THE 'FREEDOM OF THEIR OWN RULE' AND THE ROLE OF THE PROVOST IN WOMEN'S MONASTERIES OF THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

Eva Schlotheuber

The internal structure of female monastic communities and the role of women's spiritual advisors underwent a radical transformation in the course of the monastic reform of the high Middle Ages. In the early medieval period, bishops were practically the only spiritual authorities who were in a position to challenge the authority of noble women within Frauenstifte. In contrast, in the twelfth century, spiritual overseers of religious women began to emerge: provosts (propostis) who were granted far-reaching authority, even extending into the inner affairs of women's monasteries. To be sure, women in early medieval religious institutions had also had clergy at their disposal for celebrating the mass, but they do not appear to have had a role in overseeing the women, or to have held any power to discipline them. The office of provost was the consequence of a

* With thanks to Susan Boettcher for translating this chapter.

1 Schreiner, 'Pastoral Care in Female Monasteries'; Röcklein, 'Bairische, sächsische und mainfränkische Klostergründungen'; Schlotheuber, 'Die gelehrten Bräute Christi'; Parisse, 'Die

Eva Schlotheuber (schlotheuber@phil.uni-duesseldorf.de) is Professor of Medieval History at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf. She is the author of Klosterleben und Bildung: Die Lebenswelt der Nonnen im späten Mittelalter mit einer Edition des Konventstagsbuch einer Zisterzienserin von Heilig-Kreuz bei Braunschweig (1484–1507) (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004) and has published widely on medieval education and library collections, the literary, material, and spiritual culture of late medieval women's monastic communities, and the representation of individuality in high and late medieval biographical and autobiographical literature.


BREPOLS PUBLISHERS 10.1484/MWTC-EB.1.102013
profound transformation of the religious life, arising from the monastic reform movement, which itself grew out of the investiture controversy. The grand confrontations of this controversy captured the sentiments of diverse social groups, both religious and lay. At cathedral schools and in cloisters everywhere, people debated the correct form of the religious life and the demands of reform. In this atmosphere, religious, political, and social goals joined together, so that the stricter lifestyle in reformed monastic communities came to reflect not only a new spiritual self-understanding but also a new identity for monks and nuns.

The difference between women’s houses that followed the reform, whose members lived in strict enclosure, and the old, powerful communities, which often maintained close ties with kings or dukes, must have been impossible for contemporaries to ignore. The powerful abbesses of the Ottonian-Salian or Bavarian Frauenstifte frequently took politics into their own hands and were hardly less connected to dynastic and social matters than their worldly relatives. In the eyes of eleventh-century monastic reformers, this state of affairs obscured the original tasks of women religious. In response, the monastic reform movement, especially that aligned with the Benedictine abbey of Hirzau, developed a radical new ideal for the religious life, one that they sought to establish within male as well as female monasteries. According to this reform ideal, women were to dedicate themselves anew to the tasks of prayer and intercession. They were no longer to be occupied with increasing monastic properties or expanding their relatives’ power; rather, they were to concentrate on the spiritual life by adopting a rule and through enclosure, which limited women’s activity in the outside world.

Frauenstifte und Frauenklöster in Sachsen; Das Bizum Hildesheim, ed. by Goetzing, 1: Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Ganderheim (1973).

Goetz, ‘Der Investiturstreit in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung’; Suchan, ‘Publizistik im Zeitalter Heinrichs IV’.


This new ideal apparently corresponded so deeply to the needs of the age that almost all Saxon Frauenstifte had been reformed, or at least had a monastic rule introduced, by the middle of the twelfth century.

How can we explain this fundamental transformation, which resulted in a completely different internal structuring of women’s religious communities and which was not least the result of questions about the position religious women were to take in the developing hierarchy of the reformed church? The self-understanding of the women as influenced by strict enclosure, contempt for the world, and contemplation produced with it a new norm, one that has influenced our view of medieval monasteries until the present. But was the new self-understanding of the nuns, and the stricter form of religious life that emerged in the twelfth century, really as widespread as research often claims? Or is it possible that the reform movement only really gained acceptance in regions where the struggles of the investiture controversy meant that its religious goals were equally political ones? In the absence of a sufficient number of case studies, concrete questions about the establishment of enclosure and the role of male supervision in the female communities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in different regions cannot fully be answered. However, using two examples — the situation in Lippoldsberg and Lamspringe, reformed Saxon monasteries of the twelfth century, and in monasteries in the archdiocese of Rouen in the middle of the thirteenth century — I would like to illustrate how differently both religious life and the relationship of male spiritual superiors to religious women could be organized, even after the radical changes of high medieval monastic reform.

7 See for example Goetzing, ‘Hilwartshausen und Fredesloh’, p. 294. For the political backgrounds, see most recently Becker, ‘Die Auseinandersetzung Heinrichs IV mit den Sachsen’; and Feuchter, Adelopposition und kirchliche Reformbewegung. Parisse, ‘Die Frauenstifte und Frauenklöster in Sachsen’, p. 474, notes that in the first half of the eleventh century Frauenstifte were repeatedly given over to bishops, although the Saxon nobility retained its right to name the advocatus. Reform in the second half of the eleventh century, which was prompted by different impulses in different regions, drew energy from two parallel currents, the Benedictine tradition and the reform of the regular canons; see pp. 485–87. Parisse emphasizes the differences in intervention in the Saxon and Westphalian female communities, although the latter frequently remained under the supervision of the bishop.

8 Schlothuber, ‘Die gelehrten Brüder Christi’.

On the introduction of enclosure in the course of the high medieval monastic reform and its consequences, see most recently Pelskau, ‘Von Brabant bis Böhmen und darüber hinaus’, pp. 90–97.
The Role of the Provost in Women's Monasteries

As churchmen laid down conditions for the valid performance of the sacraments and defined more clearly the responsibilities of priests, the position of religious women became noticeably weaker. In the eyes of canon law, consecrated nuns were lay women—a status that became decisive particularly since the period of the investiture controversy was one of existential struggle for the clear separation of the clergy from the laity. As a consequence, nuns were forbidden to undertake any service at the altar, which in turn was restricted to the clergy. The significance of sacred space was emphasized, thereby pushing nuns out of the altar area entirely. In the subsequent period, the western galleries so typical of the late Middle Ages began to appear in nuns' churches. The spatial proximity of nuns' choir stalls to the high altar may suddenly have appeared inappropriate; in any case, these architectural changes made it easier to realize the desired spatial separation of women from the clergy during the celebration of the mass.

As a justification for the diminution of women and their marginalization from the official church, theologians pointed to their allegedly lesser capacity to know God, which according to medieval conceptions was only possible through the ratio, the intellect which was held to be the most sublime aspect of the soul. Women were unable to know God via reason, it was held, because their intellectual capacities were naturally inferior to those of men. This notion had been inherited from the ancient world, but was reinforced by Christian thinkers. Thus the Church Father Augustine of Hippo had attributed to men the ratio superior, higher reason, and to women the ratio inferior, or lower reason. According to the influential theologian Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), the physical weakness of women (infirmitas) meant that the soul developed less fully in the female body. The social subordination of women in medieval society under the munt (guardianship) of men seemed to confirm this notion as a natural one. Just as the senses required direction from the intellect, the ratio, so the female sex naturally needed steering from the male one. The possibilities

---

for rational recognition of God were systematized by the scholastic theologians of the twelfth century and increasingly associated with intellectualism. At the same time, the more strongly conceived gender hierarchy required a more clearly defined path for access to clerical functions, and thus ultimately to the sacral sphere. Since this path was closed to religious women, as it was to lay people, members of these groups again found themselves, in a certain sense, outside the hierarchy of the official church. Reflecting contemporary thought in his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas records that women cannot be deemed valid superiors of a religious community in the full sense, as they held spiritual leadership only 'by commission' (*quasi ex commissione*). Accordingly, nuns required mediators to access the sacred sphere and the teaching of the church — at least in principle. Clergy educated for this task were thus deployed as mediating authorities.

