia*, we find that it has its root in the verb *patior*, to suffer. The candidate is not just about to learn patience in a general way, but patience in suffering and willingness to

49 Cf. Song of Songs 5:10.

50 Berggren 2009, pp. 129–133.

suffer with the suffering Christ. Furthermore, the term poverty does not just refer to material poverty, but also in a spiritual way, in sharing the poverty in the spirit that Christ felt, as he was left alone hanging on the cross, having nothing.⁵¹

In the *exhortaciones* of Confessor General Nicolaus, the interpretation of the word patience is understood in a similar way. In two *exhortaciones*, one for Advent and one for Pentecost, he states that patience can make a person a martyr and quotes Gregory the Great: 'We can become martyrs without sword or fire, if we truly preserve the patience in our souls.'⁵² In the sermon for Pentecost, Nicolaus adds that the person becoming a martyr through patience is even greater than the one who suffers the sword, because the time of suffering lasts longer; 20, 30 or even 40 years.⁵³ Patience is also here to be understood in the light of its etymological background, meaning patience in suffering.

The second aspect of Christ's passion in the rite of consecration is among the prayers by the bishop over the vestments, and especially the prayer over the button with which the mantle is held together. The bishop prays as follows:

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who for the sake of his love with which he loved us was nailed to the cross of tree and sentenced to the most bitter death, may he be nailed to your soul and pierce it by the memory (*memoria*) of his suffering, so that your love will glow to God alone and the fire of love surround you and give you rest in his arms, where all the saints find their strength.⁵⁴

Let us first look at the term memory. The term is primarily used in passages concerning the passion of Christ in the *exhortaciones*. In one of the sermons for Advent, the same one that makes references to the secular marriage, Nicolaus writes that the colours of the clothes of the bride are white and red. Red signifies love, which has been tinged by the blood of Christ and 'the clothes of love are woven together by the memory of the Lord's passion'.⁵⁵ The second time Nicolaus mentions memory in connection to suffering is in a sermon for Lent. He exhorts the sisters: 'If you want to be saved, do not seek revenge, but remember

⁵¹ Härdelin 1998, pp. 342–343.

⁵² Berggren 2009, pp. 93 and 197: 'Sine effusione sanguinis martyres esse possumus, si pacienciam in animo veraciter custodimus.'

⁵³ Ibid., p. 197.

⁵⁴ Reg. Salv., p. 115: 'Dominus noster Ihesus Christus, qui propter nimiam caritatem, qua dilexit nos, ligno crucis affixus est et amarissima morte dampnatus, ipse animam tuam configat et transuerberet memoria passionis sue, vt caritas tua ad solum Deum ferueat et ignis caritatis diuine amplexans te tribuat tibi requiem in suo benedicto brachio, in quo omnes sancti requiescent.'

⁵⁵ Berggren 2009, p. 132: '... ex dominice passionis memoria texitur uestis caritatis'.

how much and in what way Christ suffered for you.⁵⁶ How are we to understand the usage of the word memory in the abbey of Vadstena? It is not possible to give a full explanation of the development of the word, but some aspects can be mentioned.

The term *memoria* is central in two texts from the middle of the fifteenth century, used in the abbey of Vadstena. Those texts, one in Latin⁵⁷ and one in Swedish,⁵⁸ contain meditations for the 15 devotions at specific stations, similar to the Stations of the Cross. Härdelin analyses those texts and, among other things, he discusses how the expression memory of the Lord's passion can be understood theologically. In one of the texts the memory of the Lord's passion is described as follows: 'There is no medicine more effective against the sins and nothing so powerful in killing the sins, in crucifying the vice, in extinguishing the temptation and in expelling the evil, than to remember the passion of the Christ.' This is what one achieves in remembering the Lord's passion, but how is it possible?

According to Härdelin, memorising is to be understood as making present the historical event of the past. This can be compared to the understanding of memory as remembrance, translated from the Greek word *anamnesis* and used, for example, in the Bible when Jesus at the Last supper institutes the Eucharist: 'Do this in remembrance of me.'⁵⁹ Remembrance does not mean to remember in a general sense, but to make present by abolishing the time-distance between past and present. This interpretation of the word is also found in the works of other mystical writers in the Middle Ages, such as Henry Suso and Ludolph of Saxony.⁶⁰ To make it clear the memory comprises in itself multiple temporal dimensions: past, present and future. This makes it understandable why it is possible to use the historical events of the past for making judgements in the present and in the future. However, by memorising a historical event in the past, you also internalise it and make it your own.⁶¹ The historical event that has been memorised can be used over and over again, because this is one of the functions of history during the Middle Ages: to teach how to act in present situations. If we use this interpretation regarding the sections in the *exhortaciones*, the sisters are urged to remember the Passion of Christ in order to make the suffering

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 195: '... si uis saluari, non queras uindictam, sed ueniant ad memoriam quanta et qualia sustinuit pro te Christus'.

⁵⁷ C 50, fol. 145rv *De quindecim stationibus*, in MHUU 2, p. 337.

⁵⁸ C 50, fol. 150r–151r *De quindecim stationibus*, in MHUU 2, p. 338.

⁵⁹ Luke 22:19.

⁶⁰ Härdelin 2003, pp. 55–60.

⁶¹ Carruthers 1990, pp. 193f.

present in their lives, because this will kill the sins and cause them to not take revenge on the sisters by mocking and hurting them. By this understanding of memory the exhortation goes from being a general exhortation to a personal one, since when each sister is thinking about this historical event over and over again, each one of them will be more and more like Christ. However, the sisters should not just theorise about the suffering of Christ; rather, they ought to act as Christ, i.e. imitate Christ in their everyday lives, an interpretation that is possible when thinking about the genre of the sermons. The confessor general exhorts the sisters, in order to reform the transgressions and make them follow the rule; the goal of the *exhortaciones* is to change the sinful behaviour of the sisters, but it is only possible to change this from the inside and out. This is why they first have to internalise the memory of the suffering Christ before they can change their actions. Consequently, the inner life and the outward actions mirror each other.

What will the consequences be of remembering Christ's passion according to the rite of consecration? First, 'that the love will glow to God alone and the fire of love will surround you'.⁶² The first consequence concerns the love directed to God. In the *exhortaciones*, the direction of the love is primarily towards the other sisters. In the *exhortacio* for Pentecost, he says that the sisters should not take revenge when they are tempted to express wrath, jealousy and rancour towards others, but remember Christ's love, as he showed his enemies hanging on the cross. The section ends with the quotation: 'But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you'.⁶³ This quotation is also found in another *exhortacio* for Advent. Nicolaus writes that when they love their enemies the sisters become white martyrs.⁶⁴ The love and the suffering are connected, not only because the suffering of Christ on the cross was an act of love as he died for the sins of others, but also because in his utmost pain he did not take revenge on his enemies, but loved them and asked the Father to forgive them.⁶⁵ The second consequence is that anyone who remembers Christ's passion may 'rest in his arms, where all the saints find their strength'.⁶⁶ This aspect concerns the eternal life, also expressed in one *exhortacio* for Lent. Nicolaus says that remembering

⁶² Reg. Salv., p. 115: '... vt caritas tua ad solum Deum ferueat et ignis caritatis divine amplexans te ...'

⁶³ Berggren 2009, pp. 195–196.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁵ Cf. Luke 23:34.

⁶⁶ Reg. Salv., p. 115: '... vt ... tribuat tibi requiem in suo benedicto brachio, in quo omnes sancti requiescant'.

the Passion of Christ makes the sisters reach to the heavens. This statement is proven by one *exemplum* expressing that remembering Christ's passion gives hope for an eternal life.⁶⁷ The ultimate goal for the sisters is the eternal life, which they will reach by imitating Christ and following his words. His words, says Nicolaus, are not just contained in the Bible, but also in the rule. Because, as Christ dictated the Bible for the evangelists, he dictated the rule for Saint Birgitta.⁶⁸ Therefore, the sisters not following the regulations in the rule are sinning in a dangerous way.⁶⁹ Consequently, when Nicolaus exhorts the sisters to follow the rule, it is not just a matter of discipline he has in mind, but eternal life.

CONCLUSION

Even though the sisters in the abbey of Vadstena did not fulfil every aspect of being the new vineyard, we can notice how important it was to follow Christ and the rule, which is mediated in the *exhortaciones* of Confessor General Nicolaus. Since we only have Nicolaus' descriptions, we have no idea how this message was received among the sisters, and in this respect we cannot acquire a full picture of the everyday life in the abbey. Still, the strength of the *exhortaciones* is that they give another picture than that of legal documents, since they also provide us with an understanding of how transgressions of the rule were reformed and what arguments were used in order to make the sisters live according to their vocation. The general exhortation of the sisters, found both in the rite of consecration and in the *exhortaciones*, could be concluded by the words *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of the suffering Christ.

The three topics discussed above express different tools or ways to fulfil this exhortation. The following of the Virgin Mary's humility means offering their own will to do the will of Christ, and especially to suffer with him. In her, the sisters found their ultimate role model for suffering, as she is a white martyr, who suffered even though she was not persecuted for her faith. The chastity is not linked to Virgin Mary in the *exhortaciones*, but to Agnes. From her *vita* the rite of consecration has incorporated many prayers and formulations, but also the important theme of a spiritual marriage.

The practical theology based on the secular marriage, as formulated by Nicolaus, is important for understanding the spiritual marriage. He mentions four

67 Berggren 2009, p. 159.

68 Cf. Reg. Salv., pp. 102–104.

69 Berggren 2009, pp. 150f. The authority and orthodoxy of Saint Birgitta's *Reuelaciones* was put into question and defended during the Council of Basel in 1430, but the authority of *Regula Saluatoris* was not examined, see Fredriksson Adman 2003, pp. 13f.

steps in preserving the spiritual marriage: self-knowledge, the usage of the Bible and rule as a way of finding sins, confession in the sacrament of penance and dress in virtues, namely purity and love, where love is to share the suffering of Christ. Finally, by remembering the suffering of Christ, the sisters are able to internalise the same suffering since the technique of remembering makes the suffering present, which should result not just in theorising about the suffering, but in acting as Christ did. By doing this the sisters will be able to fulfil the regulations of *RSS*, follow the words of Christ and reach eternal life.

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- SFSS = *Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet*.

DAVID CARRILLO-RANGEL

Textual Mirrors and Spiritual Reality

Exempla, Mnemonic Devices and Performance in the Birgittine Order

‘You’, she said, ‘should be like a mirror, clear and clean, and like a sharp thorn – a mirror through honest and godly behaviour and through good example, but a thorn through the denunciation of sinners.’¹

THIS PASSAGE OF THE *vita*, in which the Virgin addresses Saint Birgitta, exemplifies some characteristics not only of her writings but also of the devotional practices and the spirituality of her order and her time. Moreover, it can also be understood as referring to Birgitta herself as a writer of the Revelations,² which is composed of some texts concerned with contemplative states and others with the denunciation of corruption in clergy, rulers and laity. In this way, Birgitta’s image merges with the text itself, transforming her into an exemplary figure through whom the readers can come to inspect their conscience, as in a mirror, and to know Christ and his spiritual message. Moreover, the concept of the mirror is often used in mystical writings as an example of union with God, for instance in the writings of Marguerite Porete.³ The monastic order that Birgitta founded by divine inspiration would have a

¹ Quoted from Tjäder Harris, Kezel & Nyberg 1990, pp. 69–98. The original Latin is: “Tu”, inquit, “debes ese sicut speculum clarum et mundum et sicut spina acuta, speculum per honestos mores et diuinos et per bona exempla, spina vero per detestacionem peccatorum”; *A.P.*, p. 100. The so-called *A.P. vita* can be found in the edition of Birgitta’s canonisation proceedings made by Collijn 1924–1941, pp. 73–101. This text will henceforth be referred to as *A.P.* and page number in the quoted edition.

² Or more precisely recipient and mouthpiece. The role of Birgitta in the process of writing down the Revelations is described in *A.P.* 84. See also Morris 1999, pp. 64–92.

³ In *The Mirror of the Simple Souls*, when commenting about the states to reach the union with God, in the fifth one, where the lighting of God reflects itself in the mirror of the soul. See Garí 2005 and Babinsky 1993. This idea also finds equivalents in Clare of Assisi, Henry Suso, Ramon Llull and Marguerite d’Oingt, among others.

similar function, showing a double discourse: that of contemplation and interior activity, mainly undertaken by the sisters, and an exterior one, fulfilled by the brothers through the pastoral care of the congregation, of preaching and active participation in the creation, translation and distribution of devotional texts in the vernacular to the laity, aimed to convey that 'thorny' message of spiritual reform.

This paper aims to examine the transmission of devotional practices from Saint Birgitta through three processes; the way her devotions are portrayed in the Revelations, to her order and the laity. The first one, which has already been mentioned, is the relationship between devotions in texts and their reception. The second concerns the interplay between exemplary figures and the readers/audience in a process of modelling, and the third the role of individual memory, collective memory, the use of mnemonic devices in the texts and the function of such devices, as well as *exempla* in the performance of prayers and other pious practices. These processes are interwoven to form a prism whose different faces allow interactions of different kinds with the same textual device or devotion. Thus, a given devotional text can represent a textual mirror presenting guidelines for the spiritual life that trigger the self-inspection of the user/reader, introduce exemplary figures aiming to become models of behaviour – which helps when facing different situations – or/and initiate a chain of associations stored in memory through the performance of prayers and other practices. Accordingly, the classification specified here intends to re-enact the main function of the texts and devotions, but also mentions its secondary uses.

However, before starting to develop each of these points, a clarification of the term *transmission* might be needed. This paper covers a period of time roughly from the late Middle Ages to post-Tridentine Spain – that is, from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century. One of my aims is to showcase the reactions, behaviour and performance related to some devotions and their continuity and change. The tools for reaching this goal, however, are not only the textual transmission or the study of the reception of the Revelations. I claim that the concept of 'transmission' of any cultural or religious practice is a complex process involving different factors, such as: shared mental definitions, representations of the self in social terms and space, ritualistic performance, the interplay between oral and written assimilation and re-shaping of contents, collective memory, and so on. This approach, which cognitive anthropologists often use, is less applied in the analysis of hybrid societies where oral forms of communication coexist with writing, even if they claim that these interactions

can also be found in ‘written societies’.⁴ That is not to say that in the following pages a time-travel field work is proposed; instead, the processes proposed for analysing transmission should be understood as complementing each other and occurring simultaneously.

THE REVELATIONS AS A TEXTUAL MIRROR

A myriad of exemplary figures and models to follow can be found in the Revelations. Sometimes these figures are saints like Saint Lawrence, John the Baptist, Saint Agnes, Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, Saint Dominic, Saint Benedict and Saint Francis, and Birgitta is told to imitate them as a way of union with Christ’s body.⁵ However, most of the times the figures par excellence are Mary and Jesus. All of them are voices that address Birgitta, or the ‘Bride’ as she is called in most of the revelations. This epithet was used by most of the mystagogic literature of her time and fashioned her as an exemplary figure linked to that of the saints by omitting her name, which eased the process of identification in a way similar to that of Henry Suso, who self-fashioned himself as the Servant of Eternal Wisdom in *The Exemplar*.⁶ In other words, her portrayal in the texts is idealistic, emulating not only the forms of hagiography but also of devotional literature, where the role of *magister*/confessor addressing a nun is substituted by God, Jesus and other heavenly figures that talk to her. In this context it is worth noticing the references to saints that developed a monastic rule in connection with her role as a founder of a monastic order as well, as in Rev. VI:47, where Birgitta is given advice by the Virgin about preaching, which was forbidden to women, and which was possibly intended for the brothers to read and identify. All in all, the construction of the Revelations as an *exemplar*⁷ could have been planned by her confessors, bearing in mind a primarily but not exclusively monastic audience.⁸

4 See, for instance, Boyer 1999, p. viii. The concept of ‘written’ or ‘literacy’ societies should also be clarified and explained further. Medieval and perhaps to greater extent modern societies were hybrid ones, where texts are mediators between oral performance and written manuscripts or books, see Starkey 2005.

5 Rev. IV:92, 8–9

6 English translation by Tobin 1989, pp. 61–132. For the way in which Henry Suso self-fashions himself, see Hamburger 1998.

7 I am using the term *exemplar* in a similar way to that of Suso, that is, as referring to a copy of a book or text and to a model of pattern to be copied or imitated.

8 This does not mean that the Revelations were forged, or the creation of the confessors, or that Birgitta’s devotion followed scripted visions; rather, this is yet another tool, like the rhetorical devices that will be explained below, for expressing her visionary experience and adapting it to its communication and transmission, as the text itself implies (Rev. Extr. 49). For a similar

Among all of the proposed models in the text, the most important is the *imitatio Mariae Virginis*. Caroline Walker Bynum has explained that the reverence for Mary in medieval devotions is more for her role as 'bearer and conduit of the Incarnation'.⁹ However in this context, her role as a mother is also important,¹⁰ as a key for identification and modelling of the reader/audience. Since the order was dedicated to the Virgin, the abbess would represent her symbolically,¹¹ and because she is a witness and 'co-bearer' of the passion, where Christ's suffering on the cross is apprehended through Mary's experience and pain¹² in what has been defined as *compassio Mariae*. Nonetheless, the concept of *imitatio Christi* appears in the text as such, where Jesus explains it to his bride in these terms:

If my head was pierced and inclined on the cross for you, your head should be inclined toward humility. Since my eyes were bloody and full of tears, your eyes should keep away from pleasurable sights. Since my ears were filled with blood and heard mocking words against me, your ears should turn aside from frivolous and unfitting talk. Since my mouth was given a bitter drink to drink but was denied a sweet one, keep your own mouth from evil and let it be open for good. Since my hands were stretched out by nails, let your works, which the hands symbolize, be stretched out to the poor and to my commandments [...].¹³

The revelation thus provides guidelines for a spiritual life exemplified through the sufferings of Christ in the Passion; the ones mentioned are humility, rejection of worldly emotions, silence and talk restricted to good deeds, charity and poverty, which match some of the precepts that would later be part of the Birgittine Rule. The term *imitatio* should be understood here in its medieval meaning: users/readers inspect their own conduct by superposing their actions

concept, applied to the allegory and Hildegard of Bingen, see Dronke 1998. For the debate of the authenticity of visions, see Newman 2005.

⁹ Bynum 1991, p. 149.

¹⁰ For the topic of spiritual motherhood, see Atkinson 1991.

¹¹ Reg. Salv. 14.

¹² Rev. II: 21.

¹³ Rev. I: 11, 3–5: 'Si enim caput meum punctum est et inclinatum in cruce pro te, caput tuum debet inclinari ad humilitatem. Et quia oculi mei erant sanguinolenti et pleni lacrimis, ideo oculi tui debent abstinere a delectabili visu. Et quia aures mee implebantur sanguine et audiebant verba detractionis mee, idcirco aures tue auertantur a scurrilibus et ineptis locucionibus. Quia eciam os meum potatum est amarissima potacione et prohibitum a bona, ideo os tuum obstruatur a malis et aperiatur ad bona. Et quia manus mee extense sunt cum clavis, propterea opera tua, que figurantur in manibus, extendantur ad pauperes et ad precepta mea [...]' All English translations from Morris & Searby 2006–2015.

onto those of Christ, transforming the text into a mirror where 'man can see what he is and what he aims at'.¹⁴

The symbolism of the Passion also has a manifestation in performance and ritual behaviour, this time as a sign of devotion: for instance, the Five Wounds of Christ in Rev. IV: 80, 31–32, where the number five marks the number of times to repeat a certain prayer, or the amount of coins to give to the poor. Moreover, this symbolism can also be found in prayer rolls (fig. 1 on pp. 166–167), for instance in those containing the popular Middle English poem *O Vernicle*,¹⁵ where each of the stanzas is linked to one of the wounds and sufferings of Christ, through the instruments which inflicted them, and to a personal statement of inspection of conscience:

CLAUI [The Nails]
 Pe nayles thoro fete and handes two,
 Pei help me out of sinne and wo
 Pat I half in my life do
 With handes i handelid, with fet i go.¹⁶

This association between instruments of the passion, wounds and self-reflection was extremely popular in the late Middle Ages, and is known as the *Arma Christi*.¹⁷ This means the display, or assemblage, of the objects that had a role in the Passion, either the weapons used to inflict the sufferings of Christ,¹⁸ or the ones less strictly connected to it. The texts make explicit the interchangeability of the wounds with the weapons/objects, and the event they aim to re-enact with the emotion aroused in the reader/audience. In other words, representations of the objects were enough to begin the associations with the wounds and vice versa, causing the double effect of remembrance and emotional response and self-inspection, an aspect observable in both examples, but not always displayed explicitly.

¹⁴ 'Homo seipsum considerare potest, qualis sit, vel quo tendat [...]' In 'De Lectione Studio', quoted from Alcuin's *De Virtutibus et Vitiis Liber*, in Bradley 1954, p. 102, who offers a survey of the uses of the title *speculum* in medieval literature. For this meaning in devotional texts, see also Hamburger 2000.

¹⁵ The oldest manuscript preserved dates to c. 1400. For a critical edition of the poem, see Eljenholm Nichols 2014.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 368. Close to each stanza in the layout of the prayer roll or the manuscript is an illumination of the object, see figure 1 on pp. 166–167.

¹⁷ For the most complete survey of the *Arma Christi* in art history, see Schiller 1972, pp. 184–230.

¹⁸ This view of the *Arma* might be connected to the influence of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, and its invitation to the readers to meditate about every stage in Christ's Passion, see Bestul 1996.

This idea was also expressed in the Birgittine habit, where the Five Wounds were represented specifically in connection with the habit of the lay brothers, which 'should have a white cross on their cloaks as a symbol of innocence. There should be five bits of red on the cross in veneration of my five wounds.'¹⁹ A similar sign, that is to say a white cross with five red drops, is told to form the crown that the nuns were to wear, which makes it possible to understand the crown also as a symbol of the Five Wounds.²⁰ Moreover, during the rite of consecration, or profession,²¹ outlined by the rule, the pin placed at the centre of the cross, which has the function of keeping the crown in place, is placed by the bishop saying this prayer: 'May Jesus Christ pierce your heart and soul with his affectionate love so that you need not fear the sting of temptations.'²² This traces a parallel with the description of the passion in the Revelations where Mary's heart, and out of compassion Birgitta's heart, is said to be pierced with a sword;²³ this is an image repeated again when the lance is thrust into Christ's right side, piercing Mary's soul.²⁴ Henceforth, it is not by chance that both heart and soul are mentioned during the prayer, and moreover, it not only seems clear that this insignia in the Birgittine habit was to be worn out of devotion to the Five Wounds, but also that it would have had a similar function to that of the *Arma Christi* and understood as a tool of self-inspection. Thus, from the perspective of a Birgittine nun who wears the habit and sees others do so, this would start a series of associations which would remind her of her duties and of the moment of her profession, a spiritual exercise of the kind that might have been usual in other convents.²⁵ The banners used in the mentioned rite would have a similar function in making the associations clearer:

¹⁹ Reg. Salv., 13: 'Fratres autem layci in mantellis suis crucem albam portabunt propter innocenciam, in qua cruce sint quasi quinque particule rubee ob reuerenciam quinque vulnerum meorum.'

²⁰ Ibid., 4.

²¹ Ibid., 11. On the analogy between the rite of profession to the monastery and that of the consecration of Virgins and its links with other religious orders, see Tait 2013, pp. 365–402.

²² Ibid., 'Jesus Christus configat dileccione sua cor tuum et animam, ut nullius temptationis stimulos expauescat.'

²³ Rev. VIII:15, 15–17.

²⁴ Ibid., 29–31.

²⁵ For instance, in the Cistercian house of Helfta, where exercises of this kind were collected and presumably written by the nun and charismatic Gertrude of Helfta (1256–1302). There is no surviving manuscript from the Middle Ages, hence its use for comparison might be problematic. However, Jacques Hourlier and Albert Schmidt in their edition, 1967, pp. 39–44 consider them to be medieval because of linguistic analysis.

ver. 1. Compilum est
they ye made i on his pain
he cloth before to his face
he went he left he went dispe
is mouth his nose his eye
is bico his neck over also
child me fro al h in my hand
have finger wry in my hand
child me now of al wry
also others and labiriting
no maker lost us tongue also
of fumes that i have so
end of hairene for sue i me
one vny of re fuge place y se

his knif he tok away re carnation
i testime re hune al i sum
foute somme hadur alnum
her pain he tok knif of mā
foun impaon of ledere
ebe my lord vthā i idur me
re vthā his blood my blod
re vthā his blod for to fede
re he tok away on ye rere
re low us fede to his blod
re he us to gote out of hell
in vre i blod us hi co dunc
re he oure fad i our for
no use his thilon under i go

re pons also i vadas vole
re fole ihu crist was sole
i schide his vlon i ronule
re in to dene in none wyle

re clame i me here in ye tere
au crist was take in ye mire
re ligh me from vnde sume
at vng i be take re name.

re vcois i hant i ye here
liu crist yre wry to a fere
re frondes lord yre here nre
f lie a ferd yat i ue h

re vthā a ferd he had a strake
re vthā his lord yre here to dunc
re god dire i mide mad
re he jected and still layd
re vthā i mide to vthā i mide
re he for jure fax yat pite

re vthā a ferd yre of pain
and yre hand yre flagged yre vno fere
re at vne le in labour set
re at vne fume s' p' of fere
re end of alle outre al is fume
re vthā i mide i mide lebord vno

re chre for vne regne
e bille ye knut i to yng
re keep me fro venement
e childers and of ignanment
e end of sumes also
re at i hine lory myn e m d
re end wry mi note includ ethre
re ethre and ethre sume

re white crote hant vnde sum vno
re end ye p'le yat p'le leade lot on
re cu le vne lecour i mā regnig
re at mā vnd i my vnd mā doryg

re vndis gate y' were anclad
re y' seonge sume al to lachad
re at pone me lecour of sume yng
e floweris and of idemnes

re erone of yom o yl hys e yng
re i hre to tar y' sum to waft
re at schide me fco leue pite
re at vne derewd vnd vnd vnt

re o ye piter lord also
re in a roop yeh vnd y' to
re and e drawne and stred fute
e fume fco ye vnes to waft
re at vnd me alle of vnd yng
e founte ded and oukendus
re lecours lecours lecours
re lecours lecours lecours

re you ten ye crois i tolle ye gate
re ur of iusalem is me late
re vnd foppis lasset and gode
re at leue yous fandig of y' blod

re vnd mā foppis wōmē of iudie
re and alle excepte for y' torment

re o hui you sindist aptment
re a euer re vndit foy mi vng
re at foy your selfe i childern also

re for vthā e mide vnd foy wry
re and salte tress for vna lef
re for vna schul vne tress and

re a hundred vngt asturkard
re vnd foppis of leaue us ydon
re in vre go wry deuoun
re a pulgimage o hys re leon
re falle oure leue y' le our leue



FIG. 1 A-C: *Arma Christi* sequence of a prayer roll. Early fifteenth century.
Reproduced with permission of the Scottish Catholic Archives, GB3380/CB/57/9,
Scottish Catholic Historical Collection at Aberdeen University.

As she enters the church, a red standard should be carried before her on which the image of my suffering body should be depicted on one side and an image of my Mother on the other. When the new bride looks on the sign of her new bridegroom suffering on the cross, may she learn patience and poverty, when she looks on the Virgin Mary, may she learn purity and humility.²⁶

The banners appear early in the sequence, from the door of the Church to the interior of the monastery, and this act contrasts with the crowning as one of the closing gestures in the rite, which works as a process of interiorisation, in which the images become symbols. This would seem to parallel a mystical process of union with God, emphasised by the bridal imagery that unfolds during the ceremony.

A similar use and function of this insignia can be found in a description of the dubbing ritual of a Knight in Rev. II:13, where the banner of the Church that welcomes the knight in the churchyard is said to represent the Passion and wounds of Christ as a sign of his duty.²⁷ Knightly imagery is a key and distinctive element of the texts, for instance in Rev. I:6, where a kind of Christian coat of arms is described in allegorical terms, giving each weapon a significant meaning, in order to face evil. It seems as a kind of construction around Ephesians 6:10–18, where it is said ‘put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil’,²⁸ but it also seems to respond to a certain double significance of the *Arma Christi* as weapons and shields or even heraldic devices for the protection of the reader/audience against sin and evil.²⁹ In other words, the *imitatio Christi* is understood as a knightly endeavour, as explicitly stated by Henry Suso in *The Exemplar*.³⁰ This also reflects on the use of the *Arma* in the literary conception of Christ as a lover-knight in romance and lyrics,³¹ where his armour is made out of the instruments of the Passion or invokes associations with love

²⁶ Reg. Salv., 10: ‘Et cum ingreditur ecclesiam, feratur ante illam vexillum rubeum, in quo ymago corporis mei passi depicta sit ex parte una et ymago Matris mee ex parte altera, ut aspiciens noua sponsa signum noui sponsi in cruce passi discat pacientiam et paupertatem et aspiciens Virginem Matrem discat castitatem et humilitatem.’

²⁷ Rev. II:13, 26.

²⁸ Ephesians, 6:11: ‘induite vos arma Dei ut possitis stare adversus insidias diabolic’; translation from the Douay-Rheims version in *The Latin Vulgate*, online: <http://www.latinvulgate.com/lv/verse.aspx?t=1&b=10&c=6> [Accessed 2 June 2015].

²⁹ See, for instance, Lewis 1992.

³⁰ English version by Tobin 1989, p. 106. See also Hamburger 1997, pp. 63–100.

³¹ See Woolf 1968.

imagery.³² These texts, building on this double conception of the *Arma Christi*, offer yet another example of the complexity of the sources for the Revelations and should also be understood as addressing a lay audience who would be able to understand them, recognising and interpreting them from other media and forms.

All in all, with regard to Birgittine practice this shows the importance of insignia, and the use of devotional images in them, as a symbol of departure from worldly things and association with the monastic order, but always as a representation of the suffering Christ, ethically understood as a mirror-model. In other words, it is as if the *imitatio Christi* would acquire a physical dimension in the use of these symbols in order to represent their spiritual transformation.

Exempla

The reception of Birgitta as an exemplary figure, and the popularity of her texts among the laity, allows us to trace a network of women who modelled their spiritual experience on her, spanning from the Middle Ages until post-Tridentine Spain: Margery Kempe, Dorothea of Montau, and in a very different context and time, Marina de Escobar.³³ Birgitta herself became a model for them in the same way that other exemplary figures would have been for her, such as Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231), whom she would have known through the *Golden Legend*.³⁴

Elizabeth of Hungary was a widow who, like Birgitta, during her marriage showed a strong ascetic leaning. She came under the spiritual advice of Conrad of Marburg, and from then on she gave up her children and wealth and dedi-

³² Sometimes sexual imagery ‘deriving from the evocation of wounding sight in Song of Solomon 4:9’, exemplified by one of the illuminations of the *Rothschild Canticles* where the ‘Sponsa – a figure of the soul as a Bride of Christ – [...] like Longinus at the crucifixion, thrusts her phallic lance into the passive, receptive flesh of the naked Christ’ among other examples. Hamburger & Suckale 2008, p. 100.

³³ They are linked to Birgitta, apart from Marina, in Atkinson 1991, pp. 184–187 and Morris 1999, p. 174. For Marina’s similarities with Birgitta, see Nyberg 2002. Another woman who modelled her experience on Birgitta was Clare of Gambacorta, see Kieckhefer 1987, p. 45.

³⁴ There is an Old Swedish version, where Elizabeth of Hungary appears, *Ett forn-svenskt legendarium*, ed. Stephens 1848–1874, 2, pp. 803ff. However, Birgitta could have known Elizabeth from other sources or the Latin version. Even if in A.P. 66 and 87 a compilation of saints’ lives is mentioned, it is not certain that this could have been the same text. In the quotations the English translation from the Latin version by Ryan 2012 is used. The *Golden Legend* will henceforth be referred as *G.L.*

cated her life to the sick and the poor.³⁵ Other points of contact with Birgitta are that she was noble by birth, had a pious childhood, 'chose the Virgin Mary, mother of God, as her patroness and advocate',³⁶ had the imposition to recite a certain number of prayers daily, consented to be married because of obedience to her father, 'often rose during the night to pray',³⁷ and even if there were delicacies to eat at her table 'she sometimes ate nothing but a bit of bread'.³⁸ All of these aspects are used in the construction of the image of Birgitta in the canonisation materials, as any other saint of the fourteenth century whose biography is built on ideal stereotypes,³⁹ but which possibly should be understood in connection with memory and learning, modelling and transmission and as mediators between society and spiritual experience.

The way in which such figures as Margery Kempe⁴⁰ (d. c. 1483) or Dorothea of Montau (d. 1394) got to know of Birgitta and her Revelations is to some extent similar. In the case of Margery, we are told that she listened to someone reading the Revelations to her aloud,⁴¹ and she also mentions her several times in her book. Margery was born into a highly esteemed family. She was also married and a mother, and it is during her marriage that she became aware of her vocation. Other similarities are the places to which Margery travelled as a pilgrim,⁴² the states of meditation and contemplation represented through the book,⁴³ the devotion to Christ and the role of the Virgin as Margery's companion,⁴⁴ among others. This mirroring of Margery in Birgitta has been defined as *imitation*,⁴⁵ but it is worth noticing how Margery uses Birgitta in a sort of competition:

35 A motif connected to Franciscan spirituality is also found in one of the meditations attributed to Birgitta, see Morris 1996 and in Angela of Foligno (1248–1309), as a sign of voluntary poverty.

36 *G.L.*, p. 689.

37 *G.L.*, p. 690, a similar account is given about Birgitta in the *vita*, relating to when she was a child, see *A.P.* 75–77, and an adult, see for instance, *A.P.* 66.

38 *G.L.*, p. 691. Birgitta would sit at the table, joining in at feasts and celebrations, but eating only bread and drinking water from a silver chalice. See *A.P.* 581.

39 See Kieckhefer 1984.

40 Of whom we mainly know because of her own hagio-autobiography, *The Book of Margery Kempe*. For the quotations Meech and Allen's critical edition is used, and it will henceforth referred to as *B.M.K.*

41 *B.M.K.*, p. 143.

42 Santiago de Compostela, Rome, Assisi, Naples, Jerusalem ... see Bolton Holloway 1992.

43 For instance, *B.M.K.*, pp. 16–19.

44 In fact, Margery becomes a handmaiden of the Virgin in a part of the text where the Nativity is visualised, *B.M.K.*, pp. 18–19. For this particular aspect, see Gibson 1994, pp. 47–66.

45 Bolton Holloway 1992.

When the consecration was done, this creature had great marvel about the stirring and moving of the blessed sacrament, desyring to see more consecrations, looking if it would do so again. Then said our Lord Jesus Christ to the creature: 'You shall no more see it in this manner, therefore thank God that you have seen. My daughter, Bridget, saw me never in this manner.'⁴⁶

Furthermore, when Margery visits Birgitta's room in Rome, she is given a description of her: 'Then the maiden said that her lady, Saint Bridget, was goodly and meek to every creature and that she had a laughing countenance.'⁴⁷ Thus, Margery defines Birgitta in terms opposite to the attribute that she uses to describe herself; through the book tears and weeping emphasise her own characterisation as lonely and misunderstood. If the excessive weeping of Margery places her in difficult situations, where people around her reject and isolate her, then attributing to Birgitta such an opposed trait gives Margery a quality that distinguishes her from her model. Thus, if Birgitta denounces the decay of the Church and the indifference of many towards the Passion, Margery's tears and discrimination are a literary exemplification of that, acting as a mirror of the society of her time which works in terms of identification.⁴⁸ In this way, more so than *imitatio* in the terms that we have seen above, the fact that Margery is following in Birgitta's steps could be defined as the integration of a model as part of an educational process or a quest for holiness. This modelling process is concerned with a cognitive theory of learning where the models are understood in a way that goes beyond the textual interpretation that is to be integrated in the expression and exteriorisation of the self.⁴⁹

This idea comes from the social learning theory of the cognitive psychologist Albert Bandura, and more precisely symbolic modelling, which claims that children and adults acquire 'attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct' through media⁵⁰ – which in this context is understood as religious models displayed in art, liturgy, sermons and even lyrics or romances – which al-

46 *B.M.K.*, p. 47. 'Whan þe Sacre was don, þis creatur had gret mereueyle of þe steryng & mevyng of þe blyyssed Sacrement, desyring to se mor Sacreys & lokyng yf it wold don so a-ȝen. Þan seyd oþyr Lord Ihesu Christ to þe creatur, 'Bow xalt no mor sen it is þis maner, þefor thank God þat þow hast seyn. My dowtyr, Bryde, say me neuyr in þis maner.' The modern English translation is quoted from the edition by Staley 2001, p. 35.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 95. 'Pan þe mayden seyd þat hir lady, Seynt Briguþt, was goodly & meke to euery creatur & þat sche had a lawhyng cher.' Staley 2001, p. 69.

48 'the quest for holiness [...] may well result in an identity that cannot longer be fitted back into the community', *ibid.*, p. xviii.

49 'Of the many cues that influence behaviour, at any point in time, none is more common than the actions of others.' Bandura 1986, p. 206.

50 Bandura 1977, p. 39.

lows the reader/audience to shape their experience and project it aiming towards specific rewards through socially/communally accepted stereotypes. When patterns of behaviour emerge as the combination of different models, as in some of these cases, new ones are created in what Bandura defines as creative modelling:

Exposed to diverse models, observers rarely pattern their behaviour exclusively after a single source, nor do they adopt all the attributes even of preferred models, rather they combine aspects of various models into new amalgams that differ from the individual sources.⁵¹

Modelling is part of a cognitive process in Bandura's theory, in which other factors influence the performance of behaviour such as determinants and perceptions of efficacy, among other activities. Some of them are regulated by a 'set of certain standards of behaviour for themselves and respond to their own actions in self-rewarding ways'.⁵² One of these consists of judging their modelling sources as a kind of self-reinforcement. Hence, when Margery shows herself as seeing more than Birgitta saw, she surpasses her model to strengthen her own individual behaviour and how she represents it.

In a similar way, Dorothea of Montau, who was 'like the Swedish saint, a wife, a mother, and mystic',⁵³ needed to be assured that her experience was deeper and more personalised. In this case, in a relationship similar to that of Margery with the Swedish saint, her confessor reports concerning the concept of mystical pregnancy that God spoke with Dorothea, telling her that her fetus-like movement was greater than Birgitta's.⁵⁴ The case of Marina de Escobar (1554–1633) is slightly different.⁵⁵ She chose to live unenclosed after her spiritual conversion and attracted a following composed of female devotees. She often saw Birgitta in her visions, as a companion of the Virgin Mary, who, among others, urged her to found a Birgittine house in Spain, which she did, but only for women. To be precise, Marina establishes a re-foundation similar to the one made by Teresa de Ávila with the Carmelites, according to the post-Tridentine

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵² Ibid., p. 129

⁵³ Atkinson 1991, p. 184.

⁵⁴ 'But, nevertheless, you actually exhibited more of this than she. I magnified your heart and uterus more than hers.' Quoted from Sahlin 2001, p. 105 who follows an original text by Johaniis Marienwerder 'Aus dem Septilium venerabilis domine Dorothee'.

⁵⁵ For Marina de Escobar, see Poutrin 2007 and Burrieza 2002; for her relationship with the Jesuits, Burrieza 2009. Marina de Escobar has not been paid much scholarly attention, possibly because she has been to some extent overshadowed by Teresa de Ávila or Juan de la Cruz (John of the Cross).

climate.⁵⁶ In one of the visions, Marina is professed as a nun, and Saint Cosmas imposes the ring upon her,⁵⁷ visualising what was promised to Birgitta, but not shown or told in the text.⁵⁸

These examples of modelling work in terms of a process, first with the reception/acquisition of models through liturgy, reading or devotions, and second by abstracting a representation of the exemplar to be combined with others and retained in memory for later application through a re-enactment, integrated into a personal expression that needs to surpass the original in order to reinforce the integration.⁵⁹ An example of this can be found in the tradition of mysticism, when Fray Domingo Báñez, Teresa de Ávila's confessor, refers to Saint Francis or Saint Gertrude in his defence of the validity of her revelations,⁶⁰ consequently showing that modelling in exemplars plays a prime role in the transmission of devotional practices or 'ideas and social practices within a society or from one society to another'.⁶¹

MNEMONIC DEVICES AND PERFORMANCE

The uses of the text of the Revelations in the monastery also point towards the exemplarity of Saint Birgitta, not only because her text was read during meals,⁶² or because prayers were extracted from them, but also because the congregation became, in Brian Stock's terms,⁶³ a real textual community. The text was mastered and interpreted, not only in written format, which is the one that has reached us, but possibly also in oral tradition among the members who worked on these topics, interpreted them, and stored them with new layers of meaning in their memory. This plays an important role in the transmission of these models, and more specifically in collective memory. This might be the explanation for the use of initials regarding the sisters in several manuscripts and textiles from Vadstena. As Ingela Hedström has shown, these initials are not limited to colophons regarding the identity of the scribes or the crafter, requests for prayers, or the ownership of the books; they are also placed in margins, on

⁵⁶ See Lehfeldt 1999.

⁵⁷ de la Puente 1665, p. 506.

⁵⁸ Rev. VII:31, 3.

⁵⁹ In Bandura's theory these processes would be attention (reception/acquisition), retention (memory), reproduction (re-enactment), and motivation (reinforcement), see Bandura 1986, pp. 22–29. For an application of this model to spiritual and religious growth, see Oman & Thoresen 2009.

⁶⁰ In Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de la Vida*, critical edition by Mediavilla 2014, p. 382.

⁶¹ Bandura 1986, p. 50.

⁶² One manuscript containing the table readings has survived, see Carlquist 2006.

⁶³ See Stock 1983.

pictures, in litanies, or at the beginning or end of a given text.⁶⁴ Even if the books were passing from one sister to another, most of the initials were not erased, and sometimes they could mark a specific devotion.

This use of initials might respond to a kind of practice that was common in Europe during this period, but it is interesting to consider how they work if we contextualise them in a theory of memory. Mary Carruthers, in *The Craft of Thought*, uses a modern example to explain how collective memory, or *memoria rerum*, works. The example she uses is the Vietnam War Memorial.⁶⁵ The names of the dead are arranged chronologically and carved in granite, thus memorialising each person by placing them in a temporal sequence. The visitors engage in the double perception of a shared communal history: the war itself and particular stories that originate in the names and tokens that are left at the memorial, such as pictures or flowers, which enable the identification. In a very different context, the initials and their use in manuscripts might work in a similar way. The members of the community would find the initials in their devotional readings as a reminder of the names of other members who engaged in similar practices. This way they could pray for them, but also model their experience on them, since when placing their initials they were identifying themselves with the texts or the images. They were thus building an identity and collective memory with the congregation through processes of modelling similar to the ones discussed above.

The *Revelations* uses mnemonic aids through textual images in the construction of its discourse, as has been shown by Bridget Morris.⁶⁶ However, I would like to identify how these textual images could also work as a means for the transmission and performance of devotional practices. One example of this is the image of the heart as a house, that points to the idea of something treasured in the heart, the place where Mary kept her memories of her son.⁶⁷ This image is then elaborated further as a source of meditation:

There should be three things in a heart that is my dwelling; a bed where we may rest, a seat where we may sit, and a lamp that gives us light. In your heart, then, let there be a bed for quiet rest, where you can rest from the base thoughts and desires of the world. [...] The seat should be your intention of staying with me, even if you sometimes have to go out. It goes against nature to be always standing. The person

64 Hedström 2013, p. 267, note 51, and Hedström 2010, pp. 169–172.

65 Carruthers 1998, pp. 34–40. ‘Collective memory’, as she explains, would be the contemporary, although slightly different, equivalent for the medieval *memoria rerum*.

66 See Morris 1991.

67 Luke 2:19 and 2:51.

who is always standing is the one who always has the intention of being in the world and never comes to sit with me. The light on the lamp should be the faith by which you believe that I am able to do all things and am almighty above all things.⁶⁸

Thus, the heart is a place of union with God,⁶⁹ represented as a house, in an image we find in a fifteenth-century drawing from the monastery of Saint Walburg, a Benedictine abbey in Altmühl in Bavaria.⁷⁰ This has been described as serving ‘as both mirrors and models of the viewer’s own activity’,⁷¹ and as a place of union with God. The image, created in the monastery, thus has a function of an *Andachtsbild* or devotional image, possibly conceived as an aid for prayer, meditation or the performance of specific devotions. In it, a representation of a nun ‘embraces Christ and the Trinity in the seat of her own soul’.⁷² In both cases a mirror-representation of the reader/user is conjured as their ultimate exemplar. Such an image, as Jeffrey Hamburger suggests, does not illustrate a text, but works as the starting point for devotions from the viewpoint of the nun. The use of a very similar textual image by Birgitta manifests that these images are more than representations, or *pictoriae* to use Mary Carruthers’ term.⁷³ This means that these images, either textual or pictorial, act as containers for more images that work as cues for elaborated meditations, prayers or scriptural exegesis. In other words, they function as a mnemonic device for ordering sets of devotions that have been previously coded in the making of the image. For instance, this is made explicit in the image from Walburg through a series of scrolls that reproduce the beginning of different devotional texts that can be only implied in the fragment from the *Revelations*.

Some of Birgitta’s visions are preceded by devotional practices as a kind of frame of the imagery the text develops. These are normally praying⁷⁴ and

⁶⁸ Rev. I:30, 9–10: ‘Ergo in corde, quod est habitaculum meum, debent esse tria: lectus, in quo requiescamus, sedes, in qua sedeamus, lumen, quo illuminemur. In corde igitur tuo sit lectus quiescendi seu quietudinis, ut quiescas a prauis cogitationibus et desideriis mundi. [...] Sedes debet esse voluntas manendi mecum, eciam si quandoque contingat excedere. Contra naturam enim est semper stare. Ille namque semper stat, qui semper habet voluntatem essendi cum mundo et numquam sedere mecum. Lux, seu lumen, debet esse fides, qua credas me omnia posse et omnipotentem esse super omnia.’

⁶⁹ It is worth noticing, given the reception of the works by the nuns of Helfta in Vadstena, the devotion to the Sacred Heart they developed, which suggests a reception of these by Birgitta herself. See Spitzlei 1991.

⁷⁰ ‘The Heart as a House’, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung 417. The image is reproduced in Hamburger 1997, p. 141.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 137.

⁷² Ibid., p. 188.

⁷³ Carruthers 1998, pp. 205–209.

⁷⁴ Rev. IV:103, 1.



FIG. 2: The wound in Christ's side/heart, with some of the instrument of the Passion. Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, MS A 80, fol. 15v. Photo: Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm.

sometimes visits to churches or places of pilgrimage.⁷⁵ On at least one occasion the activity of praying is linked to meditation.⁷⁶ As Mary Carruthers explains, medieval culture was fundamentally memorial,⁷⁷ where mnemonic practices had more to do with interiorisation of concepts than rote learning. Her theory is based on the reception of classical rhetoric in works such as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* or Cicero's *De Inventione*, which were also known to Birgitta's first confessor Magister Mathias, as shown by the interpolations of them in the *Testa Nucis* and *Poetria*.⁷⁸ She could have acquired these skills from him connected to monastic meditational practice, where the use of them is defined as 'images painted in fantasy for contemplative thinking'.⁷⁹

Therefore, the use of these techniques should be understood in two directions: the way she could use these aids for remembering her own meditations and the way the use of these resources helped the transmission and use of the Birgittine materials, both for the laity and her order. For someone like Margery Kempe, listening to the Revelations read aloud provides a clue regarding the use of these textual images or *pictoriae*: she would meditate further on what she had listened to at a later stage. The text was probably used by the Birgittines in a similar way along with other devotional practices.

The use of textual images and illuminations as an aid for ordering meditation, prayer and performance of devotions is further exemplified in one of the prayer books from Vadstena, Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS. A 80, fol. 15v (fig. 2), which has been described by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren.⁸⁰ It is a representation of three instruments of the Passion: nails, thorns and a lash. They are placed on the page alongside the text, explaining each of them. Moreover, the text states that those are the exact dimensions of the instruments, which also refers to the dimension of Christ's wound, in the same kind of interchangeability characteristic of the *Arma Christi*. In the picture, what can be interpreted as the wound of Christ's side/heart has the text *fons amoris*, that is 'source of love', placed within it.⁸¹ The group works in the same way as the image of the heart as a house, inviting the user to meditate on each of the instruments in a sort of structure that is reminiscent of the *Arma Christi* because of its associations with

⁷⁵ Rev. VII:15, 1–2.

⁷⁶ Rev. VI:103, 1–2.

⁷⁷ Carruthers 2008, p. 9.

⁷⁸ The texts were edited by Bergh 1996.

⁷⁹ Carruthers 1998, pp. 205–209. She comments on Peter of Celle, *On Conscience*.

⁸⁰ Sandgren 2011.

⁸¹ For other examples of the meaning and devotional uses of the wound in Christ's side, see Lewis 1996.

the narrative of the Passion, the examination of the self, and the qualitative shift in its meaning as symbol of union with God. The concept of Christ's heart as a spring finds a parallel in the Revelations:

The Mother of God speaks: 'My Son's heart is as sweet as the sweetest honey and as clean as the purest spring. His heart is also most pleasant. What is more pleasant to a sensible person than the contemplation of God's love in his creation and redemption, in his life of work and his teaching, in his grace and long-suffering?'⁸²

The use of the text *fons amoris* has been linked to the popular hymn *Stabat Mater*, where it defines Mary.⁸³ The hymn mediates on her sufferings during the crucifixion and was regularly performed at Vadstena. Moreover, in Rev. I:35, Mary tells Birgitta that her heart was his heart during the crucifixion, so in the context of the illumination it works as yet another tool for the observer's identification and self-inspection, complementing and amplifying the contents of the prayer book. The image alone does not seem to be related to any of them. It is preceded by a calendar and followed by the Latin text of the *Hours of the Holy Spirit*,⁸⁴ which in combination with the *Hours of the Cross* occurs often in books of hours from the second half of the fourteenth century, as well as in most of the manuscripts from Vadstena. Maybe the role of the illumination in this position would be to complement the Latin text by evoking the emotions that the *Hours of the Cross* would arouse in the reader/observer, aiming at the state of contemplation expressed by the revelation quoted above. Also, the fact that only three of the instruments are displayed might respond to a mnemonic organisation of the devotions – the instruments stand for different moments in the chronology of the Passion: thorn and lash before the journey to Golgotha, and nail and wound for the crucifixion, which brings to mind associations with the other objects. For instance, the nail itself seems reminiscent of the cross and the lance, according to the central position of the side/heart wound. This chronological arrangement could work in connection with the performance of some kind of devotional practice, for instance virtual pilgrimage, which was often linked with indulged prayers in different books of hours using similar illuminations of the true-size of the instruments of the Passion.⁸⁵

82 Rev. IV:101, 1–2: 'Mater Dei loquitur: "Cor Filii mei est suauissimum quasi mel et mundissimum quasi fons purissimus, quia ab ipso quidquid est virtutis et bonitatis quasi a fonte procedit. Ipse etiam est dulcissimus. Quid enim est dulcius homini sensato quam considerare caritatem eius in creacione et redempcione, in labore et doctrina, in gracia eius et pacientia?"'

83 Sandgren 2011.

84 Hedström 2009, p. 453.

85 See Rudy 2011 for a discussion of this use and further examples of similar images.

The Birgittine convent at Altomünster offers another example of the link between the heart, Jesus, and his image as a fountain. The text is called 'Die geistliche Padstube' and tells how the nuns fashion with their prayers a fountain 'with five golden pipes and drains, that flowed so full of grace to wash away sin ... The living fountain is Jesus Christ hanging on the cross.'⁸⁶ For each part of the fountain devotions and prayers are offered in front of pictures, one of them the *Arma Christi*. Thus 'texts serve as cues for images, which in turn, serve as cues to text'.⁸⁷ Moreover, the goal of washing sins equals the understanding of the instruments as protective devices. Note also the number five in the pipes, a number which possibly acts like another mnemonic aid.

In any case, the images that we find connected to texts for devotions, whether aimed at performance or private meditation, are also in the Revelations as textual images to be represented mentally and retained in memory as a starting point for further meditation. They are integrated into Birgittine spirituality, which allows for interiorisation and personalisation by the users/readers. Not surprisingly, this kind of technique and complicated set of prayers are used by the Birgittines in Spain under the reformed branch by Marina de Escobar, who wrote a text called 'Seven points for the proper knowledge for the seven days of the week to kindle the divine fire', this time as spiritual exercise, which is reminiscent of Birgittine spirituality.⁸⁸ It proposes an exercise of conscience and self-examination about the relationship with God for every day of the week. This starts by placing the self in the void of the creation as an answer to the question 'What was I before I was born?'⁸⁹ on Monday and continues with the passion as an answer to 'What did this Lord do to me?'⁹⁰ on Friday. It ends with the image of the resurrection for 'What this Lord will give me and what I will receive from His hand?'⁹¹ on Sunday. It follows a programme of meditation, in this case individual, similar to that proposed by Birgitta, in *Sermo angelicus*, by understanding the days of the week as a progression in the spiritual path connected to the history of salvation.

⁸⁶ Hamburger 1998, p. 79, who translates Schnyder 1984, p. 149.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ de la Puente 1665, p. 538

⁸⁹ Ibid., '[...] qué era yo antes que naciese?'

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 539, '[...] qué hizo este Señor conmigo [...]?'

⁹¹ Ibid., '[...] qué me dará este Señor, y qué recibiré de su mano?'

CONCLUSION

In these pages different processes regarding the transmission of devotional practices – for example, the use of texts as mirrors for self-inspection and guides of spiritual conduct, modelling life on exemplary figures, employing mnemonic devices and emphasising performance – have been described in connection with the Revelations and the Birgittines. The processes take place simultaneously, complementing each other. I claim that in order to understand the devotional practices that took place in the order and around its sphere, awareness of the interplay between mental processes and textual and pictorial representations is needed. It is not the goal of this research to claim that these practices evolved from Birgitta. Rather, it is to point to the similarities within the order and the laity and the way they are shaped and transmitted, thus emphasising the quotation that opened this paper, in which Birgitta is said to be like a mirror, exemplifying most of the devotional attitudes of her time, and anticipating some of them.

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MARKUS LINDBERG

The *Addiciones Prioris Petri*: Rules and Reality

FOOD IS SOMETHING we all use and it can never be neglected. In the fifteenth century, at least 95 per cent of the population in Sweden was engaged in food production. Food and food production had and still have a major impact on society and the landscape. If eating habits change, production will change, and if production changes, the landscape will change. Food is also interesting when it comes to health, nutrition as a social marker. Moreover, food can be used to test obedience to rules, and this, with respect to the case of the monastery at Vadstena, is the topic of this paper.

RULES REGARDING FOOD IN THE MONASTERY

So what rules concerned food in the monastery? The rules of Vadstena monastery is a complicated story. When the order was first approved it was under the Rule of Saint Augustine. Eventually, it became an order with its own rule. The base for the rule is the revelations of Saint Birgitta, primarily the *Regula Salvatoris* and parts of the *Extravagantes*. Before opening the monastery, Prior Petrus Olavi adapted the rules for daily life in the *Addiciones prioris Petri* (henceforth APP), previously called the *Constitutiones*. There were also customary rules: the *Lucidarium* for the sisters and the *Liber Usuum* for the brothers. What to eat, when to do it and in what way, was regulated in the APP and in the *Lucidarium*. In these two customaries, the rules regarding food and eating are almost identical. I have chosen to use the APP in the following analysis. The *Liber Usuum* says very little about food, and the APP also concerns the brothers.¹

¹ Klemming 1883–1884, pp. 31ff, 71f and 91 (Klemming calls the APP ‘Constitutiones’); Risberg 2003, pp. 23 and 40.

FOOD IN THE MONASTERY

Having a meal was part of an ongoing service, like so much in the monastery. During the meal, one of the sisters would read, and special rituals were connected to the reading.² The food was, I would say, rich and varied. The base in the meal was always bread and beer. For supper, half a *skålpond* of bread was served, that is about 250 grams, along with one *stoop* of beer, around 1,3 litres.³

The bread at this time was generally made of barley, that is, the bread was not fermented but flat and hard and perfect for storing. Olaus Magnus says in his *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* ('History of the Nordic peoples') that if you are doing it properly, you could bake bread for your children's baptism and still serve it on their engagement day.⁴ 'Knäckebröd', crisp bread, is still very popular in Sweden. The monastery probably also baked fermented bread because they used rye and some wheat, as we will see later on. The beer was brewed from barley malt, and the production in the brewery must have exceeded 80 000 litres a year to cover the needs.

Together with bread and beer, the weekly menu, according to the *APP*, looked like this:

Sunday: 'sod', which is a soup or bouillon of fruit or meat, one piece of fresh meat, one piece of salted meat and one piece of fried meat

Monday and Tuesday: cabbage or something else grown and two pieces of boiled meat

Thursday: same as Sunday

Wednesday and Saturday: simpler food consisting of two pieces of fish, butter, an egg, cheese or something similar.

Fasting days were of two varieties: half fast, which is the normal, and full fast. Half fast consisted of two soups, two pieces of fresh fish and a third piece of salt fish, along with apples or other fruit. During full fast, one was only permitted water and bread, although the water was not to be pure but instead a decoction of barley or bread. Apples or other fruit could be eaten, if there were any to be had.⁵

This is the rule, but the question is: Did the rule reflect reality? Actually, one of the first, if not the first, known violation of the rule is connected with food. The first sisters in Vadstena did not want to work in the kitchen and,

² Ibid., pp. 34f.

³ Ibid., p 31.

⁴ Olaus Magnus 1982, p. 595.

⁵ Klemming 1883–1884, pp. 31ff, 71f and 91.

quite astonishingly, they got away with it. The rule was changed, so they had employees in the kitchen instead of aristocratic sisters.⁶

So there are questions regarding the sources:

- Does the *APP* reflect normal late medieval consumption in Sweden?
- Is it possible to compare the *APP* with other sources?

This, in turn, leads us to the main question: How accurate is the *APP*?

THE BISHOP'S COURT AT LINKÖPING CASTLE

There is contemporary material on the subject, which in this case is very interesting. From the last Catholic bishop of Linköping, Hans Brask, there is a manuscript dated around 1520. It is today kept in the diocese library, with the shelf-mark Kh54. It contains lists of the bishop's possessions, including what was paid in rent, which was not always money – in the region of Småland it was often butter or honey. There is a calendar stating when to deliver salt to fishermen in the Baltic, when to leave leather to the shoemaker, which were the right prayers at Christmas time, when it is the right time to pick walnuts, thatch roofs and so on. There are instructions to the staff at Linköping castle: their tasks, their salaries and where they should sleep.

There are furthermore lists of menus regarding what to eat every day of the week, what to eat during fast, what to eat when there were dinner guests. It is a rich material, that allows us to follow the food, from fields, pastures and waters on to the bishop's table and get a grip of the cycle of the production year. The parts of the manuscript that deal with food and household matters have recently been published and commented on in a cross sectional project.⁷

This is not a rule, but still a normative text. The menus state what people are supposed to eat, not what they have eaten. The menus from the bishop's court are more comprehensive and more exclusive than in the monastery, but the similarities are striking. It is the same structure of the meal, and of course the same rules for fasting. The menus for fasting in particular are almost the same as in the monastery. The different parts of the Linköping manuscript can be compared with each other. If the menus are compared with the calendar and the instructions to the servants, we can see that they match.

⁶ Hedström 2013, pp. 364f.

⁷ Gröntoft et al. 2016; Lindberg 2013.

After excavations at Linköping castle, the written source has been compared to archaeological material, and as far as we can see they match as well. The archaeological remains consist, of course, of the things that have been preserved, mainly animal bones and nutshells. However, the sources do speak the same language. The different kinds of meat and fish mentioned in the menus are all represented in the archaeological material.

When we compare the bishop's menus with the food in the *APP* we can see that the food in the monastery seems to be normal for the elite in late medieval Sweden.

SOURCES IN VADSTENA

So, what about other sources? In the monastery at Vadstena the archaeological material is very poor. There are accounts, but unfortunately only for the years 1539–1570, which is a late and problematic period for the monastery, and they can only be used as a comparison. These accounts were published by Carl Silfverstolpe in the late nineteenth century,⁸ but there is a list of the necessities for both the convents during one year.⁹ This list is not dated, but it is from a time when the monastery was in full action. The list contains food that had to be delivered to the monastery, either from their own farms or bought at markets. Milk, eggs, fresh fruit, herbs, fresh vegetables and root vegetables are not mentioned, probably because they were produced inside or close to the monastery.¹⁰ This also includes barley, because the amount in the list is small. As said above, barley was the main cereal during the Middle Ages. From the middle of the sixteenth century rye became increasingly important. The monastery needed rye, wheat, barley, malt of barley, hops, peas, beans, onions, butter, cheese, beef, mutton, salted pork, cod, dried fish, herring, salted salmon, salted and dried eel, dried pike, fresh fish from Lake Vättern, pepper, caraway, saffron, figs, mustard and honey, and also paper, wax, frankincense – and so on. Wine was purchased and only used for Communion, not for the meals.¹¹

Generally, this must be regarded as normal for a monastery. Some of the imported and exclusive food-stuff we find at bishop Brask's table is not mentioned here, such as rice, raisins, almonds, hemp and wild game. We do, however, find imported spices, pepper, saffron, mustard and figs. How do these expensive

⁸ Silfverstolpe 1895.

