

## Beatrice's World

### The Rise of Cistercian Nunneries in the Bishoprics of Liège and Cambrai

Beatrice of Nazareth was but one of many women from the southern Low Countries who chose to devote themselves to God by living according to the ideals of the Cistercian Order. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the region experienced a genuine boom of Cistercian nunneries, despite the ban on the further incorporation of women's communities into the Order issued in 1228 by the Cistercian General Chapter.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the ban proved rather counterproductive as it seems to have incited a new wave of foundations.<sup>2</sup> The fact that they belonged to the same Order does not imply, however, that the trajectories and the histories of these communities are interchangeable. The origins and early history of the Cistercian nunneries in the southern Low Countries are, in fact, quite heterogeneous.

The communities of Florival, Maagdendaal near Oplinter<sup>3</sup> and Nazareth, which provided a home to Beatrice as well as to her father and siblings, have received some attention from medievalists such as Ploegaerts (1925), Sabbe (1955), Rey-pens (1955), the collaborators of the *Monasticon Belge* (1968 & 1992) and De Ganck (1986).<sup>4</sup> Because of their connection to Beatrice, the three communities

<sup>1</sup> *Statuta capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, ed. by Joseph-Marie Canivez (Louvain: Bureau de la revue, 1934), vol. II, anno 1228, nr. 16, p. 68. The statute prohibits the incorporation of new nunneries into the Order. Although it did not attempt to ban the imitation of Cistercian customs among women, it made it clear that the Order would not assume the pastoral care for these communities. The Cistercian Statutes have been integrally edited by J. Canivez in eight volumes, of which the first three are relevant for this paper. I will refer to the Statutes in the footnotes as *Statuta*, followed by the volume, year, paragraph number and page.

<sup>2</sup> Almost half of the nunneries in the bishoprics of Cambrai and Liège were founded after the 1228 ban; see the appendix. The bold line in the table indicates the year of the ban, with leeway for Argenton and St-Remi, which were both founded 'before 1229'.

<sup>3</sup> A word of caution is in order here: there are two Cistercian nunneries called Maagdendaal in the southern Low Countries. The first is the community near Oplinter in Brabant connected with Beatrice of Nazareth and her family; the second is a nunnery at Aubecq and subsequently Pamele near Oude-naarde. However, the *Diplomata Belgica* database does not distinguish between these two namesakes, creating confusion as to which charter belongs to which community. Based on the geographical distribution of the donations, the patrons involved and the archival location of the charters (if indicated in the database) it is possible to ascribe the majority of the charters to the correct nunnery.

<sup>4</sup> Théophile Ploegaerts, *Les moniales cisterciennes dans l'ancien Roman-Pays du Brabant. III: Histoire de l'abbaye de Florival* (Brussels: Actio Catholique, 1925); Etienne Sabbe, 'De abdij Nazareth tijdens de eerste eeuw van haar bestaan (1225-1235)', *Cîteaux in de Nederlanden*, 6 (1955), 98-113; Leonce Rey-pens, 'De eerste grondschenking en de stichting der abdij Nazareth te Lier nogmaals onderzocht', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 29 (1955), 302-13; Émile Brouette, 'Abbaye de Florival, à Archennes', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, vol. 2 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire historique, 1968), pp. 425-40; Émile Brouette, 'Abbaye du Val-Virginal, à

are better documented than most other nunneries from this region since the surviving archival sources can be complemented with information gleaned from Beatrice's *Vita*.<sup>5</sup> The latter text, for example, offers much detail about Beatrice's father Bartholomew, who was heavily involved in the genesis of the communities. Although De Ganck certainly offers the most detailed and extensive study, his top-down and uniform conceptualization of the Cistercian Order should be nuanced in line with recent research into the relation between the Order and Cistercian nuns. However, the majority of the Cistercian nunneries in the southern Low Countries have received but scant attention. From the nineteenth century onwards, most communities have been the subject of only a few – sometimes rather dated – articles. In some cases, scholars have edited or inventoried a nunnery's cartulary and charters.<sup>6</sup> A comprehensive study that treats the Cistercian women's communities of the southern Low Countries on a regional scale, examining their common features and specific identity, has never been attempted, even though the value of such an approach has been amply demonstrated by the research of Anne Lester for the nunneries in the Champagne region, and most recently, by Constance Berman for the archdiocese of Sens.<sup>7</sup>

Oplinter', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, vol. 2 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire historique, 1968), pp. 567-84; Koen Breugelmanns and Frans Vanhoof, 'Abbaye de Nazareth, à Lierre, puis à Brecht', in *Monasticon Belge VIII: Province d'Anvers*, vol. 1 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire historique, 1992), pp. 101-26; Roger De Ganck, 'The three foundations of Bartholomew of Tienen', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 37 (1986), 49-75.

<sup>5</sup> There are some other nunneries that are documented both by charters and by hagiographical material: Rozendaal (the *vita* of Ida of Louvain), La Ramée (the *vitae* of Ida of Nivelles and Ida of Leau), Aywières (the *vita* of Lutgard of Aywières) and Ter Kameren (the *vita* of Alice of Schaarbeek); the *exempla* of Thomas of Cantimpré and Caesarius of Heisterbach provide further information about Aywières and Ter Kameren as well as about Vrouwenpark, Valduc and Florival.

<sup>6</sup> See for example 'Abbaye d'Orienten', ed. by Mathias Wolters, *Notice historique sur la commune de Rummen et sur les anciens fiefs de Grasen, Wilre, Bindervelt et Weyer, en Hesbaye* (Ghent: Hebbelynck, 1846) pp. 61-94 and 231-405; 'Annexes: Chartes', ed. by Mathias Wolters, *Notice historique sur l'ancienne abbaye de Herckenrode dans la province actuelle de Limbourg* (Ghent: Gyselynck, 1849) pp. 56-92; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye d'Épinlieu*, ed. by Leopold Devillers (Mons: Imprimerie de Dequesne-Masquillier, 1867); *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Zwijveke-Lez-Termonde*, ed. Alphonse-L. de Vlaminck (Ghent: Imprimerie C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1869); *Cartulaire de l'abbaye du Val-Benoit*, ed. by Joseph Cuvelier (Brussels: Kiessling et Imbreghts, 1906); 'Chartes et documents de l'abbaye d'Argenton à Lonzée', ed. by Émile Brouette, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis*, 115 (1950), 297-381; *De oorkonden der abdij Rozendaal der Orde van Cîteaux*, ed. by A. Goetstouwers, 2 vols. (Antwerp: Provinciebestuur Antwerpen, 1965 & 1985); *Recueil des chartes et document de l'abbaye du Val-Saint-Georges à Salzinnes (Namur) 1196/97-1300*, ed. by Émile Brouette (Achel: Abbaye cistercienne, 1971); Hendrik Delvaux, *Inventaris van het archief der abdij Maagdendaal te Oplinter* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1965) or Georges Despy and André Uyttebrouck, *Inventaire des archives de l'abbaye de La Ramée à Jauchelette* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns: The Women's Religious Movement and Its Reform in Thirteenth-Century Champagne* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). I have not been able to use Constance Berman's recent monograph, focusing on the northern French archdiocese of Sens, because it appeared only after I had finished the present article. See Constance Berman, *The White Nuns: Cistercian Abbeys for Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

In this paper I aim to provide a first step towards a better understanding of the rise of Cistercian nunneries in the southern Low Countries. In particular, I investigate (1) the origins of the nunneries, (2) the motives of the founder(s) and the role played by local 'managers' in charge of the practical organization of a new community, and (3) the relation of the nunneries to the Cistercian Order. I focus on the two bishoprics where Beatrice spent her life, i.e. Liège and Cambrai,<sup>8</sup> from the moment the first Cistercian women's community emerged (Herkenrode, before 1194)<sup>9</sup> to the middle of the thirteenth century, when the last nunnery in this region was founded (Binderen, 1244/45). During this time span of little over half a century, comprising the better part of Beatrice's life, 44 communities of Cistercian women emerged in the dioceses of Liège and Cambrai (see appendix). These communities are located in the duchy of Brabant (14), the prince-bishopric of Liège (5) and the counties of Namur (7), Flanders (6), Looz (5), Hainaut (4), Luxembourg (2) and Gelre (1). Charters form the main source of information, as they are available for all the communities, although not always in large quantities.<sup>10</sup> For the diocese of Liège, I can also rely on hagiographical sources such as several Lives of Cistercian women, e.g. Ida of Nivelles or Lutgard of Aywières, and the *exempla* stories told by Caesarius of Heisterbach and Thomas of Cantimpré. I complement this information with legislative sources such as the Statutes of the General Chapter and with the occasional foundation legend.<sup>11</sup> The resulting picture fills in some of

<sup>8</sup> The Cistercian nunneries founded in these two bishoprics account for over 80% of the total number of white nuns' communities in the southern Low Countries. The remaining 20%, situated in the more western parts of the region, have already been studied by Erin Jordan. See e.g. Erin Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); id., 'Female Founders: Exercising Authority in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), 535-61; id., 'Gender Concerns: Monks, Nuns, and Patronage of the Cistercian Order in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', *Speculum*, 87 (2012), 62-94; id., 'Roving Nuns and Cistercian Realities: The Claustrealisation of Religious Women in the Thirteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 42 (2012), 597-614 and id., '"Pro Remedio Anime Sue": Cistercian Nuns and Space in the Low Countries', in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. by Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 279-98.

<sup>9</sup> Some authors mention c. 1182 as the date of origin for Herkenrode, based on a sixteenth-century inscription found at the nunnery. However, the earliest preserved charter dates from 1194 and therefore 'before 1194' seems the more cautious dating.

<sup>10</sup> As consulting the archives for all 44 communities was not feasible, I limited myself to the charters in the *Diplomata Belgica* database, complemented – if available – with printed editions of charters and cartularies. The total number of studied charters exceeds 1500, so the documentary basis of this study is certainly extensive enough. When referring to charters from the *Diplomata Belgica* in the footnotes I will use 'DiBe ID' followed by identification number of the charter in the database. See *Diplomata Belgica. Les sources diplomatiques des Pays-Bas méridionaux aux Moyen Âge*, ed. by Thérèse de Hemptinne, Jeroen Deploige, Jean-Louis Kupper and Walter Prevenier (Brussels: Royal Historical Commission, since 2015) <[www.diplomata-belgica.be](http://www.diplomata-belgica.be)> [last accessed 15 February 2018].

<sup>11</sup> As these foundation legends were often written down only long after a community's establishment, they need to be read with caution as they often re-interpret the past to suit contemporary needs.

the blanks in the historiography of Beatrice's communities in Florival, Maagdendaal and Nazareth and will hopefully also provide a stepping stone to a better understanding of the world of the white nuns in the medieval southern Low Countries.

## THE DAWN OF CISTERCIAN FEMALE SPIRITUALITY

### Religious Experimentation and Cistercian Ideals

According to the gestation model propagated by the Order, a Cistercian community was to be founded by an abbot/abbess accompanied by twelve monks/nuns, in an *imitatio* of Christ and his apostles. However, reality hardly ever lived up to this ideal.<sup>12</sup> Many nuns' communities originated as informal gatherings of women who decided to adopt Cistercian customs without formal approval from the Order. Whereas some were later incorporated into the Order, others never gained official recognition from the General Chapter.<sup>13</sup> For example, in the case of the English nunneries, few were ever formally affiliated with the Order, although they claimed Cistercian status when it suited their needs.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, these informal communities did not necessarily follow Cistercian ideals from their inception. In the Champagne region, many nunneries emerged from houses for reformed prostitutes (*filles-Dieu*) or small hospitals, located near the access roads of cities and villages.<sup>15</sup> Determining the origins of the Cistercian nunneries from the dioceses of Liège and Cambrai can be tricky, however, since the extant source material is often very meagre or scattered. Often, the sources only offer us tantalizing hints of a history prior to the

<sup>12</sup> Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 94-96.

<sup>13</sup> Constance Berman, 'Where There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?', in *Medieval religion: New Approaches*, ed. by Constance Berman (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 217-248.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the English nuns of St-Michael's outside Stamford emphasized their Cistercian status in order to enjoy privileges, avoid taxation, enhance their prestige or claim support from Cistercian monks. See Linda Rasmussen, 'Order, Order! Determining Order in Medieval English Nunneries', in *Our Medieval Heritage: Essays in honour of John Tillotson for his 60th birthday*, ed. by Linda Rasmussen, Valerie Spear and Dianne Tillotson (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), pp. 30-49. Whereas historians such as Sally Thompson have tried to classify the English Cistercian nunneries according to their 'official' or 'unofficial' status, Elizabeth Freeman considers the issue irrelevant, reflecting modern rather than medieval preoccupations. See Sally Thompson, 'The Problem of Cistercians Nuns in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 227-52 (p. 245); Elizabeth Freeman, 'Cistercian Nuns, Cause Papers, and the York Consistory Court in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Australia and New Zealand Law and History E-Journal* (refereed paper no 16) (2006), 1-14 (pp. 3-4).

<sup>15</sup> Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, pp. 15-44 and pp. 117-46; Anne Lester, 'Cares Beyond the Walls: Cistercian Nuns and the Care of Lepers in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Northern France', in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000-1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, ed. by Emilia Jamrozik and Janet Burton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 197-224.

Cistercian affiliation of a nunnery. Luckily, other cases allow for more firm conclusions.

At least twelve nunneries, comprising a first group, seem to have been new foundations, intended to be Cistercian from the outset.<sup>16</sup> The community of Beaupré, for instance, was founded by Alice (or Aleidis), lady of Boelare, in 1228. In her foundation charter, Alice explicitly stated that she donated her land 'for the construction of a religious community, where holy women would serve God following the Cistercian observance under the rule of an abbess'.<sup>17</sup> In the case of Saulchoir, the nunnery was populated with nuns from the Cistercian community of La Brayelle.<sup>18</sup> However, even in these straightforward cases some caution is expedient, as we often rely on a later tradition of the original charter, leaving some room for discussion due to the possibility of interpolations.<sup>19</sup> This type of new Cistercian foundation is spread more or less evenly over the entire period. A second group of six other communities is too poorly documented to allow for firm conclusions. When they surface in the sources, they are already fully-fledged Cistercian nunneries.<sup>20</sup> Considering their high degree of organization, it is likely that they already existed some time before this first mention, yet it is unknown if they had always followed Cistercian customs or not. Of this second group, only Ophoven existed prior to 1228; the five other nunneries all originated in the 1230s.

A small third group of Cistercian nunneries offers examples of *transitus*, the transfer of a monastic community from one order to another.<sup>21</sup> The women of Aywières are described as 'living under the rule of Benedict' in 1202, before their patron Louis of Chiny petitioned the pope in 1205 or 1206 to grant the

<sup>16</sup> I. e. Ter Kameren, Vrouwenpark, Hocht, Roermond, Beaupré, Le Jardinnet, Valduc, Moulins, Saulchoir, Paix-Dieu, the refoundation of Robermont and Binderen.

<sup>17</sup> *ad religiosum coenobium instaurandum, in quo sanctae mulieres, sub regimine abbatissae, secundum cisterciensis ordinis observantias, Domino famulentur*, DiBe ID 18407.

<sup>18</sup> DiBe ID 19425.

<sup>19</sup> Another example illustrating how difficult it is to securely ascribe Cistercian status to a nunnery from its emergence is Moulins. Bishop John of Eppes granted his permission for this new Cistercian foundation 'at the request of people living devoutly in Christ'. It is unclear who these people were, yet it cannot be ruled out that they already lived at the site as an informal group of devout souls that had recently decided to adopt Cistercian customs. *Ad petitionem pie uiuentium in Christo ad ampliandum Dei cultum et salutem animarum, concessimus fieri Coenobium Monialium Cisterciensis*, DiBe ID 19560.

<sup>20</sup> I.e. Ophoven, St-Bernardsdal, Soleilmont, Marche-les-Dames, Orienten and Terbeek.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to the communities mentioned further on in this paper, Soleilmont is sometimes considered an example of *transitus*. According to tradition, this nunnery originated as a Benedictine community, founded by Count Henry the Blind of Namur in 1088. It was intended as a retreat for the female relatives of the first crusaders. The community was abandoned after a plague epidemic, to be refounded as a Cistercian nunnery in the early thirteenth century by Baldwin of Courtenay, count of Namur. Joseph-Marie Canivez, *L'ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique des origines (1132) au XX<sup>me</sup> siècle* (Forges-lez-Chimay: Abbaye cistercienne de N.D. de Scourmont, 1926), pp. 366-68. This account not only lacks historical substantiation, but it is also problematic: Henry the Blind lived from 1112 to 1196 and only became count in 1139. Therefore, in contrast with e.g. Erin Jordan, I reject this thesis and rely only on the extant historical evidence.

community Cistercian status.<sup>22</sup> For Val-Notre-Dame, there is no doubt that the community did not always adhere to the Cistercian precepts, as a papal bull in 1211 refers to the community as ‘the same nunnery, before it adopted the customs of the Cistercian Order’.<sup>23</sup> As Val-Notre-Dame has been connected to the Benedictine priory of St-Leonard,<sup>24</sup> this might provide a second case of *transitus*. The community likely changed its name from *Valllis Roduini* to *Vallis beate Marie* at this occasion.<sup>25</sup> The attraction exerted by the Cistercian Order on individual Benedictine nuns, is proven by the case of Ter Kameren, whose foundress was the Benedictine nun Gilla<sup>26</sup>. Gilla is by no means the only Benedictine nun who decided a Cistercian lifestyle suited her religious needs better, as is related in the Lives of the saintly nuns, Lutgard of Aywières and Ida, later abbess of Argensolles.<sup>27</sup> Other communities had an Augustinian past. At some point in their early history, the women at Robermont must have adopted the Rule of Augustine, as a charter from 1206 confirms,<sup>28</sup> before becoming Cistercian c 1215. The nuns of Vivegnis originally belonged to the Augustinian double community of Beaufays, founded in the first half of the twelfth century, before they relocated to Vivegnis to populate the Cistercian monastery recently built there by the duke of Brabant in the early 1230s. The twelfth-century Augustinian community of Solières, too, was converted into a Cistercian nunnery around 1229. In both cases, John of Eppes, the bishop of Liège in 1229-1238,

<sup>22</sup> DiBe ID 24870.

<sup>23</sup> *idem monasterium, antequam Cisterciensis ordinis instituta susciperet*, DiBe ID 30414.

<sup>24</sup> The priory of St-Leonard belonged to the abbey of St-Jacques in Liège. The hypothesis is based on the *vita* of Ida of Argensolles, who professed in St-Leonard before moving to Val-Notre-Dame, and on a charter mentioned in the *Monasticon Belge*, dealing with testamentary bequests by nuns from St-Leonard to Val-Notre-Dame. See Étienne-Marie Héron de Villefosse, ‘Vie manuscrite de la bienheureuse Ide, 1<sup>re</sup> abbesse du monastère d’Argensolles (Marne)’, *Revue du Champagne*, 1 (1889), 481-98 (486-89) and Emile Brouette, ‘Abbaye du Val-Notre-Dame’, in *Monasticon Belge II: Province de Liège*, vol. 2 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d’histoire religieuse, 1929), pp. 203-11 (p. 205).

<sup>25</sup> *in loco qui dicitur Vallis beate Marie qui prius Vallis Roduini fuit appellatus*, DiBe ID 14498 from 1210. Two papal privileges from 1211 also mention both designations, see DiBe ID 30414 and 30415.

<sup>26</sup> *Liber de gestibus virorum illustrium monasterii Villariensis*, recensio prima, ed. by Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand, in *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, III (Paris: Delaulne, 1717), cols. 1309-1374 (col. 1344). In the secondary literature, she is sometimes referred to as Gisla or Gisela; Ter Kameren is also referred to as La Cambre.