The 'structural' difference between the state of affairs before monastic reform and after it was clear to contemporaries. According to Idung von Prüfenig, a scholastic at Regensburg cathedral and proponent of reform ideas around the middle of the twelfth century, women were not to have the 'freedom of their own rule' (*proprium regimini libertas*), with the result that their spiritual lives required direction. Cut off from all worldly attachments, as Idung argued, nuns should perform their religious service under the supervision of provosts. He cites 'inborn changeability' (*naturalis mutabilitas*) and 'female weakness' (*muliebris infirmitas*) as justification for the subordination of women. Clearly, the subordination of women and their exclusion from the church of the clerics required explanation, given the fact that early medieval *Frauentücher* had quite emphatically enjoyed the 'freedom of their own rule'. In typically medieval fashion, Idung invokes the 'old and correct tradition' of the days of Benedict of Nursia (*d. c. 547*), from which he felt religious communities had later diverged. St Benedict, Idung claims, had purposefully not written a monastic rule for women; indeed, such a rule had not been necessary because in those days women had been subjected to the directive authority of the abbeys alone. 'It is not salutary for this gender to exercise the freedom of its own rule', Idung writes, 'for one, because of its natural tendency to be fickle, and then because of the temptations that attack it from outside, which female weakness cannot resist.'

In sum, the church hierarchy that developed during the twelfth century, founded on canon law, now also sought to control and discipline monks and nuns, as well as clerics. Religious women were now subjected more closely to ecclesiastical authority through spiritual overseers and the *cura monialium*, with the pope and the Roman Curia at its summit. Their integration into this structure of spiritual oversight was of increasing importance to the church, particularly since, from the turn of the twelfth century, the foundation of female religious communities was practically a mass phenomenon. The longing for and the possibility of choosing a religious life now appealed to a much broader section of society than ever before. From the perspective of the official church, the need for control was intensifying, underscored by the appearance of heretical groups like the Cathars and Waldensians, who questioned the authority of the sacraments, the church's power to discipline, and its authority to define doctrine.

The establishment of enclosure, together with the new internal organization of female religious communities, had fundamental consequences for women's religious life: on the one hand, subordination of nuns to male spiritual overseers clearly limited women's autonomy in an institutional sense; on the other, the physical confinement within their living space — which can also be understood as protection — opened up a new spiritual landscape to women. Religious women and lay people struggled to establish their own forms of religious expression in reaction to the clerical hierarchy, whose boundaries had been more strongly defined by reform. This tendency was frequently connected

16 Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, p. 266. In response to this exclusion, mystics tended to express reservations concerning the permeation of theology by reason, such as those expressed by Marguerite Porete (*d. 1310*) in the introductory poem of her work, *Le Miroir des simples ames* (*The Mirror of Simple Souls*): "Humilez dont vos sciences [Qui sont de raison fondees], Et metrez toutes vos fiances [En celles qui sont donnees] D'Amour, par Foy eluminee" (‘Humble your knowledge, which is founded on reason, and put all your trust in those given of love, illuminated by faith’). Porete, *Le Miroir des simples ames*, ed. by Guarnieri, p. 8, lii. 22–26.

17 Aquinas, *In quatuor libros sententiarum*, lib. iv, dis. 25, q. 2, art. 1, q. 1–2, in Aquinas, *Open amnia*, ed. by Busa, t. 578: ‘Cum ergo in sexu feminine non possit significari aliqua eminencia gradus, quia mulier statum subjectionis habet. [...]’. De abbatissis tamen dictur, quod non habent praedationem ordinariam, sed quasi ex commissione propter periculum cohabitationis viro am mulieres. Debora autem praeuit in temporalibus, non in saecularibus, sicut et nulliores possunt temporaliter dominari.


19 On connections between the religious women's movement and heretical groups, see Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, pp. 230–45.
of nuns were particularly effective, since virginity was understood as bloodless martyrdom, and nuns were thus equated with martyrs. It was no coincidence that a new genre, the Speculum virginum, emerged around 1140, at the centre of which stood the justification and explanation of virginity. These works elaborate the image of the ninety-fold fruit of nuns’ prayers, making clear the high regard in which society held the pious works of religious women. In typically medieval fashion, the prominent spiritual position of nuns as brides of the highest king often corresponded to their noble heritage. However, the nobility of nuns no longer entitled them to exercise unmediated political power, as they had often done during the earlier medieval period.

The new ideal of women’s religious life appealed to every social strata, with the result that the number of women’s monasteries doubled in the years between 1100 and 1250 alone. This period also saw a new emphasis on chastity, obedience, discipline, and loyalty to the monastic rule for women. Inseparably connected with the image of the nun as bride of Christ was an emphasis on her physical purity, which seemed at the same time to demand strict enclosure. This possibility was also connected with the symbolism of the nuns’ habit. For Idung von Prüfersg, the new inner attitude of nuns found its most convincing expression in their humble and simple appearance:

Holy virginity shows itself through indications that shine through from the innermost part of the person: They [the chaste nuns] are pale of countenance and ravaged by leanness, shamefaced of speech, obedient in listening, frugal in their victuals, abstemious in drinking, worthy of gait, poor of clothing. Their skin is smudged by their hair shirts, not cared for by bathing.

There was no room in this ideal for the splendid, self-assured appearance of Ottonian canonesses as representatives of their social estate. Instead, according to Idung, the humility and fragile virginity of the nun needed to be protected through strict enclosure. Determining whether nuns and monks should observe enclosure in the same way, Idung asked which vessel needed greater protection and supervision, a glass one or a golden one — both of which metaphorically


21 Lüne, Klosterarch., MS Hs. 14, Ceremoniale, fol. 29r: ‘Virgines tamen specialius Christo desponsari diciuntur, quia earum caro carni Christi familiaris se confonrat prae eo, quod caro illa sicut Christi caro corrupcionem non sensis.’

22 Seeburger, Die Illustrationen im Admonten Neuenreiber, pp. 121–23. Seeburger argues that the iconography that developed at Admont in the context of reform in the twelfth century placed great value on the physical proximity between Christ and Mary: ‘In Gesten und Motiven, wie dem Fassen der Hände, der Umrührung, dem gemeinsamen Thronen und der Krönung, werden Beziehung und Vereinigung von Braut und Bräutigam auf unterschiedliche Art dargestellt’; p. 121. Especially interesting in this context is the dexterarum functio depicted in the Admont nuns’ breviary, which illustrated the legally significant symbolic action of the marriage of Christ with Mary.