⁹ Geete 1910.

¹⁰ Ibid.; Sigurdsson & Zachrisson 2012, p. 118.

¹¹ Ibid.

spices fit the rules? In *Extravagantes*, it is said that you should eat what is grown locally, not imported spices like pepper and caraway, but it also says that you may use them for church holidays and for those who are weak and sick.¹² If we look at the amounts on the list, and later in the accounts, regarding luxurious spices like saffron, it is one *pund* – about 500 grams – for a household of 85 persons. I would say this is in line with the *APP*. That has to be regarded as humble when compared to, for instance, the amounts at the funeral of Birgitta's father, Birger Petersson. The list of purchases for the funeral includes large quantities of pepper, saffron, ginger, cinnamon, galangal, raisins, almonds, sugar, etc.¹³ Wine is permitted according to the *APP*, but, as we have seen, in Vadstena wine was not used for meals, it was meant only for Communion. At meals, beer was the main beverage, and in the accounts for some years we can see that they used mead for special days such as Saint Birgitta's day and Christmas.¹⁴ During the translation feast of Saint Birgitta's daughter Katarina, mead, wine and a sort of cherry wine was served.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Thus, we can conclude that the purchase and production of food reflect the rules well, or rather that the rule seems to reflect the reality. The food in the monastery can be compared to the food at the bishop's court – but it is humbler. There are some luxurious products such as spices and figs, but in such small amounts that it is in line with the rule. We can also conclude that although the monastic table was humble the menu at the same time offered a good and varied diet. By combining the sources we can get a good picture of food and food culture inside the monastery walls.

¹² Rev. Extr. 36.

¹³ SDHK 3533, Dahlbäck 1988, s. 109f.

¹⁴ Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 59.

¹⁵ Fritz & Elving 2004, p. 57.

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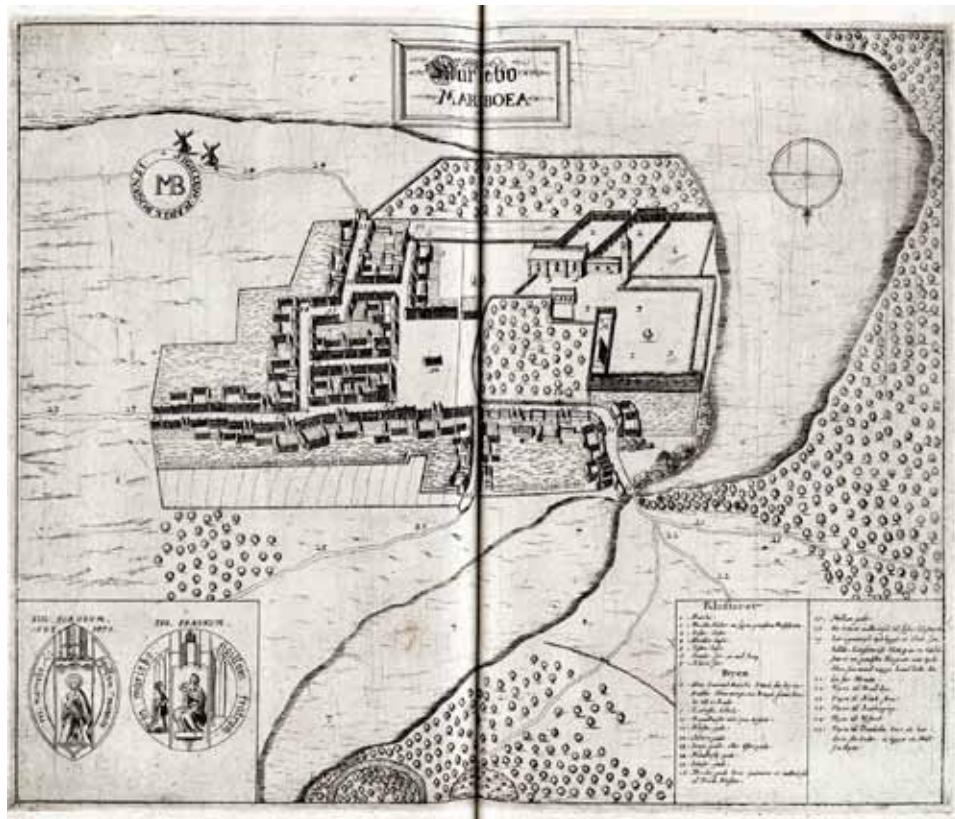


FIG. 1: View of Maribo, c. 1675, copper engraving in the *Atlas Danicus* published by Peder Hansen Resen in 1677. The monastery, seen from the north, is here shown demolished apart from the abbey church, and parts of the brothers' cloister to the south, used as residence for the vicar. Photo: The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

THOMAS W. LASSEN

The Monastery and its Town: The Maribo Statutes 1488

IN SCANDINAVIA, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, new towns were founded to support the establishment of the monasteries of the Birgittine Order. In Vadstena the municipal charter was given in the year 1400 by Queen Margareta and King Erik, and later on royal permissions were given to Maribo and Mariager in Denmark, as well as to Nådendal (Naantali) in Finland. As it seems, it was not only for the local trade and commerce that these towns were needed for the monasteries. Obviously, a continuous and steady supply of goods and food was crucial for the monastery, and the citizens of the town were imposed to pay rent to the monastery, as well as a certain amount of working days.

Another important function for the monasteries was to take care of the many pilgrims seeking indulgence, and so it was also for this reason the towns were of great importance. The founding charters were given by royal grants, but for the daily interaction between the monastery and the town certain rules were needed. Such rules are preserved from Maribo, and as this is the only monastery in question it is therefore of great importance and will be presented in the following text. Seen in the light of the fundamental similarity between the early Birgittine monasteries, these rules can perhaps reflect the conditions in the other new towns established for the purpose of the monasteries.

In the southernmost part of the Danish kingdom, a Birgittine abbey was founded in Maribo in 1416, in the middle of the island Lolland, not far from the shortest crossing over the Baltic Sea. The monastery was founded on rich gifts, bequeathed by Queen Margareta before her death in 1412, and supervised by her successor King Erik of Pomerania. On the very same day of his own great dona-

tion for the foundation,¹ on 27 September 1416, King Erik made it possible, by his royal permission, to build a town in connection with the monastery.² Later, the next year, he proclaimed that the monastery should have its own jurisdiction and be free of taxes for everything needed, including building materials.³ The monastery was provided with its own harbour to the north of the island as well.⁴

The mother convent in Vadstena supervised the establishment of the monastery in Maribo, and two brothers and the confessor general were sent out to Lolland during midwinter 1416, upon the king's request, to advise the process.⁵ After the return of the confessor in May, three sisters and two brothers later the same year moved to Lolland to form the beginning of the new convents.⁶ As mentioned, the 'official' foundation document followed in September 1416, along with the permission for the town. The papal approval and allowance was given in 1418, with the first mentioning of the name Maribo ('Marienbo' in *lingua vulgaris*), as well as the confirmation by the bishop of Odense.⁷

THE TOWN OF MARIBO AND THE LAW

An old view⁸ printed in 1677 shows the outline of the town of Maribo, earlier a village named Skemminge, with its own parish church and a watermill placed in the narrow passage between the lakes that limited the village to the south and west and north (fig. 1 on p. 190). In the pleasant landscape, near the lake and surrounded by extensive woods and rich farm land, the monastery was built during the following decades, and in the middle of the town a large market square was laid out. This marketplace still marks the centre of the town. The abbey church is likewise well preserved, with a magnificent interior, completed in the late 1480s. The church has for the last 200 years served as the cathedral of the Lolland-Falster diocese. Of the monastic buildings only ruins from the sisters' convent remain.

Alongside the growth of the monastery, and its increase by further donations, the town of Maribo was established mainly for the purpose of the monastery, which owned the whole area of the town, as well as the parish church. For the

1 Rep.dipl. Dan. 1. rk. III, 5606.

2 The municipal charter 1416.09.27, now in the Danish National Archives, is published in DGK, supplement vol. 5, p. 128f. See also Rep.dipl. Dan. 1. rk. III, 5607.

3 1417.06.27, dated in Schemminge. See Rep.dipl. Dan. 1. rk. III, 5665.

4 Confirmed 1588.07.01, Kanc. Brevb.

5 See DV 258.

6 Ibid. 268. See further Nyberg 1965, pp. 77ff.

7 1418.04.07. See Acta. Pont. Dan. II, 1248 and 1249.

8 *Atlas Danicus*, plate 75.

correlation between the monastery and its town in the Middle Ages, it is of great interest that a special document exists with a law for the city, given by the Birgittine monastery in the year 1488. In the history of law and rules in Denmark, it is exceptional that a monastery states the rules of commerce and society in a town. In Danish towns such statutes were normally chartered by the king as a royal grant. However, here in Maribo, as we will see, the monastery ordered the detailed statutes for the town, the *Stadsret*, with no less than 22 articles concerning the interaction between the monastery and the town.

As mentioned above, both monastery and town was founded in 1416, and the appearance of the statutes in 1488 might be seen as an expression of the fulfilled consolidation of the monastery.

The document is preserved in original form in the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen, written on parchment, and on a monumental scale, the document measures 50 by 40 centimetres (length and width).⁹ The formulation and the wording are in a Danish typical of the period, and the writing is by a trained hand (fig. 2 overleaf). The text of the Maribo Statutes was published by Erik Kroman in the series of ancient Danish municipal charters, *Danmarks gamle Købstadlovgivning* in 1955.¹⁰

The text is written continuously without any interruptions or shifts to new lines, and every single paragraph, mentioned as articles ('arthicel' or 'articlæ'), is introduced by the word 'Item' and slightly abbreviated and marked with an 'I' somewhat larger than the other letters. In the publication by Kroman, the text is divided into paragraphs, each marked with a number in brackets.

In the following examination the single parts are followed by a paragraph mark (§) and number, referring to the numbers in the publication of the text. The related text is a translation from the old Danish, as a summary of the contents of the single paragraphs of the statutes, with all central terms and meanings mentioned, and a few remarks added.

THE MARIBO STATUTES

It is worth noting that the Maribo Statutes begin with a large 'We' in the same way as a royal charter (cf. fig. 3 on p. 195), but here it is 'We Abbess, Confessor and sisters and brothers in Maribo' who claim the right to the town of Maribo

⁹ Danish National Archives: Maribo Rådstue, Pergament 1488.08.08, formerly in the regional archive for Zealand and Lolland-Falster, referred to as SLA. Originally belonging to the town, and kept in its administrative archive.

¹⁰ DGK vol. 3, pp. 384–387. Only published in the original Danish.

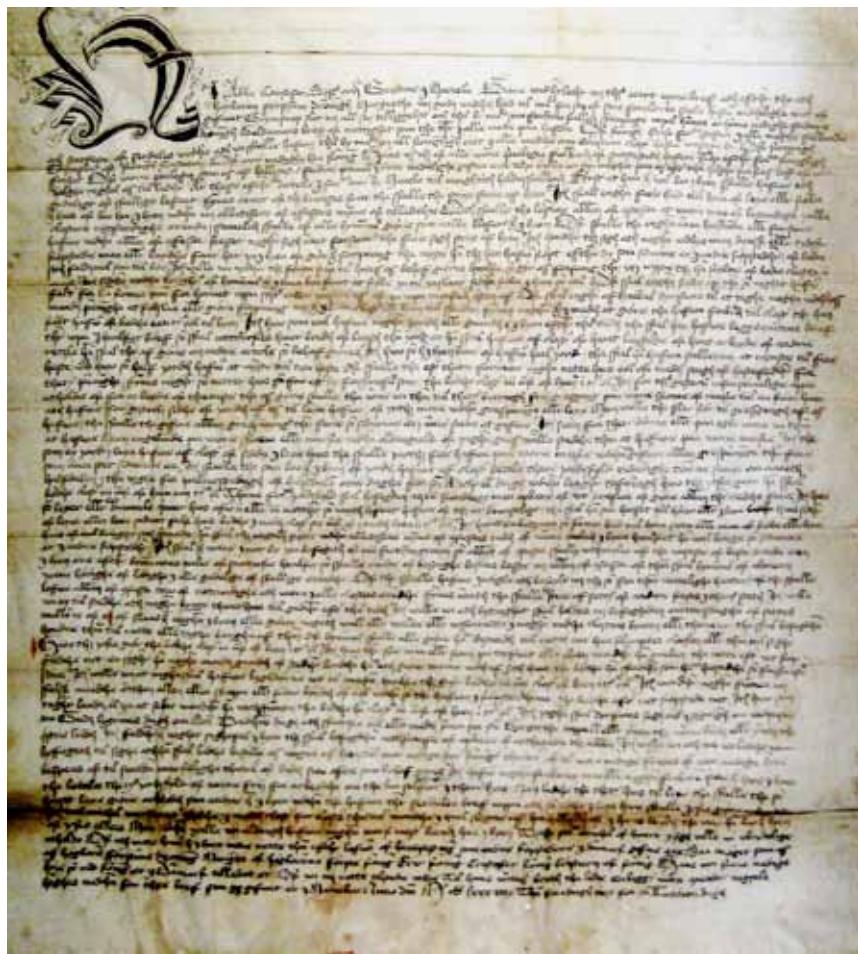


FIG. 2: The Maribo Statutes 1488. The Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.
Photo: The author.



FIG. 3: The initial capital in 'Wi abba(tissa)', detail from the heading of the statutes 1488.
Photo: The author.

with all its privileges, given by Queen Margareta and her successors. This is described in detail in the document as a 'genesis' of the monastery, and as approved by the popes in Rome. This implies that these statutes are to be followed by the town and its inhabitants to the end of time.

The first article stresses that everyone who wants to live in the town must live a life of piety and devotion, and if anything else is shown, and can be proved, they should immediately leave the town (§1).

In article two it is stated that everyone who wants to rent or buy a house in the town should be approved and sanctioned by the abbess and the confessor, and they should be loyal to the monastery. This must be obeyed by the already present citizens if they want to stay in the town. If they do not wish to obey, they should immediately leave the town (§2).

If a non-resident or non-local man, Danish or German, merchant or farmer, buys anything before the time of the open market, he will lose and have confiscated everything he bought, and will be ordered a fine, as is the custom in other towns (§3). This provision in the act follows all in all a royal permission given in

June 1488 to the confessor on behalf of the sisters and brothers of the convent, only a few months before the actual date of the statutes.¹¹

It is furthermore stated that the monastery, here and henceforth in the following articles clearly expressed as a 'we', should have the right to buy everything needed before anyone else on the market. If anyone buys beforehand, he will lose what is bought and should pay 2 marks to the monastery. Afterwards, the citizens living in the town are allowed to buy at the market, 'until it strikes eleven' it is said, after which time everyone is free to go shopping (§4).

It is interesting here to notice that the accurate time limit for the trading on the market is mentioned in the statutes. In fact, a mid-sized medieval church bell that still hangs in the old town hall and serves as a clock bell is believed to be the former market bell (moved indoors when the town hall was rebuilt in the 1850s). Market day, as is known from other sources, was on Saturdays, which was and still is the common market day in Danish towns. Alongside with Saturdays a market on Wednesdays was introduced in Maribo in the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹²

In the statutes, the marketplace on the western side is defined as the area inside the corner of the fencing wall of the sisters' convent (cf. fig. 1), and if a citizen is caught in trade with a non-resident man outside the marketplace or time restrictions, the goods will be confiscated by the monastery, and a barrel of beer is to be paid to the town (§4).

The entire area of the town was owned by the monastery, and if anyone wanted to buy or rent a site or building they must get a written permission from both convents, the sisters' and the brothers', that is to say the abbess and the confessor, and both the length and the breadth of the site must be described. A rent was to be paid regularly to the monastery, twice a year, as well as a certain number of prescribed working days. This should be specified in the written permission, proportional to the size of the building site (§5) and (§9).

If anyone held an entire site, it was also required that the owner should have stable room for at least four horses, and if half a site is in question, this corresponds to stable places for two horses (§6). This was part of the services that the citizens were expected to provide for guests coming to the town as pilgrims and visitors on the 'days of great seeking' (in old Danish 'söghning', assembly or gathering at a church site).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 383, 1488.06.28, granted by King Hans.

¹² Ibid., p. 399, 1517.03.20.

It is furthermore stated that the householders should not charge for the housing of guests, for beer or food or bed, and that they should feed the horses. The penalty for breaking the rules was a payment of 3 marks to the monastery and one barrel of beer to the town (§6).

The citizens were, for these duties to the monastery, allowed to have free grass for four cows, and if anyone needed further grazing, they should pay the monastery for it. Regarding keeping pigs in the woods, payment to the monastery was always required (§7) and (§8).

Anyone who rented room to or allowed a prostitute stay in his house for more than two or three nights, so long it is evident and without a doubt that something unworthy occurred, was forced to pay six marks to the monastery and two barrels of beer to the town (§10).

Any craftsmen coming to settle in the town must have gained permission by the abbess and the confessor (§11).¹³

In the cities owned and controlled by the crown, it was the norm that the king had his own governor as a royal official, but here in Maribo it was the abbess and the confessor that chose their representative ('byfogdhen') among the citizens, as well as eight chosen men, to form a council for the town (§12). Since the representation for the town was in this way not chosen by the citizens but rather appointed by the abbess and the confessor, as described in the statutes, it underlines in strong terms the monastic authority and control over the town. The council was allowed to judge in certain cases, but if they were not loyal to the monastery, they were to be removed immediately. It is said that the council should have its own seal to sign with in their own cases, but no such seal or any impression has survived, if it ever existed (§12).¹⁴

Beyond the normal meeting time for the council, on Thursdays between 9 and 10, the main councillor was allowed to chime the bell (mentioned above) to gather the citizens, if needed. Anyone who did not heed this sign was forced to pay the monastery 3 marks, and pay one barrel of beer to the town (§14).

A short article states as a regulation of the layout of the town that 'after this time' no one should build houses with the long side facing the street, and no one was allowed to have backdoors or gateways leading to the fields surrounding the town (§13) and (§16). This must be seen as further regulation of the market

¹³ In the statutes a supplementary paragraph (Kroman §23), mentions an incident when a craftsman caused the death of one of the servants of the monastery. It was the crossbow maker (the so-called 'werkmaster'), and for that reason his trade was no longer to be tolerated in the town.

¹⁴ It is not until 1608 that the town gets its own seal, see DGK vol. 3, p. 381f.

and trade of the town, and disobedience was fixed to the usual 3 marks to the monastery and a barrel of beer to the town. The same amount to be paid is mentioned if anyone was bringing in and selling rural beer in the town (§18).

Fights and other incidents in the marketplace and in the streets were judged after the common civil law, and if anyone was caught with false weights and measures there was a fine, to be paid according to the law (§15) and (§17). Such fines, and other fines mentioned in the statutes, as well as payments judged in trials, were received and collected by the main councillor and then handed over to the abbess (§20).

If any noble man or woman owned a house in the town, they were free from the duty to pay working days to the monastery, if they themselves were staying in the house. However, if rented out, the lodger was bound to work for the monastery, as everyone else in the town (§22).

A special article deals with restrictions for serving beer and food inside the three gates of the town on special holy and sacred days, when many people were gathered in the town. The days mentioned in the statutes are the fourth Sunday of Lent ('om midfastæ'), the feast of the Body of Christ, Corpus Christi ('Guds legemes dagh') and the feast of Saint Peter in Chains, Petri Vincula, on the first of August ('sancte Pedhers dagh') (§19). These special days of indulgence are well known from other Birgittine monasteries as part of the papal privileges, but in Maribo it is only the statutes that bear witness of the same custom.

A royal privilege, often seen in the royal charters for towns, was in Maribo passed over to the abbess. Every time she called for the councillor of the town she could order him to have wagons providing transport for the king and the queen and the bishop, as often as she demanded it (§21).

In the very last passages of the statutes, the row of privileges for the monastery, given by the monarchs since Queen Margareta, are once again mentioned and the granters are listed. Finally, the statutes are signed by both the convents, with their hanging seals, and dated in 'Marieboo' on the Friday before the day of Saint Laurentius, 8 August 1488.

COMPARISONS

It is remarkable that in the prologue of the Maribo Statutes it is argued, alongside the mention of the royal donations and privileges, that the monastery had 'their city' with all the royal rights and legalities 'in the same way as Vadstena Abbey has received the town of Vadstena'. No such detailed rules are known from Vadstena. However, from the municipal charter for the town in 1400, given by Queen Margareta and King Erik, we know of a similar rent for building

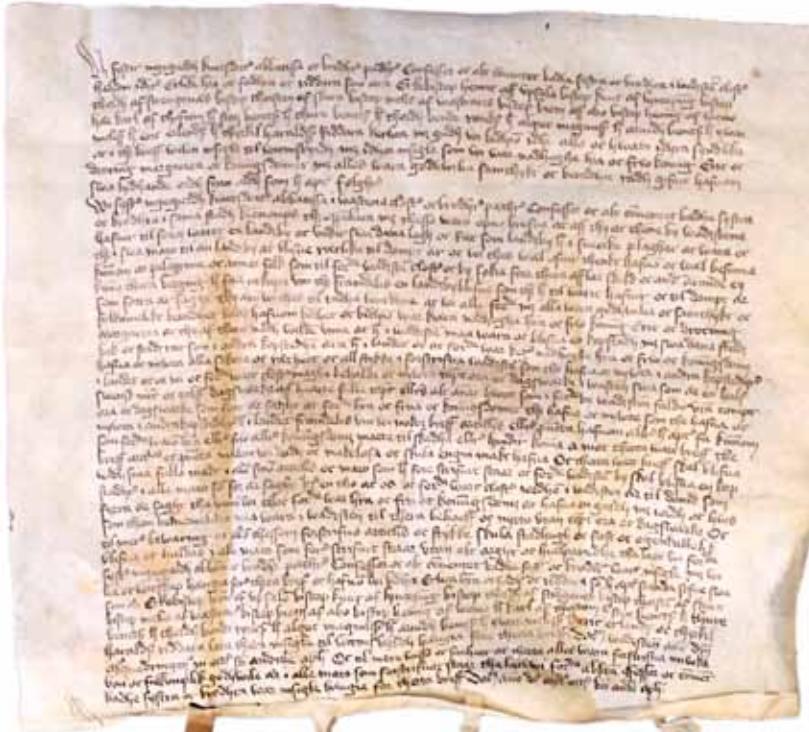


FIG. 4: The Vadstena document of 7 December 1400 in the Danish National Archives, with the seals of the abbess and main convent and the sisters' convent, in red, and the confessor and the brothers' convent. Photo: The author.

sites, as well as day-work, to be paid to the monastery. In fact, in Vadstena it is noted that the amount to be paid (called 'tompøre') was half a Swedish mark for an entire site, as well as twelve working days (in the charter called 'daxværke').¹⁵ Perhaps the same rights existed in Maribo from the beginning in 1416, but until 1488 we are unaware of such rights from any preserved sources.

The municipal charter for Vadstena was granted after a formal request from the monastery, asking for the civic rights to be a town. This document, of great interest in the history of Vadstena, is in the National Archives in Copenhagen and was originally part of the royal Danish chancellery (fig. 4 on p. 199). It has been kept there since the time of Queen Margareta and King Erik.¹⁶

From Nådendal (Naantali) in Finland the rights of the town are mentioned in connection with the foundation of the monastery. For the needs of the monastery a town was planned and a detailed municipal charter was given by King Christoffer in 1443. In Maribo, however, it is only the licence to construct a town in the place of a former village that is given, as far as we know from the foundation year.¹⁷ In the case of Nådendal, it is worth noticing that it is explicitly stated that the purpose of the town was to ensure service for pilgrims and wayfarers coming to the monastery for indulgences.

For the second Danish monastery of the Birgittine order, in Mariager, founded out of Maribo in 1446, it is supposed that there must have been similar rights for the town and the monastery, but no proper royal charge or privilege has survived. The only thing known is that the citizens, after an extensive fire in the town in 1583, were allowed to take over their building sites and were 'still' as formerly required to pay rent and day-work to the monastery.¹⁸

In Maribo the monastic authority and control over the town was kept until the late sixteenth century, although the monastery was transformed into an institution for noble ladies in 1556, with a new constitution, given by the king, along with a confirmation of the former privileges.¹⁹ The last of the sisters entered the reformed convent as late as in 1620. Just a few years later the monastery

¹⁵ SDHK 15518, 1400.12.08, here used in the version published by Kjellberg 1917, p. 206f. See Fritz 2000, p. 119f.

¹⁶ Danish National Archives: Ny kronologisk række 1846–c (1400.12.07 Sverige 44); SDHK 15516. See also references above.

¹⁷ Olesen 1991, with reference to *Finlands Medeltidsurkunder* III, nos. 2398, 2417 and 2539.

¹⁸ Kanc. Brevb. 1583.10.05. See also Dahlerup 1882, p. 103f.

¹⁹ Kanc. Brevb. 1556.10.01.

was dissolved, and the rich and extensive properties given over to the newly established noble academy in Sorø.²⁰

A very clear example of the monastic authority in the town is shown in 1584, when all towns in Denmark were called to assemble and pay homage to the young Prince Christian, chosen to be the new king (Christian IV). Here the abbess signed on behalf of the town of Maribo, still using the seal of the sisters' convent, dating back to the beginning of the fifteenth century (fig. 5).



FIG. 5: The signet of the abbess of Maribo monastery, early fifteenth century. Original matrix in the National Museum of Denmark (Nationalmuseet), Copenhagen. Photo: The author.

20 For the late period of the monastery in Maribo, see Rüber Jørgensen 2001.

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SARA RISBERG

Petrus Ingemari and his Advocacy of Katarina of Vadstena

THE BIRGITTINE BROTHER Petrus Ingemari, consecrated in Vadstena in 1480, travelled widely on the order's business. Between 1491 and 1519 we find him in, for example, Bergen (Norway), Maribo (Denmark), Maihingen (Bavaria), Lübeck, Florence, Rome and Syon Abbey (England). Petrus' visit to Syon in 1511 is really a story that begins long before he was even born, almost a hundred years earlier. The visit was connected to the cult of Katarina, Saint Birgitta's daughter – a cult that Syon seems to have embraced almost from the start, and for which Petrus Ingemari was one of the most ardent advocates.

INITIAL STEPS

The early contacts between Vadstena and Syon are fairly well known to us, not least thanks to recent scholarly editions and research.¹ The visit of 1427 has been especially brought to our attention. In April of that same year, two of the brothers from Syon turned up in Vadstena full of questions concerning the Rule of Saint Birgitta.² When they returned to their English monastery a couple of months later, they brought with them a copy of *Vita Katherine*, a text that was just finished. This copy, preserved in Syon's famous manuscript Codex Harleianus 612 in the British Library, reveals that the biography of Katarina had been written on Confessor General Gervinus Petri's initiative. Gervinus dated and sealed the copy of the text himself in Vadstena on 27 June. The author of the *vita*, Ulf Birgersson, had probably been working on the text for some time – statements in the acts from Katarina's canonisation process suggest that he

¹ See for example Andersson 2004, 2010 and 2011; Gejrot 1994 and 2015.

² DV 376.

began his work during the 1410s.³ However, the 1410s to the 1440s was not the time when Vadstena, or anyone else for that matter, put any effort into making Katarina a recognised saint. A not too far-fetched guess is that the years of the Councils of Constance and Basle made Vadstena and the Birgittine Order focus on the sheer struggle for its existence, rather than the canonisation of its founder's daughter.⁴ Thus the sources reveal nothing about this matter until the 1450s. At this time, new miracles were reported – or collected – and the first signs of plans for a canonisation can be discerned. The first clearly dated evidence is a letter to both convents in Vadstena from the bishop of Västerås, Birger Måns-son, in January 1464. He reports on his visit to Rome the previous year, where he had acted on the monastery's behalf, among other things concerning the canonisation of Katarina. In his letter he can inform the convents that they must be prepared to spend a sum of 2 000 ducats.⁵ Clearly, this was considered affordable, since in 1469 a commission was appointed by the bishop of Linköping, Henricus Tidemanni, with the task of collecting and investigating the miracles.⁶ When this commission had fulfilled their mission in January 1474,⁷ the serious and assiduous attempts to achieve a canonisation of Katarina could begin.

Once again, Syon seems to have taken part of – and in – the work at an early stage. In April 1473, Abbess Elizabeth and Confessor General Thomas thank Vadstena for a quire containing the life and miracles of Katarina, brought to them by one Andreas Johannis, called Klerk (cleric), who, despite having fallen into the hands of robbers, had arrived safely in Syon.⁸ They also offer their support 'in the sacred business' of Katarina's canonisation. Towards the end of the letter, it is suggested that it would be safer to exchange letters through the house of Saint Birgitta in Rome and the director there.⁹

³ Schück 1895, pp. 18 and 129–132; Fröjmark 1992, pp. 51–52 and 148–150.

⁴ About the Birgittines and the councils, see for example Losman 1970, pp. 244–250 (and *passim*); Fröjmark 1992, pp. 150–152.

⁵ SDHK 28243; Fröjmark 1992, p. 54. In the end, many times more than 2 000 ducats were spent. Cf. for example SDHK 32101, mentioned below. Cf. also SDHK 26030, an undated (probably from 1465) annotation or draft for a letter regarding, among other things, the canonisation of Katarina or a commission to investigate her life and miracles.

⁶ SDHK 44725.

⁷ Fröjmark 1992, p. 56.

⁸ SDHK 29575: 'vestrum familiarem devotum et fidelem *Andream Iohannis*, wlgariter apud vos *Andream* klerk, ut asserit, nuncupatum [...] semivivum spoliatumque a latronibus et male tractatum cum duabus litteris et quaternulo de vita et miraculis beate precliteque virginis domine Katerine filie beate matris nostre Birgite nostrum accendentem ad monasterium de Syon corpore tamen saluum et illesum cum gaudio pariter et compassionie recepimus.' On Abbess Elizabeth Muston and Confessor General Thomas Westhaw, see Gejrot 2015, pp. 23 and 27.

⁹ SDHK 29575. The most extensive history of the Birgitta house is still Hildebrand 1882. In short,

THE HOUSE OF SAINT BIRGITTA IN ROME

In his letter from 1464, Bishop Birger also mentioned the house of Saint Birgitta in Rome, where he stayed during his visit. When it comes to the canonisation of Katarina, her and her mother's former home in Rome became a more important place than even the monastery in Vadstena. We can see from the Syon letter that the house in Rome had frequent contact, not only with the mother monastery in Vadstena, but with other convents within the order. In the same month and year, in April 1473, the director of the Birgitta house, Petrus Henrici, writes to Vadstena about the negotiations concerning the canonisation of Katarina, and points out that a treasure needs to be spent in order to reach the goal.¹⁰ Furthermore, he gives instructions on how to proceed. Although he warns Vadstena that it will be a most difficult task, he seems eager to take part in it and perhaps make the Birgitta house a sort of hub. Indeed, in most letters preserved from the Birgitta house, the work towards canonisation of Katarina is mentioned.

One of the letters in which the Birgitta house is mentioned in connection with Katarina's canonisation is found in the manuscript C 31 of Vadstena provenance in Uppsala University Library.¹¹ It is directed at the Vadstena convents, and the contents reveal Birgittine brothers in another monastery as issuers. The finishing part, with the dating, has not been copied, but the mentioning of Petrus Henrici as the director of the Birgitta house may supply a date range between 1465 and 1505. The Birgittine brothers attest as to their intention to be of help in the process of making Katarina a canonised saint. They urge Vadstena to make prelates, the king, and the archbishop write to the Pope in this matter, and suggest that whatever money can be raised for this purpose be delivered to Petrus Henrici in Rome through the servant Andreas. It is tempting to relate this letter to the Syon letter from 1473, where, along with a promise of assistance

Saint Birgitta was, in 1354, offered to borrow a house, located by Campo dei Fiori in Rome (today's Piazza Farnese), from her friend Francesca Papazuri. In 1383 Francesca gave the house, the garden, and its appurtenances to the monastery of Vadstena. Shortly after the canonisation of Birgitta, relatives of Francesca brought claims upon some of the property, and the case was taken to court. In 1395 the judgement was passed in favour of the monastery. With the help of the archbishop and the church in Sweden the house became a guest-house for travelling Vadstena brothers and other Swedes in Rome in 1406. However, during the years that followed some of the property was lost and the house fell into decay. In 1418 the monastery in Vadstena appointed one Johannes from Gotland as the director for the house with the commission to manage it and look after its interests. Several directors followed before Petrus Henrici from Kalmar, later canon of Linköping, took over in 1465 (see SDHK 44758) and held the position until his death in 1505.

¹⁰ SDHK 29583.

¹¹ SDHK 26027.

in the canonisation process, a servant named Andreas is mentioned and the Birgitta house is referred to as a kind of 'liaison office'. However, the Birgittine brothers' mentioning of a general chapter in 'their' monastery makes it necessary to dismiss Syon as the issuing part of the C 31 letter. All in all, much points to a dating of the letter to the mid-1470s and perhaps the Birgittine monastery Marienwold near Lübeck, where a general chapter was held in 1456.¹²

THE FIRST PROCEEDINGS AND THE PREPARATORY PROCESS¹³

As mentioned above, the serious attempts to achieve a canonisation of Katarina could only begin after the commission of Bishop Henricus Tidemanni had fulfilled its task and the collected material had been examined at the provincial council in Arboga in January 1474. A volume containing the *vita* and 27 of the miracles was sent to Rome, and Pope Sixtus IV appointed a commission of three cardinals to investigate the case. A Swedish commission, with Archbishop Jakob Ulfsson, the bishop of Linköping Henricus Tidemanni, the archdeacon in Uppsala Kort Rogge, and the provost of Linköping Simon Gudmundsson as subdelegates, was given the task of *inquisitio specialis in partibus* – a preparatory canonisation process in the homeland of the saint-to-be. In 1475, their work began with the hearing of witnesses. In June 1477, the council of the realm met in Strängnäs. It was decided that no further hearings were needed, that the Swedish subdelegates' preparatory process was finished, and that the acts and the case would be left to the cardinals in Rome, in order to bring about a formal canonisation process at the Holy See.¹⁴

That the monastery in Vadstena did not sit still and wait for a papal response is clear from several letters dated in 1479. They give evidence of the continuing work in Rome and the constant need of more money in the canonisation case.¹⁵ Soon enough, the first results of the hard work would be seen.

¹² The first general chapter, in 1426, also took place in Marienwold. Other general chapters of the Birgittine Order were held in Vadstena (1429), Marienkron (1436) and Gnadenberg (1487); see Höjer 1905, pp. 291–298. Petrus Henrici's 1473 letter with his (at least between the lines) request for means to be spent in the Katarina case, and his advice for how to begin the negotiations also points to a connection, at least when it comes to dating the letter to the 1470s.

¹³ The following account is primarily based on Fröjmark 1992, pp. 56–63.

¹⁴ The acts from this preparatory process are edited by Collijn 1942–1946 (*Processus seu negotium canonizacionis b. Katerine de Vadstenis*).

¹⁵ SDHK 30522, 30540, 30559 and 30619.

PETRUS INGEMARI AND THE PROGRESS OF THE 1480S

One of the Birgittine brothers who worked hardest for Katarina's case was Petrus Ingemari. He was born in Vadstena, probably in the 1450s.¹⁶ As a child, he must have seen and met the pilgrims flocking to his home town, heard the stories about Saint Birgitta and Katarina, and been told about their miracles. It is probable that he even experienced the work of both the commission appointed by Bishop Henricus Tidemanni in 1469 to investigate and collect the miracles of Katarina, and the preparatory process of 1475–1477, since most of the work was done through interviews with witnesses and pilgrims in Vadstena.¹⁷

In October 1480 Petrus Ingemari entered the monastery and was consecrated as a priest brother by the bishop of Linköping.¹⁸ During his first ten years he seems to have led a quiet life within the monastery's walls – or at least the sources remain quiet as to his doings. During these ten years, Petrus at least had the joy of experiencing some concrete results of the negotiations in Rome concerning Katarina's canonisation.

In August 1482, Pope Sixtus IV entrusted several of his cardinals with an investigation into Katarina's life and miracles. At the same time, he sanctioned the worship of her as a saint in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.¹⁹ This step forward must have given the Birgittine Order, and especially the Vadstena monastery, new hope, and in November another supplication for the canonisation of Katarina was submitted to the Pope on the monastery's part.²⁰ However, during the 1480s, Petrus and the Birgittines also had to endure setbacks. In 1488, they were reached by the regretful announcement from Pope Innocentius VIII that he was prevented from taking on the important case of Katarina's canonisation due to other pressing matters.²¹ Present in Rome at this time were the Vadstena brothers Clemens Petri and Johannes Mathie, who had travelled there after the general chapter in Gnadenberg in 1487, where they had been Vadstena's representatives. Their mission in Rome on the monastery's behalf was to get things moving in the Katarina case.²² Pope Innocentius's message indeed seems to be

¹⁶ Since he was consecrated as a priest brother in 1480 (see below), he must have been over 25 years of age at that time, which means he was born no later than 1455. This minimum age is stipulated by Saint Birgitta in the Rule (Reg. Salv. 22), which is in accordance with the minimum age for priests stipulated by the Canon Law (X 1.14.3–4 and Clem. 1.6.3; ed. Friedberg II, cols. 126–127 and 1140).

¹⁷ Fröjmark 1992, pp. 54 and 59–62.

¹⁸ DV 843.

¹⁹ SDHK 31155.

²⁰ SDHK 31208.

²¹ SDHK 32071 (1488 14/6).

²² DV 874.

a direct result of Clemens Petri's and Johannes Mathie's efforts – he reports on them having informed him in the matter – and the brothers may very well have had some impact on the Pope and perhaps even contributed to his issuing of the permit to translate Katarina's remains.²³ In February 1489, the archbishop of Uppsala announced that the translation was to take place in Vadstena on 1 August.²⁴

The permit to translate the remains of Katarina must have been welcome in Vadstena and regarded as a success, but still the monastery was not satisfied. Soon after the above-mentioned bulls of Pope Innocentius, the convents in Vadstena authorised Clemens Petri, Johannes Mathie, and Petrus Henrici to take a loan of up to 900 ducats for carrying through the canonisation.²⁵

PETRUS INGEMARI'S FIRST MISSIONS

Two years after having taken part in the great celebration in Vadstena, when Katarina's remains were translated,²⁶ Petrus Ingemari again appears in the sources. If he, to judge from the sources remaining quiet as to his doings, had passed ten years within the monastery's walls during the 1480s, his next 30 years would be anything but quiet, and mostly spent outside the walls of the monastery. In 1491, he was entrusted with a most (his first) important mission. Together with the lay brother Gerardus, Petrus was sent abroad to Germany and Lübeck.²⁷ The cause and the case to be served and handled there was the printing of Saint Birgitta's Revelations, and the two Vadstena brothers left for Lübeck in September 1491. Fourteen months later, in November 1492, Petrus returned to Vadstena with the first edition of the *Revelationes Celestes*, the Ghotan print:

²³ SDHK 32072, issued the same day as SDHK 32071 (see above).

²⁴ SDHK 32203.

²⁵ SDHK 32101 (1488 7/8). Cf. SDHK 32100 of the same date, in which these three men are appointed to take care of the case. Cf. also SDHK 31860, a copy of a letter without date, but most probably contemporary with the above-mentioned two, since it mentions Clemens and Johannes as being (or having been) in Rome. Vadstena monastery expresses its hope for the (unknown) addressee's continuous support regarding Katarina's canonisation and reports that money has been deposited in 'bancho de Spinochis' in Rome. Clemens Petri and Johannes Mathie returned to Vadstena in September 1488, see DV 879. The mentioning of this sum of 900 ducats may be compared to the total sum of 2 000 ducats that Bishop Birger had calculated would be enough (see above).

²⁶ On the translation festivities of August 1489, see Fritz & Elfving 2004.

²⁷ SDHK 32662: 'decrevimus fratres nostros [...] Petrum Ingemari sacerdotem et Gerardum conuersum pro certis et inevitabilibus causis et casibus nos et nostrum monasterium et ordinem tangentibus ad partes extraneas Alemanie presertim versus Lubech et certa monasteria nostri ordinis ibi et infra direxisse'.

800 copies on paper, 16 on parchment.²⁸ The postscript of the Ghotan edition indicates that the two brothers had been responsible for the execution of the print.²⁹ It has been assumed that Gerardus answered for the illustrations, while Petrus acted as an editor and proofreader;³⁰ in that case, the proofs of the print preserved for example in The National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket) in Stockholm, show corrections made by his hand.³¹

In 1496, cries for help and complaints from the confessor general reached Vadstena from the *lagman* Erland in Bergen, Norway. He reported that things were in a bad way in the monastery of Munkaliv, since they lacked a good man for confessor. Vadstena was asked to send a competent man with knowledge of what is good for the monastery and how to observe the rule. ‘If you don’t do that, the brothers will leave’, the issuer stated.³² Petrus Ingemari had proved himself a man to be trusted, and apparently was considered to be the ‘competent man’ Munkaliv needed. Once again he packed his bags for the sake of the order. On New Years Eve 1499, the bishop of Bergen expressed his gratitude in a letter to Vadstena for having sent brother Petrus.³³

When Petrus left Munkaliv in September 1501, both convents affirmed that he indeed had behaved like a competent Christian man and functioned as their confessor general during his time there.³⁴

²⁸ DV 889.

²⁹ ‘Finit diuinum volumen omnium celestium Reuelationum preelecte spone Christi Sancte Birgitte de regno Swecie a religiosis patribus originalis monasterii Sanctarum Marie et Birgitte in Watzstenis prematuro studio et exquisita diligentia.’

³⁰ See Collijn 1934–1935, p. 123.

³¹ Kungliga biblioteket, Samlingen ettbladstryck och inkunabelfragment IV:4/1–IV:4/; [Ink. 214 82Aa 22/17–22/18. Other proofsheets are, according to Collijn, preserved in Flensburg and Copenhagen for example (Collijn 1934–1935, pp. 66, 123 and 128).]

³² SDHK 33330: ‘Maa j vita [...] ther idhart clostir Munkaliff staar ganzsca krankliga her j Ber-guen, ffor ty at thom brystir een godh man til Confessor. Oc vore ther nytligit at j giordin for gudz sculd oc sendir her een dandeman som closters bestar vil vita oc sancta Birgitta regla uil halda medh hedir oc makt som ther til hørir. Oc gørin j ecke thet, tha vilia brodernæ fara tedhan.’

³³ SDHK 33838: ‘Pro fratribus vestris Petro et Clemente nobis benigne transmissis, colendissimi patres, amplissimas vestre caritati referimus grates.’ It is not clear which brother Clemens the bishop refers to here. Clemens Petri had resigned from his office as confessor general in August 1499; he died in Vadstena in November 1500. Clemens Martini, professed in Vadstena in 1495, is another possibility. Neither of these two brothers is known to have been in Munkaliv. The third possibility is that the bishop expresses a very late gratitude for the brother Clemens sent to Munkaliv in the 1490s. See Silfverstolpe 1898, pp. 91–92, 144 and 131.

³⁴ SDHK 38405: ‘hedherligen fadher hæt Pedher Ingemarson haffwer waridh waar forman oc confessor generalis wch vmgaath sigh medh oss som en cristin dandeman’.

ROMAN EXPEDITIONS

Petrus did not remain long at home in Vadstena. In 1504 he was sent to Rome along with his fellow priest brother Johannes Nicolai (or Jöns Nilsson Rääf).³⁵ On their way, they were supposed to visit Birgittine monasteries. It might be in connection with this trip that Petrus wrote a list: 'If I'm going to the Curia, I should be provided with a good, five- or six-years-old horse with equipment.' According to this list, he wished to bring his small fur, two wine horns, and a portable breviary, 'since I left my medium-sized one in Lübeck, and I haven't got one to read about the saints in'. Finally, he asked to have a copy on parchment of the Revelations printed in Marienwold 'for my efforts'.³⁶

One of the brothers' missions in Rome was concerned with the house of Saint Birgitta, which towards the end of Petrus Henrici's reign had got into trouble. During his last years, the future bishop of Linköping Hans Brask, who at that time was in Rome, seems to have tried to remove him and take over the directorship. Although he did not succeed in this aspect, he persuaded Petrus Henrici to allow him to pledge some of the house's priceless articles before he went back to Sweden in 1504.³⁷

It was at this point Petrus Ingemari and Johannes Nicolai turned up in the Eternal City. A letter from Johannes to Vadstena reveals that Petrus had secretly brought from Vadstena a power of attorney to remove Petrus Henrici, but not used it. Petrus and Johannes must have had some kind of fall-out. The tone in Johannes' letter is, to say the least, irritated, and he does not speak well of Petrus, whom he calls 'ambitious'.³⁸ He alleges that Petrus, during their visits to the order's monasteries in Italy, Germany, and Denmark, had spoken of defects,

³⁵ The *viaticum* issued by the abbess, the confessor general, and both convents is preserved; SDHK 34732.

³⁶ SDHK 34101. The list is written in both Latin and Swedish and contains other items as well. Some deletions have been made, probably by Petrus himself. The book of Revelations he wishes to bring with him as a reward for his efforts is clearly a copy of the Ghotan print (Marienwold being located near Lübeck), a printing process which he himself had been part of and overseen (see above). It is even possible that this is the exemplar today preserved in Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm (Inkunabel 214, Ex. E), but which used to belong to Saint Birgitta's house in Rome. On its first leaf is written by a medieval hand: 'Liber domus hospitalis Sancte Birgitte de vrbe prope Campum Flore, quem fratres monasterii Vastenensis miserunt ad vrbum.' On this particular copy, see Collijn 1918.

³⁷ See Hildebrand 1882, p. 30; SDHK 34747, 35003 and 35105.

³⁸ 'forlathe broder Peder Jngemari swa hedergyruher han är'; SDHK 35003. Johannes arrived in Rome before Petrus, and left the day after Petrus' arrival, perhaps another indication of them not getting on well.

shortcomings and violations of the rule in Vadstena, and thereby deeply embarrassed Johannes.³⁹

Apart from looking into the affairs of the Birgitta house, Petrus had other business to attend to in Rome. Preserved sources from the 1490s reveal nothing about any major efforts put into negotiations for Katarina's canonisation, but at the turn of the century, interest in the matter seems to have arisen again. When Petrus left Rome in 1505, he had achieved new important papal confirmations, as the Memorial Book of Vadstena Abbey relates on his return in 1506.⁴⁰ He also brought with him relics of the Ten Thousand Martyrs and, above all, Pope Julius II's *apostolicum breve* with an extended licence to worship Katarina as a saint in every monastery of the order.⁴¹

Only two years later, the affairs of Birgitta's house in Rome made him travel again. After Petrus Henrici's death, the trouble had become even more worrying, and the house had ended up in the hands of one of the Pope's men.⁴² Vadstena's legation of 1506,⁴³ if anything, worsened matters, and the attention drawn to the house in Rome made Vadstena send new expeditions. The first one, consisting of Johannes Matthie and Petrus Magni (Peder Månnsson), failed as they were taken prisoners by the king of Denmark and sent back to Vadstena.⁴⁴ The second one consisted of Petrus Ingemari and Peder Månnsson and was dispatched in August 1508.⁴⁵

Two interesting sources reveal details about their journey. After their arrival in Rome, Peder Månnsson wrote a report to Vadstena, dated 7 December 1508.⁴⁶ He thanks God for getting through Denmark this time, where they had made a stop for three nights in the Birgittine monastery of Maribo. Two nights were spent with their fellow brothers and sisters in Marienwold, and three nights in Paradiso in Florence. Before that, and before crossing the Alps, they had rested a good ten days and nights in Maria Mai in Maihingen. From their visit the

39 SDHK 35003.

40 DV 982.

41 DV 982–983; SDHK 35112.

42 SDHK 35310.

43 Johannes Nicolai had been sent there again, together with a German brother, Bartoldus. Johannes soon returned, very much dissatisfied. See Hildebrand 1882, p. 30. Cf. SDHK 35953 and 35958.

44 DV 989 and 996.

45 DV 998. Petrus and Peder had better luck, although the first years in Rome involved a great deal of trouble, especially for Peder Månnsson. About his troubles, which very much involved the above-mentioned German brother Bartoldus, and his years as a director of the Birgitta house, see Risberg 2013.

46 SDHK 36353.

Hausbuch of the monastery bears witness, very much in accordance with Peder Månssson's letter.⁴⁷ Peder says that many questions were asked about the observance and rites in Vadstena, and the Hausbuch reveals that they, for example, asked how often the sisters went to confession. According to the Hausbuch, all sisters in Maihingen were as happy about this visit 'as if angels had come from heaven'.⁴⁸ Since both brothers were named Petrus, they were called Petrus major and Petrus minor (the older one being Petrus Ingemari) during their stay. The sisters could not understand the Swedish brothers, but their Confessor General Bernhardinus spoke with them in Latin, and translated for the sisters. About the confessor general, Peder wrote that he had brought with him 400 books to the library – a library four times larger than that in Vadstena.⁴⁹

In every monastery they visited, Peder testifies, Petrus Ingemari asked the brothers and sisters there if they had ever heard him speak badly about Vadstena monastery. All replied in the negative and wanted to testify to Petrus' good behaviour. Johannes Nicolai's accusations in 1505⁵⁰ must still have gnawed in him, and it was probably important to him that Petrus Magni reported these negative answers to Vadstena, thereby putting Petrus in the clear.

On the canonisation process of Katarina, Peder Månssson at this time only noted that it had come to a standstill – but that she would not be forgotten.⁵¹ Furthermore, despite all the troubles concerning the Birgitta house, some effort, and money, was put into the matter of achieving Katarina's canonisation.

⁴⁷ The Hausbuch is preserved in Augsburg, Staatsarchiv (Kloster Maihingen, Lit. 1). The part describing the visit of the Swedish brothers Petrus and Petrus has been paid attention to and transcribed (with modernisation of orthography and punctuation) by Grupp 1922. The German text of the Hausbuch dates the visit to 1509 ('da man zalt tusement fünff hunderet vnde neyn jar', fol. 152r), which is obviously a mistake, perhaps due to the story being written down several years later, in 1522 (Grupp 1922, p. 404). Grupp seems to believe that the visit took place in 1507, based upon the entry in *Diarium Vadstenense* describing how Petrus Magni and Johannes Matthie were sent to Rome in that year (DV 989). Apparently, Grupp did not notice the later entries reporting on their return and the dispatching of Petrus and Peder instead in 1508 (DV 996 and 998). Regarding the Hausbuch, see further Nyberg 1965, pp. 235–244. I would like to thank Volker Schier, who (through Claes Gejrot) brought my attention to this text and provided me with copies.

⁴⁸ Hausbuch, fol. 152r: 'vnd all schwestar waren jrer zukunfft so fro als waren engel vom himmel kommen'.

⁴⁹ SDHK 36353: 'the haffwa ena liberiam firasiⁿnom ypparen æn j Watzstenæ ær'.

⁵⁰ SDHK 35003, see above.

⁵¹ SDHK 36353: 'Item prosessus canonizacionis sancte Katherine staar æn qwar i bænken [...] wj skwlom henne jnthe gløma.'

VISITING SYON

In May 1509, Petrus left Rome, since money was scarce.⁵² Three months later, he wrote to the confessor general in Vadstena, Sueno Tordonis, from Lübeck, among other things about his wish to accomplish the canonisation. Perhaps as a way of making the confessor general willing to spend more money, he appeals to his ambition, saying: 'I wish that such a great and memorable work could be accomplished during your reign, so that it would be recorded in the annals that "this happened during Sueno Tordonis's time as confessor general and thanks to his solicitude etc."'⁵³

In November the same year, Petrus wrote to the abbess in Vadstena. He was still in Lübeck, but apparently had plans for a journey to England.

Venerable mother! Recently I wrote to you, among other things, about sending a horse to me in Lübeck. Don't bother! Should the need arise, I am trusted enough in Lübeck on behalf of you and our monastery. But, dear mother, let me have such a letter that I wrote to you about, for travelling in England and bestowing fraternity on your behalf. [...] Finally, send me a copy, sealed by you, of the apostolic letter I forward to you from Lübeck and which Peder Måansson has sent, that you have permission to distribute relics of Saint Katarina.⁵⁴

It is not entirely clear when Petrus Ingemari went to England. In January 1510, Abbess Elizabeth Gibbs and Confessor General Stephen Saunders of Syon Abbey informed Abbess Anna (Fickonis) and Confessor General Sueno (Tordonis) of Vadstena Abbey about permitting Petrus Ingemari to copy parts of papal bulls granted to Syon.⁵⁵ Vadstena had possibly written to Syon and asked for this permission as soon as Petrus' plans became known to them, at the latest through the above-mentioned letter from November 1509. Nothing in the letter of January 1510 points to Petrus being in Syon already. From the *viaticum* issued by Abbess Elizabeth and Confessor General Stephen in July 1511, we know that he at this point was about to leave Syon, that he had brought with him relics of Katarina, fulfilled every commission he had been charged with by his superiors,

⁵² SDHK 36716.

⁵³ SDHK 36564: 'Vellem quidem, quod regiminis vestri tempore [...] tam grande et memoria dignum opus impleatur, ut inter cetera, quod "hec domini Suenonis Tordonis tempore eiusque sollicitudine protunc confessoris generalis etc." annalibus inseratur.'

⁵⁴ SDHK 36598, the text (in Swedish) is only preserved in a seventeenth-century copy. According to what has been found in the register volumes of supplications in the Vatican Archives, this permission or licence to distribute Katarina's relics had been granted only two weeks earlier, on 29 October; SDHK 44727.

⁵⁵ SDHK 36652. On the Syon abbess and confessor general, see Gejrot 2015, pp. 23 and 27.

and that he (once again) had been commissioned to go to Rome to attend to the business of Katarina's canonisation.⁵⁶

BACK IN ROME

During Petrus Ingemari's absence, Peder Månnsson had had to fight for the house rather than the canonisation of Katarina. Money intended for the canonisation process had been lost in struggles over the house, and even been cheated out of Peder.⁵⁷ When Petrus came back to Rome in December 1511,⁵⁸ the two brothers had to strike a deal with the German brother Bartoldus, who, against Vadstena's wishes, had managed to procure full authority from the Pope to direct the Birgitta house. The deal included a promise of an annual sum of money for twenty years in order to make him leave the house. 'We were not happy with this deal' Peder wrote later 'but better lose one finger than the whole hand.'⁵⁹

According to Peder Månnsson in May 1512, Petrus constantly talked about leaving Rome.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he stayed on, perhaps driven by his wish to accomplish the task of having Katarina canonised. In October 1512, Petrus wrote to the abbess and confessor general in Vadstena without expressing any wish to leave, and reported that the business of Katarina now was near a settlement, the 300 ducats in gold he got in England were left untouched in the bank in Rome, and they were in want of ready money.⁶¹

One papal decision regarding Katarina was obtained in March 1513, although not to the full satisfaction of Petrus or anyone else fighting for her canonisation.

⁵⁶ SDHK 37015: 'Anna Ffickonis abbatissa et Joannes Mathei generalis confessor [...] miserint ad nos cum reliquiis sancte Catherine [...] dilectum fratrem dominum Petrum Ingemari [...]. Certificamus [...] eundem dictum dominum Petrum easdem reliquias ad nos deferentem omnia superiorum suorum mandata [...] complevisse; preterea eundem dominum Petrum [...] in curiam Romanam deputatum ad dicte sancte Catherine canonizacionem [...] propalandum.'

⁵⁷ Risberg 2013 (SDHK 36716, 37008, 35218 and others).

⁵⁸ SDHK 37215: 'kom hærr Pædhar Jngemari syænde daghen j decembri maanadl hith til Rom'.

⁵⁹ SDHK 37215: 'Oc thy wi betenkande ath bætre war mista en fingher æn alla handena [...] giordom wi sæmyo medb honom [...]. Oc wi loffwadom honom xxx rinska gyllene arligha giffwa j tywghw aar'; SDHK 37277: 'The sæmyan war oss ey tæk ath gøra wthan nødhen dreff oss ther til.' Cf. notes 43 and 45 above.

⁶⁰ SDHK 37214: 'Insuper scire vos volo, quomodo frater Petrus Ingemari semper et continue dicit se ab urbe recessurum propter tribulacionem et dolores nostros.' Similar wordings, in Swedish, are found in SDHK 37215 and 37216.

⁶¹ SDHK 35218: 'Maghen i witha thet negocium beate Catherine ær hart nær kommit til ænda [...] ccc ducata i gwl jak fik i Ængland staa orørde in banco j Rom [...]. Wii hafuom stora nødh i pæninga løsa.' It should be noted that this letter is dated in Rome 'Anno nativitatis dominice millesimoquingentesimoquinto' (1505), which must be a mistake, despite the fact that it is an original. Events mentioned in the letter took place in 1512, at which time Petrus was definitely in Rome.

Pope Leo X instead only confirmed his predecessors' permission regarding worship of her in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and all Birgittine monasteries, and regarding her translation.⁶² In addition to this, the Pope decided that the day on which Katarina would from now on be celebrated was to be the day after the feast of John the Baptist, i.e. on 25 June, and that everyone visiting Vadstena Abbey on this day would enjoy the *Advincula* indulgence.⁶³

Petrus Ingemari obstinately kept on soliciting for Katarina, despite Vadstena having asked for, and Peder Måansson urging, his return home. It seems everyone else had finally given up hope on success in the negotiations for a canonisation, although Peder's excuse for wanting Petrus to leave was lack of money. Petrus stubbornly lingered, but payed for his living in the Birgitta house.⁶⁴ In November 1514, Peder laconically notes that Petrus is as ever preparing to leave.⁶⁵ However, in February 1515 he was still there, and Peder stated:

My guess is that Petrus Ingemari intends to be on his way this summer, with the help of God. He has devoted all his care to Saint Katarina's case, and still does, expecting that one day will provide what many years have denied.⁶⁶

No such day ever came. Preserved sources seem to indicate that the efforts for Katarina's canonisation came to an end at the same time as Petrus left Rome. For example, Peder Måansson mentioned nothing further of the matter in his letters after February 1515.⁶⁷

RETURNING *ad patriam*

As to Petrus Ingemari's further doings and whereabouts, Peder Måansson's letters provide some information. In April 1516, Peder reported that Petrus had written to him from Lübeck around Michaelmas 1515; in 1518, he mentioned that he had heard that Petrus was in Maribo monastery in Denmark, not being able to

⁶² SDHK 31155, 32072, and 35112, cf. above.

⁶³ SDHK 37382.

⁶⁴ SDHK 37431: 'Item frater Petrus Ingemari adhuc est hic nobiscum sollicitans de sancta nostra Chaterina. Quem monui, ut ad monasterium rediret tam caritative revocatus, volens parcere expensis'; SDHK 44726: '[...] hafwer jak inkte twingath husith in expensis [...] ty jak hafwer mæst betahlad til reda min kost hær i husith', cf. DV 1019.

⁶⁵ SDHK 37638: 'Et parat se ad viam semper etc.'

⁶⁶ SDHK 37688: 'Item gissar jak thet herr P J aktar sigh til wæghen j sommar medh Gudz hyælp. Han haffwer alla syna wmxan wppa sancte Katherine ærande haffth oc æn haffwer wæntandes ath en dagh giffwer thet som mangl aar haffwa nekath.'

⁶⁷ SDHK 37847 (1516), 38209 (1518), 38283 (1519), and 38370 (1520).

travel on to Vadstena due to the war; and in 1519, he asked whether Petrus had come home yet.⁶⁸

On 23 June 1520, two days before the celebration of the Katarina feast, Petrus returned to Vadstena, carrying with him a bull concerning her.⁶⁹ It is probably this statement in the *Diarium Vadstenense* that has led to conclusions that Petrus had once again been in Rome and obtained a new papal bull regarding Katarina in 1519 or 1520, a document which has been lost.⁷⁰ I have found no evidence for this, neither in preserved letters nor in the papal registers of supplications and bulls from these years.⁷¹ My hypothesis is that Petrus, before his departure from Rome, had obtained the papal bull of 1513 (stipulating 25 June as the feast-day for Katarina) in original, together with the *vidisse* of it, sealed by the cardinal priest Leonardus of S. Susanna in July 1515.⁷² It is not difficult to imagine his intention being to secure these documents' safe delivery into the hands of the abbess and confessor general in Vadstena by keeping them close on his journey and handing them over himself on his return – a return that was more delayed than anyone had counted on. My conclusion is thus that the *Diarium Vadstenense* refers to this bull of Leo X, and that this, together with its *vidisse*, was the last papal document in the negotiations for Katarina to be obtained by the Birgittines.