<sup>27</sup> The saintly nun Lutgard of Aywières began her religious life in a Benedictine nunnery, St-Catherine near St-Truiden, before transferring to the Cistercian community of Aywières. *Vita Lutgardis Virgine in Aquiriae Brabantia, Acta Sanctorum*, Iuni III (Antwerp: 1701), cols. 231-63 (lib. I). A certain Ida is also said to have moved from the Benedictine priory St-Leonard to Val-Notre-Dame to better serve God; she later made a career as the first abbess of Argensolles, a highly influential Cistercian nunnery in the Champagne region. See Héron de Villefosse, ‘Vie manuscrite’, pp. 486-97. For more information on Argensolles, see Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, passim, e.g. pp. 28-33.

<sup>28</sup> *in Robertimonte, qui proximus adiacet Leodiensi ciuitati, de bonis suis congregationem dominarum sub regula beati Augustini ibidem degentium instituerit*, DiBe ID 13928.



played a decisive role in this process.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, during his episcopate the above-mentioned community of Robermont (near Liège) moved to Val-Benoit, replacing the Augustinian double community that had occupied the site until then. We know that the canons relocated, but the Augustinian women disappear from view. It is possible that the new Cistercian nunnery absorbed the female contingent of the community. These examples hint at a deliberate policy of replacing Augustinian women with Cistercian nuns in the early 1230s. Perhaps the statute proclaimed in 1228 banning the further incorporation of nunneries into the Order prompted the bishop to quickly convert communities of Augustinian women into Cistercian nunneries, hoping to secure pastoral care from the Order before the statute became generally enforced.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, a fourth group of several communities originated as spontaneous, informal gatherings of women around a local church (Robermont, Salzinnes), altar (Fontenelle), *cella* (La Ramée), oratory (Épinlieu) or inspiring woman (St-Remi, around *domina* Margaret of Glimes, then still at Marcourt). According to Lieve Monthaye, the nunnery of Rozendaal was likely the result of a campaign to reform the local hermitage along more ecclesiastically approved lines.<sup>31</sup> Before adopting the Benedictine Rule, the community of Aywières already constituted an informal group of women at Les Awirs. It is striking that all of these communities were already in existence before the proclamation of the 1228 ban.<sup>32</sup> Because these women are referred to as *mulieres religiosae*, *religiosae feminae* or *devotes mulieres* in the charters,<sup>33</sup> these loose gatherings of women are sometimes considered beguine communities. However, at that time beguines did not yet form a clearly defined group in the religious landscape, with distinct

<sup>29</sup> John even installed one of his family members as the first abbess of Solières. See *Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium*, ed. by Iohannis Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 14-129 (p. 125) and *Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium abbreviata*, ed. by Iohannis Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 129-35 (p. 134).

<sup>30</sup> In addition, these examples suggest that Despy and Despy were perhaps too hasty to dismiss as mere fiction the traditional narrative that ascribes an Augustinian past to Vrouwenpark, although granted, there is no contemporary evidence substantiating this claim. According to this narrative, John Hugh and his wife Beatrice were the founders of Vrouwenpark. Since their marriage had failed to produce any children, they founded an Augustinian community to assure themselves of spiritual offspring. See Canivez, *L'ordre de Cîteaux*, p. 213; , Georges Despy and Andrée Despy, 'Une problème d'histoire cistercienne: les débuts de l'abbaye de Parc-les-Dames', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 42 (1964), 1242-54 (1247-49).

<sup>31</sup> Lieve Monthaye, 'De vroegste geschiedenis van de Cisterciënserinnenabdij van Rozendaal te Sint-Katelijne Waver (van circa 1227 tot 1383)' (unpublished master's thesis, KU Leuven, 1965), p. 20, cited in Frans Vanhoof, 'Abbaye de Rozendaal à Wavre-Sainte-Catherine', in *Monasticon Belge, VIII: Province d'Anvers*, vol. I (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1992), pp. 127-64 (p. 141).

<sup>32</sup> Only in the case of St-Remi can this not be stated with absolute certainty. However, as the community certainly emerged before 1229, it likely already existed in some form or other at the time of the ban.

<sup>33</sup> Robermont/Val-Benoit, DiBe ID 13926 and 13927; Salzinnes, DiBe ID 13405 and 26579; Herkenrode, DiBe ID 15058 and Aywières, DiBe ID 224870.

characteristics that set them apart from other spiritual women.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the beguines, recluses, hospital sisters and Cistercian nuns of the southern Low Countries were all inspired by the same spiritual ideals<sup>35</sup> and formed close networks, in which women interacted with each other and even freely transferred between different religious lifestyles.<sup>36</sup> This shared religious culture suggests that the boundaries between these groups were quite flexible, at least in this early period. Significantly, the strong connection between Cistercian nunneries and hospitals that Anne Lester uncovered for the Champagne region appears to be rather exceptional in Liège and Cambrai. Only Refuge Notre Dame and Zwijveke can irrefutably be linked to the presence of a hospital.<sup>37</sup> In addition, recent research by Jean-François Nieuws suggests that the women that formed the nunnery of Argenton around 1229 were originally active in a mixed hospital community at Grand-Vaux, before they transferred to Argenton and became Cistercians.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the gift of a house to Val-Benoit in 1241, destined to transform the residence into a hospital for 24 beguines shows that its donor, a chaplain of St-Gilles in Liège named John, considered the management of a hospital appropriate for a Cistercian nunnery.<sup>39</sup> However, in general the nunneries of Liège and Cambrai do not stem from a life of active charity.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Simons has characterized the first beguine communities as loose gatherings of like-minded women without institutional attachments, pursuing similar goals. This only changed around 1230 when the women started to present themselves to the world as 'religious institutions', thus carving out a niche for themselves in the religious landscape, distinct from Cistercian nuns, recluses, etc. Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> Herbert Grundmann was the first to study the remarkable similarities between the newly emerging religious groups from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both orthodox and heterodox. See Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der Deutschen Mystik* (Berlin: Verlag dr. Emil Ebering, 1935).

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Panzer, 'Cistercian Women and the Beguines: Interaction, Cooperation and Interdependence' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> It might be significant that these two houses belonged to Hainaut and Flanders respectively, in other words, that they both fell under the auspices of the comital house of Flanders-Hainaut. As Erin Jordan has pointed out, several other nunneries from this region also had their roots in a hospital and/or were responsible for the management of one, the Bijloke in Ghent being the most renowned case, next to lesser known examples such as Nieuwenbos, Flines and La Marquette. This might point to a specific attitude towards hospitals and their management in the comital family and its entourage. See Jordan, 'Roving Nuns', p. 608. For more information on the Bijloke, see Alfred Van Heddeghem, *Een middeleeuws abdijhospitaal de Oude Bijloke: Gentse hospitalen en ziekenverzorging 1146-1797* (Antwerp: De Vries-Brouwers, 1978) or Cyriel Vleeschouwers, 'Het beheer van het O.L.Vrouw-hospitaal te Gent en de stichting van de Cisterciënseninnenabdijs O.L.Vrouw-ten-Bos (1215) en Bijloke (1228) door uten Hove's', *Annales de la Société belge d'histoire des hôpitaux*, 9 (1971), 11-34.

<sup>38</sup> Jean-François Nieuws is currently preparing a paper on this topic; see his forthcoming 'Les pauvres, la route et le prince: L'hospice pour pèlerins de Grand-Vaux (Balâtre) redécouvert (XIIIe-XVIe siècles)', in *Voyageurs, en route!*, ed. by Aurélie Stuckens and others, Cahiers de la Maison du patrimoine médiéval mosan, 13 (Bouvignes-Dinant: Maison du patrimoine médiéval mosan, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> DiBe ID 21701.



A pattern emerges from these observations. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, a phase of spiritual experimentation existed in which women expressed their religious aspirations in a variety of forms. At some point, several of these groups of women started to identify themselves as Cistercian and imitated the Order's ideals and customs. Of course, this evolution towards a Cistercian identity was but one option: other communities formed the nucleus of beguinages or hospitals or even retained their informal character, perhaps never leaving a trace in historical record. Even when a community was subjected to Cistercian oversight, it did not necessarily become Cistercian, as the example of the leprosy of Ter Bank proves. This community retained its autonomy, even though it was entrusted to the supervision of the male Cistercian community of Villers in 1224.<sup>40</sup> In sum, an early experimental phase led to the emergence of several forms of female spirituality, affined yet distinct, with their own accents, rules and expectations. Once the Cistercian female lifestyle became more clearly defined and distinguished from the other options, the phase of imitation gave way to more direct foundations, meant as Cistercian nunneries from the outset.

The communities in which Beatrice of Nazareth lived fit into this overall pattern. Several hypotheses have been formulated regarding the emergence of Beatrice's first home, Florival. According to an early-modern chronicle, the community was founded by the counts of Grez in 1096 as a Benedictine priory, dependent on Affligem.<sup>41</sup> Miraeus, on the other hand, posits the duke of Brabant and four of his vassals as founders,<sup>42</sup> whereas Bets described Florival as an informal community of women initiated in 1193 by Albert of Louvain<sup>43</sup>. None of these hypotheses are substantiated by contemporary evidence.<sup>44</sup> In other words, Florival's origins remain cloaked in mystery, which explains the existence of several foundation legends in the later period. The first archival documentation dates to 1224, and the community was only designated as Cistercian in 1228.<sup>45</sup> The *Vita Beatricis* is therefore the only source for Florival's earliest history and is used by scholars to date its emergence to 1208-1214, more than ten years before the first archival trace. In other words, for quite some time the community existed as an informal community (or at least a community that did not feel the need to produce or preserve archival documents). The *Vita* presents the community as Cistercian from the start, yet we need to keep in mind that it was only written several

<sup>40</sup> DiBe ID 17164.

<sup>41</sup> Ploegaerts, *Les moniales cisterciennes*, III, p. 12; Canivez, *L'ordre de Cîteaux*, pp. 194-95.

<sup>42</sup> Aubertus Miraeus, *Chronicon Cisterciensis Ordinis* (Cologne: 1614), pp. 212-13, cited in De Ganck, 'The three foundations', p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Pieter Vincent Bets, *Geschiedenis der gemeenten Oplinter, Bunsbeek en Hauthem, alsook der abdij van Oplinter* (Louvain: Fonteyn, 1870), pp. 151-52, cited in Ploegaerts, *Les moniales cisterciennes*, III, p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Brouette, 'Abbaye de Florival', p. 429; De Ganck, 'The three foundations', pp. 50-51.

<sup>45</sup> DiBe ID 27935. In 1228 the abbot of Cîteaux granted the lay brothers of, among others, Florival the same rights as those enjoyed by the *conversi* at Argensolles and Herkenrode. DiBe ID 31156.

decades after Florival was established, when its Cistercian status could no longer be disputed. Any pre-Cistercian past might therefore be ‘forgotten’ in order to present a story of three consecutive Cistercian foundations by Beatrice’s father, Bartholomew of Tienen. When Beatrice presumably joined Florival (c 1209/10),<sup>46</sup> the community was most likely an informal group of women. However, Beatrice received part of her early religious training at La Ramée, which was certainly Cistercian by 1214.<sup>47</sup> This connection demonstrates that Florival was already familiar with, and likely imitated, Cistercian customs soon after the community’s establishment.

Given its ties to Florival, there is little doubt that Beatrice’s second community, Maagdendaal near Oplinter, was intended to be a community of Cistercian nuns from the outset. However, when Maagdendaal first appears in the archival sources as a Cistercian nunnery in 1219, there seems to be some reluctance to fully claim Cistercian status: the inhabitants are not yet referred to as nuns, but as *personis ibidem Domino servientibus* and no mention is made of an abbess.<sup>48</sup> Four years later, in 1223, the community is characterized as Cistercian by bishop Hugh of Pierrepont without hesitation.<sup>49</sup> We can therefore assume that between 1219 and 1223 the nunnery further developed into a well-organized community according to the precepts of the Order. Shortly thereafter, in 1224 and again in 1225, the community sold its property located near Florival to that nunnery,<sup>50</sup> pointing to a desire to assert its independence from Florival. Finally, Nazareth too was planned as a Cistercian nunnery from its inception. The first charter concerning Nazareth dates to 1225: it details the donation by Duke Henry I of Brabant of the land on which a new Cistercian nunnery was to be built.<sup>51</sup> However, the project clearly took some time to realize, because the next trace to be found in the sources dates to 1236, when the Statutes of the General Chapter recorded the incorporation request of this new nunnery.<sup>52</sup> Because the *Vita Beatricis* states that the incorporation was secured

<sup>46</sup> De Ganck, ‘The three foundations’, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> However, the community might not have been fully established yet as the charter makes no mention of an abbess, only of the *sorores de Kerkehem Cisterciensis ordinis*. DiBe ID 15209. Two years earlier, the community is described as an informal community around a *cella*, see DiBe ID 25951.

<sup>48</sup> DiBe ID 16117 and 16138.

<sup>49</sup> DiBe ID 17116.

<sup>50</sup> DiBe ID 17511 from 1225. The earlier charter is mentioned by De Ganck, but is not included in the *Diplomata Belgica* database, nor in the inventory of the archive of Maagdendaal by Delvaux. De Ganck, ‘The three foundations’, p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> *ad construendum in ea nouum monasterium dominarum ordinis Cisterciensis*, DiBe ID 20099. De Ganck rejects this charter as a *falsum* because it is only preserved in an eighteenth-century copy. However, according to the *Diplomata Belgica* database it is an original charter and Sabbe and Reypens accept the charter’s authenticity. I have decided to follow their assessment of the charter. See De Ganck, ‘The three foundations’, p. 61; Sabbe, ‘De abdij Nazareth’, pp. 100-02; Reypens, ‘De eerste grondschenking’, pp. 303-05. However, the earlier charter from 1220 (= DiBe ID 16384) is today generally considered a *falsum*. See Sabbe, ‘De abdij Nazareth’, pp. 99-100.

<sup>52</sup> DiBe ID 30209.

one year after the community's establishment, 1235 is often cited as its foundation date, although shortly before 1236 is perhaps a more judicious dating. Whereas both Florival and Maagdendaal were situated in the diocese of Liège, Nazareth was located in the bishopric of Cambrai.<sup>53</sup> In fact, it was the last Cistercian nunnery to be founded in the diocese.

### A Choice for Contemplation?

Whether the nunneries originated as Cistercian foundations from the start or as communities that only in time turned towards the Order, in both instances the women must have had their reasons to embrace the Cistercian way of life. Unfortunately, their motives are difficult to deduce from the available sources. Hagiographical texts are the only sources that occasionally mention why a woman was attracted to Cistercian ideals. When relating the Life of Abbot Charles of Villers, the *Liber de gestibus virorum illustrium monasterii Villariensis*, for instance, informs the reader about the early history of the nunnery of Ter Kameren. The Benedictine nun Gilla had conceived the plan to found a Cistercian community for women. According to the *Gesta*, she desired to 'ascend to the Cistercian order out of a desire for a stricter life'.<sup>54</sup> Ida of Louvain began her religious life as beguine. Around 1255, however, she decided to enter the nunnery of Rozendaal. Her *Vita* attributes this change in lifestyle to a longing for a more secluded life, away from the prying eyes of secular people, so she would be totally surrendered to her own conscience and to God.<sup>55</sup> This emphasis on a quiet life of contemplation at Rozendaal is confirmed in the *Vita Arnulfi Villariensis*. When relating the foundation of the nunnery, the author Goswin of Bossut summarizes the founder's intention: Gilles I Berthout wanted the women in his new nunnery to devote themselves

<sup>53</sup> Of course, all three communities were situated in the same principality, namely the Duchy of Brabant. This suggests that crossing ecclesiastical borders mattered less than crossing secular ones. Beatrice and her family were probably well embedded in local networks, which ultimately derived their power and authority from the duke of Brabant. Leaving this support network behind must have influenced the chances of success of a newly founded nunnery more than changing bishoprics.

<sup>54</sup> *Arctioris vitae desiderio ad ordinem Cisterciensem ascendere; Liber de gestibus*, recensio prima, cap. 5, col. 1344. Caesarius of Heisterbach claimed she acted on divine command from Christ's Mother. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Homiliae & Libri Miraculorum*, ed. by Alphonse Hilka, in *Die Wundergeschichte des Caesarius von Heisterbach* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937), lib. II, ex. 4, pp. 79-80.

<sup>55</sup> *Hæc igitur illi prima mutandi status sui seculumque relinquendi fuit occasio. Solius quippe Dei notitiam, operum suorum consciam & testem habere desiderans; ad monasteriales latebras se transferendam fore satius aestimavit omnimodo, quam per populares rumusculos, quos evitare nequibat in seculo, virtutum suarum thesaurum, pro vanæ gloriæ vili commercio, perditionis exponere detrimento; Vita Idæ Lovaniensis, Acta Sanctorum*, Apr. III (Antwerp: 1675), cols. 155-89 (lib. II, cap. 2, col. 171). Lutgard of Aywières, too, avoided all pastoral duties so she could devote herself to contemplation. According to Thomas of Cantimpré, she was unable to learn French, the language spoken at Aywières, so the resulting social isolation probably ensured that she was left to herself and her prayers. *Vita Lutgardis*, lib. I, cap. 22, col. 241.

day and night to the service of God.<sup>56</sup> However, such hagiographical texts are likely to reflect the male authors' beliefs about women rather than those of the women themselves.

Nevertheless, charters too hint at the importance of the *vita contemplativa* for Cistercian nuns, for example by referring to the women as *ancillae Dei*,<sup>57</sup> who sacrifice themselves for God,<sup>58</sup> serve God day and night<sup>59</sup> or rest *sub penis contemplationis*.<sup>60</sup> When approving the foundation of Ter Kameren, John, bishop of Cambrai, wanted to ensure that the community could enjoy the peace of holy meditation and the dew of contemplation without disturbance from the secular world.<sup>61</sup> The significance of prayer is underlined by Alice of Boelare, the foundress of Beaupré. She promised to liberally reward her new community if the nuns devoted themselves to prayer on her behalf.<sup>62</sup> The ratification of this new foundation by Godfrey, bishop of Cambrai, is remarkable as well. In one of the most elaborate justifications of female Cistercian life, Godfrey stated that it was his duty to support 'the frail sex' in its spiritual endeavors, so they would not fall victim to pride. He praised the women's Cistercian lifestyle, freely chosen for the enjoyment of eternal life, and admonished all against perturbing these brides of Christ, sleeping in the arms of their Beloved.<sup>63</sup>

While we should be careful to attribute these motives to the women themselves, it does seem that the *vita contemplativa* formed a defining feature of the Cistercian lifestyle, setting the nuns apart from their spiritual counterparts, such as beguines and hospital workers. Erin Jordan has already demonstrated for the

<sup>56</sup> *novum fundavit monasterium Ordinis Cisterciensis, qui Vallis-rosarum nomen est, ubi aggregari fecit de alio monasterio Sanctimoniales, quae devotum diebus ac noctibus Domino exhiberent famulatum; Vita Arnulfi conversi Villariensis, Acta Sanctorum, Iuni V (Antwerp: 1709), cols. 608-31 (lib. II, cap. 20, col. 628).*

<sup>57</sup> Maagdendaal near Oplinter, DiBe ID 19262 and 19231, and Beaupré, DiBe ID 13320.

<sup>58</sup> *sub deo sacrificare*, Épinlieu, DiBe ID 15213.

<sup>59</sup> *domni de Boneffe Cisterciensis ordinis in qua religiosae sanctimoniales Domino die ne nocte deuote exhibent famulatum*, Boneffe, DiBe ID 19418.

<sup>60</sup> La Ramée, DiBe ID 25970.

<sup>61</sup> *Ut igitur humilitatis uestrae plantatio in sanctae mediationis otio possit quiescere ab incursum et turbine saecularis tumultus, et desuper rorem sic contemplationis accipiat, et in conuersatione terrena abundantia bonae actionis pinguescat*, DiBe ID 13320. Similarly, the bishop of Liège did not want to disturb the sleep of contemplation of the nuns of Boutershoven/Oeteren. *Catalogue des actes de Henri De Guelre, prince-évêque de Liège*, ed. by Alphonse Delescluse & Dieudonné Brouwers (Brussels: Société Belge de librairie, 1900), nr. 53, pp. 209-11.