23 Speculum virginum, ed. by Seyfarth.

24 Idung von Prüfersg, Le Moine Idung et ses deux ouvrages, ed. by Huygens, cap. 357, p. 71: ‘Ornamenta vero quae Christus requirit in sponsa sua et per quae recognoscitur eae sua, sunt signa illa, quae gloriosae mentis sanctam virginitatem ostendunt, propter quae psalmista pulchre et signanter dixit non “intus”, sed “abintus”, quia sancta virginitas sic est in mente, ut exeat foras per sua indicia, quae sunt facies pallida macieque confecta, in loquendo verecundia, in audiendo obedientia, in cibo paritas, in potu sobrietas, in incessu gravitas, in veste vilitas, cutis cilioque squalida, non balneis accurata.’
speaking represented the woman religious — and concluded that the protection and supervision of both, and correspondingly religious women, should be doubled.\textsuperscript{20} In the dedication image of the Lippoldsberg Gospels, the nuns appear to correspond closely in posture and habit to this ideal of voluntary poverty and humility.\textsuperscript{26} Their portrayal in this image quite probably had a programmatic function, as outer appearance is treated as a central element in the vows of the Lippoldsberg nuns (1095–1102), which required them to promise explicitly to wear clothing following the 'custom of monks' (\textit{more monachorum}).\textsuperscript{27}

The Position of the Provost in the Reformed Benedictine Monasteries of Lippoldsberg and Lamspringe

Strict enclosure and withdrawal from the world decisively limited the nuns' sphere of activity in the wake of reform.\textsuperscript{28} But how did the relationship of the nuns to their provost play out in practice? The provost represented the nuns in the outside world, but in reformed communities he also functioned as the spiritual advisor who helped to form and supervise the new ideal of female religious life within the community.\textsuperscript{29} For this reason, nuns were assigned reform-minded clerics as spiritual advisors; female communities were thus closely connected to reform circles through their provosts.

Lippoldsberg and Lamspringe were but two of a network of reform-oriented monasteries in twelfth-century Saxony and Thuringia. Other institutions in the group included the male Benedictine monasteries of Rheinhausen, Reinhardshunn, Helmarshausen, Bursfeld, and Corvey.\textsuperscript{30} St Pancratius in Hamersleben, a house of reformed Augustinian canons and a centre of canonically reform in Saxony, also had ties to Lippoldsberg and Lamspringe, providing provosts for both communities.\textsuperscript{34} The canons' openness to women is suggested by the fact that at Hamersleben, as in many other reform foundations, a female community had originally existed alongside the monastery. In Hamersleben, reform enthusiasm was matched by intellectual as well as political activity. The scholarly and highly regarded Hugo of St Victor (d. 1142) had been instructed in the canonical life at Hamersleben before he transferred, between 1115 and 1120, to the abbey of St Victor in Paris. Hugo, like Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129) and Honorius Augustodunensis (d. c. 1140), numbered among the most influential contemporary authors of the twelfth century — men who developed a new, rationally comprehensible biblical exegesis. Their works filled the libraries of women's as well as men's houses. Moreover, as centres of opposition to the imperial party in the struggle for Saxony, reform foundations like Hamersleben assumed a leading role in the bitter political and social confrontations of the investiture controversy.\textsuperscript{12} Their reforms sought not only to prevent involvement of the religious in secular affairs, but also to reverse the tendency towards increased interference by secular powers in the affairs of cloisters and cathedral chapters. These reformers resisted the Salian king Heinrich IV (c. 1050–1106) and his allies, whose rule they associated with such serious abuses as simony and clerical concubinage, as well as heedless interference in the administration of monasteries and churches.\textsuperscript{39}

Reform at Lippoldsberg and Lamspringe was directly connected to the political struggles of the period. When Archbishop Ruthard of Mainz (d. 1109) separated himself from Heinrich IV around 1100 and joined the side of the reformers, he immediately altered the form of religious life in the episcopal monastery, Lippoldsberg, reforming it according to the customs of Hirsau. Ruthard transferred leadership of the community from its former superior to Immida, a nun from the double monastery of Schaffhausen (diocese of Constance), a monastery that followed the Hirsau reforms.\textsuperscript{34} Together with her

\textsuperscript{20} Idung von Prüfeningen, \textit{Le Moine Idung et ses deux ouvrages}, ed. by Huygens, cap. 356, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{26} Reproduced in \textit{Helmarshausen}, ed. by Baumgärtner, p. 95, plate 9.
\textsuperscript{28} Matthaei Urkundenbuch, ed. by Stimming and Acht, 1: \textit{Die Urkunden bis zum Tode Erzbischof Adalberts I (1137)} (1932), no. 405, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{28} Lutter, 'Klausur zwischen realen Begrenzungen und spirituellen Entwürfen'; and Muschol, 'Klosterralltag und Klausur'.
\textsuperscript{29} Schlothueber, 'Die gelehrten Bräute Christi', pp. 64–67. Griffiths argues that individual men in these roles did not necessarily hold negative views of religious women, but valued their spiritual worth and perceived themselves as fulfilling an obligation to minister to Christ's bride; Griffiths, 'The Cross and the \textit{Cura monialism}'; and Griffiths, 'Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs'.

\textsuperscript{31} Peters, 'Das Augustinerchorherrenstift Hamersleben'. For general discussion on the meaning of secular clergy, see Rücklein, 'Die Auswirkung der Kanonikerreform des 12. Jahrhunderts', pp. 60–63; Bonn, 'Neue Lebensmodelle'.
\textsuperscript{32} Hoffman, \textit{Bücher und Urkunden}; Fenske, \textit{Adelsopposition und kirchliche Reformbewegung}, p. 164; and Goetting, 'Hilmarshausen und Fredelshof'.
\textsuperscript{33} Seibert, 'Libertas und Reichsabtei'.
\textsuperscript{34} Elsanne Gilomen-Schenkel also discusses the place of Schaffhausen within the circle of Augustineh and Benedictine monasteries of men and women influenced by reform centres such as Hirsau in her contribution to this volume.
sisters, Immida introduced practices at Lippoldsberg that were strictly oriented to the monastic rule. After its reform, Lippoldsberg enjoyed good connections to the south German reform centres; these provided manuscripts for the women's library. Lippoldsberg may have served as a model for other women's houses: a similar religious-political climate influenced Lanspringe about thirty years later, when Bishop Berthold (1119–30) imposed stricter observance of the rule, or *ordo monasticus,* there.

Reform at Lippoldsberg and Lanspringe resulted in the introduction of a provost, whose arrival seems to have circumscribed the authority of both the monastery's female superiors and the nuns who held offices in them. The constitutions of Lippoldsberg, composed around 1100, mention the community's abbes, who until then stood at the head of the convent. After the reform, however, Lippoldsberg was led by a simple prioress. Her position was reduced not only in title, but also in fact, by the institution of the *pater spiritualis,* or spiritual father. The provost, whose office ought not to be unoccupied (*qui numquam loco deesse debet,* now stood at the head of the internal monastic hierarchy. The importance of this newly created position can be seen in the requirement that the spiritual father be subject to the control of five neighbouring abbots. The new power of this spiritual overseer is suggested in the *Hortus deliciarum* of Herrad of Landsberg (or Hohenburg, d. after 1196), a product of monastic reform designed for the instruction of women. Here the provost is so highly esteemed that he sits, in the person of John the Evangelist, as the nuns' advisor next to Mary (first among virgins), while the office-holders of the monastery point out his power to make decisions with a demonstrative gesture. Here, then, we see the contemporary tenor of community life. This model was also adopted in Lanspringe, where the provost, appointed in 1204, was described as *pater spiritualis.*

In Lippoldsberg, the women honoured their provost, Gunther, around 1152 as their *paedagogus*—their teacher. Gunther, who had come to Lippoldsberg from Hamersleben, played a prominent intellectual role in the community. Provost Gerhard (c. 1178–after 1204) may have had a similarly influential effect on Lanspringe at the end of the twelfth century, having also come from Hamersleben. The influence of Hamersleben is also apparent in the writings of the nuns of Lanspringe.