June 1520 was most probably the first time after leaving Rome in 1515 that Petrus saw his native town again, possibly even the first time since he left it in 1508. After almost 30 years spent outside the monastery's walls in more or less constant travelling, Petrus settled down within its enclosure. He was now at least 65 years old, but was still not ready to have a leisured life in retirement. The year after his return, he was elected confessor general, an election confirmed by the bishop of Linköping, Hans Brask.⁷³ In 1524, however, the time had come for Petrus to retreat, and he resigned from his office due to poor health. Before that, he had been reunited with his companion of many years in Rome, Peder Måansson, who had returned to Sweden. They met in Vadstena in July, Petrus as

68 Cf. previous note. That Petrus was in Maribo in Denmark in 1518 is confirmed by a letter issued by the confessor general of Maribo (SDHK 38173).

69 DV 1064.

70 See for example Silfverstolpe 1898, pp. 100–101, and SBL, XXI, p. 6.

71 If Petrus Ingemari had been in Rome in 1519 or 1520, I believe that Peder Måansson would have mentioned this in his letters dated in 1519 and 1520 (SDHK 38283 and 38370), and not only asked if he had returned to Vadstena yet (SDHK 38283). Among the copies preserved in the National Archives of Sweden of entries concerning Sweden (or the Birgittines) in the papal registers made of Scandinavian scholars in the early twentieth century, nothing is found that concerns the canonisation of Katarina or that reveals Petrus as a suppliant in any other matter.

72 SDHK 37756.

73 DV 1068; SDHK 38466.

the confessor general, and Peder as a visitor in his old home, on his way to new assignments as the consecrated bishop of Västerås.⁷⁴

Within six years, Petrus Ingemari returned both to his earthly and his heavenly fatherland. He died on the Vigil of All Saints 1526.⁷⁵ That he had become one of the busiest persons in the history of the Birgittine Order, and devoted so much of his life to the founder's daughter Katarina, was perhaps a result of his birthplace being Vadstena. In his childhood, the monastery and its church must have been even more imposing than it still is today. The town, teeming with pilgrims and stories of the miracles of both Katarina and her mother, may well have made a deep impression on a boy such as Petrus, and this may have helped to determine his future as a Birgittine brother and indefatigable advocate of Katarina of Vadstena.

⁷⁴ DV 1089.

⁷⁵ DV 1116.

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TEKLA BUDE

Saint Katarina in England

Evidence from the Processionals of Syon Abbey

THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC of the Birgittine liturgy – the *Cantus Sororum* – is its attentive devotion to the Virgin Mary: each day of the week meditates on a different aspect of Mary's *vita*, and this weekly sequence of prayer repeats itself over the course of the year. The office for Sunday, for instance, stresses the Trinity's joy in Mary, Wednesday celebrates Mary's Immaculate Conception, Fridays consider Christ's crucifixion through Mary's own empathic passion, and so on.¹ In her critical analysis of the *Cantus Sororum* as practiced at Syon Abbey, Anne Bagnall Yardley discusses the spiritual benefits of this reiterative practice. Because it is so 'intensely cloistered' and 'limited in scope', she argues, it is also 'deep' and 'sophisticated'; the economy of words at the heart of the *Cantus Sororum* intensifies the work of liturgy as contemplative practice.² In Syon and other Birgittine houses, each chant carries more spiritual weight because more time can be dedicated to ruminating on its meaning.

Of course, there are a number of mitigating factors against this simplicity: over the course of a liturgical year, the nuns of Syon celebrated at least thirty church festivals, and for each of these special occasions there would be a divergence in the weekly worship sequence: sometimes, if an antiphon or hymn from one of the regular daily rites had the appropriate thematic content, it would be appropriated for a special festival; in other cases, chant texts and tones were borrowed from pre-existing liturgies elsewhere to serve the purpose of the holy day. And so, in this sense, Syon and the other Birgittine houses – despite the simplicity of their weekly liturgical plan – actually experienced relative variety: with thirty or more festivals a year, nearly one of every ten days would diverge

¹ Blunt 1873, pp. 4–5.

² Yardley 2006, p. 203–204.

from the normal course of prayer and song. What is more, the women of Birgittine houses would have been able to hear and at least aurally participate in the more florid *sanctorales* and *temporales* of the men's office; in the case of Syon Abbey, the men would sing the Sarum Rite, perhaps one of the most complex and intricate ever composed. Finally, the varied and often progressive reading material available to the women of Syon proves that the 'extreme enclosure' Yardley posits did not extend to every aspect of Birgittine worship life. These three points alone should give pause when the 'simplicity' of Birgittine worship practice is taken as a given, and it should also encourage further critical analyses of the development of their liturgical practice over the history of the order as a whole.

Although the Birgittine liturgy was reiterative, this does not mean that it did not admit change. At the English Birgittine house of Syon Abbey, for instance, the *Cantus Sororum* developed over time: at some point a new set of festal processional antiphons in honor of Saint Katarina of Sweden was added to the original liturgy composed jointly by Peter of Skänninge and Saint Birgitta.³ This paper investigates the content, background, and origins of these additions, and suggests a gentle revision of the assumption that the Birgittine liturgy was lacking in variation, both regionally and throughout its history.

SAINT KATARINA

It seems fitting that Saint Katarina of Sweden – Birgitta's daughter – would be celebrated by the Birgittine community, and yet more than a hundred years passed between her death and the first licensed celebrations of her life. The history of Katarina's involvement with the Birgittines is well known: not only did she accompany her mother on pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Compostela, and support Birgitta's cause while in Rome, she also became abbess of the Vadstena monastery in 1376, and, once again following in her mother's footsteps, a cultic figure in her own right: the first devotions to Katarina centered around her grave at Vadstena soon after her death.

The first formal attempts to recognize Katarina within Vadstena appear to have some connection with a fire in the wooden chapel where Katarina was

³ Peter likely wrote 55 of the 91 antiphons in the Birgittine office, borrowing the rest from what Viveca Servatius calls the *Gemeingut* or common tradition. The musical settings of many of the daily antiphons came from already-existing sources; most of the material written for the Birgittines *de novo* was those in honor of Saint Anne and Saint Birgitta. In other words, the remarkable 'simplicity' of the Birgittine office was itself a carefully embroidered quilt of borrowed lyrics and new ones, interchangeable melodies and new tropes based on modular efficiency, see Servatius 1990, pp. 21ff.

originally buried, when, during a rebuilding of the Abbey's pillars in 1416–1420, workers were forced to exhume the remains of the abbess. Soon afterward, Ulf Birgersson, the confessor general of Vadstena, began compiling the *Vita Katharina*, a proto-saint's life which contains the earliest compilation of stories of her life and miracles. Ulf Birgersson died in 1433, but Katarina's cult continued to collect stories, including a metrical history written by Johannes Benechini, who died in 1460/61. After nearly half a century of internal Birgittine support for the sanctity of Katarina, a formal commission was named in 1474 to investigate the possibility of canonizing her. This delegation included massive support from both the religious and secular parts of Swedish society.⁴ Although the formal process of canonization was never completed, Pope Innocent VIII allowed Katarina's veneration in Scandinavia in 1488. The *Diarium Vadstenense* records Clemens Petri and Johannes Mathei returning from their Roman negotiations after being granted papal permission to celebrate Katarina's *translatio*, a decision that was later confirmed by Pope Julius II in 1507.⁵ Clemens Petri and Johannes Mathei were greeted on their return with a singing of three of the hymns to Saint Birgitta – the *Summe Trinitatis*, *Regnum mundi*, and *Te Deum*.⁶

Katarina's festival was celebrated in the summer of 1489 with much fanfare. The *Diarium* records a procession and series of masses that lasted for three days, in which Katarina's body was exhumed and her bones placed in various reliquaries, including a vessel for her head and a silver-and-gold case for her arms. The festival culminated in the monastery's cemetery, with the singing of a new song (*vulgo ... congaudente canticum novum Domino cecinerunt*).⁷ This 'new song' – a set of antiphons and hymns composed for the brothers' choir and sung on that day – survives in a handful of manuscripts now located at the Swedish National Archives and Uppsala University Library, and Anne Reese has completed a thoughtful and thorough study of their composition and sources.⁸

However, there are no surviving records from Vadstena or any other continental Birgittine house of what the nuns may have sung on that day or in

4 Fröjmark 1992, pp. 50–66.

5 Höjer 1910. I thank the external reviewer, who helpfully cleared up a couple of dating and terminological issues here and elsewhere.

6 DV 879 (28 September 1488).

7 DV 884–886 (31 July – 3 August 1489). The festival of Saint Katarina is celebrated on 24 March (the day of her death).

8 Reese 2006. Manuscripts included in her study are Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek (Uppsala University Library) C 472, C 473, and C 481, and Riksarkivet (National Archives of Sweden) A 103 (Kungliga bibliotekets deposition av pergamentsomslag), k 121, and Fragment no. 5119 (Medeltida pergamentsomslag).

memory of Saint Katarina in future years. While the records mention the sisters continuing a celebration begun in the *chorus fratrum* ('*sororibus immediate continuantibus* ...'), the surviving liturgical material does not record what this might be.⁹

This is why the processional manuscripts from the women's choir of Syon are of vital importance for the history of the Birgittine Order and its liturgical innovation at the end of the medieval period. There are five extant processinals from the women's choir of Syon Abbey: Exeter, Syon Abbey MS 1; Cambridge University Library MS 8885; Cambridge, St. John's College MS 139; Oxford, St. John's College 167; and Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland 515a. Of these five manuscripts, the author has had the opportunity to look at the first three, of which two (the Cambridge St. John's and the Syon Abbey MS) contain a series of antiphons sung by the nuns of Syon in honor of Saint Katarina.

On the final folios of St. John's College MS 139 (beginning at the bottom of folio 106r and ending at the top of folio 109r), are a prayer and a series of antiphons in honor of Katarina of Sweden (known in Syon as *Saint Catheryne*) interspersed with antiphons in honor of Saint Anne. These chants (fig. 1–4, overleaf) belong to the Feast of Saint Katarina, which would have been held on 24 March, the day of her death.

The Katarina chants consist of three newly composed pieces: and evensong antiphon, a matins antiphon, and a response.¹⁰ The image below, from the main body of the manuscript, shows how different the two hands are (fig. 5 on p. 226).

The Katarina chants are quite obviously a later addition by a different hand than the main body of the manuscript; Christopher de Hamel attributes these additions to Thomas Baillie, a binder, scribe, and illuminator who was elected to care for the orders' liturgical manuscripts in 1482.¹¹ The additions in both the Cambridge St. John's College manuscript and Syon MS 1 appear to be in his hand.

The office for Saint Katarina is, like all Birgittine offices, quite simple, even in its innovations: there is an antiphon for evensong and one for matins along with a response; there is also a prayer, and a suggestion that, if there is need, the nuns might also sing *Anna stellam matutinam*, and *Induit me dominus*. What are the sources for these antiphons, and how did they arrive in the repertory of the Syon nuns?

⁹ DV 884 (31 July 1489).

¹⁰ Please see the appendix on p. 230 for a full transcription and translation.

¹¹ Baillie was appointed to 'wryte noote & bynde booke in tyme commynge lyke as hath bene doone in tyme paste'. Quoted in de Hamel 1991, p. 84.



FIG. 1: St. John's College MS 139, Cambridge, fol. 105v–106r. Evensong antiphon. By permission of St. John's College Library. Photo: The author.



FIG. 2: St. John's College MS 139, Cambridge, fol. 106v–107r. Matins antiphon, prayer, and further antiphon for Saint Anne. By permission of St. John's College Library. Photo: The author.



FIG. 3: St. John's College MS 139, Cambridge, fol. 107v–108r. Additional antiphon for Saint Anne, Response. By permission of St. John's College Library. Photo: The author.



FIG. 4: St. John's College MS 139, Cambridge, fol. 108v–109r. Response, continued. By permission of St. John's College Library. Photo: The author.



FIG. 5: St. John's College MS 139, Cambridge, fol. 104v–105r. By permission of St. John's College Library. Photo: The author.

The most complete analysis of the Birgittine musical repertoire for women was carried out by Viveca Servatius, who compared the *Cantus Sororum* text and music across medieval manuscripts from continental Birgittine houses. In her study, Servatius includes a historical and musicological discussion along with a transcription of all 91 Birgittine antiphons from the original rite composed by Birgitta and Peter of Skänninge.¹² Servatius' musical analysis relies on a wide variety of liturgical manuscript types and locations of ownership: she looks at antiphoners, breviaries, graduals, hymnals, processional, and psalters from convents as far-flung as Paradisus (Florence), Maria Maihingen and Altomünster (Southern Germany), Mariënwater (the Netherlands), Mariental (Estonia), and Vadstena (Sweden). Critically, however, she includes no English manuscripts in her analysis.

On the other hand, Anne Bagnall Yardley's discussion of Birgittine liturgical music focuses on manuscripts from Syon Abbey, but her treatment does not include a comparative analysis of the material sung at Syon in the context of the

¹² Servatius 1990.

continental Birgittine tradition as outlined by Servatius. Instead, she assumes that the Syon practice was identical to that of Birgittines throughout Europe. In most instances, this is a perfectly reasonable assumption, since Servatius' study proves that Birgittine antiphons were remarkably stable from one house and one region to the next. In the twenty manuscripts and fragments in Servatius' investigation, for instance, differences between musical practice from one house to another are small: one or two notes might be transposed, sometimes a note will be omitted or added to the repertoire of a single house. Only in very rare circumstances are there differences of a greater magnitude, such as the transposition of an entire musical phrase or a shift in notes from one syllable of the chant text to another, but even these larger differences hardly challenge the thesis that Birgittine practice was remarkably stable throughout the order. Furthermore, Servatius notes that these variants accumulated regionally. Liturgical books are performance texts, and so, within a particular cloister, intermanuscriptal disagreements would have been immediately apparent – singers would sing different notes at the same time – and therefore easily corrected. For all of these reasons, and because Syon explicitly requested help from Vadstena in the execution of its rule in the early days of its existence, Yardley's assumption in her own, Syon-specific study that the English house's liturgical practice was essentially equivalent to that of other Birgittine houses is generally a safe one.

However, one oversight produced by Yardley's reading is the assumption that the English Katarina-chants existed in other Birgittine sources, when, in fact, the three chants written specifically for Saint Katarina's day are not to be found in Servatius' exhaustive study of the women's repertory from the continent. What is more, the chants found in Syon's processionals do not match those used by the men of Vadstena, for obvious liturgical reasons.¹³ Finally, Volker Schier, who has been studying the processional liturgies of Birgittine nuns in South Germany, finds no evidence of antiphons honoring Katarina in his archive.¹⁴ It seems that Syon's chants for Saint Katarina's day are unique to the English house, a sole surviving record of a practice in memory of the three-day translation festival held in March 1489.

The question remains as to when the chants were added to the Syon processionals, and by whom. The support in England for the canonization of Katarina goes back to some of the earlier movements originated in Vadstena. In a letter to

¹³ The best accounts of that day are found in Reese 2006.

¹⁴ Schier 2013, pp. 268–287.

Vadstena dated 5 April 1473, Abbess Elizabeth Muston (d. 1497) and Confessor General Thomas Westhaugh mention her canonization. This is the only surviving document from a larger correspondence referred to in the letter.¹⁵ It seems that Syon was intent on keeping up with the latest developments of Birgittine concerns. Could Syon have been anticipating, in the early 1480s, that new work would need to be done on the liturgical chants due to Vadstena's campaign for Katarina's canonization? Would Syon have felt free to add chants to its repertoire on its own?

Perhaps the closest we can come to answering this series of questions is the record in the *Diarium Vadstenense* of Petrus Ingemari's visit to Syon in 1510. In that year, Petrus Ingemari – a public supporter of the order who had been living in Rome and who would eventually become Vadstena's confessor general – returned to Sweden from the Holy See with holy relics and with a papal permission that Katarina be celebrated throughout the whole Birgittine Order, and not merely in Vadstena.¹⁶ The next year – in 1511 – he visited Syon and donated some relics of Katarina to the abbey, and was in return permitted to copy papal bulls granted to Syon for the possession of the Vadstena library.¹⁷

It seems most likely that the chants were added to the Syon liturgy not during the original celebration of March 1489, but added twenty years later, during Petrus Ingemari's visit in 1511. This would also explain why none of the chants performed by the nuns of Syon appear in the 1489 *Diarium* entry or in any of the continental liturgical manuscripts – in 1489 they had not yet been composed, and perhaps they were new compositions by Thomas Baillie for the sisters of Syon on the occasion of Petrus Ingemari's visit. The processionals from Syon may indeed be the only nuns' songs in honor of Saint Katarina – new additions to the *Cantus Sororum* by the English daughter house in celebration of Vadstena's efforts at canonization.

It is important to note, of course, that the Katarina-chants recorded in the Syon processionals are simple. Their narration is vague – they do not even mention the stories from the *Vita Katherine*, like the prayers she said for an Italian wife which cured that woman's spontaneous abortions, or the star which shone above Katarina's bed on the day of her death, and kept shining until she died, or her appearance in the waters of the Svartån river to save a three-year-old boy who had fallen off a bridge – relying instead on the usual markers of general female sanctity: mainly chastity and her choral fellowship among a group of

¹⁵ Andersson 2011, p. 23.

¹⁶ DV 982–983 (August 9 1507).

¹⁷ Andersson 2011, p. 23. See also Sara Risberg, p. 213 in this volume.

holy women.¹⁸ However, the combination of these chant texts and melodies are unique to the Birgittine Order, and in this way the Katarina additions embody a tendency towards expansion and novelty housed within a rubric of conservatism and simplicity.

As Syon grew throughout the fifteenth century, its liturgy expanded, albeit carefully, and the Saint Katarina chants of the nuns of Syon provide evidence of a unique instance of nonconformity within the Birgittine Order, a moment in which Syon's liturgy differed greatly – in practice, if not in sentiment – from one convent to the next.

¹⁸ Lundén 1981, ai2r, ciir, ciii2r.

APPENDIX:

CHANT TEXTS FROM THE OFFICE OF SAINT KATARINA
CELEBRATED AT SYON**Evensong antiphon**

Hec est virgo prudens que veniente sposo aptavit lampades suas et introivit cum Domino ad nupcias.

‘This is a prudent virgin who, when the spouse came, took up her lamp and entered with the Lord to his wedding feast.’

Matins antiphon

Hec est que nescivit thorum in delicto. Habebit fructum in refectione animarum sanctarum.

‘This is one who did not know a sinful marriage bed, and she will have her reward at the meal of holy souls.’

Response

Induit me Dominus vestimento salutis et indumento leticie circundedit me. Et tanquam sponsam decoravit me corona. Tradidit auribus meis inestimabiles margaritas et circundedit me vernantibus atque choruscantibus gemmis.

Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto.

‘The Lord has clothed me with the garments of salvation and has covered me with the robe of gladness. He has granted me a crown like a bride. He has decorated my ears with inestimable pearls and encircled me with shining jewels.

Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’

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EVA LINDQVIST SANDGREN

Prosperity and Poverty in Vadstena Abbey in the Sixteenth Century

VADSTENA ABBEY MANAGED to survive as a nunnery for almost the entire sixteenth century. The nuns continued their work as long as they could during the new Lutheran circumstances, until the monastery was finally closed in 1595. The brothers were dismissed in the 1540s and that also ended the information entered into their notebook, the Memorial book of Vadstena (*Diarium Vadstenense*). There are, however, other documents from the sixteenth century bearing witness of the activities in the monastery after this partial dissolution. The silver taxation protocol of 1540 notes the items belonging to several of the altars in the church.¹ The abbess' account books from 1539–1570 make it furthermore possible to get an impression of how objects were valued and taken care of, and also from where and whom the nuns received financial support and gifts.² In addition, what the nuns finally managed to preserve up to the very end is carefully noted in the closing inventory of 1595.³

Taking the three mentioned documents as main sources, this article will bring forth the changes that the nuns were forced to adapt to while they continued as Catholics and Birgittines in a Lutheran context. Questions that will be discussed concern the objects: their being lost, their selling off and their reception as gifts. The focus is on the liturgical objects and the equipment needed to maintain the monastery as a Catholic community. The management of the objects will be related to whether it might indicate any kind of 'possession strategy' to maintain the monastic life. Furthermore, the importance of the donors' gifts will be added to the discussion on the maintaining of the abbey. Additionally, the donors mentioned in the accounts may contribute to the discussion on actors

¹ Källström 1935, also published as part of his dissertation, see Källström 1939.

² See Silfverstolpe 1895.

³ Ibid., pp. 153–156. Silfverstolpe edited the list in his edition of the account books.

during the Swedish Reformation era. The nuns' potential success to sustain will be therefore be interpreted through their possessions, more or less preserved up to the very end of the monastery.

THE SILVER TAX IN 1540

The Memorial book makes some notes related to the beginning of the Reformation and the royal activities concerned. In May 1540 the monastery received visitors prohibiting them from performing many of their Catholic rituals. On this occasion a list of altar utensils was set up.⁴ In the same year, the silver tax took place. The tax protocol of 1540 was written down carefully, and the scribe noted whether the altar was placed in the laity's part of the church, 'in templo', or in the monastic area, 'in claustro'.⁵ In total, twenty-six altars lost part of their equipment. Six of them were located 'in claustro', thirteen 'in templo' and six more were listed without localisation. It is not very likely that the designation of the altars has to do with the jurisdiction of the prebends. The classification seems to be a question of localisation in the church/abbey. Altars with the abbey as patron, as well as altars with lay patrons, seem to have in fact been taxed, despite the lay altars from a legal point of view being private property.⁶

The objects taken in 1540 were not noticed from their functional point of view, but from their silver value. All but four of the twenty-six listed altars were taxed to a value of between 1 and 5 mark silver. Several of them contributed with about 1.5 mark silver, which corresponds to an average weight of the chalices mentioned at the same occasion. Presumably, several chalices were confiscated. Evidently, objects were taken that had no liturgical function, but might have been donated as votive gifts. The most heavily taxed altars were the two Saint Anna altars together with Compassio Marie and Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi, Compassio Marie and one of the Anna altars were placed 'in templo' while the second (and seemingly richest) Anna altar was mentioned

⁴ The list itself is not preserved, but its existence was noted, see DV 1175.

⁵ The protocol lists the altars as follows: 'in monasterio', Saint Anna, 'in claustro', John the Baptist, Saint Birgitta, Christ, Corporis Christi, Rosary, Compassio Marie, 'in templo', Saint Sigfrid, Saint Barbara, City counts, Compassio Marie, John the Baptist, Corpus Christi, Saint Martin, Saint George, Saint Anna, Rosary, Saint Nicolas, Saint Michael and Trinity. Altars listed without a mentioned location (probably 'in templo') are the following: Saint Erik, the Bishop choir, Saint Birgitta, Saint Rochus, Saint Mary Magdalene and the prebend of Joan Arnesson.

⁶ Norborg 1958, p. 102, and Lindblom 1965, p. 139 have assumed that only altars under the abbey's jurisdiction were taxed, but when the tax list is compared to the information available on the altars and their patrons the information does not support this view.

‘in monasterio’.⁷ Together, these four altars contributed more than half of the total silver weight from Vadstena Abbey, around 10.6 kg of a total about 19.5 kg. Despite the fact that as many as twenty-six altars were taxed on this occasion, many altars were evidently unaffected by the tax collectors’ work. The main altar, the twelve apostolic altars and the Katarina of Vadstena altar seem to have been among those unaffected by the taxation.⁸

THE ALTARS OF THE ABBEY CHURCH

To interpret the decline of Vadstena Abbey in the sixteenth century, one issue concerns from what level the decline set in. The main focus of the silver tax protocol, as well as the closing inventory, was the property of the church, i.e. the equipment of the altars. The exact number of altars in Vadstena Abbey church is hard to define, but the number was comparatively high for Swedish circumstances.⁹ The Rule of Saint Birgitta prescribed sixteen consecrated altars in the monastic area of the church,¹⁰ and an Italian visitor in the 1430s, Pietro Querini, mentioned that there were forty-two altars in the church.¹¹ As mentioned, the tax protocol of 1540 records twenty-six altars from which items were taken.¹² Six of the altars mentioned as ‘in claustro’ were in fact not stipulated by Birgitta, but seem nevertheless to have been located in the space of the monastery. This makes a total of at least twenty-one altars for the monastics. Some altars are occasionally mentioned in the Memorial book and some lay altars are mentioned in the charters of foundation from the fifteenth century.¹³ To these must be added the Birgitta altar of the laity, reconsecrated in 1459.¹⁴ There were also a number of wooden sculptures, in the abbey church since the Middle Ages. Some of them match the description of the textually documented altars, but not all of them. Comparing the text sources of prescribed or otherwise mentioned altars, along with the preserved sculptures, we get an even higher number.¹⁵ The

⁷ The location of the Saint Anna altar ‘in monasterio’ might have been in the monastic buildings outside the church, for example the cloister walk. For further reading on this topic, see Siart 2008.

⁸ See note 6.

⁹ Källström 2011, p. 216, mentions sixty altars in Lund Cathedral and around thirty in Linköping in the fifteenth century. Vadstena Abbey seems to have been somewhere in between.

¹⁰ Rev. Extr., 28.

¹¹ Källström 2011, p. 217.

¹² Källström 1939, pp. 281–284, argues that the private lay altars not were taxed. This leads to the conclusion that the altars mentioned ‘in templo’ were abbey property at this time. This has not been investigated.

¹³ Norborg 1958, pp. 86–102, Lindblom 1965, pp. 90–92.

¹⁴ DV 704.

¹⁵ Scholars have made varying approximations of between forty-one and sixty-one altars. Käll-

forty-two altars from the early 1440s that are mentioned probably had increased in number one hundred years later. If customary medieval strategies for placing altars by the pillars and along the side chapels are followed, we reach a number of conceivably thirty to thirty-five lay altars.¹⁶

The altar equipment was restricted when it came to the monastery altars. Saint Birgitta stipulated in the *Regula Salvatoris* that fifteen of the consecrated sixteen monastic altars should have a double set of paramenta, and one chalice for each altar. The double set had the purpose to serve for both feast days and common days. However, for the main altar there should be one cross, two chalices, two pairs of candlesticks, three incensers and one pyxis.¹⁷ For the nuns' devotional altar there should be a monstrance¹⁸ and presumably, although not mentioned by Birgitta, an altar cloth and antependia. This means that thirty-three altar 'sets' is the minimum to calculate with for the abbey. For the laity's altars there were no restrictions imposed by either Saint Birgitta or the abbey, as far as is known. One may presume that some founders donated additional equipment for their own altars. A tentative estimate of the number of lay altars and their equipment is about thirty-five altars. However, concerning the monastic altars, when their equipment is restricted to a double set of mass utensils and paramenta, it leads to an impressive number of liturgical utensils in the church. Adding the known altars of the abbey makes the number of objects even more impressive.

ATTACKS ON THE MONASTERY

After the silver tax and the expulsion of the brothers in the 1540s, the decline of Vadstena Abbey began. The church interior, however, remained relatively unaffected until 1550. Up to this point the nuns and visitors could for the most part continue their liturgical tasks undisrupted. Ten years after the silver taxation, the nuns had to leave their elevated choir and move their devotional practice to the western choir, which was left empty after the dissolution of the brothers' convent some years earlier. The reasons for this transfer had to do with the local Lutheran parish, which had to be temporarily housed in the abbey church while their church, Saint Per, was rebuilt after a fire. The most evident rearrangement

ström 1939, p. 281, footnote 6, counts forty-one altars in the church. Lindblom 1965, p. 92 suggests sixty-one altars.

¹⁶ See Kroesen 2010, for a discussion on placement and number of medieval altars.

¹⁷ Reg. Salv., 21.

¹⁸ Rev. Extr., 37. The nun's altar was the seventeenth prescribed in the rule, but not consecrated for Mass.

of the abbey church in order to fit the preferences of the Lutheran parish was an insertion of pews, an organ and a preacher's pulpit. The parish took over the Birgitta altar and made it their 'main' altar, and no radical changes seem to have taken place around it. The nuns were, however, from this time and until 1576 cut off from the rest of the church by a screen between the western choir and the nave: their song should not disturb the Lutheran worship, and vice versa.¹⁹ Consequently, they did not have visual access to the rest of the church and to the altars they could formerly see from their choir.

In the beginning of the Lutheran period of the church, in August 1552, King Gustavus Vasa married his second wife, Katarina Stenbock, in Vadstena Abbey church. A group of foreign royal musicians were employed for this occasion. It turned out that they favoured the Calvinist attitude to images and attacked the images of the lay altars as well as the monastic altars. How much was destroyed at this iconoclastic occasion is not known, but the visiting Calvinists were somehow stopped.²⁰ Already at this time several of the altars around the pillars must have been removed and replaced by pews for the Lutheran parish.

Five years later, in 1557, the monastery suffered from a robbery. The list of lost items, set up by the abbess, indicates that the two thieves seemed to have managed to break into buildings close to the church. Apart from sixty-four books, the main stock of robbed items comprised textiles (altar lists, towels, embroidered images, wall hangings). They also took some reliquaries, chaplets, rings and ivories. Among the stolen textiles was probably the double set of paramenta intended for each of the twelve apostolic altars.²¹ This, along with the full content of the list, suggests that the thieves had been in the brothers' sacristy and the adjacent library. The value of the stolen items was perhaps not the worst of it, but it takes a considerable amount of time to produce forty-five towels, twenty-six altar sets, six albs/mass shirts and all the listed embroidered articles. The thieves were evidently smart, as most things on the list were rather easy to dispose of, for example, to other churches. Even though the thieves were identified and the nuns complained to the king, they never got the stolen goods back.²²

¹⁹ Andersson 1991, p. 74; Lindblom 1965, pp. 215 and 218; Andersson 1983, p. 16.

²⁰ Lindblom 1973, p. 217.

²¹ Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. XIII–XIV, edition of MS C 694 in UUB (Uppsala University Library). Twenty-six altar cloths are mentioned in the list.

²² For the full list of stolen objects, see Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. XIII–XIV, note 1. This can be summarised: sixty-four books, forty-five towels, twenty-six altar covers/cloths of velvet and linen, eight pearl stitched pictures, seven broken pearl crowns, six albs, four old wall hangings, three old leather blankets, two 'Altare stuuer' (?), two reliquaries of crystal and silver, two small gold rings, two ivory reliefs, two small pearl chaplets, one small gilded crown (å 19 lod), one pearl-



FIG. 1: The backside of a diptych from the 1300s, with later painted scenes of the crucified Christ and Virgin Mary with the Child. Inscription from 1568. The diptych was stolen from the abbess' rooms in Vadstena by Danish soldiers in 1567. Ivory, 51.1 x 8.2 cm.
©Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

Still another attack on the abbey occurred when Danish troops invaded Vadstena in 1567, but we have few records of what was lost apart from three objects: two rings and an ivory diptych.²³ The diptych was taken from the abbess's room, according to the inscription on it, and is now preserved in the Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen (fig. 1).²⁴

stitched cushion, one altar list with pearls, one reliquary of brass and coral (weight 6.5 lod), 6 mark money, gilded silver plates (weight: 8 mark 4 lod). The original document has not been identified, but is according to Silfverstolpe kept in Stockholm, The National Archives, Kungliga Maj:t:s kanslis arkiv, Klagomålsregister.

²³ The rings are discussed below.

²⁴ Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum, Inv. nr. G54. The diptych was made in France in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century paintings of the Crucifixion and the Virgin were added on its flat outside panels.

A few years after the Lutheran parish had moved back to their own church in 1576, the abbey church was affected by yet another tragedy. At the wedding of King Johan III's illegitimate daughter Princess Sofia to Count Pontus de la Gardie, too many people had gathered on a gallery to see the wedding, which caused it to collapse, injuring and killing many guests. According to witnesses, the gallery was located in the north or east part of the church.²⁵ The information suggests that it was the nuns' choir and the Marian choir that collapsed, a gallery that had been unused for about thirty years.²⁶ It must have been a horrible disaster when more than 280 m² of wood, brick and copper fell down from a height of around 6 metres.

THE ACCOUNT BOOKS

In 1539 the nun Katarina Matsdotter was elected abbess, and from this year until 1570 the account books of the nuns have been preserved.²⁷ There are several ups and downs in the incomes from this period. In 1541/42 the total income was just above 2000 marks, while in 1547 it was only around 250 marks. This decrease in income might be connected to the document confiscation of Gustavus Vasa in 1543. In this event, the king took the letter cabinet holding the documents testifying the abbey's estates. By this confiscation of legal documents the king was able to gain access to the abbey's estates, i.e. its economical foundation. This must have severely affected the abbey's economy.

At the same time as the incomes varied on a falling scale, the costs were fairly constant.²⁸ How did the nuns manage to keep this business afloat? A simple answer is that they could not. They evidently had to sell objects, but certain things they did not sell, and they did not simply sell the items that might provide the highest return. There were, however, some smaller peaks of income in 1553, 1559 and, 1562. The nuns continuously received gifts such as silver spoons and coins that they later sold off, but they also had to reduce their possessions. This became all the more evident when they sold off some of their estates, such as minor houses in Vadstena, but they also sold off brick, hides, pots, cloths, horses, bed linen, chests, etc.

²⁵ Andersson 1991, p. 80; Andersson 1983, p. 17.

²⁶ The nuns' choir was probably connected with the Marian choir. Both were wooden and had been out of use since 1550 when the nuns were forced to move to the western choir.

²⁷ DV 1168, election of abbess recorded in the Memorial book. Accounts edited by Silfverstolpe 1895.

²⁸ There were about fifty nuns during the period 1539–1595.

According to the accounts, the brothers assisted the nuns in the first years after their expulsion, but from 1544 this source of income ceased.²⁹ Even the money from the collection boxes came to an abrupt end when the Lutheran parish took over the church in 1550. The sums coming from the expelled brothers and the collection boxes were evidently not very large, but they both seem to have provided a continuous support that came to an end in the early 1550s.

In general, the household articles the nuns sold resulted in very low earnings, while the few liturgical objects that were sold had a very high value. Still, the nuns did not sell many of the most precious items until very late in the accounts. For example, in 1540 and 1542 they sold objects for around 700 marks, a reliquary, a silver belt/clasp, a chalice and some rings. These items contributed with as much as one third of the income for these two years. There is also a peak of sold objects later on, in the 1560s. They then sold six chalices, seven rings, two clasps/belts, a cope and a crosier and, a chasuble. Even some liturgical vestments were sold in the 1560s.³⁰

While the silver tax of 1540 had removed five chalices from the church and monastery, the nuns disposed of eleven more chalices before 1570.³¹ Some chalices and patens were sold between 1540 and 1545 and each of them was valued to less than 100 marks. The first chalice, sold in 1540, was the least valuable of them all, worth around 28 marks. The chalices sold in the 1560s were all of higher value than those sold before, some even much higher.³² It might be that those objects preserved longer also had a certain significance for the nuns, apart from their silver weight. However, they may also have been preserved because they were so valuable that they would be useful in a more critical economic situation. As was the case with the chalices, most of the reliquaries of a lower value were sold during the first decades recorded in the account book. The silver reliquary called 'the chin of Katarina' was, however, an exception and it provided the nuns with 221 marks in 1540.

Regrettably, the scribe did not reveal the purchaser of 'the chin of Katarina'. In fact, the accounts rarely reveal the name of the buyer. An image of the Virgin Mary was sold to lady Ebba Eriksdotter Vasa already in 1542,³³ but otherwise it is not until 1569 that purchasers are mentioned. In this year the nearby church

29 The wills of some of the brothers gave support in 1555, 1559, 1566 and, 1568. Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. 80, 92, 121 and 130.

30 Chasubles and a cope: 1563, 1564, 1566, 1568, 1569.

31 On some occasions (1540, 1541, 1542, 1543, 1560) they received chalices as gifts and sold them off rather quickly, see Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. 11, 32, 36, 39, 42 and 100.

32 The highest valued chalice rendered 250 marks in 1566.

33 Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 29.

of Rogslösa bought a chasuble.³⁴ The following year a chalice was bought by another nearby church, Hov,³⁵ in addition to a set of mass utensils by the church of Kärstad.³⁶ In all these parishes the abbey had owned estates, dating back to the early history of the monastery.³⁷

SPONSORS IN THE ACCOUNT BOOKS

The names of the sponsoring individuals are sometimes written out in the account books, but unfortunately not in all cases. The Swedish nobility are identifiable to a rather high degree and some individuals recur frequently. Among the donors we can identify men and women from most of the leading Swedish noble families, but not all. Most frequent are the members of the Vasa and Trolle families, while for example Bielke, Brahe and Vinge occur more occasionally. The Sture and Bonde families seem to be fairly absent from the abbey's history at this time, but this was not the case before the Reformation. Several members of these families are buried in Vadstena Abbey church.³⁸ Some persons are mentioned more frequently than others, and several of them are women of high nobility, such as Gustavus Vasa's queen, Margareta Lejonhuvud, and her mother Lady Ebba Eriksdotter Vasa.³⁹ Lady Ebba remained a Catholic all her life, as did her mother, Lady Anna Karlsdotter of Vinstorp, who also contributed economically to the abbey until her death in 1552. The repeated mention in the accounts of a Lady Barbro at Bro is suggestive of Barbro Eriksdotter Bielke till Åkerö (d. 1553), who lived at Brokind castle in Östergötland and was married to Måns Johansson Natt och Dag. Members of other noble families are also explicitly mentioned in the accounts, such as Lady Margareta Mikelsdotter Björnlår (married to Axel Andersson Lillie af Ökna), Lady Pernilla Nilsdotter Sparre af Ellinge (married to Sten Kristiernsson Oxenstierna), Lady Ebba Holgersdotter Gera of Björkvik and Lady Kristina Lindormsdotter Vinge.

The second most important noble family in the Vadstena account books was probably Trolle. One of them was Karin Eriksdotter Gyllenstierna (d. 1562), daughter of the mentioned Lady Anna Karlsdotter of Vintorp. Lady Karin was

³⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The abbey had owned fifteen estates in Rogslösa since the founding period. Estates from this time were likewise at hand in Hov, where one of the most important farms of the abbey was located, Västra Orlunda. For estates in Kärstad, see SDHK 17624, letter dated 1402.

³⁸ See Bennett & Gustavsson 1985.

³⁹ Lady Ebba was second cousin to King Gustavus Vasa. She bought an image of the Virgin from the nuns, as mentioned above.

married to Erik Arvidsson Trolle (d. 1539/40) in his third marriage. Another important sponsor was Arvid Trolle, but there is no specification in the accounts regarding which one of the two Arvid Trolle is meant, Turesson (d. 1568) or Joakimsson (d. 1549). It seems however reasonable to assume that it was the latter, since he was the one most closely connected to the abbey by the offices he held, and his support ceased after 1547.⁴⁰ Before this, he made as many as nine donations of a sum of 300 marks. His wife, Lady Hillevi Knutsdotter Sparre and their daughter Lady Beata Eriksdotter Trolle (married to Gabriel Kristiernsson Oxenstierna af Eka och Lindö) were also among the recurring sponsors. Despite frequent donations to the abbey, the Trolle family did not, however, reach the same level of sponsorship as King Johan III and Queen Katarina Jagellonica at the end of the account book period. Their financial support in the 1570s and 1580s, together with the visits made by the papal legate Andreas Possevino in 1577/78 and 1579/80, must have strengthened the hope of the nuns considerably, although only for a while.⁴¹

THE INVENTORY OF 1595

When the monastery was finally closed in 1595 an inventory was set up.⁴² In this everything found inside the monastic buildings was listed, from gilded silver shrines to simple kitchen utensils, such as frying pans. Silfverstolpe's edited list opens with the silver and gold objects, followed by the textiles for the church. Heading the list are the silver reliquaries of Saint Birgitta and the blessed Katarina, followed by a crucifix and a pair of candleholders, also in silver.⁴³ Birgitta's shrine is said to be of gilded silver, while Katarina's was covered by gilded silver plates. The shrine of Katarina was probably the red velvet shrine covered with small silver plates, which still exists. Katarina's embroidered tomb cover is also on the list.⁴⁴ The long list of liturgical textiles comprises nineteen chasubles of varying colours and tissues, fourteen altar lists, twelve antependia, thirteen mass shirts, twelve towels, eight amices and five reliquaries as well as book rests, altar curtains, carpets, covers, etc. Also among

⁴⁰ Adelsvapen Wiki, Trolle nr 360, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Trolle_nr_360#TAB_10.

⁴¹ For further reading on the support of King Johan III, see Lindblom 1961, esp. pp. 4–5.

⁴² The archival record is in the National Archives of Sweden in Stockholm (see 'Handlingar angående kyrkorna och klostren'). The list was edited and published by Silfverstolpe in *Historiskt bibliotek* 1875–1880, I, pp. 153–156.

⁴³ The silver shrine of Ingrid of Skänninge, also on the list, was sent to Vadstena by King Gustavus Vasa when he closed the Skänninge convent in 1544.

⁴⁴ The remains of the tomb cover were rediscovered in the early 1960s in Ödeby church, see Franzén 1963.

the objects in the storerooms were some intended for use in the church, for example eight candlesticks of copper, clocks, hand basins and jugs. The list is a mix of church utensils and everyday objects. Last in the edited list the textiles recur: table cloths, towels, pillowcases, bench cushions, tapestries, and covers. Finally, an interesting banner is mentioned, which will be discussed below.⁴⁵

As mentioned above, the account books seldom provide information regarding who has bought an object, and the inventory of 1595 mentions just three recipients: the Aska, Kumla and Saint Per churches. Two red chasubles with crosses on the back ended up at Aska church. The church of Kumla received a white chasuble with gold decorations. The parish church of Saint Per received a violet velvet chasuble together with a golden flowery one. Saint Per also got the other textile items that were connected to the two chasubles.⁴⁶

WHAT DID THE NUNS PRESERVE AND WHAT DID THEY SELL OFF?

Already in 1548 the nuns sold their money chest with the comment: 'We sold one chest. It was the money chest.'⁴⁷ Perhaps they realised they would not have much use for it, but it is in fact not until 1563 that the yearly summarising ends with the comment that *nothing* was left.⁴⁸

Is it from the documents possible to identify some strategies when it comes to selling or keeping objects? There is a continuous selling off, of for example less costly kitchen utensils, but also some of the minor houses/cottages in Vadstena. There is, on the other hand, as mentioned above, a steady input of gifts of minor and greater value. All through the period of the account books the nuns received not just cash gifts but silver gifts, foremost as silver spoons and coins. These were furthermore sold off continuously, but the income only occasionally reached levels above 100 marks/year. Silver spoons were also used as salaries now and then, instead of cash. Among the more valuable gifts were five chalices, four patens, an image, two golden chains, five chaplets, two reliquaries, an incenser and an Agnus Dei.⁴⁹ Most, but not all, of these gifts were acquired through the dispersed brothers in the 1540s.⁵⁰

Apart from the coins and spoons, rings were continuously sold off. Of the

45 Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. 153–156.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., p. 52.

48 'Blifflwer nu inte ather', ibid., p. 111.

49 Ibid., for chalices on pp. 11, 32, 36, 39, 42 and 100.

50 Ibid., for gifts from brothers on pp. 11, 21, 36 and 39.

forty-two rings sold, as many as thirty-five were nuns' profess rings. When such a ring was sold, it was also explicitly mentioned to which nun it once belonged.⁵¹ The income they received through selling the rings varied considerably, from 20 to 70 marks/ring. For the most part the rings were sold the year following the death of the nun, but there is sometimes a time lapse. In 1561 a ring was sold designated as 'den lilla faerda-ringen'.⁵² This might have been a ring with certain references for the nuns, since it received this particular attention from the account scribe. In 1554 and 1564, it is mentioned that they still owned rings that once had belonged to Saint Birgitta.⁵³ It is also noted in 1569 that the Danes had stolen the ring of sister E.H. and that they burnt sister Margareta's ring.⁵⁴ During the excavations in Vadstena 1961, two late medieval golden rings were in fact found in the ash layers from a fire in the nuns' cloister.⁵⁵

Despite the reduced number of silver objects in the church through the tax 1540, there were still many precious metal objects left. In total the nuns had sold off eleven chalices by 1570. The first ones sold were cheaper, but in the 1560s some of the more expensive ones were sold, providing an income of as much as 200 marks. In total, twenty-one chalices were noted in the accounts during these years, but the nuns did not possess all of them at the same time. There might of course have been more chalices at hand during the abbey's prime, but it is not certain that every altar had its own full set of utensils.⁵⁶ There are just two chalices explicitly associated with a particular altar: the small Laurentius chalice that was sold 1562 (for 32 marks)⁵⁷ and the precious chalice donated to the altar of the Virgin by Saint Birgitta's son, Birger.⁵⁸

More profitable than most other sold articles was a bishop's crosier and clasps for a cope sold in 1565. Together they provided an income of more than 200 marks. The following year they sold a cope, probably the one that the clasps had belonged to.⁵⁹ With the two copes mentioned in 1595 this makes a total of three copes. This seems a fairly low number, even if visiting bishops might have brought their own vestments with them.

⁵¹ Ibid., see for example pp. 80, 91, 104, 108, 109, 115, 117 and 138.

⁵² A possible translation reads: *the small travel ring* (?).

⁵³ Silfverstolpe 1895 pp. 80, 115. It is not noted if they were sold before the account ends, in 1570.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 138. Sister E.H. might be Elin/Helena Håkansdotter (1525–1569). Sister Margareta may be associated with at least three nuns at the time.

⁵⁵ Stockholm, Statens historiska museum (SHM), SHM 28813, E 21:1; SHM 28813, E 21:2.

⁵⁶ Chalices might be included in some sums of silver in the 1540 protocol.

⁵⁷ Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 105.

⁵⁸ Andersson 1983, p. 103, (SHM 7700) inscription reads: 'Birgerus miles filius sce birgitte me dedit ad altare bte vginis.'

⁵⁹ Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 122.

Crowns and chaplets of silver, gold and pearls all occur in the sources. Taken together, the documents list one large and one small gilded silver crown, one large pearl crown, nine small pearl crowns and eight chaplets. The nuns must have had many of them, but for what use? Several crowns and chaplets were probably intended for the sculptures, as some are explicitly mentioned as small. Some of the altars that had lost their belts, chains and other decorative vestments in 1540 also had to give away their crowns, which suggests that the items concerned were bridal equipment for loan at weddings. In the account books, clasps and belts are mentioned just a few times, as well as a chain sold in 1552, which rendered 10 marks.⁶⁰ As the brothers were absent and the nuns had lost access to most of the holy images, no one could dress them up with crowns etc., according to medieval custom. At the closing in 1595 the nuns possessed two small and one larger crown, as well as a pearl embroidered dress for a small sculpture.⁶¹ The dress and one of the crowns might have been for an image of the Virgin Mary.

When it comes to the reliquaries, it is impossible to get an idea of how many reliquaries there might have been. They were used in processions and for devotion on many occasions at several places in the church. The tax collectors in 1540 noted no reliquaries at all. The brothers donated two reliquaries (in 1540 and 1543), while thieves stole three in 1557.⁶² Despite the fact that the reliquaries were of high importance for the nuns and their devotional life, some were sold surprisingly early. As mentioned previously, already in 1540 the (silver) 'chin of Katarina' was sold (221 marks) and in the following year a drinking bowl of Saint Birgitta was sold (30 marks). Two other Birgitta related objects ('baas' and 'bulle') gave the nuns some minor incomes in the 1540s.⁶³ As noted above, two of Saint Birgitta's rings were explicitly mentioned as having been in possession in 1564. However, in the record of 1565, just one of them was left.⁶⁴ The preserved textile-covered reliquaries are not mentioned at all until 1595.⁶⁵

FOLLOWING THE TRACES

The information on the number of chalices mentioned in the studied sources gives a number of eighteen. The protocol of 1540 mentions five chalices, while

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁶² Ibid., p. XIV, note 1.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 22, 47 and 55.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 115 and 120.

⁶⁵ The embroidered textile-covered reliquaries mentioned in 1595 are in all likelihood identical with the four preserved today in Linköping and Stockholm.

the accounts mention gifts of five and the sale of nine.⁶⁶ In 1595 the nuns still owned four chalices and three patens.⁶⁷ The chalice sold to Hov church in 1570 is probably the one still owned by the church.⁶⁸ The above mentioned chalice, now in Statens historiska museum (SHM) in Stockholm (SHM Inv. no 7700) was once donated to the Marian altar.⁶⁹ Another chalice seems to have remained in Vadstena. It carries an owner sign and the initial E. This chalice was used by the hospital that was housed in the monastic buildings after the closure. The sign has not been identified, but the E letter might refer to the Vadstena mayor Erengisle Eskilsson who was a sponsor of the abbey and founder of an altar.⁷⁰

There seems to have been few monstrances in the abbey, and none is preserved. Three were listed in the 1540 protocol, one for each of the two Corpus Christi altars and one for the Anna altar ‘in monasterio’. According to the account books the nuns never sold or received any monstrance, but at the closing in 1595 there was still a monstrance left. This is in full accordance with the late medieval spirituality, but it is in fact also necessary for the nuns according to the Birgittine Rule: there should always be a monstrance exposed at the nun’s devotional altar.⁷¹

The list of precious metals in 1595 is not long, but the textile equipment seems to have been fairly well preserved, despite the robbery in 1557. Neither the tax collectors in 1540 nor the thieves robbed the monastery of any chasubles, dalmatics or copes. The number of chasubles sold was just four (in 1563, 1564, 1568 and 1569), and at the closing there were still nineteen left.⁷² In total this makes twenty-three chasubles. There ought to have been at least four dalmatics as well, one for each of the four deacons. Surprisingly, no dalmatics are mentioned in the 1595 inventory or in the account books.⁷³ The inventory list informs briefly on

⁶⁶ Five chalices were given to the nuns and later sold off, Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. 11, 32, 36, 39 and 100. See above note 52.

⁶⁷ Patens are rarely mentioned separately, but often seem to be included when a chalice is mentioned.

⁶⁸ It has a signature on the (remade) cup that attaches it to the Vadstena goldsmith Jacob Schotte (d. 1750).

⁶⁹ The cup was remade in 1673. It seems to have been in Vadstena in 1595, but came into royal possession thereafter. It was deposited in the museum in 1885 by the Chapel of the royal palace.

⁷⁰ SDHK 24705. (Other possible interpretations are the altars of Saint Erik, Saint Erasme or Saint Eskil, all three documented in the church.)

⁷¹ Reg. Salv., 37.

⁷² Silfverstolpe 1895, pp. 110, 112, 130 and 132.

⁷³ Two blue velvet dalmatics are however listed in the succeeding inventories from Vadstena church in 1598 and 1635. Both were given to Strå church in 1642, according to the inventory list of that year, Stockholm, ATA.

the design, materials and colours of the liturgical vestments. A cross on the back decorated ten of them, but just one was embroidered by couching and only two with pearls. Together they display a wide range of colours and qualities, from so-called camel wool to floral patterned and golden tissues.⁷⁴

Among the twenty-six altar lists/frontlets in the inventory of 1595, twelve are noticed as a group. This might include the altar lists/frontlets for the twelve apostolic altars, creating a coherent set of their own with the same measures. During the robbery 1557, two altar lists were stolen together with twenty-six altar cloths of velvet and linen. This kind of altar textile is mentioned just once as sold in the account books, in 1563, and then together with a green velvet chasuble.⁷⁵

The albs and mass shirts were also fairly numerous: as many as seventeen were noted 1595, despite six having been stolen in 1557 and three sold off in 1564.⁷⁶ This makes a total of twenty-six albs relative to seventeen ordained brothers in the monastery.⁷⁷ In addition to the liturgical vestments, eight amices are noticed in the inventory, but this is the only mention of this kind of textile as a separate item. Another kind of liturgical vestment is the cope, but in the documents they are few. The thieves did not take any of them. As mentioned earlier, a clasp for a cope was sold 1565 together with the silver of the bishop's crosier.⁷⁸ Two more copes are listed in the 1595 inventory, one orange and one red.⁷⁹ Preserved in Vadstena today is a red medieval cope, 'the Sture cope', by all probability one of the two mentioned in the inventory.⁸⁰ There are also some embroideries in Vadstena church that belonged to a cope, but these have long since been reworked and put on an altar list.⁸¹

SURPLUS AND MINIMUM

Taking the three mentioned documents as main sources, this article has discussed the material changes that the Vadstena nuns experienced, while they attempted to maintain their Catholic community as Birgittines in the sixteenth century. They did indeed receive support from the high nobility more or less all

74 Three white, three red, three green, two gold, two flowery, black, one violet ('brun'). All are not described by colour.

75 Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 110.

76 Ibid., pp. 154 and 112.

77 All brothers were not ordained, just deacons or priests had to wear liturgical vestments regularly.

78 Silfverstolpe 1895, p. 117. The crosier is explicitly defined as the bishop's in the accounts.

79 Ibid., pp. 153–154.

80 Ibid., p. 154.

81 Estham 1983, pp. 122–123.

the time, but on an irregular and varying scale. In the beginning of the period studied, some female members of the Vasa family were frequent and important donors. Some of these women were close relatives who remained Catholics all their lives. This circumstance, the nobility's loyalty to the Catholic faith, is generally excluded when discussing the Reformation century in Sweden, but it becomes apparent in the account books from Vadstena. At the end of the investigated period it was still the Vasa family who supported the nuns more than anyone else, mainly through King Johan III and his wife Katarina Jagellonica.

Despite the sponsorship of the nobility and the successively decreasing number of convent members, the income did not cover expenses. The nuns had to sell things off. The selling of objects was, however, not evenly spread out during the period of the preserved account books. Not many objects were in fact sold during the 1540s and 1550s, and the few items sold were not very profitable. The large allowance from the brothers around 1550 evidently saved items from being occasionally sold. Really precious objects such as chasubles and chalices were not sold until late in the 1560s. At this time deceased nuns' profess rings seem to have been sold off more regularly than before. As there were few newly ordained sisters to inherit the rings, this valuable property of a nun could then be a support for the remaining community.

The information on where objects went when they were sold is unfortunately sparse. Some items were sold to institutions or individuals that the nuns knew, or must have had confidence in. As mentioned, some of the nearby churches acquired objects: a chasuble to Rogslösa (in 1562) and a chalice to Hov (in 1570). The relations to Hov were very close, not just because of the holding of estates there, but also since the most important farm, Orlunda, was located there. The estates in Rogslösa parish were also part of the monastery's founding donations from Saint Birgitta's relatives and through some of the early provents. No wonder they wanted objects from the closing abbey.

Damages through taxes, theft and plunder also occasionally hit the nuns. While the theft of 1552 seems to have not directly affected the enclosure of the nuns, it did reduce their property. Many textiles and books were stolen. Many of the stolen objects may have been regarded as easy to sell. These were objects that partly belonged to the church equipment where the nuns had invested much of their handicraft, and this may explain some of the complaints the nuns presented afterwards to the king. The silver tax in 1540 indeed reduced the properties of the altars in the church, but it did not affect the monastic property as such. Most of the silver was taken from the lay altars and had never belonged to the abbey.

The objects preserved up to the very end reveal a liturgical surplus on the one hand and a minimum on the other. The brothers were since long gone and the number of nuns had decreased to eleven by 1595.⁸² As there were no brothers to celebrate Mass and the remaining altars were severely reduced in number, it does seem there was a surplus in some aspects. The nuns had preserved more than they actually needed for liturgical purposes. Formerly there had been at least sixteen altars for the Birgittine priests inside the enclosure; now all but one were gone. The liturgical vestments that remained were, however, more than enough to welcome some new brothers, if they would have had the opportunity. One might interpret it as a hopeful attitude.

On the other hand, the nuns had managed to preserve some utensils necessary for a medieval Mass altar and their own daily liturgy. If we read the list of 1595 from this point of view we may tentatively follow the royal tax collectors as they successively undressed the few remaining altars when writing the inventory list. There was full equipment for a Mass altar: an altar cross, two candleholders, a chalice and paten, an altar cloth, an antependium, an altar list, a book rest, side curtains, a reliquary, a carpet and towels.⁸³ For the keeping of the nuns' devotional altar there was an altar cloth, altar list, antependia, reliquaries, candleholders and the prescribed monstrance.⁸⁴ They even kept the previously discussed dress and crown for a sculpture, perhaps intended for the altar in the refectory or the chapter room. The abovementioned banner, noted as one of the very last items in the 1595 inventory, was possibly not just any banner. It might have been the prescribed processional banner – a red banner was to head the procession at the ordaining of new members in the abbey⁸⁵ – and was therefore important to keep. This banner was crucial for maintaining the convent.

To summarise, the Vadstena nuns did manage to preserve not just the utensils necessary for a Mass altar and their devotional altar, but also fundamental utensils for the maintenance of the monastery according to the Rule. This comprised the preserved copy of the Revelations, the shrines of Saint Birgitta and the blessed Katarina, together with some objects profoundly associated with them. This was the core of their spiritual life. The nuns could allow to lose many things, but not these. Not if they would remain Birgittine nuns according to the Rule, and as they had promised in their vows.

82 At the closing there were eleven nuns left. *Silfverstolpe* 1895, pp. 151–153.

83 *Reg. Salv.*, 21.

84 The altar list with quotes from the nuns liturgy was probably intended for the nuns' devotional altar, SHM 230022: 7. The monstrance at the nuns' devotional altar is mentioned in *Reg. Salv.* 37.

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BRANDON ALAKAS

Scrupulosity and Heresy

William Bonde's Reply to Evangelical
Views of Christian Freedom and Salvation in
The Directory of Conscience

WILLIAM BONDE's *Directory of Conscience*¹ sits slightly out-of-place in the canon of early printed Syon texts. A short work on scrupulosity – the spiritual agony arising from doubt that one's own efforts, whether pious devotions or works of charity, could ever merit God's mercy – the *Directory* has escaped the critical attention paid to the vigorous defence of orthodoxy and broad-minded pastoral aims present in other Syon productions. Richard Whitford's wide-ranging body of work, John Fewterer's *Mirror or Glass of Christ's Passion*, and even Bonde's own *Pilgrimage of Perfection* have all been the subject of such scholarly discussion.² Writing on what appears to be a slightly obscure and especially focused topic of spiritual guidance, Bonde nevertheless addresses concerns that existed at the abbey since its foundation. Thomas Betson's *registrum* records the possession of works on this topic by Jean Gerson and Thomas Fishbourne, Syon's first confessor general, and Betson's own herbal contains several remedies for *melancholia*.³ Such entries demonstrate the degree to which Bonde's writing belonged to an already established spirituality.

¹ STC 3274.5. Bonde's *Directory of Conscience* was first printed in 1527 by Lawrence Andrew and twice subsequently by Michael Fawkes in 1534 as *A Devout Treatise*. See STC 3275 and 3276.

² Rhodes 1993b discusses broad themes that run throughout the Birgittine brothers' writing, and speculates over the existence of a 'coordinated programme of publication', p. 17, and Gillespie 2004 discusses the spirituality and pastoral initiatives of the brothers. Rhodes 1993a, Gillespie 2004, and Da Costa 2013 discuss Fewterer's *Mirror*; Hutchison 2010, Da Costa & Hutchison 2010, Da Costa 2012, and Alakas 2013a, 2013b explore the pastoral and political dimensions of Whitford's writing. Da Costa 2012 approaches Bonde's *Pilgrimage of Perfection*, in part, as a response to evangelical doctrine.

³ Gerson's *De remediis contra pusillanimitatem* and *De modo confessionis in religionibus*, and the *Remedium contra scrupulositatem conscientiae*, attributed to Fishbourne, are three examples of texts which touch on the issue of scrupulosity. See Gillespie 2001, pp. 742 and 776. See also Betson 2015, pp. 259, 262, and 292.

By 1527, the year in which the *Directory* was published, these concerns had acquired an even greater significance, although Bonde's departures from earlier authorities on this topic as well as the decision to have the work printed suggest an immediacy that is not at once apparent.

Scrupulosity was a serious matter for devout souls in the late Middle Ages. By the sixteenth century, however, laypeople's concern over their spiritual wellbeing and the priest's capacity to mediate divine grace through the sacraments became a source of increasing anxiety for the established church. The *Directory* shows that Bonde recognized early on the potential for this psychological condition to lead afflicted souls away from God – and the Church. Although its engagement with evangelical doctrine remains tacit, *The Directory of Conscience* provides a significant contribution to the abbey's wider promotion of orthodoxy by addressing concerns that lay at the heart of what was the paradigmatic narrative of conversion to reformed Christianity: the inadequacy of individual efforts to obtain God's mercy through good works, whether they be charitable acts or pious devotions, or sacramental confession.⁴ Certainly, Bonde owes debts to previous authors who addressed the topic – most notably Jean Gerson, whose work was read widely at Syon and whom he cites at several points. Yet the *Directory* departs from earlier, well-known exemplars that foreground the soul's intimate relationship with God by shifting the emphasis of its guidance toward the critical roles of confession, pious devotion, and clerical counsel in obtaining salvation. In reorienting traditional approaches to dispelling the penitent's anxieties, Bonde's remedies for scrupulosity work carefully both to provide spiritual comfort and to counter a possible lapse into heresy. Unlike Whitford, however, who frequently names Luther and refers to his evangelical opponents as 'Lutheranes',⁵ Bonde engages with evangelicals tacitly. This silence, however, need not mean that Bonde was any less committed to Syon's efforts to bolster religious orthodoxy during the difficult years between 1520 and 1535.