<sup>62</sup> *ut tanto deuotius pro me et liberis Dominum deprecentur, quanto sibi uberius senserint me et ipsos fuisse in pluribus beneficiis liberales*, DiBe ID 18407. The patron of Herkenrode, Count Louis of Looz, provided a similar justification for his donations to the early community of Herkenrode: *per orationes fidelium Christo deuote seruientium ipsiusque contemplationi uigilanter uacantium solamen quaeramus et subsidium*, DiBe ID 15059.

<sup>63</sup> DiBe ID 13320. When countess Joan of Flanders confirmed her support for Épinlieu by commending the nunnery to the abbot of Cîteaux, she too used a gendered discourse, putting the duty of care firmly with the Cistercian monks. This charter is edited by Ursmer Berlière in his 'La foundation de l'abbaye d'Épinlieu', *Revue Bénédictine*, 9 (1892), 381-83. Gender is also invoked by Count Louis II of Looz when donating to the emerging community of Herkenrode, see DiBe ID 15058.

counties of Flanders and Hainaut that Cistercian nunneries were quite successful in securing donations for commemorations. Nuns' prayers clearly were considered just as effective as those of monks.<sup>64</sup> The charters for the nunneries of Liège and Cambrai confirm this picture: they abound with donations for the salvation of the donor's soul or the remission of his/her sins, the institution of an anniversary and requests for prayers. Several communities received testamentary bequests and were allowed to bury secular persons within the enclosure.<sup>65</sup> Arnold, lord of Elslo, was received in the *fraternitas* of Robermont/Val-Benoit.<sup>66</sup> Finally, when the canons of the chapter of St-Servaas in Maas-tricht granted the nunnery of Hocht the right to collect timber in the forest at Lede, they did so only in return for the community's prayers for the deceased members of their chapter.<sup>67</sup> This confirms that Cistercian nuns were conceived as effective intercessors by their environment and suggests that they themselves also considered these prayer duties a vital aspect of their religious calling.

However, the nuns were not the only stakeholders in a community. Without the financial and ideological support of secular patrons (of both sexes) and religious men (both monastic and secular), their communities stood little chance of success. These actors had their own distinct agendas, not necessarily in line with the ideals of the community itself.

## FOUNDERS, FAMILY AND MANAGERS

### A Founder's Motives

Although some nunneries developed from spontaneous gatherings of women, and consequently did not have a founder *stricto sensu*, many other communities can be traced back to a specific person or family.<sup>68</sup> Their reasons for favoring

<sup>64</sup> Jordan, 'Gender Concerns', pp. 81-88.

<sup>65</sup> I.e. Herkenrode, Salzinnes, Val-Notre-Dame, La Ramée, Fontenelle, Roermond, Zwijveke, Maagdendaal near Oudenaarde, Rozendaal, Solières, Vivegnis, Orienten, Saulchoir and Robermont. One donation charter even made explicit arrangements for the burial of the donors in the nunnery: *Insuper si uterque ipsorum, uel alter in seculo adhuc commorantes, in fata cesserint, debent in monasterio nostro sepeliri*, Rozendaal, DiBe ID 27214. Excavations at Fontenelle have revealed the existence of graves in the church. See Jordan, "'Pro remedio anime sue'", p. 290.

<sup>66</sup> DiBe ID 15583.

<sup>67</sup> DiBe ID 30357.

<sup>68</sup> Identifying the person(s) behind a nunnery's foundation is not as easy as one might expect. Often, accounts of a community's foundation were written down only decades or even centuries later, making their reliability debatable. On close scrutiny, a traditionally asserted founder sometimes turns out to be the one who donated land to an existing informal community for the construction of a more permanent residence, as in the case of St-Remi (DiBe ID 18247) and La Ramée (DiBe ID 15556). Finally, claims to the title of 'founder' by the higher nobility might conceal the crucial role played by a member of lesser descent, who was the real driving force behind a nunnery's establishment. For example, in charters dating around the foundation of the nunnery of Vivegnis, Duke Henry I of Brabant is claimed as the community's founder by his son Henry II (DiBe ID 29382 and 29384), yet according to a charter from 1256 issued by the abbess

the Cistercian lifestyle intersected with those of the nuns themselves. As can be expected, spiritual motives are often invoked as the justification for foundations, in particular repentance for the past sins of the founder or his/her relatives,<sup>69</sup> intercession for the founder's soul,<sup>70</sup> the desire to honor God<sup>71</sup> or the restoration of *memoria* practices.<sup>72</sup> By contrast, communities founded as the result of a crusader vow, such as attested for thirteenth-century Northern France,<sup>73</sup> are not recorded for the nunneries of Liège and Cambrai.<sup>74</sup> The nuns of Binderen were perceived as her spiritual offspring by Mary of Brabant, who also considered her efforts in establishing the nunnery a form of *imitatio Christi*,<sup>75</sup> an idea that is also found in the Life of William, the founder of Olive.<sup>76</sup> By founding Valduc, Duke Henry II of Brabant wanted to express his gratitude for the birth of his first son.<sup>77</sup> However, Thomas of Cantimpré gives

of the community, Prior Renier of Beaufays was the driving force behind the nunnery's foundation. Furthermore, de Crassier quotes an epitaph for Renier, which describes him as *fundator domus istius*. See Guillaume de Crassier, 'L'épithapier de l'abbaye de Vivegnis', *Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du Diocèse de Liège*, 19 (1910), 1-3 (p. 3). The same may be true of Nazareth: although the initiative for the community's foundation is traditionally ascribed to Duke Henry II of Brabant, Sabbe has suggested the decisive influence of a member of the ducal entourage, the Antwerp patrician family of Overijse/Anderstad. See Sabbe, 'De abdij Nazareth', pp. 98-113.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Binderen, DiBe ID 28041.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. La Ramée, DiBe ID 15556 and Beaupré, DiBe ID 18407.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Moulins, DiBe ID 19560.

<sup>72</sup> The refoundation of Robermont, DiBe ID 22037.

<sup>73</sup> Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, pp. 147-70; Constance Berman, 'Fashions in Monastic Patronage: The Popularity of Supporting Cistercian Abbeys for Women in Thirteenth-Century Northern France', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 17 (1990), 36-45 (p. 39).

<sup>74</sup> Tradition has it that both Soleilmont and Marche-les-Dames were founded in order to provide for the female relatives of crusaders, yet there is no contemporary evidence to support these claims. Donations from departing crusaders are, however, recorded for Robermont/Val-Benoit (DiBe ID 4936), Salzinnes (DiBe ID 13355) and Ter Kameren (DiBe ID 16588 and 20734), but nonetheless do not seem to have been very common. The count of Looz, Louis II, did lend money from the nuns of Herkenrode in order to finance his crusading plans around 1218 (DiBe ID 15951). His father, Gerard, an important early patron of the community, was also a crusader and even died in Jerusalem. Canivez further suggests that Gerard, lord of Jauche and patron of La Ramée, was also inspired by crusading ideals when donating land for the relocation of the community, although the extant charters remain silent on the issue. Canivez, *L'Ordre de Cîteaux*, p. 188.

<sup>75</sup> Binderen, DiBe ID 28041. As explained in footnote 30, the foundation of Vrouwenpark is traditionally ascribed to the childless couple John Hugh and his wife Beatrice, who considered the nuns to be their spiritual offspring, although there is no evidence to substantiate this claim. See Brouette, Émile, 'Abbaye de Parc-les-Dames, à Rotselaar', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, vol. 2 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1968), pp. 511-30 (p. 517).

<sup>76</sup> *Vita Guilielmi de Oliva, Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. II, Antwerp, 1658, cols. 494-99 (cap. 2, cols. 495-96).

<sup>77</sup> Cyriel Vleschouwers, 'Joes van Dormael's kroniek der hervorming binnen de Brabantse cisterciënserinnenabdij Hertogendal (1488)', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 47 (1973), 173-220 (pp. 196-97); *Chronica Villariensis monasterii*, ed. by Georg Waitz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 159-209 (p. 207).



another reason. He claims that Henry was motivated by the desire to procure a place in a religious community for his daughter Margaret.<sup>78</sup> Providing for female relatives with religious aspirations by founding a community that these women could enter, was in all likelihood commonplace, considering the many sisters, daughters or nieces that entered their kin's foundations.<sup>79</sup> Only in the case of Roermond, however, is this explicitly stated by the founder. Count Gerard III of Gelre explains that he had founded the nunnery so his mother could fulfil her wish to become a Cistercian nun without leaving the county, as at the time there were no Cistercian nunneries in Gelre.<sup>80</sup> The discourse of founders also concealed other practical motives,<sup>81</sup> such as the creation of a family necropolis. The abbey church of Roermond, for instance, served as a burial church for the counts of Gelre, while Herkenrode provided a final resting place to the counts of Looz and their relatives.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the martyrology of Saulchoir mentions fourteen members of the founding bourgeois family of Aletake, several of which are buried in the nunnery's church.<sup>83</sup> Another underlying motive might have been the competition between noble families and the resulting geopolitical struggles, as Erin Jordan has suggested with regard to the foundation policy of the countesses of Flanders and Hainaut.<sup>84</sup> For example, the informal community of women of Aywières was first located in the territory of the prince bishop of Liège and supported by Louis, count of Chiny. Four years after Louis' death, the duke of Brabant and his vassal Iwan of Rèves donated land for the transfer of the community to Lillois, over 60 miles west of the original location.<sup>85</sup> Other relocations might have been inspired by similar motives. In fact, it is telling that many nunneries in Cambrai and Liège are situated close to secular borders. This is particularly striking with regard to the nunneries located in the county of Namur as well as the high density of

<sup>78</sup> Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus*, lib. II, cap. 10, 8, see the translation by Henri Platelle, *Thomas de Cantimpré: Les exemples du 'Livre des abeilles' : Une vision médiévale*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), nr. 74, pp. 123-24.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, the nunneries of Aywières, Zwijveke, Rozendaal, Wauthier-Braine, Valduc, Ten Roosen or Paix-Dieu.

<sup>80</sup> Martien Dillo, 'De stichting en wijding van de Munsterabdij te Roermond, 1218-1220, en de vermeende wijding in 1224', *Maasgouw: Tijdschrift voor Limburgse geschiedenis en oudheidkunde*, 99 (1980), 10-18.

<sup>81</sup> The community of Rotem provides a curious example of a patron motivated by very practical considerations. When Anselm, miles of Budingén, renounced his rights to certain lands in favor of the community in 1242, he expected in return that, should he ever be imprisoned, the nuns would bail him out. Furthermore, if his property would ever fall victim to flames, the nuns of Rotem were to rebuild it. DiBe ID 30388.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Coomans, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries: The Medieval Architectural Remains', in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture. VI: Cistercian Nuns and Their World*, ed. by Meredith Parsons Lillich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), pp. 61-131 (pp. 69-71); DiBe ID 24725.

<sup>83</sup> Auguste Voisin, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Saulchoir', *Bulletin de la société historique et littéraire de Tournai*, 10 (1865), 100-60 (pp. 105-07).

<sup>84</sup> Jordan, *Women, Power*, chapter 3, pp. 61-85.

<sup>85</sup> DiBe ID 25031.

Cistercian women's communities on the axis between Diest and St-Truiden, which more or less coincides with the boundary between Brabant and Looz. A close analysis of the interaction between the important political players is needed to further assess this thesis, but this first impression already confirms Jordan's hypothesis.

Studying the foundation of Nazareth from this perspective of geopolitical competition proves fruitful. Nazareth was located in close proximity to Rozendaal, which was founded shortly before 1227 by the influential family Berthout, in other words, more or less coinciding with the initial donation of land for the construction of Nazareth by Henry I of Brabant in 1225.<sup>86</sup> The Berthouts had been allies of the duke of Brabant since the twelfth century, but were at the time trying to expand their power. Furthermore, the family's extensive domain also included property near Mechelen, resorting under the prince bishopric of Liège.<sup>87</sup> Founding Rozendaal in the prince bishopric yet close to the border with Brabant might have been an attempt by the Berthouts to assert their power vis-à-vis the duke.<sup>88</sup> In addition, in 1233 Henry I donated land to Villers for the foundation of a new male abbey, yet the project was not realized. When Nazareth was finally established on the land provided by the duke (shortly before 1236), the Berthouts responded by donating land to Villers, this time resulting in the successful foundation of the male abbey of St-Bernard, located not far from Nazareth.<sup>89</sup> The proximity between Nazareth and St-Bernard caused severe friction from the beginning, given that the General Chapter was called upon to mediate in 1237 and again in 1239, yet only the relocation of both communities proved a lasting solution.<sup>90</sup> The Berthouts' play for power

<sup>86</sup> For Rozendaal, see Vanhoof, 'Abbaye de Rozendaal', pp. 127-64. The foundation of Rozendaal by Gilles I Berthout is also mentioned in the *Vita Arnulfi Villariensis*, written by Goswin of Bossut, monk of Villers, around 1228 and redacted before 1236. According to Goswin, Gilles I consulted Abbot William of Villers on the practical arrangements (location etc.) for the new nunnery. See *Vita Arnulfi*, lib. II, cap. 20, col. 628. In 1229, soon after the foundation, Gilles I entered the Teutonic Order, leaving his wife and sons in charge of his patrimony.

<sup>87</sup> For more information on the Berthout family, see Godfried Croenen, *Familie en Macht: De familie Berthout en de Brabantse adel* (Louvain: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2003), in particular pp. 306-10 (Gilles I) and pp. 318-20 (Gilles II).

<sup>88</sup> Smets has suggested that during the early thirteenth century, the Berthouts tried to capitalize on the tensions between the duke and the bishop. See Georges Smets, *Henri I duc de Brabant, 1190-1235* (Brussels: Lamartin, 1908), pp. 243-44.

<sup>89</sup> In 1236, while lying on his deathbed, Gilles' oldest son and namesake donated land to Villers for the construction of the male abbey of St-Bernard at Vremde. In the donation charter, Gilles II Berthout demanded the same rights in the new monastery as the duke already enjoyed at Villers: *In memorato autem monasterio, quale ius habet dux Brabantie in monasteria Villariensi, tale nobis et successoribus nostris reservamus*, DiBe ID 20207. See F. Marcus, 'Abbaye de Saint-Bernard sur l'Escaut, à Hemiksem', in *Monasticon Belge VIII: Province d'Anvers*, vol. 1 (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1992), pp. 31-79 (pp. 42-44).

<sup>90</sup> St-Bernard's transfer from Vremde to Hemiksem was planned in 1244 and executed in 1246. Nazareth probably relocated one year later. However, the duke had already donated the new site for the community in 1243.

seems to have paid off as from the reign of Henry II onwards (1235-1248) they gained increasing influence on the ducal policy.<sup>91</sup>

Of course, none of the motives listed above explains why the founder or founders decided that their community was to adopt Cistercian customs, instead of some other monastic or semireligious lifestyle. In this respect, the influence of ecclesiastical men on spiritual women and on aspiring founders or donors should not be overlooked. As mentioned above, during the early episcopate of John of Eppes, three Augustinian women's communities were replaced by Cistercian nunneries.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, the informal community that had developed around Margaret of Glimes at Marcourt was transformed into the Cistercian nunnery of St-Remi, again with the support of Bishop John.<sup>93</sup> He probably collaborated in this project with John of Nivelles,<sup>94</sup> who was also involved in the establishment of the nunneries of Le Jardiniet and Val-Notre-Dame.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, John's contemporaries and friends James of Vitry and John of Liroux both had strong ties to the community of Aywières.<sup>96</sup> James of Vitry was also entrusted by Countess Joan of Flanders with the practical matters of the foundation of Épinlieu, and when the community of Argenton moved to another location in 1229, James approved its decision by appending his seal to the charter announcing the move.<sup>97</sup> Although these men are best known for their support for the early beguine movement, they definitely promoted the Cistercian lifestyle among women as well and contributed heavily to the success of the Cistercian nunneries in the southern Low Countries.

<sup>91</sup> Godfried Croenen's analysis of the witness lists in ducal charters demonstrates the rise to power of the Berthout family. In 1238 Wouter IV Berthout, Gilles I's brother, also concluded an agreement with Duke Henry II which was sealed by the marriage of his oldest son to a niece of the duke. However, it was the death of Duke Henry III in 1261 that enabled the family to become the political linchpin in Brabant. Croenen, *Familie en Macht*, pp. 232-41.

<sup>92</sup> I.e. Beaufays/Vivegnis, Solières and the original community at Val-Benoit, which probably disappeared when the nuns of Robermont moved to the location.

<sup>93</sup> DiBe ID 25051.

<sup>94</sup> DiBe ID 18247. See also Christine Renardy, *Les maîtres universitaires dans le diocèse de Liège: Répertoire biographique (1140-1350)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), pp. 361-63.

<sup>95</sup> Le Jardiniet, DiBe ID 19370 and Val-Notre-Dame, DiBe ID 15099, 28056 and 24903.

<sup>96</sup> James of Vitry was a fervent admirer of the women living at Aywières: he supported the community with donations, after his promotion to the See of Acre in the Holy Land he was eager to keep his female friends informed about his life through letters, and at the end of his life he remembered the women in his will. Among James' personal acquaintances at Aywières was Lutgard, the saint who was later commemorated with her own Life by James' pupil and admirer, Thomas of Cantimpré. In fact, it was John of Liroux who had advised Saint Lutgard to leave her Benedictine monastery and join the women of Aywières, around the time the community decided to become Cistercian. His own sister also joined the community. John remained a close friend of Lutgard his whole life and even appeared to her in a vision after his death. See *Vita Lutgardis*, lib. I, cap. 22, col. 241 and lib. II, cap. 8, col. 245; Ursmer Berlière, 'Jacques de Vitry: Ses relations avec les abbayes d'Aywières et de Doorezele', *Revue Bénédictine*, 27 (1908), 185-93; Alfred Deboutte, 'Sint-Lutgart en magister Johannes van Lyro', *Sinte Lutgart schutsvrouw van Vlaanderen*, 18 (1976), pp. 46-53; Renardy, *Les maîtres universitaires*, pp. 355-57.

<sup>97</sup> DiBe ID 15213 and 18525.

## A Family Endeavour

A remarkable feature of the genesis of the three nunneries where Beatrice of Nazareth lived is the role played by her father Bartholomew and the fact that her entire family was involved in the communities' establishment. In the *Vita Beatricis*, Bartholomew is presented as the founder (*fundator*) of all three communities, as a tribute to the Holy Trinity.<sup>98</sup> Why he favored a religious life in the emerging Cistercian order,<sup>99</sup> in a women's community moreover, is unfortunately not mentioned. His children all joined him in his religious pursuits: his oldest son as a Premonstratensian monk in Averbode, a daughter as a nun at La Ramée<sup>100</sup> and the others – Beatrice, her sisters Christina and Sybilla, and her brother Wicbert – all followed the footsteps of their father from Florival to Maagdendaal and finally to Nazareth.<sup>101</sup>

Religious families like Beatrice's are not uncommon in hagiographical sources. After the death of his wife, Renier, an inhabitant of Louvain and *camerarius* to the duke of Brabant, entered the monastery of Villers around 1216 in the company of his three sons, Renier, Godfrey Pachomius – who was revered as a saint after his death – and Thomas, who wrote Godfrey Pachomius' Life. His daughter Alice (or Aleidis) professed as a nun at Vrouwenpark.<sup>102</sup> One of Renier's fellow monks at Villers was the saintly Abond. This monk too came from a religious family: his sisters Gela and Mary were nuns respectively at La Ramée and Val-Notre-Dame, whereas his brothers John and James had chosen Val-St-Lambert near Liège as their community. A third sister Walburgis

<sup>98</sup> *Vita Beatricis: De autobiografie van de Z. Beatris van Tienen o. cist. 1200-1268*, ed. by Leonce Reypens, *Studiën en Tekstuutgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 15 (Antwerp: Ruusbroec-Genootschap, 1964) (= hereafter referred to as *VB*), lib. I, cap. 1, lines 12-13 and 28-49. The Life is translated into English as *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth, 1200-1268*, trans. and ann. by Roger De Ganck, *Cistercian Fathers Series*, 51 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

<sup>99</sup> *VB*, lib. I, cap. 1, lines 28-31 (*in monasterio prefati cisterciensis ... suscepto religionis habitu, se conuertit*). The *Vita Beatricis* never explicitly refers to Bartholomew as a lay brother, only his son Wicbertus is called a *conversus* (lib. III, cap. 10, lines 24-25). However, the abbreviated *Vita* of Bartholomew himself, as preserved in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Ser. N. 12710, fol. 197<sup>v</sup>-198 is edited by Reypens as *Gesta venerabilis Bartholomei ciuius Thenensis postea conuersi cisterciensis* (= appendix 11 to his edition of the *VB*, pp. 260-262).