At Lippoldsberg, the nuns marked reform by reworking the community's history, in the form of a chronicle. Describing not only the theological but also the ecclesiastical and political bases of this new development, the Lippoldsberg chronicle nevertheless records the activities almost exclusively of men—the archbishops of Mainz and their own provosts, men on whom the nuns' spiritual life depended. Only in passing does the chronicle allow the reader to detect the presence of the nuns alongside their provost. Prioress Margaret acted in cooperation with Gunther; she had prompted the composition of the Latin chronicle, which traced the community's history from its foundation to 1152. Unfortunately, the question of whether this chronicle was composed by the women themselves, as Walter Heinemeyer assumes, or by the monastery's clerics must remain open. But even if explicit indications are lacking, it is nevertheless possible that the women were its authors: only in this way could they have composed their encomium to Gunther's activity as provost, which they
denfied towards increasingly strict hierarchies was replicated within monastic communities. In Lippoldsberg, the women honoured their provost, Gunther, around 1152 as their *paedagogus*—their teacher. Gunther, who had come to Lippoldsberg from Hamersleben, played a prominent intellectual role in the community. Provost Gerhard (c. 1178–after 1204) may have had a similarly influential effect on Lanspringe at the end of the twelfth century, having also come from Hamersleben. The influence of Hamersleben is also apparent in the writings of the nuns of Lanspringe.

At Lippoldsberg, the nuns marked reform by reworking the community's history, in the form of a chronicle. Describing not only the theological but also the ecclesiastical and political bases of this new development, the Lippoldsberg chronicle nevertheless records the activities almost exclusively of men—the archbishops of Mainz and their own provosts, men on whom the nuns' spiritual life depended. Only in passing does the chronicle allow the reader to detect the presence of the nuns alongside their provost. Prioress Margaret acted in cooperation with Gunther; she had prompted the composition of the Latin chronicle, which traced the community's history from its foundation to 1152. Unfortunately, the question of whether this chronicle was composed by the women themselves, as Walter Heinemeyer assumes, or by the monastery's clerics must remain open. But even if explicit indications are lacking, it is nevertheless possible that the women were its authors: only in this way could they have composed their encomium to Gunther's activity as provost, which they

denfied towards increasingly strict hierarchies was replicated within monastic communities. In Lippoldsberg, the women honoured their provost, Gunther, around 1152 as their *paedagogus*—their teacher. Gunther, who had come to Lippoldsberg from Hamersleben, played a prominent intellectual role in the community. Provost Gerhard (c. 1178–after 1204) may have had a similarly influential effect on Lanspringe at the end of the twelfth century, having also come from Hamersleben. The influence of Hamersleben is also apparent in the writings of the nuns of Lanspringe.

At Lippoldsberg, the nuns marked reform by reworking the community's history, in the form of a chronicle. Describing not only the theological but also the ecclesiastical and political bases of this new development, the Lippoldsberg chronicle nevertheless records the activities almost exclusively of men—the archbishops of Mainz and their own provosts, men on whom the nuns' spiritual life depended. Only in passing does the chronicle allow the reader to detect the presence of the nuns alongside their provost. Prioress Margaret acted in cooperation with Gunther; she had prompted the composition of the Latin chronicle, which traced the community's history from its foundation to 1152. Unfortunately, the question of whether this chronicle was composed by the women themselves, as Walter Heinemeyer assumes, or by the monastery's clerics must remain open. But even if explicit indications are lacking, it is nevertheless possible that the women were its authors: only in this way could they have composed their encomium to Gunther's activity as provost, which they

---

35 Heinemeyer, 'Die Urkundenfalschungen des Klosters Lippoldsberg,' in Küsters, 'Formen und Modelle religiöser Frauengemeinschaften,' pp. 203–05.
36 Schlotbeuher, 'Die gelehnten Brüder Christi,' pp. 77.
39 *Mainzer Urkundenbuch,* ed. by Stimming and Acht, i. no. 405, pp. 310–12.
40 Parisse, 'Die Frauenstifte und Frauenklöster in Sachsen,' p. 489; Rückel, 'Die Auswirkung der Kanonikerreform des 12. Jahrhunderts,' p. 60: 'Zunächst und vor allem führte die Reform zur Entmachtung der Äbtissinnen, die in den Kanonissenstiften mit umfassenden Rechten ausgestattet waren.'
41 *Mainzer Urkundenbuch,* ed. by Stimming and Acht, i. no. 405, p. 311. See also Hotchin, 'Female Religious Life.'
42 Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights,* plate 7. Griffiths offers an alternate interpretation of

---

this image that similarly stresses the important function of the cleric for a female religious community. She suggests that Herrad used the figure of John the Evangelist to encourage the priest to fulfill his duties in emulation of John.

44 Hotchin, 'Dilecto Fratri Gunthero,' and Hotchin, 'Women's Reading and Monastic Reforms,' p. 141.
45 Wölter-von dem Knezebeck, 'Lanspringe, ein unbekanntes Scripitorium.'
46 Cohen–Mushlin, 'Scriptoria in Medieval Saxony,' pp. 53–82; *Geschrieben und Gemals,* ed. by Härtel, p. 20.
47 *Chronicon Lippoldsonse,* ed. by Arndt, p. 546: 'Pro amore, pro cautela nec non et honore loci subsequenta scripta, et cepta et hue usque perdueta sunt, religiosa quadam virginie, tunc huies clustri prioris, nomine Margaratae sagatante et precipuente, quod fieret.'
48 Hotchin, 'Women's Reading and Monastic Reforms,' p. 149, argues for its composition by a cleric.
portray as rich in its blessings. In contrast to the Lippoldsberg chronicle, in which the female community remains in the background, women appear as prominent actors in the Quedlinburg _Annales_. These annals were produced in the ancient noble Frauenstift at the beginning of the eleventh century, and were probably written by a canoness. They depict women engaging in activity well beyond the boundaries of their own cloister, often against the backdrop of imperial politics.

Despite the observance of enclosure at Lippoldsberg, the women were quite capable of appraising political circumstances, personalities, and the activities of provosts, even if active intervention was no longer possible for them. The Lippoldsberg prioress Margaret obviously enjoyed high regard and great authority in reform circles. Sindold, the librarian at nearby Reinhardshbrunn, describes her as 'my spiritual mother' (mater mea spiritualis), who 'received [him] before the altar 'in the place of a son' (me suscepit pro filio). The relationship between Margaret and Sindold hints at the informal networks that could develop between monastic men and women who were inspired by reform and devoted to promoting its aims. Although the prioress is not recorded as acting outside the monastery, she apparently remained a respected and sought-after interlocutor in reform circles. Sindold's high esteem is telling. A highly educated librarian, whose letters were collected as rhetorical examples, Sindold cultivated extensive relationships.