The scant information which remains of William Bonde shows him to be a man deeply committed to transmitting the devotional culture of the monastery to pious laypeople, while at the same time sensitive to the complexities of the mind and the heart. Educated at Cambridge University, Bonde earned his BA in

⁴ Alistair McGrath relates Luther's own conversion experience before linking it to developments in his own theology which would inform his own doctrine of justification. See McGrath 2012, pp. 118–128. Reiterating this narrative and reinforcing its connection to ideas of Christian liberty, Michael A. Mullet (2015, p. 4) notes that early evangelicals saw themselves as 'proclaiming a libertarian jubilee of freedom from centuries of Catholic enslavement'.

⁵ See STC 25421, *The Pipe*, (sig. A2r). Whitford uses this language from the outset of his *Pipe, or Tonne, of The Life of Perfection*.

1500–1501 and MA in 1503 before becoming a fellow of Queens' College. Three years later, he transferred to Pembroke College and served as junior treasurer. Here he would have met John Fewterer, also a fellow at Pembroke who would become confessor general of Syon Abbey. Appointed university preacher in 1509–1510, Bonde abandoned this position, and soon after his studies, to enter the Birgittine enclosure where he remained until his death on 18 July 1530.⁶ All other knowledge we have of Bonde must be gleaned from the two texts he wrote while at Syon: *The Pilgrimage of Perfection* and *The Directory of Conscience*.

Bonde's *Pilgrimage*, a wide-ranging devotional guide whose contents are divided into the seven-day progression of the soul toward perfection furnishes readers with detailed discussions of pastoral topics necessary for achieving the contemplative life. With the passing of each day, the reader, be he or she religious or lay, is immersed more deeply in the devotional culture of the monastery. In providing such detailed devotional exercises in the vernacular, Bonde demonstrates his commitment to render accessible this rich cultural heritage to religious and laypeople who possess little or no Latin so that they too may be 'partners in the same'.⁷ Of course, Bonde, having died at the outset of the decade, was denied the opportunity to stand with his brothers and sisters in opposing the king's divorce, his installation as head of the English Church, and his suppression of the abbey.

The dangers that Bonde attributes to an overly scrupulous conscience are witnessed in a brief anecdote regarding William Roper, Thomas More's son-in-law. Nicholas Harpsfield's *Life of More* tells us that, while a young lawyer at the Inns of Court, Roper suffered from a 'scruple of his own conscience' and so embarked on a regimen of 'immoderate fasting and many prayers' to free himself from doubts over his own salvation. Taxed by the rigour of this penitential regime, Roper, we are told, 'did weary himself even *usque ad taedium*'.⁸ Unable to free himself from despair, Roper found a remedy for his scrupulosity in the Lutheran tracts being smuggled into England. Although Luther's writings had been outlawed in England since the promulgation in 1521 of *Exsurge Domine*, the

⁶ This brief biographical sketch is greatly indebted to Virginia Bainbridge's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), see Bainbridge 2004.

⁷ In the second edition of the *Pilgrimage*, printed one year after his death in 1531, Bonde augments his text with material on the Creed that engages directly with evangelicals' teaching that faith alone leads to salvation. Alexandra Da Costa 2012, pp. 82–93, traces the careful way that Bonde weighs into the *sola fide* debate by noting his strategy of distinguishing between faith and grace in order to shift attention onto the latter, which he identified as the source for 'clere & holy fayth' (STC 3278 fol. 186v).

⁸ Harpsfield 1932, pp. 85–86.

papal bull condemning the Augustinian friar,⁹ works such as *The Babylonian Captivity* and *The Freedom of A Christian*¹⁰ were made available in London via merchants in the German Steelyard down the river from the Inns of Court.¹¹ For Roper – and many other pious laypeople who maintained a strict regimen of private devotions – these texts offered a salve for the *taedium* that afflicted his heart, and he soon became

persuaded that faith only did justify, that the works of man did nothing profit, and that, if man could once believe that our saviour Christ shed His precious blood and died on the cross for our sins, the same only belief should be sufficient for our salvation. Then thought he that all the ceremonies and sacraments in Christ's Church were very vain.¹²

Roper's narrative of conversion allows us a glimpse at why scrupulosity came to be viewed with such urgency. To begin with, Roper's story highlights the role that a scrupulous conscience played as a catalyst for heterodox belief: doubt led him to view the sacraments as entirely ineffectual. Equally concerning to authorities was the fact that, once convinced of Luther's teaching, Roper and his fellow converts 'thirsted very sore to publish' this new doctrine. And, what is more, Roper became fixated on sharing them with others and eager to assume a clerical role, as he 'longed so sore to be pulpited'.¹³ This narrative thus suggests an awareness on the part of orthodox writers of the dangers that excessive scrupulosity posed in leading the devout soul to embracing the doctrines of radical reformers.

The close relationship between scrupulosity and the new soteriology promoted by evangelicals owes much to a model of conversion that Luther himself experienced. In the preface to the first volume of his complete Latin works (1545),

⁹ For a discussion of this early campaign against Lutheran works, see Rex 1989, pp. 85–88.

¹⁰ Specific titles that circulated in England in the first years of the 1520s are difficult to identify. Carl S. Meyer identifies the works sold by the Oxford bookseller John Dorne – *luter de potestate pape, resolutio luteri ligata in pergameno, and the responsio luteri recepi* – and notes that while the *resolutio luteri* cannot be identified, the *responsio* is the *Responsio Luteri ad dialogum Silvestri Prieriatis de potestate papae*, published in Wittenberg in 1518. See Meyer 1958, p. 176. Of course, Cuthbert Tunstall first alerted English authorities of Luther's *Babylonian Captivity* while attending the Diet of Worms in January 1521, which likely precipitated, according to Rex, Wolsey's banning the sale and possession of Lutheran texts that same year. Rex 1989, p. 86.

¹¹ Brigden 1989, p. 110. Brigden and Marshall 2002 also note Roper's struggle with scrupulosity and his reading of Lutheran texts.

¹² Harpsfield 1932, pp. 85–86.

¹³ Ibid., p. 84.

Luther relates how as a young Augustinian he agonized over whether God could or would be satisfied with his own penitential efforts, which were considered rigorous even by those in his community. While studying in the tower room of his convent in Wittenberg, Luther experienced a moment of insight – referred to as the *Turmerlebnis* or ‘tower experience’ – that led him to believe that good works (charitable acts or pious devotions) were entirely futile: humanity was ‘justified’ solely on account of faith in God.¹⁴ While Peter Marshall, who describes this episode as a ‘template for explaining both why and how sixteenth-century people came to turn their backs on the faith of their parents,’ cautions against reading this narrative at face value, this episode nevertheless points to the catalytic force of scrupulosity in their conversion – regardless of whether this ‘single moment of discovery’ was fabricated or not.¹⁵ To be sure, this model of immediate conversion from despair to faith – and its concomitant movement from orthodoxy to heterodoxy – became a familiar paradigm which may be seen in the lives of devout souls who were drawn to the message of evangelicals.

Thomas Bilney’s conversion and eventual condemnation by church authorities is perhaps the most well known iteration of this paradigm in England. Similar to Roper, Bilney viewed his own devotional rigour as ineffectual in obtaining God’s mercy. During his heresy trial in 1531, Bilney wrote to the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, informing him that he found no remedy for his scrupulous conscience in fasting, pardons, or masses.¹⁶ Following in the footsteps of Luther, Bilney found respite, according to John Foxe, when while

¹⁴ Having meditated at length on the writings of Paul, Luther believed that he at last grasped the significance of Romans 1:17, ‘For therin is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written: The just shall live by faith.’; upon arriving at this insight, Luther stated that he ‘felt [him]self straightway born afresh and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself’. See Rupp & Drewery 1970, pp. 5–6. The account of Luther’s conversion experience is found in Marshall 2002, p. 16 and elaborated upon more fully in McGrath 2012, pp. 119–120. Richard Marius 1999, pp. 58–60, also considering Luther’s conversion experience, discusses the way his excessive scrupulosity informed his practice of confession and prefigured his eventual renunciation of the Catholic faith.

¹⁵ Marshall 2002, pp. 16–18. (quotation on p. 16). Steven Ozment 1980, pp. 223–231, discusses various speculations on the mental state of the young Luther as well as his potential motives for entering the monastery and arriving at his theological insight.

¹⁶ Commenting on his own efforts to overcome scrupulosity with traditional devotions, Bilney states the following: ‘O mighty power of the moste highest: whiche I also miserable sinner, haue often tasted and felt. Which before that I coulde come vnto Christ, had euen likewise spent all that I had vpon those ignoraunt Phisitions, that is to say, vnlearned hearers of confession so that there was but small force of strength lefte in me, (which of nature was but weake) small store of mony, and very little witte or vnderstanding: for they appoynted me fastings, watching, buying of pardons, and Masses: in all which thinges (as I now vnderstand) they sought rather theyr owne gayne, then the saluation of my sickle and languishing soule.’ Foxe 1583, p. 1029.

reading through Erasmus's New Testament he chanced upon Paul's statement to Timothy that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to saue sinners, of whom I am the chiefe and principall.' Bilney 'wounded with the guilt of [his] sinnes and being almost in despayre, ... felt a maruellous comfort and quietnesse, in so much, that [his] brused bones leapt for ioy'.¹⁷ As with Luther and Roper, Bilney's conversion includes what would become stock details of the evangelical conversion narrative: anguish over the state of one's spiritual wellbeing; the conviction that one's own efforts are ineffectual, which in turn serves as the catalyst for conversion; sudden insight upon reading the Bible; and, finally, a desire to share this new understanding with others.

As James Simpson has noted, Luther's theology of salvation requires the individual's movement from 'self-loathing' and a conviction in one's own 'total incapacity' to the sudden and 'overwhelming sense of gratitude to a God who takes the initiative into his own hands and works everything by grace'.¹⁸ So, although Harpsfield's *Life of More* (1557?) and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) were compiled several decades after the events they recount, the narratives they relate – which span both sides of the confessional divide – re-inforce the concern that doubt engendered by a scrupulous conscience makes a person more receptive to Lutheran opinions. Remarkably, William Bonde's *Directory of Conscience* demonstrates this same awareness of the dangers that excessive scrupulosity held for the established church thirty years earlier.

The *Directory* is quite explicit about the threats that a scrupulous conscience poses to one's orthodoxy. Bonde begins the work by drawing readers' attention to the relationship between fearing God and loving God: the former being the 'beginning of all gostlynes and spirytuall edifycation' and the latter 'the ende of all perfeccyon' (sig. A3r). The movement Bonde traces from dread and despair to love bears some similarity to the one traced by evangelicals; however, his discussion focuses almost exclusively on the hazards related to the initial stage of the soul's journey toward 'perfeccyon.' Anatomizing scrupulosity in great detail, Bonde sets out the various definitions of this spiritual condition before locating its cause in 'the natural complexion of man', which he describes as humanity's inclination toward 'vyce' and 'inordynate fear' (sig. B3v). Whereas 'the holy fear of god' (sig. A3r) is profitable and necessary for embarking on the path toward perfection, the very devotional and meditative practices that support one's piety may render this fear harmful. Sensitive to the dangers to devout souls – particu-

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Simpson 2007, p. 94.

larly women – who ‘go alone’ or spend time in ‘derke places,’ Bonde displays an awareness of the potential hazards for those who pass their time in solitude (sig. B4v). Pondering ‘the iustyce of god’ easily leads, he acknowledges, to thoughts of ‘the terrible paynes of hell and dampnacyon whych is ordeyned for synners’ (sig. B4v). Pursuing such thoughts had for some time been recognized as dangerous, yet Bonde’s particular sensitivity to this concern as well as the guidance he provides is notable.

Reflecting on the murky terrain into which an overly scrupulous conscience is prone to stray, Bonde dwells on the increasingly acute dangers posed by this spiritual condition. What begins as pusillanimity, ‘a dull tedyouse and ondyscrete deieccyon or trouble of the mynde’ (sig. B2v),¹⁹ may easily drift towards dishonouring God by distrusting his mercy and his sacraments (sig. A4r). And murky is exactly how he viewed this latter condition. Bonde likens arriving at this stage of scrupulosity to adding mud to a vessel containing pure water and then agitating the water so that one’s reason is darkened and the devout soul can no longer see value in the good works that have been performed (sig. D3v); this metaphor of contamination to convey one’s doubts concerning the efficacy of the sacrament is appropriate given the frequent association of pollution with sin and heresy.²⁰ And this very connection is made explicit in the *Directory*. Scrupulosity, Bonde tells us, opens the doors to ‘syngularyte ... the moste peryllouse spyce of pryd ... that [occurs] whan a person so restith to his owne opynyon & reson / that he wyll beleue none other / ne follow the councel of any other’ (sig. C1r). Such pride which results in an implacable conviction in one’s own opinions leads to an inordinate love of one’s own ‘excellency’ and, in turn, to ‘errour’ (sig. C1r). Later in the text, Bonde links this condition to heterodoxy directly when he states that Satan uses scrupulosity to convey afflicted souls whom he burdens with ‘an heuynes or dulnes of spirit’ down a path trod by ‘great synners of the world & infydeles & heretykes’ (sig. E3v). The dangers for the individual and the community of those given to such prideful *syngularyte* are made explicit immediately afterward. For Bonde is especially concerned about the wider consequences of heresy: these ‘seruantes of the deuyll’ remain ‘so obdurat that [they] wyll folow no manys counsel nother of prelat ne other ruler’ (sig. E4r). Bonde furthermore suggests that individuals’ stubborn maintenance of their own opinions may have broader implications than their refusal to acquiesce to the spiritual counsel of a confessor. Such obstinance is akin, in

¹⁹ For discussion of Bonde’s definition of scrupulosity, see Rhodes 1974, pp. 139–141.

²⁰ This association is explored in Kienzle 2001, p. 116.

Bonde's mind, to the biblical treasons of Achitophel, Haman, and Judas (sig. E4r), all of whom – in relying on their own judgements and in pursuing their own gain – betrayed political and spiritual authorities and sowed wider discord among their communities.

One of the ways Bonde seeks to remedy such scrupulousness is by emphasizing the salutary role of the confessor – an approach which owes significant debts to the Latin and vernacular writing of Jean Gerson. Cited at points throughout the *Directory*, Gerson was read widely at Syon and his guidance on scrupulosity enjoyed a broad currency throughout the later Middle Ages.²¹ Crucial to my discussion is Gerson's *De remediis contra pusillanimitatem*, which belonged to the abbey library and was recorded in the *registrum*. As in his other works on scrupulosity – *De praeparatione ad missam*, aimed at clerics, and the vernacular *Contre conscience trop scrupuleuse*, intended for broader diffusion among lay audiences – Gerson urges anxious readers to trust not in their own piety or devotion but primarily in God's mercy. In *De remediis*, Gerson, as Dyan Elliott notes, recognizes the dangers fostered by a desire to confess particulars of every sin and to believe that venial sins are mortal and neutral acts sinful.²² What is more concerning, such thinking leads the individual to make his or her own conscience 'a tribunal unto itself' and thus doubt both God's mercy and the priest's ability to grant absolution.²³ For Gerson, the answer lies in recalling and being confident in God's mercy rather than dwelling on his justice.²⁴ Such thinking runs throughout his writing on scrupulosity and may also be found in *De praeparatione*. Here, Gerson reflects on his own spiritual wellbeing, while underscoring the futility of human effort to obtain salvation: 'What in the end do you dread? What are you frightened of, oh my soul? Why and how long will you upset me? Trust in God and he will free you, not confound you.'²⁵ Gerson's guidance fosters a relationship between God and the remorseful soul that puts less emphasis on the sacrament itself and more on God's personal relationship with the penitent. In *De remediis*, Gerson's attitudes toward the limitations of the sacrament at times anticipate Luther's own: 'I know that if I confessed a thousand times, I would not be clean; only your mercy will cleanse me.'²⁶

²¹ The *registrum* of the Syon Abbey library records at least seventeen titles of works by Gerson, see Gillespie 2001, p. 742.

²² Gerson 1960–1973, vol. 10, p. 381; Elliott 2003, p. 46.

²³ Gerson 1960–1973, vol. 10, p. 381; Elliott 2003, p. 47, advances this same point in 'Women and Confession'.

²⁴ Gerson 1960–1973, vol. 10, p. 381.

²⁵ Ibid., vol. 9, p. 48.

²⁶ Ibid., vol. 10, p. 384.

Of course, Gerson's de-emphasis of the sacrament is simply a more humane response to anxious souls, those who were unable to find consolation in the priest's absolution, and not a call for radical doctrinal reform. Summarising the moral principle underwriting Gerson's teaching on scrupulosity, Brian McGuire offers the following distillation: 'we must make an effort to do what we can, but in the end we can only hand ourselves over to God's mercy'.²⁷ Such counsel is echoed in the vernacular *Contre conscience trop scrupuleuse* as the reader is advised to 'give his heart and his love to God' in order to defend against darker thoughts of 'one's sins and other faults, or of hellfire and death'.²⁸

Despite the stress placed on cultivating a more intimate relationship with God during times of quiet reflection, Gerson does not abandon sacramental confession or the role of the priest as spiritual advisor. In *De arte audiendi confessiones*, he provides a series of guidelines for the pastor to cultivate his relationship with the penitent, locate the source of his or her doubt or anxiety, and then minister to it. While his counsel on scrupulosity appears rather proximate to Luther, Gerson is simply placing the accent on the individual trusting in God's mercy rather than on his or her own effort to win salvation through the sacraments.

Deferential to Gerson's authority, Bonde nevertheless directs his focus towards an understanding of and remedies for a scrupulous conscience which tacitly engage with Lutheran views on Christian freedom. Shifting attention away from the penitent's relationship with God, he is equally if not more preoccupied by the dangers this condition poses to one's relationship with the institutional church. This concern is reflected in his discussion of the individual's fear of God. According to Bonde, the source of the soul's anguish is an excessive fear of God. This fear is labelled 'servile' in the *Directory* (sig. A3r). Such a person who dreads God in this way is like a slave who, afraid of his master's 'iustice or cruelty,' performs his duty 'for drede of ponisshment or lest [he] ... take his wages from hym' (sig. A3v). In other words, devotional duties are observed out of obligation, not love. For Bonde, the love of God can only exist in *freedom*, and such love, which is 'the ende of all perfecyon' (sig. A3r), requires 'liberty to springe as it wolde' (sig. A4r). Yet, to arrive at this end, one must possess 'the holy fear of god [which] is the beginning of all gostlynes and spirytuall edyfycacion' (sig. A3r). In tracing this psychological movement that sees the penitent progress from fear to love by way of freedom – a trajectory which recalls those articulated by reformers – Bonde underscores the orthodoxy of this interior journey. Adding to the

²⁷ McGuire 2005, p. 226.

²⁸ Gerson 1960–1973, vol. 7, p. 141.

seemingly antithetical connexions between freedom, love, and fear, he asserts that no one is better disposed to the positive, reverential fear needed to catalyse this movement than a female religious, whose life is governed by a strict regimen of prayer and devotion (sig. A3v). Paradoxically, the constraints of monastic life, Bonde insists, furnish optimal conditions for achieving the freedom to love God and for 'excellently' attaining his 'grace and fauour' (sig. A3v). Bonde's yoking of freedom, the love of God, and religious life is certainly unusual, and his emphasis on personal liberty as essential for devotion to flourish departs from Gerson, whose lexicon omits any mention of individual freedom.

Yet, in adopting this language, Bonde, I suggest, deliberately taps into contemporary discourse concerning Christian freedom that responds to Lutheran attacks on the sacraments, particularly sacramental confession in *The Freedom of a Christian* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*.

In the former, Luther draws repeatedly on language related to liberty and argues that the freedom of a Christian 'is a spiritual and true freedom and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws, and commands' and *not* the observance of a devotional regimen or the recitation of fixed prayers.²⁹ In Luther's text, this language is grafted onto a theology of salvation which is predicated on an immediate and radical departure from traditional devotional structures to a conviction that God will secure the individual's salvation through grace alone. To be sure, Luther himself links this language to the interior movement from abject despair toward rejoicing over being 'justified and saved' that accompanied conversion to evangelical Christianity.³⁰ By 1527, when the *Directory* was first printed by Lawrence Andrew, this theology, and the discourse of freedom to which it had become attached, had been circulating in England for nearly a decade.³¹ Yet, Tyndale's Prologue to the 1525 New Testament, which rendered Luther's theology of salvation into the vernacular, ensured an even broader circulation than the restricted readership of learned men like Roper and Bilney. In the Prologue, Tyndale describes the requisite hopelessness of the sinner over

²⁹ Luther 1955–1986, vol. 31, p. 371. Shortly after affirming this, Luther states that those err who 'rely for their salvation solely on their reverent observance of ceremonies, as if they would be saved because on certain days they fast or abstain from meats, or pray certain prayers; these make a boast of the precepts of the church and of the fathers, and do not care a fig for the things which are of the essence of our faith.' *Ibid.*, p. 372.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

³¹ Meyer 1958, p. 173, identifies late 1518 as the first point at which 'a limited number' of Luther's works had become known in England, but concedes that very little evidence remains that allows us to track just how widely these texts circulated beyond John Dorne, the Oxford bookseller whose ledger records the sale of twelve or thirteen texts by Luther, or the handful of extant letters noting the hostility with which his work was met by authorities.

his or her situation just before the sudden elation that stems from realizing that faith alone will lead to salvation:

... when gooddes lawe hath brought the synner into knowledge of him sylfe and hath confounded his conscience and opened vnto him the wrath and vengeance of god, then commeth good tydings, the Evangelion sheweth vnto him the promyses of god in Christ and howe that Christ hath purchased perden for him hath satisfied the lawe for him and peased the wrath of god, and the povre synner beleeveth, landeth and thanketh god throwe Christ and breaketh oute into exceedinge inward ioy and gladnes. (STC 2823, sig. B2r)

Tyndale's words, of course, simply repeat what Luther himself had written about a scrupulous conscience in *The Freedom of a Christian*. For Luther, an individual must 'recognize his helplessness' so that 'being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved'.³² Arriving at this spiritual impasse is framed as a prerequisite, so that, as Luther goes on, the Gospel 'comes to our aid',³³ thus opening the way to 'Christian liberty'.³⁴

This notion of Christian freedom, as developed by early reformers, becomes pivotal as polemicists exploit such vocabulary by linking it to claims for the individual's autonomy from ecclesiastical authority. Having arrived at the realization that 'faith alone and the Word of God rule the soul,' Luther defines this state as 'that Christian liberty, our faith, which ... makes the law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation'.³⁵ By works, of course, Luther means 'the altars and offices of the church ... [as well as] the special fasts and prayers' with which he felt 'Christian liberty perishes altogether'.³⁶ For Luther, then, freedom, which is set up in opposition to the increasingly elaborate devotional regimens of late medieval piety, becomes a shorthand for its rejection.

Once again, Tyndale's writing serves as a conduit for this particular notion of liberty and servitude. The Prologue, for example, describes the way that 'Christ setteth vs att liberte ... [from] captivite and bondage' (STC 2823, sig. B2v). This freedom, Tyndale continues, is the fruit of God's grace, and this claim is expanded in his 1526 *Introduction to Paul's Epistle to the Romans*: 'fayth only iustifyeth, maketh ryghtewes, and fulfylleth the lawe: for it ... maketh hym

³² Luther 1955–1986, vol. 31, p. 349.

³³ Ibid., p. 348.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 349.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 349–350.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 370.

fre, [and] setteth hym at lyberte' (STC 24438, sig. A5r). This nexus of ideas that becomes linked to freedom and bondage were supplemented, albeit in a less sophisticated manner, in more popular works such as *Rede Me and Be Not Wroth*, which was printed after Bonde's *Directory* in 1528 but which circulated for years prior. The preface to *Rede me* bluntly affirms the tyranny of the clergy who exploit the sacraments, principally the Mass, to maintain 'their holde, stede, and defence' of clerical authority and to keep the laity in thrall (STC 1462.7, sig. A3v).³⁷ Later, in a short ballad near the centre of the book, the language of freedom and bondage is explicitly evoked to criticise the efficacy of sacraments in sustaining the faith and their administration by clergy:

They haue perverted [the sacraments] vnto oure hyndraunce.
 Enforcynge vs to trust in tryfles wayne.
 Wother newe sacramentis falcely they fayne.
 Obscuringe godis worde as moch as they may
 But it cannot thus endure all waye.

Christis *freedom* they have brought in *bondage* (sig. E2r, my italics)

From sophisticated polemics by Luther and Tyndale to popular compilations like *Rede me and be not Wroth*, we may see how broadly the message of evangelical reformers drew on the language of freedom and bondage to argue for the futility of the sacraments in ministering to the needs of the soul as well as their exploitation by clergy to underwrite ecclesiastical authority. Concern over whether one could ever merit salvation – scrupulosity – is thus a critical element in the movement towards heterodoxy, and these texts illustrate that the anguish and elation of reformers was understood as a movement from servitude to liberty.

In the face of such polemic, Bonde counsels remedies for scrupulosity that foreground clerical authority and orthodox forms of piety. Most obviously, the *Directory* affirms time and again the salutary role of sacramental confession: the surest way to 'putte away an erroneous consyience' is to follow the 'good cownsell' of one's confessor in order to receive 'the great vertue and grace of the sacrament of penaunce' (sig. D2r). Defending the sacraments as a certain conduit for God's grace, Bonde insists on the active and visible role played by the Church in managing the believer's relationship with God. Bonde's awareness of the increasing amount of time his lay readers dedicated to private devotion

³⁷ On the authorship of *Rede Me and Be Not Wroth*, see Koszul 1928. Rupp 1966 provides a more recent discussion of the context and structure of this work.

also filters into his guidance for scrupulous souls in the care he takes to supply his audience with several orthodox devotional exercises. The *Directory* offers a variety of ‘holy and swete medytacyon[s]’ that consist of the recitation of multiple prayers throughout the day, as needed (sig. E3r). Recalling one person’s struggle against suicidal thoughts, Bonde insists on the effectiveness of certain Latin prayers to Christ and the Virgin in saving the man (sig. E3v). Although the severity of this individual’s condition required him to recite these prayers 100 times a day, he was nevertheless ‘clene delyueryd from his grete temptacyon & trouble’ (sig. E3v).

In a similar vein, the *Directory* draws on devotions that are more in line with monastic tradition by advising recitation of a penitential psalm, in this case, *Domine exaudi* (Ps. 101), when prayer or devotional reading becomes particularly tedious. In place of the Christian’s freedom from institutional constraints championed by Martin Luther, the devotional exercises Bonde prescribes direct the penitent toward a more affective encounter with God – but they also lead away from the biblical text as well as theological speculations concerning the sacraments or the confessor’s ability to facilitate God’s grace.

Yet, despite the *Directory*’s co-opting of language related to freedom and canny timing with counsel on despair and grace, Bonde does not name Luther explicitly, nor does he give any indication of concern over the growing appeal of the evangelicals’ message. At first glance curious, this silence nevertheless may speak to the political and ecclesiastical establishments’ larger campaign against Lutheran thought. Certainly, Bonde’s unwillingness to name evangelicals or admit to their arguments has not gone unnoticed: Alexandra da Costa has discussed the way in which the 1531 edition of *The Pilgrimage of Perfection* reveals an ‘awareness of heresy as a contemporary threat’ by aligning heresy with pride and disobedience but remains silent on Luther.³⁸ Craig D’Alton’s discussions of the political and ecclesiastical establishments’ multi-phased campaign against heretical thought under Wolsey offers a broader context for this silence in vernacular religious writing.³⁹ Whereas the first phase of this endeavour, begun in 1521 with the launch of Henry VIII’s *Assertio septem sacramentorum*, targeted universities on the continent and sought to refute Luther directly, the second phase, which began in 1526 with the proclamation against and burning of heretical books, shifted attention toward the local scene.⁴⁰ According to D’Alton, the essence of this policy was rooted in an attempt to persuade those in England

³⁸ Da Costa 2012, pp. 82, 84–85.

³⁹ See D’Alton 2002 and 2003; Da Costa also cites D’Alton’s discussion in 2012, pp. 100–101.

⁴⁰ D’Alton 2003, pp. 229–230.

who were drawn to the evangelicals' message of their error, of the efficacy of the sacraments, and of the legitimacy of the institutional church. The point of this campaign, then, was not simply to punish heretics, but 'to restore them to wholeness, to reform them into fully sighted, fully believing members of "the multitude"'.⁴¹ Unlike more heavy-handed tactics used against Lollards a little over a century earlier, this policy was aimed at containing 'heretical inclinations [that] arose from intellectual curiosity'.⁴²

Implicit as well in this policy shift was the tacit acknowledgement that attempts to refute Luther directly were only marginally successful and that attention ought to be paid instead to containing the message of the new Christianity. Syon Abbey's efforts in the first half of the 1520s to provide curious readers – both lay and religious alike – with resources that would bolster orthodox doctrine fits into the political and ecclesiastical establishments' larger campaign to inhibit the proliferation of Lutheran thought.

As for Bonde himself, although there is no evidence, as Da Costa notes in her discussion of *The Pilgrimage of Perfection*, that he ever read any evangelical authors first-hand, he 'clearly understood the broad features of contemporary heresy'.⁴³ And Bonde's lack of immediate familiarity with evangelical texts was likely shared by the *Directory*'s readership. But not having direct access to these texts does not necessarily restrict access to the ideas contained within them. The Birgittine brothers were in regular contact with theologians who were themselves actively engaged in the struggle against Lutheranism. For example, Richard Pace, who assisted Wolsey in his efforts to suppress Luther's writings, spent several months at Syon in 1526 and again in 1527 specifically to learn Hebrew, Chaldean, and Aramaic.⁴⁴ Likewise, John Fisher frequently visited the abbey and consulted with Reynolds over aspects of Henry's proposed divorce from Katherine,⁴⁵ and Thomas More spent time there 'talkinge with dyvers of the Fathers togeather at the grate'.⁴⁶ Moreover, suggestions of a greater awareness of and concern over Lutheranism may be deduced from the abbey's library holdings, which contained Henry's *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum*, Fisher's own *Assertionis Lutheranae confutationis*, and Leo X's bull *Exsurge Domine*.⁴⁷ Thus, while conclusive evidence for Bonde's immediate

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 239.

⁴² Ibid., p. 230.

⁴³ Da Costa 2012, p. 91.

⁴⁴ Curtis 2004.

⁴⁵ LP, vol. 8, letter 1125, p. 441.

⁴⁶ More 1947, letter 197, p. 484.

⁴⁷ Gillespie 2001, p. lx.

access to Luther's work remains out of reach, the Birgittines' associations with leading figures in the debate over evangelical doctrine combined with their library's possession of texts concerning Luther nevertheless suggest an awareness of these issues on the part of the community as a whole. Furthermore, Bonde's lack of direct access to evangelical texts is no indication that he was any less committed to Syon's broader struggle to reinforce orthodox Christianity in the face of the growing popularity of evangelical doctrine in the latter half of the 1520s. D'Alton's remarks on the small number of public heresy trials during this period are especially helpful in elucidating this strategy of indirect engagement: 'every effort was being made to deal with the problem in secret, rather than to make a public show and thereby advertise Luther's opinions further'.⁴⁸

Bonde's *Directory*, which responds so clearly to the principal stage of the individual's movement towards reformed belief, all while omitting any specific reference to Luther's opinions, conforms to this early strategy of containment whereby orthodox instruction is provided without explicitly invoking its urgent need.

⁴⁸ D'Alton 2003, p. 241.

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INGELA HEDSTRÖM

Vadstena Abbey and the Printed Word

MANUSCRIPT CODICES, and the texts and scribal additions they contain, have quite rightly been the main and most important sources of evidence for medievalists. However, in recent decades greater and greater emphasis has been placed on the early printed word. I think we might now be at a point where these two sources are weighed equally as overlapping and sometimes complementary forms of record. Such an approach is of the greatest relevance for the study of the Birgittine Order, which flourished at the end of the Middle Ages and seems to have embraced and exploited the printing revolution in a variety of ways. In this paper, I will attempt to outline the printing operations in Vadstena Abbey and discuss the dissemination of Birgittine texts throughout the Swedish book market around the time of the Reformation.

SYON ABBEY AND PRINTING

As has been studied elsewhere, medieval England quickly became a large market for commercial printing, with both foreign and native printers active.¹ Both the importance of printing for the Birgittines of Syon Abbey, and their relationship with the market for incunables and early printed books, have been fairly thoroughly investigated.² Syon Abbey had the advantage of being situated close to the printing centres of London and Westminster, which allowed them to work with and employ local print shops. Printers such as Wynkyn de Worde were used to print works like *The Rule of St Augustine* and *The Orcharde of Syon*.

Birgittine woodcuts were printed and spread within the order, and copperplates, which were produced in the Birgittine abbey Maria Troon in Dendermonde in the Netherlands, have been found in both English and Swedish

¹ For an extensive and useful survey and discussion of this, see Gillespie & Powell 2014.

² Recently by, for example, Gillespie 2010.

manuscripts.³ Printed Birgittine images were also, as Martha Driver has shown, used as an *imprimatur*, signifying Birgittine approbation of certain texts.⁴ Initially, Syon Abbey was happy to encourage its sponsors and supporters in order to get works printed, but in the 1520s and 1530s the abbey took on a higher profile in printing, and entered the world of print production in its own right.⁵

VADSTENA ABBEY AND ITS CONTACT WITH INCUNABLES AND EARLY PRINTS

When we turn to Vadstena Abbey and printing, the focus tends to be solely on the 1492 printing of Saint Birgitta's Revelations, which was produced in Lübeck. It was the most influential print of the Birgittines and has received much attention, but there is certainly more to be said about the wider context.

To begin with, it is worth noting the grand library which the Vadstena brothers had, even by international standards. The number of books in it has been estimated to between 1 400 and 1 500. This can be compared to some of the largest libraries in Europe: the libraries of Cîteaux (the mother house of the Cistercians) with some 1 200 books, Syon Abbey with a listing of over 1 400 shelf marks and St. Augustine's, Canterbury, with over 2 000 volumes.⁶

In the Vadstena brothers' library, which included bookcases labelled A–Q, the forty surviving volumes which were stored in the last cases of that sequence (N–Q) seem to identify their original contents as mostly incunables.⁷ Certainly, these forty were not the only incunables in the original library, and predictions from the implied missing volumes in the sequence suggest that this part of the book collection was quite large. It should also be noted that elsewhere in the cases, some printed volumes made it onto the bookcases with lower shelf marks, most likely replacing older manuscripts.

EARLY PRINTING IN SWEDEN

Thus printed books were not unusual or something to which the members of the Vadstena community were unaccustomed. At the time the revolution of printing with movable types, with all its new possibilities to spread texts and ideas to a wider audience, made a break through and became much more accepted and widespread, the Birgittines were fighting for the canonisation of Birgitta's

³ See Hedström 2009, pp. 229–243; Undorf 2012, pp. 482–485.

⁴ See Driver 1995, p. 252, and 2004, p. 149.

⁵ Powell 2010, p. 61.

⁶ See Walta 2014, p. 51 with further references.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 45 and 95.

daughter, Katarina (beatified in 1489). Printing opportunities in Sweden were, however, limited. The first Swedish print was the *Dyalogus creaturarum moralizatus*, a collection of fables in Latin.⁸ It was published in Stockholm in 1483 by the German printer Johann Snell, who had previously worked in Lübeck and returned there.⁹ The first book in Swedish, a translation of Jean Gerson's *Liber de temptationibus diaboli* (Old Swedish: *Aff dyäfwlsens frästilse*) was printed in Stockholm in 1495. It was the work of another German printer, Johann Fabri, who had also operated in Lübeck.¹⁰ In fact, all of the early incunables were produced by German (and perhaps northern German) printers in Stockholm, the only printing centre in Sweden in this period.¹¹

THE VADSTENA PRINTINGS

It was natural that Vadstena Abbey turned initially to Germany when they wanted something printed. Similarly, contacts with other Birgittine houses closer to the big printing centres must also have been useful. In November 1490, the brothers in Vadstena received a letter from the Confessor General Wilibald of Gnadenberg.¹² The confessor let the Vadstena convent know that their negotiations to have the Revelations printed by a famous Nuremberg printer had failed.¹³ This first attempt to print the Revelations had perhaps been initiated, or at least discussed, when the Vadstena brothers Clemens Petri (who was confessor general at the time) and Johannes Mathei visited the general chapter in Gnadenberg in 1487 on their way to Rome to work for Katarina's canonisation.¹⁴

They appear to have set aside attempts to find a printer, but remained focussed on Lübeck. The following year, 1491, another two of the Vadstena brothers – the priest brother Petrus Ingemari and the German-born lay brother Gert (or Gerhard) – travelled to Lübeck to arrange for the printing of the Revelations by Bartholomaeus Ghotan.¹⁵ Gert is recorded, in the Vadstena memorial book,

⁸ For a facsimile, translation and comment on this text, see Bernström & Hedlund 1983.

⁹ About this print, see Klemming 1889–1927, pp. 5–8. On Johann Snell and his printing activities, see Ridderstad 2003–2006b, p. 595.

¹⁰ Also known as Johannes Smed, see Ridderstad 2003–2006a, p. 561.

¹¹ Of course, as will be discussed below, a printing press was set up in Vadstena Abbey in 1495. There was also a printing press donated to the Carthusians in Pax Mariae ('Mariefred') in 1498. On this, see, for instance, Collijn 1935. Both of these printing presses only managed to produce one (known) print each, and thus these convent presses can hardly be called printing centres.

¹² Original in the National Archives of Sweden, SDHK 32505.

¹³ See Nyberg 1972, pp. 390–394. The printer is unknown, but it has been suggested that it was Koberger, see Undorf 2010, p. 93, note 235.

¹⁴ DV 874.

¹⁵ DV 889.

as a skilled painter and woodcarver.¹⁶ Some have therefore speculated that he might have joined the mission not only because of his advantage as a native speaker, but also that he was in some way responsible for the woodcuts in the printed edition of the Revelations.¹⁷ Petrus, on the other hand, has been thought of as responsible for the editing and proof-reading of the text.

Ghotan was accustomed to working with Swedes and the Birgittines. After first setting up a printing shop in Magdeburg in the late 1470s, he moved on to Lübeck in 1484. There he printed Saint Birgitta's Revelations in Low German in 1485.¹⁸ The nearest Birgittines were the abbey of Marienwohlde, in Mölln, some 3 miles south of Lübeck. The Birgittines in Marienwohlde probably instigated the printing, or at least helped with the process. In some unknown way, this must have opened the Swedish market to Ghotan. Perhaps there were Swedish buyers of the Revelations, or the edition had been approved of by the mother house in Vadstena. All we know is that Ghotan two years later moved to Stockholm, where he printed both Birgitta's and Katarina's *vitae* as well as manuals and missals for the dioceses of Uppsala and Strängnäs. A year later Ghotan was back in Lübeck, executing the Vadstena brothers' commission of printing the Revelations and producing the *editio princeps*, the first full edition in Latin, which also became the authorised edition.¹⁹

As recorded in the Vadstena memorial book, the brothers returned to the mother house the following year, in 1492, having secured the printing of 800 volumes on paper and sixteen on parchment.²⁰ In comparison to other printed works, this edition of the Revelations was in fact quite large, on the upper end of the estimated scale of 200–1000 copies for what can be considered an 'average' edition. It can be compared to other editions intended for Sweden from around the same time: the Missal of Strängnäs was printed in 170 copies, the Missal for Turku (Finland) in probably between 120 and 200 copies, and a contract for the Missal for the Archdiocese of Uppsala mentions 700 copies.²¹ This clearly shows that there was a demand for the text – or at least that the brothers expected it. It has been suggested that the parchment copies were intended for the other Birgittine houses: one of them was sent to Birgitta's house in Rome, and another copy most likely found its way to Syon Abbey.²² The paper volumes

¹⁶ DV 868 and 1036.

¹⁷ Collijn 1934–1938, p. 123. See also Risberg on p. 208 in this volume.

¹⁸ Klemming 1889–1927, pp. 38–40.

¹⁹ On Ghotan, see Joost 1964, p. 367.

²⁰ DV 889.

²¹ Walta 2014, pp. 97–98.

²² Gillespie 2010, p. 107.

were intended for a wider audience, with the large pilgrim crowds as a possible market.

The Vadstena memorial book also mentions a printing press within the abbey itself. The entry is dated 15 October, 1495:

Furthermore, on the night immediately following Saint Calixtus' day, a severe fire started in the new infirmary, around one o'clock. All that was kept in this house, and thereto ceilings and partitions, was consumed and reduced to ashes by the fire. On this occasion burned, among other things, a barrel filled with seven volumes of our mother Saint Birgitta's Revelations; a Lübeck citizen had deposited the barrel here for the sale of these books. Furthermore, also different machines for letterpress printing burned here, they were installed properly and had already been in use for half a year. It was a printing press with pewter letters for small and large print, which had been brought here for costly money and with much trouble and so on.²³

Similar information is also found in a letter, probably written shortly after the fire in the same year.²⁴ The Vadstena brother Thorstanus (Torsten) Johannis writes to an unknown recipient, most likely a monk in a different convent, or perhaps a Vadstena brother who was travelling at the time. In the letter, Torsten informs the recipient about the fire, and says that, among other things, tools, printing types, and several copies of the Revelations had been lost, as well as psaltars, breviaries, and a book which the recipient had left in the convent to be bound.

The information about the fire is interesting from several points of view. Firstly, it tells us that the abbey was selling copies of the Revelations, and it is thus one of the first times we hear about books from Vadstena aimed at an external audience. Although books produced in the abbey certainly made their way outside the convent, most of them were made to be used within the abbey. Books for the secular public were perhaps not a very large scale business, but the members of the convents were certainly used to it.

Secondly, we can see that the abbey had invested time and money in a printing press – as the money and effort this took was especially pointed out in the

²³ 'Item, in nocte proxima post diem sancti Calixti accendebatur ignis vehemens in infirmitorio novo circa horam primam. Consumpsitque et in favillam redegit singula, que in illa domo servabantur, cum tecto et intersticiis etc. Tunc combusta fuit ibi inter alia una tunna plena cum septem voluminibus Revelationum celestium sancte matris nostre beate Birgitte, quam deponi hic fecerat quidam civis Lubecensis pro librorum huiusmodi venditione. Item, conflagraverunt etiam ibidem diversa instrumenta pro impressura librorum realiter aptata et iam per medium annum in usu habita, videlicet torcular cum litteris stanneis in brevitura et in textura in magnis expensis et laboribus comportata etc.' (DV 921).

²⁴ SDHK 33186.

entry in the memorial book. One does not acquire a printing press for just one print run, when a functioning printing shop could have done the job. Therefore, such an undertaking must have meant that the convent had plans for an even larger production of books, undoubtedly for future sale.

We are told in the memorial book that the printing press had in fact been in use, but nothing more was known about what had been produced during the six months it had functioned. However, in the early 1900s, an incunable Book of Hours in Latin was attributed to the Vadstena press. Bibliographical scholars such as Gustaf Edward Klemming previously erroneously assumed it to have come from Ghotan's print shop in Lübeck, but now it can be shown to be Swedish.²⁵ This mistake can be explained by the identification of the typographical material. Since the material for the Vadstena printing press had most likely been purchased by the aforementioned brothers when they were in Lübeck, it was connected to Ghotan's set of types.²⁶

The Book of Hours from the Vadstena Abbey printing press, now commonly known as *Horae de Domina*, is preserved in a single copy (in Uppsala University Library, shelf mark Sv. Rar. 10: 223) (fig. 1a, overleaf).²⁷ The book, in an octavo format, consists of 160 leaves. In the front is one handwritten quire of four leaves (in the following referred to as fol. a–d), of which the first leaf is formerly a paste-down. This is followed by the printed part of 148 leaves (16 quires with the signatures *a–q* and 3 quires without signatures). Finally there is another quire of 8 leaves (also the last one formerly a paste-down). The printed part, as well as the last quire, has a later pencil foliation (fol. 1r–156v).

The printed book is, in its present form, made up by the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Holy Spirit, the Hours of the Holy Cross, the Seven Penitential Psalms, a Litany of Saints and the Office of the Dead, with an imperfect ending.²⁸ Three different near-contemporary scribes have added to the book.²⁹ Firstly, hand one has written a prayer 'After the Psalter of the Virgin Mary' (*Oratio post Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis*) in *textualis* on the verso of the last leaf before the print (fol. dv). The second hand, writing mainly in a *textualis* style seemingly imitating the print, has completed the ending of the Office of

²⁵ Klemming 1889–1927, p. 54, note 1.

²⁶ See, for instance, Collijn 1947, p. 42.

²⁷ For a facsimile, edition, translation and comment on this book, see Hagberg 2008.

²⁸ *Horae de Domina* fols. 1r–55r; *Horae de sancto Spiritu* fols. 55r–66v; *Horae de sancta Cruce* fols. 66v–75v; *Septem psalmi poenitentiales* fols. 75v–91v; *Litania* fols. 91v–101v; *Officium de defunctis* fols. 101v–148v.

²⁹ None of these hands have (yet) been identified with any known scribes (sisters or brothers), but it is plausible that the hand-written parts have been added in Vadstena.

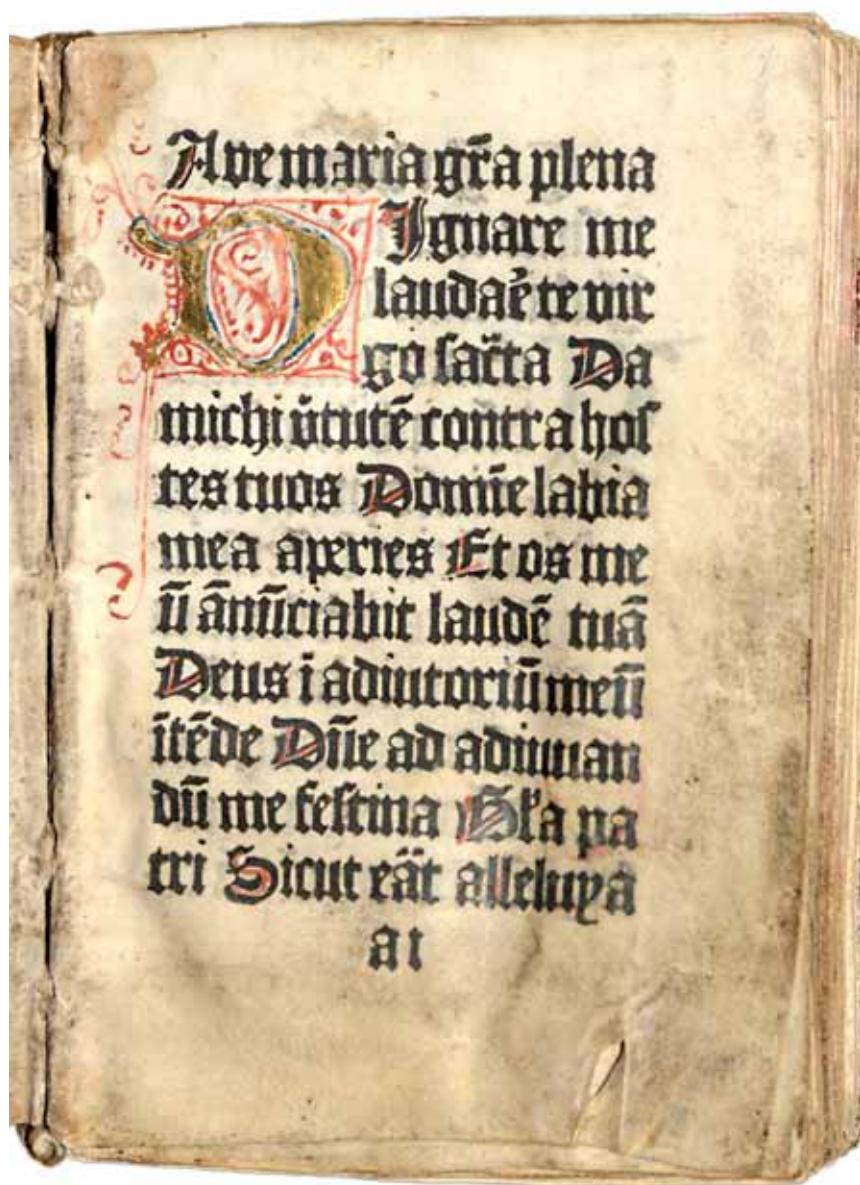


FIG. 1A: The printed Book of Hours with an initial illuminated by Christina Hansdotter Brask. UUB Sv. Rar. 10:223. Photo: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.

172
tva alla mina synder **m** the mi
wa menlosasta blodhero **h**unlbit
thu swa berlba wtgot for man
mild almen **H**or bors nulna
bore som stan larens ffor an
thu takur gudz likam bidh for a

S hri gudz jat trostir up
on thra flora godhet
or myla nulher jat
gudz farran siwl til siela lars
can hingrot or trostagh til lissmo
sella arm or wsiwl til hymen lus
bonig tralen til heim creatmet
til stuparen wtlegingri til mul
dakan hingvalarn **H**ra or jaðar
dhan thu hri gudz wilbona til
mle **H**ra or jat mardha thu wile

FIG. 1B: Prayer book, written and illuminated by Christina Hansdotter Brask. UUB C 12,
fol. 172r. Photo: Uppsala University Library, Uppsala.



FIG. 2: King David playing the harp. Image from the 1514 Leipzig print.
Photo: The Royal Library (Det Kgl. Bibliotek), Copenhagen.

the Dead (fol. 149rv). A third hand, in *hybrida*, has added on the first few leaves (fol. br–dr; fol. a is blank) a *Memorale passionis Domini* and a verse on Christ's seven words on the Cross, as well as continuing where the second hand ended, adding the Hours of the Holy Trinity, prayers for the dead and some verses in hexameter on the final leaves (fol. 149v–156r).

This book has traditionally been assumed to be a proof copy, as it contains a number of handwritten corrections in the margins. It has been believed that is the reason the copy survived – a proof copy might have been stored in a different building of the convent, since it was an item they were actively working with. However, there are several reasons to question this. Firstly, incunable or sixteenth-century proofs are normally in individual bifolia. It would seem an enormous waste of time when printing with moveable type to set up type for each bifolia, print them, supply the entire pages to a reader in a single run, and

then incorporate corrections and reset up the type for each bifolia again – doubtless adding new errors the second time. Secondly, the incunable contains several hand-painted illuminated initials, the first one on the title page being especially elaborate, and painted in gold (see fig. 1a). Again such effort and expense fits badly with a proof copy intended only to be returned to the printer, used for corrections in the print shop and then discarded. There is, of course, the possibility that this initial was added much later, when all other copies of the Book of Hours had already perished in the fire. However, this illuminated initial is undoubtedly painted by the sister Christina Hansdotter Brask. Christina, well known to anyone working with the Vadstena sisters, entered the convent in 1459 and died there 61 years later, having been one of the most productive sisters in Vadstena in the copying and illuminating of books. In the extant material one can identify her hand in a total of eighteen manuscripts and fragments (cf. fig. 1b on p. 275).³⁰ Compared to some of the other manuscripts she illuminated (and copied) there is no question that Christina was also active in the final stages of making the printed Book of Hours.

What this book does appear to be, is the sole surviving copy of the printed text in its final form – albeit having lost a few leaves, which were replaced or added in the manuscript soon after its printing or the fire of 1495. Interestingly, this book also appears to have been the only copy available to Vadstena Abbey in the period after the fire. There are no indications that one tried to replace the printing equipment. Indeed, it must have been acquired with much effort and at a great cost. Instead, the Birgittines in Vadstena returned to what they already knew – hiring a printer in Germany. There was in fact a second edition of the Vadstena Book of Hours, printed in Leipzig in 1514 by the well-known printer Melchior Lotter.³¹ A close comparison of the Book of Hours from the Vadstena printing press and the second edition of Leipzig shows us that this very copy of the book was used when setting up the Leipzig edition. The texts written by hands one and two on the additional leaves at the beginning and end of the book are all included in the Leipzig edition.³² Furthermore, throughout the Vadstena edition there are several brief marginal notes in red, and these refer to the Leipzig 1514 edition, recording the quire and page within the quire.³³ There are also a

³⁰ See Hedström 2009, pp. 66–69.

³¹ See Franck 1884.

³² Only one copy is known of the Leipzig edition, now in the Royal Library (Det Kgl. Bibliotek) in Copenhagen.

³³ The Leipzig edition, which consists of 76 leaves (later foliated in pencil), begins its quire-signature after the calendar. The second edition has a signature system similar to the first, with the first leaf opening a quire marked with a printed letter (*a–h*), and the following pages with

few notes of the ‘*io d figur*’-kind, which correspond to other physical features in the second edition. In the Leipzig edition there is a print of King David playing the harp on fol. 41v (sig. dv, verso) (fig. 2 on p. 276). A few corrections have also made it into the second edition, most notably the addition of the Swedish Saint Brynolf to the litany.³⁴ Another feature which points towards this having been used in the later German printing process is the title note on the first flyleaf: ‘*Ora de domina eclesie linckkopencis Et carencis bene correcte*’ (‘The Hours of Our Lady for the dioceses of Linköping and Skara, well amended’). This garbled spelling of the Swedish dioceses of Linköping and Skara would be incongruous in a Swedish setting, and must be a misunderstanding by the Leipzig print shop.³⁵

The main difference between the Vadstena and Leipzig printings is the presence of a calendar, which is included in the second edition, but missing in the first. It is, however, likely that a calendar had once been included in the Vadstena edition, or at least was intended to be. Calendars were usually included at the beginning of books of hours as ancillary texts, copied onto separate quires and commonly consciously overlooked by foliators and paginators.³⁶ Thus they could easily get lost and such a loss is undetectable in the foliation, pagination or quire-signatures. In this context it is worth noting that the calendar in the Leipzig edition, while part of the original codex, is left out of the quire-signature sequence. The calendar in the Vadstena printing may have not been printed before the destruction of the press.

It is clear that the calendar in the Leipzig edition is Swedish in origin, containing the saints Brynolf, Sigfrid, Erik, Eskil, Birgitta, Botvid, David of Munkatorp and Helena of Skövde.³⁷ The near-unique inclusion on 5 September, *Commemoratio domini Vlphonis*, suggests the influence of the Birgittine Order. This entry must refer to Birgitta’s husband, Ulf Gudmarsson. His memorial day, on the same day, is included in the calendar of the Psalter from the Norwegian Birgittine abbey of Munkaliv (the book now in Prague at *Archiv Pražského*

letters and roman numerals. The system is, however, not properly implemented as some leaves are missing the signature, and others are wrongly printed (e.g. *giv* has been given the signature *gviij*, and *gv* has been repeated twice).

³⁴ For more comprehensive listing of these corrections and additions, see Hallberg 2008, pp. 80–81. It should also be noted that there is an omission in the Leipzig litany, in that Saint Caritas has dropped out of the list. Most probably this is due to ‘eye-skip’ by a typesetter, produced by the fact that in the Vadstena litany she is found on the same line as Fides, followed by the similarly spelt Castitas.

³⁵ It can be noted that in the epilogue of the Leipzig edition the orthography has been improved: ‘*Finis horarum de domina secundum ecclesias diocesium Linckopensis et Scharenensis.*’

³⁶ For the (sparse) use of calendars in the Vadstena prayer books, see Hedström 2009, pp. 284ff.

³⁷ Interestingly, a later hand has added the Norwegian Saint Halvard to the calendar on 5 May.

bradu, MS Capit. B 4/1) as well as in a Vadstena manuscript breviary (Uppsala University Library, MS C 479). Further evidence of its Birgittine origin is the inclusion in the calendar of all the Birgitta feast days, as celebrated *totum duplex*, as well as certain feast days – those for the commemoration of benefactors, and those for the commemoration of sisters and brothers.³⁸ It is thus almost certain that the calendar in the Leipzig edition was produced by, or at least collected with the help of, the Swedish Birgittines.³⁹

Evidently, the Vadstena Book of Hours was carefully prepared for a second edition by the Birgittines in Vadstena, who added handwritten material at the front and the back. At some point between 1495 and 1514 the book was sent to Leipzig so that the second edition – also intended for the Swedish market – could be printed from it, and it was later returned to Sweden rather than discarded. It may have been kept and returned due to its value as the apparently unique witness to the earliest print run.

LATER PRINTED WORKS

The demand for printed Books of Hours in Sweden was not fulfilled with this, and other prints soon emerged on the market. The first one in the vernacular (*Den svenska tideboken*) contained translations of the same sets of hours as in the Vadstena printing, and was printed in Uppsala in (or before) 1525. It was once again the work of a printer from Lübeck – this time Jürgen (Georg) Richolff, who had this Book of Hours made as one of his last Catholic prints before transferring to the Royal Printing House in Stockholm, where he served King Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) and printed one of the first texts of the Reformation.⁴⁰ While the hours in the edition are common material, it is interesting to note

³⁸ The *commemoratio benefactorum* occurs on 29 January, 11 July, 23 September and 2 December. These dates correspond to the entries found in the calendar in the Vadstena manuscript prayer book, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin MS Lat. Theol. 71, 80. The dates for the *commemoratio sororum et fratrum* on 26 April, 13 July and 19 October correspond to the days found in the manuscript prayer book The National Library of Sweden (Kungl. biblioteket), Stockholm MS A 80, 80. The feast days for the *festum reliquiarium* on 4 August and the *dedicatio ecclesie* on 16 October are also found in the calendar, which corresponds to Vadstena use. As the Book of Hours was intended for the diocese of Linköping, this is to be expected. However, no similar feasts for Skara have been included.

³⁹ Likewise, but unsurprisingly, there are Swedish saints to be found in the litany. However, Katarina of Vadstena has also been included as *Sancta Katarina Swecie* (fol. 95v). The occurrence of Katarina in a litany is, however, uncommon, even among the Vadstena Birgittines, see Hedström 2009, p. 361.

⁴⁰ *Den svenska tideboken* was reprinted by Klemming in 1854. See also Klemming 1889–1927, pp. 149–153 and Ridderstad 1998–2000.

that several of the non-liturgical, vernacular prayers are known from Vadstena prayer-book manuscripts. The degree of correspondence between these vernacular prayers vary greatly – from simply having the same theme to corresponding on a word-by-word level.⁴¹ In addition, the Uppsala printing also contains one woodcut depicting Saint Birgitta contemplating the Man of Sorrows, as well as prayers taken from Birgitta's Revelations, and the fifteen Oes traditionally (but wrongly) attributed to her.⁴² I am not suggesting that Vadstena Abbey in any way initiated this late Uppsala prayer book edition, but it is indeed interesting to see the textual influence the abbey must have had.

There is one fact complicating matters here. Of the thirty-one extant Swedish prayerbooks or Books of Hours only two derive from houses other than Vadstena.⁴³ It might be conceivable that one or two of the prayer-book manuscripts attributed to Vadstena in fact come from a convent of a different order, but there is nothing to compare them with. Some manuscripts have been attributed to Vadstena on the basis of their contents (i.e. prayers known from Vadstena manuscripts and prayers to or by Saint Birgitta), but we know almost nothing about the dispersal of these texts, or of Birgitta's cult outside her own order in Sweden.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, I think it is safe to say that Birgittine texts were popular even outside the abbey. Just as with Syon Abbey, using Birgittine texts and *imprimatur* was probably financially (and 'reputationally') advantageous for the printers.

The Birgittine mother-house in Vadstena certainly had a significant role in the Swedish printed book market. The spreading of Birgittine texts and iconography continued, even at the time of the Reformation and when manuscript production was slowly going out of fashion. Although Vadstena Abbey did not always work actively for it, the two convents were definitely a cultural driving force, and early printing was an important way forward for the Birgittine Order.

41 On texts and language in this edition, see Lindqvist 1927; see also Hedström 2009, pp. 329ff.

42 The image is also reprinted in Klemming 1889–1927, p. 150, where he observes that the woodcut also occurs in a 1522 partly Birgittine print from Kraków, see pp. 127–128. On the 15 Oes, see for instance Gejrot 2000.

43 Uppsala University Library MS C517a probably originates from the Poor Clares and National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket) MS Rål. 11, 12mo is Dominican.

44 For instance, the Carthusian printing of Alanus de Rupe's *De dignitate et utilitate psalterii b. Marie virginis* (Mariefred, 1498) contains both excerpts from Saint Birgitta's Revelations as well as woodcuts depicting her and her daughter Saint Katarina (Klemming 1889–1927, p. 65). The connection between the Birgittines and the Carthusians has been discussed before (see for instance Härdelin 2001), but it is interesting to see that Birgittine texts and iconography were spread even outside the order.