<sup>100</sup> However, the abbreviated *Vita* of Bartholomew in MS Ser. N. 12710 mentions Ter Kameren instead. *Gesta venerabilis Bartholomei*, p. 260.

<sup>101</sup> *VB*, lib. I, cap. 1, lines 20-49 and lib. III, cap. 10, lines 42-49.

<sup>102</sup> The *Vita Godefridi Pachomii* is preserved in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Ser. N. 12845, fol. 45<sup>r</sup>-64<sup>r</sup>. As only a few fragments have been edited in *Analecta bollandiana*, 14 (1895), pp. 263-68, I am very grateful to Éric Delaissé for sharing his microfilm images of the manuscript. A summary of the *Vita* can be found in the *Liber de gestibus*, recensio secunda, cap. 8, cols. 1347-48. Thomas, who was cantor at Villers, also wrote two letters to his sister at Vrouwenpark, which are preserved in KBR (Brussels) MS. 4459-70 and edited by Edmond Mikkers in 'Deux lettres inédites de Thomas, chantre de Villers', *Collectanea ordinis cisterciensis reformatorem*, 10 (1948), 161-73. For an analysis of the letters, see Anthony Ray, 'Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Brothers and Sisters Indeed: Two Thirteenth-Century Letters of Thomas, Cantor of Villers, to his Sister Alice, Nun of Parc-les-Dames', in *Partners in Spirit: Men, Women, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500*, ed. by Fiona Griffiths and Julie Hotchin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 213-36.

stayed behind in the parental home but lived the life of a saintly virgin.<sup>103</sup> However, these families were never involved in the foundation of a monastic community. The charters and foundation legends, on the other hand, do present several of the nunneries in Cambrai and Liège as familial enterprises: some nunneries were founded by different family members acting together<sup>104</sup> and in most cases the first inhabitants included one or more female relatives.<sup>105</sup> In one case, the founder decided to enter his foundation himself.<sup>106</sup> However, none of these families then moved on to the establishment of a second nunnery, let alone a third. Clearly, the case of Beatrice's family is an exceptional one.

Despite the unique role claimed by the *Vita Beatricis* for Bartholomew, the charter material available for all three nunneries makes no mention of this pivotal figure.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Bartholomew was a burgher of Tienen and is described in the *Vita Beatricis* as a man of mediocre means. This prompted De Ganck to posit that Bartholomew is not really to be considered the communities' founder, but rather as a lay brother charged with making the practical arrangements to kickstart the communities because of his talents as a manager. In fact, the *Vita* even calls him a *generalis temporalium bonorum eiusdem monasterii dispensator* and states that he daily had to leave the nunnery of Florival on business (*negotia*) for the nuns.<sup>108</sup> Once his reputation as a broker was established at Florival, he was enlisted to carry out the foundations of Maagdendaal and Nazareth as well.<sup>109</sup> However, one could hypothesize that Bartholomew's role in Florival was perhaps less decisive than the *Vita* makes it out to be. As mentioned above, this community

<sup>103</sup> *Vita Abundi monachi Villariensis*, ed. by Adrianus M. Frenken, 'De vita van Abundus van Hoei', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 10 (1959), 11-33 (lib. I, cap. 1, p. 13). Chapter 12 relates how, upon hearing of his father's marriage plans for his sister Mary, Abond arranged a different kind of wedding for Mary, as a bride of Christ in the nunnery of La Ramée. These examples are all known because of the saintly reputation of one of the family members, yet this phenomenon of religious families also occurred among the less spiritually gifted, as the testament of Nicolas of Engelmanshoven demonstrates. At the end of his life as a hospital brother at St-Jacques in Tongeren, Nicolas was cared for in the abbey of Villers, where his son was a lay brother. In his testament from 1241, he included bequests to Ophoven and Boutershoven/Oeteren, where his daughters lived as nuns. DiBe ID 26331.

<sup>104</sup> For example Fontenelle was founded by Joan and Agnes, daughters of the knight Hellin of Aulnoy; Wauthier-Braine was founded by Simon the Leper and his sisters Oda, Ida and Beatrice; Ten Roosen is said to have been established by the *miles* Razo of Fontinella and his sons, and the foundation of Paix-Dieu was executed by Margaret and her brother Baldwin, at the request of her son Arnold.

<sup>105</sup> See for instance Aywières, Zwijveke, Rozendaal, Wauthier-Braine, Valduc, Ten Roosen and Paix-Dieu.

<sup>106</sup> The hermit William entered Olive after its establishment. See *Vita Guilielmi de Oliva*, cap. 5, col. 498. Arnold of Beaufort, who was probably the driving force behind the *transitus* of Solières to the Cistercian Order, also joined the Cistercian Order, but the precise community is not specified. DiBe ID 30507.

<sup>107</sup> It is possible that *Bartholomeus conversus de Lintre* mentioned in the witness list of a charter from 1223 (DiBe ID 26690) is Beatrice's father, but there is no way to be sure.

<sup>108</sup> VB, lib. I, cap. 7, lines 42-43. *vt quotiens ad monasteriorum negotia procuranda foras necessitas exire compelleret*; VB, lib. I, cap. 1, lines 63-64.

<sup>109</sup> De Ganck, 'The three foundations', pp. 53-55.

was one of the earliest communities in the diocese of Liège and therefore belongs to the phase of religious experimentation, when Cistercian nunneries only just started to emerge from spontaneous gatherings of women. Based on the hagiographical sources, De Ganck deduced that Bartholomew only joined the young community some years after Beatrice around 1215.<sup>110</sup> Florival was at the time still quite informally organized but was probably already inspired by Cistercian ideals. As one of its earliest members, however, he may have helped to shape its Cistercian identity.

Bartholomew's role in the foundation of Maagdendaal was probably more significant. As stated above, Maagdendaal was planned as a Cistercian nunnery from the outset. A charter from 1246 seems to suggest that Arnold of Wezemaal was the donor of the land on which the nunnery was originally located, while the duke of Brabant further augmented its estate.<sup>111</sup> Bartholomew might have been the driving force behind the project, considering the nunnery's proximity to his hometown of Tienen. His *Vita*, included in chapter one of the *Vita Beatricis*, praises his charisma as a preacher, exhorting many to convert and repent,<sup>112</sup> so he certainly would have been well placed to raise funds for a new nunnery. Why he subsequently left his home region to found Nazareth after 14 years at Maagdendaal, remains a puzzle. Based on the documents of practice, we would attribute the initiative for Nazareth's foundation to Duke Henry II of Brabant,<sup>113</sup> although Sabbe has suggested the decisive influence of a member of the ducal entourage, the Antwerp patrician family of Overijse/Anderstad.<sup>114</sup> Bartholomew's reputation as a manager might have spread through the duke's network, reaching its members who were only too happy to enlist his talents. However, as De Ganck has rightly pointed out, Bartholomew was already over seventy at the time.<sup>115</sup> Associating his name with the new nunnery was perhaps more important than Bartholomew's actual contribution to the project.

Men like Bartholomew had of course always formed an integral part of the Cistercian nunneries, as the occasional phrase 'brothers and sisters' in charters proves.<sup>116</sup> For half of the communities in Liège and Cambrai (22 out of 45) the presence of men is attested in the sources,<sup>117</sup> ranging from lay brothers (*conversi*

<sup>110</sup> De Ganck, 'The three foundations', p. 52.

<sup>111</sup> De Ganck, 'The three foundations', p. 58.

<sup>112</sup> VB, lib. I, cap. 1, lines 54-60.

<sup>113</sup> DiBe ID 20099 and *Statuta*, II, anno 1236, nr. 66, p. 168. Duke Henry II of Brabant also donated the site to which the community moved around 1247. DiBe ID 29756 and *Statuta*, II, anno 1245, nr. 55, p. 299 and anno 1246, nr. 50, p. 311.

<sup>114</sup> Sabbe, 'De abdij Nazareth', pp. 98-113.

<sup>115</sup> De Ganck, 'The three foundations', pp. 63-65.

<sup>116</sup> Attested for Herkenrode, DiBe ID 30324 (1216) and 29087 (1233); Ter Kameren, DiBe ID 26588 (1221) and Vrouwenpark, DiBe ID 30770 (1221), 30785 (1245) and 30787 (1246).

<sup>117</sup> An extensive study of the male contingent in Cistercian nunneries has not yet been attempted. However, the high number of nunneries for which men are attested indicates that this might be a fruitful enterprise.



or *fratres*)<sup>118</sup> to spiritual advisors such as priests and confessors. Yet, a second Bartholomew, charged with the practical arrangements for a nunnery's establishment, is not easy to find in the extant charter evidence. There are three possible candidates. First, a certain lay brother Henry, at the time still living in the world, was instrumental in the foundation of the community of Herkenrode.<sup>119</sup> Some charters even attribute to him the role of *primiciator coenobii*, although this honor is traditionally bestowed on the count of Loos.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, the charters for St-Bernardsdal mention a lay man by the name of Paul, who held the land on which the nunnery was built in fief from Arnold, lord of Diest, who donated the land and is traditionally considered the community's founder. Perhaps Paul was the driving force behind the donation and the foundation as well? Soon after the community's establishment, Paul professed at the community as a *conversus*.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Renier of Dieve donated his entire possession to the nascent community of Vrouwenpark and subsequently became a lay brother in the community. In the charters he is sometimes referred to as *provisor* and he was responsible for drawing up a charter confirming a donation to the community as well.<sup>122</sup> The fact that Renier is described as the community's *provisor* is interesting because the charters for other communities – Robermont, Rozendaal and Zwijveke – also mention men with this title.<sup>123</sup> In the case of Robermont he was a lay brother by the name of Libuinus and is mentioned six times between 1216 and 1227.<sup>124</sup> Significantly, Libuinus is once also designated as *negociator domus*<sup>125</sup>, which resembles the description of Bartholomew in the *Vita Beatrixis*. We also come across *procuratores*, men who were responsible for the daily management of a community, for example Baldwin (Robermont/Val-Benoit),<sup>126</sup> brother Thomas (La Ramée)<sup>127</sup> and brother William (Paix-Dieu),<sup>128</sup> while this function is also mentioned in general terms in a charter for Orienten.<sup>129</sup> In the case of Paix-Dieu, however, the founder's mother is also called *procuratrix domus fundande* at the time of the nunnery's foundation,<sup>130</sup> illustrating that secular women, too, could

<sup>118</sup> Sometimes they are further described as *magister*, *magister domus*, *magister curtis*, *cellerarius* or the *lator* of letters. Significantly *conversae* are almost absent from the sources. They are only attested for Vrouwenpark (DiBe ID 30774 from 1233), Salzinnes (DiBe ID 26622 from 1244) and Orienten ('Abbaye d'Orienten', nr. 13 from 1253, p. 257)

<sup>119</sup> DiBe ID 15065, 24725 and 16916.

<sup>120</sup> '*frater Henricus, primiciator coenobii de Herckenrode*', DiBe ID 24725 (1220) and 16916 (1222). See also Mathieu Bussels, 'Over het ontstaan der abdij van Herkenrode', *Het oude land van Loon*, 1 (1946), 20-26 (pp. 21-24).

<sup>121</sup> DiBe ID 20048.

<sup>122</sup> DiBe ID 17357, 29882, 29872, 17219 and 24708.

<sup>123</sup> For Zwijveke DiBe ID 17050 (1223) and for Rozendaal in DiBe ID 24659 (1247).

<sup>124</sup> DiBe ID 15567, 15568, 15583, 16448, 16942 and 18063.

<sup>125</sup> DiBe ID 15583.

<sup>126</sup> In 1220, DiBe ID 15818.

<sup>127</sup> In 1248, DiBe ID 30120.

<sup>128</sup> In 1249, DiBe ID 26353.

<sup>129</sup> '*mediante magistro ac procuratore suo*', in a charter from 1250, DiBe ID 30409.

<sup>130</sup> DiBe ID 26336 from 1239.

perform this task of laying the foundations of a new Cistercian community.<sup>131</sup> These examples, however scattered, suggest that men like Bartholomew were perhaps not so rare after all, yet in the absence of a famous daughter they left but little trace in the historical record.

## THE CISTERCIAN CONNECTION

### A Difficult Relationship?

As the Church did not allow religious women to perform sacerdotal roles, it was crucial that nuns were supported by men who said mass, heard their confessions and provided them with spiritual guidance.<sup>132</sup> To officially belong to an ecclesiastically sanctioned order made this task of obtaining male assistance slightly easier, as these duties could be performed by the male members of the order.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, formal affiliation functioned as a hallmark of orthodoxy,

<sup>131</sup> In 1267, the Cistercian Order tried to impose order on the proliferation of men assisting Cistercian nuns and their designations, by imposing the title of *procurator* instead of *provisor*, *praepositus* or *prior* and granting the nuns' father abbot the exclusive right to appoint these male associates: *Item, moniales Ordinis quae provisores suos consueverunt appellare praepositos, eos ulterius non praepositos vel priores, sed procuratores appellent, nec eos ulterius elegant vel assumant, nisi de visitatoris sui licentia speciali. Statuta*, III, anno 1267, nr. 10, p. 49.

<sup>132</sup> This issue of pastoral care for spiritual women is currently a hot topic in historiography, as is attested by the abundant recent literature on this issue. See, among others, Vera Morton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds, *Guidance for Women in 12th-Century Convents* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003); Fiona Griffiths, "'Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs': Abelard, Heloise, and Their Negotiation of the 'Cura Monialium'", in *Medieval religion*, ed. by Constance Berman, pp. 290-315; Elizabeth Freeman, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's Pastoral Care of Religious Women, with Special Reference to "De institutione inclusarum"', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 46 (2011), 13-29; Fiona Griffiths and Julie Hotchin, eds, *Partners in Spirit: Men, Women, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Francesca Tinti, 'Benedictine reform and pastoral care in late Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe*, 23 (2015), 229-51.

<sup>133</sup> Priests are recorded for Herkenrode, Robermont/Val-Benoit, Maagdendaal near Oudenaarde and Solières; chaplains for Herkenrode, Aywières, Robermont/Val-Benoit, Ter Kameren, Val-Notre-Dame, La Ramée, Vrouwenpark, Épinlieu, Zwijveke, Hocht, Rozendaal and Orienten. Although we sometimes know the first name of these men, only in one case is there enough information to identify him with certainty. Baldwin of Barbenchon (c 1180-1239/42) was the nephew of Gilles, founder of Oignies, where he too became a canon. Between 1215 and 1231 he served the nunnery of Aywières as chaplain. The *Vita* of Lutgard of Aywières describes him as an excellent preacher, who later in life became involved in worldly affairs, against the advice of his friends, perhaps a gibe at his resignation as chaplain in order to become prior of Oignies in 1234. Baldwin was a close associate of Bishop Hugh of Pierrepont and was certainly well acquainted with James of Vitry, and probably John of Nivelles. See *Vita Lutgardis*, lib. III, cap. 8, col. 257-58; Renardy, *Les maîtres universitaires*, pp. 190-92. Thomas of Cantimpré also relates a short anecdote about Godfrey, the chaplain of Ter Kameren, see Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, lib. II, cap. 40, 8 (trans. Platelle, nr. 143, p. 191). In addition, the former bishop of Lausanne, Boniface, spent the last 18 years of his life at Ter Kameren (sometime between 1240-1260/65). His *Life* describes him celebrating mass at Ter Kameren, yet it is unclear if he served the nuns as confessor. He also acted as auxiliary bishop to the bishop of Liège (not Cambrai, in which Ter Kameren was situated), consecrating altars and cemeteries, mediating conflicts, authenticating miracles, etc. so he was probably frequently away from the

providing the women protection from accusations of heresy. Yet, monastic men were often less than eager to take on the pastoral care for women. In the case of the Cistercians, the attitude of the Order towards religious women is a matter of contention among historians. Traditional scholarship asserted that the white monks were averse to the idea of Cistercian women. It claimed that the Order barred women until the end of the twelfth century, when it could no longer hold back the flood of women seeking a religious life. Previously, these women were accommodated by the Premonstratensian Order, but from 1148 onwards they were no longer welcome there and had to find refuge elsewhere. Anxious about scandals and the financial strain, however, the Cistercians also closed their gates in 1228 by prohibiting the further incorporation of nunneries into the Order,<sup>134</sup> thus passing on the care for spiritual women to the Dominicans and the Franciscans.<sup>135</sup>

Since Constance Berman's seminal study on women in the Order,<sup>136</sup> however, medievalists have become increasingly aware of the importance of Cistercian nuns throughout the Order's history.<sup>137</sup> The fact that, notwithstanding all

community. *Vita Bonifacii Lausanensis, Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. III (Antwerp: 1658), cols. 149-59 (cap. 3, col. 154); DiBe ID 21978, 24919, 22448, 31038, 22715, 22874, 31701 and 24600); Ursmer Berlière, 'Les évêques auxiliaires de Liège', *Revue Bénédictine*, 29 (1912), 60-81; Thomas Coomans, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant: Construction, configuration et signification d'une abbaye cistercienne gothique*, *Studia et Documenta*, 11 (Brussels: Racine, 2000). Boniface of Lausanne is also mentioned by Thomas of Cantimpré as a source of anecdotes in his *Bonum universale*, lib. II, cap. 51, 4 (trans. Platelle, nr. 183, p. 271), cap. 57, 30-32 (nr. 224, p. 257) and II, 30, 6 (not included in Platelle). Finding suitable priests often proved difficult. In 1253 the community of Boutershoven/Oeteren complained that there was hardly one Dutch-speaking priest who was willing to serve mass in person in the community: *liceat vobis sacerdotem ydoneum scientem theutonicum volentem et valentem personaliter deservire*; *Catalogue des actes*, nr. 53, pp. 209-11.

<sup>134</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1228, nr. 16, p. 68. The ban was repeated in the codifications of the Cistercian statutes in 1237 and 1257; see Bernard Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes de 1237 et de 1257* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977), pp. 349-50. An earlier attempt to halt the influx of women into the Order seems to have produced little effect, see *Statuta*, I, anno 1220, nr. 4, p. 517.

<sup>135</sup> Simone Roisin, 'L'efflorescence cistercienne et le courant féminin de piété au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 39 (1943), 324-78 (pp. 350-67); Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen*, pp. 174-76 and pp. 199-208; Roger De Ganck, 'The Integration of Nuns in the Cistercian Order Particular in Belgium', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 35 (1984), 235-47; Klaus Schreiner, 'Pastoral Care in Female Monasteries: Sacramental Services, Spiritual Edification, Ethical Discipline', in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Jeffrey Hamburger and Susan Marti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 225-44 (pp. 230-38).

<sup>136</sup> Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*; see also Berman, 'Where There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?', pp. 217-248.