The office and functions of the provost as the spiritual overseer of women's communities gradually became established in subsequent centuries. The ecclesiastical hierarchy held right to this structure, and in 1298 Pope Boniface VIII finally made the introduction of strict enclosure for all female branches of religious orders compulsory with the decretal _Periculosa_. New orders founded during the twelfth century and later customarily assumed the basic structure of spiritual oversight through clergy who, on the one hand, represented the women as a mediating authority in worldly affairs, and on the other, were responsible for the _cura monialium_. Through the _cura monialium_ they could subject their subordinate female communities to the theology of the respective order, integrate them through the power of secular oversight into that order's structure, and supervise their lives in enclosure. In practice, the diversity of these tasks — and probably the growing size of monasteries as well — probably overtaxed provosts. In any case, the new orders typically split the functions of the supervisor, thus creating two offices: a secular administrator, responsible for economic affairs, and a cleric, usually a father confessor, for spiritual affairs.

Each order with a female branch wrestled to find appropriate solutions for the oversight of women's communities. In women's monasteries incorporated into the Cistercian Order, the father abbot ( _pater immediatus_ ) supervised observance of the order's rules and decisions of General Chapter, and provided, or hired and checked, the male personnel responsible for the spiritual and economic supervision of the nuns: confessors, chaplains, procurators, and _magister curie_. During annual visitations, he informed the daughter house about the decisions of the General Chapter and subsequently reported the result of his visitation at the following General Chapter. Thus the father abbot clearly acted as an intermediary between the order and the monastery, just as provosts of reformed Benedictine monasteries did as well. On the basis of his authority to correct and punish, the father abbot could exercise a great deal of influence over the women's spiritual lives. Following the directives of the order, the spiritual supervision of women was to be assumed by Cistercian monks, while lay brothers ( _procuratores_ ) often supervised the monastic economy. Through this separation of clerical (spiritual) and worldly tasks and functions, the Cistercian General Chapter sought to limit the powers that provosts ( _praepositi_ ) in unincorporated monasteries could assume. These provosts were not monks but secular clerics. Their position was superior to the abbesses and as the highest-ranking cleric they not only stood at the head of the monastery, but also of the chaplains and the whole _familia_. These powerful monastic supervisors could provide occasion for complaint, since their joint control of the secular and spiritual affairs of the women's house made it difficult to challenge their authority.  

---

49 _Chronicon Lippoldsbergense_, ed. by Andt, p. 555.
50 The editor of this text, Martina Giese, assumes authorship by a Quedlinburg nun for good reasons; _Die Annales Quedlinsburgenses_, ed. by Giese, p. 63.
51 _Die Reinhardbrunner Briefsammlung_, ed. by Pecck, no. 34, p. 35. For Reinhardbrunner, see Tebruck, _Die Reinhardbrunner Geschichtsbrechung_, p. 83.
52 Liber Sextus, ed. by Friedberg and Richter; on this, see Makowski, _Canon Law and Cloistered Women_, pp. 133–35.
53 See, for example, Goez, _Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit_, pp. 278–94; Rückert, 'Frauenzisterzien und Patrimonitätstrukturen in Südwestdeutschland'; and Mersch, _Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei in Brezhausen_, pp. 76 and 135.
54 Töpfer, 'Die Konversen der Zisterzienserinnen'. Revealing on this is also Mersch, _Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei in Brezhausen_, pp. 82–93.
55 Schlotheuber, 'Die Zisterzienserinnengemeinschaften im Spätmittelalter'.
56 Mersch, _Das ehemalige Zisterzienserinnenkloster Vallis Dei in Brezhausen_, pp. 75–87, surveys the tensions that could arise in the relationship between the provost and nun of a monastery.
Like the Cistercians, the Franciscans and Dominicans transferred pastoral care of their female monasteries to members of the order who served as father confessors.\textsuperscript{57} In keeping with the vow of poverty, the economic affairs of the mendicant orders were later taken up by secular administrators nominated by the founders of the institutions.\textsuperscript{58}

Notwithstanding organizational differences, a common feature emerges from this brief sketch of the arrangements made by various orders to ensure oversight of the monastic women in their care: close male supervision of the female religious life. Such supervision was a lasting consequence of monastic reform, whether by members of the respective order (such as Cistercian monks or mendicant friars) or by secular clerics appointed to serve as provosts. The integration of women's religious communities into the governance structures of the new religious orders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries thus created real possibilities for intervention in the affairs of nuns through pastoral and administrative oversight. We turn now to closer examination of another region, where the sources offer unique insight into the relationships between women's monastic communities and the extent of intervention by ecclesiastic authorities.

Female Communities in the Archdiocese of Rouen in the Thirteenth Century

When Archbishop Eudes Rigaud (Odo Rigaldus)\textsuperscript{59} visited the nuns of the Benedictine monastery Saint-Sauveur d'Évreux (founded in 1060) on 14 May 1250, he encountered a group of women who clearly enjoyed life. The women kept little dogs that they fed, as well as squirrels and birds, they possessed sumptuous accessories, and did not observe the monastic rule.\textsuperscript{60} In response, the archbishop required the abbess to present her account books regularly to her officials and to inspect the cells of the nuns in order to ensure the absence of private property. Rigaud could hardly do more than that in the framework of a visitation, although he took his official and supervisory obligations over the monastic communities of his district very seriously. He supervised problematic monasteries quite intensively, visiting the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Ouen-de-Rouen fifteen times in twenty-one years.\textsuperscript{61} This atypical engagement was most likely due to the fact that Eudes Rigaud was the first member of a mendicant order to ascend the archiepiscopal throne of Rouen. As a Franciscan of the second generation, Rigaud may have seen his chance to agitate from a position of responsibility against ecclesiastical abuses that were the subject of frequent complaint. Rigaud had studied in Paris with the famous Franciscan scholastics Alexander of Hales and Jean de la Rochelle and had risen to the post of magister regens in 1245. When he was consecrated archbishop of Rouen in 1248, he already had a successful university career behind him.\textsuperscript{62} Above all, however, he had achieved a reputation as a moral-theological preacher, a fact that especially recommended him for the office of archbishop of Rouen. The French king, Louis IX, as well as the popes, valued not only his profound theological knowledge, but also his diplomatic skills.\textsuperscript{63} Rigaud enjoyed such high regard among the Curia that Pope Gregory X chose him to preside over the second ecumenical Council of Lyon towards the end of his life.\textsuperscript{64}

As archbishop, Rigaud is known primarily for the journal of his travels, the Regestrum visitationum, in which he transcribed the results of his visitations over more than twenty years (1248–69).\textsuperscript{65} His attempt to lead the male and
female communities of his archdiocese back to a manner of life in accordance with the monastic rule was hardly a simple undertaking.\textsuperscript{66} Success was mostly contingent on the superiors of the communities — that is, on their will and ability to enforce the desired changes, often against the wishes of community members.\textsuperscript{67} In visitation reports regarding female communities, it is striking that the archbishop dealt directly with abbesses and priores. Neither a provost nor a father confessor appears to have acted as mediator. Were the women in Rouen still conducting themselves during the thirteenth century with the ‘freedom of their own rule’? Male advisors seem to have played no role in making decisions about the internal lives of the women. They do not appear to have enforced enclosure, provided theological instruction, or obtained necessary reading for the women. Nor did men examine the practices according to which the nuns accepted new postulants, so that their numbers did not exceed the capacity of the monastery’s property to support them. Even in questions to do with spiritual matters — confession or the regularity with which the nuns prayed the canonical hours — the archbishop turned only to monastic superiors.