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VERONICA O'MARA

A Syon Scribe Revealed by Her Signature

Mary Nevel and Her Manuscripts

IN DISCUSSIONS OF NUNS' scribal literacies in late medieval England much attention has been paid to the contrasts between England and continental Europe. Such differences operated at various economic, religious, and social levels.¹ None of these contrasts shows England in a good light.² When compared with Europe, there are differences in the educational facilities; in the size, wealth, and location of nunneries; in the limited range of orders found; in the meagre survival rates of manuscripts or indeed the houses themselves; in the increasing reliance on commercial book production amongst England's religious (both male and female); and, above all, in the poor evidence for scribal activity amongst English nuns from the fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. More manuscripts survive for Syon than for any other English nunnery, but comment on writing amongst the nuns is incidental or non-existent.³ Unlike continental Birgittine houses, Syon *appears* not to follow the female fashion for in-house manuscript production. Indeed, it is obvious from the evidence that does survive that Syon nuns were not reluctant to ask for outside help. Albeit living alongside Birgittine brothers who should have been adept scribes, when manuscripts were needed, the nuns tended to favour the Carthusians, go to secular outlets, or have material adapted, unlike their Swedish counterparts who produced the manuscripts themselves or enlisted the aid of the brothers

¹ O'Mara 2013, O'Mara 2015, and O'Mara (forthcoming).

² European norms for female religious literacy are variable, but England in the late Middle Ages (though less so in the Anglo-Saxon period) would figure at the lower end of the spectrum; for an overview, see the introduction to Blanton, O'Mara & Stoop (forthcoming).

³ See Bell 1995, pp. 171–210, supplemented by Bell 2007; he lists forty-eight volumes, including ten printed books and one of manuscript/print, associated with Syon nuns, a further ten manuscripts and two printed books that may have belonged to the sisters, plus untraced books and other references.

for translational activity.⁴ Given the wealth of female Birgittine scribal activity throughout Europe from Vadstena to Paradiso in Florence, English Birgittine nuns seem to have more in common with other English religious than they do with their European sisters: Syon nuns, like other English nuns (and some male religious), would seem *not* to have produced their own material as a general rule.

Alongside the one definite example of anonymous female scribal activity from Syon, a devotion and colophon by the so-called 'scrybeler' in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 546, there are only two named Birgittine nuns who may fully be called scribes: one at the beginning and one at the end of the period.⁵ The first is Anna Karlsdotter (d. before 1450), anglicized as Anna Charles in the Syon Martyrology (London, British Library, MS Additional 22285), who was responsible for a Latin and Swedish prayer-book (Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, MS A 82a), as brought to light by Claes Gejrot.⁶ Given that she was one of the four professed sisters who came from Vadstena to help establish Syon, it would be easy to conclude that later English postulants learnt something about manuscripts from Anna and perhaps her fellow Swedes, but there is no proof. Even if we suppose that there were other (anonymous) Syon nuns with scribal interests in the interim, it is not until a century later that we get our second authentic female scribe: Mary Nevel.

She was first brought to our attention by Christopher de Hamel who says that Mary was perhaps chantress at Syon and would have had responsibility for updating liturgical books.⁷ It is not clear to which of the many extensive families of Nevel (or Neville) she belonged.⁸ Her profession date too has been a mystery until now; all that was previously known was that Mary was not professed by 2 September 1518 because she was not present at the election of Constance

⁴ See, amongst others, Hedlund 2003, Hedström 2009, Dverstorp 2010, Hedström 2010, Lindell 2010, and Hedström 2013.

⁵ See O'Mara 2013, p. 78. There are a few examples of contemporary Syon nuns who were involved in some literary activity; for example, Bell 1995, p. 176, notes Dorothy Codrington, *alias* Goodrington, one of the well-known Fetiplace sisters, who annotates a 1535 printed copy of *A devout treatise called the tree and xii. frutes of the holy goost*; I hope to follow this up in my ongoing study of Syon scribal literacy. Moreover, the *Spirituall Exercyses* by the Dominican William Peryn (prefaced on 31 December, 1555 and published in 1557) was dedicated to Katherine Palmer (d. 19 December 1576), abbess during the exile in Dendermonde, and to a Poor Clare, Dorothy Clement; see Erler 2012, and Erler 2013, pp. 108–113, and *passim*.

⁶ Gejrot 1994.

⁷ de Hamel 1991, p. 108.

⁸ She has not been identified by Syon historians; see, for instance, Bainbridge 2010a and Bainbridge 2010b. I am grateful to Virginia Bainbridge for generous advice in this matter.

Brown as abbess.⁹ Ironically, there is more information about Mary after Syon closed than before. She was one of the nuns in Agnes Jordan's Southlands community in Denham (Buckinghamshire) after the Dissolution in 1539.¹⁰ Mary was the only female witness to Agnes's will (which would bolster her literacy credentials), though there are no books in the bequest to her – indeed, books rate very little mention.¹¹ Following the death of the abbess on 29 January 1546, the Southlands community departed for the Low Countries, arriving at various stages between 1550 and 1552. Previous commentators have mistranslated the source, the continuation of the chronicle of Marie van Oss (d. 1507), the abbess of Dendermonde (or Termonde) so that two arrival dates were confusingly postulated for Mary: the feast of Saint Margaret (20 July) and the feast of Saint Anne (26 July), 1552. In fact Mary arrived in Maria Troon in Dendermonde on 31 October 1552 with Margaret Mannington and Anne Dancy. The source further adds the valuable information that Mary was not professed until 3 April, 1535.¹² She returned with four other nuns to be re-instated at Syon in August 1557 with some other dispersed sisters and brothers. Yet her return was very brief as she died on 17 October 1557 or 1558 (both years are given in the Syon Martyrology).¹³ In the autumn of 1558 there was a devastating influenza epidemic that would seem even to have contributed to the death of Mary I (Mary Tudor) on 17 November.¹⁴ This might suggest that 1558 is the date for Mary Nevel's death; conversely, it could be that the person who noted her burial decided that the

⁹ Those present are given in the register of the Bishop of London, Richard Fitzjames (1506–1522) in London, Metropolitan Archives, MS 9531/9, fols 128v–130r/fols 130v–132r (two systems of foliation).

¹⁰ For a comprehensive account of the Southlands community, see Cunich 2014.

¹¹ For the will, drawn up on 28 October 1545 and probated on 9 February 1546, see The National Archives, Prob. 11/31/52.

¹² See Sander Olsen 2002, p. 312: '(fol. 44v) Item op Alderheleghen avert xv.c.lij qvamen by ons noch drie zusters uuyt Ynghelant, Zuster Mergriete Manniton ende Zuster Anne Danse, ende deze twee waeren ghprofest met Zuster Dorethe Slecs voerscreven den vij dach in hoeymaent, ende die derde Zuster die met Sr. Mergrieten ende Sr. Anne qvam, Zuster Marie Neuels, ende was ghprofest te Pasche, den iij apriel daernae xv.c.xxxv' ('Item on All Saint's Eve 1552 another three sisters came to us from England, Sister Margaret Mannington and Sister Anne Dancy, and these two were professed with Sister Dorothy Slight aforementioned on 7 July, and the third sister, who came with Sister Margaret and Sister Anne, [was] Sister Mary Nevel, and [she] was professed at Easter, 3 April thereafter 1535' [that is, the Saturday after Easter Sunday]). I am grateful to Patricia Stoop for help with this translation.

¹³ In the Syon Martyrology (London, British Library, MS Additional 22285) one hand on fol. 60r records her death as on 17 October 1557; another on fol. 192r notes her burial 'prope murum' with a different year, 1558, and the same day but no month (it has been scratched out); see Gejrot 2015, pp. 120–121 and 156–157, and Forbes 2013, pp. 87 and 90.

¹⁴ The ultimate cause of the death of Mary Tudor would seem to have been uterine cancer, but her

correct date must be 1558 solely because of the epidemic. Considering that fuller information is provided in the earlier entry, it may be that 1557 is the more likely. Bell provides one other detail: Göttingen University Library, 4° Theol. Mor. 138/53 Inc., containing *The chastysing of goddes chyldern* and *The tretyse of loue*, both printed c. 1493, was given by Mary Nevel to Audrey Dely (d. 19 April 1579), who inscribes the book to this effect.¹⁵ This is all that is currently known about Mary's biography. Unlike continental Birgittines, who are often explicit about their scribal involvement, the evidence for Mary's work has to be built up solely on detailed palaeographical grounds.

Following Christopher de Hamel's researches and those of Neil Ker, plus a study by Alexandra Barratt, I have compiled a list of manuscripts that may be associated with Mary Nevel.¹⁶ de Hamel unearthed the first clue by locating Mary's ownership inscription in Oxford, St. John's College, MS 167 and by pointing to a few manuscripts in which he traced or suspected her involvement.¹⁷ The remainder of this essay will be devoted to retracing his footsteps and those of fellow palaeographers, while making known my own views and discoveries. Nine manuscripts or parts thereof will be discussed, in the following order and in three separate categories (de Hamel's list; other Latin liturgical manuscripts; devotional volumes): (1) Oxford, St. John's College, MS 167; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 62; and London, British Library, MS Additional 22285; (2) Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 8885; Edinburgh University Library, MS 59; Exeter University Library, MS 262/ fragments 5 and 7, Syon Abbey medieval and early modern manuscript collection (or fragment 4a and 4b according to the best catalogue description); and The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 505A; and (3) London, British Library, MS Harley 494; and London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3600.¹⁸

The flyleaf of St. John's, MS 167 (fol. ii recto) shows Mary's ownership inscription, 'Syster mare. Neuel.', alongside that of 'syster tomysyn grove' and 'Brother James Stock', followed by a musical gamut in another hand (this same musical gamut also occurs, in the same hand, on the pastedown of the inside cover)

system was probably weakened in the summer and autumn of 1558 by the influenza outbreak, see Weikel 2008.

¹⁵ Bell 1995, p. 187. Audrey Dely was the sister of Margaret Dely (d. 10 October 1561), the Syon treasurer and the only Syon nun, with the exception of Agnes Jordan (whose brass plaque is in Denham church), to be commemorated by an extant memorial (in Isleworth church).

¹⁶ See de Hamel 1991; Ker 1977; Barratt 2009.

¹⁷ For a description, see Hanna 2002, pp. 232–234.

¹⁸ A very preliminary mention of these findings may be found in O'Mara (forthcoming).

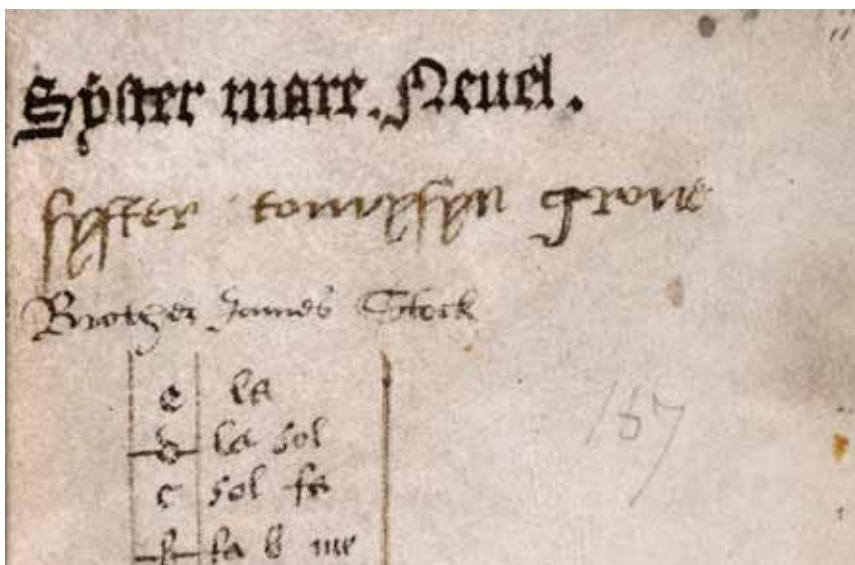


FIG. 1A: Ownership inscriptions, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 167, fol ii recto. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of St. John's College, Oxford.

(fig. 1a). Brother James Stock has not been identified, but it may be presumed that Thomasina Grove (who died in 1566) walked in procession with Mary, as Syon sisters apparently shared the same processional, and/or she and later James Stock inherited the book after Mary's death. The nuns processed in pairs in the order of their profession, with the abbess and prioress together, and the chantress and sub-chantress also making up a pair, so if Mary were the chantress, perhaps Thomasina Grove was the sub-chantress (which might also explain the music).¹⁹ As may be seen, the three signatures are in different hands which give a clear assurance that they are actually those of the people named (something that is not always the case).²⁰ While the other two are in competent cursive hands, Mary's very elegant *textualis* script is particularly noteworthy – and not only when compared with the hands here but also in comparison with other English nuns' signatures. In her choice of a *textualis* script she has more in common with her Swedish contemporaries than with her countrywomen. Whereas the brothers in Sweden used *cursiva* for most of their material, the sisters opted

¹⁹ See de Hamel 1991, p. 86, for this information on the processional order.

²⁰ This problem is discussed in O'Mara 2013, pp. 79–81.

for *textualis* for Latin and *hybrida* for the vernacular; Mary goes one better in choosing *textualis* for English and Latin.²¹ Her hand demonstrates some of the classic features of *textus quadratus*, the highest form of *textualis* (*formata*), best described by Albert Derolez:

Textus Quadratus [...] is an extremely angular script mostly used for great Bibles and liturgical books [...] It stands at the top of the hierarchy of Gothic scripts. Minims were given a diamond-shaped serif or quadrangle at both the headline and the baseline, made with a separate penstroke which required great care [...] When well executed, these applied quadrangles touch each other at their lateral points when several minims occur in sequence, and thus create two highly conspicuous horizontal rows of similar forms, one at the headline, the other at the baseline. In this way the strong sense of a horizontal line [...] is produced, which contrasts with the heavily vertical emphasis characteristic of this type of script, and contributes to the extraordinary dynamism of an otherwise stereotyped script.²²

To demonstrate the effort put into the execution of this script, Derolez includes a pattern book dated 1510 by Gregorius Bock from Swabia where, for instance, the letter 'a' alone comprises six different strokes.²³ In Mary's signature (see fig. 1a on p. 287) the formality of the script is very evident both in general and particular: the overall symmetry, regularity, and angularity; the carefully executed minims; the conventional diamond-shaped full stop (which occurs after her first name and surname); and the general professionalism. In many ways this hand is so representative of its script type that to attempt further identification of it elsewhere seems futile. Yet, there is just enough singularity to enable such identifications. The most obvious identifying features are the noticeable serifs at the bottom of the letter-forms. Whereas there should be perfect quadrangles at the baseline, there are serifs on virtually all these quadrangles; these look like drips from the pen, in some cases resembling something akin to a club-foot leading off to the right, but are clearly a characteristic of Mary's style. The letter 'y' in 'Syster' has a diamond-shaped dot over it and, most obviously, an idiosyncratic teardrop loop at the tip of the descender. These, combined with the size of the individual letter forms (also a useful indication of the number of lines that will fit on a page) and the appearance of the only capitals, 'S' and 'N', all help to contribute to isolating Mary's hand elsewhere. Although a full stop and fifteen

²¹ Dverstorp 2010, p. 168.

²² Derolez 2003, pp. 74–75. The three other kinds of *textualis* outlined by Derolez are *Textus Praescissus*, *Textus Semi-quadratus*, and *Textus Rotundus*; he also notes further refinements by Wolfgang Oeser (pp. 75–76 and 85–86).

²³ Ibid., plates 15–16.

letters (or in reality only eleven as there are some repeated forms) are very little to go upon, by identifying Mary's hand in other texts, a dossier of different letter-forms and features may be built up.

In the first category the first example of the possible occurrence of Mary's hand elsewhere is in St. John's, MS 167 itself where de Hamel argues that she is responsible for amendments in the midst of the litany on fols 80v–90r (there are also a few added slips elsewhere). The changes in the litany are not corrections to the main text in the normal sense but are on added slips of parchment (whose reverses are blank) bound into the manuscript labelled 'a', 'b', and so on; these contain extra saints' names and are foliated in modern pencil. The slips between fols 80v and 83r are numbered 81 and 82; those between fols 83v and 86r are numbered 84 and 85; and those between fols 86v and 90r are numbered 88, 87, and 89 (in that order). For instance, slip 'a' (fol. 84) contains the names of Saints Anna, Birgitta, 'Katherina' (Katarina), and Elizabeth that rightly belong on fol. 86r (see fig. 1b). It would seem plausible that if Mary were not responsible for the main manuscript (which she is not), then if she were the chantress, she would be the person obliged to include additional saints in the litany.

Yet, as with beauty being in the eye of the beholder, so it may be with palaeographical comparisons: in this case I do not agree with de Hamel's assessment. In my opinion, the hand on the inserted slips, though not the same as the main script, resembles Mary's hand but is a different sort of rounder *textualis*. The most obvious difference is that it lacks the tell-tale serifs on the quadrangles at the baseline. In contrast to de Hamel, I think that Mary's hand is responsible for more extensive script on fols 110r–120r that is not mentioned by him. This

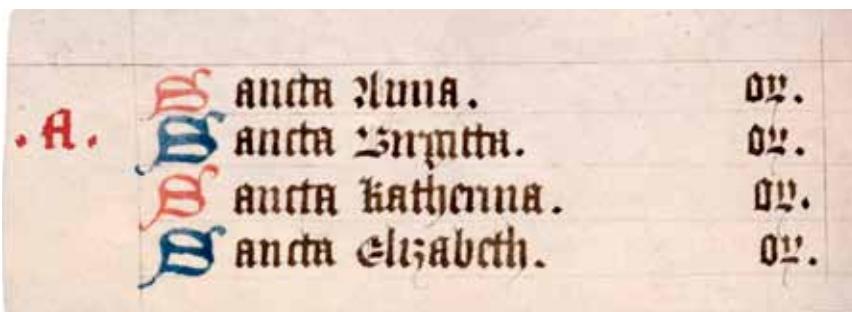


FIG. 1B: Added slips, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 167, fol. 84. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of St. John's College, Oxford.



FIG. 1C: Material written by Mary Nevel. Oxford, St. John's College, MS 167, fol. 116r. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of St. John's College, Oxford.

contains material for the Circumcision, Annunciation, Corpus Christi, Saint Katarina, and Advent. Throughout this section the same sort of pronounced feet with the noticeable serifs characteristic of Mary's hand are present; see, for example, fol. 116r (fig. 1c).

For his second example de Hamel posits that Mary Nevel's hand is responsible for substantial sections (fols 29r–31r, 63r–79v, 149r–153r) of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 62, a 'late fourteenth-century Book of Hours acquired and adapted by Syon' about a century later; according to an inscription on the flyleaf (fol. ii verso), this was owned by John Barcham of Exeter in 1597, and it was apparently donated to the Bodleian in 1602 (fig. 2).²⁴ Like St. John's, MS 167, this

²⁴ de Hamel 1991, pp. 102 and 108; see also pp. 76–77, 105, and 117. Another example of this hand is found on fol. 116r–v, though it is questionable whether or not fols 149r–153r are in the

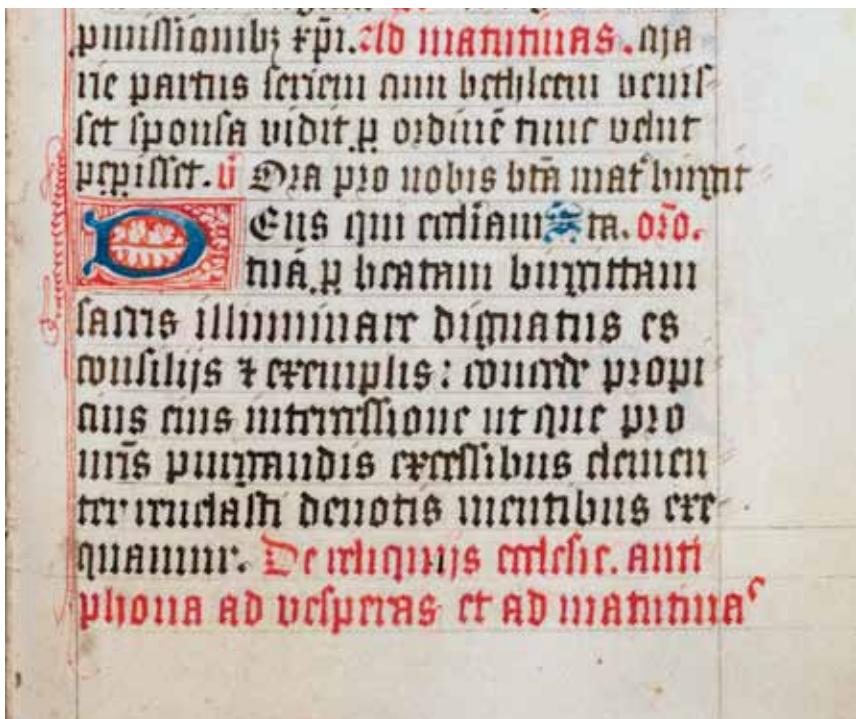


FIG. 2: Material not written by Mary Nevel. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 62, fol. 30r. Reproduced with the permission of The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

manuscript immediately looks like a Birgittine one, as it has well-preserved Syon index tabs; in places the colours of the woven tabs (blues, reds, and so forth), are still quite bright.²⁵ The hand is again a good example of a *textus quadratus*, demonstrating the features outlined by Derolez. Some of the same characteristics found in the bookmarks in the Syon Martyrology (below) are evident in the section on fol. 30r (see fig. 2): the same zig-zag on the left of the capital letters as well as the single or double vertical strokes in these capitals – seen, for instance, in the 'O' in the heading 'Ora pro nobis beata mater birgit'. What are not obvious are the pronounced quadrangles at the baseline with their noticeable serifs. They are there, but not to the same extent as found in the signature

same hand; it is even possible that there are two further hands here. A brief description of the manuscript is available in Madan & Craster 1922, p. 175.

²⁵ For index tabs, a feature of books for men and women, see de Hamel 1991, pp. 103–106.

and examples from St. John's, MS 167. Neither does this example compare with Mary's usual large script; as we shall see, she tends to fit very few lines on a page, about twelve to fourteen, whereas on fol. 30r there are nineteen lines (of course, such comparison assumes that all pages are of comparable size). There is enough in the way of general features that might persuade one that this is Mary's hand, but there are perhaps not enough of the particular characteristics, even leaving aside that her distinctive letter 'y' is never going to appear in a Latin text.

There is also one other issue. The added prayers elsewhere (by another hand) are in the masculine form which would presuppose use by a Birgittine brother.²⁶ This too casts some doubt over Mary as scribe here, unless she worked on manuscripts intended for sisters and brothers, which would be highly unusual. On balance my view is that Mary was not responsible for the parts of this manuscript highlighted by de Hamel, though the hand closely resembles hers.

In his third instance de Hamel notes that Mary's hand seems to be responsible for two bookmarks in the Syon Martyrology (London, British Library, MS Additional 22285).²⁷ The first (numbered 11–12 pasted together, with each page having the same text), currently suspended between fols 10 and 13, is inscribed with the variant Latin forms that the reader of the Martyrology would need to adapt appropriately for reading names aloud to the Syon chapter. The second (numbered 120–123, with the same text on each side, that is, on numbers 120 and 123), presently suspended between fols 119 and 124, consists of a double volvelle, with two revolving disks (numbers 121 and 122) showing numbers through little windows that refer backwards or forwards to other sections during public reading of the Martyrology (fig. 3).²⁸ If the hand in the first bookmark (number 11) is examined carefully, we can see that it has various distinctive features: the use of a sort of triple zig-zag on the left of the capital letters – for instance, in the 'Obijt', 'Benefactor', 'Diaconus', as well as a single vertical line or a double vertical line in capitals, for instance, in 'Diaconus' and 'Diaconi'. These features may prove useful in later identifications, but such elaborate capitals are not uncommon in *textus quadratus* scripts, as seen in the Bodleian, MS Bodley 62 example (fig. 2 on p. 291). The problem is to isolate the general from the particular, though it is only possible to build up a scribal profile by examining the two in combination, even if at different points the proportion of what is particular or general will vary. Here there is the very obvious diamond-shaped full stop and more or less the same capital 'S' in 'Sorores' that Mary used for

²⁶ See, for example, fols 105v ('*mibi peccatori*') and 109v ('*ego miserrimus peccator*').

²⁷ de Hamel 1991, p. 108.

²⁸ See Wordsworth & Littlehales 1910, pp. 279–281 for a full description of these.

Obiit.	Obierunt
ffundator.	Ablatiss.
Soror.	Sorores.
fforaria.	fforarie.
Būfactor.	Būfactores.
Būfactrix.	Būfactrices
Huius monasterij.	

Sacerdos.	Sacerdotes.
Diacorij.	Diacomi.
ffrater.	frēs.
fforarius.	fforarij.
Huius cōgregatiōis.	

FIG. 3: Bookmark by Mary Nevel. London, British Library, MS Additional 22285, no. 11.
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FIG. 4: Additions by Mary Nevel. Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 8885, fol. 230r. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

her signature. Most particularly, and unlike the Bodley example, there are the pronounced serifs at the baseline throughout. I therefore agree with de Hamel in accepting these two additions to the Martyrology as another example of Mary's hand, though there would seem to be no other instance of her writing amongst the many hands in this extensive volume.

In the second category the next four examples of Mary's hand comprise parts or fragments of liturgical manuscripts. The identification of the first, a section of Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 8885 (fig. 4), is absolutely certain in my view and this claim is also indirectly supported by the researches of

Neil Ker.²⁹ The manuscript, the second of Syon's five extant processionalis, was mistakenly said by James Hogg to have been written by Anne Amersham (d. 21 October 1533), but it only has her ownership inscription alongside that of Anne Digne in the same hand.³⁰ The fact that the hand of Mary's ownership inscription in St. John's, MS 167 occurs in the Syon processional here is not mentioned by de Hamel, as far as I am aware.³¹ Nevel's additions occur on. pp. 220**–231 (the asterisks indicate duplicated folio numbering) and comprise the procession for the Feast of the Holy Name. The same double vertical line noted in the Syon Martyrology above also occurs in 'Benedicta' in the final line (see fig. 4). This lacks the zig-zags on the left, though these occur, for instance, in 'Oremus' on p. 231, demonstrating that Mary has different forms of capitals. Most importantly, the script here is notable, not only for her usual lower-case letter forms and features such as hairline strokes over the 'i', but particularly for having the same pronounced serifs at the baseline so characteristic of her.

Secondly, there is a single added folio at the end of Edinburgh University Library, MS 59 that may with certainty be attributed to Mary. This vellum psalter, with occasional illuminated capitals and decorative borders, was written apparently by one fifteenth-century professional scribe throughout, and donated to the University by a graduate student in 1636, as noted on a flyleaf.³² Apart from additions to the calendar, any corrections to the main text are often very minor, but what is most intriguing is that the hand of the final page, fol. 116r (with fol. 116v being blank), is strikingly different from that of the preceding (fig. 5, overleaf). This latter hand, which is quite large with only twelve lines on the page and so out of keeping with the other hand where there are about twenty-six lines to a page, is particularly eye-catching because of its diamond-shaped full stops and the serifs at the bottom of letter forms, together with the usual hairline strokes. Even if there are no undecorated capitals to compare, this is clearly another instance of Mary Nevel's hand (see fig. 5 overleaf). This example was

29 The manuscript was originally owned by Bristol Baptist College; for the description of Z.d.40 (now the Cambridge manuscript), see Ker 1977, pp. 194–195; in his description (p. 199) of another Bristol Baptist College manuscript, Z.e.37 (now the Lambeth manuscript), he says that the hand is 'apparently the same hand as Z.d.40, art. 11' (that is, pp. 220**–231).

30 See Hogg 2003, p. vii, note 6. The other three processionalis are: The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 505A; Cambridge, St. John's College, MS 139, and Exeter University Library, MS261/1, Syon Abbey medieval and early modern manuscript collection. Mary is not responsible for any part of MS 139 or MS261/1; for MS 505A, see below.

31 de Hamel 1991; there is a dense network of scribal relationships among Syon manuscripts that de Hamel has otherwise partly brought to light; other scribal connections are raised in Miles 2010. I do not discuss these, but intend to so in my research on scribal literacy at Syon.

32 Described in Borland 1916, pp. 106–107.

vidicare viuos & mortu
os. **A**d annis aduentu
omnis homines resurgent ha
bent cum corporibus suis: et
modicum sunt de fratribus primis
raeone. **E**t quod bona erat
runt ibunt in vita eterna:
qui vero in vita in igne erat
nisi. **A**et est fides catholica:
qua misericordia fiducia
firmiter quam crediderit sal
vus esse non poterit.

FIG. 5: Final leaf by Mary Nevel. Edinburgh University Library, MS 59, fol. 116r.
Reproduced with the permission of Edinburgh University Library.

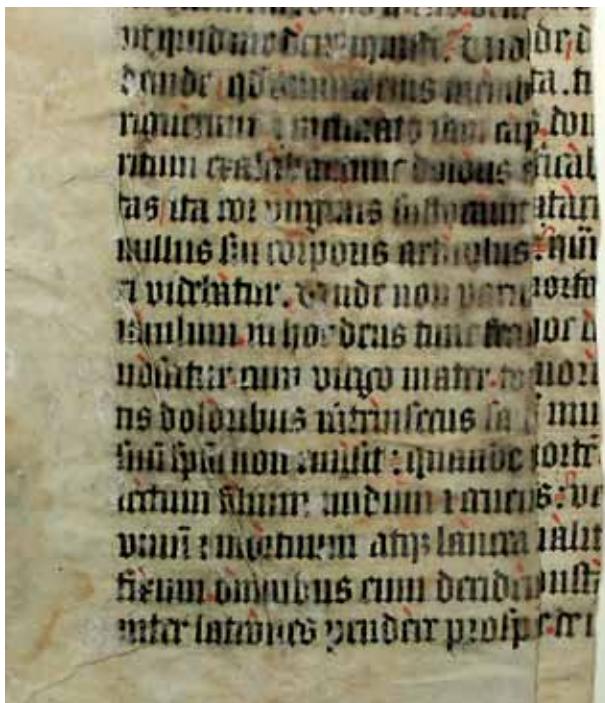


FIG. 6: Possibly or possibly not Mary Nevel's hand. Exeter University Library, MS 262/Fragment 7, Syon Abbey medieval and early modern manuscript collection. Courtesy of the University of Exeter, Special Collections.

first brought to light by Alexandra Barratt as she noticed the similarity between this folio and pp. 220**–231 in the Cambridge processional above, but not their association with Mary Nevel.³³ The insertion of a final folio to compensate for one that had got lost at the end of a quire (the catchword ‘iudicare’ is found on fol. 115v) would support de Hamel's thesis that it was Mary's task as chantress to repair manuscripts that had missing text.

Thirdly, in this liturgical group there are two bifolia from a Birgittine breviary in Exeter University Library, MS 262/Fragment 5 and 7 (parts of), Syon Abbey medieval and early modern manuscript collection or, better still, Fragments 4a and 4b, as designated by Ker and Piper (fig. 6).³⁴ Fragment 5 or 4a

³³ Barratt 2009, p. 119.

³⁴ As catalogued in the Syon Abbey collection in Exeter University Library, these fragments are

comprises sections of readings for Monday Matins and Lauds, and of Tuesday Matins first lesson; Fragment 7 or 4b consists of parts of Friday Matins third lesson and of Saturday Matins first lesson.³⁵ The centre-fold of Fragment 5 or 4a is blurred and difficult to read, and in Fragment 7 or 4b lines at the top are missing and the outer end of each line has gone; originally there would have been nineteen lines per page (see fig. 6). The Latin is pointed in red for correct stress when reading aloud. The hand is a large *textus quadratus* and looks remarkably like the previous examples of Mary Nevel's hand, with its large letters. There are very few upper case letters for comparison, though there is a 'T' in 'Tercia' (recto of the centre-fold) that has the zig-zag pattern seen in the Syon Martyrology capitals. The tell-tale serifs at the baseline are there, albeit not as prominent as in other instances which gives pause for thought. Overall this *may* or *may not* be another example of Mary's hand.

Fourthly, in this liturgical group is the final unfoliated double spread in The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle; DNP: MS 505A (a processional). These two folios contain on the verso antiphons for evensong and matins, finishing with a prayer to Saint Katarina, and on the recto the prayer, 'O omnipotens sempiterne deus'. The same perplexity obtains here as with the Exeter fragments. While the hand or hands, particularly that of the prayer, bears a remarkable similarity to Mary's, on closer inspection there is some dissimilarity in the overall appearance and again in the restrained use of serifs at the baseline to warrant some caution. On balance, this hand has more in common with the Exeter one and so *may* be the same hand as that; one way or another, the same caveats apply in that the Alnwick hand *may* or *may not* be by Mary Nevel.

Finally, in the third category overall there are two part-vernacular examples, starting with a single paper leaf from London, British Library, MS Harley 494: folio 4*^r (the asterisk indicates a duplicated folio) that contains a Latin prayer to Onuphrius, a saint known in Syon circles. Alexandra Barratt says that the hand here 'is either the same as that found in London, Lambeth Palace, MS 3600, and the additions to Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 8885 or it is modelled on that hand'.³⁶ The rest of this manuscript is a lengthy compilation of prayers and devotional material in English and Latin associated with a woman, Anne Bulkley, whose name occurs in the manuscript. Barratt argues

separated as Fragments 5 and 7; in the clear analysis of all the fragments in Ker & Piper 1992, pp. 348–349 (p. 349), they are fragments 4a and 4b, which is a much better description.

³⁵ These are fully identified and described in Ker & Piper 1992, p. 349.

³⁶ See Barratt 2009, p. 179, who transcribes and discusses the text on pp. 178–179.

that this woman was a Hampshire widow, and that the manuscript was perhaps later owned by her daughter of the same name, who was a nun at Amesbury (Wiltshire), though Barratt also postulates links with Syon.³⁷ Yet the trouble is that, although Barratt is quite right in attributing much of the manuscript to the hand of Robert Tailour, the steward of Syon who also wrote *The Myoure of oure Ladye* for the Birgittine nuns, the hand on fol. 4^o bears no relation whatsoever to that encountered in the Cambridge and Lambeth manuscripts which we now know may be identified with that of Mary Nevel. Therefore, we have not gained a seventh example of Mary's hand but fortunately the final – and most important – example is entirely certain.

All of Mary Nevel's scribal features are also found in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3600, whose scribal connections with the processional in Cambridge have long been known (albeit without scribal identification).³⁸ Similarly to St. John's, MS 167 and Bodleian, MS Bodley 62, the Lambeth manuscript also has index tabs. The bulk of the manuscript (fols 9–144) is vellum, like all the other manuscripts in which Mary was involved. The paper folios have a range of different hands (some repeated) on fols 3r–5v and 145r–149r, but the vellum leaves are all written in Mary's distinctive hand (fig. 7a overleaf).

The same scribal features encountered elsewhere occur all the way through: the large letter forms (in this case fitting fourteen lines to the page); the hairline strokes; the very pronounced diamond-shaped full stops; the plain large initials usually found in her work (with the obvious exception of the decorated ones at the very start of the Lambeth text and in the Edinburgh folio, and the more embellished ones found at points in the processional); the zig-zags on the left of some capitals; the double vertical line on certain others; and the very characteristic serifs at the baseline. Most notably of all, this hand routinely makes use of the dot and the idiosyncratic loop on the *y* found in Mary's signature noted at the beginning and not found before because we have been dealing with Latin manuscripts; for instance, fols 9r, 20r, and 24r have particularly good examples of 'y' with its teardrop curl and diamond-shaped dot on top, as does fol. 66v, for instance, in 'de/uocyon' in the last line (fig. 7b on p. 301). For the first time the text here is extensive enough to find comparisons with her script elsewhere, including her signature. We see that she uses the plainer capital found elsewhere as well as the zig-zag type, if we compare the plain 'T' in 'Take' on fol. 58v with the more elaborate 'T' in 'Tercia' in the Exeter fragment above. On folio 140r

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 22–33.

³⁸ See note 29.

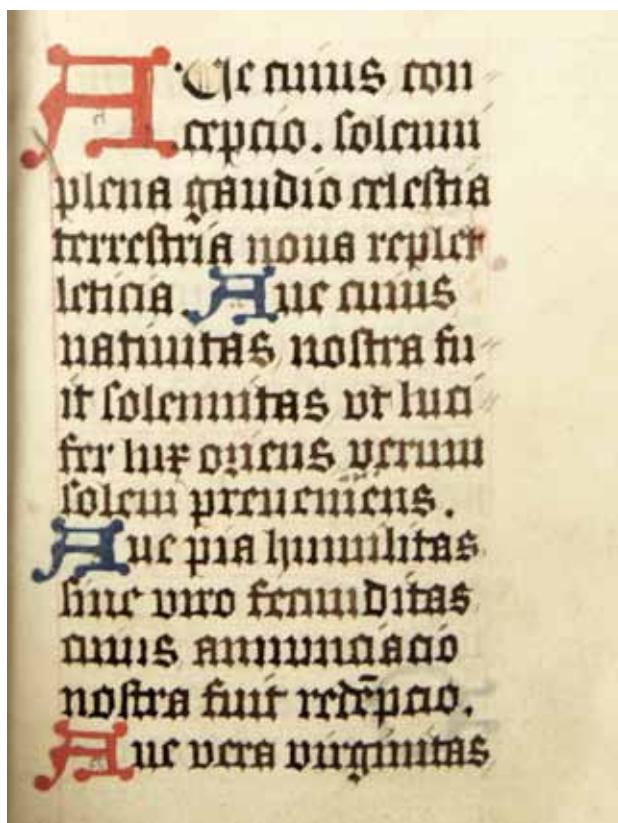


FIG. 7A: Latin text by Mary Nevel. Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3600, fol. 67r.
 Reproduced with the permission of His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

‘marie’ is a good point of comparison with ‘mare’ on the flyleaf of St. John’s, MS 167; while fol. 9r and 38v have a capital ‘N’ that is identical to Mary’s ‘N’ in her signature.

There are other features too that confirm the identification of Mary as scribe – and a good one at that. Unlike those in Bodleian, MS Bodley 62, the prayers here are suited to a female user, for example, ‘ego indigna peccatrix’ (fol. 70v). One other remarkable feature is that the scribe does not always bother to finish prayer endings, but is content with an abbreviated format: for instance, ‘Qui v. e. r. d. p. o. s. s.’ (fol. 43r) – clearly the work of someone used to copying ‘Qui

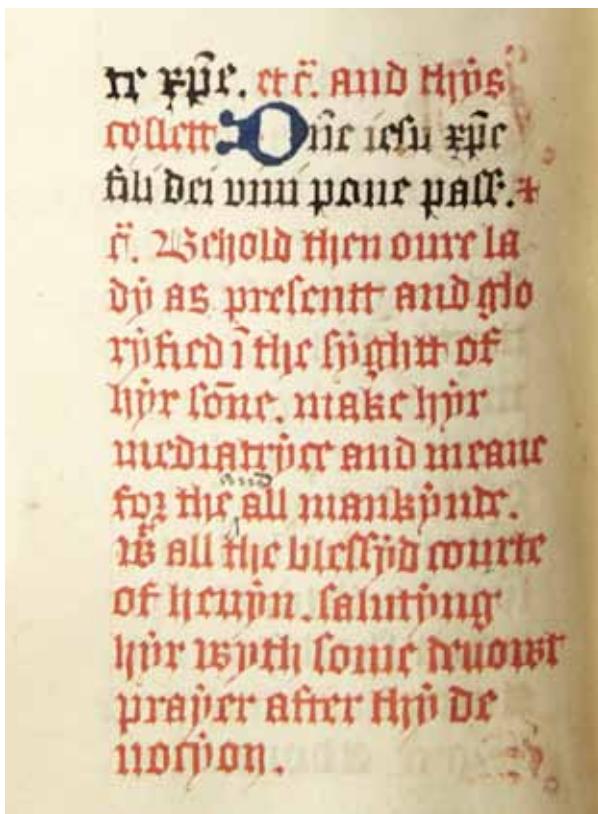


FIG. 7B: English text by Mary Nevel. Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3600, fol. 66v.
Reproduced with the permission of His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

viuis et regnat deus per omnia secula seculorum'. Fols 61v, 62r, and 62v have extensive annotation in the form of added prayers (in a later sixteenth-century cursive hand). Apart from this, there is only a very rare trace of correction, for example, on fol. 21v where 'syngē' is crossed through very lightly and 'sygne' written in a cursive hand in the margin and fol. 66v (see fig. 7b) where 'and' is added in a secretary hand. It is not clear whether these are 'official' correcting hands or those by later owners.

As far as I am aware, Lambeth, MS 3600 is the only known example not only in Syon circles but in the whole of late Middle English (if viewed broadly)

of a complete manuscript written by a nun.³⁹ It is an extensive collection of devotional Latin and English material (some of which is repeated in both languages) from the sixteenth century, that bears some similarity to the contents of Lambeth, MS 546, part of which was written by the Syon 'scrybeler' alluded to earlier.⁴⁰ If Mary is responsible for almost 140 devotional items in Lambeth, MS 3600 – as all the evidence suggests that she is – she is not only capable of writing a whole volume consistently and elegantly, but she is also, apparently, able to engage in some composition, as several of the items are unique (to the extent that devotional material can ever be truly unique). Albeit that it does not necessarily follow that the scribe of an only copy is *ipso facto* its author, the evidence here seems compelling. If this is the case, then de Hamel's understandable argument that no Syon nuns were responsible for whole books needs to be re-assessed and Barratt's speculation that the manuscript may have been written by a nun confirmed.⁴¹

If we accept that the signature in St. John's, MS 167 is by Mary Nevel – and there is no reason why we should not do so – then on palaeographical grounds we may attribute elements of between five and seven manuscripts to her: later parts of St. John's, MS 167; the book marks in British Library, MS Additional 22285; the last section of Cambridge, MS Additional 88885, the last page of Edinburgh, MS 59; *possibly or possibly not* the fragments in Exeter University Library MS 262 and the last opening of Alnwick, MS 505A; and – most significantly and certainly – virtually the whole of Lambeth, MS 3600. And if she is not responsible for parts of Bodleian, MS Bodley 62, and possibly not for the Exeter fragments and the Alnwick folios, there is another scribe/s who writes very like her. Perhaps this is someone who wrote alongside Mary, trained Mary or was trained by Mary. If this were the case, it would open up all sorts of interesting possibilities about in-house training on the lines of what happened in Vadstena under Christina Hansdotter Brask.⁴²

With this point we return to the continent. In his article on Syon's first scribe, Anna Karlsdotter, Gejrot's discussion in part involves a consideration of where

³⁹ It is argued that there was some secular female involvement in the production of the much discussed Findern Anthology (Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 1. 6), on which there is an extensive literature, but nothing that compares to the Lambeth example.

⁴⁰ The English prose contents of Lambeth, MSS 546 and 3600 are described in Pickering & O'Mara 1999, pp. 49–51 and 70–72; a list of the contents of Lambeth, MS 3600 is in Barratt 2009, pp. 127–131.

⁴¹ Barratt 2009, pp. 119 and 126.

⁴² See Hedlund 2003.

Anna wrote the book, in England or in Sweden, and where it might have been decorated. In the end he opts for England on the strength of the illumination that may be associated with the workshop of Hermann Scheere. In other words, he concludes that Anna may have written the Swedish prayers from memory while she was at Syon and had the book decorated by an illuminator based in London, rather than having produced the manuscript in Sweden and sending it to England to be decorated.⁴³ Conversely, there may be a suggestion of continental involvement that will form the next leg of the journey with Mary Nevel, Syon's last female scribe.

Among many other issues in this palaeographical conundrum it is not clear when Mary might have written the various parts of the manuscripts discussed here, and so any theories about precedence can only be speculative. It is in the nature of highly formalized *textualis* scripts that they are very difficult to date. While commentators have put forward various dates for the processionals associated with Syon, the only real clues are their inclusion of a copy of a dispensation by John Kemp, Bishop of London, '*bone memorie*' (he died in 1454), and the presence of Saint Osmund (canonized in 1457) in the original litany.⁴⁴ Any updating can only indicate the chronology of events and not the exact dating of respective items. Given that Mary was not professed until 1535, her work cannot precede this date. This has important consequences for the overall dating of the processionals; if, according to de Hamel, four of the processionals were written between 1480 (with the Cambridge manuscript perhaps being a decade earlier) and 1500, some of them have been added to considerably later.⁴⁵ An early inscription (fol. 6v) recording the birth of 'Elynor Mownselowe' on 28 December 1543 in the Edinburgh manuscript testifies to its having left Syon fairly soon after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This demonstrates that the manuscript had come into secular possession four years after the Dissolution or, less likely, that it was the creation of some unnamed Birgittine nun. One way or another, it proves that Mary Nevel wrote the final folio before 1543. In addition, because she was one of the Syon nuns who went abroad post-1539, it may be that the bulk of her work dates from this period. It is striking that the cover of Lambeth, MS 3600, is dated probably to Louvain or Leuven in about

43 Gejrot 1994, pp. 36, 44 and 53–54, note 48.

44 See de Hamel 1991, pp. 85 and 142.

45 Ibid., pp. 82 and 85. One motivator for this scribal activity might have been the abbess, Constance Brown, consecrated in 1518. From the Syon accounts sizeable amounts of paper and parchment – far beyond the average – were purchased in 1518/19, which would have implied a sizeable number of books, see Erler 1985, pp. 300–301.

1550.⁴⁶ As we have seen, from October 1552 to the return of the nuns in 1557 Mary Nevel was in the Birgittine convent of Maria Troon at Dendermonde, which is just less than sixty kilometres from Leuven. As shown by Ulla Sander Olsen, this convent was renowned for manuscript production from the days of Abbess Marie van Oss.⁴⁷ It may not be too far-fetched to speculate that Mary – if she did not bring this manuscript with her – made use of her time in Dendermonde by copying Latin prayers (some of which would seem to come from early printed sources), as well as providing the English equivalent for some of them. This might be further supported by the fact that some of the material in Lambeth, MS 3600 derives from continental sources (Dutch and German), although it could equally indicate long-standing textual connections between Syon and the Low Countries.

Depending on how the material here is dated (either closer to Mary's profession in 1535 or her death in 1557/8), there are different scenarios for the scribal activity above. That Mary Nevel had acted as Syon's resident chantress and so corrected and produced various volumes in the pre-Dissolution period, some of which she then took abroad. Or her writing career began in exile for reasons of necessity (influenced perhaps by an active scriptorium in Dendermonde, something that she would not have witnessed at home as there was no Syon scriptorium). It is interesting that in 1571 when Katherine Palmer (then located in Mishagen) wanted a copyist for the *Directorium aureum contemplativorum* with the *Tractatulus de effusione cordis* of Hendrik Herp (d. 1478), she asked an English secular priest, Edmund Hargat.⁴⁸ Perhaps after Mary's death there were no other Syon sisters capable of the task.

Yet maybe a combination of the two scenarios makes more sense: that Mary started her writing career, possibly as Syon's chantress, in the third decade of the sixteenth century in England and carried it on until the middle of the century in the Low Countries. We have already seen that at least one of her manuscripts, Edinburgh, MS 59, cannot have been taken abroad as it was dispersed from Syon at least by 1543.⁴⁹ This alone would suggest that Mary had to have been writing before her sojourn on the continent. It is not easy to answer when – or where – the other volumes were produced or taken later. There are no obvious changes in

⁴⁶ Ker 1977, p. 199.

⁴⁷ Sander Olsen 1989–1990 and 1997.

⁴⁸ See Rhodes 1993, p. 164, note 28; Erler 2013, p. 112.

⁴⁹ As noted, Bodleian, MS Bodley 62, albeit not in Mary's hand, was also in non-Birgittine ownership by 1597.

writing style or diminution of expertise that would enable one manuscript to be dated before or after another purely on palaeographical grounds. Nevertheless, common sense would dictate that the nuns would not have left Syon without the books that they would have used daily, meaning that Mary's additions to the processionals (Cambridge, MS Additional 8885 and St. John's, MS 167) may date from the pre-1539 period; it may not be insignificant that the cover used in the St. John's manuscript is of a type used by a London binder between 1535 and 1549.⁵⁰ It might be assumed that Mary's updating of these manuscripts also springs from this time; this rationale would also apply to the Alnwick manuscript, if the script is hers. This may be further reinforced by the fact that Mary's addition to the Cambridge manuscript is for the Feast of the Holy Name, an object of devotion since the early days of Syon, but only legitimated as a regular feast in the late 1480s, making it more likely that she made this addition before they left Syon rather than afterwards.⁵¹ Conversely, given the Leuven/Louvain binding of Lambeth, MS 3600, it is tempting to suggest that this volume at least was one that may well have been produced in Dendermonde.⁵²

Far from her country as Anna Karlsdotter had been at the foundation of the order, writing down English prayers and devotions would have enabled Mary Nevel in her exile to remain in contact with home while at the same time showing herself to be a continuing part of European female scribal tradition – something that few other English nuns could claim.⁵³

⁵⁰ See Hanna 2002, p. 234.

⁵¹ For information on the cult of the Holy Name and Syon, see Powell 2007, pp. xxi, xl–xlii.

⁵² Whether such a hypothesis is viable depends on further scrutiny and on the potential identification and dating of the minor hands at the beginning and end of the manuscript.

⁵³ I hope to pursue Mary Nevel's potential continental links in my future study of her manuscripts, particularly Lambeth, MS 3600, and Syon scribes. I am very grateful to the custodians of the libraries above for granting me access to their holdings, to the relevant authorities for permission to reproduce the materials here; I am particularly grateful to the following archivists and librarians: Christopher Hunwick of the Duke of Northumberland's Estates; Kathryn McKee, St. John's College Library, Cambridge; Angela Mandrioli and Sue Inskip, Exeter University Library; Stewart Tiley, St. John's College Library, Oxford; and to the staff of the Institute of Historical Research, London. For very helpful discussions on palaeographical matters, my thanks are due to E. A. Jones, William Marx, Oliver Pickering, Susan Powell, Kari Anne Rand, Patricia Stoop, and Daniel Wakelin. Above all, I should like to thank Christopher de Hamel and the late Neil Ker whose earlier work on these manuscripts has been invaluable.

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manuscript collection, MS 262/1

GÖTTINGEN

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ELIZABETH PERRY

Art and Identities at the Lisbon Church, 1594–1861

THIS PAPER WILL EXPLORE how the visual culture of the church at Syon Abbey in Lisbon arose from and interacted with the monastery's English, Portuguese, and Birgittine identities and audiences.¹ Study of the art in the church reveals how profoundly interrelated these identities actually were. Syon Abbey created a rich multi-faceted community and church at Lisbon with Birgittine identity at its heart.

One can begin to explore the visual constructions of the community's multiple identities by standing imaginatively in the streets of a barrio of western Lisbon called Mocambo, in reference to its many African residents,² and looking at the entrance to 'the convent of English nuns', as Syon Abbey was often called in Lisbon. Above the gate to their monastery and church, Syon placed a carved stone pillar.³ It was said that part of the body of the Birgittine martyr Richard Reynolds had been hung on the gates of Old Syon, following his execution at Tyburn in 1535. The abbey had removed that blessed fragment of Gothic architecture, carried it across Europe in exile, and enshrined it in the gate of its new abbey at Lisbon. Set into public space visible from the street, the gate-relic literally became a badge of identity for the community. Walking beneath its

¹ I would like to thank E. A. Jones and the participants of the 'Syon at 600' Lisbon Workshop for making this paper possible. Special gratitude also goes to Raquel Henriques da Silva, Hélia Cristina Tirano Tomás Silva, and Tiago Borges Lourenço, scholars of the Lx Conventos Project, for their generous collaboration in this research.

² The Mocambo district of Lisbon was associated with a slave and free African population from at least the sixteenth century. The term is believed to derive from an Angolan word for 'hideout' and came to be used throughout the Portuguese Atlantic, especially in Brazil, to refer to communities of escaped slaves. Sweet 2013, p. 237.

³ The historian William Cole saw the stone relic above the gate when he visited Syon in 1737. The relic is now at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Exeter.

arch, a visitor could not help but to marvel at its testimony that Syon Abbey in Lisbon was an intact, surviving relic of the famously martyred English church.

But the massive relic that stood above the entrance to Syon Abbey at Lisbon was not just an English and Birgittine monument; it was also a Portuguese one. Portugal was the host of the exiled monastery; it was part of *their* identity to be preservers and defenders of Catholicism in a city where the ‘convent of English nuns’ would find refuge alongside other exiled monastic communities.⁴

From the moment of their arrival at the bustling Santos port, Syon was offered hospitality by Portuguese elites. They lived for their first five years at Lisbon with the aristocratic nuns of the Franciscan convent Nossa Senhora da La Esperança (Our Lady of Hope), founded by Isabel Mendanha in 1524, and then were invited to establish their abbey permanently in the home of another Portuguese noblewoman, Isabel de Azevedo (d. 1615). From the start, the Portuguese nobility, many of whom felt ties of kinship with Syon through a common Lancastrian heritage, worked to sustain the community and bring it to fruition in its new home.

Syon Abbey constructed two churches at Lisbon. The monastery was created with the secular houses and land donated by the Azevedo family, and a modest church was operational there by 1601. This incarnation of Syon Abbey was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1651. The fire also destroyed many of the community’s documents, including historical records; in 1738 Syon would piece together a record of their time in Lisbon from memory and surviving documents (the Lisbon Annals).⁵ After the 1651 fire, the nuns’ part of the monastery was rebuilt, and a new church constructed. Syon Abbey and its new church were damaged, but not destroyed, in the 1755 Lisbon earthquake.⁶

After the nuns of Syon Abbey returned to Britain in the nineteenth century, the convent buildings at Lisbon underwent many changes, some quite drastic. In 1992 the ex-monastery was brought to new life by being integrated into an innovative design for the University of Lisbon’s School of Economics and Management (ISEG). Gonçalo de Sousa Byrne (1941–), a prominent Portuguese architect, did not restore the convent, but rather made an artistic renovation,

4 Silva & Lourenço 2015, pp. 41–45.

5 Exeter University Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158. ‘History of Sion in Lisbon’, referred to here as the Lisbon Annals. Study of Syon Abbey at Lisbon is made more difficult by the losses of the 1651 fire, compounded by those of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, by the departure of part of the community to England in 1809, carrying many treasured objects and documents that were subsequently lost to Syon, and by losses necessitated by the final move back to Britain in 1861 and the significant alterations in the buildings after their departure.

6 University of Exeter Library, MS 389/1812. ‘Letter of Sister Kitty Witham.’

incorporating history, memory, and imagination into the contemporary life of the University.⁷

In 1602 Leonor Vaz de Campos de Mendanha (1576–1655), the grandniece of Isabel Mendanha, the founder of La Esperança, professed at Syon Abbey as Madre Brígida de Santo António, and began to make a place for herself in the community. Leonor's widowed mother initially resisted her daughter's profession, but then she too retired to Syon, and on her death in 1616, the Mendanha family fortune came to Syon.⁸

Very little is known of the first church at Lisbon where Leonor de Mendanha made her profession. It was situated on a steep hillside overlooking the river Tagus. As the choir nun Kitty Witham would later write: 'Our convent stands so high, that we have thirty-two steps to go up to it.'⁹ The monastery itself consisted of the two houses donated by the Azevedo family and an unfinished church.¹⁰ The church is said to have been designed by the prestigious architect Pedro Nunes Tinaco (d. 1641).¹¹ There is no known image or written description of this first church. The monastery received a load of wood as a dowry payment in 1643, and used it to complete the church.¹² It took a long time to finish the small wooden church, but it was destroyed quickly in the fire of 1651. The Lisbon Annals relate poignantly that '... the Church and hause quiet burnt downe in a very littell time as I have it by relation in one hour or tow it was laid in ashes'.¹³

The disastrous fire occurred very shortly after another momentous event. In 1650, following the death of Barbara Wiseman (1557–1649), Leonor Mendanha, Madre Brígida de Santo António, became Syon's first, and only, Portuguese abbess. Madre Brígida's reputation for sanctity, both within the convent and

⁷ Almeida 2014, pp. 153–156.

⁸ Santa Maria 1701. This Portuguese biography of Madre Brígida de Santo António was translated into English for the nuns of Syon Abbey c. 1923. University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'Life of Bridget Mendanha.' The English manuscript has been published with annotations and an introduction in Perry 2012.

⁹ University of Exeter Library, MS 389/1812, 'Letter of Sister Kitty Witham.'

¹⁰ The Lisbon Annals relate that a second house was given to Syon Abbey by a Portuguese 'gentleman' in exchange for the care and profession of a small child, who was later called 'old sister Mary Anna.' University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', p. 26. Convent records show that in 1609 a Marianna de Azevedo professed at Syon Abbey Lisbon, see Bowden, 2016. The house appears to have survived the fire of 1651 because the brother's part of the monastery did survive, and the author of the Lisbon Annals, writing in the eighteenth century speaks of it as 'this house.' *Ibid.*, pp. 24–27.

¹¹ Pereira 1927, p. 235. This source cites a 1707 account.

¹² University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', p. 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

in Lisbon generally, had grown steadily throughout the 1630s and 1640s. She brought Syon Abbey increased respect in the community and valuable local patronage. Among the powerful circle of friends who visited her at Syon Abbey were such illustrious persons as Dona Ana María de Cárdenas y Manrique de Lara (c. 1600–1660) and her daughter Dona María Guadalupe de Lencastre, the 6th Duchess of Aveiro (1630–1715), and Queen Luisa de Guzmán (1613–1666).¹⁴ Madre Brígida de Santo António's network of local elites would enable Syon to rebuild after the fire of 1651.

The scene must have been striking when Abbess Brígida de Santo António led the community in procession from their burned-out convent to the shelter of the neighboring convent of La Esperança, founded by her great aunt Isabel Mendanha. She was followed by the nuns, mainly English but including some Portuguese women, and many members of the court of João IV. The nuns would stay at La Esperança for a few months before moving into some small houses nearby for the remainder of the years they spent away. As she walked, the Portuguese Abbess held aloft the convent's silver arm reliquary of Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury (c. 1119–1170).¹⁵ It is significant that she chose to carry this particular relic at this important public procession, rather than other relics that were larger or might seem of greater symbolic meaning for the community, such as their larger arm reliquary containing relics of both Saint Augustine and Saint Birgitta.¹⁶

The choice was fraught with meaning. Saint Thomas Becket was associated by English Catholics with Sir Thomas More, executed by Henry VIII in 1535.¹⁷ Like More, Thomas of Canterbury was an advisor and friend of an English king, and martyred for refusing to side with the king in a conflict with the papacy. Henry VIII had destroyed the shrine at Canterbury and expunged Becket's cult. In their relic of Saint Thomas, Syon and their Portuguese supporters possessed a part of English Catholic history that seemingly had been irredeemably lost. In giving special honor to this saint, they symbolically rebuked the False Church of England, and upheld their own role in preserving the True Church.

The nuns must have been in an equally sombre mood when they processed

¹⁴ Santa Maria 1701, pp. 129–148.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁶ These relics are included in the list of 'reliques and silver plaite belonging to our monastery' in the Lisbon Annals. The list is discussed by Erik Bijzet in this volume, and reproduced as an appendix in his essay on p. 357. Exeter University Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 181 and 183.

¹⁷ Shell 1999, pp. 211–213, discusses the play *St. Thomas Cantuar*, performed at the English College at Rome in 1613 and 1617 in this context.

back to Syon Abbey four years later, bearing the body of Abbess Brígida de Santo António. The years away from the monastery had taken a toll on the community. Conflict between the English nuns and their Portuguese abbess had reached a near breaking point.¹⁸ Only days before her death she had completed the arrangements to found a daughter house of Syon intended for Portuguese women.¹⁹ A dispute had broken out over the disposition of her body; still homeless, the community had no place to bury their abbess. They had kept her in a sturdy coffin for months before returning home and burying their abbess in the low choir of their old church, which had been preserved and would now be used as a chapter house. As the Lisbon Annals state: 'They buried Lady Bridget in the Sisters low quier which is now called the low chapter house and the abbesses and elders buried there.'²⁰ Above her grave monument was placed a large deathbed portrait of Abbess Brígida de Santo António as she had appeared at her funerary ceremonies, a few days after her death.²¹

During those difficult last years of her life Abbess Brígida de Santo António had continued her intense spiritual practices; provided leadership, however challenged, to her community; administered healing, counsel, and prophesy to the Portuguese court; published an edition of the Birgittine rules in Portuguese; planned the foundation of a new convent; suffered grave illness; and also managed to obtain the patronage necessary to rebuild Syon Abbey. Little, if any, support for the rebuilding came from England.²² It was Abbess Brígida de Santo António's social status, her reputation for sanctity, and network of contacts that encouraged many donations from Portuguese elites. King João IV made a large donation.²³ Nevertheless, although patronage was found, and the nuns moved back into the monastery, they were not able to use the church until 1672, and even then there was no *retablo* (altarpiece) for the high altar.²⁴

The patrons of the rebuilding of the convent church were Don Ruy Correa Lucas and his wife Dona Milicia Silveira. Correa was Lieutenant General of Artillery for João IV, and a Commander in the Order of Christ. He and his wife

¹⁸ Santa Maria 1701, pp. 194–197.