<sup>137</sup> Taking into account for the first time research by Freed and Degler-Spengler previously overlooked, see John Freed, 'Urban Development and the "Cura Monialium" in Thirteenth-Century Germany', *Viator*, 3 (1972), 311-27; Brigitte Degler-Spengler, '"Zahlreich wie die Sterne des Himmels" Zisterzienser, Dominikaner und Franziskaner vor dem Problem der Inkorporation von Frauenklöstern', *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, 4 (1985), 37-50. The efficacy of the Premonstratensian ban on women has also been questioned recently. See e.g. Shelley Amiste Wolbrink, 'Women in the Premonstratensian Order of Northwestern Germany, 1120-1250', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 89 (2003), 387-408.

legislative efforts, the Chapter did not succeed in curtailing the attraction that women exerted over men has lead scholars to nuance the presumed misogyny among Cistercian monks.<sup>138</sup> New research has also pointed to the role played by Villers, one of the most influential Cistercian male communities in the southern Low Countries. *Exempla* stories and hagiographical texts clearly demonstrate the openness of the abbots and monks of Villers towards women, both Cistercian nuns and beguines.<sup>139</sup> Villers was, for instance, involved in the establishment of Ter Kameren,<sup>140</sup> and provided spiritual supervision to, among others, Ter Kameren, Valduc and Binderen.<sup>141</sup> In short, the traditional narrative has lost much of its validity, yet, in his *status quaestionis* on the issue, Franz Felten concluded how strongly the traditional view still stands.<sup>142</sup> Completely

<sup>138</sup> See for example the work of Fiona Griffiths and Elizabeth Freeman. Fiona Griffiths, 'Brides and "Dominae": Abelard's "Cura Monialium" at the Augustinian Monastery of Marbach', *Viator*, 34 (2003), 57-88; id., 'Men's Duty', pp. 90-315; id., 'The Cross and the "Cura Monialium": Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform', *Speculum*, 83 (2005), 303-30; id., 'Monks and Nuns at Rupertsberg: Guibert of Gembloux and Hildegard of Bingen', in *Partners in Spirit*, ed. by Griffiths and Hotchin, pp. 145-69; Elizabeth Freeman, 'A Cistercian Monk Writes to a Cistercian Nun: John Godard's Treatise for the Abbess of Tarant, England, c. 1250', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 45 (2010), 331-51; id., 'Gilbert of Hoyland's Sermons for Nuns: A Cistercian Abbot and the "Cura monialium" in Twelfth-Century Lincolnshire', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 50 (2015), 267-91.

<sup>139</sup> Edouard de Moreau, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Brussels: Librairie Albert Dewit, 1909), pp. 105-14; Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre, 'L'abbaye de Villers et le monde des moniales et de béguines au XIIIe siècle', in *Villers, une abbaye revisitée: Actes du colloque 10-12 avril 1996* (Villers-la-Ville: Association pour la promotion touristique et culturelle de Villers-la-Ville, 1996), pp. 183-229; Griffiths, 'Monks and Nuns', pp. 145-69 (pp. 155-57); Ray, 'Brothers and Sisters', pp. 213-36; Sara Moens, 'The *mulieres religiosae*, daughters of Hildegard of Bingen? Interfaces between a Benedictine visionary, the Cistercians of Villers and the spiritual women of Liège', in *Medieval Liège at the Crossroads of Europe: Monastic Society and Culture, 1000-1300*, ed. by Steven Vanderputten, Tjamke Snijders and Jay Diehl (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 301-38 (pp. 319-24).

<sup>140</sup> *Liber de gestibus*, recensio prima, cap. 5, col. 1344; *Chronica Villariensis monasterii*, p. 197.

<sup>141</sup> The historiography on Villers ascribes the supervision of several other communities to Villers as well, although it is not always clear how official and lasting Villers' involvement with these communities was. Joseph-Marie Canivez, Edouard de Moreau and Simone Roisin list the following nunneries: Argenton, Aywières, Binderen, Ter Kameren, Le Jardin, Florival, Nazareth, Olive, Vrouwenpark, La Ramée, Salzannes, Soleilmont, Solières, Terbeek, Rozendaal, Valduc, Val-Notre-Dame, St-Bernardsdal, Wauthier-Braine and Argensolles (in the diocese of Reims). Villers also supervised the beguinage of Louvain (Groot Begijnhof) and the hospital of Ter Bank. See Canivez, *L'ordre de Cîteaux*, p. 12, De Moreau, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant*, pp. 110-14 and Roisin, 'L'efflorescence', pp. 354-59.

<sup>142</sup> Franz Felten, 'Waren die Zisterzienser frauenfeindlich? Die Zisterzienser und die religiöse Frauenbewegung um 12. und frühen 13. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer Bestandaufnahme der Forschung seit 1980', in *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. by Franz Felten and Werner Rösener (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2009), pp. 179-223 (p. 212); see also Franz Felten, 'Abwehr, Zuneigung, Pflichtgefühl. Reaktionen der frühen Zisterzienser auf den Wunsch religiöser Frauen, zisterziensisch zu leben', in *Female vita religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages*, ed. by Gerd Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2001), pp. 390-415. In a way, this debate about the Order's attitude towards women is one between optimists and pessimists: both sides argue from the same sources (mainly

dismissing the Order's ambiguity towards women is therefore imprudent. Rather it is wise to differentiate between the policy of the Order as a whole and the daily practice. On an institutional level there were certainly concerns about the impact of the nunneries on the Order's financial and human capital. On the local level, however, much depended on the individual abbots and monks, as well as on the influence of important patrons, family ties and networks.

## A Range of Options

The 44 communities in this study all identified themselves as Cistercian and/or were generally recognized as such by their patrons and benefactors, yet the strength of their claim to Cistercian status differs. Some communities were incorporated into the Cistercian Order after officially petitioning the Chapter for affiliation.<sup>143</sup> Others were accepted as members by the Chapter without ever requesting incorporation. In some cases they were authorized to follow Cistercian customs by the pope or a high-ranking member of the Order. Yet, for a substantial number of nunneries, we only have the nuns' word for their Cistercian status, or that of their contemporaries.<sup>144</sup>

The Statutes of the General Chapter contain incorporation requests for seventeen communities, all but one dating to 1232 or later (see appendix). Two of these were already mentioned in the Statutes before the request.<sup>145</sup> Significantly, only three communities in existence before the 1228 ban bothered to formally apply for incorporation (Roermond, Ter Kameren and Maagdendaal near Oplinter)<sup>146</sup>, whereas almost all communities founded after the ban's

legislative sources from the General Chapter) but interpret them differently. Whereas the pessimists interpret the restraints imposed on Cistercian women and the conflicts about the care for nuns as a sign of aversion and reluctance, the optimists see them as proof of a continued attention to women and cooperation between the sexes.

<sup>143</sup> In most cases this request is the only trace of the incorporation in the sources. Only in rare instances is an incorporation charter preserved (e.g. for Soleilmont, DiBe ID 20535). Perhaps drawing up such a charter was not customary, as the oral acceptance of a community by the Order after inspection by two or three abbots was probably considered sufficient, which would explain the scarcity of this type of document.

<sup>144</sup> Medievalists have also pointed to other parameters that would prove the existence of a Cistercian community along the official guidelines, such as the presence of an abbess (instead of a prioress) or lay brothers, the adoption of Mary as the community's main patron saint and the enforcement of enclosure. Nevertheless, a comprehensive study of these criteria has yet to be executed. See also Elizabeth Freeman, "'Houses of a Peculiar Order": Cistercian Nunneries in Medieval England, with Special Attention to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 55 (2004), 245-87 (pp. 249-51).

<sup>145</sup> I.e. Wauthier-Braine and Maagdendaal near Oplinter.

<sup>146</sup> Not all scholars agree with the identification of *Lingi* with Maagdendaal near Oplinter (sometimes referred to as *Lintre*). Opsomers, for instance, has refuted the identification on toponymical grounds. See De Ganck, 'The three foundations', p. 60. However, because of the timing of the request, i.e. the year following the request for Nazareth, and the fact that there is no other candidate for *Lingi* I maintain the tradition identification.

proclamation did.<sup>147</sup> The 1228 ban clearly did have an effect, albeit not the one intended. Instead of ending the influx of women into the Order, it simply made new communities more careful to follow the correct procedure. The case of Saulchoir is, however, more complex. Before the community was accepted into the Order in 1233,<sup>148</sup> its founders, two burghers from Tournai, had already secured the aid of some very influential supporters. In January 1233, Pope Gregory IX granted permission for the foundation of this new Cistercian nunnery, to be populated with nuns from Brayelle, and wrote to the General Chapter with a request for incorporation.<sup>149</sup> Six months later, Walter of Orchies, abbot of Cîteaux, also consented to the foundation and claimed the responsibility of pastoral care for himself.<sup>150</sup> Why the founders of Saulchoir did not petition the Chapter for incorporation themselves is unclear. However, the statute granting the incorporation also records the opposition of the abbey of Loos to the new nunnery and the appointment of the abbots of Vaucelles and Cambron as mediators.<sup>151</sup> Maybe the founders had anticipated the resistance of Loos and had therefore made sure they were armed with the highest possible support in advance. In the same year, another community, that of Solières, was also incorporated in the Order, this time at the request of Arnold, lord of Beaufort,<sup>152</sup> although this fact was not recorded in the Statutes. A charter from August 1233 issued by the abbots of Villers, Valdieu, Grandpré and the unidentified 'Bilane' nevertheless confirms the incorporation of the community into the Order.<sup>153</sup>

Arnold of Beaufort was not the only member of the secular nobility that exerted influence to secure a community's incorporation. Count Louis of Chiny,<sup>154</sup> Countess Joan of Flanders and Hainaut,<sup>155</sup> Duke Henry II of Brabant,<sup>156</sup> his sister Mary, former empress of the Holy Roman Empire<sup>157</sup> and Count Arnold IV of Looz<sup>158</sup> also intervened on behalf of certain nunneries to obtain their incorporation. Religious men were no less enthusiastic in their support for Cistercian women. Incorporations were requested by Pope Gregory IX<sup>159</sup>, the bishop of Liège, John of Eppes,<sup>160</sup> his entourage, that is, Archdeacon

<sup>147</sup> The exceptions are Valduc, Orienten, Moulins, Saulchoir, Boutershoven/Oeteren and the refoundation of Robermont.

<sup>148</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1233, nr. 32, p. 117.

<sup>149</sup> DiBe ID 19425 and 19593.

<sup>150</sup> DiBe ID 19593.

<sup>151</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1233, nr. 32, p. 117.

<sup>152</sup> DiBe ID 19568.

<sup>153</sup> DiBe ID 19663.

<sup>154</sup> I.e. Aywières.

<sup>155</sup> I.e. Épinlieu (on behalf of Beatrice of Lens), Refuge Notre Dame (together with her sister Margaretha) and St-Bernardsdal/Soleilmont/Nazareth.

<sup>156</sup> I.e. Vivegnis, Ten Roosen and St-Bernardsdal/Soleilmont/Nazareth.

<sup>157</sup> I.e. Binderen.

<sup>158</sup> I.e. Terbeek.

<sup>159</sup> I.e. Ter Kameren and the above-mentioned Saulchoir.

<sup>160</sup> I.e. Vivegnis, Maagdendaal near Oplinter, Rotem and St-Bernardsdal/Soleilmont/Nazareth.



Henry of Beaumont<sup>161</sup> and Auxiliary Bishop Baldwin of Semgallen<sup>162</sup>, and his successor Robert of Thourotte<sup>163</sup>. It is remarkable that no similar activity is recorded for the bishops of Cambrai.<sup>164</sup> In fact, it seems as though Bishop Godfrey of Cambrai deliberately circumvented the Cistercian Order. Instead, he asserted his own right over the community of Beaupré by personally determining whether the chosen location was compatible with religious life.<sup>165</sup> In the case of Zwijveke, too, it was Godfrey who granted permission to transform the hospital of Zwijveke into a Cistercian nunnery and who appointed men to inspect the location, namely the Benedictine and Premonstratensian abbots of Affligem and Ninove and the archdeacon of Antwerp.<sup>166</sup>

The above mentioned example of Solières already warned against relying too heavily on requests in the Statutes as the only source of information for the acceptance of a community into the Order. In fact, twelve communities were clearly acknowledged as members, as they are mentioned in the Statutes, although no incorporation request nor acceptance charter has been preserved.<sup>167</sup> With the exception of Orienten, they all predate the 1228 ban. In sum, 40% of the nunneries in Liège and Cambrai gained official recognition from the Order, while an additional 30% seems to have been generally accepted, even though we lack formal confirmation of their incorporation. Nevertheless, having the proper documents to substantiate a claim to Cistercian membership was not merely a formality, as is proven by the case of Marche-les-Dames. When the bishops of Cambrai and Liège contacted the Chapter in 1241 on behalf of this community, the Order denied all authority over Marche-les-Dames because it was never affiliated with the Order and, therefore was not, and could never become, an abbey.<sup>168</sup>

Fortunately, the majority of communities could substantiate their Cistercian status with other authoritative documents. For instance, the earliest Cistercian community in the southern Low Countries, Herkenrode, received permission to adopt the Cistercian lifestyle directly from the head of the Order, Guy of Paray

<sup>161</sup> I.e. Wauthier-Braine.

<sup>162</sup> I.e. Le Jardinnet.

<sup>163</sup> I.e. Paix-Dieu and Robermont (refoundation).

<sup>164</sup> In fact the bishop of Cambrai only appears once in the Statutes before 1250, compared to eleven mentions of the bishop of Liège. *Statuta*, II, anno 1241, nr. 20, pp. 233-34.

<sup>165</sup> *Decernimus itaque ut ordo Cisterciensis, cui se deuotae mulieres propter uitae perpetuae desiderium deuouerunt, ibidem perpetuo inuiolabiliter obseruetur, ac praesit praefato conuentui electa canonice et secundum statuta praefati ordinis abbatissa, quae a nobis et successoribus nostris, benedictionem recipiat ex more solemnem*, DiBe ID 18574.

<sup>166</sup> DiBe ID 17050, 17073 and 18327.

<sup>167</sup> I.e. Herkenrode, Robermont/Val-Benoit, Salzinnes, Florival, Val-Notre-Dame, La Ramée, Vrouwenpark, Hocht, Boneffe, Ophoven, Beaupré, Orienten, Saulchoir and Valduc.

<sup>168</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1241, nr. 20, pp. 233-34. This contradicts the opinions of Elizabeth Freeman and Linda Rasmussen that the concern with determining the precise status of Cistercian nunneries is a modern, rather than medieval preoccupation, although both of course refer to the situation of the English nunneries. See Rasmussen, 'Order, Order!', p. 32; Freeman, 'Cistercian Nuns', pp. 3-4; Freeman, 'Houses', pp. 245-46.

(abb. 1194-1200). This privilege was confirmed by his successors in the early thirteenth century (1217 or 1218?) and included the acknowledgement that the nuns were *plenarie incorporate ordini nostro et unite* and were allowed to wear the Cistercian habit.<sup>169</sup> In the case of Épinlieu, only the request itself is preserved: around 1214 Joan, countess of Flanders, wrote to abbot Arnold to ask for permission for a new Cistercian women's community that Beatrice of Lens intended to found.<sup>170</sup> This Abbot Arnold is also thought to have admitted Fontenelle into the Order in 1216, following the advice of Conrad of Urach, abbot of Clairvaux.<sup>171</sup> Finally, the founder of Aywières, Louis of Chiny, did not address the abbot directly, but turned to the pope instead. In 1205 he asked the pope to intervene with the abbot of Cîteaux in order to secure the Order's acceptance of the nunnery.<sup>172</sup> These are all very early examples of Cistercian women's communities, eliciting the hypothesis that, because the first nunneries developed gradually and spontaneously, every community tackled the issue of its relation to the Order on an ad hoc basis, as there were no fixed procedures in place yet during this early phase. However, the refoundation of Robermont in 1245 contradicts this hypothesis. This community is never mentioned in the Statutes, and the bishop of Liège, Robert of Thourotte, secured its acceptance into the Order directly from the prior of Cîteaux. However, as Robermont was refounded on the site of an earlier Cistercian nunnery, it is a unique case that is not representative for Cistercian nunneries in general.

The pope could also support a monastic community by granting it the papal bull *Religiosam vitam*. This bull was the established form to confirm a religious community's rights and possessions from the eleventh century onwards and functioned as an instrument of papal protection.<sup>173</sup> Several versions of this bull circulated, yet it always stated the community's affiliation, described its customs and privileges in varying degrees of detail and often listed its possessions. Twenty-one Cistercian nunneries from Liège and Cambrai received such a *Religiosam vitam* bull.<sup>174</sup> For

<sup>169</sup> *concessimus abbatisse et conventui de Herckenrode et omnibus que ab eadem domo exierint, quod sint plenarie incorporate ordini nostro et unite, habentes integrum habitum scundum formam ordinis, scapularia scilicet cum caputis et monachiles cucullas, quod quondam eius concesserunt pie memorie Guido, abbas cisterc, et reliqui successores eius usque ad nos.* The charter itself is not preserved, but it is known through a *vidimus* from 1290 of the confirmation by Guy of Paray's successors, see 'Annexes: Chartes', nr. 23, pp. 87-88.

<sup>170</sup> DiBe ID 15213.

<sup>171</sup> DiBe ID 15618. We are only aware of this charter because Jacob of Guise cites it in his fourteenth-century chronicle of Hainaut. The fact that the abbot of Cîteaux named in the charter is not Arnold, but Adam could be a genuine mistake, but some caution is advisable. See also Jordan, 'Female Founders', pp. 554-55.

<sup>172</sup> *uirgines autem in supradicta ecclesia congregata cum uoto et proposito ordinis Cisterciensis, quia nondum sunt in ordinis consortio recepte, petunt et ego pro ipsis et cum ipsis ut, eis specialiter in uestra protectione receptis, abbati Cistercii committatis,* DiBe ID 30798.

<sup>173</sup> Jane Sayes, *Papal Government and England during the Pontificate of Honorius III (1216-1227)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 121.

<sup>174</sup> I.e. Val-Notre-Dame (1211), Herkenrode (1218), Robermont/Val-Benoit (1228, 1245), Argenton (1229), Solières (1231), Maagdendaal near Oplinter (1231), Beaupré (1233), Vrouwenpark (1234), Salzinnes (1234, 1267), Wauthier-Braine (1235), Maagdendaal near Oudenaarde (1235), Orienten

five communities, i.e. Argenton, Moulins, Boutershoven/Oeteren, Maagdendaal near Oudenaarde and Rozendaal, the privilege seems to have been the only official recognition of their Cistercian lifestyle. The majority of the *Religiosam vitam* bulls (86%) postdate the 1228 ban.<sup>175</sup> This points to an intensified relationship with the apostolic see from this moment onwards and/or to the increased use of *Religiosam vitam* as an instrument to safeguard a community's Cistercian privileges, likely instigated by anxiety over the ban's potential implications. Finally, Zwijveke and St-Remi only possessed charters from their diocesan in proof of their Cistercian status.<sup>176</sup> The poorly documented community of Le Verger is the only one without any formal evidence to sustain its claim, or at least, no such documents have been preserved.

Of course, our view can be distorted due to the loss of source material. Yet, the above survey again underscores the impact in the 1228 statute barring women from the Order. The official incorporation requests recorded in the Statutes date all but one from 1232-1246, coinciding with the increased use of *Religiosam vitam*. In the early thirteenth century, every community secured its right to a monastic life according to the ideals of the Cistercian Order as, and when, it saw fit. The ban, however, made having a secure claim to Cistercian life highly pertinent, resulting in an increased appeal to the papacy and a more or less standardized incorporation procedure at the level of the General Chapter.

With the exception of Florival, Beatrice of Nazareth's communities were firmly connected to the Cistercian Order. Already in 1236, one year after its foundation according to the *Vita Beatricis*,<sup>177</sup> Nazareth petitioned the General Chapter for incorporation.<sup>178</sup> The community also procured recognition of its affiliation from the apostolic see.<sup>179</sup> Maagdendaal was one of the few nunneries that chose to formalize its relation to the Cistercian Order in retrospect. In 1237, at least 18 years after its emergence, it requested incorporation in the Order, hereby supported by the bishop of Liège.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps the community was inspired by the request filed by Nazareth the previous year, suggesting a continued contact between the two communities. Florival, on the other hand, had little formal proof of its Cistercian status. In his *Chronicon Cisterciensis Ordinis* from 1614, Miraeus claims that in 1218 the community's first abbess, Genta, traveled to Rome to secure the approval of the holy see for Florival's Cistercian lifestyle, yet he took his information from Gramaye who lacked reliable sources.<sup>181</sup> Whatever the case may be, Florival was clearly accepted as part

(1237, 1238), Soleilmont (1239), St-Bernardsdal (1239), Moulins (1240), Nazareth (1244), Oeteren (1244), Rozendaal (1244), Rotem (1244), Boneffe (1245/46) and Paix-Dieu (1246).