The degree of women’s autonomy is astounding when considered alongside the central role that spiritual supervisors had begun to play in the twelfth century. By the early thirteenth century, too, many changes had begun to emerge within reformed women’s monasteries in the Holy Roman Empire such that the initial imposition of strict enclosure and the asceticism of monastic life may, in some places, have given way to greater laxity in observance. It is striking that no male authority emerges from the pages of Archbishop Eudes Rigaud’s journal as a mediating authority between religious women and the outside world. The lack of such an authority made archiepiscopal intervention in the women’s monasteries more difficult. The archbishop could not entrust the implementation of his reform measures in a female house to anyone other than the superior herself. As a result, his influence always remained episodic, even though he visited several houses, such as the Cistercian priory Saint-Saëns,\textsuperscript{68} the Cistercian

\textsuperscript{66} On episcopal reform and its basis in the papal law decrees, see Davis, \textit{The Holy Bureaucrat}, p. 67. For episcopal visitation in English nunneries, see Spear, \textit{Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries}, pp. 41–59.

\textsuperscript{67} Pobst, ‘Visititation of Religious and Clergy by Archbishop Eudes Rigaud’, p. 223. This study treats the five male communities of Jumièges, Saint-Ouen in Rouen, Beaulieu, Longueville, and Saint-Lô-de-Rouen.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Abbayes et priérés de l’ancienne France}, ed. by Beaurain and Besse, \textit{vii}, 67; Johnson, \textit{Equal in Monastic Profession}, p. 71.

abbeys at Bival,\textsuperscript{69} Saint-Aubin,\textsuperscript{70} Villarceaux,\textsuperscript{71} and the Benedictine nuns in Saint-Amand (Rouen)\textsuperscript{72} or the priory of Bondeville\textsuperscript{73} almost annually, and tirelessly admonished their residents not only to observe their orders’ rule and accept enclosure, but also to abstain from private property.\textsuperscript{74} Were the female monasteries of Normandy and England completely spared these changes to their inner organization and thus the requirement for supervision through spiritual overseers? Were they, as a result, able to receive their episcopal visitor directly as relatively autonomous and self-governed institutions?

As I have already argued, women’s clausuration was a characteristic feature of reform for monastic women.\textsuperscript{75} But enclosure played a subordinate role in all of the houses in the archiepiscopal territory of Rouen.\textsuperscript{76} Eudes Rigaud cannot be faulted for having been too severe in his ideas about enclosure. At Bondeville, he admonished the prioress that she should only let the nuns visit Rouen in good and honourable company!\textsuperscript{77} Moreover, it was often the case that the archbishop did not actually find the abbess or prioress at the cloister when he arrived to conduct a visitation.\textsuperscript{78} Even in the Cistercian monastery of Bival (founded 1128–54) relatives and friends went in and out, non-members ate in the community, and the nuns frequently left the cloister. Here as elsewhere,

\textsuperscript{69} On Bival, see Malicorne, \textit{Documents et courte notice sur l’abbaye de Bival, and Abbayes et priérés de l’ancienne France}, ed. by Beaurain and Besse, \textit{vii}, 66.

\textsuperscript{70} On Saint-Aubin, see \textit{Abbayes et priérés de l’ancienne France}, ed. by Beaurain and Besse, \textit{vii}, 75.


\textsuperscript{72} Dierkens, ‘Saint Amand; and \textit{Abbayes et priérés de l’ancienne France}, ed. by Beaurain and Besse, \textit{vii}, 62.

\textsuperscript{73} Bondeville was a daughter house of Bival; Johnson, \textit{Equal in Monastic Profession}, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{74} For Rigaud’s visitations of women’s monastic communities, see the excursus in Power, \textit{Medieval English Nunneries}, pp. 652–69.

\textsuperscript{75} Felkauf, ‘Von Brabant bis Böhmen und darüber hinaus’, pp. 90–97.

\textsuperscript{76} Johnson, \textit{Equal in Monastic Profession}, pp. 150–63; Johnson concludes: ‘Clearly, in actual practice religious women often did not live by the theory of enclosure, a reality that was true of nuns in southern France as well as of their northern sisters’ (p. 157).

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis}, ed. by Bonnin, p. 456 (20 March 1263): ‘Inhibitus etiam eisdem ne permiteret aliquas ire Rothomagum nisi cum bona societate et honesta, et quod cito redirent.’

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis}, ed. by Bonnin, p. 323 (Villarceaux, 23 November 1258).

Rigaud forbade secular people from entering the nuns' enclosure, though, significantly, he found occasion to make exceptions for the women's influential friends and relatives. Close relationships between the women and the powerful families of the region, who frequently located their family mausoleums within female monasteries and liked to celebrate lengthy feasts there — particularly to mark their daughters' entrances into the cloister — were decisive for the economic wellbeing and integration of a monastery within a region. A single institution could remove itself from this dynamic only with difficulty. As we have seen, high medieval monastic reform had consciously sought to remove nuns from contact with family through strict enclosure, the appointment of a provost as a mediating authority, and other measures, such as the prohibition of simony as a factor in the selection of candidates for entrance to the monastery or the assumption of godmotherhood. Yet, female monasteries in the archdiocese of Rouen still assumed, like noble Frauenstifte of the early and high Middle Ages, social functions as sites of familial, spiritual, and economic prestige. Thus they displayed the consequences of close contact with the lay world: the conformity of nuns with noble customs of dress, neglect of the communal life, the cultivation of private property, and even the appearance of unwanted pregnancy. Her good contacts with the clergy gave Aeliz of Rouen, a nun in Saint-Aubin, the gift of a little boy. One imagines that the archbishop really might have dreaded his visits to Saint-Aubin. When he arrived there in

1261, not only did he have to acknowledge the presence of another child born to Aeliz of Rouen, by this time her third, but also that of a further nun, Beatrice of Beauvais, who had delivered a baby in the interval as well. In Saint-Saëns, too, he encountered several instances of unexpected offspring. Moreover, the prioress there struggled against challenges to her authority. She complained during the visitation of 1259 that the wealthy Jeanne Martel rode to visit her parents clad in a dark woolen cape with sleeves, and that she kept in close touch with her relatives via her own private messenger. The male supervisors of these women were called provisors (provisores) or procurators (procuratores) in Rigaud's register and they typically staffed positions in property administration (negotia) for the nuns. But they were no help to the female superiors facing disciplinary problems or in other cases that concerned the monastery's internal affairs. In contrast to provosts, these provisors were not clerics, but rather subordinate secular administrators. Women's communities could even get along without them, at least temporarily. In his inventory of abuses in Saint-Aubin in 1252, Eudes Rigaud noted the lack of a provisor only at the very end of the list of his admonishments. Spiritual advisors also took on a very different role in these communities than in reformed monasteries. One of the parish clergy celebrated the mass in

79 Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, pp. 116–17 (28 August 1251): 'Inhibimus ne aliquis secularis introducatur claustrum, nisi forte tales de quibus esset scandalum accer eos.' In 1255 he admonished the Benedictine nuns of Almèches not to leave the cloister without the abbess's permission (p. 235). In Saint-Léger he reported that the women came and went as they liked: 'Moniales vadunt extra abbatiam quando possunt et reveniunt quando volunt' (p. 295, 31 December 1257).