¹⁹ The Convento de N. S. da Conceição de Marvila (the Convent of Our Lady of the Conception) in Marvila, Lisbon.

²⁰ University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 79–80

²¹ The painting is at St. Bridget's Convent, Maryvale Institute, Birmingham.

²² Few English patrons from this period of the rebuilding of the church are listed in the Lisbon martyrology, while numerous Portuguese benefactors are identified. *Catalogus defunctorum ... 1693*, in Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, COD.69.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Câmara Municipal 1950, p. 399.

engaged in several large acts of charity; they also founded a college for poor clerics in 1651. Dona Milicia appears to have been related to the Silvieras who were devotees of Abbess Brígida de Santo António and had a *quinta*, neighboring Syon Abbey.²⁵ The church for the English nuns built under their patronage was modest for Lisbon in this period, seating about two hundred persons,²⁶ but it was made of stone with a beautiful interior. Long stripped of its ornament, the church of Syon Abbey at Lisbon, as we have seen, now serves as an auditorium for ISEG.²⁷

Written descriptions attest that with its gilded and carved woodwork altarpieces, architectural details in colored stone, and *azulejo* (blue and white tile) ornament, the church was a perfect embodiment of the Portuguese Baroque.

The interior displayed spiritual splendor in a rich abundance of artistic genres, materials, and styles. The walls were covered in *brutesco* ornamental painting. This type of ornamental imagery had its origins in Renaissance classicism and is more commonly known as *grotesquerie*. It was imaginative, colorful, and exuberant. The fantastically painted walls were punctuated by framed oil paintings and polychrome wooden sculptures set into niches and upon small gilded and painted altars. Four side chapels offered glimpses of further heavenly extravagance. The center of the ceiling was crowned by an illusionistic painting of the Assumption of the Virgin.²⁸ In such Baroque imagery, Mary would be shown in virtuoso *di sotto in su* ('from below upwards') perspective, rising toward heaven in a glory of clouds, angels, and divine light.

The painted and colored stone walls at the Syon church in Lisbon were complemented by elaborate blue and white *azulejos* tile murals of allegorical, classical, or religious subjects. They extended from the walls onto the ceiling of the church. Many religious tile murals were removed, rather than destroyed, from convents and churches by the government of Portugal after the suppression of the monasteries in 1834 and especially after the Revolution of 1910. A number of these still survive, in new locations or in storage. The provenance of a large part of the murals, including those from Syon, remains mostly unknown.²⁹ Only one tile mural from Syon Abbey has been identified at this point; the Museum

²⁵ Ibid., p. 398.

²⁶ Pereira 1927, p. 233.

²⁷ The larger church that can be seen at ISEG today was built after Syon left Lisbon, when the ex-monastery served as the Colégio de Jesus Maria José. Silva & Lourenço 2015, pp. 55–63.

²⁸ Câmara Municipal 1950, pp. 391–411.

²⁹ The *azulejos* that can be seen at the renovated cloister at ISEG do not include religious imagery and have been arranged aesthetically rather than as a historical restoration.

Grão Vasco in Viseu has a small blue and white tile mural from Syon Abbey in its collection. It depicts Saint Birgitta holding a cross and is dated 1729. It was removed from the choir at the former Syon church in 1938 and transferred to the museum.³⁰ Hopefully, with the increased use of searchable databases, other *azulejos* murals from Syon in Lisbon will be identified.

The high altar *retablo* at Syon was carved and gilded, with an image of the Virgin Mary as its centrepiece. Such altarpieces typically contained paintings or sculpture, or both. The *retablo* at Syon had niches on the sides for the display of saints of the order, presumably statues of Saint Birgitta and Saint Catherine.³¹ A large crucifix from the church may have been placed before or above the high altar.³² Sadly, Don Ruy Correa Lucas died before the completion of the church, and the place prepared for his family tomb beneath the steps of the high altar was never used.³³ Although so much of the church at Syon is lost, the convent church of its daughter house, the Convento de N. S. da Conceição de Marvila, now a parish church, has preserved its sumptuous Baroque interior, and allows a glimpse into the appearance of the church at Syon Abbey.³⁴

Both the church at Marvila and the Syon church displayed a special kind of Portuguese eucharistic tabernacle called a *trono* ('throne') on their high altars. The *trono* was a large and ornate staging for eucharistic devotion. It was often made of precious materials, possibly incorporating delicate paintings. The high altar at the church of the Irish Dominican nuns of the convent of Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso ('Our Lady of Good Success') still retains its beautiful silver-plated and painted *trono*. Its colourful pastoral imagery is inspired by the mystical love celebrated in the Song of Songs.³⁵

³⁰ Marinho et al., 2015, p. 117.

³¹ Pereira 1927, p. 234.

³² John Talbot, the 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, gave a wooden sculpture of the crucified Christ from Syon Lisbon to Ambrose Lisle March Phillipps de Lisle for his chapel at Grace Dieu Manor in Leicestershire. It is now in the collection of the Squire Gerard de Lisle. See the essay by Erik Bijzet in this volume for more information on the Earl of Shrewsbury and the treasures of Syon.

³³ Although Correa Lucas left money for the upkeep of the altar and for Masses, the original endowment for the building of the church ran out of money before the completion of the high altar, and Syon had to finish it at its own expense. University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 107–108.

³⁴ The former Birgittine church is now the Igreja Paroquial de Santo Agostinho a Marvila (the parish church of St. Augustine) in Marvila, Lisbon.

³⁵ McCabe 2007, pp. 61–78.

The Syon, Marvila, and Bom Sucesso churches all participated in the *Sagrado Lausperene*, a form of forty hours eucharistic devotion practiced in Lisbon.³⁶ From 1682 the churches of the city took turns hosting perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, each for a period of forty hours. A beautiful monstrance to be used atop its *trono* was donated to Syon by a group of English Protestant seamen who said that Syon deserved a monstrance equal in beauty to that of other Lisbon churches.³⁷ *Sagrado Lausperene* was an important religious and civic ritual that brought Syon and the city of Lisbon together in worship.³⁸

The visual culture of the church at Lisbon was a testimony to shared English, Birgittine, and Portuguese traditions of appreciation for the transcendent power of art in fostering, enhancing, and celebrating religious devotion. The first chapel on the right as you entered the church of Syon Abbey was dedicated to a miraculous painting of the Virgin of Populo.³⁹ According to the story of the miracle, Father João Cerveiro de Vera commissioned a copy of the famous icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. He was a priest at the court of Clement VIII (1536–1605), with a profound devotion to the Virgin of Populo. While on pilgrimage to Marian shrines in Spain, the opportunity to go to the Holy Land left him with no place to put his beloved copy of the Virgin of Populo. As he prayed he heard the image speak her wishes, asking to be placed ‘En Santa Brizida de Lisboa’. The painting arrived at Syon before 1628 and (miraculously) survived the fire of 1651.⁴⁰

The image of the Virgin of Populo was of intense interest in Lisbon at this time because it was a key part of the widely-circulating account of the martyrdom of Blessed Inácio de Azevedo and his thirty-nine companions. Inácio de Azevedo (1527–1570) had served as Rector of the Jesuit College at Lisbon, provincial of Portugal, and superior over the missions in Brazil. He had also developed a profound devotion to the Virgin of Populo during his time spent working in Rome with Francis Borja (1510–1572), the Superior General of the Society of Jesus. En route to Brazil, Azevedo and his companions were martyred by French Huguenot pirates near the Canary Islands. Inácio de Azevedo had been carrying copies of the Populo icon to Brazil to serve as patron of the missions. No bodies

³⁶ Pereira 1927, pp. 234–238.

³⁷ Formerly in the collection of Syon Abbey, South Brent, Devon. University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, ‘History of Sion in Lisbon’, pp. 186–187.

³⁸ Romano Torres 1904–1915, p. 85.

³⁹ The miraculous painting of Our Lady of Populo is at St. Bridget’s Convent, Maryvale Institute, Birmingham.

⁴⁰ The presence of the miraculous painting at Syon Abbey was well known to the Lisbon public; the story was first published in Cardoso 1652–1744, 1657, p. 649.

were recovered from the massacre of the Jesuits; it was said that only an image of the Virgin of Populo was found, floating on the water, and bearing traces of the martyrs' blood. Devotion to the cult of the forty Portuguese martyrs, as well to the Virgin of Populo was spread by Francis Borja and the Jesuits, and naturally was of great importance in Portugal.⁴¹

Devotion to both cults would have been of special interest for Syon, as well as for the general public, because of their shared reverence for martyrdom, and because the Azevedo family who had donated the houses and land for their monastery may have been related to Inácio de Azevedo. Daily masses for Isabel de Azevedo were said at one of the Syon church's four side chapels.⁴² Perhaps it was the chapel of the Virgin of Populo that was dedicated to her. Syon also had a painting of the Portuguese martyrs in the church, but it is not known if the painting was placed in the chapel to the Virgin of Populo or at the altar of the Virgin of the Martyrs in the lower choir, perhaps joining images of the English martyrs.⁴³

Probably the most significant expression of the community's English identity in the Syon church was its display of a series of twelve paintings of early English royal saints. Pictured in the series at Syon were six men and six women: Lucius, Edilbert, Edmund, Oswin, Oswald, Edward, Ursula, Milberga, Edilberga, Ediltrudis, Edith, and Margaret.⁴⁴ Except for Saint Ursula and King Lucius, all of the saints depicted were Anglo-Saxon royalty, a subject of special interest in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation period.

Each saint is depicted as a half-length figure within an oval cartouche designed to appear like stone architecture containing an identifying inscription and a Biblical quotation, both in Latin. The faces of the saints are highly individualized, and each has subtly different postures and gestures. They appear to glow against their dark backgrounds, with sparkling ornaments of jewelry, crowns, and crosses. Each cartouche is crowned with the Tudor coat of arms, an indication that the paintings date to before 1603.

The paintings were likely part of a number of sets of paintings of the subject made in Seville in the early seventeenth century. The patron was Don Antonio, Count of Luna and Mayorga. He was a prominent benefactor of the English

⁴¹ Osswald 2010, pp. 163–166.

⁴² Lisbon, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Autos de Conta de Capela de Isabel de Azevedo.

⁴³ University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 189–190.

⁴⁴ The well-preserved series of paintings of English royal saints are in the collection of Oscott College in Birmingham.

College in Seville, and deeply interested in English religious history. The historian Michael Williams describes a letter of 1616 written by Father Francis Peralta of the Society of Jesus, Rector of the English College in Seville, addressed to the Count, in which Peralta discusses the suffering of English Catholics and the holy history of the saintly kings and queens of England's past. He specifically recalls with gratitude how Don Antonio had commissioned a series of portraits of English royal saints, and that copies of these were made and sent to 'various parts of the world'.⁴⁵

Two sets of the paintings are known: the one that was at Syon and one that is at the Royal English College at Valladolid, which is documented as arriving in 1602.⁴⁶ There is no documentation for the series that was displayed at the Syon Abbey Church. That the sets were indeed 'sent out to the world' has been verified by the art historian Susan Verdi Webster's recent discovery of a single painting of Saint Lucius from the series in Colombia.⁴⁷

The subject matter of the paintings was deeply relevant to religious politics. An interest in the early saints of the English Church, and particularly in the Anglo Saxon period, was shared by both Protestants and Catholics, as it formed part of the larger debate of which was the True Church and which the False. In Rome in 1584 the antiquarian Richard Verstegan (c. 1550–1640) published *Ecclesiae Anglicanae trophyea*, a book that reproduced through engravings the frescoes of past and present English martyrs in the English College at Rome. Such texts and fresco cycles began with the martyrs of the early English church and proceeded through the recent martyrdoms of the Elizabethan period. The frescoes at the English College at Rome, and their engravings in *Ecclesiae Anglicanae trophyea*, depicted many of the saints in the painting series in the Syon Abbey church.

The nuns at Syon Abbey were interested in the lives of early English saints and holy persons, and went to great lengths to obtain source material in order to know and understand more of their history. In 1662 two monks at Syon Abbey Lisbon created a large two-volume book of the *Lives of English Saints*.⁴⁸ John Vivian translated a chapter from the eight-volume *Lives of the Saints* by Surius Carthusianus from Latin into English, and Stephen of the Conception was the scribe. All of the royal saints seen in the paintings in the convent church were included in the volume, along with hundreds of other lesser-known holy men

45 Williams 1996, p. 130.

46 Ibid., p. 130.

47 Webster 2015, pp. 48–57.

48 Exeter University Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'Lives of the English Saints'.

and women of England in a calendar arrangement. The book was designed to be read out loud for the benefit of the community.⁴⁹

The English royal saint paintings carry many clear connections to the exiled English church, but there is no evidence of when or how the paintings actually came to Syon Abbey. When the series was first completed in 1602, Syon had just constructed its first church. This would seem a natural time to acquire the paintings, but it was also a time of poverty for Syon (although perhaps the paintings could have been given as a gift from their patron). It is puzzling that the set that was in Seville, which would have been the first and likely the finest of the sets, is not known. When the College of Saint Gregory in Seville was closed in 1767 with the suppression of the Jesuit Order, its assets went to the Valladolid College (which already had the set of paintings that had arrived in 1602). Syon could have acquired its set of paintings at that time.⁵⁰ On the other hand, there is no set known to have been at the English College of SS. Peter and Paul at Lisbon, founded in 1624. Perhaps that was because there already was a set in Lisbon, at Syon Abbey.

The paintings are attributed to the workshop of Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644). Pacheco was a well-known painter with a large workshop. He is most remembered today as an art theorist and as the teacher and father-in-law of Diego Velazquez (1599–1660). Pacheco was deeply involved with issues of the Counter Reformation and art; he was an officer of the Inquisition and had important ties to humanist and clerical, particularly Jesuit, circles in Seville.⁵¹

The convent also prominently displayed other imagery celebrating their connections to English royalty. They had a large portrait of their founder Henry V, which they believed was a fifteenth century work painted from life and brought from Old Syon.⁵² They also possessed a life-size portrait of Charles II, who married the Portuguese Princess Catherine of Braganza and was a benefactor of the convent, shown seated, in his royal robes.⁵³

Another way that the convent represented its English and royal heritage was through the use of costly and sumptuous *Opus Anglicanum* vestments during liturgy and processions on feast days. The most valuable of the convent's ec-

⁴⁹ Bowden 2010, pp. 188–189.

⁵⁰ My thanks to Father Peter Harris, archivist at the English College, Valladolid, for pointing this out to me.

⁵¹ Webster 2015, pp. 7–8.

⁵² Aungier 1840, p. 111.

⁵³ Exeter University Library, Syon Abbey FLE/17, notebook no. 17 by J. R. Fletcher, p. 22.

clesiastical textiles was a fourteenth century vestment called the *Syon Cope*, now in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum. It seems probable that the vestment was given to Syon Abbey when it was reinstated in England under Queen Mary. It may have been theirs before the first expulsion or, more likely, it may have belonged to another suppressed religious institution and been given to the newly reinstated abbey.⁵⁴ In the medieval and Renaissance periods *Opus Anglicanum* was valued above painting or sculpture, and just beneath the precious objects crafted by goldsmiths and jewellers. It was exchanged as diplomatic gifts and eagerly collected among royalty.⁵⁵ The significance of such a highly prized and famously English ecclesiastical object would have been abundantly clear to the convent and the community privileged to witness Syon's rituals and ceremonies.

In their decoration of the church, the convent was also concerned to celebrate and share with the public Syon's Birgittine identity and heritage. Six large oil paintings depicting events in the life of Saint Birgitta were displayed in the nave of the church, perhaps in the chancel flanking the high altar. These may be the paintings for the church mentioned in the Lisbon Annals as having been purchased by Sister Mary Yard (d. 1731) with funds from an inheritance.⁵⁶ If so, these paintings are especially significant in that they would be the only known art from the Lisbon church documented as having been commissioned by the nuns themselves. And the subject was very dear to Syon's heart: Saint Birgitta.

There is a similar set of paintings of the life of Saint Birgitta in the Convent at Marvila, attributed to Bento Coelho da Silveira (c. 1620/1630–1708). Both sets of paintings may have been planned and executed as a joint commission between Syon and its daughter house at Marvila. The evidence for this is the close similarity in the size and style of the two sets of paintings, as well as the fact that there is no overlapping of iconography. If scenes from the life and Revelations of Saint Birgitta were commissioned separately, some of the most famous events, such as the giving of the Rule, would appear in both sets. But all of the scenes in the twelve paintings that were at Marvila and Syon are unique.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Syon Abbey had been ransacked and looted by that time, and Queen Mary had to hastily reassemble the material objects such as choir books and vestments, necessary to a royal abbey.

⁵⁵ Victoria & Albert Museum, London, see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O93171/the-syon-cope-cope-unknown/>.

⁵⁶ University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', p. 104.

⁵⁷ There were either a total of eight or a total of twelve paintings in the commission, depending on which Birgittine paintings from both churches are included or excluded. The proposed joint commission needs further study.

Such a commission would have likely occurred between 1680 and 1700. The Lisbon Annals tell us that the two communities stayed in touch, and that the nuns of Marvila would turn to Syon for direction in Birgittine matters.⁵⁸ A joint art commission would be evidence of that closeness. The paintings of Saint Birgitta in both churches speak of the communities' devotion to her, their desire to inform the Portuguese public about her life and sanctity, and of a major productive act of collaboration between the two monasteries.⁵⁹

The upper and lower choirs were the most private and important spaces of the Syon church, shared only by members of the community. This space was where the nuns, joined by the lay nuns and laywomen who lived with them,⁶⁰ gathered to recite the Divine Office, hear the Mass, and engage in their own private devotions. Among the beautifully illuminated choir books and carved choir stalls, the gilded altars with their paintings and sculptures,⁶¹ the most treasured object in the upper choir at Syon was a medieval ivory sculpture of the Virgin and Child brought from Old Syon and venerated as a miraculous image.⁶²

According to the Revelations of Saint Birgitta, Our Lady had promised special protection if the community would assemble every evening and chant the hymn *Ave Maris Stella*.⁶³ According to the Lisbon Annals, Old Syon had been neglecting this obligation, when this delicate and beautiful small sculpture appeared miraculously in their turnstile. No one was present, but a little note inside the Virgin read simply: *Ave Maris Stella*. From that time the hymn was without fail recited in the choir before Vespers, and the image kept with great veneration.⁶⁴ This small sculpture, then, represented a miraculous and deeply personal link between the community and Old Syon. There is, in fact, a cavity in the bottom of the sculpture, perhaps intended for a relic, that could have held a note.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', p. 113.

⁵⁹ The paintings of the life and Revelations of Saint Birgitta from Syon Abbey are at St. Bridget's Convent, Maryvale Institute, Birmingham. The Marvila set is still *in situ*.

⁶⁰ The Lisbon Annals mention two laywomen living at Syon Abbey, although there certainly could have been more. University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 108–110.

⁶¹ The intact upper choir of the Dominican convent Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso is the inspiration for this description.

⁶² This was likely the thirteenth century ivory *Virgin and Child Enthroned* sold at Sotheby's, London, in 2013 and the subject of Erik Bijzert's essay on p. 339 in this volume.

⁶³ The vision is related in Birgitta, Rev. Extr., chapter 8.

⁶⁴ University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'History of Sion in Lisbon', pp. 183–185.

⁶⁵ Sotheby's, European Sculpture & Works of Art, 4 December 2013, lot 33. Cat. entry: 'Mosan or North French *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, c. 1250–1260.'

The existence of a miraculous sculpture in the choir of Syon Abbey was known outside of the convent, but its true meaning belonged only to those within the choir. The community would have meditated on this beautiful sculpture daily while singing the *Ave Maris Stella*, keeping faith with their ancient traditions.

The lower choir of the Church was a sombre and intimate space for the community. In this space was their altar to the Virgin of the Martyrs and a sepulcher for a large sculpture of the dead Christ. In 1912, the elderly Sister Ignatius Budd was asked to commit some of her memories of having lived at the Lisbon convent to writing. Sister Budd's brief 'Recollections of Lisbon' centered on the small, personal rituals and observances that made up daily life at the Lisbon convent. Her description of some of the community's Easter week rituals included acts of devotion in front of a sculpted image of Christ in the tomb. A sculpture of the dead Christ in a wooden bed was brought back from Lisbon,⁶⁶ and may be the sculpture of which she speaks:

Formerly it was the custom for the Community to assemble in the low choir, to wash and venerate the image of the dead Christ, with prepared rose, or, lavender, water, to cleanse and dress the sepulchre with clean linen, after this was done every one went to kiss and venerate the Sacred Wounds [...] But on Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday it Was dressed with flowers and exposed for venerating.⁶⁷

Mother Ignatius Budd's words bring the mute sculpture back to life. It has been the goal of this paper to similarly explore the complex lived experience that belongs with the artworks now dispersed and alienated from their home in the church at Syon Lisbon.

Syon's Birgittine devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Passion of Christ, and the Eucharist were shared by the people of their new home. English, Birgittine, and Portuguese faith and devotion overlapped, intermingled, and created something new at the 'convent of the English nuns'. The religious lived for nearly three hundred years on their hillside overlooking the fishermen, laborers, churches, and houses of fellow religious, exiled and native, of Lisbon's Mocambo district. But inside the walls of the monastery was another world, a shared treasure formed from history and faith. That rich legacy can still be clearly seen in close examination of the art from the church of Syon Abbey in Lisbon.

66 The sculpture of the dead Christ is in the collection of the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

67 University of Exeter Library, MS 262/add 1/B/158, 'Recollections of Lisbon'.

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KARIN STRINNHOLM LAGERGREN

A Reformed *Cantus Sororum* in Maria Refugie around 1800

ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1713, four Birgittine sisters arrived in the Dutch town of Uden. They came from the Birgittine abbey Mariënwater, about 20 kilometres away, which they had been forced to leave due to conflicts relating to the Thirty Years' War and the Reformation. These Birgittines were now able to reestablish their contemplative monastic life in an abbey they called Maria Refugie – the Refuge of the Virgin Mary. The community that moved to Uden consisted of only four sisters, including the abbess. A few sisters had remained at Mariënwater, where they had been allowed to stay but not receive any novices. The brothers had already left Mariënwater in 1652, due to the dissolution of the double monasteries in the Low Countries, and relocated to Hoboken, near Antwerp.¹ Maria Refugie was built up again under partly new conditions, of which the absence of the brothers was one major change in an order originally intended as a double monastery.

In this article, I will concentrate on the melodical reform that took place somewhere during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. It will prove to be an interesting case of how Gregorian chant could be adapted to changing tastes after the Middle Ages, a rarely treated subject in chant scholarship.²

In Mariënwater, liturgical manuscripts had been continuously produced with regular intervals of about 80–100 years, at least from the end of the fifteenth century.³ In my previous research I have investigated the large corpus of antiphonals and graduals for the sisters in particular, and I have found that these handwritten manuscripts can be divided into four periods. These sources will

¹ Further described in Sander Olsen et al. 2013 and Liebergen 2013.

² The most important studies until now are Karp 2005a and b.

³ All extant manuscripts are catalogued in Sander Olsen 2002.

from now on be called the *Uden sources*. The division into periods is based on inscriptions in the manuscripts stating when they were completed, as well as on palaeographical comparisons and historical circumstances.⁴

Period I: c. 1480–c. 1510 (6 antiphonals of which 2 also contains a gradual section)

Period II: c. 1639–c. 1653 (11 antiphonals and 13 graduals)

Period III: c. 1728–c. 1760 (9 antiphonals and 13 graduals)

Period IV: c. 1843–c. 1851 (4 antiphonals and 1 gradual)

When investigating these 57 graduals and antiphonals in total, I have noticed that the majority of the office chants in the *Cantus Sororum* had been reworked in the Period III-manuscripts, whereas the chants in the graduals had never been altered. A close examination of the antiphonals revealed that the alterations were palimpsests, in other words written on erased parts on the music staves. The text of the chants had never been altered, although the spelling in the Period II- and IV-manuscripts had been altered in order to follow principles of classical Latin. This was in accordance with the humanistic ideals that influenced spelling from the sixteenth century onwards.⁵

An even closer examination showed that the notes in these palimpsests had only *partly* been erased. A number of original notes had been left untouched, while others had been erased to provide room for new notes. The erasures had been done so elegantly that it is sometimes necessary to see the original manuscripts (all on paper) in order to notice them. This also means that the reform took place *after* the manuscripts had been completed. This reform was completed in 1846 at the latest, which is the year of the only dated Uden antiphonal. This antiphonal, as well as the other Period IV-antiphonals, have the reformed repertoire, written by the original scribe and with no palimpsests. Before going into detail in order to demonstrate one example of the reworking, I will give a brief summary of the reform:

1. The majority of the melodies in the *Cantus Sororum* (a total of almost 200 chants) have been reformed. It is very difficult to make any exact calculations, since it has proved hard and ineffective to draw a firm line between

⁴ Described at length in Strinnholm Lagergren (forthcoming). Sander Olsen 2002 lists all manuscripts with dating.

⁵ Karp 2005a, p. 184.

what is a new melody or reworked one.⁶ An estimation shows that about 30 melodies have no or only minor alterations; these are so small that they cannot be considered as a part of the melodical reform. However, this approximation must not be taken verbatim.

2. A general principle in reworked melodies is to keep the beginning intact with no or few alterations. After that, the new melody develops in directions that can be close to, or diverge widely, from the original melody.
3. Melismas – two or more notes to one syllable – *can* be shortened, but this is not an overarching principle. This is frequently done in post-medieval repertoire in cases outside the Birgittines, in order not to obstruct the text.⁷
4. The most important issue in the reworking is the placement of melismas on accentuated syllables. Melismas result in the lengthening of the syllables and thus lead to accentuation of the syllable in question. According to the general view of Gregorian chant from the late sixteenth century onwards, too long melismas on unaccentuated syllables were regarded as a cause of confusion regarding the textual understanding.⁸ In the Uden sources, the move of melismas from unaccented to accented syllables is the most important principle of the reworking. To some extent this can be observed already in the books for the sisters in Mariënwater, which were copied in the seventeenth century – during Period II – but the systematic work was done in the eighteenth century.
5. In eleven cases the chants have been provided with new modal designations, by which the Period III-sources have extended the medieval 8-mode system up to 14 modes. The new attributions have been made, not only to reworked melodies, but also to ones that had not been reworked. Who made these changes and why is still an unsolved question.
6. The question if there was any system according to which melodies in the *Cantus Sororum* were reworked, for example with regard to modes, genre, office etc., has proved to be impossible to answer. It seems as if there was no

⁶ Treitler discusses the lack of methodology in chant scholarship for determining at what point a variant becomes a new melody, Treitler 2003, p. 148.

⁷ This can be studied in the many transcriptions in Karp 2005b.

⁸ See note 5.

such system but rather the personal choice of the individual or the group who made the reworking.

By this reform, three important results were achieved:

- Correct accentuation: accentuation by means of melismas on the correct syllable.
- Classicised spelling.
- Modal clarity: the reworking shows a greater concentration towards the finalis and tenor, in order to enhance the modality of the chant in question. This also follows the renewed interest in the treatment of chant from the sixteenth century onwards.

As mentioned earlier, the classical spelling is a sign of the time within the humanistic movement. Also, regarding the music, the process described above is not unique. The emphasis on textual clarification follows a long trend back to the sixteenth century, not only following the demands of the Council of Trent, but also due to the primary interest in the text with the music as a servant of the text. This was taken to its most extreme point in the Italian monody during the first half of the seventeenth century. The Birgittines simply responded to general trends, though around two hundred years later.

THE METHOD

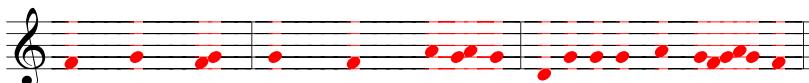
The method used in the reworking of the melodies can be examined by studying a melody in which the reworking was left incomplete. This is the Invitatory Antiphon for Monday in Uden HS K:An 16 from 1735 (henceforth Uden An 16). We will follow the method by studying this antiphon in three sources, all from Uden.

On the image on the next page (fig. 1) we can observe the partial erasures that later would become the scaffolding for the reworked melody. The C-clef was erased as well and has been reconstructed in music example 1 by examining the manuscript. This is an erasure that will be an important clue in the understanding of how the reform process was carried out.



FIG. 1: Invitatory antiphon *Regem angelorum* with partial erasures in Uden HS K:An 16 from 1735 (no pagination). Photo: The author.

A transcription of this melodic skeleton, with a reconstructed C-clef below:



Régem angelórum de éjus mátre exultántium. Veníte ado- ré mus.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 1: Transcription of Invitatory Antiphon *Regem angelorum*, from Uden HS K:An 16.

The complete melody can be reconstructed by comparing erasures in Uden An 16 with manuscripts from Uden from previous periods. Since the melodic transmission is consistent up to Period III, any manuscript can be used. Here I chose an antiphonal from c. 1500 (fig. 2 overleaf). The notes marked in red are the notes that were kept in the erased version in Uden An 16. As can be seen, compared to the music example in fig. 1, the red notes are on the distance of a third, something that will be discussed later together with the C-clef issue.



FIG. 2: *Regem angelorum*, in Uden HS K:An 1, 26r (c. 1500). Photo: The author.



Ré - gem an-ge-ló -rum de éj-us mátre ex -

ul- tán- ti -

um.



um. H̄e nute

a - do- ré-

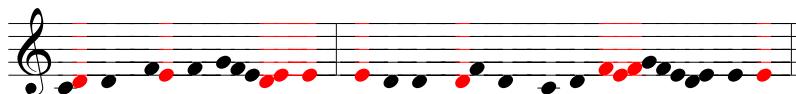
mus.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 2: Transcription of Invitatory Antiphon *Regem angelorum* in Uden HS K:An 1.

In the next music example, we see the completely reworked version that was the result of the reform. The source here used is Uden HS K:An 18 (henceforth Uden An 18) from 1736 (fig. 3). The red notes are the same as in music example 1 (again on a distance of a third) around which the new melody was built.



FIG. 3: *Regem angelorum*, in Uden HS K:An 18, p. 47 (1736). Photo: The author.



Régem an-ge- ló - rum de éjus mátre exul-tán - ti-um.



Vení - te a-do-ré - mus.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 3: Transcription of Invitatory Antiphon *Regem angelorum*, in Uden HS K:An 18.

Having demonstrated how the melody went from the original to a reworked version via partial erasures, I will now discuss the erased C-clef. In order to be able to use the notes in Uden An 16 as scaffolding for the reworked melody, the clef was erased so that the notes could be re-used in the reworked melody. In this process, it would have been necessary to insert another C-clef before the seven last notes in order to use them. In music example 4, below, I have reconstructed the version in Uden An 16 with respect to these clefs, so that the notes could be used in the reworked version:



Ré-gem angelórum de éjus mátre exultántium. Veníte a- doré - mus.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 4: *Regem angelorum* in Uden HS K:An 16, partly transposed.

A comparison between the original and the reworked version by analysis of the red notes shows how the skeleton in music example 4 has become the scaffolding for the new version in Uden An 18. This in turn shows a high degree of awareness and a careful planning of the reworked melody: these reworkings were not haphazard, but carefully planned before the erasing process took place.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE REFORM OF *Regem angelorum*

The result of the reworking of this specific antiphon has resulted in the guidelines outlined earlier. Here I will point to two important features. In the transcriptions I have marked the word accents by accents (for example *angelórum*). A comparison between the transcriptions in music examples 2 and 3 (on pp. 330–331) shows how the melismas in the reworking were concentrated to the accentuated syllables. A few examples are the words *angelórum*, *exultántium* and *veníte*, which have one or few notes on the unaccented syllables and many on the accented ones in Uden An 18.

The second feature concerns the way in which the reworked version enhances the modal clarity. Notable is that the mode has changed from E-mode to D-mode, more specifically from the fourth to the second mode. This can be established by the changed finalis; the reworked version ends on D instead of E as in the original version, but the tenor tone is also changed from A (for E-mode) to F (for D-mode). Changes in modality in the reworked melodies do sometimes

occur, so this is not unique to this chant. The tenor tone A is less emphasised in the melody in Uden An 1, while we can observe a concentration of the melody to the tenor in Uden An 18. The concentration has been done by limiting the range of the melody and by centering it around F.

The reasons for reworking certain melodies into new modes are difficult to determine, but in this particular case I would argue that it has to do with the transition from a modal into a tonal understanding of music. D-mode is closer to our understanding of minor/major than E-mode, since D-mode resembles D-minor, whereas E-mode has a very different character and cannot be fitted into the tonal system. In the eighteenth century, the step into major/minor tonality was finally taken, and it is possible that this chant in its original form felt old-fashioned.

As for the dating of Uden An 16 and Uden An 18, they were written with just one year in between, and this is why we might ask why one was completed and not the other, especially since Uden An 16 also contains melodies that have not been revised, while Uden An 18 has the complete reformed corpus. I think there is a simple reason: the format of the books. The difference between Uden An 16 and other manuscripts produced during Period III is the size. While the format of Uden An 16 is quarto, the others are in the format of octave, and this is a clue to how and by whom they were used. I believe that Uden An 16 was used by the group of singers in charge of solo tasks: the *horista*, the *cantrix* and *versicularie*. These tasks were circulated on a weekly basis, probably among the most skilled singers in the community, who must also have known all melodies more or less by heart.⁹ A manuscript in quarto format is ideal for placing on a music stand between the two choir groups where at least the *horista* was placed. We know that such music stands were used.¹⁰ It was therefore more important to carry out the changes in the manuscripts used by sisters who did not know the new melodies so well, which here means the manuscripts in the octave format used in the choir stalls.

HYPOTHESES ON WHERE THE REWORKED REPERTOIRE CAME FROM

From whom or from where the melodic reform came is difficult, not to say impossible, to answer, due to the lack of contemporary sources for comparison from other Birgittine abbeys and other documentation from Maria Refugie. I

⁹ This praxis is further described in Servatius 2003.

¹⁰ Maria Refugie still holds a music stand on the nuns' platform.

have demonstrated the difficulty of establishing an exact period when the reform was carried out. We cannot say more than after 1760 and before 1846. There are four probable hypotheses that I will now present and discuss.

1. *Did the reform come from outside the Birgittine Order?* Can we find the answer to the reform in other editions of these chants in other monastic traditions or in diocesan traditions? This is unlikely, since a great part of the chants in the *Cantus Sororum* are unique and not found in sources outside the Birgittines.
2. *Did the reworked melodies originate from the daughter foundation Mariënblum?* A few years before the move from Mariënwater to Uden, the community were joined by sisters from their daughter foundation Mariënblum in Kalkar, Germany. One of them was Theodor Alexia de Haen, who in 1705 became prioress of Mariënwater (and later in Maria Refugie), an office she held until her death in 1730.¹¹ In this function, she had the opportunity to influence the liturgy, for example by a repertoire she had brought with her from Mariënblum. Unfortunately, no liturgical books from Mariënblum have survived, so no comparison can be made. A fact that speaks against this hypothesis is that the reform was carried out during the second half of the eighteenth century at the earliest, which is a long time after the sisters from Mariënblum came to Mariënwater.
3. *Did these reworkings come from another Birgittine abbey and not from Mariënblum?* In order to draw firm conclusions on this, we would need material from other Birgittine abbeys from the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, the only abbey from which any such material is preserved is Maria Altomünster in Bavaria. This material still awaits investigation. The probability that we would find the reformed melodies in the Altomünster manuscripts is not great, since the contacts between Altomünster and Maria Refugie seem to have been sparse. It is important to point out that no printed musical edition of the *Cantus Sororum* that could function as an 'Urtext' for the Birgittine chant existed before 1861.¹²

¹¹ Sander Olsen et al., 2013, p. 220.

¹² This year, Pustet in Regensburg published a print for use by the Birgittines in Altomünster: *Antiphonarium Ordinis SS. Salvatoris seu S. Birgittae in Monasterio S. Altonis*.

4. *Did the initiative come from inside Maria Refugie itself?* No written documents exist that can support this assumption, but it seems the most likely alternative, since nothing else supports any of the other theories. This musical reform did not take place in a 'parallel universe', but was carried out by someone who was well informed about the currents that influenced Gregorian chant after the Council of Trent. It remains a mystery why it took such a long time to carry out this reform here, which in other contexts took place much earlier; from the late sixteenth century onwards. One explanation might be that after the dissolution and the relocation of the brothers in 1652, Maria Refugie had become a rather isolated abbey. By the relocation, the sisters lost their natural connection with the diocesan liturgy and other traditions. Taken together with the cloistered life without any opportunities to leave the abbey, this might have contributed to the rise of this distinct musical repertoire.

EPILOGUE: THE REFORMED MELODIES AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

As earlier mentioned, the reform was completed in 1846 at the latest. What happened after that? Was this reform just a short transient trend, after which the sisters went back to the original melodies? The answer can be found by examining the first prints of the *Cantus Sororum* with musical notation published for the Dutch Birgittines in 1881 and 1883.¹³ These prints were made by a daughter foundation of Marie Refugie, Maria Hart, which had been founded in 1843, and were probably intended for use by these two abbeys only. I have been able to establish that this not was a transient trend, since these prints transmit the reformed repertoire. Therefore we can conclude that the reform not was of an ephemeral character, and the printed versions were in use (possibly alongside handwritten books) until the 1950s, when the Roman Catholic priest and musicologist Nicolaas de Goede reformed the melodies according to one of the oldest sources, in order to restore the melodies to their presumed medieval splendour: Uden An 1.¹⁴ This manuscript was used for the reconstruction in music example 2 (see p. 330). His work is entirely in line with the restoration of the Gregorian chant undertaken by the Benedictines at Solesmes some one hundred years earlier, and which has ever since influenced both our thinking about

¹³ *Antiphonale juxta breviarium sanctimonialium ordinis SS. Salvatoris ...*, Weert 1881; *Vesperale juxta breviarium sanctimonialium ordinis SS. Salvatoris ...*, Weert 1883.

¹⁴ Sander Olsen (s. d.).

Gregorian chant and how to perform it.¹⁵ Furthermore, Goede's restoration of the Birgittine chant formed the basis for the reworking into the vernacular of the *Cantus Sororum* into both Swedish and Dutch, which he was to undertake in the 1970s.¹⁶

SUMMARY

After the Middle Ages Gregorian chant was subject to changes on a larger scale, in accordance with new trends and ideas on the relationship text/word and musical taste. The musical reform of the *Cantus Sororum* in Maria Refugie is one example of a consistent reworking of an Office repertoire. It took place after 1760, when almost all the melodies were subject to partial erasures, and it was completed by 1846 at the latest. New notes were written in, substituting the erased notes, and this resulted in reworked melodies. One such example has been discussed in this article by the examination of the Invitatory Antiphon for Monday, the antiphon *Regem angelorum*. These melodies were transmitted in the prints from 1881 and 1883 and sung until the 1950s, when the Office chants were revised again, this time in order to restore the chant melodies to their late medieval shape. It is important to point out that the reform only affected the office repertoire and never the Mass repertoire.

The revised repertoire of the Birgittines in Maria Refugie is not an isolated example of a unique process. It all corresponds to new musical ideas. As such, it must be seen as part of the currents in the world-wide Roman Catholic Church after the Council of Trent. Plainchant after the Middle Ages is only scarcely researched, but the subject is gradually gaining interest among scholars. Even so, monastic repertoires are still very little investigated. Studying chant in contexts outside the medieval period can teach us more about the ability of this music to adapt to changing musical fashions and tastes, and about the ideologies that were the driving forces behind musical reforms.

I want to make three concluding points:

- Gregorian chant always communicates with its context.
- Gregorian chant is shaped by its users.
- Birgittine chant has a fascinating history in its own right, even after the Middle Ages, although there is still much research that needs to be done.

¹⁵ The restauration of Gregorian chant is discussed at length in several texts, see for example Bergeron 1998; Strinnholm Lagergren 2009 and Ellis 2013.

¹⁶ Strinnholm Lagergren 2009, pp. 158–180.

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FIG. 1: *The Syon Virgin*, ivory with remnants of polychromy, Mosan or North French, c. 1250–1260, 23.7 cm, private collection, London. Image courtesy: Sotheby's, London.

ERIK BIJZET

The Rediscovery of the Syon Virgin and Inventories of Syon from the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries

IN EARLY 2013 Sotheby's was presented with a large and unusual partially gilt ivory Virgin and Child enthroned in the medieval style (fig. 1). Its owner, a Dutch cleric, had inherited the statuette from his father, a prominent art dealer who, in turn, had acquired it in 1949 from the dealer Hermann Baer in London, without any further information about its provenance. On numerous occasions the family had been told that the carving was a forgery: stylistically it was thought to be too unusual and technically too accomplished. Nevertheless, it had been decided to get a fresh set of opinions about the object, following a premonition of one of the owner's sisters.

Recent progress in the study of Gothic ivories, not least due to the extensive online database of *The Gothic Ivories Project* at the Courtauld Institute of Art, has reinforced the view that several centres were responsible for the production of ivory carvings and that the Parisian ateliers were not necessarily exclusively dictating form and style across Europe. Particularly the continuing importance of the Meuse valley had long been underestimated in this field. The traditional frontal *Sedes Sapientiae* composition, languishing Child, the naturalistic faces, and deeply undercut and heavily undulating pattern of folds of the mystery ivory suggested a link to the polychromed oak *Notre-Dame-des-Miracles* from Saint-Omer from c. 1230–1240 and two smaller ivories recently associated with this sculpture in the Musée de Cluny, Paris, and The Thomson Collection.¹ For most of the other unusual features that were deemed suspicious two decades earlier, such as the reliefs to the side of the throne and the mouldings along the base, precedents were quickly discovered among Parisian ivories, and the statuette

¹ Inv. nos. CL 23832 and 29464 respectively; see Magnier 2013, p. 194; Lowden & Cherry 2008, pp. 44–45, no. 13.



IVORY STATUE OF ENGLISH WORK, DATE ABOUT 1280.

Formerly in possession of the Nuns of Sion House.

(Height, 9.5 inches.)

FIG. 2: Frontispiece from Waterton, Edmund, *Pietas Mariana Britannica: A History of English Devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Marye Mother of God* (London 1879).

was eventually dated to c. 1250–1260.² In addition to the stylistic reassessment, radiocarbon dating firmly placed the ivory in the thirteenth century.³

In tandem with the authentication of the *Virgin and Child* its pre-war provenance needed to be established. Whilst Sotheby's own archive yielded a black-and-white photograph of the statuette discouragingly marked 'FAKE' in large letters on the reverse, the archive of the Sculpture Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum bore more fruit. It contains a cutting from the frontispiece of a copy of Waterton's *Pietas Mariana Britannica: A history of English devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Marye Mother of God* published in London in 1879 which illustrates the statuette much like it is today (fig. 2). Serendipitously, annotations on the cutting showed that the object had been part of the collection of the museum's predecessor, the South Kensington Museum, in the 1870s. However, it had disappeared by the time Margaret Longhurst (1882–1958) became its curator in 1938.⁴ The print's caption provided further food for thought: it suggested that the object was 'formerly in the possession of the nuns of Sion House'.

Following this discovery, knowledge of the whereabouts of the ivory in the nineteenth century gradually took shape. It had arrived on English soil early in 1809, with Abbess Dorothy Halford (d. 1828) and nine other nuns of Syon Abbey in Lisbon, Portugal. They decided to leave the home of the exiled British community in fear of Napoleon's aggressive response to the British intervention in the Peninsular War that took place in August 1808. The ten women hastily set sail for England with the convent's most valued treasures, in spite of protests by the remainder of the community and local clergymen that apparently persisted even on the quayside.⁵ Their flight did not prove a fruitful choice. Aside from Lisbon remaining largely safe from Napoleon, the nuns that arrived in England were not recognised as members of the Catholic Church by Rome and subsequently lost their entitlement to certain grants and pensions. By 1836, after many further hardships, only a few nuns remained and were living in poverty in a poorly outfitted house. They hit such dire straits that it was decided to hand over their treasures to the Catholic nobleman John Talbot, the 16th Earl of Shrewsbury (1791–1852), in exchange for a pension of 30 pounds.⁶

² For a full discussion of the attribution and dating of the ivory, see entry in Sotheby's London, exh. cat., *European Sculpture and Works of Art*, 4 December 2013, lot 33.

³ Radiocarbon dating measurement report no. RCD-1989, prepared by A.J. Walker of RCD Radio-Carbon Dating, East Lockinge, 15 February 2013, states that the ivory dates between 1215 and 1281 (95 % confidence interval).

⁴ See also Maskell 1872, p. XCI and Maskell 1875, p. 101.

⁵ de Hamel 1991, p. 132.

⁶ See also Aungier 1840, pp. 105–106; Fletcher 1933, pp. 145–147.

John Talbot passed away in 1852 and only four years later his successor died childless, leaving a group of distant relatives to quarrel over the inheritance. This left the Shrewsburys' Alton Towers estate rudderless and resulted in one of the greatest auctions ever held, comprising over 4 000 objects and taking place over 29 days from 6 July 1857 onwards. The catalogue of the Alton Towers sale is the first real document of many of the objects that the Earl of Shrewsbury is said to have traded with the nuns in 1836. It includes the keys to 'Old Syon', the monastery's seals, a papal bull addressed to Syon, and Syon's deed of reconstitution from 1557.⁷ Our ivory was lot 1956.

Tantalisingly, correspondence between Syon Abbey and auctioneers Christie, Manson & Woods from 1905, tells that all lots associated with Syon were withdrawn from the sale shortly after the catalogue appeared.⁸ As further letters would reveal, instead of being sold to the highest bidder, Syon's treasures were divided among the Earl's two executors and key figures in the restoration of the Roman Catholic Church in England in the nineteenth century, James Hope-Scott (1812–1873) and Serjeant Edward Bellasis (1800–1873),⁹ his chaplain the Reverend Canon Daniel Rock (1799–1871), and his only Catholic family member, his cousin Charlotte Sophia Fitzalan-Howard, the Duchess of Norfolk (1788–1870). The latter received the *Virgin and Child* and probably briefly kept it at Arundel Castle with the wonderful illuminated manuscript illustrating the community's flight, published by de Hamel.¹⁰ In 1860 the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk presented the statuette to their son-in-law, James Hope-Scott, probably on the occasion of his betrothal to their daughter.

Whilst in the care of Hope-Scott the statue was exhibited and published on several occasions, including at the show at the Institute of Archaeology of London in 1861 and the great *Special Exhibition of Works of Art on Loan to the South Kensington Museum* in 1862.¹¹ At the latter exhibition it appeared together for the last time with the *Syon Cope*, which had been kept out of the Alton Towers sale altogether by Canon Rock. While the cope was quickly acquired

⁷ Christie & Manson, *Catalogue of the magnificent contents of Alton Towers, the princely seat of the Earls of Shrewsbury*, 6 July 1857 'and following days'.

⁸ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 49, Christie, Manson & Woods to Syon, 27/09/1905 and Box 32/7, Bellasis-Charlton to Abbess Jocelyn, 08/05/1934; The letter from the auction house mentions lots 1349, 1435, 1436, 1450, 1451, 1730, 2101, and 1956.

⁹ Hope-Scott and Bellasis converted to Catholicism at the same time and would champion the religion from then on. They helped Cardinal John Henry Newman found the Oratory School in Birmingham.

¹⁰ de Hamel 1991.

¹¹ *The Archaeological Journal* 1861, pp. 275–276; Robinson 1863, pp. 16–17, no. 204.

for the museum, the ivory remained on loan. The statuette was included in Maskell's catalogue of the museum's ivories in 1872, but was collected from the museum following the death of James Hope-Scott a year later.¹² According to Hope-Scott's will it was supposed to be given to his brother-in-law, Henry Fitzalan-Howard, the 15th Duke of Norfolk (1847–1917), but the ivory does not appear in the family's inventories at the time.¹³ The statuette would not resurface until it was purchased by Hermann Baer in 1949.

Accounts of the nuns fleeing the Reformation and then Napoleon with their most cherished possessions as well as the large gap in the provenance of the ivory from 1873 to 1949 eventually led Sotheby's to the Syon Abbey archive at Exeter University for further investigation. It yielded several sets of documentation that not only reinforced the provenance of the *Virgin and Child* but also revealed new information about other objects that were at one time in the possession of the community. Furthermore, it revealed attempts by the community to retrieve works of art dispersed in England between 1809 and 1836.

In what follows I will outline their efforts along the lines of several unpublished eighteenth- and twentieth-century inventories and wishlists from Syon, as well as correspondence between the nuns and well-disposed members of the public about the whereabouts of objects associated with Syon. The earliest inventory, made around 1723 by Sister Mary Bridget Smith (d. 1782) and transcribed in appendix 1 on p. 357, concerns the convent in Lisbon and not only provides valuable insights about which objects were in the building, but also on the spaces they occupied, Syon's patrons at the time, and what works of art were created in the convent. An annotated summary of the eighteenth-century list from c. 1934, and an inventory of c. 1956, (appendices 2 and 3 respectively), and early twentieth-century correspondence between Syon Abbey and its friends also give a thorough overview of the contents of Syon in England, and introduce a number of patrons. Moreover they bring further objects thought to be from Old Syon to light and illustrate the role of works of art in the reestablishment of Syon Abbey in England from the late nineteenth century onwards.

Our knowledge of the fate of the ivory *Virgin and Child*, and what the trove of works of art that was carried to England by Abbess Halford and the other nuns in 1809 contained, is largely due to the efforts and archives of the Lisbon chapter that, after years of relative peace in Portugal, repatriated successfully in 1861.

¹² Maskell 1872, p. XCI; Victoria & Albert Museum Archive, MA/31/3, Art Loan Index, vol. C, p. 310 as having been returned to H. Kerr Esq.

¹³ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 49, Maxwell-Scott to Abbess Jocelyn, c. 20/10/1934.

Fresh help and larger numbers allowed for an energetic search for the treasures that had had to be sold during the homecoming of the first nuns. This quest is well recorded in Syon's archives in Exeter.

The first correspondence about a concentrated effort to reacquire the objects traded with the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1836 seems to have started in 1905. In the autumn of that year the nuns started to exchange letters with Major General Walter Maxwell-Scott (1875–1954) and George Bellasis-Charlton (1873–1943), grandsons of the two executors of the Earls of Shrewsbury, who had both been instrumental in the restoration of the Catholic Church in England in the nineteenth century. In the tradition of their grandfathers, the two gentlemen would support Syon on-and-off for the next four decades, offering clues about the whereabouts of the nun's treasures along the way. They provided their grandfathers' annotated catalogues of the Alton Towers sale and searched the wills of their ancestors for Syon's works of art. They also turned to their own contacts to establish connections with the auction house Christie, Manson & Woods, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and branches of the Talbot and Fitzalan-Howard families for the nuns.

Bellasis-Charlton was the first to correspond with Syon Abbey. On 24 April 1905, according to his almost forensic account of the event, he had discovered an old document in a heap of rubbish in the lumber room of his mother Margaret Jane Bellasis-Charlton's (1873–1914) home in London. The document had been swept into a corner, probably waiting to be transferred to the ash heap. Failing to decipher it, but understanding it had Catholic significance Bellasis-Charlton took it to the Brompton Oratory where it was translated by one of the priests. Recognising that it had to do with Syon Monastery, the priest suggested that Bellasis-Charlton wrote to the author of *The Angel of Syon*, Dom Adam Hamilton (d. 1908), about it.¹⁴ Hamilton confirmed its provenance: they had rediscovered Syon's deed of reconstitution, signed by Cardinal Pole in 1557.¹⁵ On 8 October 1905, on the Feast of Saint Birgitta, the deed was returned on behalf of the entire Bellasis family in exchange for indulgences and prayers.¹⁶ Some months later, in March 1906, one of the seals thought to have come from the original monastery in Isleworth was uncovered in the estate of Edward Bellasis (1852–1922), son of Serjeant Edward Bellasis and an uncle of George Bellasis-Charlton, and sent to the nuns by Margaret Jane Bellasis-Charlton from Newcastle.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., Box 32/7, Bellasis-Charlton to Father Hamilton, 18/09/1905.

¹⁵ For a facsimile, see Blair 1907–1908, p. 110.

¹⁶ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 32.7, Bellasis-Charlton to Father Hamilton, 19/10/1905.

¹⁷ Ibid., Box 32/7, M. J. Bellasis-Charlton to Abbess Jocelyn, 20/10/1906; according to the corre-

Subsequently George Bellasis-Charlton introduced Father Hamilton to Major General Maxwell-Scott, the grandson of James Hope-Scott. Maxwell-Scott's first letter to Hamilton dates from 19 October 1905. It accompanied a modern book on the Passion of Christ, which Maxwell-Scott had lent to be copied. In the letter he confesses that he had cut out an article from the book, which he had found disagreeable and wanted to prevent young people from reading. Next he writes that his father had been given a beautiful medieval reliquary and a processional cross from Syon which were later donated to their parish church in Galashiels (Selkirkshire, Scotland), and that he himself was in the possession of a small crystal reliquary cross with Passion scenes said to be from Syon. He would consider their return to the community.¹⁸ The response from Abbess Jocelyn and Father Hamilton was rapturous.

After 1906, the correspondence between Syon, Bellasis-Charlton, Maxwell-Scott and their relatives seems to cease for almost thirty years and with it the hunt for the missing works of art. In 1924 there is a brief exchange between Abbess Jocelyn and the Victoria & Albert Museum about the return of the *Syon Cope*, but the nuns are concisely but politely reminded that the museum bought the piece from the Earl of Shrewsbury's chaplain, Canon Rock, and that they were not prepared to hand it over.¹⁹

In 1934, however, Abbess Jocelyn reemerged as the motor behind Syon's search for its treasures, with Bellasis-Charlton as her main lay assistant. At this time Bellasis-Charlton circulated a summary of an inventory of the relics and silver present in the convent in Lisbon around 1723 which is transcribed in appendix 2 on p. 359. I will return to it shortly.²⁰ Since there are some inaccuracies in the summary of the inventory and Bellasis-Charlton refers to its author as 'the Syon Chronicler', the original list may have been missing at the time. Thankfully it is part of Syon's archives at Exeter University today,²¹ and is contained within brief early eighteenth-century handwritten annals of the convent in Lisbon. The section concerning the inventory, entitled *Memorandum of the Reliques and silver plate belonging to our monastery* is transcribed in appendix 1 on p. 357. According to an annotation on the cover of the manuscript

spondence the seal is inscribed: *Sigillum. Conventus. De. Syon. Sancti. Adriani. I* in abbreviated form. It is one of the six seals of which Aungier collected impressions in 1840. The seal does not seem to have been mentioned in any further inventory or correspondence.

¹⁸ Ibid., Box 32/7, Maxwell-Scott to Hamilton, 19/10/1905.

¹⁹ Ibid., Box 65, Mitchell to Abbess Jocelyn, 09/09/1924.

²⁰ Ibid., Box 19, bundle 1, 1499.

²¹ Exeter University, Syon Abbey Library, Syon MS 262, Add 1/ B/ 158, pp. 180–191.

the author is Sister Mary Bridget Smith, whose family members include the late seventeenth-century Abbess Mary Smith and Confessor William Smith. Her record in the *Who were the nuns?* database at Queen Mary University suggests that she could have been in her teens at the time of writing, which is substantiated by the slightly naive writing style and varying spelling of certain recurring terms.²² Nevertheless it gives a valuable insight in the Lisbon convent in the 1720s. As the title suggests it only concerns relics, their containers, and the liturgical silver at Syon in Lisbon, and lists the objects informally with occasional notes on the provenance and location.²³

The list reveals that the community possessed relics of Saint Birgitta, Saint Augustine, Saint Catherine, Saint Thomas of Canterbury, a Holy Innocent, two of the 11 000 Virgins, the Apostles, and four pieces of the True Cross. Only the arm reliquary of Saint Birgitta may be connected with a relic mentioned before the eighteenth century: it could be the relic brought from Vadstena to England by Robert Belle and Thomas Stevinton in 1427, as mentioned in the Syon Martyrology.²⁴ Aside from being far more descriptive than the summary circulated by Abbess Jocelyn in the 1930s, the inventory locates a number of objects in the convent, naming several altars and rooms. In order of appearance these are the high altar, the altar of Our Lady of Pity, the altar of Our Lady of Populo,²⁵ the image of Our Lady of Martyrs in the low choir, the image of Our Lady of Victory in the low chapter house, and the infirmary. In addition, Sister Mary lists which objects were thought to have come from Old Syon, whilst for some of the others she mentions contemporary donors and benefactors. The descriptions of recently acquired objects show that Syon and some of the individual nuns present there benefitted from the support from friends and relatives in England, English expatriates in Lisbon, and the local faithful and government in the first decades of the eighteenth century. Specific references to benefactors include Sir William Jennens (1661–1690),²⁶ the Bishop of Vizela, one of the Nuncios, a Mrs Crags, Senhor Antoinie Ferrier, and a Mrs Barbosa. Lastly, there are brief references to the nuns mounting and embellishing relics themselves at the time,

22 'Mary Bridget Smith', *Who were the nuns?*, London, 2008–2013, <http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/counties/details.php?uid=LB150> [accessed 22 November 2015].

23 For a detailed account of the contents of Syon in Lisbon, see also Elizabeth Perry's article on p. 309 in this volume.

24 British Library, Add.MS.22285, fol. 1r. quoted in de Hamel 1991, p. 57; Gejrot 2015, pp. 20–21.

25 The painting of Our Lady of Populo and its miraculous genesis is discussed by Elizabeth Perry on p. 316 in this volume.

26 J. Charnock 1794, p. 106.

and a charming entry on the supply of silver decorations for effigies by the nuns 'according to there devotion'.²⁷

The three-page entry on the mysterious appearance of an image referred to as 'Our Blessed Lady of Ave Maris Stella' is tantalising with respect to the ivory *Virgin and Child* sold by Sotheby's. The image is said to have been left in the nuns' wheel at Syon in Isleworth one evening when nobody could have approached their building, and it contained a note on which was written 'Ave Maris Stella'. Since a small ivory statuette might have been venerated like a relic and this particular one has a large cavity in which a note could have been hidden on the underside it is tempting to connect this entry with the object. The summary list used by Syon Abbey in the 1930s shows that the mentioned image and the ivory, of which a print had been discovered in the nineteenth century, were thought to be one and the same.²⁸

The aforementioned summary of Sister Mary Bridget's inventory which was circulated by George Bellasis-Charlton in the 1930s is supplemented with objects from the Alton Towers sale and a few other items uncovered by the nuns elsewhere. It is transcribed in appendix 2 on p. 361. The descriptions of Sister Mary Bridget's entries have been shortened to their bare essentials in one column, whilst annotations by George Bellasis-Charlton and others show which objects could be cross-referenced with other information, or had indeed been located. Found objects include the two reliquary crosses mentioned in the 1723 list, the *Syon Cope*, and a red chasuble which had been on loan to a church and was clearly long overdue.²⁹ The odd one out is a group of paintings with Saint Birgitta, Saint Augustine, and various bishop saints, kings and queens. It is not clear if they were lost by Syon at some point, but by 1934 the pictures were on perpetual loan for the decoration of their convent in England.³⁰ If anything the list shows that most of the objects brought back by the first group of nuns in 1809 had largely slipped away from the community in early 1934. Only eight out of the thirty entries on the list were accounted for to some extent, of which only one seal, the deed of reconstitution, and one reliquary cross had already been returned. Four further objects seemed likely to be returned.

²⁷ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 19, bundle 1, 1499, no. 6; Exeter University, Syon Abbey Library, Syon MS 262 Add 1/ B/ 158, pp. 182 and 190.

²⁸ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 49, Abbess Jocelyn to Bellasis-Charlton, 12/11/1934 and Box 19, bundle 1, 1499, no. 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 28 and 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 27.



FIG. 3: Processional cross, brass, Italian, possibly Rome, c. 1600, current location unknown.
Image courtesy: University of Exeter, Special Collections.

Perhaps spurred on by this rather bleak situation Bellasis-Charlton fearlessly petitioned Major General Walter Maxwell-Scott and Father Alexander O'Donoghue of the church in Galashiels (parish priest from 1922–1944) in March 1934 for the return of the reliquaries and cross mentioned in 1905. Shortly after, the Abbess provided Father O'Donoghue with a long plea for the objects, outlining the entire unfortunate history of Syon's flight from persecution, fires and earthquakes in Lisbon, the panicked return of the first nuns in 1809, and the empty treasury at Syon Abbey now.³¹ Impressed by all this hardship, the church and Maxwell-Scott agreed to yield and three objects were ceremonially received in November 1934.³² In January 1935 Maxwell-Scott wrote again with the news that he had discovered another pendant cross associated with Syon in his collection that was identified as the given to the community in England by Queen Mary.³³ He vowed to leave it to Syon upon his death, but decided to send it over in 1945 when he emigrated to the United States.³⁴

Part of the seventeenth volume of Fletcher's vast and sadly unpublished manuscript about Syon's history, compiled shortly after the return of the objects in 1934, covers the treasures of Syon monastery, and is illustrated with black and white photographs of the returned works of art.³⁵ Judging by the images, the processional cross and the crystal reliquary cross can indeed be rhymed with the 1723 list (fig. 3 & 4, overleaf).³⁶ The former is probably the brass processional cross acquired by the monks in Rome. It is difficult to read into the rather dim image, but it certainly seems that it was made in Italy c. 1600. The pendant cross containing relics of the Apostles was thought to be the gold cross given by the Bishop of Vizela, but since the reverse has engraved scenes from the Passion it could also be the second cross mentioned in the second entry on Sister Mary Bridget's list.³⁷ The large gem-set reliquary given to the monks at Buckfast Abbey recently poses more of a problem

³¹ Ibid., Box 10, 459, Abbess Jocelyn to Bellasis-Charlton, 11/05/1934.