<sup>175</sup> Allowing some leeway for the first issue of *Religiosam vitam* for Robermont/Val-Benoit.

<sup>176</sup> DiBe ID 25051 for St-Remi and DiBe ID 17050 and 23174 for Zwijveke.

<sup>177</sup> VB, lib. III, cap. 10, lines 57-58.

<sup>178</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1236, nr. 66, p. 168.

<sup>179</sup> DiBe ID 29752 from 1244.

<sup>180</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1237, nr. 59, pp. 179-80. See also footnote 146.

<sup>181</sup> De Ganck, 'The three foundations', p. 51. However, the existence of abbess Genta is attested to by charters (see e.g. DiBe ID 20697 from 1237) and by Thomas of Cantimpré, who was a

of the Order, as it was identified as Cistercian in 1228 by the abbot of Cîteaux, when he granted the lay brothers of, among others, Florival the same rights as those enjoyed by the *conversi* at Argensolles and Herkenrode.<sup>182</sup>

### Terms and Conditions

When the General Chapter received a request for affiliation, it appointed a committee of abbots to assess the applicant and its conformity with Cistercian regulations. In addition, each nunnery fell under the authority of a father abbot, who was to guarantee the continued observance of the Order's precepts by conducting yearly visitations of his daughter house. He was also charged with the daily spiritual guidance of the community, e.g. by providing confessors to the nuns.<sup>183</sup> Conflicts sometimes arose concerning a community's *paternitas*: when William, the abbot of Villers, was promoted to the abbacy of Clairvaux in 1237, he insisted on transferring the supervision of Ter Kameren to Clairvaux as well, much to the discontent of his former fellow monks, who disputed the decision before the Chapter in 1240.<sup>184</sup> This suggests that holding the responsibility of a nunnery was considered prestigious. Curiously, we are hardly ever well-informed about the *paternitas* of a nunnery. The incorporation requests recorded in the Statutes normally include the appointment of a father abbot, but for many communities we remain in the dark. Furthermore, it seems rather impractical to assign the *paternitas* to the abbots of Clairvaux and Cîteaux, who are listed seven times in the Statutes as father abbot to a nunnery

personal acquaintance of Genta and related an anecdote about her in his *Bonum universale de apibus*. See Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, lib. I, cap. 10, 3 (not included in the translation by Platelle).

<sup>182</sup> DiBe ID 31156. Florival is also possibly mentioned in the Statutes of the General Chapter in 1273, although the identification of 'Arqueron' with Florival (supposedly referring to the site of the nunnery's location at Archennes) is based mainly on the geographical proximity of Florival to the other communities mentioned in the statute. Argenton, however, is also a possible candidate. See *Statuta*, III, anno 1273, nr. 12, pp. 117-18.

<sup>183</sup> The importance of a father abbot was first formulated in the Statutes in 1213 and a chapter devoted to the issue was included in the codification of 1257. See *Statuta*, I, anno 1213, nr. 3, p. 405; Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, p. 349. Which responsibilities and tasks a formal bond of this kind precisely entailed for both the men and women involved unfortunately remains vague and might have differed from community to community. For the Cistercian nunneries of Champagne, Anne Lester has concluded that although the male monasteries of the Order formally assumed responsibility for many female communities, they rarely intervened directly in the women's affairs. Moreover, the visitation of these nunneries often fell to the local bishop instead of to the abbot officially in charge of the community. The importance of episcopal oversight is also observed for the English Cistercian nunneries, especially in the late Middle Ages. See Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, pp. 78-116, in particular pp. 110-14 and pp. 175-77; John Nichols, 'Medieval Cistercian Nunneries and English Bishops', in *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, ed. by John Nichols and Lilian Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), pp. 237-49.

<sup>184</sup> *Chronica Villariensis monasterii*, p. 202; *Statuta*, II, anno 1240, nr. 72, pp. 229-30.

in Liège or Cambrai, among others Nazareth.<sup>185</sup> Instead of performing this duty personally, they probably delegated the task to the abbot of a monastery belonging to their lineage.<sup>186</sup> The father abbot of a given community could also change over time, adding to the confusion. To give but one example, a charter from 1225 mentioned the abbot of Valdieu as *pater* of Maagdendaal near Oplinter, yet in the Statutes of the Chapter in 1237 Aulne is assigned the community's *paternitas*.<sup>187</sup> The assignment of a father abbot to a certain nunnery in the secondary literature is consequently sometimes disputable. This is unfortunate as it can be important to know the confessors of a nunnery, as is illustrated by the case of Beatrice of Nazareth: the author of the *Vita Beatricis* is likely to have been one of the community's confessors.<sup>188</sup>

Above all, the Order was particularly eager to impose strict enclosure on its female communities,<sup>189</sup> both actively (the women were not permitted to leave the nunnery) and passively (no outsiders were to enter the premises, especially not men),<sup>190</sup> in order to avoid scandal. Some exceptions were allowed, however. For example, both the abbess and the *celleraria* could leave the enclosure, accompanied by two nuns, if their duties warranted this.<sup>191</sup> A secular woman could be permitted to spend the night in the nunnery, if it would otherwise raise scandal.<sup>192</sup> In case a member of the community wanted to speak with an outsider, she was allowed to do so when permitted by the community's confessor, albeit through a grilled window.<sup>193</sup> Erin Jordan has questioned the strict enforcement of

<sup>185</sup> In the case of Vivegnis, Refuge Notre Dame, Rotem and Paix-Dieu, the *paternitas* was assigned to Clairvaux; St-Bernardsdal, Terbeek and Nazareth fell under the auspices of Cîteaux.

<sup>186</sup> G. J. Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces van de cisterciënzerinnenabdij "Locus Imperatricis" (Binderen) bij Helmond, 1237-1246', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 38 (1987), 165-92 (pp. 176-77).

<sup>187</sup> DiBe ID 17511; *Statuta*, II, anno 1237, nr. 59, pp. 179-80.

<sup>188</sup> Reyens and De Ganck have both discussed the issue of the authorship of the *Vita Beatricis*. According to the *obituarium* of St-Bernard near Hemiksem, this community supplied the spiritual care to the nuns of Nazareth, as substitutes for the abbot of Cîteaux. Consequently, Reyens considers a monk of St-Bernard as a plausible author of the *vita*, possibly a certain Fulgerius. De Ganck, on the other hand, is less convinced of this hypothesis, and suggests a secular chaplain as the author. By the late fifteenth century, the *paternitas* of Nazareth had transferred to Aulne. See VB, pp. 26\*-38\*; Roger De Ganck, 'The biographer of Beatrice of Nazareth', *Cistercian Studies*, 22 (1988), 319-29.

<sup>189</sup> The high priority of enclosure for women is demonstrated by the frequent occurrence of this topic in the Statutes (for the period until 1275, see the years 1213, 1218, 1219, 1220, 1225, 1229, 1231, 1238, 1242, 1243, 1268 and 1275) and its inclusion in the codifications of the legislative sources from 1237 and 1257, see Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, pp. 351-52. Cistercian abbesses were not even allowed to attend the General Chapter, see *Statuta*, II, anno 1237, nr. 4, p. 169.

<sup>190</sup> Jane Tibbets Schulenberg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100)', in *Medieval Religious Women* ed. by Nichols and Shank, pp. 51-86 (p. 51).

<sup>191</sup> *Statuta*, I, anno 1218, nr. 84, p. 502; anno 1219, nr. 12, p. 505; anno 1220, nr. 4, p. 517 and *Statuta*, II, anno 1242, nr. 17, pp. 248-49.

<sup>192</sup> The prohibition of 1238 was mitigated in 1242. *Statuta*, II, anno 1238, nr. 10, p. 187 and anno 1242, nr. 17, pp. 248-49.

<sup>193</sup> This grilled window is mentioned in 1225, 1231, 1242 and 1243 as well as the codifications of 1257. *Statuta*, II, anno 1225, nr. 7, p. 36; anno 1231, nr. 6, p. 92; anno 1242, nr. 17, pp. 248-49 and anno 1243, nr. 6, p. 260; Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, p. 351.

claustralization for the Cistercian nunneries of Flanders and Hainaut. For example, she has pointed out that many donation rituals entailed the transgression of active or passive enclosure.<sup>194</sup> The evidence for Liège and Cambrai confirms her findings: many donations are described as having been made ‘on the altar’ of a community or ‘in the hands of the abbess’, proving that donors were allowed to enter the enclosure at the moment of their donation, at least if we take these phrases to be more than mere formulae. Other charters, recounting the arbitration of conflicts, portray culprits promising to observe the agreed settlements in the presence of the abbess or by swearing an oath on the relics of the nunnery.<sup>195</sup> Some nunneries’ churches also functioned as a parish church.<sup>196</sup> At Vrouwenpark, the nuns were permitted to receive family and friends.<sup>197</sup> In addition, the women also traveled beyond the walls of the nunnery, as the *Vita Idae Nivelensis* illustrates with an anecdote relating Ida’s journey to Louvain in the company of her abbess.<sup>198</sup> This confirms that the segregation between world and cloister was not so absolute as legislative sources intended it to be. However, most of these examples are restricted to a community’s functionaries, who were bound by less strict rules. The interaction with lay people was also mostly confined to the sacred space of the church. At the same time, the charters contain clues that communities were reluctant to break enclosure. On several occasions, the abbess delegated a male member of the community to execute a certain transaction.<sup>199</sup> Other charters include the option for the nunnery to be represented by a third party.<sup>200</sup> In short, when relying solely on legislative sources one risks overestimating the impact of claustralization on Cistercian nunneries, as Jordan has rightly demonstrated, but neither should we dismiss enclosure as mere discourse.

The specter of increased competition for resources and donations between communities, due to close proximity, also haunted the Chapter. In 1218 the minimum distance between a men’s and a women’s community was set at six miles (*leucas*) and between two nunneries at ten miles.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, this regulation could not prevent a high density of Cistercian nunneries from

<sup>194</sup> Jordan, ‘Roving Nuns’, pp. 597-614; see also Katherine Gill, ‘“Scandala”: controversies concerning *clausura* and women’s religious communities in late medieval Italy’, in *Christendom and its discontents: Exclusion, persecution, and rebellion, 1000-1500*, ed. by Scott Waugh and Peter Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 177-203.

<sup>195</sup> E.g. Soleilmont, DiBe ID 20955.

<sup>196</sup> E.g. Maagdendaal near Oudenaarde, DiBe ID 19443.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, lib. II, cap. 29, 20 (trans. Platelle, nr. 109, pp. 158-161).

<sup>198</sup> *Vita Idae Nivelensis*, ed. by Chrysostomus Henriquez, in *Quinque prudentes virgines* (Antwerp: 1630), cols. 199-297 (cap. 15, pp. 237-39). The Life of Arnulf of Villers contains a similar story about prioress Lucia of Épinlieu and two nuns who, on route to Villers, had to stay the night at another woman’s house. *Vita Arnulfi*, lib. II, cap. 21, col. 631.

<sup>199</sup> I.e. Salzinnes (1228, DiBe ID 26595), Orienten (1233, DiBe ID 19655; 1238, DiBe ID 21083; 1250, DiBe ID 40499), Hocht (1240, DiBe ID 28479), Val-Notre-Dame (1242, DiBe ID 18498), La Ramée (1248, DiBe ID 30120) and Herkeronde (1248, DiBe ID 29794).

<sup>200</sup> I.e. Ter Kameren (1245, DiBe ID 22906) and La Ramée (1250, DiBe ID 25991).

<sup>201</sup> *Statuta*, I, anno 1218, nr. 4, p. 485.



developing in the southern Low Countries, especially in the area between Diest and St-Truiden: St-Bernardsdal, Rotem, Orienten, Boutershoven, and Terbeek all emerged in the 1230s on the axis between the two cities, with Maagdendaal near Oplinter in the close vicinity as well. This concentration of nunneries probably prompted the relocation of Boutershoven to Oeteren. In 1273 the General Chapter even explored the feasibility of merging some of these communities,<sup>202</sup> resulting in the fusion of Boutershoven/Oeteren and Orienten in 1274/75.<sup>203</sup> In combination with the enforcement of enclosure, this raised concerns about economic viability.<sup>204</sup> If a nunnery could not provide for its members, it risked becoming a burden on the finances of the Order. It was a potential source of scandal as well, in case the nuns had to leave the confines of the nunnery in order to beg in the street for food or could no longer afford the *necessaria* for the religious services.<sup>205</sup> The incorporation committee was, therefore, also charged with the close inspection of each nunnery's location and its sources of income. Whenever a nunnery decided to relocate, which happened on numerous occasions, a similar procedure was initiated. Unfortunately, we are only rarely informed about the outcome of this inspection.

The insistence on a solid economic basis clashed with the Cistercian Order's commitment to voluntary poverty, as a form of *imitatio Christi*, which was also promoted as an ideal for women in the Order's literature. For instance, the Life of William, the founder of Olive, describes the nuns' love of *paupertas* as following in the footsteps of Christ.<sup>206</sup> To what extent poverty was an aspect of daily life is difficult to assess. It is sometimes invoked as a justification for donations in the available charter material, for instance during the early years of Herkenrode<sup>207</sup> and of Val-Notre-Dame<sup>208</sup>. The majority of the charters that mention poverty, however, date to the later period.<sup>209</sup> Several nunneries also petitioned the pope for the right to refuse the provision of new benefices.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>202</sup> *Statuta*, III, anno 1273, 12, pp. 117-18.

<sup>203</sup> 'Abbaye d'Orienten', nr. 76 and 77, pp. 364-66.

<sup>204</sup> Mentioned explicitly in the statute of 1225 and included the codification of 1237. See *Statuta*, II, anno 1225, nr. 7, p. 36; Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, pp. 349-50.

<sup>205</sup> Begging was explicitly forbidden to women. *Statuta*, II, anno 1225, nr. 7, p. 36; Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, p. 350.

<sup>206</sup> *strictam ordinis cisterciensis paupertatem amplexi sunt et nude crucis dominice sequentes vestigia, crucem eiusdem instituti nudo corde subeuntes*; *Vita Guilielmi de Oliva*, cap. 5, col. 498.

<sup>207</sup> To illustrate: *considerata imbecillitate religiosarum feminarum in Herckenrode ordinis Cisterciensis et cognita ipsarum sancta conversatione, necessitati et indigentie earum pie compassi sumus*, DiBe ID 15058, from 1213. Other examples are DiBe ID 15059 (1213), 16072 (1217), 15891 (1217), 15966 (1218) and 26360 (1219).

<sup>208</sup> DiBe ID 25152 (1215) and 26385 (1224).

<sup>209</sup> I.e. Maagdendaal near Oplinter (1234, DiBe ID 19803), Vrouwenpark (1247, DiBe ID 30794 and 1250, DiBe ID 24377); Solières (1250, DiBe ID 24553); La Ramée (1252, *Catalogue des actes*, nr. 42, pp. 190-91); Val-Notre-Dame (1252, *Catalogue des actes*, nr. 44, pp. 193-95), Oeteren (1253, *Catalogue des actes*, nr. 53, pp. 209-11).

<sup>210</sup> I.e. Maagdendaal near Oplinter (1247, DiBe ID 23835, and 1262, Delvaux, *Inventaris*, nr. 44, p. 115), La Ramée (1246, DiBe ID 25983) and Rozendaal (1246, DiBe ID 31067).

In addition, in 1240 the community of Val-Benoit possessed insufficient funds for the construction of new buildings.<sup>211</sup> When the community of Boutershoven relocated to Oeteren in 1245, the nunnery's *penuria* was one of the arguments justifying the move,<sup>212</sup> and in 1241 a father donated a sum of money so that his daughter, a professed nun in the same community, could dress in a fashion becoming of a good nun.<sup>213</sup> These allusions to poverty are not as frequent as one would expect if they were mere topoi, suggesting that they might reflect reality. If so, by the middle of the thirteenth century the nunneries seemed to have been plagued by increasing economic difficulties.

This preoccupation with nunneries' economic viability also led to the insistence on a *numerus clausus* for female communities, so that the number of nuns would not exceed a community's resources. This requirement is first mentioned in the Statutes in 1218 and was confirmed in 1219, 1225 and 1242.<sup>214</sup> In 1243 the requirement was slightly amended by allowing the admission of a nun, above the fixed number, if the applicant could not be refused without causing great scandal and only with the explicit consent of the community's father abbot.<sup>215</sup> The imposition of a *numerus clausus* was not a mere formality, as the case of Soleilmont demonstrates. When this nunnery was affiliated with the Order in 1237, the acceptance charter included a clear warning against allowing more women into the community than its resources could support.<sup>216</sup> The task of setting the limit to a community's members was left to its father abbot.<sup>217</sup> His decision was, unfortunately, never recorded. Only in the case of Valduc, a tip of the veil is lifted. According to a late fifteenth-century chronicle, in 1245 a *numerus clausus* of 60 nuns, novices and students, 10 lay brothers, 2 priests, 4 male servants and 4 female servants was instated at Valduc.<sup>218</sup> Whether these numbers are representative for other communities is unknown. In any case, several nunneries felt the pressure of their expanding communities. Seven of them even appealed

<sup>211</sup> DiBe ID 21532.

<sup>212</sup> *multa sustineret incommoda, siue defectus propter penuriam pascuae communis, siue lignorum et aliarum rerum necessarum sic ut ibi poterant sustentari*, DiBe ID 22859.

<sup>213</sup> '*pecunia quod inde proveniet uolo quod bene et habundanter uestiatur sicut bone competit moniali*', DiBe ID 26331. The dress code for nuns was set down in the Statutes in 1235, see *Statuta*, II, anno 1235, nr. 3, p. 139 and included in the codifications of 1237 and 1257. See Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, pp. 352-53.

<sup>214</sup> *Statuta*, I, anno 1218, nr. 84, p. 502 and anno 1219, nr. 12, p. 505; *Statuta*, II, anno 1225, nr. 7, p. 36 and anno 1242, nr. 15, p. 248. It was also included in the codifications of 1237 and 1257. See Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes*, p. 351.

<sup>215</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1243, nr. 7, p. 260.

<sup>216</sup> *quibus etiam auctoritate praedicta in uirtute sanctae obedientiae districte duximus praecipendum, ne domum suam ultra posse possessionum suarum, in personis recipiendis, onerare praesumerent*, DiBe ID 20535.

<sup>217</sup> First suggested in 1218, but made explicit in 1242; see *Statuta*, I, anno 1218, nr. 84, p. 502 and *Statuta*, II, anno 1242, nr. 15, p. 248.

<sup>218</sup> *onder nonnen, nouicien ende scolieren 60, ende 10 couerse, 2 priesters, 4 broers familiers ende 4 susteren familiers*. Furthermore, in 1270, Pope Clemence IV is said to have insisted that the Chapter revised this number to 35 nuns, 2 chaplains and 10 lay brothers. See Vleeschouwers, 'Joes van Dormael's kroniek', p. 197.

to the pope to have their *numerus clausus* formally ratified: only at the explicit command of the pope could these communities henceforth be compelled to accept a new member.<sup>219</sup> These papal charters all date to a brief time span, from 1244 to 1246, i.e. the early years of Innocent IV's papacy (1243-1254), and were issued at the request of the nunneries themselves.<sup>220</sup> The correct interpretation of these measures is, however, difficult. The charters themselves cite a lack of sufficient means and the concern for the *vita contemplativa* as motives for the petitions. They also coincide with the increase in mentions of hardship in donations charters, suggesting that increasing poverty was indeed an important rationale behind the institution of a *numerus clausus*. However, at the same time these measures demonstrate the strong appeal of the Cistercian lifestyle on women. The communities had no problem attracting new members, even to the point that their resources could no longer support these growing numbers. In other words, the nunneries fell victim to their own success.