80 Schlotheuber, 'Familienpolitik und geistliche Aufgaben', Johnson, Equal in Monastic Profession, p. 153, comes to the same conclusion: 'The most commonly authorized reason for a nun to be out of her monastic retreat was to secure powerful support for her monastery.'

81 Rückelein, 'Bairische, sächsische und mainfränkische Klostergründungen'.

82 In 1256 Eudes Rigaud confiscated the veils of Aeliz of Rouen and Eustachia of Estrepigniac 'for a time' ('Velem autelimum ad tempus proper carum forniciationem'), because they were still associating with men and Eustachia had attempted to terminate her pregnancy (Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 255). She left the cloister and bore the child of the chaplain Johannes de Fry (p. 283). The offspring of nuns is reported regularly in the register, but the archbishop and the women's houses appear to have dealt with this problem rather pragmatically. See for example the visitation of Bival in 1256, when the nun Florence had already borne several children (p. 268).
Saint-Aubin. In 1254, a cleric named Lucas dispensed the sacraments to the nuns. Though he was their confessor, he himself did not live chastely. After his expulsion, the ladies had no confessor of their own at their disposal for years; in 1261, the register notes that they had lacked a confessor for a long time. There were no priests at all at Bondeville, and in the priory of Villarceaux, just as in Saint-Léger de Préaux, there was no one who could ensure that the nuns went to confession once a month or that they celebrated the Eucharist. The Cistercian Order, too, had its problems regulating nuns’ lives in Normandy in accordance with its standards. In 1277 it was reported that the women of Villarceaux had come into conflict with the father abbot, and that there was a pressing need for reform there.

The relative inconsequence of male supervisors in Rouen probably resulted in greater autonomy for the women, not least in regard to economic affairs. Members of these monasteries were allowed to maintain separate apartments, and, where communal life had already disintegrated, individual nuns took care of their own needs. The archbishop may have abandoned the abbesse regularly to review accounts with her officials, but beyond that, the women owed no one else an accounting of their finances except the archbishop himself at visitation. A lack of social cohesion occasionally gave rise to unpleasantness in the everyday life of the nuns. For instance, at Bondeville the upper windows of the choir were broken, allowing doves to fly through them and disturb the celebration of the mass. No one in the community had attempted to address the problem until the archbishop arrived for his visitation. Observing that the many of the windows were superfluous anyway, Rigaud advised that they should be walled off. Only in the ancient and powerful Benedictine monastery of Montivilliers, which refused to submit to visitation in 1259 on the basis of an exemption privilege, did a male cleric, a magister Ricardus, speak for the nuns. After a great deal of controversy (post multas altercations), in January 1260 Eudes Rigaud was finally able to convince the nuns of Montivilliers to agree in writing to his right of supervision — an interesting example of the establishment of an episcopal right of visitation over an older exemption.

The introduction of communal life was one of the central demands of monastic reform. Since the observance of enclosure and the women’s communal dining were closely linked, it is hardly surprising that Rigaud complained of the dissolution of communal life and the breaking of enclosure in the same

98 Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession*, p. 206: ‘Although theoretically confined to the cloister, monastic women also took responsibility for that area traditionally assigned to men, the Aussenwirtschaft, or field economy [...]. But even when male provots and bailiffs worked for a woman’s monastery, final responsibility and authority rested with the nuns.’

99 Regestrum visitationum archiepisopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 512 (12 April 1265): ‘Conquête fuerunt super hoc quod columbus volabant per monasterium et tumulrabantur ibidem impendientes divinum officium, ut dicebant; proper quod preceptum maiorem partem fenestrarum monasterii obstruxerit astra plastrari; plures eternam erant ibi superficie.’


99 Regestrum visitationum archiepisopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 353 (7 January 1259). He inserted the nuns’ agreement to visitation in his register, although the archiepiscopal ius commune opposed the privilege of exemption that freed the women from the jurisdictional power of the bishop. Nonetheless the nuns subjected themselves to his will, on the condition that all of the other liberties of the monastery be preserved. On this, see Hall and Sweeney, *An Unpublished Privilege*, p. 666.
breath. At Saint-Saëns, eighteen nuns lived together with three lay sisters, but each took care of herself, and the abbess neglected choir services. Daily chapter and the rule of silence were also of little meaning at Saint-Saëns. According to Eudes Rigaud, the abbess did not dare to correct the sisters for fear of being accused herself. As noted above, provosts in reformed monasteries were responsible for the nuns' theological instruction and thus also for obtaining the necessary literature. This sort of care was apparently lacking in the female communities of Rouen archdiocese. In some monasteries, as at Villarcœux in 1257, even basic liturgical books were missing and it took four years to remedy this deficit. The demand for training in Latin was also often a frequent accompaniment to reform. In Almenêche, however, the Latin of the nuns was no longer sufficient for them even to understand their own Latin rule, on account of which it was supposed to be explained to them regularly in French during chapter.

Houses that struggled with internal difficulties or whose customs transgressed canon law — such as the simony that often occurred at the entrance of new residents into the community — were visited by Eudes Rigaud almost every single year. In the tiny priory of Saint-Aubin, payments to the women's house at the reception of future nuns were customary. Here, as in other cases, the archbishop sought to intervene with the direction that in future no one should be accepted into the community without his express permission — a prohibition that could be maintained only with some effort. Again and again at visitations in Saint-Aubin, Rigaud found nuns whose acceptance he had not agreed to. In all periods of reform, visitors attempted to prohibit the acceptance of 'domesticas', girls who lived in the cloister only to be educated, with no intention to become nuns. Since families pressured nuns to accept their younger daughters and monasteries profited financially from this practice, nuns defended the practice by appealing to the poverty of their monastery. According to canon law, girls who lived at the monastery and were intended to become nuns could make a binding promise to enter religious life through the ritual of investiture before they reached their age of majority. The rite of consecration in this ceremony effectively promised them to the religious life, which they later confirmed through their profession once they reached their majority. These canon law requirements either were unknown to the Cistercian nuns of Bival or they conscientiously ignored them, since they even allowed minor children to take monastic vows, directly transgressing canon law.

In 1258 the prohibition for Saint-Aubin was repeated (Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 319). At the 1258 visitation of Saint-Saëns, we read: 'item, diei erant puellæ pro quibus rogati fuerunt a prioriis et qui quibusdam monialibus ut eas recipi faceremus et velarí. Quantum pecuniae non exaudientes in hac parte, eae preceptum amovere infra octo dies subsequentes; iniquum autem eis qui aliquam recipiencium prescriptum absque nostra licentia speciali'; Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 310. In 1259 the nuns had again admitted the daughter of a noble family without the bishop's knowledge and consecrated her as a nun (p. 361). In 1261 the archbishop refused to agree to the acceptance of five further nuns (p. 419), and in 1264 he again registered an admission against his will (p. 512).

Schlotheuber, Klosterinrit und Bildung, pp. 127–34. This problem appears in numerous places, as in Saint-Sauveur d'Évreux (Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 220, 1 July 1256), where all children who had not yet been robbed (omnes infantes non velatæ) were to be expelled. At the visitation of Villarcœux in 1258 the children who had been taken in for education were ordered to be ejected immediately (ut eorum quis in domo sua nutriment contra nostram inhibitionem dixit essem factam, de eadem domo cicere non postponsunt); Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 324. Eudes Rigaud ordered the same thing in the same year for Saint-Sauveur d'Évreux, Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 305. In 1260 he ordered Saint-Saëns to expel the psellæ seculares (p. 380).