³² Ibid., Box 49, Bellasis-Charlton to Bede Camm, 12/03/1934; Bellasis-Charlton to Abbess Jocelyn, 20/04/1934; Bellasis-Charlton to Abbess Jocelyn, 08/05/1934; Abbess Jocelyn to Father O'Donoghue, 22/09/1934; Bellasis-Charlton to Abbess Jocelyn, 02/10/1934; Memo 01/11/1934; Abbess Jocelyn to Maxwell-Scott, 02/11/1934; Ibid., Box 31, bundle 13, Abbess to Maxwell-Scott, 23/10/1934.

³³ Ibid., Maxwell-Scott to Abbess Jocelyn, c. 20/10/1934.

³⁴ Ibid., Maxwell-Scott to Abbess Jocelyn, 02/04/1935.

³⁵ Fletcher, 'A history of Syon Abbey and its Brigitine Community', Exeter University Library, MS 95, vol. 17, pp. 156–189.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 167–171.

³⁷ Exeter University, Syon Abbey Library, Syon MS 262, Add 1/ B/ 158, pp. 180–182.



FIG. 4: Reliquary cross pendant, gem-set gold and rock crystal, obverse with relics of the Apostles, reverse with scenes from the Passion of Christ, Continental, fourteenth/fifteenth century, current location unknown. Image courtesy: University of Exeter, Special Collections.

(fig. 5 & 6, overleaf).³⁸ Aside from the three large late fourteenth-century French ivory diptych leaves mounted on the front, the object is in the neo-gothic style and therefore certainly post-dates the arrival of the first nuns in 1809. It is much more likely to have been commissioned by Maxwell-Scott's father upon his donation of the relics to the church in Galashiels. The ivories do not seem to have been part of the contents of Alton Towers and are never mentioned in the cited correspondence from the early twentieth century. They were therefore probably acquired elsewhere by Maxwell-Scott's family. The relics inside, on the other hand, may include those inventoried in 1723. The list from 1934 shows that the nuns assumed that the bone of Thomas of Canterbury contained in the reliquary according to a lost list provided by Father O'Donoghue was the same as that in one of the 'lesser silver Armes' mentioned by Sister Mary Bridget.³⁹ Nevertheless, Bellasis-Charlton and the Abbess may have overdone it by asking for the whole reliquary to be restituted to Syon Abbey. Fragments of correspondence between the community and Margaret Longhurst from the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1935 suggest that she had pointed out the same issue.⁴⁰ Fletcher adds a late medieval gold professing ring then in the possession of the nuns to the survey of Syon's treasures.⁴¹

The final list discussed here seems to be the only inventory of Syon Abbey at South Brent drawn up in the twentieth century that survives in the archives in Exeter.⁴² As the transcription in appendix 3 on p. 362 suggests, it is a fairly comprehensive account of the works of art and liturgical objects belonging to Syon Abbey at the time, including not only silver and relics, but also sculptures, paintings and vestments. There are two nearly identical lists actually written on the backs of envelopes addressed to 'The Lady Abbess', stamped 9 February 1956 and 6 November 1956 respectively. Their descriptions are sadly brief and some are difficult to decipher.

Nevertheless, a few entries can be reconciled with objects discussed earlier in this article: 'the relic of the True Cross given by Queen Mary' is that returned by Maxwell-Scott in 1945 and the 'Large Brass Processional Cross' that acquired

³⁸ Fletcher, 'A history of Syon Abbey and its Briggittine Community', Exeter University Library, MS 95, vol. 17, pp. 172–178; oddly also mentioned in Williamson, *The Book of Ivory*, London, 1938, pp. 176–177.

³⁹ See appendix 2 on p. 359, no. 6; appendix 1 on p. 357, p. 181.

⁴⁰ Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 10, 459, Longhurst to Rev. Norris, 26/10/1935.

⁴¹ Fletcher, 'A history of Syon Abbey and its Briggittine Community', Exeter University Library, MS 95, vol. 17, pp. 181–186.

⁴² Appendix 3 on p. 362, and Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 22, bundle 22, 1655.



FIG. 5: Reliquary casket set with diptych leaves, gem-set silver and ivory, French, late fourteenth century and English, mid-nineteenth century, Buckfast Abbey. Image courtesy: University of Exeter, Special Collections.

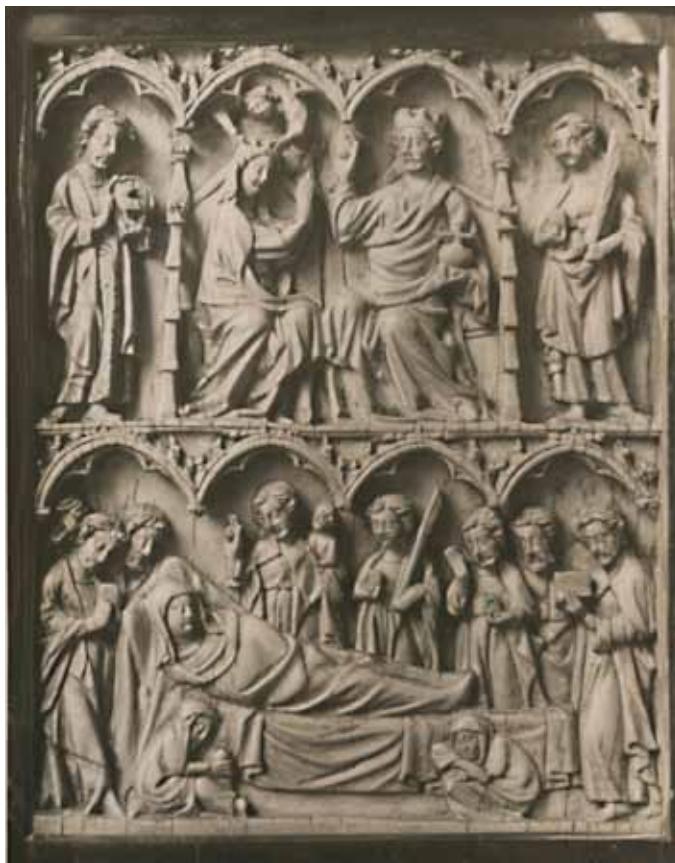


FIG. 6: Reliquary casket set with diptych leaves (detail), gem-set silver and ivory, French, late fourteenth century and English, mid-nineteenth century, Buckfast Abbey. Image courtesy: University of Exeter, Special Collections.

in Rome in the seventeenth century and returned by Galashiels parish church with the reliquary casket in 1934.⁴³ In addition it is encouraging to see that the silver sanctuary lamps and the monstrance donated by Captain William Jennens made their way to England with the nuns that returned in the 1860s, as well as a group of polychromed wood and ivory sculptures.⁴⁴ The reliquary pendant given by Maxwell-Scott in 1905 and Fletcher's gold professing ring, in turn, are not mentioned, even though the former might fall under 'Many relics'.⁴⁵ New additions said to have come from 'Old Syon' are a marble statue of Saint Birgitta and the capital from Syon Monastery's gate on which the body of Richard Reynolds, the Birgittine brother who refused the Oath of Supremacy and was executed by Henry VIII's henchmen in 1535, was displayed (fig. 7). Both are illustrated in Baxter's *Syon Abbey*.⁴⁶

While the former is unlikely to be 'Pre-Reformation' on stylistic grounds, the capital is a masterpiece of English stone carving of the fifteenth century. Since it is probably came back from Portugal with the nuns in 1861 it is indeed likely that this relic already carried some meaning when the community fled England in the sixteenth century, if it is not indeed the stone on which Richard Reynolds' body was presented by the Reformers. The capital was given to the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Exeter in 2011 where it is proudly displayed with a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century wrought iron tower cross.⁴⁷ Judging by the illustration in Baxter these two objects were not paired in the early twentieth century, but the cross may still stem from the convent in Lisbon. Continuing down the list there are numerous valuable liturgical object donated to Syon in the twentieth century by several named benefactors, showing that the community could count on wealthy supporters in the first half of the century. There is special mention of those objects blessed by the Pope.

Aside from the information they contain about Syon's possessions and the place of works of art in the fabric of the convents, the lists discussed above show just how much the community referred to its legendary heritage. Their flight, exile, and finally, Syon's successful repatriation are constantly implied in the descriptions and efforts to regain the works of art. The aid of members of the

43 Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 49, Maxwell-Scott to Abbess Jocelyn, 02/04/1935; Fletcher, 'A history of Syon Abbey and its Brigitine Community', Exeter University Library, MS 95, vol. 17, pp. 167–171.

44 See appendix 2 on p. 359, no. 6; see appendix 1 on p. 358, p. 186.

45 Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 32/7, Maxwell-Scott to Hamilton, 19/10/1905.

46 Baxter 1907, title page and p. 13.

47 For more information on the interesting role of the capital when it was placed over the gates of the convent in Lisbon, see Elizabeth Perry's article in this volume.



FIG. 7: Capital said to be from Syon Monastery on which the body of Richard Reynolds was displayed, stone, English, fifteenth century, Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Heavitree, Exeter. Photo: Graham Fereday.

congregation and sympathisers from further afield in acquiring and retrieving objects is another interesting constant which illustrates the importance of liturgical and votive objects. Sadly, it is unclear where many of the objects which helped to illustrate Syon's rich history between the 1720s and Syon Abbey's closure in September 2011 ended up. Only the *Syon Cope* and the capital that commemorates Richard Reynolds' martyrdom are publicly accessible. *The Syon Virgin* is now documented and all the vessels of the altar, such as chalices, ciboria and the gold monstrance given by Sir William Jennens and his English sailors in the eighteenth century and a statue of either Saint Catherine or Saint Bridget, as well as the reliquary from Galashiels, were transferred to Buckfast Abbey in September 2011.⁴⁸ Most of the sculptures were auctioned at Christie's in 1990. At the *Continuity and Change in the Birgittine Order (Syon Abbey 1415–2015)* conference in July 2015 the former abbess, Sister Anne, remembered that one of the old seals was returned to the Belgian monastery, from which it was supposedly taken at the time of Syon's peregrinations, in the 1990s.

Even though some will resurface again, I suspect that several of the small objects from 'Old Syon' that remained in the 1930s found good homes through donations in the final decades of Syon Abbey. Such charity is ultimately among the pillars of the Birgittine Order.

I would like to thank Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies of the Victoria & Albert Museum for their help with uncovering the provenance of the ivory and John Lowden from the Courtauld Institute for his advice on the attribution, Angela Mandrioli for guiding me through the archives of Exeter University, John Adams and Ann Hutchison for getting me excited about Syon, my former colleagues in the European Sculpture and Works of Art Department at Sotheby's and Tim Bolton for their helpful pointers as research progressed, Mia Åkestam and E. A. Jones for their help with this article, and lastly, Sister Anne O.Ss.S. for her invaluable comments on the inventories.

⁴⁸ Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S. I visited Buckfast Abbey in 2013 and was shown the liturgical gold and silver, as well as the reliquary. Sadly the brothers and their agent were not aware of the presence of many other objects, such as the small reliquary crosses from Old Syon.

APPENDIX I:

SISTER MARY BRIDGET SMITH, 'MEMORANDUM
OF THE RELIQUES AND SILVER PLAITE BELONGING
TO OUR MONASTERY', c. 1732

Exeter University, Syon Abbey Library, Syon MS 262, Add 1/ B/ 158, pp. 180–191.

- p. 180 I think it will not be amisse to make a memorandum of the Reliques and silver plaite belonging to our monastery as from whence it came or from whome they were given / I have made it me bussiness to the beste of me pour to inquier exactly after them which I quoted downe and now briefly relait what I have heard / the Holy Crosse tow peeces sett in a custodia with severall other Reliques of great esteem came from olde sion: /
- p. 181 a littell Christiall Crosse with a peece of the Holy Crosse in it given by / Queen Mary when the Cumunity was in England as also a mettell'd Cross which has the misteriss of the passione upon it: / a silver Arme which has a bone of our Holy Mother St Briggitt and one of our Holy Father Saint Augustin in it: / another of the same bigness within it a longe bone of our Holy Mother Saint Catherine: / Tow lesser silver Armes one with a Relique of St Thomas of Canterbury the other with a foote of the holy innocents which was sett in silver since the Cumunity came to Lisbone ye alms for the laste was given to S^r Mary Anna Salsbury from her frinds: / a golde Cross the Bishop of Viz /
- p. 182 Vizels* gave: the Cumunity gott the Reliques of the Apostles sett in it: / a caise of silver maid in the forme of a little Custodei at the Cumunity charges to sett a peece of ye wode of the Holy Crosse in which was sent from England by a gentleman that had the cair of King Charles the seconds wardrobe who founde it there and having some acquaintance with ye religious heer tould them that he would sende it to this Convente and gave such demonstrations that it was so holy a relique as is said befor. / 2 heads of the 11 0000 Virgins the religious made caises for them of their owne worke: / 4 more reliques sett in ordinary caises: / a chiest of reliques /
- p. 183 Reliquies which was brought from olde Sion as was all the rest some only which was given by one of the Nuntios: / the first mentioned as also the three silver Arms came from Sion in the same forme as they are now by what I can heer or understand by the elders: / the Image of our Blessed Lady of Ave Maris Stella certainly may be esteem'd as a great Relique being it was brought by miracell to Sion in England which I shall relaite exactly as I have been informed the Cumunity hade taken a custome out of there owne devotion to say the Hymn of Ave Maris Stella dayly but upon what accounte it /
- p. 184 it was lefte of I cannot tell but had not been said for some time: one day when the Cumunity of sisters was in the refectory at dinner the bell at the wheel was runge which surprised ye religious beinge it was so uncustomary at that time by reason that a lay brother portore who was obliged to locke up the out door that no strangers might come to ringe at the wheel the time that ye sisters was at dinner but the religious whose office was there went to see who runge and what was wanting but found no body She knocket and called but none answered and turninge the wheel found this image of our blessed Lady in it /
- p. 185 in it with a littell paiper write in it say Ave Maris Stella the religious being very importune to know who had been there call'd the porter to know who had been there or who he had opened the door too which he did assauer her that the door was locked and that he had not oppened

* Sister Mary Bridget Smith often, but not always, repeats the last words of the previous page, which she does not always complete, at the start of the next.

- it to any: / Soe from that time ye Hymn of Ave Maris Stella with the prayer Protege quiesumus Domine: has been dayly recited in the Quier befor Vespers and the Image kepte with great veneration in the Cumunity: / foure chalices no doubte some was broughte from England but how many it is not /
- p. 186 (and all the old vestmens of ...) / is not certain some has been bought since ye Cu^{ty} came to Lisbone: / the almes was given by gentellmen belonging to the English fleer which bought the Custodei for expsoeing of the Blessed Sacrament: the chife benefactor was S^r William Genings and likely was the admirall who showed a good will and great respecte to the Cumunity ye fathers of the same habitt was then living but wheather a charity was asked or it was given with out I cannot decied but it is certain they gave the price of it: and when S^r William came again ye Lady Abb^s and Cu^{ty} went to give him thanks for /
- p. 187 for so great a favour and charity as he had confin'd on them by giving so liberall an almes which had procured them a Custodei which ye Cumunity had not befor: / he tould them that they where nothinge oblieged to him: as to those few pence they were given to ye fathers Ave Maries potte as for there Custodei he did not know what they ment by it / the Lampe which hangs befor the Blessed Sacrement was brought from Sion in England as was the holy water potte and I suppose ye Cumunione Cup being I have not heard who procured it: the the [sic] first tow mention'd as I un /
- p. 188 I understand has been changed since ye Cumunity came to Lisbone but is no larger or heavyer then befor: / Sixe silver candellstiks for the highe Altar tow the Cumunity bought the other four was made of some plate brought in by S^r Rusell ye Cumunity was at the charges of fashioning of them / the other four for the throne when the Blessed Sacrement is exsposed was given by M^{rs} Borbosa: / four more for each side of the highe Altar / tow for ye Image of our Bl^{sd} Lady / ye other tow for the Image of our Holy Mother Saint Briggitt given by benifactours of our holy Mo^{ut} feast in oc^{br} /
- p. 189 the Silver Cross which is caryed in publick processions was given by the brothers of the Confertanity many years ago in there own fathers time: / the Lampe which hangs before the Altar of our blessed Lady of pitty was given by M^{rs} Crags who also lefte an other alms for which the Cumunity is oblieged to have tow masses sade yearly for her soule: / the Lampe which hangs befor our Blessd Ladys Altar of popullo was given by Senhor Antoinie Feriero who is a benifactor to the Cumu^{ty} / the little lamp which hangs befor the Image of our Lady of Martyrs in /
- p. 190 in the low Quier / ye tow smallest silver candellstiks / ye silver dish & gare was procured by the religious but chiefly by one who was a portigease: / the tuerable shipe nor Silver bell I have not heard who was benifactours for them which maks me conjectour the Cumunity has either brought them from England or bought them heer: / the Lampe which hangs befor ye Image of our Bl^{sd} Lady of Victory in ye low Chapter house was bought by S^r Ann Beringtone with a token sent to her from frinds in England / the Crouns and Splendours has been bought by the religious for the Image according to there devotion: /
- p. 191 Tow brothers who went to Rome it is supposed upon the acounte when our holy Mothers office was chang'd for ye Romen office brought home with them the brasse Crosse which is kepte in the Infermary which has a planery Indulgence at ye hour of death: / Chap ye 26 In the obbit book mentione is maid of one of ye religious that was buried at Macklin ye 18th of feb^{ury} at the Augustin friers and more may be seen of her in the Register I have inquired very curiously after a register but cannot find out what became of it or what was in it any more then what is heer mentioned and in the book of ther /
- p. 192 there travels where it is also mention'd certainly many things of antiquity is buried in oblivion for want of this Register as things notable in Sion in England which I should have had a great pleasour to read but I suppose it has been loste befor the Cumunity came to Lisbone or was consumed when the house was burnte for none liveinge nowe can give any account of it:

APPENDIX 2:

‘LIST OF RELICS CHURCH PLATE ETC BROUGHT
BY THE NUNS OF SYON TO ENGLAND IN 1809 ...’,
CIRCULATED c. 1934

Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 19, bundle 1, 1499, Summary of Sister Mary Bridget Smith’s list from 1732 supplemented with other objects such as those that were part of the Alton Towers sale. Annotations in the second column by George Bellasis-Charlton [GBC] and two other hands [1] and [2].

List of relics church plate etc brought by the
nuns of Syon to England in 1809 most of
which probably were in the hands of John
Earl of Shrewsbury when the last of the nuns
died in 1836

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Two pieces of wood from the True Cross set
in a custodium with several other relics of
great esteem which came from Old Syon</p> <p>2 A little crystal cross with a piece of the wood
of the Holy cross in it It given by Queen
Mary Tudor when the community was in
England also a metal cross which has the
mysteries of the Passion on it</p> <p>3 A reliquary of silver in the form of a custo-
dian this reliquary was made at the com-
munity’s chapel to set a piece of the wood
of the Holy Cross in it which was sent from
England by a gentleman who had charge of
Charles II wardrobe who found it there</p> <p>4 A silver reliquary in the shape of an arm with
a bone of Holy Mother St-Bridget and the
bone of St-Augustine in it</p> <p>5 Another similar reliquary with a long bone
of our holy mother St-Catherine in it</p> <p>6 Another similar reliquary but smaller with a
relic of St-Thomas of Canterbury in it</p> | <p>Now at Abbotsford in possession of Major
General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott ... to be given
to Syon Abbey on his death [1]</p> <p>Number 5 on Fr O’Donoghues list of relics as
the reliquary of St Thomas of Canterbury bones
and fragments* [1] / (note with vow for pilgrim-
age and who is O’D) [2]</p> |
|---|---|

* Father Alexander O’Donoghue of the parish church in Galashiels must have sent a list of the relics contained within in the large reliquary (fig. 5 & 6 on pp. 352–353) at the time of the correspondence about its return in 1934. The subsequent comment is by a different hand who is clearly unaware of the background history.

- 7 Another similar silver reliquary copied from the above with a foot of one of the Holy Innocents in it
- 8 Two heads of the 11,000 martyrs with St Ursula in it
- 9 Four chalices some brought from old Syon
- 10 A monstrance bought by alms given by Wm Jennings
- 11 A silver sanctuary lamp and a silver holy water pot from Old Syon
- 12 A silver communion cup
- 13 Six silver candlesticks for the high altar
- 14 Four other silver candlesticks for the throne of the Blessed Sacrament
- 15 Four other silver candlesticks from each side of the high altar and 2 others from the image of our Holy Mother St Bridget
- 16 A silver lamp which hung before the altar of our Blessed Lady of Pity
- 17 A silver lamp which hung before our Ladys altar of populo
- 18 A little silver lamp which hung before our Lady of Martyrs
- 19 A silver lamp which hung before our lady of Victory bought by an alms sent from England to Sister Anne Berrington
- 20 Two small silver candlesticks a silver cruet
- 21 A brass cross brought from Rome about 1607 by some of the Bridgettine brothers
- 22 A silver cross carried in procession
- 23 An ancient statue of our lady in ivory held in great esteem by the community

The nuns sent me a print of this but I have mislaid it / I will send it on if I can find it or try to get another copy G.b.C [GBC] / No 1956 Alton Towers sale catalogue struck out as not to be sold “the Virgin seated holding the Infant in her lap A very beautiful Italian carving in ivory” [i]

- 24 A gold cross given to the community by the bishop. The community had some relics of the apostles set in it
 Presented to the nuns of Syon Abbey by Major General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott ... 1934 [i] / my uncle Mr Richard Bellasis wrote to me on 21 Aug: 34 eldest son of Serjeant Bellasis. I had in my possession a valuable antique ... the shape of a bishops pectoral cross containing relics of the apostles. I gave it to Mrs Maxwell-Scott [GBC]
- 25 The seals of Syon Abbey
 No 1435 Alton Towers sale catalogue struck out of list. [i] / Seal No 6 in Aungier, History of Isleworth, was found amongst odds and ends at my mothers house. She was Serjeant Bellasis eldest daughter. It is a seated St- was returned to the nuns of Syon; the ... seal 1905-6 ... see Proceedings of Newcastle Society of Antiquarians [GBC]
- 26 The keys of Old Syon
 No 1436 Alton Towers sale catalogue struck out as not to be sold. Wrongly catalogued by Messrs Christie and Manson as the keys of Croxden Abbey [i]
- 27 A number of paintings including British saints Kings & queens one of St Bridget and one of St Augustine
 Not in the nuns list but they sent me this information; a number of these paintings were secured on perpetual loan by the nuns from ... / Pictures of St Bridget and St Augustine are loaned by the nuns of East ... [GBC]
- 28 The Syon Cope
 Not in the nuns list. I am unaware from whom the British Museum acquired it G.b.C [GBC]/ now in Victoria & Albert Museum [2]
- 29 A red chasuble
 Not in the nuns list but they sent me this information / Lent by St-Giles church ... to the cathedral of Shrewsbury, never returned [GBC]
- 30 The deed of Reconstitution of Syon Abbey signed by Cardinal Pole 1557
 Not in the nuns list but it was at Alton Towers; [GBC] No 1450 Alton Towers sale catalogue struck out as not to be sold / Found in a heap of ashes 1907 & restored to the Abbey of Syon by G.b. Charlton, grandson of Serjeant Bellasis [i]

APPENDIX 3:

INVENTORY OF SYON ABBEY AT SOUTH BRENT
 WRITTEN ON THE BACK OF AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED
 TO THE LADY ABBESS, STAMPED 6 NOVEMBER 1956

Exeter University Library, MS 389, Box 22, bundle 22, 1655. Additions from a nearly identical summary list on the back of an envelope addressed to the Lady Abbess and stamped 9 February 1956, from the same bundle in the archive, between brackets [].

From Old Syon

The Column of Gate Way of old Syon Isleworth on which Bl. R head hung in 1534 after his martyrdom, the Reliquary.

The marble Statue of St Bridget.

Relic of True Cross from Queen Mary

Numerous old precious books a list of which is in the Library case.

From Lisbon. Sanctuary lamps:

Large hanging cross in Cloister.

Gold monstrance from the English Sailors at Lisbon, story of this is told in T.S.C.⁴⁹

Statues of St Bridget, St Catherine, St Peter, St Joseph, inlaid with Gold, St Michael, St Anthony, St Peter, St John, St Lucy. the Dead Christ⁵⁰

Various pictures, many framed.

The Painting with L.A. in Sanctuary has a wonderful history

Ivory, statue of the little Shepherd.⁵¹

Our Lady Assumption

The little Boy Jesus, Little Bishops Statue robed, Large Brass Processional Cross Rosary used by our Bro when begging during our wanderings Relic list in safe

Vows

49 All vessels of the altar, including the monstrance, were taken by Buckfast Abbey when Syon was closed on 7 September 2011. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S. T.S.C. presumably refers to *The Syon Chronicle*. See appendix 1 on p. 357, p. 186.

50 All statues save one of the female saints were sold at Christie's when the community moved from Marley House, South Brent, to the converted farm buildings in 1990. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

51 Since it is thought to have been brought from Portugal this is most probably an Indo-Portuguese seventeenth- or eighteenth-century statuette of the Good Shepherd as few were carved in Europe. There are several examples in the Victoria & Albert Museum, including inv. no. A.43-1928.

Many Relics list in safe /

Brought from Chudleigh

Chapter House Altar given by Mr Ballie, when his mother died⁵²

Chapel was dismantled, Also a Gold Chalice in wooden case, Wooden Case in
L A room

Gold monstrance, used daily given by Miss Mary Horan of Porta ... Eire, also a
stand picture of Our L. G Counsel + branch candles [9 February 1956 - Our
Lady of Good Council in room of L A given by Ms Horan, with stand of
branch candles]

Pix case donor M^{rs} Gevert

Cruets " M^{rs} Towley Cork

Paschal Candle given by Bishop Brownlow.⁵³

Set of Brass " " " [9 February 1956 - Set of Mass Candlesticks]

Crucifix and set of Candles and Vases given by Rev F^r Downing a Chaplain.⁵⁴

Chudleigh Organ Donor Colonel Graham Bp Grahams brother⁵⁵

A Gold Chalice donor M^r Haye. [9 February 1956 - Silver Chalice from M^r
Hay]⁵⁶

Abbess Gold Cross presented to her by the congregation of Chudleigh 1921

A Gold Cross with rubies given to L A Magdalen Nevin by the Abbot of Buck-
fast 1946.⁵⁷

Vestments

F^r Burdett gave Green, Red, Purple, Black Vestments. Also an ancient Crib set,
dress in silken, with request we keep them always robed like that.

A silver Sanctuary Lamp.

⁵² Probably Evan Baillie (1816–1899), who donated the land upon which Syon House at Chudleigh was built and whose last rites were administered by the Chaplain of Syon House. See his obituary in *The Tablet* 1899, p. 28.

⁵³ William Robert Brownlow (1830–1901), Bishop of Clifton. See his obituary in *The Times* 1901, p. 10. As Canon of Plymouth he officiated the celebrations of the Feast of Saint Bridget at Syon Abbey in Chudleigh. *The Tablet* 1888, p. 592.

⁵⁴ Rev. W. F. Downing of Lime Regis, Sub-deacon at the Feast of Saint Bridget at Syon Abbey in Chudleigh in 1888 and several other feasts and funerals in the diocese around that date. *The Tablet* 1888, p. 592.

⁵⁵ Charles Maurice Graham (1834–1912), the Bishop of Plymouth's brother was General William Henry Graham (1838–1906).

⁵⁶ Mr Hay or Haye may be related to Mother Mary Magdalen Heys or Hays (d. 1897): a former prioress and five times elected abbess. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁵⁷ Lady Abbess Mary Magdalen Nevin was elected abbess in 1946; the Abbot of Buckfast of the time was Bruno Fehrenbacher (1895–1965). Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

Fr Benedict Williamson gave Vestments Green, Red, purple, also a cope.⁵⁸

Miss Herbert at Profession Silver Candles.⁵⁹

Miss Cusker, Silver Candles.⁶⁰

Miss Hassett 2 Crucifixes with ivory figures. Bls by Pope Pius.

A Mother of Pearl Crucifix given by S. M Magdalen Family it had been bl by Pius IX 1854.⁶¹

A Lamp stand cloth belonging to P. Pius IX, through M. Elizabeth Rome.⁶²

M^{rs} Misa, Crucifixes, Reliquary Stand.⁶³

A Coloured Crib given by S. M Magdalen Family over 65 ys old. [9 February 1956 – A coloured crib in glass shade]⁶⁴

Our Best High Mass set made by Brown & Nolan Liverpool for S. M Oliveres Profession.⁶⁵

Red High Mass set made at Syon.

Purple “ “ “ “ Syon.

Our Ladys Vestment work at Sowark Convent,⁶⁶ for Lady Abbess silver Jubilee White jewel Vestments, jewel, Miss Walker, silk M^{rs} Misa Wedding Dress.⁶⁷

Our Ladys Vestment, S M Michael Bridal Dress⁶⁸

White satin one S M Andrews's Bridal Dress⁶⁹

⁵⁸ Father Benedict Williamson C.SS.S (b. 1868), preached at Syon, reported on the fifth centenary of Syon Abbey in *The Tablet* 1920, pp. 105–106, and wrote *The Bridgettine Order: Its Foundress; History and Spirit*, London, 1922.

⁵⁹ Gladys Herbert (d. 1959), Sister Mary Bridget as a sister of Syon Abbey. She was a hospital matron. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶⁰ Clare Agnes Veronica Cusker (d. 1946) was a friend of the community and benefactress. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶¹ Lady Abbess Mary Magdalen Nevin. See note 57 above.

⁶² Saint Elisabeth Hesselblad (1870–1957), foundress of the Swedish branch of the Birgittines. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶³ Mrs Iola Misa (d. 1946), wife of John Manuel or Emmanuel Misa (d. 1979). Generous benefactors and friends of a member of the community. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶⁴ Probably Mother Heys. See note 56 above.

⁶⁵ Probably Sister Mary Olivia Culhane (d. 1917). Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶⁶ Presumably the Community of Reparation to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, formerly housed in Chadwick House, Rushford Street, Southwark, London.

⁶⁷ The sisters wore a wedding dress on the occasion of the Clothing, as brides of Christ. During the ceremony they would change from the wedding dress into the Birgittine religious habit. Frequently the material of the dress would be suitable for a vestment. For Mrs Misa see note 63 above. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶⁸ Sister Mary Michael Harragan (d. 1992). Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁶⁹ Sister Mary Andrew Vernon (d. 1969). Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

White V, with, S M Gabrels Silver Jubilee gift from friends⁷⁰

White cope red orphrey S M Philippas Bridal Dress.⁷¹

Lady Abbess Jocelyn Abbatial Cross presented by congregation of Chudley [sic] 1921

L.A. Nevins Abbatial Cross, gold with rubies presented by Abbot Bruno of Buckfast, 1946: not worn because it is jewelled.⁷²

[9 February 1956 – Crucifix in Lady Abbess room given by Mr Bailey.⁷³

L.h. Stall given by Miss Redpath]

⁷⁰ Sister Mary Gabriel Holden (d. 1997). She was the last sister to enter in Chudleigh and the first to receive her religious habit in Marley, South Brent. She was a great niece of another Sister, Sister Mary Clare Coulston. Written correspondence with Sister Anne O.Ss.S.

⁷¹ Sister Mary Philippa Straker (d. 2011). Left Syon and the order in the 1970s, but always kept in touch with the community.

⁷² These two crosses are mentioned twice in the primary list.

⁷³ Probably Evan Baillie, see note 52 above.

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CARMEN M. MANGION

Syon Abbey's 'Second Summer', 1900–1950

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST HALF of the twentieth century is often seen as a golden age of modern Catholicism in England; a time of dynamic growth and confidence embedded in the stability of the Catholic faith and the Catholic faithful. Indeed, E. A. Jones' chapter on the momentous celebrations of 'Syon at 500' (on p. 389) demonstrates admirably this tenor of confidence. For Syon this golden age began with their quincentenary celebrations in 1920 and lasted to the mid-1930s when, at the celebration of Lady Abbess Mary Teresa Jocelyn's Silver Jubilee, it was forecast that Syon's 'second spring' might be leading to a 'second summer'. Such optimism had been encouraged by the growth of Syon from a 'handful of sisters' to a full cloister which 'daily sings the praises of God with unusual solemnity and devotion'.¹ After years of struggle, Syon Abbey appeared to be rising from the ashes to take its place in the firmament of England's religious orders.²

This chapter interrogates Syon's brief 'second spring' and longer 'second summer' via the prism of the women who entered Syon as postulants during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. By examining in detail the changing demography of the community and by analysing a series of letters sent about

¹ 'Syon Notes', in *The Poor Soul's Friend* (henceforth PSF), 42 (1934), pp. 114–115. *The Poor Soul's Friend* was a monthly magazine edited by the Birgittines from 1893. It occasionally contained 'Syon Notes' which included information on clothings, professions, jubilees and other Syon events.

² Roman Catholic women interested in religious life had two main options: they could lead a contemplative life of prayer as nuns in an enclosed religious order such as the Syon Birgittines, or they could pursue an active life outside convent walls performing charitable activities as did sisters within a religious congregation. Though the terms nun and sister have precise canonical definitions, colloquially speaking the terms are often used interchangeably. The term women religious is used to encompass both nuns and sisters.

or by potential postulants we move from the triumph and assuredness of a 'second spring' (and more laggard 'second summer') to a history that reflected the uncertainties of modernity.

Much of the historiography of English Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century is found in the histories of bishops and dioceses, with its focus on ecclesiastical and political history.³ This was a time, according to historian Sheridan Gilley when 'Catholic England came of age'.⁴ From Rome's administrative vantage point, England and Wales were no longer dependent missionary territory and in 1908, with the publication of Pope Pius X's apostolic constitution *Sapienti Consilio* (29 June 1908) England joined the ranks of other fully established national churches managed by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation.⁵ In 1910 Westminster Cathedral, intended by Cardinal of Westminster, Herbert Vaughan (1832–1903) to be the 'head and heart of the life of the [Catholic] Church in England',⁶ was consecrated with much public pomp and ceremony. Then in 1911, in a move that was seen to reflect the growth of the Catholic population, a diocesan re-organisation upgraded the sees of Liverpool and Birmingham to Metropolitan Provinces. The Archbishopsric of Westminster was granted a pre-eminence that was meant to encourage Catholic 'unity in government and policy'.⁷

These centralising activities were matched by a normalising of the position of Catholics in England. The Catholic Relief Act of 1926 remedied some of the 'dead letter' prohibitions embedded in the 1829 Catholic Relief Act: religious dress could be worn on public thoroughfares and processions could no longer be blocked by Protestant agitators.⁸ The hierarchy of England and Wales marked the centenary of Catholic Emancipation with the National Catholic Congress in 1929. Toleration and progress were the leitmotifs of the celebratory mass held in Westminster Cathedral and the international meetings convened in the Royal Albert Hall. Cardinal Archbishop Francis Bourne (1861–1935), addressing the

³ Vickers 2013; Hagerty 2012; Beck 1950; McClelland & Hodgetts' 1999 edited volume has a broader remit than most institutional histories. The social or cultural history of English Catholicism in the first fifty years of the twentieth century has yet to be written. Alana Harris's work covering 1945–1982 is an excellent example of what is needed for the earlier period, see Harris 2013.

⁴ Gilley 1999, p. 34.

⁵ Aspden 2002, p. 3.

⁶ Snead-Cox 1910, p. 319.

⁷ Wheeler 1950, p. 175.

⁸ McGhee 1965, pp. 75–77.

scores of schoolchildren who had processed from the Thames Embankment to Westminster Cathedral reminded them

... of the great event which took place in 1829, just one hundred years ago, that you, my dear children, are able to be taught your religion freely in Catholic schools; that you can practise that religion without let or hindrance; that you have the same rights and position as your Protestant fellow boys and girls. [...] A hundred years ago almost all those unjust laws against Catholics were at last swept away.⁹

Catholics had arrived. They had the liberty to profess fervour for their faith and loyalty to their country. This triumphalist tone reflected a hard-earned pride in the dynamic growth in Catholic parishes, schools and religious institutes. The Catholic Church, peopled 'principally from a social class which was largely absent from the churches of other denominations' had become 'a large part of the Christian face of England'.¹⁰ This Catholic expansion is in striking contrast to the broader picture painted by scholar Callum Brown who has noted from 1920 to 1945 a drifting away from religion and a 'Christian culture in confusion' and suggests perhaps a more complex rendering of this period.¹¹

The history of women's religious congregations and orders in the first half of the twentieth century has also been positioned in terms of structure and progress. Women's religious institutes' vibrant growth in the nineteenth century continued on into the twentieth century. By 1900, 113 religious institutes had established over 500 convents;¹² by 1937 these figures had jumped to 175 religious institutes and 956 convents.¹³ Historian Susan O'Brien calls the first half of the twentieth century a time of consolidation 'in structure and style'.¹⁴ This consolidation was encouraged by a continual stream of norms and regulations that institutionalised religious life, prioritising form over function. The apostolic constitution *Conditae a Christo* in 1900 recognised simple-vowed religious sisters of active congregations as canonically religious, and outlined the juridical nature of religious life, emphasising the ecclesiastical authority of bishops. *Normae* issued in 1901, the new Code of Canon Law in 1918 and further *Normae* in 1929

⁹ 'The National Catholic Congress', *The Tablet*, 21 September 1929, p. 380.

¹⁰ Gilley 1999, p. 55.

¹¹ Brown 2014, pp. 116 and 125. Denis Gwynn in surveying the years 1850–1950 told a story of progress and dynamic growth for the Catholic Church in England, see Gwynn 1950, p. 410.

¹² Mangion 2008, pp. 37–38.

¹³ Walsh 2002, p. 177. There are no precise figures quantifying the numbers of sisters and nuns in England and Wales in the nineteenth or the twentieth century.

¹⁴ O'Brien 1999, p. 110.

added layer upon layer of regulations. Congregations and orders were asked to revise their constitutions according to a template prioritising standardisation at the expense of the unique spiritual character of each institute.¹⁵ Rome advocated amalgamation and consolidation and some religious institutes travelled that path.¹⁶ Scholar Sara Maitland identifies this series of changes as a 'new stress on centralism, rigid hierarchy and distinct channels of obedience' that led to an 'ossifying of the tradition'.¹⁷

At the same time the instruction *Constans ac Sedula* (1936) freed women religious to work more closely in the medical and home missions as medical doctors and obstetrics practitioners. Missionary congregations founded in the early twentieth century were more modern; their sisters wore simple, practical religious habits; they were less weighed down by centuries of tradition. In places like Ireland, where mission fever was rampant, Irish women found a new impetus to join women's religious institutes both in Ireland and in England.

Susan O'Brien points to three trends in Britain's female religious life in this period of consolidation (1900–1962): the impetus of missionary activity, the engagement with the state through education and welfare provision, and lastly, a renewed vigour in contemplative life.¹⁸ It is this third trend that I will explore more closely with a case study of Syon Abbey's postulants. My aim is not only to deepen the history of Syon Abbey in the twentieth century, but to add a lived history dimension that foregrounds women's experiences and attitudes to the history of English Catholicism.

This chapter evolved from a small cache of correspondence, approximately forty letters, most written by aspirants, which enable us to eavesdrop on the sometimes self-reflective, often unmediated voice of the aspiring postulant and allows a glimpse into her personal life and familial circumstances as she makes the decision to enter Syon Abbey. It provides us some understanding of the attraction to Syon and the enclosed, contemplative life. Of course, such epistolary interactions, though invaluable, have limitations. The correspondence offers snapshots into the lives of only a small sample of Catholic women who entered the Syon Birgittines. Disappointingly, we only have half the conversation; copies of the replies written by the Lady Abbess or Prioress to these letter writers are not

¹⁵ MacGinley 2002, pp. 277–278; De Maeyer et al. 2004, pp. 22–23.

¹⁶ For example the Sisters of Mercy began amalgamating in 1922 and the Dominicans in 1929. King 1978, p. 10; Nye 2011, pp. 145–168.

¹⁷ Maitland 1983, p. 57.

¹⁸ O'Brien 1999, p. 124.

extant. In addition, some of the correspondents do not appear to have later been professed as Birgittines so biographical information is scarce. Contextualising these sources with a prosopography of Syon Abbey's occupants from 1900–1950, materials from the archives of the Plymouth diocese and articles printed in the press allows us to answer a set of simple questions about potential postulants. Who were the women who desired to become Birgittines at Syon Abbey from 1900–1950? What motivated their entry into Syon Abbey? What was their social and economic background? What support did they receive from family and friends as they made their decision to enter enclosed religious life? What were the attitudes of the English Catholic and non-Catholic world to their entry into Syon? The answers to these questions offer some clues to the decisions women made and lives Catholics lived in the first half of twentieth century.

The first section analyses the demographic profile of the entrants into the Syon community.¹⁹ The second section comprises a close reading of this correspondence. This research gives us a window into Birgittine life in the early twentieth century as well as the larger English Catholic and non-Catholic world.

SYON COMMUNITY

The Syon community returned to England in 1861 and settled in Spetisbury, a Dorset village in the mostly rural diocese of Plymouth in the south-west of England.²⁰ From 1887, the Birgittines were located in a purpose-built abbey in Chudleigh, until their move to Marley House, South Brent in 1925. Both locations, on the edge of the Dartmoor moorlands, offered them the space to lead contemplative lives in isolation, which they welcomed as enclosed nuns. But, this also ensured their invisibility. Canon Fletcher's history of the Birgittines commences with a remark on their isolation 'Syon Abbey, on the confines of Dartmoor, near South Brent, is not as well known, even to Catholics, as it ought to be ...'²¹ Such obscurity is striking, given their distinctive English and Catholic claims of being the only pre-Reformation religious order to trace an unbroken line of succession from the original community founded in south-west London in 1415. Though Syon was linked to the international Birgittine houses on the

¹⁹ The archives contain no complete register of twentieth-century postulants or professed Birgittines. The Syon database was derived from various archival sources and census data. The most helpful records were found in PSF and EUL MS 95/17, one of Canon Fletcher's notebooks, containing some of the profession/clothing statements of the post 1900 entrants.

²⁰ In 1902, when Charles Graham became the third bishop of Plymouth, many of the diocese's 12 000 Catholics lived in the naval garrison town of Plymouth or nearby Devonport and Stonehouse. Graham 1913, p. 172.

²¹ Fletcher 1933, p. 9.

continent, it remained a small autonomous little-known community with only one house in England.

Syon's nineteenth-century history reveals its difficulty in attracting vocations in England. Cistercian Father James of Mount Melleray Abbey (Waterford, Ireland) addressed this matter in a letter to the prioress in 1892:

The great drawback seems to be that your community does not increase in number. I never could clearly understand the reason why. I wish it were in my power to procure good subjects for you, but I can only pray, that I will do.²²

The initial community that made the journey from Lisbon to England in 1861 consisted of Abbess Mary Joseph Carter, eight choir sisters, two choir novices and two lay sisters.²³ By the time of the 1871 census, six women were professed as Birgittines and the Spetisbury community had increased to fifteen professed nuns. Worryingly, there were no postulants or novices in the 1871 census report.²⁴ They appear in the remaining decennial censuses, but the number of professed Birgittines had dropped to around twelve nuns from 1881 to 1901.²⁵

TABLE I. Syon Abbey, age structure of community (professed, postulants, novices)

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
# members in community	14	16	20	31	34	39
average age of community	41.0	36.6	40.7	45.6	50.5	53.4
median age of community	34.0	29.0	35.5	44.0	52.0	54.0
age range of community	16–70	22–74	24–76	23–86	22–83	23–89

Source: Syon database.

²² EUL MS 389/2471, Letter from Fr James of Mount Melleray Abbey to Rev Mother, dated 28 July 1892.

²³ Fletcher 1933, p. 159.

²⁴ 'Ann Carter' 1871 census return for Sion House, Spetisbury (National Archives: RG 10/1977), p. 25. <<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>> accessed 10 July 2015.

²⁵ Such slow growth is perhaps not unusual for a contemplative monastery. Barbara Walsh calculates that the number of convents of active and mixed congregations grew from 83 to 441 from 1857 to 1897, an increase of 531 %. The number of contemplative monasteries, by comparison, grew more slowly, just doubling in size from 14 houses to 27 houses in the same period, see Walsh 2002, p. 176. While there has been little published research on enclosed life in the nineteenth century, the development of the Poor Clares offers a thought-provoking comparison. Of the initial four communities of English Poor Clares that relocated to England from the continent in the late eighteenth century, two had closed by the 1830s due to declining numbers. In contrast, the four Poor Clare Collectine communities founded from Bruges in the mid-nineteenth century fared better. They flourished, founding an additional three communities in the nineteenth century, see Mangion 2017. One wonders if the traditions and practices of these former English nuns in exile deterred new entrants.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, there was a marked growth in the Syon community. Table 1 demonstrates that the numbers of nuns jumped from fourteen in 1900 to a high of thirty-nine by 1950.²⁶ Extant canonical visitation reports from 1920 record the number of postulants who enter and progress to the novitiate and take vows. Table 2 below reveals that the interwar years were particularly fertile with the numbers of postulants averaging over two a year.²⁷ These statistics suggest Syon's 'second spring', a time of growth and vitality that was reflective of the confidence of the Roman Catholic Church discussed earlier. Few women entered as postulants during the Second World War; likely this was due to mandatory female conscription in Britain.²⁸ The post-war increase in the number of postulants suggests a small backlog of postulants. From 1920 to 1949, fifty-three postulants entered Syon, twenty-six (49 per cent) then proceeded to the novitiate, and nineteen (36 per cent) were professed.²⁹

TABLE 2. Syon Abbey – postulants, 1920–1949

	# years	# postulants	# entered novitiate	# professed	average postulants per year
1920–1933	13	36	16	12	2.77
1934–1935	2	4	2	2	2.00
1936–1939	4	5	4	2	1.25
1940–1944	5	2	1	0	0.40
1945–1949	5	6	3	3	1.20
Totals	29	53	26	19	1.83

Source: PDA, Bridgettines, Visitation reports and EUL MS 389/2487.

It was not unusual for young women to leave during the formation process, the postulancy and the novitiate. From 1914 the postulancy period began on the day of a young woman's entrance into the community.³⁰ This initial period of

²⁶ The community size remained in the thirties until the mid-1960s. This 1920s/30s generation was long-lived (2/3 of them die after 1965) and bolstered the size of the community despite the small numbers of new entrants.

²⁷ This table was created from data included in a series of visitation reports (reports earlier than 1920 were not extant). EUL MS 389/2487, Folder 'Visitations'. PDA, Bridgettines, Visitation Reports.

²⁸ Broad 2006, pp. 136–141.

²⁹ There are no comparable statistics from other congregations and orders during this period. However, percentages are similar to those calculated for nineteenth-century congregations where for every two women who entered as postulants, one left and one entered the novitiate. Mangion 2008, p. 92.

³⁰ The postulancy prior to 1914 would have occurred outside the monastery. See Jones 2015, p. 20 and Ellis 1984, p. 152.

training at Syon typically lasted twelve months. Shortly before the end of the twelve months, the postulant requested and if the chapter (voting members of the community) agreed, the postulant entered the next stage of preparation for religious life: the novitiate. During the clothing ceremony, which marked the transition between the two forms of religious training, the simple black dress of the postulant was exchanged for the novice's religious habit. At Syon, the novitiate typically lasted one year for the choir sister (and two years for the lay sister) after which again with the agreement of the chapter, a novice would pronounce simple vows. This last stage typically lasted three years, after which each sister would make her perpetual vows.³¹ The postulant and the novice were tutored by a novice mistress, and for the most part of this training kept separate from the professed community. The novice mistress taught the history and practice of Birgittine spirituality, the rule and constitutions³² and explained the intricacies of the breviary and the Divine Office. An integral part of this experience was also manual labour. Postulants and novices cooked and cleaned, tended the garden and the farm animals. This type of manual labour was ubiquitous amongst most religious congregations and orders. Religious communities were self-sufficient communities and typically did without domestic servants, though occasionally outdoor help was needed for large farms or gardens. Even communities with lay sisters or externs engaged postulants and novices in domestic work. There was a religious as well as practical impetus to this labour; it was expected to teach humility and abnegation of self.

The 1920s were a particularly fruitful time for postulants; perhaps the public celebrations discussed in E. A. Jones' chapter introduced Syon Abbey to a wider public. Chronicles from 1921–1931 confirm the vibrancy of the 1920s and allow a more nuanced interpretation of the data from the visitation reports. The Chronicles name twenty-five postulants who enter from 1924 to 1931.³³ Of these twenty-five women, seven were accepted into the novitiate and were later professed as Birgittines. Most postulants came and went, typically in a matter of days, and without much comment from the chronicler. On occasion, an entry hints of the reasons for departure. One postulant entered on 9 November 1926 and left five days later. The anonymous chronicler noted: 'She felt the enclosure

³¹ Hohn 1912, pp. 35–36. PDA Orange folder, *A Royal Foundation: Syon Abbey past & present* (1946). An additional two years was added alongside other changes in formation in 1969. EUL MS 389/1740: Letter from Abbess to Fr Rutten, dated 15 April 1969.

³² This included the study of the Augustinian Rule, the Constitution of Our Saviour (based on Birgitta's Revelations) and the Syon Additions.

³³ Postulant numbers were summarised in the visitation reports. Individuals were not identified. These Chronicles gave the names of many, though not all, the postulants.

too much, wanted more of an active life, we were too contemplative to suit her, but an extremely nice little person.³⁴ Other postulants had to be told they had 'no vocation'. One took this news 'very badly' and left a few days later 'after very bad behaviour'. But not all such departures ended acrimoniously. Miss Dorothy Lewis entered on 15 September 1926. She left before entering the novitiate but remained close to the community, sending friends to visit Syon in July 1927.³⁵ These entries suggest that women were attracted to life at Syon Abbey, but that many aspirants were unsuited to their enclosed way of life with its ancient traditions and physical hardships. Most postulants made the decision for themselves, though, as is evident, the Syon nuns did refuse women they believed unsuited to their form of religious life.

Table 1 on p. 372 points to another dimension of the Syon community: from the 1920s it was an ageing community. The average age dips in 1910, but then climbs from 36.6 to 53.4 in 1950. The median age similar increases, from twenty-nine in 1910 to fifty-four in 1950. This was in part caused by the slow trickle of postulants entering from the mid-1930s, but also a significant factor was the actual age of entry of Syon postulants. Table 3 overleaf indicates that in the first half of the twentieth century, postulant ages ranged from sixteen to sixty-two.³⁶ The 1900s entrants were unusually young, averaging twenty-one years of age; the remaining four decades reflect an average age range from twenty-six to thirty-two. Over the fifty years of this study, the average age of entry was twenty-eight with a median age of twenty-six. This average age was comparable to the average age women married in the first half of the twentieth century, revealing that women who entered religious life, in general, were making this decision at the same time that their peer group were making the decision to marry.³⁷

³⁴ EUL MS 389/195, 'Syon Chronicles January 1921–October 1931'.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ This and all statistics pertaining to postulants are estimates based on the known dates of birth of 58 of 85 postulants.

³⁷ The average age of marriage for women from 1901 to 1941 ranged between 25.5 and 25.6 until 1951 when it drops to 24.6. Stone 1990, p. 443.

TABLE 3. Syon Abbey – postulants' ages

	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	total
postulants who took vows	8	9	12	8	5	42
average age of entry	21	26	32	29	27	28
age range of entry	16–27	16–38	18–62	17–53	18–40	16–62

Source: Syon Database.

A more detailed look at individual postulants confirms that Syon Abbey had a greater openness to older vocations. Most religious institutes had a stated (or unstated) upper age limit for postulants. Syon's cut off age was thirty-five according to one letter³⁸ but nine of the forty-nine women who were professed from 1900 to 1950 were over thirty-five years old when they entered.³⁹ This did not go unnoticed. John Joseph Keily (1854–1928), bishop of Plymouth, voiced his reservations of older postulants several times. In one letter dated 1914, he notes:

I do not like these novices in the [sic] thirties. Why did she not leave home before? One of the gravest difficulties in enclosed houses come from the formed habits before entry. Kindly reassure me. God bless you all.⁴⁰

He wrote again to the Lady Abbess Mary Teresa Jocelyn in 1922 with concerns about forty-three year old Agnes Weaver, a convert and former Anglican sister.

I greatly fear to overwhelm your bright youngsters with old maids not yet accustomed to the faith & with no dowry. A youngster is different: but Miss Weaver is too old. Although we admit some, that does not mean that age is not an impediment ... The cumulative effect of your life is heavy & I cannot think we are wise in adding such a subject. You may argue with me but I feel a great repugnance to putting any but young people in your novitiate.⁴¹

³⁸ EUL MS 389/2128, Letter from Annie Simmons to Lady Abbess, dated May 1914. The Birgittine entry in Hohn's publication indicates 'By Rule there is no age limit for admission. Preference however is given to those under thirty.' Hohn 1912, p. 35.

³⁹ We tend to think these more mature vocations are part of the twenty-first century phenomenon of religious life but they are not a novel phenomenon.

⁴⁰ EUL MS 389/2710, Letter from the bishop to Lady Abbess, dated 16 April 1914. This is probably a letter about Annie Simmons, aged thirty-seven, who enters in June 1914 and is professed in 1916. She spent 52 years in religious life. There are also letters in this box from Bishop Charles Graham voicing similar concerns about postulants over the age of forty.

⁴¹ EUL MS 389/1424, Letter from the bishop to Abbess, dated 29 July 1922.

His concerns reflected several issues, but it was age that provoked him the most. Bishop Keily implied that at the age of forty-three, Agnes Weaver was not physically equipped for the austerities of an enclosed life. He contrasted her with the 'bright youngsters' who were likely the three postulants in the novitiate aged seventeen, eighteen and twenty-seven. All three departed before their year's postulancy was over. There were two additional postulants (aged forty-four and forty-five) that Keily seems to have forgotten – both were later professed. In the end, the Lady Abbess convinced Bishop Keily to overcome his repugnance. Miss Weaver entered in 1922, but left before her postulancy year was over.

Bishop Keily was not alone in his concerns about older postulants. One of the Augustinian nuns of St Augustine's Priory in Newton Abbot contributing to *The Poor Soul's Friend* obituary of Sister Mary Rita (Elizabeth) Prost wrote in a letter to the Lady Abbess:

I have purposely avoided giving the number of years Rita had to spend in the world before becoming a religious as you would be deluged with applications from all the old ladies far & near who would see their chance on reading the magazine!⁴²

She suggests that older aspirants were less likely to have a true vocation.

Elizabeth Prost's story was a familiar one as far as older vocations go. She recognised her vocation whilst a schoolgirl with the Faithful Companions of Jesus, but spent years caring first for her father, then her mother and then her sister. Most congregations and orders did not accept applicants who had family members dependent on them. There was a gendered expectation that the priority of unmarried daughters was to care for family members. The obituary acknowledged:

Long weary years, of waiting for the fulfilment of her one desire – now almost impossible – followed, but those years were ones of sacrifice, charity, helping to brighten the lives of others, in other words, a life hidden in God, which were not left without their reward, as we shall see later.

After being released from her familial obligations, Elizabeth Prost entered the Augustinians but had difficulty with the Divine Office. Encouraged by the Augustinians, she approached the Syon community and was admitted as a

⁴² EUL MS 389/234, Letter from Sister Mary Agnes of St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot to Lady Abbess, dated 12 September 1935.

postulant, aged sixty-two.⁴³ She made her solemn vows and remained a member of the community until her death in 1935.

There was an ageism embedded in religious life where postulants were expected to be young and pliable and unsullied by the travails of the world. Older postulants were not expected to conform easily to the traditions and rigours of life behind convent walls. Yet, Syon Abbey exhibited a self-confidence in its welcome of older postulants. Their founder, Saint Birgitta, was a mature woman when she founded the order and they had a long history of accepting older postulants. As an older community, they were comfortable that strong vocations could be found in more mature candidates. There may have been one important drawback to this: one wonders if the older community proved unattractive to some of the postulants (as Bishop Keily implied) who came and left Syon Abbey.

SYON POSTULANTS

Aspirants' letters are rarely found in archives and this rich corpus of letters identifies how some vocations developed. One candidate 'heard of the existence of Syon Abbey ... and felt that God was in this convent in some special way & that made her wish to join it'.⁴⁴ Others less attached to a particular congregation or order asked for guidance from clergy or others. The Augustinians, as we have seen, referred Elizabeth Prost to Syon. Convert Emmeline Gilbert, who entered the Birgittines in 1929, had investigated the recommendation of her confessor Francis Burdett.⁴⁵ Kinship relationships were also important to the development of vocations. At least six women in the Syon community had aunts or great-aunts in Syon Abbey.⁴⁶ In addition, three sets of blood sisters entered during 1900–1950.⁴⁷ As I have noted elsewhere, women religious communicated their lived experience of religious life to their kin, and family members came to

⁴³ EUL MS 389/234, St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot. The Divine Office at Syon Abbey was a weekly office, so it may have been easier to follow. Thanks to Sister Anne Smyth for her advice on this matter. The relationship between the Augustinians in nearby Newton Abbot and the Birgittines was a close one. They would not have recommended Elizabeth Prost were they not convinced of her religious vocation.

⁴⁴ EUL MS 389/681, Letter to Lady Abbess from T. Barney, dated 19 February 1925.

⁴⁵ EUL MS 389/2112 Letter from Emmeline Gilbert to Lady Abbess, dated 12 June 1929.

⁴⁶ Monica Coyle was great-niece to siblings Mary Margaret Budd and Mary Ignatius Budd; Mary Gabriel Holden was great-niece of Mary Clare Coulston. Lady Abbess Jocelyn was aunt to Mary Josephine Faye and Mary Paul Hardstaff-Stafford who were first cousins. The Westhead sisters were the nieces of Mary Joseph Carter.

⁴⁷ These were the Conways, Westheads and Smiths (though one Smith entered in the 1950s).



FIG. 1: Sister Mary Cecilia in the cemetery, 1982. Sister Anne Smyth, personal collection.
Photo: Harold J. Deakin.

know religious life even with its hardships, as a fulfilling vocation and a laudable alternative to marriage.⁴⁸

The series of letters written in 1913–1914 by Mena Coyle, mother of Mary Monica Coyle (1893–1993), the future Sister Mary Cecilia, reflects this important kinship link to Syon Abbey. This family had close links to Roman Catholic institutions and Mena was the driving force of the family, as the letters make clear. Unusually Mena Coyle rather than Monica was the author of the letters. Perhaps this was a mother's strategy to protect her daughter who, the correspondence suggests, may have been concerned about being told she was not suited to Birgittine life. It is more likely, however, that she already knew the community quite well as two maternal aunts were members of the community. Despite this mediation, we can glean some of the aims and desires of Monica Coyle who entered the Birgittines in 1914 and remained there until she died in 1993. As the Coyle letters address a range of factors pertinent to our understanding of the Syon community their family biography will be examined in some detail.

⁴⁸ Mangion 2008, pp. 67–68.

Mary Monica Coyle was born 3 December 1893, the second eldest of five children.⁴⁹ Her father Frederick was a professional cricketer and her mother Mena was a member of the Catholic Women's League. Mena's two aunts were Syon nuns, Sister Mary Margaret (1846–1888) and Sister Mary Ignatius (née Elizabeth) Budd (1835–1918). It was highly probable Mena (and Monica) visited her aunts at Syon Abbey. Family visits were regular features of life at Syon as documented in extant chronicles and calendars which routinely note reunions between nuns and their family and friends. Sister Anne Smyth, former Lady Abbess of Syon from 1976–2011, recalled her own frequent childhood visits with her mother and grandmother to her maternal aunt, Sister Mary Raphael Langan (née Mary Lillian) who entered Syon in 1927. She recounts entertaining the nuns by singing and dancing.⁵⁰ Children's visits were noted with great delight in the daily Chronicles.