Disobeying the terms and conditions set by the General Chapter could have severe consequences for a nunnery, as it risked punishment and expulsion from the Order.<sup>221</sup> When in 1242 the General Chapter tightened the requirements for incorporation,<sup>222</sup> this led to a genuine rebellion in the nunnery of Vrouwenpark. The nuns had not only rejected the new regulations, but they had even threatened their visiting abbots and left the chapter house with great ostentation. When the abbots excommunicated the nuns as a punishment for their disobedience, the community was not at all impressed: not only did they ignore the abbots' sentence, they also made it clear that the abbots did not need to bother with visiting the nunnery ever again. The General Chapter, however, took the matter very seriously: the abbess was deposed summarily and sent to another community, as was the *celleraria*. The visitators were sent to Vrouwenpark to return order to the nunnery.<sup>223</sup>

#### EPILOGUE: WANING ENTHUSIASM FOR CISTERCIAN WOMEN

By the 1240s it became increasingly difficult for nunneries to gain acceptance into the Order, as is proven by the lengthy and laborious incorporation

<sup>219</sup> Maagdendaal near Oplinter (1244, DiBe ID 22236), Robermont/Val-Benoit (1245, DiBe ID 22816), Val-Notre-Dame (1245, DiBe ID 30848), Salzinnes (twice in 1245, DiBe ID 26625 and 26626), Herkenrode (1246, DiBe ID 22992), Zwijveke (1246, DiBe ID 23194) and Rozendaal (1246, DiBe ID 31067). In 1250, La Ramée refused to admit Catherine, the daughter of Henry of Incourt, steward to the duke of Brabant, yet lost the plea when Pope Innocent IV became involved in the conflict (DiBe ID 25990 and 25991). In 1274, the community was again admonished to abandon their resistance to the admission of a new member, in this case Ida of Lormut. See Despy and Uyttebrouck, *Inventaire*, nr. 100, p. 192. However, these isolated cases may be the tip of the iceberg, as it is possible that only the cases in which a nunnery's decision was overturned were recorded.

<sup>220</sup> See e.g. Salzinnes (twice in 1245, DiBe ID 26625 and 26626) and Rozendaal (1246, DiBe ID 31067).

<sup>221</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1228, nr. 15, p. 68 and anno 1242, nrs. 17-18, pp. 248-49.

<sup>222</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1242, nrs. 15-18, pp. 248-49.

<sup>223</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1243, nr. 67, pp. 272-73.

procedures of Robermont and Binderen, the last foundations in the region. After the transfer of the original community to Val-Benoit, the site at Robermont remained unoccupied until in or shortly before 1240, a wealthy canon of St-Lambert in Liège, Lambert Surlet, came upon the deserted buildings and saw the dilapidated graves of former patrons and community members. Distressed by this neglect, he decided to establish a new community at the site to care for these souls' salvation.<sup>224</sup> The abbess of Val-Benoit, which at the time struggled financially as mentioned above, agreed to provide the new nunnery's first members.<sup>225</sup> Securing permission for his enterprise turned out to be a long-winded process: first, Abbess Sybilla of Val-Benoit wrote to Abbot William of Cîteaux to explain the project and receive his blessing. William subsequently appointed Oliver, the abbot of Val-St-Lambert, who held the *paternitas* over Val-Benoit, to examine the site, following the advice of Robert of Thourotte, at the time still bishop of Langres, but in the running to succeed John of Eppes as bishop of Liège. Oliver consulted with his fellow abbots from Grandpré and Valdieu and issued a charter granting the new community his permission in 1240. However, the General Chapter did not seem keen on following this advice. It took Robert of Thourotte, by then officially appointed as bishop of Liège, three years and as many letters to the prior of Cîteaux before the Chapter finally acquiesced. Only in April 1243 the prior of Cîteaux issued an acceptance charter, in which all of the charters mentioned above are cited.<sup>226</sup> In January 1244 the first practical arrangements could finally be made.<sup>227</sup> What motivated the Chapter to ignore Robert of Thourotte's insistent requests, unfortunately, remains unclear.

The case of Binderen dragged on even longer.<sup>228</sup> The initiative for this community was taken by Mary, sister to the duke of Brabant, widow of Emperor Otto of Brunswick and of William, count of Holland, and former empress of the Holy Roman empire. Already in 1237, this eminent figure petitioned the General Chapter for permission to found a new nunnery near Helmond.<sup>229</sup> The next year, her brother confirmed his support for her project,<sup>230</sup> yet for six years nothing happened, until in 1244, Mary again stated her desire to found a nunnery. Following the recent statute from 1244 requiring the diocesan's approval

<sup>224</sup> *quodam die ueniens ad locum in quo prius situm erat monasterium nostrum et inueniens eum quasi omnino desolatum, pietate motus est tum propter amenitatem loci, tum propter corpora multarum personarum tam religiosarum quam nobilium ibidem quiescentium, defraudatarum suffragiis orationum et aliorum bonorum operum, propter quorum participationem in eodem se loco postulauerant sepeliri*, DiBe ID 22037.

<sup>225</sup> *ipsa uero abbatissa et conuentus Uallis Benedicte de suis monialibus in domo de Robermont conuentum instaurarent*, DiBe ID 22037.

<sup>226</sup> DiBe ID 22037.

<sup>227</sup> DiBe ID 22226.

<sup>228</sup> Van Bussel has already studied the problematic incorporation of Binderen in great detail. See Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces', 165-92.

<sup>229</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1237, nr. 31, p. 174.

<sup>230</sup> DiBe ID 28024.

preceding an incorporation,<sup>231</sup> she also immediately acquired the consent of Bishop Robert of Thourotte,<sup>232</sup> before submitting a second incorporation request to the General Chapter.<sup>233</sup> The Chapter, however, rejected her request. Van Bussel, who studied the incorporation of Binderen in great detail, has suggested that the Chapter was worried about the nunnery's economic endowment.<sup>234</sup> Both the bishop and the cathedral chapter issued a second charter in support of the new community that, by this time, must already have existed.<sup>235</sup> Finally, Pope Innocent IV became involved in the matter. In 1246 he issued three papal bulls advocating for the community: not only did he confirm the new community and its Cistercian status, he also demanded the incorporation of Binderen into the Order and charged the abbot of Villers with the *paternitas* of Binderen.<sup>236</sup> Armed with these powerful weapons, Mary turned to the General Chapter a third time in 1246, after having donated more land to the community herself.<sup>237</sup> This time, her request was finally granted. However, the example clearly shows that the General Chapter put much effort into stopping the influx of nunneries into the Order, even when these communities could rely on powerful patrons like Mary of Brabant, a former empress. Only by pulling many strings did Mary succeed in her project of founding a new Cistercian nunnery.

Despite the fact that Robermont and Binderen are the last nunneries founded in the southern Low Countries, one more incorporation request is recorded in the Statutes. In 1246 Robert of Thourotte, the bishop of Liège, petitioned the General Chapter for the affiliation of a new community that Agnes, lady of Agimont (near Dinant), intended to found.<sup>238</sup> The *Diplomata Belgica* database contains three charters mentioning this Agnes, in one of which she identifies herself as the *mulier nobilis* of Givet.<sup>239</sup> In 1247 the nunnery was again mentioned in the Statutes, this time described as the *abbatia monialium quae aedificauit* (instead of *vult aedificare* the year before). The Chapter complied with Agnes' request to have her nunnery placed under the jurisdiction of Aulne.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>231</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1244, nr. 7, p. 275.

<sup>232</sup> Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces', pp. 173-74.

<sup>233</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1245, nr. 56, pp. 299-300.

<sup>234</sup> Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces', pp. 178-79 and pp. 181-83.

<sup>235</sup> DiBe ID 28037 and 26196.

<sup>236</sup> Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces', pp. 183-85. Based on this last charter Van Bussel surmises that the conflict about Binderen also concerned the negotiation of Binderen's *paternitas*. He conjectures that Mary had intended the abbot of Villers to supervise her new foundation, but that the General Chapter had tried to block Binderen's incorporation by assigning the responsibility of father abbot to Morimond. See Van Bussel, 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces', pp. 176-77 and pp. 183-85.

<sup>237</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1246, nr. 56, p. 312.

<sup>238</sup> *Inspectio abbacie monialium quam vult aedificare mulier Agnes domina Daugimont pro qua dominus Leodiensis scribit Capitulo generali, committitur de Alna et Grandi prato abbatibus qui ad locum, etc.*, *Statuta*, II, anno 1246, nr. 57, p. 312.

<sup>239</sup> *Nos, Agnes, mulier nobilis de Giuel, et de Agimont domina*, in DiBe ID 24542 from 1250; the other two charters are DiBe ID 30114 from 1248 and DiBe ID 30137 from 1250.

<sup>240</sup> *Petitio dominae Agnetis de Augemont quod abbatia monialium quae aedificauit sit filia de Alna, exauditur*. *Statuta*, II, anno 1247, nr. 19, p. 318.

The nunnery thus seems to have been built and accepted into the Order, yet we find no further trace of it in the sources,<sup>241</sup> suggesting that it was short-lived and/or of little importance. For some reason, this community never left its mark on the religious landscape.

The examples of Paix-Dieu, Binderen and the community of Agnes of Givet illustrate the struggles Cistercian women's communities faced by the middle of the thirteenth century, not in the least the increasing opposition from the Order. From 1251 onwards, the Order no longer accepted any exceptions to the 1228 ban, which for a long period had proven less than effective, unless the pope explicitly demanded the incorporation of a nunnery.<sup>242</sup> However, by then the religious landscape of Cambrai and Liège had become saturated.<sup>243</sup> It was no longer considered feasible to found more Cistercian nunneries due to the increasing mutual competition and no new communities were established until the late Middle Ages.<sup>244</sup> Moreover, illustrious patrons, such as the dukes of Brabant, seem to have lost their interest and, instead, turned their attention towards new spiritual ideals, exemplified by the Franciscans and Dominicans.<sup>245</sup> The great enthusiasm for Cistercian nunneries had come to an end.

<sup>241</sup> In 1462 the community of St-Remi was reformed into a male community. The women resettled in the nunnery of Felipré near Givet (sometimes called Feli-pré or Felix-Pré). The choice for this location might have been based on the existence of a female religious community at this site and/or the presence of buildings suited to house a women's community, although we have no documentary evidence to support this thesis. However, the *Gallia Christiana* does list Felipré as an independent community and claims it was founded around 1230 by the same founder who established the community of St-Remi (i.e. Gilles, lord of Walcourt), yet without providing any evidence to corroborate this claim. See Dionysius of Sainte-Marthe and Barthélemy Hauréau, eds, *Gallia christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa*, 16 vols. (Paris: 1716-1865), III (1725), cols. 1038-1040. If the roots of Felipré are indeed to be traced back to the thirteenth century, Felipré just might have been the community founded by Agnes of Givet, yet, if so, the absence of any evidence for the community makes it clear that it was of minor importance.

<sup>242</sup> *Statuta*, II, anno 1251, nr. 4, p. 361. This measure seems to have had an immediate, albeit short-lived effect: no incorporation requests are recorded in the Statutes from 1253 to 1259. In 1260 two new incorporation procedures were initiated (for nunneries in modern day Switzerland) and the incorporation of Grafenthal in the diocese of Cologne was confirmed. However, by then the surge of Cistercian female spirituality in the southern Low Countries was over and no new nunneries were founded in the region. *Statuta*, II, anno 1260, nr. 59, pp. 473-74 and nr. 64, p. 474; see Gerd Ahlers, *Weibliches Zisterziensertum im Mittelalter und seine Klöster in Niedersachsen* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2002), pp. 69-71.

<sup>243</sup> In 1249 Duke Henry II of Brabant appealed to William of Houthem, a canon of St Oedenrode, to abandon his project to establish a monastic community near the nunnery of Binderen. The close proximity of the communities, Henry claimed, would endanger the survival of both institutions and would cause scandal and infamy by forcing the members to beg from door to door: *ex quo personas locorum contingeret defectu multiplici compellente in ignominiam ordinis hostiatim in posterum necessaria mendicare*, DiBe ID 28045.

<sup>244</sup> The women's priory of Muysen was founded in 1387 and the nunnery of La Vignette in 1519. From then onwards no new female communities were established in the southern Low Countries until the nineteenth century. Canivez, *L'ordre de Cîteaux*, pp. 523-25.

<sup>245</sup> Whereas Duke Henry II of Brabant as well as all his siblings patronized the Cistercian Order, his son and successor Henry III (duke from 1248 to 1261) favored the Dominican Order. For instance, Henry III and his wife Aleidis of Burgundy chose the Dominican church in Louvain as



The life of Beatrice of Nazareth spans this evolution of rise and stagnation of Cistercian nunneries. When Beatrice entered Florival as a young girl, Cistercian female spirituality had only just started to develop its own identity in interaction and competition with other spiritual women. By the end of her life, the flourishing Cistercian women's movement was securely embedded in the dioceses of Cambrai and Liège. The existing communities continued to attract members and donations, but no longer succeeded in inspiring new important patrons. Yet Beatrice probably did not experience this evolution as clearly as we can survey it in retrospect. In her eyes, by the time of her death, Cistercian women had finally fully claimed their place in the religious landscape of the southern Low Countries.

their final resting place. Aleidis also founded one of the earliest convents for Dominican nuns in the Low Countries (Hertoginnedal, in 1262), where her heart was kept in a shrine. Bogaerts suggests that she was influenced in her patronage of the Dominican Order by Thomas of Cantimpré, himself a fervent admirer of the Cistercian nun Lutgard of Aywières. Lieve De Mecheleer, *De orde van de Dominicanessen: Monasticon* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2001), pp. 137-39 and Ambrosius Bogaerts, *Het klooster Hertoginnedal der zusters dominikanessen te Oudergem: 1262-1797* (Louvain: Dominikaans Archief, 1979) pp. 7-49 and pp. 53-62.

APPENDIX : LIST OF CISTERCIAN NUNNERIES IN THE BISHOPRICS OF LIÈGE AND CAMBRAI, UNTIL 1250

Beatrice’s communities are highlighted in *italics*; the bold line indicates 1228, the year of the ban on the further incorporation of women’s communities into the Cistercian Order, with leeway for Argenton and St-Remi. The \* in ‘Incorporation Request’ indicates that a community is mentioned in the Cistercian Statutes, although no incorporation request is preserved.

Name	Diocese	Principality	Date of Origin	Incorporation Request	<i>Religiosam vitam</i>	Remarks
Herkenrode	Liège	Looz	Before 1194 (1182?)	*	1218	
Aywières	Liège	Liège/ Brabant	Before 1197			Moved in 1211 from Les Awirs (Liège) to Lillois, and in 1214-1215 to Couture-St-Germain, both located in Brabant.
Robermont/Val-Benoit	Liège	Liège	Before 1200	*	1228, 1245	Moved in 1231 from Robermont to Val-Benoit, where an Augustinian double community was located until then. The relocation occasioned a change in name.
Ter Kameren	Cambrai	Brabant	1201	1232		
Salzennes	Liège	Namur	Before 1202 (1997?)	*	1234	
<i>Florival</i>	<i>Liège</i>	<i>Brabant</i>	<i>1208-1214</i>	*		<i>First preserved charter dates to 1224.</i>
Val-Notre-Dame	Liège	Liège	Before 1210	*	1211	
La Ramée	Liège	Brabant	Before 1212	*		Originally located in Kerkom (Dutch-speaking), near Tienen, and moved to Jauchette (French-speaking) in 1215-1216.
Fontenelle	Cambrai	Hainaut	Before 1212			

Name	Diocese	Principality	Date of Origin	Incorporation Request	<i>Religiosam vitam</i>	Remarks
Vrouwenpark	Liège	Brabant	Before 1215	*	1234	
Épinlieu	Cambrai	Hainaut	1216			
Hocht	Liège	Looz	1218-1220	*		Between 1185 and 1217 the site was occupied by Cistercian men, before they moved to Valdieu.
<i>Maagdendaal (Oplinter)</i>	Liège	Brabant	<i>Before 1219</i>	1237	1231	<i>First preserved charter dates to 1219.</i>
Roermond	Liège	Gelre	Before 1219	1219		
Zwijveke	Cambrai	Flanders	Before 1221/ 1223-1228			Originated as a hospital that was transformed into a Cistercian nunnery between 1223-1228.
Boneffe	Liège	Namur	Before 1222	*	1245/46	
Le Verger	Cambrai	Flanders	Before 1225			
Maagdendaal (Oudenaarde)	Cambrai	Flanders	Before 1227		1235	
Rozendaal	Cambrai	Liège	Before 1227		1244	
Ophoven	Liège	Looz	Before 1228	*		Moved to Dalheim, Holy Roman Empire, c. 1250.
Beaupré	Cambrai	Flanders	1228	*	1233	
Argenton	Liège	Namur	Before 1229		1229	First nuns transferred from Grand-Vaux, where a mixed community existed around a hospital for pilgrims.
St-Remi	Liège	Luxembourg	Before 1229			
Solières	Liège	Luxembourg	1127/1229	1233	1231	Originated in 1127 as an Augustinian double monastery, joining the Cistercians in 1229.

Name	Diocese	Principality	Date of Origin	Incorporation Request	<i>Religiosam vitam</i>	Remarks
Vivegnis	Liège	Brabant	1123/1230-1237	1236		Originated in 1123 as an Augustinian double monastery at Beaufays, joining the Cistercians at the occasion of the relocation of the women in 1230-1237.
Wauthier-Braine	Cambrai	Brabant	Before 1231 (1229?)	1233	1235	
Valduc	Liège	Brabant	1231-1235			
Le Jardinnet	Liège	Namur	Before 1232 (1229?)	1234		
Olive	Cambrai	Hainaut	1232-1233	1234		
Refuge Notre Dame	Cambrai	Hainaut	1232-1234	1234		Originally built next to a hospital, but the community moved to a new location in 1234.
Orienten	Liège	Brabant	Before 1233	*	1237, 1238	Fused with Boutershoven/Oeteren in 1274/75.
Moulins	Liège	Namur	1233		1240	
Saulchoir	Cambrai	Flanders	1233-1234	1233		
Boutershoven/Oeteren	Liège	Looz	Before 1234		1244	Moved c 1245, which occasioned a change in name; fused with Orienten in 1274/75, when the nuns moved to Orienten.
Ten Roosen	Cambrai	Flanders	Before 1235 (1228?)	1235		
St-Bernardsdal	Liège	Brabant	Before 1235	1236	1239	
Nazareth	Cambrai	Brabant	Shortly before 1236	1236	1244	First plans for its foundation date to 1225; first charter testifying to its existence dates to 1237.