For Bondeville we read in November 1261: 'Plures puellæ seculares mittabantur ibi cum sumptibus suis.' Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 410 (20 November 1261).

Schlotheuber, Klosterinrit und Bildung, pp. 134–46.

Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 207 (27 February 1251).
High medieval monastic reform had insisted that nuns no longer perform clerical tasks. But Eudes Rigaud recorded, albeit only in Saint-Saëns, that a nun assisted a priest at mass. In Montivilliers, which had been able to avoid an archiepiscopal visitation for a long period due to its exemption, the archbishop was appalled that nuns lifted children out of baptismal basins — that is, they were entering into godmotherhood. The assumption of godparenthood had been forbidden to both nuns and monks, since it could promote excessive familiarity with the child’s parents and with it the danger that religious godparents would give their godchildren preferences later in life.

Conclusion

The integration of religious women into noble networks, their autonomy in economic affairs, and their independent position within the monastic community and in respect of the archbishop: all these differences differentiated the female communities of Normandy from the religious institutions for women that had been subjected to monastic reform in Germany during the twelfth century. The new ideal of female religious life that had developed in the course of the investiture controversy resulted in a radical rearrangement of female communities. But although this ideal received general recognition among the Curia and thus became a normative expectation for religious women, its further development was by no means assured. The successful introduction of strict enclosure was dependent on the ability of monastic reform and its religious ideals to prevail in specific settings. The movement for monastic reform in Germany had evolved and developed its ideas in the struggles about the correct form of religious life that took place during the investiture controversy. In different regions and within individual monasteries, these ideas had played a powerful role not only in the course of the bitter struggle for establishment of a form of religious life in accordance with the monastic rule, but in a political sense as well. It was only the connection of religious with political goals that led to the establishment of a new religious norm against old customs and the practices of the traditionally superior social strata.

The investiture controversy took a different course in England and Normandy than it had in Germany lands, and did not result in the sort of confrontation that had captured the attention of so many social groups in those regions influenced by the Salian emperors. In England and Normandy, bishops were subject to stronger control from kings and had a different position in the social and political constellation of their age. The lines of conflict ran down a narrower path and were limited mostly to the controversy between Henry I and Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury. Thus, reform thinking in the Angevin kingdom seems to have attracted interest from various social circles in a less radical way. Monastic reform movements adopted different contours in England too, where reform ideals were also realized through support of the new Gilbertine and Fontevraud Orders. These ideals did not, however, garner a similar level of support as their counterparts in Germany, making the broad transformation of religious life desired by reformers here more difficult to achieve. No visitation undertaken by an archbishop, no matter how sincere, could replicate the new religious ideals promoted by the reform movement and made manifest in the introduction of strict enclosure into female monastic communities. I would argue, in contrast to the usual account in the secondary literature, that this new form of religious life and, with it, the observance of enclosure, were established quite differently in different regions. The lively women of Saint-Aubin and the other monasteries visited by Eudes Rigaud clearly did not seek to adopt the spiritual ideal of interiority and withdrawal from the world. They appear, on the contrary, to have exercised the ‘freedom of their own rule’.

Translated by Susan Boettcher

---

1254): 'Item in honum abbatise quod moniales non facerent vota, quoasse deveniret ad XIII annum.' In 1257 four puellæ lived in Saint-Amand, who were however designated for a religious life (p. 285). The five girls referred to in Bondeville in 1257 were possibly only meant to remain in the community ‘for a time’: ‘Quinque sunt domicelle, que non fuerunt receptæ’ (p. 189). Saint-Salvator (p. 305, 1 May 1258): ‘Precepmum omnes puellulas non velatas penitus amoverit.’

123 Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 187 (18 September 1254).

124 Regestrum visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by Bonnin, p. 517 (15 May 1265). For the prohibition against monks and nuns becoming godparents, see Angenendt, Kaiserherrnchaft und Königstanze, p. 146.

125 See Power, Medieval English Nunneries; and Spear, Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries, pp. 41–50.

126 Most recently, see Vollrath, 'Der Investiturstreit begann im Jahr 1100.'

127 Most recently, see Bertelsmeier-Kierst, 'Bräute Christi', p. 15; and Felskau, 'Von Brabant bis Böhmen und darüber hinaus', p. 90.
Works Cited

Manuscripts and Archival Resources

Lüne, Klosterarchiv, MS Hs. 14 (Ceremoniale)

Primary Sources


Aquinas, Thomas, Sankt Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia, ed. by Robert Busa, Indicis Thomisticorum Supplementum, 7 vols (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974–80)


Chronicon Lippoldebergense, ed. by Willhelm Arndt, in [Supplementa tomorum I, V, XI, XII. Chronicarum Suevicarum], ed. by Georg Heinrich Petri and others, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores, 39 vols to date (Hannover: Hahn, 1826–), XX (1868:), 546–57


Mainzer Urkundenbuch, ed. by Manfred Stimling and Peter Acht, 2 vols in 3 parts (Darmstadt: Hessische Historische Kommission Darmstadt, 1932–71)

Porete, Marguerite, Le Mirour des simples ames/Speculum simplicium animarum, ed. by Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen, Corpus christianorum, continuatio medievalis, 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986)

Regestra visitationum archiepiscopi Rothomagensis, ed. by P. Théodose Bonnin (Rouen: Brument, 1852)


Speculum virginum, ed. by Jutta Seyfarth, Corpus christianorum, continuatio medievalis, 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990)

Statuta capitularum generalium ordinis Cistercien is ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786, ed. by Joseph Maria Canivet, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, 9–14, 8 vols (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933–41)

Secondary Studies

Ahlers, Gerd, Wölbliches Zisterziensertum im Mittelalter und seine Klöster in Niedersachsen, Studien zu Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur der Zisterzienser, 13 (Berlin: Lukas, 2002)


—, 'Ottonische Frauenengenossenschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt', in Eisen und die sächsischen Frauenklöster im Frühmittelalter, ed. by Jan Gerchow and Thomas Schlipf, Essener Forschungen zum Frauenstift, 2 (Essen: Klartext, 2003), pp. 29–44

Angenendt, Arnold, Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter, 2nd edn (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000)


Bauhüter, Ingrid, 'Bachkultur und Goldschmiedekunst im Hochmittelalter', Die Region trifft sich die Region erinnert sich (Kassel: Euregioverlag, 2003)


Griffiths, Fiona J., *The Cross and the Carma monialium: Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform*, *Speculum*, 83 (2008), 303–30

Hartmann, Hartmut, *Bücher und Urkunden aus Helmarshausen und Corona, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Studien und Texte, 4* (Hannover: Hahn, 1992)


—, *Women's Reading and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Germany: The Library of the Nuns of Lipoldsberg*, in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. by Alison I. Beach, Medieval Church, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 139–74


Malacorde, J., *Documents et courte notice sur l'abbaye de Bival (arrondissement de Neufchatel) du dixième siècle jusqu'en 1789* (Rouen: Cagniard, 1897)


Oberste, Jörg, *Die Dokumente der klösterlichen Visitateion*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental, 80 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999)


Werner Rösener, *Vita regularis: Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter*, 42 (Münster: Lit, 2009), pp. 265–84