Monica's vocation story as told through her mother's letters reveals she was initially unsure which religious order to approach, although this might have been a strategy to gauge her prospects of entering Syon Abbey. She was unequivocal in her desire to enter an enclosed, contemplative order; her mother declared that 'confinement & enclosure would not trouble her at all'. She had considered Belgian and Dutch communities, but found them wanting and she preferred to remain in England. Monica rated Syon highly but thought her 'want of dowry' was an obstacle.⁵¹ The reply from the Lady Abbess allayed her fears. Mena reported to her husband that

you all seemed as happy over receiving my dear little Monica as you could be over a highly born or richly dowered daughter of an Earl.⁵²

Mena's comment suggested that Syon Abbey was an elite institution that accepted 'highly born' or 'richly dowered' young women. This was perhaps a common assumption. Canon Fletcher in his history of the community emphasised Syon's aristocratic lineage. Articles in the *Tablet* refer to Syon Abbey as a royal foundation.⁵³ The celebrations that E. A. Jones describes in his chapter (see p. 389) give us a sense of the heralded status of Syon Abbey. However, there

49 'Mary M. Coyle' 1901 census return for Newstead Grove, Halifax, West Yorkshire (National Archives: RG 13/4124), p. 20, <<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>>, accessed 10 July 2015.

50 Interview with Anne Smyth OSsS, on 24 March 2015.

51 EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 22 September 1913.

52 EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 21 October 1913.

53 'Reviews', *The Tablet*, 22 October 1887, p. 649; 'The Syon Celebrations', *The Tablet*, 1 May 1920, p. 602. E. A. Jones notes late medieval Syon was dominated by the gentry and merchant classes though there were sisters with a noble lineage. Jones 2015, pp. 26–27.

is very little evidence that members of the Catholic aristocracy entered Syon Abbey in the first half of the twentieth century. The reports of clothings and professions in *Poor Soul's Friend* often name the candidate's parents and the only titles mentioned on occasion were Esquires. Other candidates expressed similar concerns about dowry in their letters, but their fears were also allayed. Annie Simmons (later Mary Stanislaus) writing in 1914 noted that though she could bring the articles of clothing required: 'I am afraid I shall not have much money left to bring to you & my next ½ yearly money is not due till October. I shall have several journeys to make to see my people etc.'⁵⁴ The '½ yearly money' implied some sort of annuity, but it may also pertain to her salary; she had been employed for nine years as a paid companion to a Miss Martyn.⁵⁵

Annie Simmons, like many young women who entered Syon in the first half of the twentieth century, was in paid employment after completing her education. Nursing and teaching as well as clerical and shop work offered safe and respectable occupations for both working class and middle-class young women.⁵⁶ Monica Coyle was a shop assistant for a Mr Lyon, working 12–13 hours a day in a physically demanding job that entailed running up and down flights of stairs.⁵⁷ Scottish-born Ivy Wallace (later Lady Abbess Mary Peter) did secretarial work at a shipping firm.⁵⁸ Nursing seemed to be a popular occupation for Syon Abbey postulants. Florence Glanville (later Sister Mary Gertrude) worked in a Red Cross hospital during the First World War.⁵⁹ Mary Frances West (later Sister Mary Elizabeth) had been a member of the Scottish Nurses Unit in the Balkan Campaign and then afterwards Matron in a hospital in the Fiji Islands.⁶⁰ Alice Cope (later Mary Benedict) had been employed to nurse one of the infirm Birgittines in 1907.⁶¹ Emily Stephens (later Sister Mary Richard) taught at St Joseph's convent school in Cheadle.⁶² Many of the young women entering in the first half of the twentieth century had some experience of paid employment before they entered. Perhaps then it is not surprising to see in the *Poor Souls' Friend* in 1945 an article on 'The Girl Who Works':

⁵⁴ EUL MS 389/2128, Letter from Annie Simmons to Lady Abbess, dated 21 April 1914.

⁵⁵ EUL MS 389/2128, Letter from Annie Simmons to Lady Abbess, dated 4 May 1914.

⁵⁶ Todd 2005, pp. 20, 34–44.

⁵⁷ EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 2 November 1913.

⁵⁸ EUL MS 389/2129, Letter from Ivy Wallace to Lady Abbess, dated 26 February 1931.

⁵⁹ EUL MS 389/653, Note from unknown to Lady Abbess, undated.

⁶⁰ 'Obituaries', PSF, n. s. 22 (1974), p. 15.

⁶¹ 'Syon Notes', PSF, 46 (1938), pp. 117–118. In 1908, she converted to Catholicism. In 1911 she entered Syon Abbey.

⁶² EUL MS 389/2126, Letter from Emily Stephens to Sister Mary Austin, dated 10 September 1923.

God bless the girl who works! She is brave and true and noble. She is not too proud to earn her own living or ashamed to be caught at her daily task. She smiles at you from behind the desk or counter or printer's case. ... Her hand may be stained by dish-washing, sweeping, factory grease or printer's ink, but it is an honest hand. It stays misfortune from home; it supports an invalid loved one, it is a loving, potent shield that protects many a family from the almshouse.⁶³

The Birgittines applauded the working girl. Her manual labour was seen as honourable, especially when it maintained her family.

The austerities of religious life, and the requirement of manual labour (as discussed earlier), were such that the health of potential Birgittines was scrutinised, as we saw in the example of Agnes Weaver. Women who entered religious institutes were required to submit a medical certificate of good health in order to ensure they were able to manage the long hours and physical labour of both active and contemplative religious life. Mena's letters imply the family's health history included tuberculosis, but Dr Kennedy, the Irish Catholic doctor who gave Monica her physical exam noted that

convent life was in every way (physically at least) more suited to Monica's constitutions than a life in the world, especially a married life & possible motherhood.⁶⁴

His intimation that she would remain healthier in an enclosed order suggests she might have been physically slight and unsuited for the physical demands of motherhood. He did have some knowledge of the rigour of religious life; his sister was a Provincial in an active congregation.

Life at Syon Abbey was far from sedentary. Like many enclosed communities, Syon aimed to be a self-sufficient community so, besides praying the Divine Office (itself physically demanding), much of the nun's ordinary workday included manual labour (the *labora* of *ora et labora*). The nuns worked as cleaners, decorators, cooks and farm labourers. In 1925, after their move to Marley House, the nuns were staining the woodwork, painting, distempering walls and whitening ceilings in between 'solemn round[s] of praise and adoration in choir'.⁶⁵ In 1931, 'The whole community went into the woods for the day to saw up the fallen trees.'⁶⁶

63 'The Girl Who Works', PSF, 52 (1945), p. 46.

64 EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 23 September 1913.

65 'The New Syon', PSF, 34 (1926), p. 4.

66 EUL MS 389/195, 'Syon Chronicles January 1921–October 1931'.

Though lay sisters performed much of the domestic work in the abbey, choir sisters also performed significant amounts of manual labour.⁶⁷

Mena Coyle's letters also reflected concerns of declining vocations to religious life. Oftentimes these were blamed on the distractions and pleasures of the modern world or the influence of 'less generous' parents.⁶⁸ In discussing her daughter's search for the right community, Mena Coyle described a conversation with some Little Sisters of the Poor from Leeds who encouraged Monica to visit them, noting that 'it is increasingly difficult to find girls with a vocation for the religious life'.⁶⁹ Despite perceptions about this period as a golden age for vocations, there were already concerns about declining numbers of suitable applicants. By the late 1940s Religious Vocations Exhibitions were being held in an effort to reverse a 'vocation shortage'.⁷⁰ Syon entered its own golden age of vocations in the 1920s but by 1948 they voiced their acute need for postulants.

Now the Novitiate is waiting for *Postulants*. We have made several Novenas for Postulants; the last one was to St Jude to end on his Feast – The Patron of Hopeless Cases.⁷¹

The report of Mary Philippa Straker's clothing ceremony in 1949 included the remark that she was the 'one and only Choir postulant' and 'Now we have plenty of choir Stalls empty for Postulants. Are there none of our readers who have daughters or friends willing to consecrate themselves to the life of Praise of the Holy Mother of God?'.⁷²

Family responses to relatives joining religious communities varied. Mena Coyle was enthusiastic about her daughter's decision. Postulant Annie Simmons' natal family were also understanding. Her family had links to a religious life; her aunt was a Dominican lay sister. She noted that her mother

has often wished that one of us might have been called to Religion – she even mentioned it to me this time I was at home.

⁶⁷ Syon, like other religious communities, had little success in recruiting women willing to enter as lay sisters in the mid-twentieth century.

⁶⁸ For example, 'Vocations', PSF, 56 (1950), p. 30. These sermons and discussions are ubiquitous from the 1940s.

⁶⁹ EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 23 September 1913.

⁷⁰ See my chapter on vocation decline in my forthcoming monograph *Becoming Modern: British Catholic Women and Social Change, 1940–1990*.

⁷¹ 'Syon Notes', PSF, 54 (1948) p. 165.

⁷² 'Syon Notes', PSF, 55 (1949), p. 183; Jones 2015, pp. 128–129.

But she still comments that they were 'grieved at parting'. Annie Simmon's letters unmask the emotional pain of separating from her family. Her own grief in leaving seemed overpowering:

I feel I have to be strong for myself & for my dear ones, because they will not know how much it costs me to leave them & to see them grieve & I do not know if the good God will always give me this strength – if I keep putting it off.⁷³

Whilst some Catholic families like the Coyles and the Simmons were accepting of their daughter's decision to enter religious life, other women faced significant opposition. Ivy Wallace described her family's displeasure to the Lady Abbess. Her mother was 'dead against it and won't consider anything. Only you know she is such a darling really. It is awfully complicated.'⁷⁴ She wrote that her family was

terribly upset but really there isn't anything left to do that would ease matters off for them. The rest are coming home from Eastbourne this afternoon. I came back earlier with one of my brothers. So I shall just wait and say goodbye to them when they come. It would be a lot easier to run off now but it doesn't seem sporting somehow.⁷⁵

Ivy Wallace entered Syon in 1931, becoming Sister Mary Peter and later Lady Abbess (1965–1977).

In the time leading up to her daughter's entry Mena Coyle was exposed to the antipathy felt towards the enclosed religious life by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The Coyle family doctor, on learning Syon's 'rule of life', remarked that the Coyle parents were 'insane, if not inhuman' to allow Monica to enter Syon Abbey and he did not perform her physical examination. He 'asked Monica why she wanted to shut herself up like this'. He was replaced by Dr Kennedy, who confirmed Monica Coyle's good health, but was critical of the fasting at Syon Abbey stating he did not 'understand why these things are necessary'.⁷⁶ Mena Coyle noted the 'sympathetic looks' she received from those who were not Catholics and

the condolences that are so freely offered me when they hear I am losing my daughter ("& such a fine girl too") to a convent, and oh dear! It is such an unsatisfactory task to try & drive home to the world in general even a remote conception of the religious life. Poor England will she ever recover ...⁷⁷

73 EUL MS 389/2128, Letter from Annie Simmon to Lady Abbess, dated 4 May 1914.

74 EUL MS 389/2129, Letter from Ivy Wallace to Lady Abbess, dated 26 February 1931.

75 EUL MS 389/2129, Letter from Ivy Wallace to Lady Abbess, dated 20 April 1931.

76 EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 23 September 1913.

77 EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 2 November 1913.



FIG. 2: Sister Mary Julie Holland at her Golden Jubilee, 1996.
Sister Anne Smyth, personal collection.

Mena concluded that 'there is a lot of ignorant bigotry to be stamped out of the minds of intelligent men even in the 20th Century'. She claimed that 'in common with heaps of people, cath included' there was 'very little if any appreciation or sympathy with enclosed religious'.⁷⁸ Evidence for this disapproval was often mentioned in clerical sermons. In 1927, Bishop Keily at the solemn profession of Sisters Mary Dominic Redpath and Mary Gertrude Glanville expounded that people have 'strange ideas' about contemplatives 'and one of the strangest is that you are doing nothing and good for nothing'.⁷⁹ Likewise, the sermon preached at Sister Mary Julie Holland's profession in 1946 elaborated on a similar point.

The world finds it hard to understand the religious life, calls it unnatural, and of course it is, in so far as anything that is above nature and beyond nature can be unnatural. Without a special call from God it would be presumptuous for anyone to take up such a life.⁸⁰

Such antipathy towards enclosed religious life was often used to reinforce the supernatural nature of a religious vocation.

⁷⁸ EUL MS 389/2125, Letter from Mena [Coyle] to Lady Abbess, dated 22 September 1913.

⁷⁹ 'Solemn Profession at Syon Abbey, S. Brent', PSF, 35 (1927), p. 153.

⁸⁰ 'Syon Notes', PSF, 52 (1946), pp. 130–131. Sister Mary Julie Holland died on 11 November 2016, RIP.

CONCLUSION

In considering Syon's brief 'second spring' we move far too quickly from the triumph of the many aspirants knocking on Syon's door and the resulting bustling novitiate to the uncertainties of the 'second summer' with its ageing population of sisters. Yet, the 1920s were sufficiently fruitful of vocations to sustain the abbey for many decades.

This corpus of letters gives us a sense of women's experiences before becoming nuns. They led busy and fruitful personal and working lives. They made a conscious and oftentimes difficult decision to leave 'the world' for religious life. Some were supported by family and friends, while others were not. The Catholic and non-Catholic world voiced persistent concerns about the utility of religious life. The life was physically rigorous and good health was important to the living of *ora et labora*, but their formation as a postulant and novice, and the subsequent three years in simple vows, gave them time to apprehend the experience of religious life before they made their final commitment. Not all of Syon's postulants became Birgittines; there was no shame in realising that one's vocation was not to religious life. Those who remained were aware community life was not always easy. Though the physical and emotional strains were rarely acknowledged, these women remained committed to their vocation.

The voices heard in these letters are those of capable, mature women with experience of the world who believed it was their vocation to devote their lives to God. And so they did. As the celebrations of Syon's 600th anniversary of its foundation in 2015 made clear, Syon Abbey will always have a special place in the firmament of England's religious orders.

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E. A. JONES

Syon at 500

Quincentenary Celebrations
at Syon Abbey, Chudleigh,
in 1920

THIS ESSAY TAKES its place in a volume marking the sexcentenary of Syon Abbey, the English Birgittine house. Readers may already have noticed from my title, however, that Syon's last centenary was celebrated a little less than one hundred years ago. For explanation, let us turn to the issue of Syon's magazine, *The Poor Souls Friend*, for July–August 1965. Sister Mary Francis, the magazine's editor, wrote: 'This is a memorable year for the Syon community for it includes several important dates connected with the foundation of Syon – which make this, in a certain sense, a year of Jubilee.' She went on to note that 1965 marked 550 years since the laying of the foundation stone of Syon Abbey at Twickenham by Henry V on 22 February 1415, and since the issue of the king's charter of foundation shortly afterwards on 3 March, as also of the arrival of the party of Swedish nuns and brothers on 13 May of that year. But 1965 was only 'in a sense' a year of jubilee. 'However memorable the dates in this year are,' Sister Mary Francis continued, 'the actual foundation of Syon is reckoned not as 1415 but 1420' – on the basis that it was not until 21 April of that year that the first nuns and brothers of Syon made their professions and the community elected its first abbess; in short, 'It was in this latter year that the monastery was canonically established.'¹ Although additions to the Calendar in the *Syon Martiloge* include both 22 February (for the laying of the first stone in 1415) and 21 April (the first professions in 1420), it is on the latter

¹ *The Poor Soul's Friend* (henceforth PSF), n.s. 13 (1965), p. 110. For the foundation of Syon see Johnston 1969; Tait 2013. There was, however, no special celebration in 1970; by then the community's eyes were already turned towards the sexcentenary of Saint Birgitta herself, which was celebrated in 1973. Some of us, incidentally, were lucky enough to be able to celebrate 21 April this year in the cloister of Syon Abbey's convent in Lisbon, as part of the Syon at 600 project.

date each year that Syon has always remembered, and continues to remember, its foundation.²

FIFTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS TO-DAY!

In 1920, Syon Abbey had been established in the purpose-built convent at Chudleigh for more than thirty years.³ The community had arrived in 1887 from Spetisbury in Dorset, where they had been settled since their return to England back in 1861, and now it was thriving. A few years after their arrival in Chudleigh, in 1893, the nuns launched their Rosary Crusade, an association that offered prayers for the holy souls in purgatory, and promised members masses and prayers on and after their own deaths. The Crusade was promoted in another of Syon's new ventures, the monthly *Poor Soul's Friend*. The magazine was an immediate success: it could already boast 2 000 subscribers within its first six months. (It continued into the 1970s.) In 1897, by papal licence, the community began once more to use the Birgittine breviary, whose use had been discontinued in the early years at Lisbon. Numbers grew: already in 1913, for instance, twenty-three of the convent's twenty-seven cells were occupied; and further land was acquired for grazing. A number of medieval manuscripts were re-acquired, either by purchase or donation, to join those few volumes that had remained in the sisters' collection since before the dissolution, and the community sought the restoration of other treasures that had been dispersed in the nineteenth century. Their most notable success was the return of the original deed of reincorporation under Mary Tudor, signed by Cardinal Reginald Pole and dated 1556, which came back to Syon in 1905.⁴

As it happens, 21 April 1920 passed without great ceremony. Sister Mary Francis, whose expanded 'Syon Diary' is a rich source for the years 1911–1924,⁵ recorded: 'THE FIFTH CENTENARY of the first Professions at Syon, Isleworth. The feast was kept very quietly, as his Lordship the Bishop wishes a more public thanksgiving to be made about June.' Masses were said by two priests who enjoyed close associations with the abbey: Ernest Graf of Buckfast

2 Gejrot 2015, pp. 38–39. Personal information, Sister Anne Smyth.

3 For Syon's return to England, see Jones 2015, pp. 95–116.

4 See Jones 2015, pp. 109–111. A series of letters relating to the return of Cardinal Pole's deed are kept at EUL MS 389/106. For more on the dispersal and return of Syon artefacts, see Erik Bijzet's essay, on p. 339–366 in this volume.

5 'Chronicles of Syon Abbey or Memorandum', alternatively known as 'Syon Diary kept by Sr M. Francis, 1911–1924'. EUL MS 389/18. Except where stated otherwise, references in the rest of this essay are to dated entries in this source (whose pages are unnumbered). In quotations from the diary, a few errors have been corrected and the corrections enclosed in square brackets.



FIG. 1: The Syon community in 1919. Sister Anne Smyth, personal collection.

Abbey, the refounded community of Benedictines who were Syon's near neighbours, and Benedict Williamson, a well-known church architect and convert who, under the influence of Elisabeth Hesselblad, had been attempting to re-found the order of Birgittine brothers, and was an important figure at Syon in the 1920s. High Mass at 10 am was sung by Syon's resident chaplain, Canon Augustin Morford. The community had prepared for the day of celebration with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the night preceding, and the day after, 22 April, they entertained the visiting priests with a tea in the community room.

So the day itself was a relatively quiet affair. But as we have seen, the community had already been in discussion with the bishop over plans for something more ambitious later in the year. John Keily (bishop of Plymouth, 1911–1928) had first come to Syon to talk about the approaching quincentenary at the end of 1919. He arrived on 19 December, bringing with him his secretary, Father Patrick Barrett, who had previously served as the community's chaplain.

They both came into [the] Community room and discussed about the Centenary. His Lordship most graciously proposed that the occasion should be celebrated with the greatest possible solemnity, and be made known[n] as widely as might be, to the public, not merely for the sake of making it known, but in order to make public thanksgiving to God for His wonderful mercies to our holy Order during all these past years.

The day would include a public benediction on the lawn in the front garden, and pamphlets would be printed and sold at an affordable price, to make better known the narrative of the community's extraordinary history.

His Lordship graciously promised to carry things out with the greatest solemnity, to invite the Cardinal and as many Ecclesiastics as he could. He intends that it shall be an occasion for us to remember all our lives. It should be, he thought, the close of a period of the life of our holy Order, and the commencement of a new era. We must all pray much in preparation and commend the whole affair to Our Blessed Lord.

Bishop Keily did not, however, leave matters only in the hands of divine providence. He was at Syon again 2–3 January 1920 and, though no details of the visit are given, we may assume that the quincentenary figured large among the topics of conversation. He visited again, accompanied by Father Barrett and another priest, on 27 February, and again on 10 March; Keily and Barrett were at Syon from the 25th to the 27th of the same month, and the bishop returned on 16 April. As we have seen, he was not at Syon for the celebration on 21 April, but he came again on 7 and 28 May.

Keily's solicitude for the nuns of Syon was in character. Following his death in 1928, his obituary in *The Tablet* recalled that 'it was one of the consolations of his episcopal life to welcome and add houses of the contemplative Orders to the riches of his diocese'.⁶ At a time when the overwhelming majority of new foundations for women religious were characterised by an active apostolate, the south west of England, and specifically the diocese of Plymouth, was unusual for its number of convents for contemplative nuns.⁷ Keily had written movingly of his regard for them shortly before his death:

These religious houses, which in this poor diocese are amazingly scattered among you, are authentic – they are not pious devotions or committees of holy people; for their Office, for their prayers, for their mortifications they are the official Act of the Church of God in their life of prayer. With regard to them we have sadly noticed a

6 From his obituary in *The Tablet*, 29 September 1928, p. 27.

7 Walsh 2002, p. 77.



FIG. 2: Syon Abbey, Chudleigh, the chapel. From an early twentieth-century postcard. EUL MS 389/3939. Courtesy: University of Exeter, Special Collections.

matter of fact way in which so many of them of high name and great tradition are just left. One is anxious you should know their power of intercession with God, and make use of a neighbourhood which warms the atmosphere by its devotion, its unceasing and unfailing ways in His Holy Service. In handing over to me the Diocese of Plymouth, Bishop Graham, from his death-bed, gave this as his last legacy to me: – ‘Remember your nuns – they always pray for you, and will not forget you.’⁸

There is a genuine warmth in his correspondence with the Abbess of Syon, Mary Teresa Jocelyn, during this period. His obituary in *The Poor Soul’s Friend* in turn pays affectionate tribute to ‘a friendship of twenty-five years’. It too notes ‘his tender care and fatherly affection for souls consecrated to God in religion’: with his death, the religious communities of the diocese have lost ‘a very dear father and a most loyal friend and supporter’.⁹

Keily intended that the anniversary would be marked by the award (or the restoration) to Syon of a number of markers of special spiritual distinction: that is, that the Holy See would be petitioned to allow the nuns to take solemn vows, to observe papal enclosure, and to elect a perpetual abbess. On 6 January 1920,

⁸ Quoted in *The Tablet*, 29 September 1928, p. 27.

⁹ PSF 36 (1928–1929), pp. 222–226; quotations from pp. 223 and 224.

immediately after the bishop's first visit, the community began a novena of masses for the intention. For the time being, however, the main focus of attention was the public celebration of the quincentenary, whose date had been fixed for 27 July, the Tuesday following the feast of Saint Birgitta on the 23rd. There was much to be done before the community would be ready to welcome the large number of visitors anticipated. In March, they whitewashed the cloister. At the beginning of May, the lower grate room, where visitors could be received by the nuns, was redecorated. Later that month, Brother Peter came over from Buckfast Abbey to overhaul the bells. On 15 May scaffolding went up in the abbey church, which was to be cleaned and re-coloured in readiness. At the end of the month

Mr. Baker came (Sr. Margaret's brother, a mason by trade, but pensioned off by the Government on his returning from the war, being disabled during the fighting.) He came to clean the stone Altars in our Church, willingly giving his services free of charge as a thanksgiving to God for sparing his life during the Great War.¹⁰

Work on the church was finished on 10 June. During July, the community room, staircases and kitchen were redecorated, work on the latter being done entirely by the layisters themselves, and the turn was varnished.¹¹

In the mean time, progress had been made on Bishop Keily's desire for Syon's story to 'be made known as widely as might be' by the writing of a short history. The author was Dudley Baxter (1872–1927), a convert and Oxford graduate, founder of the Catholic Reading Guild (formerly the Catholic Newspaper Guild) and author of numerous catholic historical pamphlets.¹² He had previously written a short account of Syon's history which was published by the abbey in 1907.¹³ *Five Centuries Record of the English Bridgettines of Syon Abbey, 1420–1920* begins with an acknowledgment that: 'Probably not one person in ten thousand knows that away in the quiet Devon hills there exists a community of English nuns who have an unbroken history of over five hundred years, yet such is the case.' In a couple of dozen pages, it gives a concise and piously readable account of the community from its foundation until the arrival at Chudleigh asking, in conclusion, 'After such a record of half a thousand years, who can fail to recognize the manifest power of God, in Whose sight "a thousand years are

10 'Syon Diary', 29 May 1920. He died the following January.

11 The turn was a device shaped like a half-barrel and set in the cloister wall: it could be rotated so as to permit items to be passed in and out of the monastery without violating the enclosure.

12 See his obituary in *The Tablet*, 11 June 1927, p. 26.

13 Baxter 1907. The account had first appeared in the weekly *Catholic Fireside* the previous year.

but as yesterday, which is past, and as a watch in the night!'.¹⁴ Baxter presented a copy of his text to the queen on 23 April,¹⁵ and soon afterwards, the nuns sent it for printing, with a request for quotes for initial runs of either 1 000 or 2 000. Advance copies arrived at the beginning of July, and were sent to Bishop Keily and Cardinal Bourne.

Copies of the *Five Centuries Record* were sent to the kings and queens of England, Spain and Sweden. (The formal reply of George V, dated 2 August from HM Yacht Victoria & Albert, and expressing thanks and hearty congratulations to the community on their anniversary, is still in the archive).¹⁶ They were also included with the formal invitations to the quincentenary celebrations which were individually handwritten and sent out at the beginning of July.¹⁷ On the 4th, Abbess Jocelyn sent the guest list to the bishop for his approval, and on the 6th a poster advertising the 'Grand Centenary at Syon Abbey, Chudleigh, S. Devon' was sent to Exeter for printing (100 or 200 copies). The archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Francis Bourne, had agreed to attend, and on 23 July, a throne was installed in the chapel for his use. The following day Bishop Keily and Father Barrett visited to check that all was in order, before returning on the 26th, when the cardinal also arrived in Chudleigh. The garden was hung with sacred bannerettes and mottoes in gold.¹⁸ And so, at last, all was in readiness.

Sister Mary Francis's diary is carefully and uniformly type-written, with the exception of one entry. Against 27 July 1920 she has written, in a large and exuberant hand, *Fifth Centenary Celebrations to-day!* Pontifical mass was celebrated by Bishop Keily, and the homily was given by Cardinal Bourne. Years later, the Syon community still treasured memories of the cardinal's visit, and recalled 'one of those addresses in which he knew how to describe and express the spirit of an event, a date or an anniversary'.¹⁹ 'We are assembled here to-day for an occasion that would be quite exceptional in any country, an occasion which is unique and without example, as far as England is concerned', the cardinal began, and went on to delineate the double celebration due on such a day: both a sharing in the 'personal and intimate joy' of the nuns themselves, for

¹⁴ [Baxter] 1920, pp. 1, 24. The text was serialised in PSF 28 (1920–21), pp. 54–59, 78–83, 94–95, and also in four issues of the *Plymouth Diocesan Record*, vol. 1, between August and December 1920.

¹⁵ *The Tablet*, 1 May 1920, p. 28.

¹⁶ EUL MS 389/271. The text was reproduced at the head of the second instalment of the *Five Centuries Record* in the *Plymouth Diocesan Record* 1 (1920), pp. 60–61.

¹⁷ Replies to the invitations are gathered in EUL MS 389/23.

¹⁸ This detail from *The Tablet*, 31 July 1920, p. 23.

¹⁹ From his obituary, PSF 42 (1934–1935), p. 333.

their five hundred years of history, and joy for the whole of the English catholic community, for whom Syon is a reminder that England was a Roman Catholic country before ever it was Protestant, and for the greater part of its history.

There is a phrase in connection with you that I daresay has come into many minds, even as it has come into my own, that you are a relic of the past. Yet I feel that there is no phrase less suited to your position and condition, for a relic is a sacred memory of something that is dead. You, my dear Sisters, are living to-day, you are the living link with that pre-Reformation Catholic Church, you are a living vessel filled with living sap, rescued by Almighty God from all the devastation and wreck of the Reformation of the 16th century, and you are given to us to enable our thanksgiving to Almighty God to be the greater, and to be a lesson of encouragement to us, showing us the things for which we have to strive in the future, lest our courage should become slack. We have to look back to the Catholic past, we have to look forward to a Catholic future in God's good time, and your presence in our midst is a pledge of the protection God will give to us in doing our work, if only we remain faithful to Him as you have done in the past for the re-establishing yourselves in the present.²⁰

Mass was followed by a sumptuous luncheon,²¹ attended by many guests, including several whose presence recalled particular phases of Syon's long and colourful history: the Rt Hon. Charles Clifford, of the Cliffords of neighbouring Ugbrooke Park, and a descendant of the bishop of London who had received the first vows at Syon in 1420; Dr John Cullen, president of the English College at Lisbon, where the community had spent more than 250 years between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Father Eric Green, parish priest of St Bridget's, Isleworth, Syon's medieval neighbours, whose predecessor John Hale had suffered with Richard Reynolds in 1535. The bishop read a congratulatory telegram from the Pope, and letters from the kings and queens of England and of Spain, and the Lord Mayor of London, while Abbess Jocelyn presented Cardinal Bourne with a specially-bound copy of the *Mirror of Our Lady*. In his vote of thanks, the cardinal remarked 'whatever else we may do, whatever other occasion we may keep, whatever other feast may call us together in different parts of England, never shall we be summoned, I suppose, except here, to keep a five hundredth anniversary'.²²

²⁰ An account of the ceremony, including the full text of Bourne's address, was printed in PSF 28 (1920–1921), pp. 138–147; this quotation, p. 142. The corrected typescript of Bourne's address, with manuscript additions corresponding to the report in PSF, is EUL MS 389/5. A summary appeared in *The Tablet*, 31 July 1920, p. 23.

²¹ The lunch menu is preserved at EUL MS 389/3684.

²² From PSF 28 (1920–1921), p. 145.

PUT IN THE OLD WAYS AGAIN ...

A couple of days later, on 31 July, the bishop telegrammed to say that he had received approval from Rome for the taking of solemn vows, papal enclosure, and the election of a perpetual abbess. Although, as we have seen, the restoration of these privileges had formed part of the original plans for the quincentenary, the timetable had slipped somewhat. It was only on 16 June that Bishop Keily had asked Abbess Jocelyn for a summary of Syon's case for solemn vows and a perpetual abbacy. Jocelyn's arguments are recorded in Sister Mary Francis's 'Syon Diary' under that date. In both cases, the abbess was able to argue that what was being requested was no new privilege, but a restoration of Syon's ancient rights. The abbess of Syon had been a life appointment, she said, until 1607, when, in the light of post-Tridentine reforms across the church, triennial elections were imposed on the community as part of the price they had to pay for papal protection during their time in Lisbon. Now, Jocelyn argues,

with the Community's return to their native land, the circumstances which brought about this change no longer existing, they have again humbly pleaded for the favour of their Vows now being made Solemn, and the return, in conformity with the Holy Rule of our Most Holy Saviour, of a Perpetual Abbacy.

As to vows at Syon, they had always been solemn, and Jocelyn had believed, at the time of her own profession, that she was taking solemn vows. That assumption had only later been questioned by 'certain Priests', in light of the fact that, in all other orders and congregations in England, women were permitted to take only simple (that is, temporary) vows. When these priests were challenged by the abbess, 'They did not give a very clear reply as to how a change of country could affect the Vows of members of a Religious Order and of the same Monastery.' Given Abbess Jocelyn's formidable reputation, as well as her encyclopedic knowledge of the community's history and traditions, one can well imagine the presumptuous priests' discomfort.

So, with papal permission granted, another round of intense preparation could begin. In early September a local craftsman came to instal a grille to partition the nuns' choir from the rest of the church. Bishop Keily and Father Barrett were there to see the work begun, and returned on the 23rd to perambulate the boundaries of the enclosure, and to identify any repairs needed. On 13 October a load of timber came from Ashburton saw-mills for a new fence. There were also technical questions to settle. In early September Bishop Keily was taking advice over the position of laysisters under papal

enclosure.²³ When, on 24 September, Sister Mary Paul Hardstaff-Stafford made her first, simple profession, she became the first choir nun to take temporary vows. She wore the black veil but no ring, crown or mantle. These final distinguishing elements of the Birgittine habit, wrote Sister Mary Francis, would be given at the taking of Solemn Vows 'in three years time, or maybe five years, this is not yet finally decided by the Holy See, so far as we now know'.²⁴ One thing was, however, decided that day: Mary Teresa Jocelyn was, surely to no-one's great surprise, elected as perpetual abbess. She would be installed the following spring.

On 13 April the abbess, accompanied by Benedict Williamson, walked around the enclosure, checking the fences for winter damage, and a carpenter from Chudleigh came to make good any breaches. On 2 May Father Barrett arrived, bringing 'a great many cakes etc'; the next day the bishop came, and on 4 May 1921 Mary Teresa Jocelyn was installed as perpetual abbess.²⁵ By one of those happy coincidences that punctuate Syon's history (and that it is always tempting to ascribe not to chance, but to providence) 4 May was both the feast of Syon's martyr, Richard Reynolds, and the eve of the anniversary of the installation of the community's first canonically-elected abbess, Joan North, in 1420.²⁶ The ceremony employed the same medieval rite that had been used for the profession of Joan North, and the medieval abbesses who had succeeded her. Bishop Keily celebrated Mass, assisted by about a dozen priests. At the Gradual Jocelyn left her stall and prostrated herself in the sanctuary, where she made her oath of obedience and was presented with a vellum-bound copy of the Birgittine Rule. After the bishop's address, the abbess was conducted into the enclosure, where each of the nuns in turn made her obedience. Following

²³ Reply to Keily's request from Thomas Bergh, abbot of St Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, 14 September 1920, in EUL MS 389/565.

²⁴ The term was duly set at three years. When the community revised its constitutions in the aftermath of Vatican II, however, the period was increased to five years.

²⁵ See *Solemn Blessing and Installation of the Lady Abbess at Syon Abbey, Chudleigh, S. Devon*, an undated pamphlet presumably issued by the Abbey itself shortly after the event. The text was reproduced in PSF 29 (1921), pp. 76–84, and *Plymouth Diocesan Record* 3:2 (September 1921). There are copies of the pamphlet with the archive at EUL MS 389/193 and 2911, and a draft in typescript at EUL MS 389/1245. There is a different account in typescript at EUL MS 389/266, and a summary in *The Tablet*, 14 May 1921, p. 25.

²⁶ As Bishop Keily put it in his address, 'Surely coincidences are not all coincidences, in the strict sense of the word, but God, Who has been behind our lives all the time, has so made all things come together': *Solemn Blessing*, p. 5. The choice of this significant date had been Abbess Jocelyn's idea: see the letter from Jocelyn to Bishop Keily, dated 5 March 1920, in Exeter: Plymouth Diocesan Archives/Bridgettines.

the conclusion of the Mass, the congregation came to the grille to congratulate Abbess Jocelyn, before a tour of the enclosure and a lunch for about sixty guests in the community room.

It had been the intention to administer the nuns' solemn vows on the same occasion, and to implement papal enclosure, but in the event those plans had to be postponed 'because the hoardings were not all up round the boundary enclosure'.²⁷ Instead, Keily returned the next month, leading a short retreat and interviewing the nuns individually before they made their solemn vows during Mass on 11 June 1921, following which the bishop made the formal declaration of papal enclosure. In his opening address at their retreat, Keily summed up all the events of the preceding months, congratulating the community on their decision to take solemn vows, and remarking:

the Church has given you a great chance in your Solemn Vows to offer your gratitude by a complete surrender of yourselves to our Divine Lord. You have been put in the old ways again, in spite of all that has been done to destroy you: you have been put back into the old position of being solemnly dedicated to Almighty God, giving yourselves to Him in such a manner, that it is not possible to make it more solemn, for there is no word in the human language and no offering from the human heart to make it more solemn.²⁸

RETURNING ROMEWARDS?

19 July 2015 saw a celebration of Syon's sexcentenary (the six hundredth anniversary, that is, of the foundation by Henry V) at Syon Park, Isleworth. The event was organised jointly with Syon Park by the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady of Sorrows and St Bridget, Isleworth, and the Anglican church of All Saints, Isleworth.²⁹ The ecumenical character of the celebration was stressed by the celebrant, the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who began his homily:

This is a most remarkable celebration: different Christian communities, united in one voice to praise and thank God for the foundation of a Catholic monastery 600 years ago, Syon Abbey! It's a marvellous testimony to how you, the Christians of Isleworth and Brentford, have worked together joyfully to make today's historic service possible.

²⁷ As noted by Sister Mary Francis, 'Syon Diary', 4 May 1921.

²⁸ From a typescript set of extracts from Bishop Keily's conferences at the retreat, EUL MS 389/115, p. 2.

²⁹ For a record of the occasion, see <http://www.syonabbey600.org.uk/>.

And he went on to quote Pope Francis:

The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions ... We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face.³⁰

Nichols's tone is in marked contrast to that earlier Cardinal Archbishop, Francis Bourne, in his address at Syon's quincentenary celebrations (made, of course, in a very different context). For him, the anniversary

brings home to us what I believe to be a very important fact, which we very often forget, a fact which is speedily lost sight of by our fellow countrymen in this country, who will be greatly astonished at what I am going to say. We are so accustomed to the atmosphere of Protestantism which surrounds us that we are apt to think, as our national countrymen do, that the natural and normal condition of England is the possession of a Christianity separated from the unity of the Apostolic See, in other words, to be a Protestant country.

Yet, if we look at things, not in the light shed upon them by our immediate surroundings, but in their true perspective of history, we shall see that the normal and natural condition of England is the possession of the only true Christianity, in union with the Apostolic See of Rome.³¹

The polemical tone intensified, as Bourne, speaking less than two years after the defeat of Germany in the Great War, continued:

I think we may say without exaggeration, that if, in the 16th century the English people had been left to themselves, the schism of Henry VIII would never have become the stubborn heresy it did. These are things that could not have been said perhaps a few years ago so loudly as we can say them now. If there had not been distinctly Lutheran influence coming to us over the North Sea from Germany, the schism of Henry VIII would have been won over and ultimately healed. You see it was the heresy coming to us from German Lutheranism that gave to England its distinctive Christianity, and brought about the permanent separation from the Holy See.³²

For Bourne, 'Christian unity' can only be envisaged as reunification. As he reminds the nuns of Syon:

³⁰ The full text of the homily is available at <http://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/homilies/600th-anniversary-of-foundation-of-syon-abbey/>. The quotation is from the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), §244.

³¹ From the account in PSF 42 (1934–1935), pp. 139–140.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

You, my dear Sisters, have the great privilege of carrying us back to that time when there was only one Faith, when all peoples were united in the acceptance of the Catholic Faith, and were in obedience to the Apostolic See.³³

This was by no means the only occasion on which Bourne advanced such arguments. Indeed, Mark Vickers has shown that

Much of his episcopate was spent refuting Anglican claims to continuity with the pre-Reformation Catholic Church in England. He lost no opportunity of asserting that the Catholic Church, through union with the successor of St Peter, her doctrine and liturgy, was the sole valid successor of the faith brought to these shores by St Augustine.³⁴

In this he is echoed closely by Dudley Baxter, in his anniversary account of Syon's history, the *Five Centuries Record*. Baxter celebrates Syon as 'the sole survivor of the wreck and ruin of the Reformation', continuing: 'Its very existence and the cause of its long exile in the past, are in themselves a refutation of the modern Anglican claims to continuity.'³⁵ He goes on to express the hope that 'this historic monastery may have to play a part as great in the life of Catholic England of to-day, as it did in the great days of old', before making explicit his prayer that, not only Syon Abbey, but the Roman Catholic faith in England, might one day be restored to its former position:

Would that the promise made of old by Our Saviour to Saint Bridget that 'in whatsoever country there should be a monastery of her Order, *there* He would grant an increase in prosperity,' might be fulfilled at this season of thanksgiving and rejoicing. God grant that the gentle Saint once so beloved in Catholic England, may obtain for this country the one grace without which there is no real prosperity, the grace of the Ancient Faith!³⁶

The same hope appears at the conclusion of the little pamphlet produced to commemorate the installation of Mary Teresa Jocelyn as perpetual abbess the following year:

Alone of England's countless religious Communities, Syon Abbey ... has survived and seems destined to a future almost as glorious as its past. Alone it literally links us

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Vickers 2013, p. 470. Behind the scenes, in contrast to his public utterances, Bourne was open to dialogue with representatives of the Church of England. See Vickers 2013, pp. 475–510. For a less sympathetic view of Bourne, see Aspden 2002.

³⁵ [Baxter] 1920, p. 23.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

with our Catholic forefathers and some happy day may be the instrument of proving to our compatriots, now returning Romewards, that real continuity is only to be found where it was *never lost*.³⁷

Was England really ‘returning Romewards’? Perhaps Baxter’s enthusiasm was running away with him. But nonetheless, as Sheridan Gilley has observed: ‘The era between the world wars was something of a golden age in the history of Catholicism in England’.³⁸ In 1920 there were a little under two million Roman Catholics in England and Wales, a total only just short of the number of communicants in the Church of England. (By 1950, Catholics would outnumber Anglicans).³⁹ The annual number of conversions to Catholicism (a figure published proudly in the *Catholic Directory* each year) was consistently in four figures during the first half of the twentieth century, and reached its peak of over 12 000 in 1920.⁴⁰ Francis Bourne’s installation as Archbishop of Westminster in 1903 was the first public occasion to be celebrated in Westminster Cathedral, an exuberant and ambitious architectural statement of confidence, newly-built in the heart of London. Its consecration in 1910 doubled as a celebration of the diamond jubilee of the restoration of the hierarchy in England and Wales, back in 1850.⁴¹ Two years earlier, London had hosted the 1908 Eucharistic Congress, an annual festival in honour of the Real Presence. Tens of thousands of lay Catholics joined delegates from twenty-five countries, including seven cardinals, fourteen archbishops, 75 bishops, 21 abbots, and 2 000 priests, over four days in September.⁴² The *Plymouth Diocesan Record*, looking back on those days, recalled ‘London was a Catholic city once again, and during those blissful days it sheltered more clergy and more laity than it did in the days preceding the Reformation’.⁴³

At the same time, the vehement opposition that the congress provoked in some circles, that led to fears of public disorder, and the resignation of two cabinet ministers, also shows the persistence of anti-Catholic sentiment and the climate of sectarianism that forms the backdrop to interventions such as Bourne’s and Baxter’s.⁴⁴ In 1920, we recall, Britain was in the midst of the

37 *Solemn Blessing*, p. 8. I suspect that Baxter may have been the author, though I have yet to find confirmation of this.

38 Gilley 1999, p. 23.

39 Currie 1977; see also *British Religion in Numbers*, <http://www.brin.ac.uk/>.

40 Gilley 1999, p. 40.

41 Doyle 1995, p. 48.

42 Devlin 1994, p. 409, note 9.

43 Editorial, 1:2 (August 1920), p. 3.

44 Machin 1983; Devlin 1994.

Anglo-Irish War, and May 1921, as well as the installation of Abbess Jocelyn, saw the partition of Ireland.

A RETURN FOR THE RANSOMED?⁴⁵

While the author of the pamphlet on Jocelyn's installation was sharing in the general Catholic confidence of these years when he imagined England 'returning Romewards', Dudley Baxter had more specific hopes for the Syon community. 'Perhaps the day may come,' he wrote, 'when the voice of praise shall once more be heard on the ancient site of Isleworth where it has been so long silent, and the children of Syon return to their old home once more.'⁴⁶ Cardinal Bourne, speaking at the lunch following the quincentenary mass, likewise observed that 'the wholesome dreams of Syon will not be fulfilled till it returns to the banks of the Thames'. Humorously protesting to Bishop Keily that he was not trying to 'poach' his nuns, he was, he says, not necessarily advocating that the entire community should leave Devon, 'but I trust the day will come when they may again take possession of at least a part of the lands which once belonged to their own home at Isleworth'.⁴⁷ Keily himself in any case shared the hopes of Baxter and Bourne, as he confirmed in his address to the congregation at the installation of Abbess Jocelyn the following year:

We wish you joy and blessing and the grace of God, and that you may, in God's good time, come back once more to ancient Syon, so that people may understand how futile are the doings of men.⁴⁸

The community's medieval home in Isleworth had, of course, passed to the Crown at the Dissolution, and in 1594 had been acquired by Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland. The Percy Earls (latterly Dukes) of Northumberland had held Syon House ever since (as they still do). Throughout its long exile, nonetheless, the community had been sustained by the hope that they would one day return to 'Old Syon'. They carried with them, at what must have been extraordinary inconvenience, the portion of richly-carved stone reputedly from the abbey gatehouse upon which part of the executed Richard Reynolds's body had been displayed in 1535 – a relic in equal measure of the abbey's martyr and of

45 Cf. Isaiah 35:10, 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away' (AV).

46 [Baxter] 1920, p. 23.

47 PSF 42 (1934–1935), p. 146.

48 *Solemn Blessing*, p. 5.

its former home.⁴⁹ And they likewise, having never surrendered them to Henry VIII's commissioners, retained the original monastery keys throughout their exile.⁵⁰ In the early 1670s, the community was visited in Lisbon by the British naval officer James Jenifer, who reported:

This Nunnery is called by the name of Syon House, in memory of our Syon House, by Brentford, and dedicated to the honour of St Bridget; but the professors were removed in the reign of Henry the Eighth, some into Flanders, and they rest here, and such is the fondness of these real devouts, that they hope to return to their original foundation; but I doubt their harps will rust upon the willows, before they will be able to tune that song of Syon aright.⁵¹

Compared with the bluff (if biblically well-versed) pragmatism of Jenifer, the pious hopes of Baxter, Bourne and Keily sound like sentimental pipe-dreams. But for one brief moment in the early 1920s, the notion of a return to the abbey's original home seemed to enter the realm of the possible.

Early in 1921, the community had received a rather excited letter from Eric Green, parish priest of St Bridget's Isleworth, an old friend who had been with the nuns for the festivities the previous summer:

Dear Lady Abbess

I write to you in great haste to tell you that your old home, Sion House, is to be let at once (for ten years) ... The stables, which during the war were turned into a hospital, would suit you much better than the large house, and they have a garden and are all enclosed. The stables are built on the only part of the old foundation that remains – Once you were there who knows what might happen in ten years. I really do think it possible something may come of it.

How to approach the Duke I cant [*sic*] say – perhaps to be perfectly simple and write to him direct and suggest to him your return. The stables include a very large hall and plenty of small rooms for cells.⁵²

⁴⁹ See the front cover of this volume.

⁵⁰ They were among the treasures lost in the nineteenth century when Abbess Halford's attempted return to England founded: see Erik Bijzert's essay on p. 339 in this volume. Earlier in the same century, the Duke of Northumberland had visited the community in Lisbon: 'They told him they still had the keys of Syon House; "But," said the Duke, "I have altered the locks since then".' Aungier 1840, p. 111, note 2.

⁵¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission 1896, p. 24. The allusion is to Psalm 137 (AV): 'By the rivers of Babylon, / there we sat down, yea, we wept / when we remembered Zion. / We hung our harps / upon the willows in the midst of it. / For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, / and those who plundered us requested mirth, / Saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"' (1–3).

⁵² Quoted by Sister Mary Francis in her diary entry for 25 January 1921. Letters from Green dating between 1907 and 1927 (including the second page only of the present letter) are included in the

Green, with his local information, was able to give Syon advance warning of something that would presently become general knowledge. A few weeks later *The Times* reported that the Duke of Northumberland was indeed making Syon House available furnished on a fixed-term lease; his town house in Princes Gate in Knightsbridge was also to be let.⁵³

These were straitened times for the English aristocracy. To the agricultural depression of the early twentieth century, which had severely hit landholders' incomes, were added the labour shortages and social changes that followed the Great War, capped by death duties, which (though first introduced at the end of the previous century) had been increased by the Lloyd George government in 1909 with the express aim of precipitating the break-up of the great estates.⁵⁴ When the 7th Duke of Northumberland died in 1918, his son and heir, Alan Ian Percy, inherited a large tax bill alongside no fewer than five great houses. In addition to Syon, there was the family's principal seat of Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, Keilder Castle in the same county, Albury Park (Surrey) and Stanwick Park (Yorkshire): some rationalisation was inevitable. But Syon House did not immediately find a taker.

By May 1921 the Duke had engaged new agents in the matter, Knight, Frank & Rutley of London, but the senior partner in the firm, Sir Howard Frank, wrote to him with a gloomy assessment of his chances:

With the country in its present disturbed condition and with very little prospect of an immediate settlement I think it extremely unlikely that any private person will take Syon House to live there. Apart from the cost there are few people just now who care to take a very large house necessitating, as it does, a big staff of servants. I hope that things will improve in the future, but I am afraid it will be some time.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the Duke pressed ahead and the house and park were re-advertised on 10 May 1921.⁵⁶

It is from about this time that we have our first record of contact between the nuns and the Northumberland estate. (Despite Eric Green's urgings, there seems to have been no attempt at a direct approach earlier in the year.) Dudley

bundle at EUL MS 389/2425. Some years earlier he had tried to interest the community in Syon Lodge, at the northern edge of Syon Park, the former home of the novelist George Manville Fenn (d. 1909). EUL MS 389/2425, letter dated 28 February 1913.

53 *The Times*, 12 February 1921 (issue 42643), p. 10.

54 Worsley 2002, pp. 7–24.

55 Letter of 2 May 1921, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, From DP: D8/I/17. My thanks to Chris Hunwick for this reference.

56 *The Times*, 10 May 1921 (issue 42716), p. 21.

Baxter acted as intermediary, writing to the Duke at the beginning of May 1921, apparently to suggest some kind of gesture in recognition of Abbess Jocelyn's installation.⁵⁷ The 8th Duke was, however, unlikely to prove receptive. Alan Ian Percy was a staunch Anglican, and vice-chairman of the House of Laity in the National Church Assembly (forerunner of the General Synod of the Church of England); he was also a 'diehard' right-wing Tory known for his 'extravagantly reactionary opinions', who later that year rebelled against his party over the Anglo-Irish treaty, advocating rather than the creation of the Irish Free State the invasion and reconquest of the whole of Ireland.⁵⁸ Baxter's letter received a short and rather cool reply. The Duke could not do anything for the nuns of Syon, he wrote, regretting that he was 'very sorry I cannot undertake to do what you ask. ... I think such a present would come more suitably from one who was not, in their view, a heretic.'⁵⁹

Nevertheless there was evidently still some life in the notion of a return to 'Old Syon'. In the summer of 1921 Henry Browne S.J., professor of Greek at University College Dublin, founder of the university's Classical Museum, and a friend of Benedict Williamson, was in London.⁶⁰ He wrote to Abbess Jocelyn on 23 August: he had visited Syon House and seen it 'from top to bottom'. He describes it with an antiquarian's eye, identifying the gothic vaulting of the undercroft as likely a remnant of the medieval abbey (an opinion shared by current archaeological thinking). 'The House looks enormous from the outside – but it is really a hollow quadrangle,' he writes, and provides a sketch of the elevation and plan, before proposing a suggestion for how the building might be re-converted into a monastery: 'I think one side should be converted into a church – the opposite side pulled down or converted into something – and the 2 remaining opposite sides adapted to monks and nuns refecting.' He goes on: 'Fr. Benedict is not in favour of the scheme – but I cannot see why it shd not come off someday.'⁶¹

But it was not to be. While he was showing interested parties, such as Henry Browne, around Syon House, Northumberland was trying to find a buyer for another of his subsidiary estates, Stanwick Park in Yorkshire. In 1922, no single buyer having been found, the estate was sold at auction and broken up, and the

57 Baxter's letter to the Duke has not so far been traced in either archive.

58 See Williamson 2011.

59 Letter dated 18 May 1921, EUL MS 389/990.

60 See Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 2009.

61 EUL MS 389/340.

house itself was demolished in 1923.⁶² The income from the sale evidently eased the Duke's financial situation sufficiently for the plan to let Syon House to be abandoned. The Syon community's next move, just a few years later, in 1925, was not back to their original site in Isleworth, but to what would be their last home, the Marley House estate, at South Brent in Devon.

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⁶² http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_yorkshire_stanwickhall.html.

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The Authors

MIA ÅKESTAM is Senior Lecturer in Art History and research officer at the Department for Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University. She has published on the Annunciation motif, on Saint Birgitta of Sweden and on illuminated manuscripts. Her research centres on medieval art, the rhetoric of images and the use of imagery, with a special interest in the interaction between the secular and profane spheres. She is currently working on the project 'The Vadstena Palace – place, space and presence'.

BRANDON ALAKAS is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Alberta – Augustana. His research focuses on late-medieval religious culture, with particular interest in the many ways that monastic orders aimed to guide lay piety. He has published articles on Richard Whitford's *Pype, or Tonne, of the Life of Perfection* and *Werke for Householders*, as well as on John Whethamstede and the Coventry Corpus Christi Play. Returning to his interest in devotional texts produced at Syon Abbey, he is currently working on Richard Whitford's *Dyuers Holy Instrucyons and Teachynges*.

KEVIN ALBAN O. Carm., specialises in the late medieval history and spirituality of the order. He is a Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, London and teaches there and in Oxford. He is currently working on a large project investigating Carmelite reform movements.

ELIN ANDERSSON received her Ph. D. in Latin at Stockholm University in 2011 and has mainly worked on medieval Latin texts relating to the Birgittine Order. She is currently preparing an edition of the memorial book of the Franciscan convent in medieval Stockholm. Since 2016, she has been employed at the Na-

tional Library of Sweden as curator of the rare collections of the Rogge Library as well as the Cathedral Library in Strängnäs.

ROGER ANDERSSON, Associate Professor of Scandinavian studies at the Department of History, Stockholm University, has mostly worked on medieval Swedish literature with a particular focus on philology, manuscript culture and sermon studies. He is currently preparing a critical edition of the Old Swedish version of the Revelations of Saint Birgitta and is also engaged as a researcher in the cataloguing project 'Text Till Tiden' (National Library of Sweden).

VIRGINIA BAINBRIDGE has published several articles on the history of Syon Abbey while working full-time on major research projects, the *Victoria County History*, and the *Manorial Documents Register*. The community is the focus of her research because its story crosses the divide between the medieval and early modern worlds. She is currently writing a social history of Syon Abbey c. 1415–1615. This is based on research for biographies of the sisters, brothers and benefactors, which she plans to publish as a 'Who's Who of Syon Abbey'.

ERIK BIJZET is a dealer in European sculpture and works of art based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Prior to this he was the Head of Auction Sales of the European Sculpture and Works of Art department and an auctioneer at Sotheby's London. His scholarly work includes catalogues of medieval works of art in the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2016) and the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2017) as well as several articles for the *Bulletin of the Rijksmuseum* and *The Sculpture Journal*.

TEKLA BUDE is Assistant Professor of English at Oregon State University, prior to which she was Kathleen Hughes Junior Research Fellow at Newnham College, Cambridge. She is completing a monograph on metaphysical music in late medieval England.

ERIK CLAESON is a Ph. D. student in Practical Theology at Lund University. His research concerns medieval homiletics, liturgy and hagiography, with special interest in sermons from Vadstena Abbey. He is at present working on his thesis about the medieval cult of Saint Botolph in Scandinavia.

CLAES GEJROT is the editor-in-chief of the national Swedish medieval charters series, *Diplomatarium Suecana*. He is also attached to Stockholm University

as an Associate Professor of Latin. Besides charters, his research has centred upon editing and studying medieval texts dealing with Saint Birgitta and the Birgittine Order. Among his publications are *Diarium Vadstenense* (1988, 1996), *Diplomata Novevallensia* (1994), *Diplomatarium Suecanum* (1991–2014), *Poetry for the Occasion* (1999), ‘The Fifteen Oes’ (*The Medieval Translator* 7, 2000), *Bero Magni de Ludosia: Sermones et Collationes* (2011) and *The Martiloge of Syon Abbey* (2015).

INGELA HEDSTRÖM received her Ph. D. in 2009 in Nordic languages at the University of Oslo with her thesis *Medeltidens svenska bönböcker. Kvinnligt skriftbruk i Vadstena kloster* (‘Medieval Swedish prayer books. Female literacy in Vadstena Abbey’). She is currently the editor of Old Swedish charters at the *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm. Her primary area of research concerns writing and manuscript production at Vadstena Abbey as well as female scribes and literacy in the Middle Ages.

E. A. JONES is Associate Professor of English Medieval Literature and Culture at the University of Exeter. As director of the ‘Syon at 600’ research project he organised a number of conferences and other events to celebrate the sexcentenary of Syon Abbey in 2015, and has also written a history of the house for general readers, *England’s Last Medieval Monastery* (2015). Away from Syon, he works on late-medieval religious culture, with a particular interest in hermits and anchorites.

KARIN STRINNHOLM LAGERGREN is Senior Lecturer in Musicology at the Linnaeus University in Sweden. Her research focuses on Gregorian chant, where she has concentrated in particular on chant in medieval Scandinavia and in the Birgittine Order. In her thesis, ‘The Word Became Song. Monastic Chant in Catholic Convents and Monasteries 2005–2007’, she examined the role of Gregorian chant in monastic repertoires after the Second Vatican Council, a pioneering work that was awarded the Harald Göransson Prize for Church music research from the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

THOMAS W. LASSEN is a Danish medieval archaeologist and historian, former Director of the regional Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum in Maribo, and Sæby Museum, as well as museums consultant at the Danish Ministry of Culture. His research centres mainly on the earliest topographical descriptions of Denmark in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as church history and

iconography. The church of the Birgittine abbey in Maribo, and the remains of the monastery there, has been the focus of his detailed study for many years.

MARKUS LINDBERG, archaeologist, is the Director of the Sancta Birgitta Convent Museum in Vadstena as well as Linköping Castle and Cathedral Museum. His current projects concern bishop Hans Brask and the manuscript Kh 54 (Linköping), early royal graves in Vreta Abbey, and textiles in Vadstena Abbey.

CARMEN M. MANGION broadly examines the cultural and social history of gender and religion in nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain and Ireland in her research. She is the author of *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales* (2008) and has written numerous articles on Catholic and Anglican religious women and deaconesses. Her current research examines the changes in Catholic women's religious life 1940–1980, identifying how individual and community lives were altered.

VERONICA O'MARA is Professor of Medieval English Literature at the University of Hull. Her research specialism is medieval English religious literature; her other research interests include the relationship between manuscript and print, and female literacy. Her main publications include: *The Translation of the Works of St Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars* (with B. Morris, 2000); *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons* (with S. Paul, 2007); and (with P. Stoop & V. Blanton) three edited collections of essays on *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe* (2013, 2015, and forthcoming).

TORE NYBERG published his thesis *Birgittinische Klostergründungen des Mittelalters* in 1965. He held an inter-scandinavian scholarship for teaching and research in Medieval History at Copenhagen University 1969/70 and worked as lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Southern Denmark 1970–2001. He is the editor of the journal *Birgittiana* (1996–2011) and has published widely on the religious orders, notably the Birgittines, in the Middle Ages. His book *Monasticism in North-Western Europe 800–1200* was published in 2000.

ELIZABETH PERRY holds a Ph. D. in Art History from Brown University and teaches in the Art & Music Department at Framingham State University in Massachusetts. Her research focuses on the visual culture of early modern convents, with a special interest in Syon Abbey at Lisbon. Her most recent publication is 'An Illuminated Manuscript from Syon Abbey, Lisbon' in *Com-*

munities, *Culture and Identity: The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, ed. Caroline Bowden & James E. Kelly (2013).

DAVID CARRILLO-RANGEL is a Ph. D. student at the University of Barcelona. The topic of his dissertation is the cultural transmission of devotional practices from Birgitta of Sweden to her order, focusing mainly on the dissemination of Birgittine texts and their functions. He is also a member of the research project 'Landscapes of Spirituality', funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

SARA RISBERG works as an editor for the *Diplomatarium Suecanum* at the National Archives of Sweden. She received her Ph. D. in Latin from Stockholm University in 2003. Her scholarly work has mainly dealt with late-medieval texts, particularly Birgittine material and Vatican documents. At *Diplomatarium Suecanum* she works with digital resources and the development of digital editorial techniques, but also with preparing editions of some of the oldest Swedish charters which have not previously been printed.

EVA LINDQVIST SANDGREN is Assistant Professor/Senior Lecturer at Uppsala University. Her dissertation (2002) concerned Parisian book illumination from the time around 1400. Thereafter her research has been on medieval book illumination in Swedish collections, medieval Swedish parchment fragments, and an illuminated scroll of John Arderne's *Medica Practica*. Since 2007 she has worked with projects concerning Vadstena Abbey, initially on the nuns' scriptorium and book illuminations from the abbey, and later on the use of pictures in the abbey church, and its visual shape as seen from the perspective of different categories of user (nuns, brothers and lay people).

HILKKA-LIISA VUORI, D. Mus., is a teacher, singer and researcher of medieval music. She teaches Gregorian chant at the Sibelius-Academy, Helsinki, and in the Kallio congregation, Helsinki. She is one of the singers in the duo Vox Silentii. They have recorded eleven CDs of medieval liturgical music since 1996. Vuori specialises in medieval Birgittine chants, her most recent publication being a chant book for choirs, *Cantus sororum* (2015). Her dissertation for the Sibelius-Academy in 2012 concerned the matins responsories in the Birgittine *Cantus Sororum*.

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