Name	Diocese	Principality	Date of Origin	Incorporation Request	<i>Religiosam vitam</i>	Remarks
Soleilmont	Liège	Namur	Before 1236	1236	1239	
Marche-les-Dames	Liège	Namur	Before 1236	(never incorporated)		In 1241 the General Chapter denied having any authority over Marche-les-Dames as it was never incorporated.
Terbeek	Liège	Looz	Before 1237	1237		
Rotem	Liège	Brabant	Before 1239 (or before 1237?)	1237 (uncertain identifi.)	1244	
Paix-Dieu	Liège	Liège	1239	1241	1246	
Robermont (refounded)	Liège	Liège	1244			Refounded on the original location of Robermont.
Binderen	Liège	Brabant	1244-1245	1237, 1245, 1246		

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Sources

- 'Abbaye d'Orienten', ed. by Mathias Wolters, *Notice historique sur la commune de Rummen et sur les anciens fiefs de Grasen, Wilre, Bindervelt et Weyer, en Hesbaye* (Ghent: Hebbelynck, 1846), pp. 61-94, 231-405
- 'Annexes: Chartes', ed. by Mathias Wolters, *Notice historique sur l'ancienne abbaye de Herckenrode dans la province actuelle de Limbourg* (Ghent: Gyselynck, 1849)
- Cartulaire de l'abbaye d'Épinlieu*, ed. by Leopold Devillers (Mons: Imprimerie de Dequesne-Masquillier, 1867)
- Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Zwyveke-Lez-Termonde*, ed. by Alphonse-L. de Vlaminck (Ghent: Imprimerie C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1869)
- Cartulaire de l'abbaye du Val-Benoit*, ed. by Joseph Cuvelier (Brussels: Kiessling et Imbreghts, 1906)
- Catalogue des actes de Henri De Guelre, prince-évêque de Liège*, ed. by Alphonse Delescluse & Dieudonné Brouwers (Brussels: Société Belge de librairie, 1900)
- 'Chartes et documents de l'abbaye d'Argenton à Lonzée', ed. by Émile Brouette, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis*, 115 (1950), pp. 297-381
- Chronica Villariensis monasterii*, ed. by Georg Waitz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 195-209
- De oorkonden der abdij Rozendaal der Orde van Cîteaux*, ed. by A. Goetstouwers, 2 vols. (Antwerp: Provinciebestuur Antwerpen: Provinciebestuur Antwerpen, 1965 & 1985)
- Delvaux, Hendrik, *Inventaris van het archief der abdij Maagdendaal te Oplinter* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1965)
- Despy, Georges and André Uyttebrouck, *Inventaire des archives de l'abbaye de La Ramée à Jauchette* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1970)
- Diplomata Belgica. Les sources diplomatiques des Pays-Bas méridionaux aux Moyen Âge*, ed. by Thérèse de Hemptinne, Jeroen Deploige, Jean-Louis Kupper and Walter Prevenier (Brussels: Royal Historical Commission, since 2015) [www.diplomata-belgica.be](http://www.diplomata-belgica.be)
- Die Wundergeschichte des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, ed. by Alphonse Hilka, Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Rheinische Geschichtskunde, 43, 3 vols. (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933-1937)
- Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium abbreviata*, ed. by Iohannis Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 129-35
- Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium*, ed. by Iohannis Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover: 1880), pp. 14-129
- Gesta venerabilis Bartholomei ciuis Thenensis postea conuersi cisterciensis*, ed. by Leonce Reyens, *Vita Beatrix* (Antwerp: Ruusbroecgenootschap, 1964), pp. 260-62
- Héron de Villefosse, Étienne-Marie, 'Vie manuscrite de la bienheureuse Ide, 1<sup>re</sup> abbesse du monastère d'Argensoles (Marne)', *Revue du Champagne*, 1 (1889), 481-98
- Liber de gestibus virorum illustrium monasterii Villariensis*, ed. by Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand, in *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, III (Paris: Delaulne, 1717), cols. 1309-74
- Lucet, Bernard, *Les codifications cisterciennes de 1237 et de 1257* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977)
- Mikkers, Edmond, 'Deux lettres inédites de Thomas, chantre de Villers', *Collectanea ordinis cisterciensis reformatorem*, 10 (1948), 161-73



- Recueil des chartes et document de l'abbaye du Val-Saint-Georges à Salzinnes (Namur) 1196/97-1300*, ed. by Émile Brouette (Achel: Abbaye cistercienne, 1971)
- Statuta capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, ed. by Joseph-Marie Canivez (Louvain: Bureau de la revue, 1934), 8 vols
- The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth*, 1200-1268, trans. and ann. by Roger De Ganck, Cistercian Fathers Series, 51 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991)
- Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus*, ed. by Georges Colvenere (Douai: 1605) and trans. by Henri Platelle, *Thomas de Cantimpré: Les exemples du 'Livre des abeilles': Une vivolysion médiévale* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997)
- Vita Abundi monachi Villariensis*, ed. by Adrianus M. Frenken, 'De vita van Abundus van Hoei', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 10 (1959), 11-33 and trans. by Martinus Cawley, *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers*, by Goswin of Bossut, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 206-58
- Vita Arnulfi conversi Villariensis*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Iuni V (Antwerp: 1709), cols. 608-31 and trans. by Martinus Cawley, *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers*, by Goswin of Bossut, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 122-205
- Vita Beatricis: De autobiografie van de Z. Beatrijs van Tienen o. cist. 1200-1268*, ed. by Leonce Reypens, *Studiën en Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 15 (Antwerp: Ruusbroec-Genootschap, 1964)
- Vita Bonifacii Lausanensis*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. III (Antwerp: 1658), cols. 149-55
- Vita Godefridi Pachomii*, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 14 (1895), pp. 263-68
- Vita Guilielmi de Oliva*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. II (Antwerp: 1658), cols. 494-99
- Vita Idae Lovaniensis*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Apr. III (Antwerp: 1675), cols. 155-89 and trans. by Martinus Cawley, *Ida the Eager of Louvain* (Lafayette: Guadalupe Translations, 2002)
- Vita Idae Nivelensis*, ed. by Chrysostomus Henriquez, in *Quinque prudentes virgines* (Antwerp: 1630), pp. 199-297 and trans. by Martinus Cawley, *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers*, by Goswin of Bossut, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 29-99
- Vita Lutgardis Virgine in Aquiriae Brabantia*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Iuni III (Antwerp: 1701), cols. 231-63 and trans. by Barbara Newman and Margot King, *Thomas of Cantimpré: The Collected Saints' Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières*, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 19 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 207-96
- Vleeschouwers, Cyriel, 'Joes van Dormael's kroniek der hervorming binnen de Brabantse cisterciënserinnenabdij Hertogendal (1488)', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 47 (1973), 173-220

## Secondary Sources

- Ahlers, Gerd, *Weibliches Zisterziensertum im Mittelalter und seine Klöster in Niedersachsen* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2002)
- Berlière, Ursmer, 'Jacques de Vitry: Ses relations avec les abbayes d'Aywières et de Doorezele', *Revue Bénédictine*, 27 (1908), 185-93

- Berlière, Ursmer, 'La foundation de l'abbaye d'Épinlieu', *Revue Bénédictine*, 9 (1892), 381-83
- Berlière, Ursmer, 'Les évêques auxiliaires de Liège', *Revue Bénédictine*, 29 (1912), 60-81
- Berman, Constance, 'Fashions in Monastic Patronage: The Popularity of Supporting Cistercian Abbeys for Women in Thirteenth-Century Northern France', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 17 (1990), 36-45
- Berman, Constance, 'Where There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?', in *Medieval religion: New Approaches*, ed. by Constance Berman (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 217-48
- Berman, Constance, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000)
- Bogaerts, Ambrosius, *Het klooster Hertoginnedal der zusters dominikanessen te Oudergem: 1262-1797* (Louvain: Dominikaans Archief, 1979)
- Breugelmans, Koen and Frans Vanhoof, 'Abbaye de Nazareth, à Lierre, puis à Brecht', in *Monasticon Belge VIII: Province d'Anvers*, 2 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1992-1993), I (1992), pp. 101-26
- Brouette, Émile, 'Abbaye de Florival, à Archennes', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, 6 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1964-1972), II (1968), pp. 425-40
- Brouette, Émile, 'Abbaye de Parc-les-Dames, à Rotselaar', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, 6 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1964-1972), II (1968), pp. 511-30
- Brouette, Émile, 'Abbaye du Val-Notre-Dame', in *Monasticon Belge II: Province de Liège*, 2 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1928-1929), II (1929), pp. 203-11
- Brouette, Émile, 'Abbaye du Val-Virginal, à Oplinter', in *Monasticon Belge IV: Province de Brabant*, 6 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1964-1972), II (1968), pp. 567-84
- Bussels, Mathieu, 'Over het ontstaan der abdij van Herkenrode', *Het oude land van Loon*, 1 (1946), 20-26
- Canivez, Joseph-Marie, *L'ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique des origines (1132) au XX<sup>me</sup> siècle* (Forges-lez-Chimay: Abbaye cistercienne de N.D. de Scourmont, 1926)
- Coomans, Thomas, 'Cistercian Nunneries in the Low Countries: The Medieval Architectural Remains', in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture. VI: Cistercian Nuns and Their World*, ed. by Meredith Parsons Lillich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), pp. 61-131
- Coomans, Thomas, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant: Construction, configuration et signification d'une abbaye cistercienne gothique*, *Studia et Documenta*, 11 (Brussels: Racine, 2000)
- Croenen, Godfried, *Familie en Macht: De familie Berthout en de Brabantse adel* (Louvain: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2003)
- de Crassier, Guillaume, 'L'építaphier de l'abbaye de Vivegnis', *Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du Diocèse de Liège*, 19 (1910), 1-3
- De Ganck, Roger, 'The biographer of Beatrice of Nazareth', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 22 (1988), 319-29
- De Ganck, Roger, 'The Integration of Nuns in the Cistercian Order Particular in Belgium', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 35 (1984), 235-47
- De Ganck, Roger, 'The three foundations of Bartholomew of Tienen', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 37 (1986), 49-75

- De Mecheleer, Lieve, *De orde van de Dominicanessen: Monasticon* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2001)
- de Moreau, Edouard, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Brussels: Librairie Albert Dewit, 1909)
- Deboutte, Alfred, 'Sint-Lutgart en magister Johannes van Lyro', *Sinte Lutgart schutsvrouwe van Vlaanderen*, 18 (1976), 46-53
- Degler-Spengler, Brigitte, "'Zahlreich wie die Sterne des Himmels" Zisterzienser, Dominikaner und Franziskaner vor dem Problem der Inkorporation von Frauenklöstern', *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, 4 (1985), 37-50
- Despy, Georges and Andrée Despy, 'Une problème d'histoire cistercienne: les débuts de l'abaye de Parc-les-Dames', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 42 (1964), 1242-54
- Dillo, Martien, 'De stichting en wijding van de Munsterabdij te Roermond, 1218-1220, en de vermeende wijding in 1224', *Maasgouw: Tijdschrift voor Limburgse geschiedenis en oudheidkunde*, 99 (1980), 10-18
- Felten, Franz, 'Abwehr, Zuneigung, Pflichtgefühl. Reaktionen der frühen Zisterzienser auf den Wunsch religiöser Frauen, zisterziensisch zu leben', in *Female vita religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages*, ed. by Gerd Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2001), pp. 390-415
- Felten, Franz, 'Waren die Zisterzienser frauenfeindlich? Die Zisterzienser und die religiöse Frauenbewegung um 12. und frühen 13. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer Bestandaufnahme der Forschung seit 1980', in *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. by Franz Felten and Werner Rösener (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2009), pp. 179-223
- Freed, John, 'Urban Development and the "Cura Monialium" in Thirteenth-Century Germany', *Viator*, 3 (1972), 311-27
- Freeman, Elizabeth, "'Houses of a Peculiar Order": Cistercian Nunneries in Medieval England, with Special Attention to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 55 (2004), 245-87
- Freeman, Elizabeth, 'A Cistercian Monk Writes to a Cistercian Nun: John Godard's Treatise for the Abbess of Tarant, England, c. 1250', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 45 (2010), 331-51
- Freeman, Elizabeth, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's Pastoral Care of Religious Women, with Special Reference to "De institutione inclusarum"', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 46 (2011), 13-29
- Freeman, Elizabeth, 'Cistercian Nuns, Cause Papers, and the York Consistory Court in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Australia and New Zealand Law and History E-Journal* (refereed paper no 16) (2006), 1-14
- Freeman, Elizabeth, 'Gilbert of Hoyland's Sermons for Nuns: A Cistercian Abbot and the "Cura Monialium" in Twelfth-Century Lincolnshire', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 50 (2015), 267-91
- Gill, Katherine, "'Scandala": controversies concerning *clausura* and women's religious communities in late medieval Italy', in *Christendom and its discontents: Exclusion, persecution, and rebellion, 1000-1500*, ed. by Scott Waugh and Peter Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 177-203
- Griffiths, Fiona and Julie Hotchin, eds, *Partners in Spirit: Men, Women, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500*, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 24 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014)
- Griffiths, Fiona, "'Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs": Abelard, Heloise, and Their Negotiation of the "Cura Monialium"', in *Medieval religion: New*

- Approaches*, ed. by Constance Berman (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 290-315
- Griffiths, Fiona, 'Brides and "Dominae": Abelard's "Cura Monialium" at the Augustinian Monastery of Marbach', *Viator*, 34 (2003), 57-88
- Griffiths, Fiona, 'Monks and Nuns at Rupertsberg: Guibert of Gembloux and Hildegard of Bingen', in *Partners in Spirit: Men, Women, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500*, ed. by Fiona Griffiths and Julie Hotchin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 145-69
- Griffiths, Fiona, 'The Cross and the "Cura Monialium": Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform', *Speculum*, 83 (2005), 303-30
- Grundmann, Herbert, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der Deutschen Mystik* (Berlin: Verlag dr. Emil Ebering, 1935)
- Jordan, Erin, 'Female Founders: Exercising Authority in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), 535-61
- Jordan, Erin, 'Gender Concerns: Monks, Nuns, and Patronage of the Cistercian Order in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', *Speculum*, 87 (2012), 62-94
- Jordan, Erin, '"Pro Remedio Anime Sue": Cistercian Nuns and Space in the Low Countries', in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. by Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 279-98
- Jordan, Erin, 'Roving Nuns and Cistercian Realities: The Claustrealisation of Religious Women in the Thirteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 42 (2012), 597-614
- Jordan, Erin, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006)
- Lefèvre, Jean-Baptiste, 'L'abbaye de Villers et le monde des moniales et de béguines au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Villers, une abbaye revisitée: Actes du colloque 10-12 avril 1996* (Villers-la-Ville: Association pour la promotion touristique et culturelle de Villers-la-Ville, 1996), pp. 183-229
- Lester, Anne, 'Cares Beyond the Walls: Cistercian Nuns and the Care of Lepers in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Northern France', in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000-1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, ed. by Emilia Jamrozak and Janet Burton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 197-224
- Lester, Anne, *Creating Cistercian Nuns: The Women's Religious Movement and Its Reform in Thirteenth-Century Champagne* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011)
- Marcus, F., 'Abbaye de Saint-Bernard sur l'Escaut, à Hemiksem', in *Monasticon Belge VIII: Province d'Anvers*, 2 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1992-1993), I (1992), pp. 31-79
- Moens, Sara, 'The *mulieres religiosae*, daughters of Hildegard of Bingen? Interfaces between a Benedictine visionary, the Cistercians of Villers and the spiritual women of Liège', in *Medieval Liège at the Crossroads of Europe: Monastic Society and Culture, 1000-1300*, ed. by Steven Vanderputten, Tjamke Snijders and Jay Diehl (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 301-38
- Morton, Vera and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds, *Guidance for Women in 12th-Century Convents* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003)
- Nichols, John, 'Medieval Cistercian Nunneries and English Bishops', in *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, ed. by John Nichols and Lilian Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), pp. 237-49

- Nieus, Jean-François, 'Les pauvres, la route et le prince: L'hospice pour pèlerins de Grand-Vaux (Balâtre) redécouvert (XIIIe-XVIe siècles)', in *Voyageurs, en route!*, ed. by Aurélie Stuckens and others, Cahiers de la Maison du patrimoine médiéval mosan, 13 (Bouvignes-Dinant: Maison du patrimoine médiéval mosan, 2019), in preparation
- Panzer, Elizabeth, 'Cistercian Women and the Beguines: Interaction, Cooperation and Interdependence' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994)
- Ploegaerts, Théophile, *Les moniales cisterciennes dans l'ancien Roman-Pays du Brabant. III: Histoire de l'abbaye de Florival* (Brussels: Actio Catholique, 1925)
- Rasmussen, Linda, 'Order, Order! Determining Order in Medieval English Nunneries', in *Our Medieval Heritage: Essays in honour of John Tillotson for his 60th birthday*, ed. by Linda Rasmussen, Valerie Spear and Dianne Tillotson (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), pp. 30-49
- Ray, Anthony, 'Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Brothers and Sisters Indeed: Two Thirteenth-Century Letters of Thomas, Cantor of Villers, to his Sister Alice, Nun of Parc-les-Dames', in *Partners in Spirit: Men, Women, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500*, ed. by Fiona Griffiths and Julie Hotchin, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 24 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 213-36
- Renardy, Christine, *Les maîtres universitaires dans le diocèse de Liège: Répertoire biographique (1140-1350)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981)
- Reypens, Leonce, 'De eerste grondschenking en de stichting der abdij Nazareth te Lier nogmaals onderzocht', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 29 (1955), 302-13
- Roisin, Simone, 'L'efflorescence cistercienne et le courant féminin de piété au XIIIe siècle', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 39 (1943), 324-78
- Sabbe, Etienne, 'De abdij Nazareth tijdens de eerste eeuw van haar bestaan (1225-1235)', *Cîteaux in de Nederlanden*, 6 (1955), 98-113
- Sainte-Marthe, Dionysius and Barthélemy Hauréau, eds, *Gallia christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa*, 16 vols. (Paris: 1716-1865), III (1725)
- Sayes, Jane, *Papal Government and England during the Pontificate of Honorius III (1216-1227)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- Schreiner, Klaus, 'Pastoral Care in Female Monasteries: Sacramental Services, Spiritual Edification, Ethical Discipline', in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Jeffrey Hamburger and Susan Marti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 225-44
- Simons, Walter, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)
- Smets, Georges, *Henri I duc de Brabant, 1190-1235* (Brussels: Lamartin, 1908)
- Thompson, Sally, 'The Problem of Cistercians Nuns in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 227-52
- Tibbets Schulenberg, Jane, 'Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100)', in *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, ed. by John Nichols and Lilian Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications 1984), pp. 51-86
- Tinti, Francesca, 'Benedictine reform and pastoral care in late Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe*, 23 (2015), pp. 229-51
- Van Bussel, G. J., 'Het stichtings- en incorporatieproces van de cisterciënzinnenabdij "Locus Imperatricis" (Binderen) bij Helmond, 1237-1246', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 38 (1987), 165-92

- Van Heddeghem, Alfred, *Een middeleeuws abdijhospitaal de Oude Bijloke: Gentse hospitalen en ziekenverzorging 1146-1797* (Antwerp: De Vries-Brouwers, 1978)
- Vanhoof, Frans, 'Abbaye de Rozendaal à Wavre-Sainte-Catherine', in *Monasticon Belge VIII: Province d'Anvers*, 2 vols. (Liège: Centre national de recherches d'histoire religieuse, 1992-1993), I (1192), pp. 127-64
- Vleeschouwers, Cyriel, 'Het beheer van het O.L.Vrouw-hospitaal te Gent en de stichting van de Cisterciënserinnenabdijen O.L.Vrouw-ten-Bos (1215) en Bijloke (1228) door uten Hove's', *Annales de la Société belge d'histoire des hôpitaux*, 9 (1971), 11-34
- Voisin, Auguste, 'Notice sur l'abbaye de Saulchoir', *Bulletin de la société historique et littéraire de Tournai*, 10 (1865), 100-60
- Wolbrink, Shelley Amiste, 'Women in the Premonstratensian Order of Northwestern Germany, 1120-1250', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 89 (2003), 387-408

## ABSTRACT

Beatrice of Nazareth was but one of many women from the southern Low Countries who chose a religious life in the Cistercian Order. In the first half of the thirteenth century, this region experienced a genuine boom of Cistercian nunneries. This paper studies the rise of these Cistercian nunneries in the bishoprics of Liège and Cambrai. First, it examines the origins of the nunneries and the role of contemplation in the nuns' life. It also investigates the motives of the founder(s) and the role played by local 'managers' in charge of the practical establishment of a new community. Finally, it addresses the nunneries' relation to the Cistercian Order and lays bare the difficulties that Cistercian women faced by the middle of the century. The resulting picture not only gives insight into the rise and stagnation of Cistercian nunneries in Liège and Cambrai, but it also helps to better understand the world in which Beatrice of Nazareth lived.

*Adres van de auteur:* Sara Moens, Vlaamse Erfgoedbibliotheken, Statiestraat 179, 2600 Berchem (sara@vlaamse-erfgoedbibliotheken.be)